

Bnai Mitzvah Project *Road Map*



An all-inclusive guide for
choosing a Mitzvah Project
that suits you.



The background is a stylized map with a grid of streets in shades of blue and green. A prominent orange path winds across the map. Several location pins are scattered: a purple pin with a '10' icon in the top left, a pink pin with a building icon in the center, and a blue pin with a shopping cart icon in the bottom left.

Your Bnai Mitzvah Project

1. Mazal Tov!.....	3-4
2. Choosing a Mitzvah.....	5-8
3. Creating a Mitzvah Project.....	9-11
4. Parsha Themes.....	12-14
5. Mitzvah Project Journey.....	15-16
6. Guided Timeline.....	17
7. Moving Forward.....	18

Mazal Tov!

The time you have been waiting for has finally arrived, your Bar or Bat Mitzvah! As you begin choosing balloons, making center pieces, creating invitations and tasting food for the menu, keep something very important in mind: you have reached the age at which you become responsible for your actions, and you are now ready to accept Jewish law. During this wonderful and powerful time in your life, you have the amazing opportunity to involve your friends and family in a Mitzvah Project. Our job at Areyvut is to help you find a project that personally speaks to you, and turn it into a reality. This is your moment; make it meaningful. Validate to yourself that you have indeed reached this special age where everything you do begins to count.

Helping others together

Areyvut wants to wish you a big Mazal Tov for reaching this tremendous milestone in your life! We believe that everyone has the power to perform meaningful Mitzvot, and for that reason, we would like to work together with you to help you achieve this goal. Areyvut would like to offer a hand in facilitating a program in which you will have the unique opportunity to create and implement activities that are geared towards benefitting others. By participating in one or several Bnai Mitzvah programs, you can bring this new common goal to the table. Our highly qualified staff at Areyvut is here to make your Bnai Mitzvah celebration a memorable experience for you, for your guests and for those you wish to help.



About Us

Areyvut was established in 2002 by Daniel Rothner. Areyvut helps Jewish youth to fill their lives with the core of Jewish values, such as chesed (kindness), tzedakah (charity), and tikkun olam (social action). Areyvut offers a unique opportunity for institutions including schools, synagogues, and youth organizations to create meaningful and innovative programs. Through the programs that Areyvut develops and implements, the participants deepen their roots in Judaism by learning about Jewish ideals and values, and then utilizing these new ideas to influence others.

Why Now?

A better question is: Why NOT now? As a teenager, you have the means to change lives. In this world, there are many in need, and you have the power to make a difference. Any organization would benefit tremendously from your help. The project you choose will not only be incredibly exciting for the organization you are helping, it will also be an amazing opportunity that will be remembered for a lifetime for you, your friends and family members.

Let's Get Started

In the following pages, you will find a guide created to help make your Bnai Mitzvah experience as meaningful as possible. It will demonstrate how to find meaning in your project before, during and after your service and/or party. It will give you some specific project ideas, as well as guidelines to help you reflect on your experience. Following the steps in this guide will lead to a truly meaningful Mitzvah Project.

Choosing a Mitzvah

Deciding on a Mitzvah Project can be quite overwhelming; however, Areyvut has created an easy five step process for finding a Mitzvah Project that is appropriate for you. This process helps you narrow in on your passion, find an organization, choose a specific project, make a goal, and give ideas on how to spread the word.



Step 1: What's your passion?

When deciding on a mitzvah project, you should choose something that means something to you— something that you feel a connection to. (If you're not sure which theme to choose, take a look into your Parsha, and you may find a different theme that speaks to you.) Here is a list of twenty-one different themes.

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Animals | 7. Environment | 13. Literacy | 17. Soldiers |
| 2. Arts/Music/Theatre | 8. Health/Medicine | 14. Lifecycle | 18. Sports |
| 3. Children | 9. Hunger | 15. People with Disabilities | 19. Teen Philanthropy |
| 4. Clothing | 10. Israel | 16. Poverty/Homelessness | 20. Tolerance |
| 5. Education | 11. Jewish Education | | 21. Victims of Terror |
| 6. Elderly | 12. Kiruv (Outreach) | | |

If you feel passionate about more than one, that is OK. The best part about a Mitzvah Project is that you can always do more than one.



Now that you have found your passion, finding an organization is a bit easier. You have a few options. You can search online for organizations that work in that area, or you could go to www.areyvut.org/opportunities/ and search for you passion in the "theme" drop-bar menu. You can also go to your local synagogue and ask your rabbi or rabbis if they know of something that would be a good fit for you.

Step 2: Finding an Organization

Step 3: Choosing a Project

Once you have your passion chosen and your organization selected, what can you do to help? Do you want to volunteer, fundraise or both?

Volunteering

If you plan on becoming a volunteer, you must first speak to your organization about their policies. Keep in mind that some organizations have a minimum age for volunteers or a minimum number of hours you must volunteer. Volunteering may involve stacking canned foods at a food bank, teaching underprivileged kids to play a sport or playing chess with the elderly. Volunteering is a great way for you to use your passion to change the world!

Fundraising

If you plan on fundraising, you must decide what you are collecting. Fundraising does not necessarily mean raising money. If your passion is working on how to eliminate hunger, you can collect canned food. If your passion is helping underprivileged children, you can collect school supplies for those who cannot afford them.

Both

Sometimes you can have it all! If you want to plan a cleaning day at a public park, but you also want to collect teddy bears for the hospital, you can! There is no one stopping you from performing more than one mitzvah! Both volunteering and fundraising involves your family, your friends and you. Remember, everything you do makes a difference.

Step 4: Establishing a Goal

Setting a goal for yourself is ALWAYS a good plan. If you choose to volunteer for your project, set a goal of how many hours you want to devote, or how many people you would like to participate in your volunteer event. Be realistic when setting your goal. When volunteering, you must choose a number you can promise, a number that is doable. You can always exceed your goal. You cannot, however, promise hours and then fall short. If you choose fundraising, you can make a goal of how much you would like to raise or collect. Do not set the number to an outrageous amount, select something that is achievable. Remember, talk to your organization before setting anything in stone. They can help with organizing your goal and giving you alternate suggestions.



Words have power! This final step is easier said than done. Along with your Bar/Bat Mitzvah invitation, slip in an announcement that explains the organization and the project you chose. Emphasize the importance of your guests' involvement. Ask your Synagogue to put your Mitzvah Project in their newsletter. Talk to your rabbi or principal. Your rabbi may even allow you to make an appeal from the bimah. When people ask about your Bar or Bat Mitzvah, make certain to mention your Mitzvah Project! Keep reminding people how important this project is to you and how much of a difference it will make. You never know what you can do until you try.

Step 5: Spreading the Word

Creating a Mitzvah Project

Below is a list of some project ideas for each given passion. The following projects are not specific to one passion, so if you want to mix and match, go right ahead! Once again, this is your Mitzvah Project.



<i>Passion</i>	<i>Mitzvah Projects Ideas</i>
Animals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster or adopt a pet from the shelter • Collect animal toys and donate them to an animal agency • Volunteer at an animal shelter • Assist in therapeutic horse-back riding sessions
Arts/Music/ Theatre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make bead jewelry and hand them out • Perform a play or a choir concert at a senior citizens home or hospital • Create a dance-a-thon for children to support exercise • Create a carnival for your community to raise money for an organization
Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect children's toys for lower income families • Decorate pillow cases with children at hospitals
Clothing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a clothing drive. Collect and donate the clothes to an organization that gives them directly to those in need • Decorate T-shirts with happy messages and give to kids in hospitals or shelters
Elderly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write letters of any kind and give them out to a senior citizen center • Host your own Bingo/Chess/Movie Night/Arts and Crafts event • Adopt a friend from a senior citizen center with friends and family • Volunteer at a senior center
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make and donate bookmarks • Collect school supplies • Volunteer to tutor at a local elementary, junior high school, or high school • Volunteer for after-school homework help • Help people who are learning English to improve their English
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant a communal garden at your synagogue • Sponsor an environmental fair to explain the importance of recycling and do a project with recycled bottles, paper or cardboard • Volunteer to have a clean-up day at a local park, beach, or playground and invite your friends and family to join
Health/ Medicine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write notes of encouragement to those with health issues • Make "Fun Bags" that have toys, games, coloring books and stickers for kids in the children's wing of a hospital • Make teddy bears and donate them
Hunger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect food for a food bank or soup kitchen • Give out pre-made Shabbat boxes to food banks or shelters • Volunteer for the food counter at a shelter • Sponsor a Hunger Benefit and donate the money and/or extra food
Israel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant trees in the honor of someone who has made an impact on you • Raise money and donate it to Israeli organizations • Create an Israel fair to inform everyone about Israeli organizations and what they do
Jewish Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help the younger students to prepare for their bar/bat mitzvah. • Decorate havdalah candles and give them out at your synagogue • Create a Shabbat book or a bracha book that contains all the blessings and hand them out at your synagogue • Help kids who don't go to Jewish day schools with their Hebrew

<i>Passion</i>	<i>Mitzvah Projects Ideas</i>
Kiruv (Outreach)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect your friends and family with individuals or communities all over the globe and raise money for their communities • Create a pen pal system with Jewish kids all around the globe
Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect books and hand out the books with to children • Sponsor a reading day. Give out books and have group book readings • Write and decorate books then hand them out
Lifecycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create birthday-party boxes for children in need who don't get to celebrate birthdays • Get updates on those who recently had a baby, had a Bnai Mitzvah, got married, have an anniversary, etc. and hand out Mazal Tov cards • Volunteer at a burial association, cleaning and renovating
People With Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan a "make a friend" day and invite children from a special needs school and your friends to spend a fun day together • Host a fair explaining different disabilities • Volunteer at a special needs school
Poverty/ Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect tooth brushes, toothpaste, soap and hand them out to the homeless • Volunteer at different shelters • Collect different stories and write about it on a blog
Soldiers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make care boxes for lone soldiers in Israel • Create a pen pal system with Israeli soldiers • Donate clothes, food, or hygiene products to soldiers
Sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a sports day/tournament and invite everyone in the neighborhood to participate • Teach your favorite sport to children in a lower income area • Collect sports equipment and give them to schools with limited supplies
Teen Philanthropy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start a project in your school for something you are passionate about • Create campaigns to raise awareness for social injustice
Tolerance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach out to someone you don't agree with socially or religiously • Send a letter to a governmental figure about an issue you are passionate about • With your friends or family, create a monument with a message of peace or hope and place it at your school or synagogue • Create and decorate a Friendship bench in your school playground or community park to encourage people to be inclusive to all and even make new friends
Victims of Terror	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host a school or community event with a guest speaker who has been victimized to raise awareness • Raise money for a victim of a recent terror attack to rebuild what they've lost • Reach out to a family who has suffered from terror and ask what you can do to help

Parsha Themes

As you read your Parsha, remember there are many themes you can use on which to base your project. Below is a table of the Parshiot and some of the themes that might help you decide what you would like to use for your Mitzvah Project.

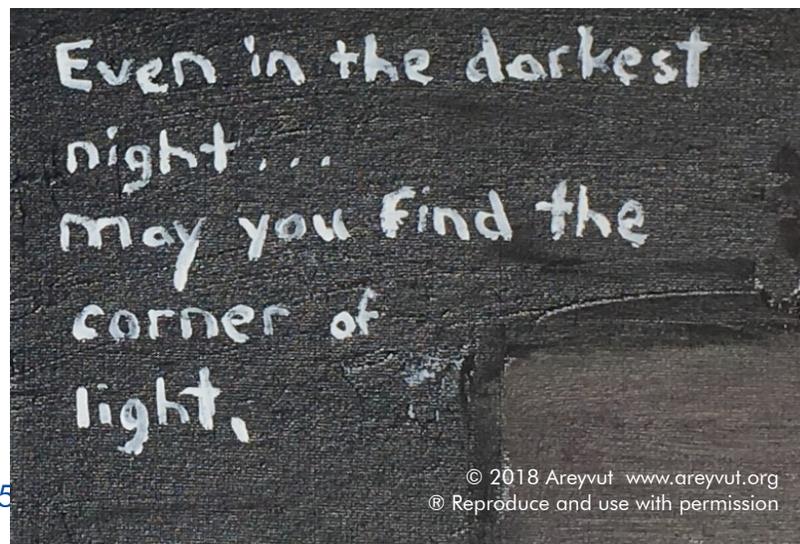
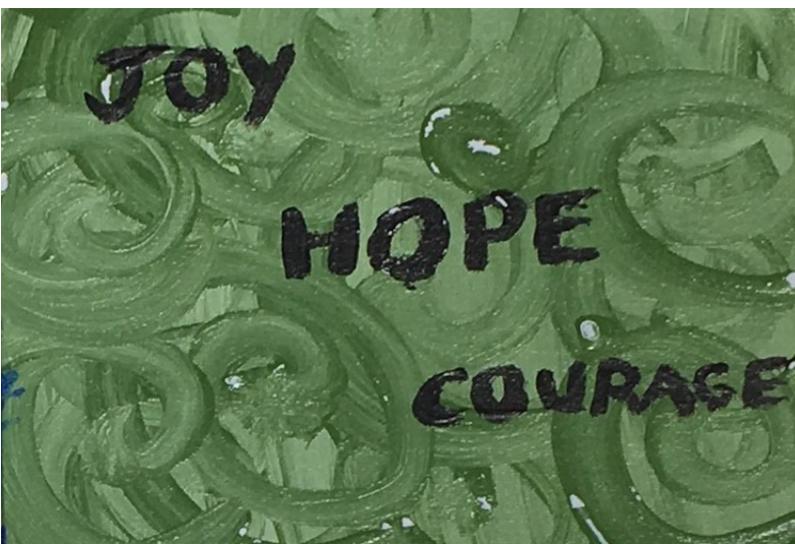
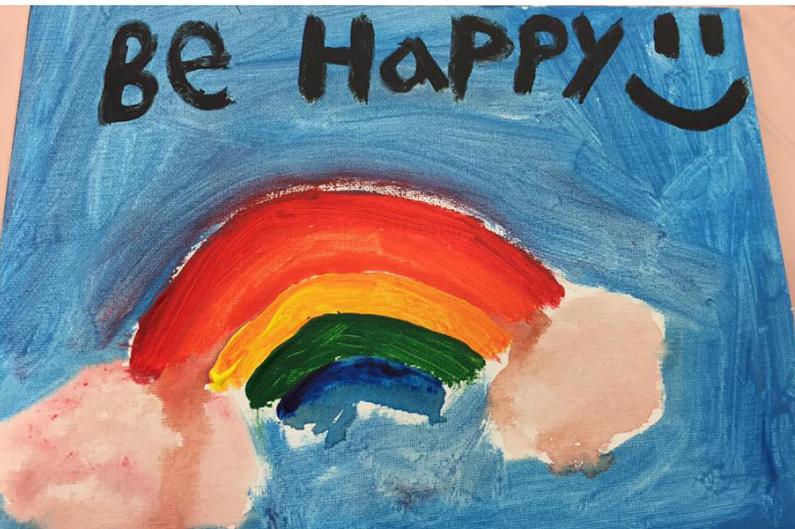


<i>Parsha</i>	<i>Themes</i>
Bereshit	New Beginnings
Noah	Faith, covenants, water
Lech-Lecha	Joys of parenthood, children
Vayera	Angels, new mothers, health
Chayei Sarah	Reconciliation, grandparents
Toledot	Family, parenting
Vayetze	Dreaming, angels, starting anew
Vayishlach	Questioning, finding home, reconciliation
Vayeshev	Mercy, understanding, dreams
Miketz	Interpretation, thinking ahead, forgiveness
Vayigash	Self-sacrifice, leaving home, reunions
Vayechi	Blessings, humility, hope, Israel
Shemot	Tolerance, courage, heroic women
Va'era	Determination, courage, brothers
Bo	Freedom, compassion, empathy
Beshalach	The unknown, nature, being a leader
Yitro	Rules, chances, treasures, nature
Mishpatim	Humankind, laws, acceptance, empathy
Teruma	Faith, sacrifice, Jewish community, giving back, creation
Tezaveh	Similar to Teruma, Pekudei, Vayakhel
Ki Tisa	Second chances
Vayakhel	Similar to Teruma, Tezaveh, Pekudei
Pekudei	Similar to Teruma, Tezaveh, Vayakhel
Vayikra	Sacrifices, responsibility, purification, honor system, keeping faith, prayer
Tzav	Similar to Vayikra
Shmini	Following the commandments, being holy
Tazria (often read w/ Metzora)	Childbirth, caring for the ill, life and death, purification, symbolization of water
Metzora (often read with Tazria)	Similar to Tazria
Acharei-Mot (often read with Kedoshim)	Sincerity, forgiveness, understanding the "heart" of the Torah

<i>Parsha</i>	<i>Themes</i>
Kedoshim (often read with Acharei-Mot)	Similar to Acharei-Mot
Emor	Shabbat, animals, preservation of memories
Behar (often read with Bechukotai)	Balance, health, freedom, poverty, fresh start, redemption, blessings and curses
Bechukotai (often read with Behar)	Similar to Behar
Bamidbar	Strength, organization, wandering/searching, family history, understanding parenting
Naso	Blessings, dedication, equality
Beha'alotcha	Believing in yourself, asking for help, resolving conflict with siblings, communication
Shlach	Courage, having faith, worthiness
Korach	Finding paths of peace, moral understandings
Chukat	Final journey, water and the rock, rules, celebrating accomplishments, giving back
Balak	Blessings instead of curses, angels, finding your own space
Pinchas	Women's rights, peace, the new moon, Jewish festivals
Matot (often read with Masei)	Common goals, accountability, loyalty and true feelings, choosing between personal gain and divine mission
Masei (often read with Matot)	Similar to Matot
Devarim	Understanding your history and the Jewish history, saying goodbye
V'etchanan	Being just and moral, the Shema and the Ve'ahavta, being responsible for your own actions
Ekev	Befriending strangers, hardships and blessings
Re'eh	Making choices, free will, Tzedakah
Shoftim	Preserving the environment, creating a new government
Ki Tetze	Humanity, marriage, Mitzvot, traditions, kindness to animals
Ki Tavo	The first fruits, spiritual purpose, belonging to an community
Nitzavim (often read with Va'Elch)	Repentance, traditions, ensuring Judaism's longevity, future generations
Va'Elch (often read with Nitzavim)	Similar to Nitzavim
Ha'azinu	Songs of praise, Israel, power of poetry and song, children
V'zot Habracha	Blessings, heritage remembering, saying goodbye

Mitzvah Project Journey

Your Mitzvah Project will have an incredible impact to your life, as well as the lives of others. This section is a reminder of how to keep your Mitzvah Project in your mind before, during, and after your Bnai Mitzvah.



Before your Bnai Mitzvah

Hopefully by now you have a project picked out. Whether you are volunteering or fundraising, you should keep these ideas in mind:

- Inform: Send a note in your invitation of the details of your Mitzvah Project letting all your guests know how you plan to start your Jewish adulthood.
- Take pictures: Each time you donate your time to your Mitzvah Project, snap a picture. These pictures make great centerpieces for your party!
- Keep a journal: Jot things down at any event you have. They could be used in your speech!
- Reach out: Talk to as many people in the organization as possible, workers and/or receivers. Share their stories to others to show how much of an impact the organization has.
- Go viral: Create a twitter or Instagram account for your Mitzvah Project. Post pictures, give updates, share experiences and use hashtags! This is a great way to spread the word and get more people involved in your project.

During your Bnai Mitzvah

When your Bnai Mitzvah finally arrives, do not forget that your Bnai Mitzvah Project is still going on! Here are a few ways to remind your guests the importance of giving back.

- Mention your project in your Dvar Torah. Take a couple of moments to express the importance of your Mitzvah Project, and how it will make a difference.
- Remind your guests that it's never too late to get involved.
- Incorporate your project into every aspect of your Bnai Mitzvah. Use your project's theme to create centerpieces and decorations.
- Donate some of your gifts. Let everyone know that you are giving a certain percentage of your gifts to your organization.

After your Bnai Mitzvah

Now that your Bnai Mitzvah is coming to an end, your project does not have to end here too.

- Write a reflection and share it with your organization or synagogue. Most organizations really like getting reflections from volunteers. They can take quotes from your reflection and use them in their newsletters, brochures, or on their website. Taking the time to reflect is also extremely beneficial on a personal level. Note whether you met your goal or whether you exceeded it. Express how this project impacted you. Assess how you can improve for next time.
- Send "Thank You" cards to the organization for allowing you to work with them and to your guests for participating with you. When you send a "Thank You" note to your guests for donating to your cause, whether it was time or money, it reminds them of how important it is to give back. Don't forget to include in your note what you achieved, i.e. how much time and/or how much money you donated.
- Keep volunteering! With some projects, you can make annual events with the help of your community. Anything you do to give back is always welcomed, no matter the organization. Go the extra mile. Make an impact!

Guided Timeline

+ *Two Years* +
Choose a date for your Bnai Mitzvah
Discuss different themes in your Parsha each week
+ Start thinking about what your passions +

+ *18 Months* +
Pick an organization you want to work with
Decide whether to volunteer, fundraise or both
+ Think about your party theme +

+ *12 Months* +
Contact chosen organization
Set a start day if volunteering
+ Set a realistic goal +

+ *9-6 Months* +
Make invitations and an insert for your Mitzvah project
Buy materials for centerpieces if making them
+ Discuss decorations and centerpieces +

+ *4-2 Months* +
Draft your D'var Torah and other speeches
Check in with the tutor to see what else needs to be finished
+ Mail invitations with inserts about your mitzv +

+ *6-3 Weeks* +
Polish up D'var Torah and write a "Thank You speech"
Keep up communication with your Mitzvah project organization
+ +

+ *2-1 Weeks* +
Have a dress rehearsal to prepare for your Bnai Mitzvah
Prepare welcome baskets for out of town guests,
+ include a reminder for your Mitzvah project +

+ *2-1 Days* +
Breathe
Relax
+ Enjoy +

Moving Forward

Now, you are on your way. Remember Areyvut is here to help you. With time, planning and organization, you can achieve your Mitzvah Project goal. Your family, your friends, your Rabbi, your school, the members of your congregation and community will support you. Enjoy reaching your goals and enjoy impacting someone's life.

