



Tzedakah and Becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah

- To become a Bar or Bat Mitzvah means becoming the son or daughter of the commandment. It is said that there is no other commandment higher than the mitzvah of tzedakah.
- Tzedakah is best transliterated as “sacred giving” and it comes from the Hebrew root for “Justice.”. Tzedakah is an obligation to give goods or money to those in need as part of the Jewish People’s covenant with God to make the world a more “just” place.
- A simcha (joyous occasion) in Jewish tradition is considered an opportunity to give to others in need. It is a time to express thankfulness for our blessings by sharing with those who are in need of blessings in their lives.

How to Involve the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Student in the Act of Tzedakah

- 1). Choosing which form of tzedakah to give.
It is wonderful if the items to be donated have meaning to the young person who is becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah, For example, children who love to read might want to donate books; children who love sports might want to donate sports equipment; children who feel strongly about the issue of hunger might want to donate food. In addition, to goods, students are encouraged to donate a portion of his/her gift money to a cause he/she would like to support.
- 2). Choosing where to donate the tzedakah
There are so many worthy places to donate tzedakah (many of which are listed in the Tzedakah Resource hand-out). Your family may have a particular connection to an organization or your child may have a cause that is of particular concern or interest. Explore the options together so that the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student is an active participant in the both planning and implementing the act of tzedakah. For example:
If your tzedakah involves purchasing and making centerpieces the student should be involved in shopping or collecting the items to be donated; filling and/or decorating the baskets; and/or writing an explanation of the donation to be included with the centerpiece.
If you are going to be delivering the items after the Bar/Bat Mitzvah you should plan to do this together.

Tzedakah at your celebration: Donations of Goods and Funds

Prepared by Naomi Eisenberger Executive Director of the Good People Fund.

When it comes to your party, there are so many things you can do for centerpieces.

1. Books, books, and books! An arrangement of kids' books, CDs, DVD's can then be given away to a deserving organization in your area.
2. Food, food, and food! An arrangement of canned and boxed foods in a basket can then be donated to a local pantry or shelter.
3. Want to go the traditional route with flowers or plants? Arrangements of individual plants and flowers can be broken up and distributed to the local hospital, shelter, or nursing home, or you can ask your rabbi or synagogue office to give you the names of congregants who might enjoy some. You can do this with balloons and *bimah* [pulpit] arrangements, too.
4. Speaking of *bimah* arrangements, don't forget that you can make attractive baskets of toys and stuffed animals and distribute them as well.
5. Are you a sports fanatic? Try collecting sports equipment and arrange it as centerpieces. After the party? Give it away to local shelters where kids may not have their own equipment.
6. Use your imagination! There are hundreds of ways to do this--just keep thinking mitzvahs!

Tzedakah Resources

How to Keep the Mitzvah in the Bar/Bat Mitzvah

Below are a variety of ideas on how you can make tzedakah part of your Bar/Bat Mitzvah. In addition, to the ideas below, please check out the following websites:
Mitzvah Heroes Fund http://www.mitzvahheroesfund.org/mitzvah_heroes_116.html to look at the 116 Practical Mitzvah Suggestions created by Tzedakah Hero Danny Siegel
The Good People Fund <http://www.goodpeoplefund.org/>

Ideas for Tzedakah Centerpieces

There are many ways to make beautiful and festive centerpieces that become items to donate after the bar/bat Mitzvah celebration. The following ideas were recorded by Temple Isaiah members in the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Resource Book found in the Temple library:

- We bought ‘‘teen’’ books and put them in see through fabric with balloons attached and donated them to hospitals and shelters.
- We used the hand knit scarves our daughter made for a homeless shelter
- We used menorahs which were donated to The Golda Meir House
- Centerpiece balls were donated to Lawrence Boys and Girls Club
- We represented our daughter’s mitzvah project for Good Sports with centerpieces made up of brightly colored soccer balls in a net as an anchor for balloons. The balls as well as the funds she raised were donated to Good Sports.
- We put art supplies for Horizons or Homeless Children in boxes that rested on Styrofoam squares covered in decorative paper.
- We made up winter gift baskets for Bristol lodge- wool hats, socks, gloves, toiletries, wrapped food, candies..
- We made up tzedakah certificates rolled into scrolls and tied with ribbon. Each certificate indicated where tzedakah had been donated in honor of the occasion. The scroll also included a write-up by the Bat Mitzvah explaining why she had chosen this organization.
- We planted a tree in Israel (through Jewish National Fund) in honor of each guest and we gave each guest a tree certificate.
- We had potted plants which were delivered to shut ins through the Home Care Program at Emerson Hospital.
- We made up baskets of food decorated with cellophane, ribbons and balloons and donated them to the Lexington Food Pantry.
- We made up baskets full of gently used childrens’ s books and teddy bears and decorated them with balloons to the Reach Out and Read Program.
- We used decorative wire baskets filled with school supplies and attached each basket to a bouquet of balloons. We sent the supplies to a child in Africa who is sponsored by our family to share with his classmates.

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Local Organizations to consider when donating goods:

Jewish Family Table

Contact: 781 693-5593, Waltham, MA

Baskets of non-perishable Kosher foods for Jewish Family Table which provides food monthly to over 100 needy Jewish families in the Boston area. If the family would prefer to donate money in advance of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, Family Table will provide donor cards.

The Reach out and Read Program

Contact: www.reachoutandread.org - (617) 629-8042

This organization promotes literacy in a variety of ways throughout Boston. They will accept new and very gently used books. Books are donated to Boston Medical Center, Children's Hospital as well as to various pediatric clinics around the Boston area.

The Boston Medical Center Grow Clinic

Contact: <http://www.bmc.org/pediatrics-growclinic/donate.htm>

This clinic treats about 180 low income malnourished infants and toddlers each year. Items needed: iron fortified milk and soy formula, diapers, baby food, multicultural board books and "I can read" books in English and Spanish.

Cradles to Crayons

**Contact: Sarah Basch sarah@cradlestocrayons.org; <http://cradlestocrayons.org/C2C/>
Accepts new and gently-used clothing, books, toys, baby items and school supplies for children ages 0-12. Local warehouse with opportunities to drop-off and sort goods.**

Left Over Food from your Celebration

Many caterers donate their leftovers to food banks and soup kitchens. You may want to make that one of your pre-requisites in choosing a caterer. In addition, caterers who already donate items can be helpful in getting your food baskets donated to appropriate places. To learn about the Good Samaritan Food

Donations of Funds

A family can choose one or several organizations that they would like to support in honor of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. In addition, to causes that may be close to your family's heart, Temple Isaiah encourages you to consider **Mazon: A Jewish Response To Hunger** <http://mazon.org/>. MAZON is a national nonprofit organization that allocates donations from the Jewish community to prevent and alleviate hunger among people of all faiths and backgrounds. They will provide table cards that you can use to let your guests know that you are sharing a portion of your celebration with those in need.

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Supporting A Needy Child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah

There are Jewish children both locally and internationally whose family cannot afford the cost of a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Your family can contribute to their Simchas (joyous occasion).

Twining involves making a donation that will help cover the costs of a Bar/Bat Mitzvah for a child in another country whose family is unable to do so. Your child sometimes can be in contact by mail with the recipient child/family.

Supporting a local family with a Mitzvah Basket for the Bima

Mitzvah to Mitzvah – “Mitzvah Basket”

Contact Sharon Levinson (781) 693-5610 slevinson@jfcsboston.org.

Display a Mitzvah Basket at your Simcha and help a needy child celebrate his or her Bar/Bat Mitzvah. With a contribution of \$180 to the Mitzvah-to Mitzvah Program, you may borrow one of the beautiful baskets available in different colors and styles, for the Bima, etc.

Sponsoring a Bar/Bat Mitzvah at our Sister Synagogue Or Hadash in Haifa.

Contact: Temple Isaiah, Israel Action Committee

Rabbi Edgar Nof at our sister congregation in Haifa, performs many bar and bat mitzvah every year for disadvantaged young people such as new immigrants, children from single parent or children living in poverty who otherwise could not afford the cost of the training and ceremony.

Twining with an Ethiopian Jewish child-North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry

http://www.nacoej.org/bar_batmitzvah.htm

This organization which supports Ethiopian Jews in Israel can match your child up with an Ethiopian child who is about to become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. The tzedakah will help pay for the celebration.

Remember Us: The Holocaust Bnai Mitzvah Project

This is a simple offer to participate in an act of memory- to remember one child who was lost in the holocaust before having a chance to be called to the Torah. Contact: The Holocaust Bnai Mitzvah Project remember@sonic.net or www.remember-us.org.

Prepared by Marilyn Stern, Director of Congregational Learning- Updated November 2010