

# The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Family Handbook

## Sutton Place Synagogue



Dear Families,

*Mazel Tov* on your upcoming *simcha!* This is a very exciting time in your life and your child's life.

Becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is an important stepping stone in your child's Jewish education journey. Becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a spiritual rite of passage. It is not a single event, but the first vital stage of a process in a child's ongoing religious education and lifelong engagement with and commitment to living as a Jew. Becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah in Jewish tradition indicates that a child is now recognized as a Jewish adult. This status carries with it certain privileges, obligations and responsibilities. While becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is attained automatically by virtue of age, its meaning becomes significant only through preparation and study.

The synagogue, the Jackson Religious School and the professional staff are always here for you to act as a resource throughout the Bar/Bat Mitzvah process. Please read this handbook and contact the synagogue if you have any questions.

We look forward to joining you on this journey and celebrating together as a community.

*Mazel Tov!*

### **Jewish Education at Sutton Place Synagogue**

Cultivating a love of Judaism, Jewish tradition, and Jewish learning is one of the highest values at Sutton Place Synagogue. There are a variety of ways that we as a community convey a love of learning, both inside and outside of the classroom. In preparation for becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah it is imperative that your family takes seriously the commitment to a solid Jewish education. There are a few different options to accomplish this goal both leading up to (and ideally) after completion of your Bar or Bat Mitzvah ceremony.

At the Jackson Religious School (JRS), Jewish education begins with the Kindergarten year, continues through Bar/Bat Mitzvah and on through N'siyah (our Teen programming). The program strives to encompass all relevant Jewish topics. It provides a basis for lifetime Jewish knowledge and participation. The curriculum and structure of the religious school instill in students a sense of pride in Judaism which will carry them through their high school and college years.

The requirements for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah program at JRS meets the standards of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. We require a minimum of five years of Jewish education throughout elementary school and into middle school. Your child must be enrolled in JRS or a Jewish day school through 7<sup>th</sup> grade. For complete Bar/Bat Mitzvah policy, please see Addendum in this handbook.

JRS, through its lay Religious School Committee and its professional staff, strives to assemble the finest quality staff of educators available, and to provide the most effective materials and methods for use in the classrooms.

We also know that a number of our families have chosen to enroll their children at local Jewish day schools. As stated in the Addendum, this fulfills our requirement as well.

A number of family education and adult education opportunities will be offered and we strongly encourage families to participate. Not only will it give you more access to our tradition, but you will create and strengthen bonds with other members of the SPS community. As you think about what it means to celebrate your child becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, we encourage you to heed what Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk said, "If you truly wish your children to study Torah, study it yourself in their presence. They will follow your example. Otherwise, they will not themselves study Torah but will simply instruct their children to do so."

### **How Bar/Bat Mitzvah Dates are Selected**

When your child is in fourth grade, you will be asked to attend a pre Bar/Bat Mitzvah meeting at the synagogue with the Rabbi and various synagogue staff. The purpose of this meeting is to review the entire Bar/Bat Mitzvah process at Sutton Place Synagogue and to give you the opportunity to ask the staff any questions you may have.

When your child is in *Kitah Dalet* (fourth grade), the Rabbi will schedule a meeting with your family to determine the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date for your child. Every effort is made to schedule the Bar/Bat Mitzvah to take place on or soon after your child's Hebrew thirteenth birthday in

relation to the synagogue calendar. Once your family schedules the date of your *simcha* with the Rabbi, the date is added to the master synagogue calendar and a confirmation letter is mailed to you.

### **Trope Classes**

During your child's *Kitah Vav* year in Religious School, students may learn *Torah* and *Haftorah* trope during their religious school classes. The Cantor will teach them trope together as a class and will expect the students to complete homework in order to solidify the learning of this trope. Learning trope is not only important to learn for their Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Learning *Torah* and *Haftorah* trope will be a lifelong skill that your child will use forever.

### **Bar/Bat Mitzvah Individual Tutoring**

Once the date of your *simcha* is chosen, the Director of Education and the school's supplemental Hebrew tutor will assess the Hebrew level and progress of your child. Some students may need to meet with the supplemental Hebrew tutor at least once per week during fourth and fifth grades in order to properly prepare them for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah process. Based on the tutor's assessment of your child's Hebrew, the Cantor will determine at what point your child will begin lessons for their Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Some students will begin meeting with the Cantor well over a year before the ceremony and some may require only a year. Every child is different and every child has a different learning style, so it is important to be patient as the Cantor, the supplemental Hebrew tutor, and the Director of Education determine the optimal preparation schedule for your child.

Individual tutoring for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah will take place at the synagogue during non-religious school hours. The goal of religious school is to provide your child with a Jewish education, and the goal of Bar/Bat mitzvah training is to prepare your child for their *simcha*. Meetings with the Cantor or other tutors are not to take place during religious school hours.

Each student will have the option to receive training in the following skills:

1. Learn both *Torah* and *Haftorah* trope.
2. Learn both the *Haftorah* and the *Maftir* portion of the *Torah*, as well as the *Torah* and *Haftorah* blessings. If time permits, students will also be given the option of reading additional *Torah* portions.
3. Learn to lead various parts of the Saturday morning service, as well as the Friday evening service, if desired.
4. Learn how to lead *Kiddush* and *Hamotzi*.
5. Learn how to put on Tallit and Tefillin and learn the appropriate b'rachot.

### **Preparation of D'var Torah**

This is a special opportunity to not only understand what your child is learning, but for you and your child to get to know the Rabbi and study together in a personalized setting. Your child will begin meeting with the Rabbi approximately four months before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. In preparation for the first meeting the Rabbi will ask you to do the following:

1. Read the entire Torah portion (not just what your child may read that day) in English. Please read it carefully. We recommend printing out a copy of the portion and underlining key ideas, circling words that your child doesn't understand, and coming up with 3 questions about the portion and 3 main ideas that resonated with your child that feel relevant to their life.
2. Set a meeting date with the Rabbi to present this "research."
3. During the meeting, the Rabbi will review the ideas with the student and begin to outline the d'var torah. The Rabbi will then suggest other commentaries that the student can consult to help them on their talk.
4. There will be a few more meetings after that to work on content and delivery of the d'var torah.

The goal of the d'var torah is for the student to not only better understand what he/she is learning but to become a teacher for the day. It is extremely gratifying to watch our students not only recite the ancient words of our tradition but to find relevance and share that meaning with the congregation.

### **Shabbat Involvement**

During your child's *Kitah Zayin* (7<sup>th</sup> grade) year, your child will no longer attend Shabbat School or Family Service because we expect them to be a regular in the Sanctuary service. The year before your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the Cantor will request that you and your child attend *Shabbat* morning services the day your child's *parsha* will be read. Attendance is important because it gives your child the opportunity to observe the service in its entirety. This is part of our overall vision for the Jewish education of our children, and we hope your family will take part in this unique and special opportunity.

Consistent attendance at Shabbat services at SPS for at least 6 months leading up to scheduled bar or bat mitzvah is required. We recognize that there will be weekends where you will be at other synagogues celebrating a Bar/Bat mitzvah for a friend or occasionally out of town, but please make it a priority that in the absence of that, that you come to Shabbat services on a consistent basis.

Additionally, during a number of the services, the Cantor will call upon your child to lead various parts of the services, in order to properly prepare them for their own *simcha*. The best way to prepare is by being familiar with the service. As the Rabbi is often heard saying, "please don't be a guest" at your own *simcha*.

### **Ushering during Shabbat Morning Services**

To develop a greater sense of community and feeling of "welcome" to our congregation, sometime prior to your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah date, SPS will arrange for your family to usher during at least one Shabbat Morning Service that includes a Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration. We ask that your entire immediate family attend that service.

Ushers are expected to:

- Arrive at 9 am in order to greet people with a friendly "Shabbat Shalom" as they arrive.

- Distribute our weekly Shabbat pamphlet and Transliteration guide to those who need it.
- Remind guests, as needed, that we do not allow any photography or private videography at any time inside the sanctuary.
- Remain standing in the back of the synagogue during the service and be alert for times and places where your assistance would be helpful or needed.
- Provide a kippah and a tallit where appropriate.
- Show people where the coatroom and/or restrooms are.

### **B'nei Mitzvah Family Education with Rabbi Ain**

Over the course of the year leading up to (or spanning the time of your child becoming a bar or bat mitzvah) your family will be required to participate in 5 family education sessions with all of the other families in your child's age group. These sessions, which will each last approximately 1 hour, will use the book *Putting God on the Guest List-For Kids*, by Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin, to explore the values, traditions, and ethics associated with becoming a bar or bat mitzvah. Through interactive dialogue and activities, you and your child will have a chance to explore with other families many issues confronting Jewish teens today.

### **The Rabbi's Award**

This is an optional activity and it gives the opportunity for students that so desire to engage more deeply in the study of and performance of *mitzvot* as a way of embracing the notion that they are now a child of the commandments. If the child completes the Rabbi's award by the time of their ceremony they will receive special recognition for doing so as well as a book that speaks to the importance of their accomplishments. There is a more detailed description of the Rabbi's Award found at the end of this booklet.

### **Preparation for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Ceremony**

Four months prior to your *simcha*, the Member Services Director will request that you submit a picture and a short paragraph about your child to be printed in the synagogue and *Shabbat* bulletins. The Member Services Director will contact you a few weeks prior to the ceremony regarding the honors and *aliyot* you may receive during your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah service.

The week of your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah, s/he will be invited to a Monday or Thursday morning *Torah* service in order to follow the public prayer rituals of a Jewish adult. These rituals may include being called to the *Torah*, wearing a *Tallit* and *Tefillin* and participation in the service. This is a nice time to invite siblings and grandparents to the service.

### **Invitations**

Our Saturday morning *Shabbat* service begins promptly at 9:15 am. We ask that you print this time on the invitations mailed to friends and family.

### **Do we require that the families invited everyone in that year's B'nei Mitzvah class?**

We do not require that families invite all of their child's classmates to their Bar or Bat Mitzvah. However, we strongly encourage that families at least include all of their child's religious school class in the Shabbat morning service. We spend a lot of time in the religious school stressing the importance of *kehillah*, or community, and its important the students see their friends and classmates celebrate this special milestone together, as a class.

### **Bar/Bat Mitzvah Fees**

1. A \$1000 fee for your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah training during the *Kitah Vav* and *Kitah Zayin* years.
2. A contribution to sponsor the congregational *Kiddush*. Logistics and specific amount of contribution will be determined by the child's family and our Member Services Director.
3. A contribution for the *bimah* flowers on the day of your ceremony, if you have not made your own private floral arrangements.

### **Kippot, Flowers, Family Pictures, Kiddush, and Other Costs**

Many families like to order personalized *kippot* to be placed outside of the sanctuary for their guests to use. The *kippot* are typically placed in a basket to the right of the entrance to the sanctuary. The *kippot* for your *simcha* must be dropped off at the synagogue prior to *Shabbat* on the weekend of your child's *simcha*.

To coordinate flowers for the *bimah*, please speak to our Member Services Director.

If you want your photographer to take family pictures in the sanctuary, please note that this must be done before or after *Shabbat*. Please contact the synagogue office to make an appointment. We will do our best to accommodate your request.

### **Sources for Tallit, Tefillin, Kippot**

While SPS has no relationship with these providers, SPS families have made purchases from these vendors:

Local storefronts for tallitot, personal kippot, and accessories:

- West Side Judaica: Broadway between 88<sup>th</sup>-89<sup>th</sup> Streets
- The Tallis Lady: Bergen County, NJ or online

Online stores:

- J. Levine Books and Judaica: [www.levinejudaica.com](http://www.levinejudaica.com) –all sorts of Judaica is available
- Kippah.com—good for bulk kippot
- Gabrieli Tallit (Jerusalem): <https://gabrielitallit.com>
- Masorti Tefillin (supports Conservative Judaism): <https://masorti.org/masorti-tefillin/> --Tefillin

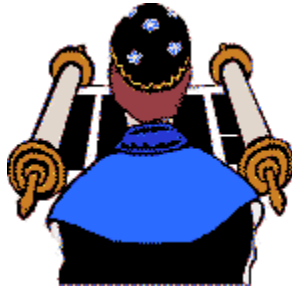
### **Synagogue Etiquette**

Please encourage your guests, especially teenagers, to dress and behave appropriately in the synagogue and to remain in the sanctuary as much as possible. Examples of attire that are inappropriate for the synagogue are bare shoulders and midriffs, or extremely short skirts, as well as blue jeans, sweat pants, tee shirts, shorts, or flip flops. Please turn off your cell phone before entering the synagogue and ask your guests to do the same. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah takes place in the context of a worship service. We require that any male that is participating in the service wear a *kippah* and a *tallit* and we welcome women who are participating to do the same. Anyone who ascends the *bimah* for an honor should cover their head.



## How to have an Aliyah to the Torah

Often times, there are family members or friends of the family that might not be familiar with how to take an aliyah. We hope this guide will be helpful.



It is an honor to be given an *aliyah* when the Torah is read in the synagogue, and it is important to fulfill this *mitzvah* with dignity, both out of respect for God and Torah, and out of respect for the congregation, on whose behalf you will be blessing the Torah. Hence it is important to be familiar with the ritual of the *aliyah* and practice reciting the blessing aloud prior to the occasion. Please keep in mind that there are variations in custom in different congregations, and it is appropriate to follow *minhag ha-makom* (the local custom).

### 1. Being called to the Torah

You will be told in advance which number your *aliyah* is. There are seven *aliyot* on Shabbat morning. At Sutton Place Synagogue, we follow the custom of giving the first *aliyah* to a Cohen or daughter of a Cohen, and the second to a Levite or daughter of a Levite. The *maftir aliyah* is given to the person who will chant the *Haftarah* and follows the seventh *aliyah* and the *Hatzi Kaddish*.

After the Cohen and Levite are called to the Torah, all other *aliyot* are generally covered by those with an “Israelite” status. If you do not know your status, please contact the Rabbi. The Israelite *aliyot* are called by number (e.g., “*ya’amode shlishi*” – the third *aliyah*). When you are called, you should go to the *Shulchan*, Torah reading table, using the shortest route possible. When you arrive at the *shulchan* the Gabbai will ask for your Hebrew name.

Hebrew names may be given in the form: [Your name] *ben/bat* [your father’s name] and [your mother’s name]. You may use the name of only one parent if you so choose. Say your name slowly and clearly.

### 2. Find the Place in the Torah

The reader will open the scroll and show you where s/he will begin reading. Take the *tzitzit* (corner fringes of the *tallit*) or a *siddur* and touch them to the word the reader points out and kiss the *tzitzit*. The reader will close the scroll and the gabbai may or may not cover the scroll.

### 3. Hold the *Etz Chayim*

When reciting the Torah, it is customary (and your privilege) to hold the bottom ends of the wooden rollers, one in each hand.

### 4. Recite the First Blessing

בְּרַכּוּ אֶת יְיָ הַמְּבַרֵךְ!  
בְּרוּךְ יְיָ הַמְּבַרֵךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בָּנוּ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים וְנָתַן לָנו אֶת תּוֹרָתוֹ.  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה.

**You say:**

**Barchu et Adonai ham'vorach.**

Congregation responds:

Baruch Adonai ham'vorach l'olam va'ed.

**You say:**

**Baruch Adonai ham'vorach l'olam va'ed.  
Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam,  
asher bachar banu mikol ha'amim v'natan lanu et torato.  
Baruch atah Adonai, notein hatorah.**

*Praise Adonai, the Exalted One!*

*Praise be the Adonai, The Exalted One, throughout all time!*

*Praised are You Adonai our God, who rules the universe, choosing us from among all peoples by giving us the Torah. Praised are You Adonai, who gives the Torah.*

### 5. The Reader Reads Torah

While the reader reads, you may be asked to hold one of the wooden rollers to keep the scroll open. You should follow along with the reader while he/she reads.

### 6. The Second Blessing

When the reader finishes reading the *aliyah* (the portion), s/he will point out the last word with the *yad* (pointer). Take the *tzitzit* in your hand, touch them to this word, and kiss them. Then recite this blessing:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָנוּ תּוֹרַת אֱמֶת,  
וַחַיֵּי עוֹלָם נָטַע בְּתוֹכֵנוּ.  
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה.

**Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam,  
asher natan lanu torat emet,  
v'chayay olam natah b'tocheinu.  
Baruch atah Adonai, notein hatorah.**

*Praised are You, Adonai our God, who rules the universe, giving us the Torah of truth, planting within us life eternal. Praised are You, Adonai, who gives the Torah.*

## **7. After the Blessings**

When you have completed the second blessing, move to the other side of the reader to make room for the next person called to the Torah. Having blessed the Torah, you are now honored with being invited to stay at the reading table for the next *aliyah*. When the next *aliyah* is completed, you may return to your seat. It is customary to take a longer route back to your seat than that which you took on going to the *shulchan*, signifying your reluctance at leaving the Torah.

## **8. After the Torah Reading: Hagbah and Gelilah**

After the *Maftir aliyah*, the *Gabai* will call for *Hagbah*, the person given the honor of lifting the Torah, and *Gelilah*, the person given the honor of dressing the Torah.

**HAGBAH:** For *Hagbah*, take hold of the lower part of the *Etz Chayim* and slide them downward off the *shulchan* until your wrists and forearms support its weight, using the edge of the table as a fulcrum. Lift the scroll as high as you can and open it as far as possible (the tradition is to open the Torah so that the congregation can see three columns) while maintaining control, then turn so that the written side of the Torah faces the congregation. Walk to one of the nearby chairs, turn around again and be seated.

**GELILAH:** After the person doing *hagbah* is seated, help to roll the scroll shut. Then the *gabbai* will hand you a tie with which to tie the Torah. When you have tied it, the *gabbai* will hand you the mantle with which to cover the Torah.

Once the Torah is at rest, you may return to your seat.

## ADDENDUM

### Bar/Bat Mitzvah Policy

*\*The policy found below was created by the 2005 – 2006 Religious School committee and was passed by Sutton Place Synagogue's Executive Committee.*

Religious school education is an opportunity for the children of the Sutton Place Synagogue to become part of a Jewish community and to prepare for their Bar or Bat Mitzvah. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah of a child is only a part of their Jewish education, not just the goal. The children of Sutton Place Synagogue are encouraged to continue their quest for Jewish learning and experience after their Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

This being said, Sutton Place Synagogue has created the following guidelines for religious education prior to a Bar or Bat Mitzvah in our synagogue.

Children are encouraged to attend the Jackson Religious School starting in Kindergarten and are required to attend the Religious School beginning in third grade. Transfer students from other religious schools are welcome to our Religious School however these new students will be evaluated by our Religious School Principal in order to determine proper class placement. Children need to fulfill the requirements of attendance to class twice a week, attendance to twice a month Junior Congregation and satisfactory performance in both. This will optimize the educational and community experience. Private tutoring of a child is not considered an acceptable alternative unless there are developmental or educational needs that require special attention. These circumstances must be approved by the Religious School Principal. The Sutton Place Synagogue, in turn, is committed to making the religious education for the children both meaningful and enjoyable. \*\*

If your child attends an accredited Jewish day school program, s/he does not need to enroll in our Religious School

Only children enrolled in an accredited Jewish day school program or our Religious School will be given a Saturday morning Bar or Bat Mitzvah date in the fourth grade.

Children are required to be enrolled in our Religious school or an accredited Jewish day school program through seventh grade.

The members of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Committee of Sutton Place Synagogue will be appointed to review all cases. Individuals or situations that do not meet the above criteria will be reviewed on a case by case basis. In the event of an exception, synagogue membership is required.

## BAR/BAT MITZVAH CEREMONY WORKSHEET

**\*Please complete this form and return to the Cantor at least one month prior to your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah.**

**Child's English name:**

**Child's Hebrew name:**

**Bar/Bat Mitzvah Date:**

**Parent 1 English name:**

**Parent 1 Hebrew name:**

**Parent 2 English name:**

**Parent 2 Hebrew name:**

The following is a list of potential honors and areas of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service in which you and your friends or family may participate. We would ask that all of these honors are fulfilled by people of the Jewish faith. If there are members of your family who are not Jewish, please speak to the Rabbi about how they might be included.

### **ARK OPENINGS:**

Ark Opening: beginning of *Torah* Service:

- 1.
- 2.

Ark Opening: end of *Torah* Service:

- 1.
- 2.

**ALİYOT:** The *Torah* reading is divided into seven parts called *aliyot* (from the singular word *aliyah*, meaning "to go up), plus one additional *aliyah*, known as the *maftir*, which is reserved for the bar or bat mitzvah student. An *aliyah* is the honor of being called to the *Torah* to recite the *Torah* blessings (in Hebrew) before and after each reading. The synagogue may limit *aliyot* at its discretion in order to accommodate congregants.

- 1. First *aliyah* (The first *aliyah* is usually designated for a *Cohen* or daughter of a *Cohen*):**
- 2. Second *aliyah*: (The second *aliyah* is usually designated for a *Levi* or daughter of a *Levi*):**
- 3. Third *aliyah*:**
- 4. Fourth *aliyah*:**

5. **Fifth *aliyah*:**
6. **Sixth *aliyah***
7. **Seventh *aliyah*: (traditionally recited by the Bar/Bat Mitzvah child's parents):**
8. **Maftir *aliyah*: reserved for the child**

**TORAH READINGS:** We encourage all of our congregants and families to learn how to read from the *Torah*. For the day of your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah, you may want to ask family members to learn a *Torah* portion. If you would like for friends or family to read from the *Torah*, please indicate who will be reading, their relationship to your family and which reading they will be learning:

1. **First *Torah* reading:**
2. **Second *Torah* Reading:**
3. **Third *Torah* Reading:**
4. **Fourth *Torah* Reading:**
5. **Fifth *Torah* Reading:**
6. **Sixth *Torah* reading:**
7. **Seventh *Torah* reading:**
8. **Maftir *Torah* reading: reserved for your child**

**TORAH PROCESSIONAL:** This is traditionally done by the Bar/Bat Mitzvah family.

#### **HAGBAH AND GELILAH**

The honor of lifting up the Torah is called *Hagbah*, and the honor of dressing the *Torah* is called *Gelilah*. Please indicate who will be doing these special honors:

1. ***Hagbah*:**
2. ***Geililah*:**

#### **PRAYER FOR OUR COUNTRY AND FOR ISRAEL**

These readings are in English and are done immediately after the Torah service.

1. Prayer for our Country:
2. Prayer for the State of Israel:

## THE RABBI'S AWARD

Dear Bar or Bat Mitzvah student:

You are about to embark on one of the most exciting projects a Jewish man or woman can undertake – the doing of mitzvot. For the Jew, mitzvot have always been the means of sanctifying life, making actions worthwhile, and doing what God expects.

A Bar or Bat Mitzvah is a person who, upon reaching the age of 13, demonstrates that he or she has mastered the knowledge required to be a responsible Jewish adult. But few Jewish boys or girls have an opportunity to show that they have mastered the art of performing mitzvot, or that they have put their learning to practice.

Our Rabbi's Award is designed with this purpose in mind. By fulfilling the requirements for this award, you will receive practice in the art of Jewish living, and recognition at your Bar or Bat Mitzvah service for your special voluntary achievement.

Here is what it entails:

1. Our list of mitzvot is divided into six categories. You are required to perform 13 mitzvot, at least one in each category. They should not be things that you have done before, or a continuation of mitzvot, no matter how worthwhile, that you are already performing.
2. Every mitzvah is based on one of the 613 Commandments found in the Torah, the source of all commandments. Each Mitzvah in our list has two references after it: (For example: "32; Ex. 20:9"). The reference is to the biblical verse where that mitzvah can be found. It is essential that you know the verse, and the content of the section that it is part of. Usually, the mitzvah you perform will be based on a general principle that the Torah teaches. You must be familiar with the passage in the Torah where the mitzvah is found, understand the principle, and show how each project you have chosen is derived from the text in the Torah.
3. Keep a record of the mitzvot you have performed in your Handbook
4. After each mitzvah is completed, write a description of your work. Describe the verse in the Torah from which the mitzvah is derived, the connection of your project with the biblical command, and its meaning to you.

Good luck on your venture into the thrilling world of mitzvot!

## **TO THE PARENT:**

You play a central role in the success of our Rabbi's Award program. Although it is your child who will be doing the work, you will have four important areas of responsibility.

Your first task is encouragement.

Your second task is guidance, helping your youngster to choose projects wisely and comprehend their essence and meaning. Frequent home discussions can make the process of selecting mitzvot easier, and help clarify difficult concepts.

Your third task is involvement. Many of the mitzvot must be performed at home, and your participation is crucial. Religious practices in home or synagogue are above all family experiences, and cannot be done alone. You will also be called upon at times to drive your son or daughter to places where mitzvot can be performed. Your willingness may make all the difference.

Your final task – enthusiasm. The quest for the Rabbi's Award is an exciting adventure in itself, for both candidate and parents, but an extra measure of interest on your part will make it an even more memorable experience.

After seeing the effect this program has had on your child, you may decide you want to personally grow in mitzvot along with your son or daughter. That would be a marvelous idea, and a step that we enthusiastically recommend. The doing of mitzvot is, obviously, not only for children. And nothing would do more to make your child's effort a more meaningful project.



Sutton Place Synagogue  
RABBI'S AWARD 13 MITZVOT

**A. Mitzvot in Your Home – Ethical (Choose 1-3 mitzvot)**

1. Assume a special new job or responsibility in your home that will be continued. (Ex. 20:9)  
*The Shabbat Commandment not only tells us to rest on Shabbat, but it also instructs us: "Six days shall you labor and do all your work." This is a commandment to spend the other six days of the week, excluding Shabbat, productively and creatively.*
2. Show special honor or consideration for your parents. (Ex. 20:12)
3. Assume a new and ongoing responsibility to free your home of a harmful or polluting practice (bottles, smoking, waste materials). (Ex. 23:2)  
*"You shall not follow after a multitude to do evil." Even if there are many people who allow an unhealthy practice to become common and to proliferate, the Torah instructs us not to follow their example, but to work to eradicate the practice.*
4. Care for your pet animal by taking on a new responsibility that will be continued. (Deut. 22:4, 6)  
*If a mother bird watches as her young or her eggs are taken from her, it causes her much grief. We are therefore commanded to treat her with kindness and let her go before taking them. Deut. 6:14 also tells us to treat a fallen donkey or ox with kindness. These verses apply to all animals that are in our care. They are to be treated with kindness and compassion.*
5. Correct a hazardous condition in your home. (Deut. 22:8)
6. Exercise care against negligence (work out a technique for safety at home, such as fire escape route). Submit a written plan. (Deut. 22:8)
7. Introduce themes and ideas of Jewish interest to be discussed by your family at the Sabbath eve meal on at least three occasions. (Deut. 6:7)

**B. Mitzvot in Your Home – Ritual (Choose 1-3 mitzvot)**

1. Follow the laws of kashrut (at home if your home is not yet kosher, outside if your home is kosher) (Lev. 11:2,-42)
2. Build a sukkah and use it. (Lev. 23:42)
3. Recite the motzi regularly before meals. (Deut. 8:10)  
*The Torah tells us that we should eat and be satisfied, but we must not do so without blessing and thanking God for the good land from which the food grew.*
4. Recite the grace after meals regularly on Shabbat. (Deut. 8:10)
5. Take on a major role in preparing for or leading a Passover Seder. (Ex. 12:18)
6. Remove and sell all leaven in your home before Passover. (Ex. 12:15)
7. Observe the Passover food restrictions during the entire festival. (Ex. 13:3, 7)

8. Learn and recite the Shabbat kiddush regularly on Friday night. (Ex. 20:8)
9. Learn and recite the Havdalah regularly at the end of Shabbat. (Ex. 20:8)
10. Light the candles regularly on Shabbat and Festivals. (Ex. 20:8)  
*The Torah contains no direct instructions to light candles on Shabbat, but it does command us to remind ourselves that Shabbat is to be made holy. The Rabbis tell us that by lighting candles at the start of Shabbat, we place before ourselves a constant glowing reminder of that holiness, as their glow, even in darkness, makes Shabbat a time of sacred joyfulness.*
11. Make a mezuzah and affix it on the doorpost of your home – include a kosher scroll. (Deut. 6:9)
12. Learn to bake challah and practice this skill at least 3 times (Num. 15:20)
13. Daven the morning services wearing tefillin at least 6 times. (Deut. 6:8)

**C. Mitzvot in Your Community – Jewish or Secular (4 hour minimum for each mitzvah)  
(Choose 1-3 mitzvot)**

1. Work on a project that helps produce better government or civic improvement. (Ex. 22:28)  
*We are to bring the best of our produce eagerly to support the community, and give to God (or His representatives) the service of our children. The Rabbis tell us that supporting our government/community is a way to do God's work.*
2. Work on the campaign of someone who you believe is a worthy political candidate. (Ex. 22:27)  
*We are not to revile or curse a leader of our people. This means that we should choose and support leaders who are worthy of our respect and whose goal is to bring about a better community and society.*
3. Work to preserve the natural beauty of your neighborhood or area. (Collect litter; beautify the park, etc.) (Deut. 20:19)
4. Work for a charitable Jewish cause. (Deut. 15:8)
5. Work for or help support a charitable cause. (Deut. 15:8)
6. Serve as a volunteer at the Hebrew Home for the Aged or similar organization serving older people. (Lev. 19:32)
7. Organize a clothing drive of at least 3 families and deliver the goods to a charitable institution. (Lev. 19:9)
8. Work to help inform the public about an important issue. (Ex. 23:13)
9. Do volunteer work in your community. (Ex. 22:24)
10. Tutor a student. (Lev. 19:17)  
*We are to reprove others when it is for their benefit, though not when it is hurtful to them. This often involves teaching them to make the greatest use of their abilities.*

**D. Mitzvot in Relations with People. (In this category, you must complete two items to get credit for one mitzvah.) (Choose 2-6 mitzvot)**

1. Demonstrate honesty when it would be to your advantage to lie. (Ex. 20:13)
2. Treat someone with respect who you feel is not highly thought of by most people. (Ex. 21:8)
3. Help someone to become a more religious or self-respecting Jew. (Ex. 21:8)  
*This mitzvah focuses specifically on the treatment of a Jewish maidservant, who is not permitted to lapse into a life of degradation or shame. A master must not sell her into servitude, but is obligated to ensure that her situation becomes one of self-respect. In the same way we are all obligated to do all we can to assist other Jews to become more self-respecting and self-reliant, as Jews and as people.*
4. Make amends to someone you have harmed. (Ex. 21:18, 19, 53, Ex. 21:33-4)  
*We are obliged to compensate anyone we have harmed, or injured in any way, not only to the extent of the injury, but also to make amends for the wrong we have done. The mitzvah is not only to pay for the cost of the injury, but also to make sure the person is healed, both physically and emotionally.*
5. Help someone without expecting or accepting any reward or payment. (Ex. 22:6)
6. Make a special effort to be helpful to someone you don't like. (Ex. 23:5)
7. Maintain your faith in someone's innocence though circumstantial evidence is against him. (Ex. 23:7, Lev. 19:15)
8. Admit voluntarily doing something wrong and make amends for it. (Lev. 4:13)
9. Put an end to malicious gossip about someone. (Lev. 19:16)
10. Convince someone, who is prejudiced against Israel, of the wrongness of his attitude. (Lev. 19:14)  
*We are to reprove others when it is for their benefit, though not when it is hurtful to them. This often involves teaching them to make the greatest use of their abilities.*
11. Come to the aid of someone who is being harmed. (Lev. 19:16)
12. Return a lost article to its owner at some inconvenience and without reward. (Deut. 22:1)
13. Treat a stranger (visitor) with special kindness and helpfulness. (Deut. 10:19, Deut. 24:17)
14. Pay a shiva call. ( Deut. 14:1, 536; Deut. 21:23)
15. Visit a friend(s) regularly who is sick, either at home or in the hospital. (Deut. 26:17, based on Gen. 18:1)

**E. Mitzvot in Your Synagogue (Choose 1-3 mitzvot)**

1. Help in building, repairing, or beautifying something in the synagogue for at least 4 hours. (Ex. 25:8)
2. Take a special role in the synagogue service (Deut. 31:12)
4. Attend weekday morning services, wearing tefillin at least 6 times (Deut. 6:8)
5. Learn to blow the shofar. Blow the shofar for the Hazzan to apply to sound it at one of the High Holy Day services at the synagogue. (Lev. 25:9)
6. Attend Festival services (not Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur) on a day when it requires your staying out of school. (438; Deut. 12:6)
7. Buy a lulav and etrog and use it at services on Sukkot. (Lev. 23:40)
8. Help out in synagogue for at least 4 hours. (Deut. 18:4)  
*In ancient times, the priests were the representatives of God within the Jewish community. The Israelites were obligated to give them the best of their produce and their flocks to support their ability to serve. In modern times, the synagogue plays that role, so it is a mitzvah to support it both financially and with our labor.*
9. Organize and direct a special project as a member of Kadima. (Ex. 22:28)  
*We are to dedicate our first-born children (and all our children, for that matter) to God's service, but even if we have no children of our own, even if we are their peer, it is a mitzvah to do all we can to make it easier for young people to be more dedicated to God and Judaism.*
10. Work on a synagogue sponsored program (for at least 4 hours), such as Mitzvah Day, Sukkot in April, Men's Club Clean-up Day. (Levit. 19:10)

**F. Personal Study Mitzvot. (Choose 1-3 mitzvot)**

1. Set aside a regular and fixed time for the study of some Jewish subject (outside of Hebrew School and Bar/Bat Mitzvah lessons.) (Deut. 6:7)
2. Read at least 2 new books of Jewish interest. Write a one-page summary for each book and explain whether you would recommend it. (Deut. 6:7)
3. Learn the meaning and origin of three different Jewish rituals that you practice in the home. Describe them in writing. (Deut. 31:12, 613; Deut. 31:19)  
*According to Deuteronomy 31:12, all Jews, young and old, are to assemble periodically to learn the meaning of the rituals they practice in their daily lives.*
4. Make a tallit, including the tying of the fringes and learn their significance. (Num. 15:38-39)
5. Learn the meaning of five Shabbat restrictions and practice them strictly for a month. (Ex. 20:10)
6. Go on, or plan a trip to Israel for the future, studying about the most important places to visit there. Describe five sites you have seen or will see and their significance in a two page narrative report. (Deut. 16:16)

# WORKSHEETS FOR MITZVOT

1. Category \_\_\_\_\_ Mitzvah Title \_\_\_\_\_

Torah Source \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Description of project and its relationship to Torah Source:

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2. Category \_\_\_\_\_ Mitzvah Title \_\_\_\_\_

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7. Category \_\_\_\_\_ Mitzvah Title \_\_\_\_\_

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11. Category \_\_\_\_\_ Mitzvah Title \_\_\_\_\_

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12. Category \_\_\_\_\_ Mitzvah Title \_\_\_\_\_

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13. Category \_\_\_\_\_ Mitzvah Title \_\_\_\_\_

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## Record of Proposed Mitzvot

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**Record of Mitzvot Completed**

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Name of Counselor: \_\_\_\_\_

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