

How to Choose a Mitzvah Project for a Bar/Bat Mitzvah

"One should use one's face, hands, and feet to honor one's Creator" (Tosefta Brachot 4:1).

By Naomi Eisenberger

In recent years, many synagogues and families have begun asking bar/bat mitzvah candidates to do "tzedakah (social action) projects" as part of their bar/bat mitzvah preparations.

This requirement makes explicit to these teens the idea that the mitzvot (commandments) to which they will be obligated involve not only Jewish ritual but also social action. The following article, which offers pre-teens suggestions on how to select appropriate projects, is reprinted with permission from Ziv Tzedakah Fund, Inc.

How can we add that special ingredient of *tikkun olam*, or fixing the world, to our upcoming *simcha* (joyous event) so that many more people can benefit from our happiness and joy?



It's really easy to find that special idea, the one you will enjoy working on and the one that will give you a special glow when you complete your work. In the process, you will see how many other people's lives have been changed because you cared and you care.

Ask Yourself the Four Questions

Start by asking yourself a few questions.

We all know the traditional four questions recited at the Passover seder--*Ma nishtana haleila hazeh*....But here is a different set of four questions, as well as a Question We Need to Ask Before We Ask the Four Questions.

First, we must ask: What are the other person's (the person we want to help) needs?

Then, and only then, should we ask the Four Questions:

1. What am I good at?
2. What do I like to do?
3. What bothers me so much about what is wrong in the world that I get very angry and want to do whatever I can to change it?
4. Whom do I know?

And finally: Why not?

#1 may include: giving big hugs, playing soccer, baking chocolate chip cookies, talking on the phone for hours, being a computer whiz, or drawing or painting the most beautiful pictures.

#2 In order to answer what you like to do, you will have to think a little bit more. What activities give you the most pleasure? Can you sit and read for hours? Are you really excited about playing the guitar or keyboard?

#3 "What bothers you?" Are you tired of hearing that there are untold numbers of kids who go to bed hungry every night? Are you enraged when you think about what terrible things happened when the World Trade Center was attacked? Do you feel uncomfortable when you visit a nursing home and see so many people just sitting and staring into space? Now, turn what bothers you into tikkun olam and make a difference.

#4 The classic example of "Whom do I know?": After the World Trade Center attack on September 11, 2001, we saw unprecedented giving and helping from all parts of the country. Some people raised money by making American flag pins with safety pins and beads, others held bake sales--anything to raise funds to help the victims.

The late George Harrison of Beatles fame went one step further. He remembered how his own father, a firefighter in his native England, put his life on the line every time he went out to fight a fire and then used the "Whom Do I Know" principle to raise tens of millions of dollars for relief for fallen firefighters. How did he do it? He called all of his friends, the most famous rock stars we know, and brought them together for an incredible concert. The result? Millions of dollars for relief for the victims of the terror attacks.

Know someone who enjoys playing a musical instrument as much as you do and would like to join you in a concert at a local nursing home? Or maybe you have a relative who is a dentist and is willing to give you dental supplies that can be donated to a dental clinic in Jerusalem? Are you and your friends ace soccer players who could teach kids at a homeless shelter how to play?

There is no end to the answers to this question. You just need to think about it... and do it!

The additional question--"Why Not?"--is generally the easiest of all. Almost always the answer is, "There's no real reason why not. So, let's do it." Now, list your own answers, pick a piece of tikkun olam, and go do it.

This article can be found at:

http://www.myjewishlearning.com/life/Life_Events/BarBat_Mitzvah/Practical_Aspects/Mitzvah_Projects/How_to_Choose.shtml?p=0

For further information on wonderful Mitzvah Project ideas go to:

www.themitzvahbowl.com

<http://www.pinterest.com/mitzvahmarket/mitzvah-project-ideas/>

<http://www.goodpeoplefund.org/>