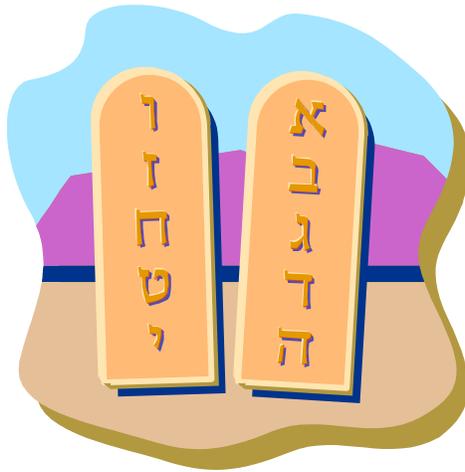


# *Eílu D'varím*

*The Thirteen Mitzvot Program*



*Shema Koleinu  
My Personal Cantor  
Cantor Debbi Ballard*

**Dear Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah Student,**

Welcome to **EILU DEVARIM: THE THIRTEEN MITZVOT PROGRAM!** As you prepare for your "big day," it's really important that you begin to participate in Jewish decision-making. There are certain responsibilities that go along with becoming a Jewish young adult. This program is designed to help you make Jewish decisions and take on those Jewish responsibilities. As the rabbis of old taught, "It's not enough to study Torah; you must strive to BE TORAH!" Here's what you need to know as you get started:

- ☆ Your family is going to be involved in this project together. So start by sitting down with your parents (yes, your parents) and read through this booklet **TOGETHER**.
- ☆ You will find 10 Mitzvah categories, from which you will choose 13 activities. You **MUST CHOOSE** to participate in **at least 1 activity per category**, then choose 3 additional activities, for a grand total of 13 mitzvot. (You may create your own mitzvot if you like. **HOWEVER**, they should be mitzvot that you would not ordinarily be doing!! Be sure to get an OK from the cantor before you do a mitzvah of your own creation.) **\*\*MITZVOT SHOULD BE CURRENT (STARTING NOW), NOT THINGS YOU'VE DONE IN THE PAST!**
- ☆ You need to be finished with your mitzvot by 1 month prior to your Bar/Bat Mitzvah. You should try to do at least 1 mitzvah each week.
- ☆ As you perform each of your chosen mitzvot, fill in a **MITZVAH DIARY** page, to be found towards the back of this booklet. Also, check off the appropriate category on the last page.
- ☆ Bring this booklet to your regular meeting with the cantor.
- ☆ You will be discussing one of these mitzvot at your Bar/Bat Mitzvah service. You will be expected to delve more deeply into this one special Mitzvah. Your speech or project related to that mitzvah must be completed one month before your ceremony.
- ☆ Bar/Bat Mitzvah rehearsals will take place only upon completion of all 13 mitzvot.

**Now, to Review: SIT TOGETHER WITH YOUR PARENTS, READ THE BOOKLET, CHOOSE MITZVOT, DO THEM, AND KEEP A DIARY. BRING THIS BOOKLET BACK TO CANTOR DEBBI FOR CHECKING. AND HAVE FUN! DOING MITZVOT BRINGS JOY TO YOU AND TO OTHERS!**

**HERE ARE THE TEN MAJOR MITZVAH CATEGORIES:**

- 1. KIBUD AV VA'EYM (Honor Your Mom and Dad)**
- 2. GEMILUT CHASADIM (Do Acts of Loving Kindness)**
- 3. Diligent Pursuit of Knowledge and Wisdom (NEED HEBREW)**
- 4. HACHNASAT ORCHIM (Welcome the Stranger)**
- 5. BIKUR CHOLIM (Visit the Sick)**
- 6. HACHNASAT KALLAH (Rejoice with Bride and Groom, and Other Significant Moments)**
- 7. L'VAYAT HAMAYT (Comfort the Bereaved)**
- 8. IYUN TEFILLAH (Pray with Sincerity)**
- 9. HAVA'AT SHALOM BEIN ADAM LACHAVERO (Make Peace Where There Is Strife)**
- 10. TALMUD TORAH K'NEGED KULAM (The Study of Leads to Them All)**

**1. KIBUD AV VA'EYM  
(HONOR YOUR MOM AND DAD --  
AND OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS, TOO)**

- a. Do something that you would not ordinarily do to be helpful to your parents.**
- b. Twice each month, call, write or visit with a grandparent, aunt, or uncle whom you do not ordinarily see.**
- c. Create a family history or genealogy.**
- d. Do something that you would not ordinarily do to be helpful to another member of your family.**
- e. Find a way to let your parents know that they are appreciated and loved.**
- f. Custom-make your own mitzvah for this category. Get cantor's approval first.**

## **2. GEMILUT CHASADIM (DO ACTS OF LOVING KINDNESS)**

- a. Participate with your family in the MAZON program by contributing 3% of the cost of your Bar/Bat Mitzvah party to MAZON, a Jewish organization which feeds the hungry. Check out your packet of information from the cantor.**
- b. Visit a retirement or nursing home Go several times to get to know some of the residents.**
- c. Contribute money to the charity of your choice. In Judaism, this is known as tzedakah, or "doing the right thing." The Torah called upon Jews to give a tenth of what they produced to what we would call "charity." This tenth was called a tithe. You and your family might consider a "simcha tithe" -- giving an amount to charity equal to a tenth of what you will spend on the Bar/Bat Mitzvah party. If you receive money as a Bar/Bat Mitzvah gift, you may personally want to contribute a percentage to tzedakah. Another idea: A lot of the money you receive you'll probably invest; if you spend some now on yourself, give an equal amount to tzedakah.**
- d. Break one bad habit that has a negative effect on others.**
- e. Volunteer some time at a social service agency. (e.g., soup kitchen, nursery school, hospital, home for the aged...just to mention a few!).**
- f. Clean out your drawers and closets and donate your old clothing to the needy.**
- g. Use books, baskets of food, or toys as centerpieces for the tables at your Bar/Bat Mitzvah meal or Friday evening oneg. Then, donate them to the appropriate organization of your choice. If you use flower centerpieces, donate them to a senior citizens' home or other worthwhile place.**
- h. Contact Cantor Debbi and volunteer to assist Shema Koleinu in a giving project.**
- i. Do something special for someone you know that *you would not ordinarily do*.**
- j. As invitations for your ceremony, use JNF certificates (those certificates you get when you buy trees for Israel).**
- k. Help a friend with school work in such a way as to ensure that s/he will be able to do it alone next time.**
- l. Custom-make your own mitzvah for this category. Get cantor's approval first.**

### **3. DILIGENT PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM**

- a. Watch the news every night for one week. Write 3 mini essays about something you learned – having to do with current events, world news, politics, local events, etc.**
- b. Ask one of your teachers if you can interview them. Find out what they love most about their job, and what their goal is in teaching children. Write about something you learned in that interview**
- c. List 3 things you have always wanted to learn about. Choose 1 and begin to research. Write 3 facts you did not previously know about your topic of interest.**
- d. Interview a senior citizen (grandparent, older relative, someone you know who is at least 65 years old). Ask them to tell you about their childhood. After hearing their story, write 10 things you have in your life today that they did not have.**
- e. Study 2 extra hours than you would have for your next test in your hardest subject. Devote these 2 hours to uninterrupted study time. Record your grade on that test. Evaluate if/how your grade changed as a result of that extra time invested.**
- i. Custom-make your own mitzvah for this category. Get cantor's approval first.**

**4. HACHNASAT ORCHIM  
(WELCOME THE STRANGER)**

- a. Invite others to a Shabbat or Holiday dinner in your home. Help prepare and serve the meal.**
- b. Build a sukkah and invite guests to a Sukkot meal in the Sukkah.**
- c. Invite a friend who would not ordinarily go to a Seder to yours.**
- d. Contribute time and/or money to a refugee resettlement organization. Contact the Jewish Family Service for references.**
- e. Invite a fellow student you don't know to have lunch with you. Ask them 3 questions about themselves, and tell him/her 3 things about you. Write a paragraph about your experience.**
- f. Custom-make your own mitzvah for this category. Get cantor's approval first.**

**5. BIKUR CHOLIM  
(VISIT THE SICK)**

- a. Visit a children's ward in a hospital and bring balloons or small gifts.**
- b. Entertain at a hospital.**
- c. Create some beautiful greeting cards for the rabbi or cantor to use when visiting the sick.**
- d. Cook meals for someone who is ill.**
- e. Clean house for someone who cannot do so for him or herself.**
- f. Help a classmate who is ill. Bring homework, library books, and messages between home and school.**
- g. Visit a home-bound or hospital-bound relative or friend.**
- h. Custom-make your own mitzvah for this category. Get cantor's approval first.**

**6. HACHNASAT KALLAH  
(REJOICE WITH BRIDE AND GROOM --  
AND OTHER SIGNIFICANT JEWISH MOMENTS)**

- a. Participate in the planning of a Brit Milah, a baby-naming ceremony, a wedding, a conversion or other significant Jewish moment.**
- b. Attend one of the above and write up your reactions to it.**
- c. Help check coats, move chairs, serve food, etc., at a Jewish life cycle event.**
- d. Interview/video your parents and/or grandparents to find out about their wedding. What kind of ceremony did they have? Did they do anything special in it?**
- e. Write a poem for use in someone else's special life cycle event.**
- f. Custom-make your own mitzvah for this category. Get cantor's approval first.**

**7. L'VAYAT HAMAYT  
(COMFORT THE BEREAVED)**

- a. Attend a minyan at a house of mourning.**
- b. Make a shivah call with your parents.**
- c. Cook a meal or some baked goods and deliver them to a family in mourning.**
- d. Attend a funeral.**
- e. Visit the graveside of a relative. Learn and write about that person's life.**
- f. Custom-make your own mitzvah for this category! Get cantor's approval first.**

**8. IYUN TEFILLAH  
(PRAY WITH SINCERITY)**

- a. Write a short essay on the meaning of your favorite prayer.**
- b. Practice communicating with God for 5 minutes each day for two weeks. End your session with the Shema.**
- c. Whisper the Shema and V'ahavta to yourself before you go to bed at night. Do this daily for two weeks.**
- d. Say the b'rachot (blessings) over bread in your home daily every time you eat for two weeks.**
- e. Create a special prayer or poem for your Bar/Bat Mitzvah service. It could be a prayer of thanksgiving for becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, or a prayer for peace, about Shabbat, about worship, or about being a Jew.**
- f. Custom-make your own mitzvah for this category. Get cantor's approval first.**

**9. HAVA'AT SHALOM BEIN ADAM LACHAVERO  
(MAKE PEACE WHERE THERE IS STRIFE)**

- a. Work on only speaking well of others and getting others to follow your example.**
- b. Help two enemies become friends.**
- c. Help someone who is in trouble.**
- d. Listen to a friend who is upset.**
- e. Become friendly with someone you didn't like before.**
- f. Restrain yourself from "answering back" in an argument.**
- g. Go out of your way to avoid a fight with your family.**
- h. Defend someone who is being teased or hurt.**
- i. Include someone in your "group" who is usually excluded.**
- j. Research, support, and/or join a peace-making organization, like  
Interns for Peace, Fellowship of Reconciliation, Jewish Peace  
Fellowship, Geshet, or Amnesty International.**
- k. Custom-make your own mitzvah for this category. Get cantor's approval first.**

**10. TALMUD TORAH K'NEGED KULAM  
(THE STUDY OR TORAH LEADS TO THEM ALL!)**

- a. Visit or prepare to visit Israel. Write about a place you did or will visit.**
- b. Study your entire Torah portion for your Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah and choose one major issue that interests you. Find one traditional commentator (ask for help!!) and learn what that commentator has to say about that issue.**
- c. Create a prayer, drawing, painting, collage, or song to illustrate your Torah portion.**
- d. Ask one of your teachers for an extra article or chapter on a topic you are studying in Religious School.**
- e. In order to begin developing your own Jewish library, add a Jewish book to your personal collection. Read it and write a paragraph explaining what you liked about it or learned from it. Religious School texts don't count!**
- f. Learn about a topic relating to Judaism and write 2-4 paragraphs about it.**
- g. Learn one new way of observing a Jewish holiday of your choice.**
- h. Custom-make your own mitzvah for this category. Get cantor's approval first.**

MITZVAH DIARY OF \_\_\_\_\_

MITZVAH NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

Category (please write it out) \_\_\_\_\_

Activity (please write exactly what you did) \_\_\_\_\_

1. Describe *why you performed* this mitzvah:

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2. Describe *your reactions* to doing this mitzvah:

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3. Describe this mitzvah's *effect on others*:

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4. Parent's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**CHECK LIST**

**As you complete a mitzvah in each category, check it off. For your additional mitzvot, add the repeated categories at the end and check them as you complete them.**

<u><b>Category</b></u>	<u><b>Date Completed</b></u>
<b>Kibud Av Va'Eym</b>	_____
<b>Gemilut Chasadim</b>	_____
<b>Diligent Pursuit of Knowledge and Wisdom</b>	_____
<b>Hachnasat Orchim</b>	_____
<b>Bikur Cholim</b>	_____
<b>Hachnasat Kallah</b>	_____
<b>L'vayat Hamayt</b>	_____
<b>Iyun Tefillah</b>	_____
<b>Hava'at Shalom</b>	_____
<b>Talmud Torah</b>	_____
_____	_____
<b>(fill in with category of your choice)</b>	
_____	_____
<b>(fill in)</b>	
_____	_____
<b>(fill in)</b>	