

HaDerech – The Path

Derech Mitzvah

HaDerech is designed for our United Hebrew students in 4th – 6th grade to enhance their connection to their Judaism as they prepare for their “coming of age” in Judaism.

The *Mitzvah* path is a supplementary part of our 6th grade curriculum to help our students understand, that as they turn 13, they become responsible and contributing members of our community. One of the ways to show their willingness to be contributing members of our community is to offer their hands and minds to help the communities in which they live and grow.

How does it work?

During the sixth grade year, participating students will perform 13 voluntary *mitzvot* from the lists below, representing the three Jewish pillars of *Torah*, *Avodah*, and *Gemilut Chasadim*. Students may choose from the options below or discuss with the rabbis or cantor other ideas they may have to perform the *mitzvah*.

Why choose to participate?

We hope that your child and your family will see this program as a way to enhance your connection to your Jewish values and understand that in performing these *mitzvot*, you are making a difference in our world. We encourage your family to participate with the student in as many of these *mitzvot* as possible.

United Hebrew Congregation recognizes this and will celebrate your fulfillment of the *Derech Mitzvah* – the Mitzvah Path, by placing an announcement of congratulations in *Ha Makor*, our monthly newsletter, in our Parent’s Bulletin, and each participant, upon completion, will receive a certificate of achievement on or around the time of their 13th birthday.

What is the tracking system?

Since this is a supplementary program, we will ask for students (and their families) to keep track of their own completion of the various *mitzvot*. United Hebrew will provide a form for students to use. At the end of the 6th grade year, or one month prior to one’s 13th birthday (whichever comes first), we will ask for the completed forms from participating students.

- All reports may be written (paper), oral (presented on video or in person), or visual (power point, visual or performance art).
- Submit materials to the *HaDerech* folder in the school office or send an email with the attached files to rshapiro@unitedhebrew.org. One or all of the clergy may read the reports and comment. Oral presentation can be scheduled with one of the clergy.

What are the categories and my options?

TORAH (study)

Complete FOUR:

- Make a commitment to yourself, your family, and your rabbis/cantor to continue in Jewish education (religious school and Chai School) through 12th grade, by completing a “Jewish Learning *Brit* (covenant) form, signed by the student and his/her parents.
- Add a Jewish book to your personal library. Read it and submit a report.
- Watch a movie or program of Jewish interest and submit a report.
- Subscribe to a Jewish magazine and submit a report on an article.
- Learn to play a piece of Jewish music and perform it.
- Create a piece of artwork inspired by a Torah portion and share it.
- Attend one Shabbat morning *Torah* study at United Hebrew (9:00-10:00 a.m.)
- Create a report on a famous Jewish person or an historical Jewish event.
- Use the internet to research a Jewish topic and submit a report
- Tape an interview with a grandparent or other senior about Jewish life when they were 13.
- Create your own *Torah*-related project with approval of a rabbi/cantor.

AVODAH (*worship and Jewish practice*)

Complete FOUR:

- Light and bless *Shabbat* candles at home for thirteen *Shabbat* evenings.
- Lead your family in *kiddush* for thirteen *Shabbat* evenings.
- Lead your family in *motzi* thirteen times before your dinner with members of your family.
- Recite the *Shma* before bed on thirteen nights.
- Attend one Saturday morning service with your family.
- Attend a Jewish lifecycle event (*brit*, baby naming, wedding, or funeral); submit a report.
- Attend a *Shabbat* service at another synagogue with your family; submit a report.
- Attend a service at a church or institution of a different religious faith; submit a report
- Write a creative prayer.
- Write your own poetic interpretation of one of the prayers you have learned.
(see the left side of *Mishkan T'filah* (our prayerbook) for examples)
- Buy a *mezuzah* and affix it to your bedroom door with the appropriate blessing.
- Assist during a “Kid”dush Club *Shabbat* service or activity.
- Have *Shabbat* dinner with United Hebrew families.
- Help build a *sukkah* at your home or a friend’s home; or help decorate the congregation’s *sukkah*.
- Create a work of art inspired by one of the prayers you have learned.
- Make/decorate a Jewish ritual object (e.g., *mezuzah*, *chanukiah*, *challah* cover, *kiddush* cup).
- Create your own *Avodah*-related project with approval of a rabbi/cantor.

GEMILUT CHASADIM (*acts of loving kindness*)

Complete FOUR:

- Make a contribution to one of the congregational funds in honor or in memory of someone.
- Donate a percentage of your allowance or birthday, holiday, or *bar/bat Mitzvah* gift money to the synagogue or other Jewish *tzedakah* organization (other than religious school *tzedakah* collection).
- Help a classmate who is ill by bringing homework or books between home and school, etc.
- Read the daily newspaper for a week and determine the issues affecting our community and the world; write to an elected official about your thoughts on one of these issues.
- Comfort a mourner by paying a *shivah* call or sending a card with a personal note.
- With your parents, select an on-going chore or task that will indicate your growing responsibility.
- Clean out your drawers and closets and donate usable clothing, toys, games, etc. to a charity of your choice.
- Help an older neighbor by running an errand or performing some other helpful chores.
- Adopt an elderly person at a local care facility and send cards and/or pay visits.
- Deliver a synagogue care package to UH’s homebound or nursing homebound seniors (see Rabbi Rosenberg for care packages and names).
- Participate in a *Gemilut Chasadim*-related UHJYG program (youth group).
- Participate in some other volunteer project at the synagogue such as *Mitzvah* Day
- Create your own *Gemilut Chasadim*-related project with approval of a rabbi/cantor.

Wait, you said there were 13... above I only had to choose 12 total

#13 – Submit a piece (written, oral, visual) about your feelings about turning 13 and becoming a responsible and contributing member of the Jewish community. What does it mean to you to be Jewish? What role does God play in your life? What are your hopes for Jewish involvement in the future?