



## **Bnai Mitzvah Family Program**

### **Session 1: *Back to the Future*- Choices and Responsibility**

#### **Family Discussion Guide**

Dear August 2019 - June 2020 B'nai Mitzvah Families,

I am so sorry that you couldn't join us for our b'nai mitzvah family meeting, but I am extremely grateful that you are taking the time to participate in the included family activity.

Please watch the short talk that I recorded for you all that you can view by [clicking here](#) and then, as a family, follow the activities that are explained in this packet.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to me ([jsimon@zedek.org](mailto:jsimon@zedek.org)) or [Molly Levy \(mlevy@zedek.org\)](#).

Also, once you've completed your family b'rit and tzitzit, please take a picture of your child with them and send them to us.

I look forward to continuing to explore the meaning of Bar/Bat Mitzvah with you all this coming year as we as a congregational family strive to make this moment and the time leading up to it as meaningful for you and your family as we can!

Shanah Tovah, wishing you all a happy and healthy New Year,

Rabbi Simon

### Supplies included in this package:

- Welcome Letter from Rabbi Simon
- Family Brit White Board
- Tzit Tzit Craft (4 strings, key ring)

**Before starting the activities in this guide, we encourage you to watch *Back to the Future* with your family. You can also watch a recap of the premise of the movie by [clicking here](#).**

### After you have seen the movie or recap, discuss as a family:

- This is a movie that will seem “old” to a twelve-year-old watching today, but for parents, this film was a part of many of our childhoods. Think about the experience of sharing this film as a family. What does it teach our children about our generation? Our parent’s generation?
- What are the pieces that, perhaps, don’t apply to our children, and what are the overarching themes that are timeless – that are as meaningful (or even more so) to our children than they were to us
- After watching the film, take some time with your kids to talk about the world in which you grew up. Start by letting them ask questions. Give your thoughts about what was different and what is the same.
- If you could write a letter to yourself in 1985, what would you want to tell yourself? Warn yourself? How does that translate in the lessons you try to give to your child(ren) today?
- Why do you think we might have suggested this film as we’re talking about Bar/Bat Mitzvah and passing the Torah from one generation to the next? (This is a conversation Rabbi Simon would love to be a part of if you’d like 😊)

### Activity 1:

#### Marty and Doc’s Choose your own Adventure

Think of the scene with Marty and the photograph. (in which Marty and his siblings start to disappear after his parents’ past changes).

Every single thing we do impacts our future and others’ future from that point forward. Some consequences may be bigger than others.

Not all are absolute right or wrong. Some are simply trying to do the best we can when there is no right or wrong.

The following scenarios are not ones for which we think there is a right answer. There are benefits to both options. Discuss them as a family and try to come up with an agreement of what you, as a family, would decide to do.

As a part of your discussion, try to think of the possible consequences, both positive and negative, of each choice, for you and all others who are involved.

Talk through the following scenarios as a family. Try to come to a 100% consensus and give reasons why you would choose your answer.

- **Scenario 1:** Marty has been asked to attend a pre-b'nai mitzvah family program for the synagogue. He's excited about the program, but his band is signed up to play in the middle school's Battle of the Bands at the same time.
  - Would your family choose to go to the program at the synagogue or the Battle of the Bands? Why?
  - What are the consequences of each choice? What are you giving up going to the synagogue program? What are you giving up going to the performance?
- **Scenario 2:** Doc has been invited to speak at the international time travelers and inventors' convention in Sweden. It's a huge honor, and the Nobel selection committee will all be there, but it's the same weekend as Marty's championship baseball game.
  - As a parent, is it difficult to balance family and outside responsibilities, like work?
  - What are the consequences of not going the conference? The baseball game?
  - What are the positive results of attending the conference? The baseball game?
- **Scenario 3:** Marty is invited to an acquaintance's Bat Mitzvah. The Bat Mitzvah is this coming weekend, and he RSVP'ed weeks earlier, but his best friend calls and invites him to his favorite band's concert in Orlando with backstage passes.
  - What are the consequences of either decision?
  - What if the "acquaintance" is your mom's boss's daughter? Does that change the answer in any way?

## **Activity 2:**

### **Family B'nai Mitzvah Brit**

*Supplies needed: Family Brit White Board*

Brit means "covenant," and there are a few famous ones in Jewish history. God showed Noah the rainbow as a covenant that the earth would never be destroyed with a flood again. God also make a brit with Jewish people that we will be God's chosen people, if we are partners with God. What makes a brit special is that both parties agree to give and get something in the relationship, they are partners in the decision.

As a family, you are going to make a bar or bat mitzvah brit. We have provided you with a white board to record some of family's agreements during this busy and exciting year.

Talk through each of the four categories (Judaism, School, Community, and Family) thinking about Rabbi Simon's description of Bar/Bat Mitzvah and discuss the following questions:

- What are concrete obligations/responsibilities that this "budding adult" can take on in each category?
- What will the positive consequences for meeting them be and what would be the consequences of not meeting them (both given and inherent)?
- How can your family support your bar or bat mitzvah during this process in each category?

There is a reason that we used a white board for this activity, we know that this is a busy time and sometimes things change. You may find that your family needs to change some of your agreements or add to them. Please think of this as a living document and revisit it as you need to. Is there anything on your board you would want to be permanent?

### **Activity 3:**

#### **Tzit Tzit Keychain Craft**

*Supplies needed: Embroidery floss (1 long, 3 shorter), key chain, tape*

Now that we have acknowledged that our actions have consequences, we look to our tradition for a way to remind us of that truth. Tzitzit, in their origin, are literally a reminder to stop when we are about to make a poor choice.

The explanation for why we wear Tzitzit can be found in the book of Numbers:

The LORD said to Moses,

Speak to the Israelite people and instruct them to make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments throughout the ages; let them attach a cord of blue to the fringe at each corner.

That shall be your fringe; look at it and recall all the commandments of the LORD and observe them, so that you do not follow your heart and eyes in your lustful urge.

Thus you shall be reminded to observe all My commandments and to be holy to your God.

(Numbers 15:37-40)

The tzitzit are the four fringes that hang from the corners of your tallit (prayer shawl). Tying your own tzitzit can be a meaningful mitzvah and can even be a way to make your tallit (prayer shawl) truly your own.

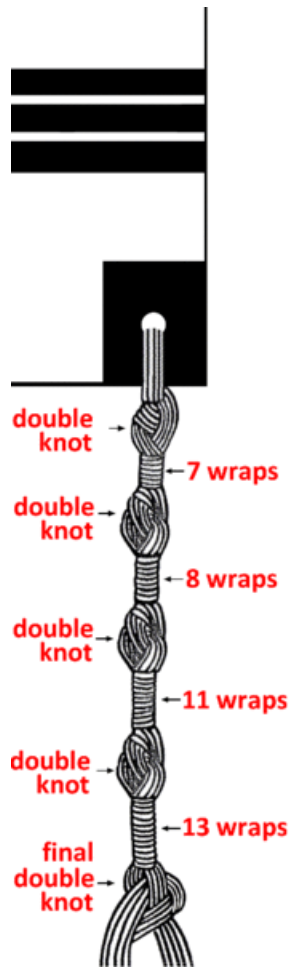
The tzitzit that you're making now, however, is not for a tallit. The tzitzit, according to the Torah, was not just for a tallit during prayer but rather something to wear all the time as a reminder of our obligation to perform the mitzvot – to do the right thing.

Tzitzit are a reminder of the 613 mitzvot we are commanded to keep. Whenever you might break a commandment you can look at the tzitzit and remember what you promised. As you tied this tzitzit key chain you can think of certain promises you want to make to yourself during this b'nai mitzvah year, maybe goals you have as you move into being a teenager. When you look at the tzitzit we hope it will remind you of these promises/ goals and encourage you to keep going.

*Instructions:*

1. Place four strings (three short and one long) through the hole of the key ring. Even the ends so that you have seven that are the same length, and one longer. Tape the key ring to a table so you have resistance.
2. Tie a double knot using four strings on each side.
3. Take the shamash (the longest string) and wrap it 7 times around the other 7 strings.
4. Tie a double knot.
5. Take the shamash and wrap it 8 times.
6. Tie a double knot.
7. Take the shamash and wrap it 11 times.
8. Tie a double knot.
9. Finally, take the shamash and wrap it 13 times.
10. Tie a final double knot.
11. You can either cut the ends of the tzitzit or leave them uneven.

Tzitzit diagram:



Thank you for participating in the B'nai Mitzvah Family Program! Please send any pictures (we would love to see what you are doing!), feedback or questions to [mlevy@zedek.org](mailto:mlevy@zedek.org).