



# Marvelous Mitzvot for Winter Break

## Kibbud Zekeinim – Honoring the Elderly

## כיבוד זקנים

"מִפְּנֵי שִׂיבָה תִּקְוֹם וְהִדַּרְתָּ פָנֶי זָקֵן..." ויקרא יט:לב

"Rise before the aged. Honor the elderly..." – Leviticus 19:32

- ☐ Call your local senior living center to arrange a visit—some will even allow you to bring a family pet with you.
- ☐ Is it snowing or bitter cold where you live? Help out an elderly neighbor by shoveling snow off their sidewalk or offering to walk their dog.
- ☐ Ask an older relative or friend to tell you about their memories of life when they were your age.

## Rosh Hodesh – New Month

## ראש חודש

"הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם רֹאשׁ חֳדָשִׁים רִאשׁוֹן הוּא לָכֶם לְחֹדְשֵׁי הַשָּׁנָה" שמות יב:ב

"This month shall mark for you the beginning of the months..." – Exodus 12:2



- ☐ Make an "Oreo cookie phases of the moon" chart. Simply open the cookies and use a spoon to scrape away parts of the frosting to leave the remaining white parts in the shapes of whole, crescent, gibbous, and new moons.

- ☐ Read *The Hanukkah Moon*, a book about a Rosh Hodesh celebration.

## Shabbat

## שבת

"זָכוֹר אֶת-יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ" שמות כ:ח

"Remember the Shabbat day to keep it holy" – Exodus 20:8

- ☐ Prepare your winter Shabbat meals by adapting a challah recipe with the addition of spices like cinnamon. [This one](#) from Maggie Glezer incorporates canned pumpkin.
- ☐ Read a special Shabbat story such as *The Shabbat Princess* by Amy Meltzer to enhance your celebration.
- ☐ Make beautiful paper flowers for this week's Shabbat table. For simple instructions, [click here](#).

## Tza'ar Ba'alei Hayim – Being Kind to Animals

## צער בעלי חיים

"כִּי-תִרְאֶה חֲמֹר שֹׁנֵאֵף רֶכֶץ תַּחַת מִשְׁאוֹ וְהִדַּלְתָּ מֵעָלָיו לֵאמֹר עָמוּ" שמות כג:ה

"When you see the donkey of your enemy crouching under its burden..., you must unload it with him." – Exodus 23:5

- ☐ Donate blankets and tarps to animal shelters to help keep animals warm while it is cold outside.
- ☐ Call your local animal shelter to find out how your family can volunteer this winter.
- ☐ Donate animal toys, pet food, and newspapers to a shelter. You can even make dog toys out of t-shirts or fleece blankets.



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## Hachnasat Orhim – Hospitality

## הכנסת אורחים

"וְאָקָחָהּ פֶּת־לֶחֶם וְסָעְדוּ לִבְכָּם..." בראשית יח:ה

"Let me fetch a morsel of bread that you may sustain yourselves..." – Genesis 18.5

- ☐ There are many, many biblical examples of hospitality. Be like the *avot* and *imahot* (forefathers and foremothers) by welcoming others this winter break. Host a festive meal for friends or family or just have people over for a pizza or ice cream party.
- ☐ Even if you are not hosting guests for a meal, you can practice this *middah* (Jewish value) by being a warm and welcoming person and by greeting others with hospitality.
- ☐ Create a welcome sign for your door.

## Kibud Av v'Em – Honoring Your Father and Mother

## כבוד אב ואם

"כִּבֹּד אֶת־אָבִיךָ וְאֶת־אִמְךָ..." שמות כ"ב

"Honor your father and mother..." – Exodus 20:12

- ☐ Help your parents around the house by doing chores inside your home or shoveling the walkway.
- ☐ Make sure to greet your parents. Ask them about their day.
- ☐ Offer to help prepare a meal for the family.

## Bal Tash'hit – Not Destroying

## בל תשחית

"לֹא־תִשְׁחִית אֶת־עֵצָה לְנִדָּח עָלֶיךָ גֵּרְזֵן כִּי מִמֶּנּוּ תֹאכַל וְאַתָּה לֹא תִכְרֹת..." דברים כ"יט

"...Do not destroy its trees... you may eat of them but you must not cut them down" – Deuteronomy 20:19

- ☐ Protect the Earth's resources by reusing and recycling as many household items as you can.
- ☐ Challenge your family to reduce their garbage output for the duration of winter break.
- ☐ Repurpose an old article of clothing that you don't wear anymore. For example, turn a sock into a puppet or a shirt into a tote bag.

## Talmud Torah – Jewish Study

## תלמוד תורה

"וְשִׁנַּנְתֶּם לְבָבְךָ..." דברים ו'ז

"You shall teach them diligently to your children..." – Deuteronomy 6:7

Even though you are on vacation from school, try to make time for Jewish learning.

- ☐ Learn the weekly *Parasha* (weekly Torah portion). Want to make it interactive? Discuss your favorite part of the *parasha* at your Shabbat table.
- ☐ Read a book with Jewish themes. Check your local library for picture books, historical fiction, holiday stories, and even mysteries. You can find a great list to get you started here: <http://sydneytaylorbookaward.blogspot.com>
- ☐ Enjoy a "Jewish Movie Night." Check out a classic like "The Chosen" or a more recent favorite like "Keeping Up with the Steins."
- ☐ Learn about the newest technological, cultural, environmental, medical contributions (and more!) coming out of Israel at [NoCamels.com](http://NoCamels.com).



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## V'ahavta L'rei'acha Kamocha – Loving One's Neighbor

## ואהבת לרעך כמוך

... "וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כָּמוֹךָ..." ויקרא יט:יח

"You shall love your neighbor as yourself" – Leviticus 19:18

- ☐ Winter break is a good time to go through your closets and find items that you can give to those in need. With your family, collect coats, mittens, boots, hats, gloves, or other items that are especially necessary for the needy during winter months.
- ☐ You could set up a hot chocolate stand and give all the proceeds to charitable organizations. Organize your friends, relatives, etc. to help out in the community. Click [here](#) to learn about kids who started their own non-profits.

## Shalom Bayit – Peace in the Home

## שלום בית

"כל המשים שלום בתוך ביתו, מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו משים שלום בישראל על כל אחד ואחד." אבות דרבי נתן כח:ג

"Those who bring peace in the home, it is as though they bring peace to all the people of Israel."

– Avot de Rabbi Natan 28:3

- ☐ A tidy home is a peaceful home (it's hard to relax in the midst of clutter). Spend some time cleaning up your room, or your desk.
- ☐ Try your best not to fight with your siblings for at least one day.
- ☐ Say yes to every parent request (this also works for honoring your parents!)
- ☐ Do one chore without being asked.
- ☐ Surprise someone by bringing them their favorite snack or other treat.

## Hiddur Mitzvah – Enhancing the Mitzvah

## הידור מצוה

..."זֶה אֵלִי וְאֶנְהוּ..." שמות טו:ב

"...This is my God, and I will glorify God..." -Shemot 15:2

Here are some things you can do to beautify your Jewish home:

- ☐ Set the table for Shabbat using your family's best tablecloth, plates and napkins. While you're at it, create place cards for everyone with their names.
- ☐ Polish the silver. Many families have silver kiddush cups or candle sticks. See what's in your house and offer to polish it up so it's ready for the next holiday. If you don't have silver polish, toothpaste works well too.
- ☐ Go retro and make a *tzedakah* box out of an old food container. Be more modern and make it out of loose parts. Decorate it so that you smile each time you add money.
- ☐ Many families hang a מִזְרָח (*mizrah*) in their homes to remind them to look east towards Israel. With your family, create a mizrah that represents what your family would like to remember about Israel. Check [out these examples](#) to get you started.



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## **Pikuah Nefesh – Protecting a Life**

## **פיקוח נפש**

"וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־חֻקֹּתַי וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטַי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אֹתָם הָאָדָם וְחָי בָּהֶם אֲנִי יְיָ" ויקרא יח:ה

"You shall keep my laws and rules, that a person shall do them and live by them. I am YHVH." -  
Leviticus 18:5

- ☐ While the opportunity to save a person's life does not appear frequently, you can be prepared when the opportunity does present itself. Spend time over winter break getting certified in CPR. Already know CPR? Take the time to get recertified.
- ☐ Organize a blood drive where people can give blood.
- ☐ At this time that you are spending more time with your family, make sure that the adults in your life are up to date on their flu shots and preventative medical screenings.

## **L'sameiach – Find Happiness**

## **לשמח**

"מִצְוָה גְּדוֹלָה לִהְיוֹת בְּשִׂמְחָה תָּמִיד" ליקוטי מוהרן ב:כד:א

"It is a great *mitzvah* to always be in a state of gladness." – Rabbi Nahman of Breslov

- ☐ Rabbi Nahman of Breslov encourages people to find their way through the difficult parts of life and find happiness. Help others to find this happiness. Some possible ways to do so include: Be a good listener, tell an appropriate joke, bring music in the lives of others, help them find holiness in even the most mundane aspects of life.

## **Bikur Holim – Visiting the Sick**

## **ביקור חולים**

"וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו יְיָ בְּאֵלֵי מִתְרָא וְהוּא יוֹשֵׁב פֶּתַח־הָאֵהָל כָּחֹם הַיּוֹם" בראשית יח:א

"YHVH appeared to [Avram] by the terebinths of Mamre, and he was sitting at the opening of this tent as the day grew hot." – Genesis 18:1

- ☐ Fulfilling this mitzvah could be as simple as texting or calling a sick friend or relative. To perform this mitzvah on a larger scale, contact your synagogue, which might have an organized program to visit people who are hospitalized or otherwise incapable of going out.

## **Keriat Shema – Reciting the Shema**

## **קריאת שמע**

"וְשִׁנַּנְתֶּם לְבָבְךָ וְדַבַּרְתָּ בָּם בְּשֹׁכְבְּךָ וּבְלִכְתְּךָ בְּדֶרֶךְ וּבְשֹׁכֶכְךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ" דברים ו:ז

"You shall teach [these words] to your children and you shall speak them... when you lie down and when you rise." – Deuteronomy 6:7

- ☐ If you do not do so already, try to say the *Shema* when you wake up in the morning, when you go to sleep at night, or both.



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## **Ma'aser – Tithing (giving 10% of one's earnings)**

**מעשר**

"וְלִבְנֵי לֵוִי הִנֵּה נֹתַתִּי כָּל-מַעְשֵׂר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל לְנַחֲלָה... " במדבר יח:כא

"And to the Levites, behold, I give all the *ma'aser* in Israel as property..." – Deuteronomy 6:7

- ❑ In the Torah, *ma'aser* is 10% of one's agricultural produce. Today, many people continue to give 10% of their earnings to charity. If you are working over break or if you receive an allowance, consider giving a small portion of your earnings to charity.