

## Triplets 4 A Cause

**A**nna, Julia, and Noah Greenblatt recently finished fifth grade at Rosenbaum Yeshiva in River Edge, New Jersey, but these enterprising triplets have already begun their *hesed* component for Julia and Anna's *B'not Mitzvah* this coming winter and Noah's *Bar Mitzvah* the following year. Though these siblings will not celebrate reaching *gil mitzvot* at the same time, they have found a perfect way to work together: the three 11-year-olds have set up their own website ([www.triplets4acause.com](http://www.triplets4acause.com)) to publicize *tzedakah* and *hesed* projects they have initiated. This is how they describe their effort:

We did not want to start a project just for our Bar and Bat Mitzvahs. We wanted to use this time as a bridge to perform *hesed* throughout our lives. While we believe in the importance of taking our own money to place in a *tzedakah* box, we also believe strongly in action and working to help others. We agreed that we would find many different causes and put a lot of effort into them. Whether the cause is large or small, the person being helped benefits. Even by doing the smallest thing, you can brighten someone's day. We know how good we feel when someone is kind to us, and we want to be able to spread that feeling. As Hillel stated in *Pirkei Avot*, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me, but if I am only for myself, what am I and if not now, when?" You have to be kind to everyone, because every person was created in the image of God (*b'tzelem elokim*). You can give *tzedakah* which is great, but if you inspire others to give as well, you can accomplish even more.

They have already planned and carried out a number of projects. Touched by horrific stories about genocide in Darfur, they prepared and hosted a "cookie and cocoa" sale, raising more than \$1,800 to send to the Tel Aviv Foundation, an organization that provides shelter, food, clothing, and other needs for young refugees from Darfur who live in Tel Aviv. For their second project, they worked in a Manhattan soup kitchen on Thanksgiving as a way of expressing their gratitude for their good fortune in being able to afford food and helping those who cannot. Describing their day in the soup kitchen, the triplets noted the importance of talking to the people who came to get food and learning a little about their lives.

This summer the Greenblatt triplets decided to raise money to buy a special bike for a 12-year-old Teaneck boy with cerebral palsy. By assembling and selling care packages for kids in camp and promoting the project on their website, they hope to raise even more than the cost of the bike. Any extra proceeds will go to the Friendship Circle of Bergen Country, New Jersey, which helps families of children with special needs.

Although incorporating *hesed* into the celebration process is not a new phenomenon, with new generations and new technologies come new possibilities. The Greenblatts are using the Internet to make their efforts as successful as possible; donations have come in from far afield, as have suggestions for new projects and appeals for worthy causes. The website also serves as an example for people of all ages to see what can be accomplished by a Bar or Bat Mitzvah or certainly by three of them together.

## HaTov Ve HaMeitiv: Good for Oneself and for Others

By Daniel Rothner

**A***mitzvah* or *hesed* project can provide young people celebrating their Bar or Bat Mitzvah with the perfect opportunity to reflect on who they are, who they want to be, and how they can best have an impact on the world. The self-reflective process of choosing, designing, and implementing a *mitzvah* project can serve to establish personal development goals and should be driven by the celebrants' individualized interests and the needs of the community that they are looking to enrich.

Areyvut, a nonprofit organization founded in 2002, offers Jewish day schools, congregational schools, synagogues, community centers, and families a variety of opportunities to empower their youth by creating programs that make core Jewish values real and meaningful to them. As the director of Areyvut, I work with *B'nei Mitzvah* celebrants and families to help them develop innovative and challenging projects that enhance their celebrations and ignite a lifelong commitment to the core Jewish values of *tzedakah*, *hesed*, and *tikkun olam*.

### Mitzvah projects are vitally important for both young men and women.

The idea that *hesed* projects are important for girls and not for boys is clearly misguided. *Mitzvah* projects are vitally important for both young men and women. Nevertheless in this article I focus on Bat Mitzvah projects with which Areyvut has been involved.

To be personally meaningful, a Bat Mitzvah *hesed* project should be driven by a hobby, concern, or passion that inspires the celebrant. While parents, families, and teachers can and should play a role in supporting the project, the Bat Mitzvah girl should begin the planning process with a brainstorming activity that identifies several activities that are important in her life, such as acting, art, cooking, movies, music, reading, shopping, or sports. She should then identify several causes that she feels passionate about; for example, animals, the environment, literacy, poverty, Israel, education, or children with special needs. Finally, she should consider how her interests, knowledge, and skills can be used to support one or more of the causes. In doing so, she will be able to elevate her everyday activities by employing them to help others.

Abby spent a long time deciding how to celebrate her Bat Mitzvah. She wanted to incorporate meaningful acts of *hesed* into the experience, to involve friends and family, to make