



Just Simchas Guide to Bar and Bat Mitzvah

Introduction

A *bar* or *bat mitzvah* is a milestone event marking the beginning of Jewish adulthood. In this ceremony, Jewish children take on the obligations and responsibilities of Jewish life. Our tradition teaches that while none of us is responsible for all the world's ills, we are still obligated to help in whatever way we can. As a *bar* or *bat mitzvah*, your child can participate in this tradition by creating a *simcha* which reflects the values of *tzedek* and *chesed*. *Just Simchas* enables your child to promote justice through action at his or her *simcha*.

Choose to make *tzedek* part of one of the most important moments in a young adult's life. The *Just Simchas* guide is designed to ensure that your *simcha* can be easily imbued with the Torah value of *tzedek*.

Catering and Food

Since food is a central part of any *simcha*, choosing a caterer can be one of the most important choices you make when planning your event. In addition to ensuring the caterer is kosher, we urge you to choose one that is *yosher* (just). Launched by Uri L'Tzedek, the [Tav HaYosher](#) is a local grassroots initiative that brings workers, restaurant owners and community members together to create just workplaces in kosher restaurants and catering services. In order to qualify for the Tav HaYosher, a restaurant must provide their workers with the right to **fair pay**, the right to **fair time**, and the right to a **safe work environment**. All criteria are derived strictly from US and Canadian state and local

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law. Choosing a Tav-certified caterer is an opportunity to harness some of the power and influence that you have as a kosher consumer to strengthen *tzedek* in our world and create a true *kiddush Hashem* (sanctification of God's name).

Appendix A is a list of caterers in the United States and Canada that have the Tav HaYosher. If your caterer is not on the list, encourage them to contact Uri L'Tzedek to sign up for certification. The Tav HaYosher is free and easy to obtain.

In addition, leftover food from *simchas* is frequently thrown out. An easy way to promote *tzedek* is by donating this food. A list of food banks that accept food donations can be found in **Appendix B**.

Location

There are many venue options for your *simcha*. You can use your influence as a consumer to select a location that treats its workers ethically. A central part of the Jewish notion of social justice is ensuring that vulnerable members of society are treated fairly. Today the most vulnerable in society are often those in low-skilled, low-paying jobs. Make *tzedek* a central part of your celebration by using these guidelines to choose your location.

- Hotel employers often take advantage of their workers by using unfair labor practices. If you are hosting your *simcha* in a hotel, choose a hotel whose workers are unionized to support labor protection. The New York Hotel Workers Union has a list [here](#) of unionized hotels.
- [Check](#) to see if the hotel is currently in the midst of labor disputes.
- If you are hosting your *simcha* in a non-hotel location, we encourage you to call and ask if their workers are unionized.
- You can also consider supporting your local Jewish community by hosting your *simcha* in a synagogue or local Jewish institution.

Apparel

There is an understandable amount of excitement when selecting the perfect outfit for a *simcha*. We all want to look wonderful at our celebrations and carefully choosing our outfit allows us to imbue our *simchas* with a special feeling of uniqueness and beauty. After your celebration is over, please consider **donating your outfit** to a *gemach* (Jewish donation agency), so others who may not be able to afford new outfits can also have clothing that will make them feel beautiful at their *simchas*. You might also consider **renting your outfit** or **buying it pre-worn**. This limits waste and benefits the environment.

A list of local *gemachs* is available in **Appendix C**.

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Kippot

Many people choose to distribute *kippot* as mementos of their *simcha*. Choose to leave them with a *kippah* made from fair trade materials such as those on Fairtradekippot.org or Fairtradejudaica.org.

Bar and Bat Mitzvah Projects

A traditional *bar* or *bat mitzvah* project focuses on *chesed* or *tzedek*. Here are some ideas for simple, fun activities and projects (to be done either at the celebration or before), which make a significant impact, both on the person participating and the world around us. These projects teach your child and his or her friends the importance of *tzedakah* and social justice.

- **Zichron Chana Baila** sends care packages to hospitalized children. Creating and decorating these care packages at a *bar* or *bat mitzvah* is a fun way to teach children about the importance of caring for others.
- **Action for Post-Soviet Jewry** assists Jewish communities in the former Soviet Union. Its main project is [Adopt-a-Bubbe](#), which sends food packages to impoverished elderly Jews living in Eastern Europe. Donations as part of *bar* and *bat mitzvah* projects can help fund these food deliveries. Post-Soviet Jewry also provides aid for students at Jewish day schools and Jewish orphanages, which is attached to a *bar/bat mitzvah* "twinning" program that links young Jews in America with their counterpart in Ukraine, usually a Jewish day school student. Guests at your *simcha* can write letters to their Ukrainian Jewish counterparts and possibly begin a pen pal exchange.
- AJWS partnered with an organization called **"The Girl Effect"** to support 16 organizations throughout Ethiopia, Kenya and India that create safe spaces for adolescent girls to grow and flourish, and become change-makers within their communities. Screen a "Girl Effect" movie at your daughter's *bat mitzvah* to raise money and awareness for this important program.
- Holding a donation drive for items that have a special significance to your child. For example, one *bar mitzvah* child collected gently used and new instruments that his music school helped him repair and donate to public schools that needed them in his area.
- Consider a resource like Allchesed.org, which has examples of organizations with which *bar*, and *bat mitzvahs* have teamed up in the past, including: Share Your Soles, The Make-A-Wish Foundation and Boys Town Jerusalem.
- [Leket Israel](#), an organization dedicated to ending hunger in Israel is another resource for *bnei mitzvah*. Many of their projects are specifically set up as *bar* or *bat mitzvah* projects.

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Decor

Decor can give a great deal of meaning and beauty to a *simcha*. Add even more meaning by choosing sustainable decorations.

Avoiding Conspicuous Consumption

Social justice can also be incorporated into your decorating plan by using items that can be donated after the event, or using centerpieces that will encourage awareness of and donations to worthy causes. These are great ways of ensuring that your *simcha* has a lasting effect on the wider community.

Centerpieces

Centerpieces are often thrown out at the end of *simchas*, creating unnecessary waste. Reduce waste with the following tips:

- Centerpieces can be made out of school supplies. These supplies can then be donated to a local school or an organization like Harlem Children's Zone (<http://www.hcz.org/home>), which tackles poverty and illiteracy among children in New York.
- Use potted plants instead of cut flowers and donate them to a hospital or an old age home. [Flower Power Foundation](#) accepts flower donations throughout New York and California.
- Jewish Family Services offers themed centerpieces for *simchas*. These centerpieces are for rent and can be made out of food or books. The proceeds from renting the centerpieces directly support the corresponding branch of Jewish Family Services' *tzedakah* services around the country.
- Directly engage with social justice by using beautifully decorated *tzedakah* boxes as centerpieces. Place the *tzedakah* box in the center of each table with a note about the charity to which you have chosen and invite guests to add their own contributions.
- Inspire social justice centered conversation by leaving a small card explaining your creative centerpiece and where it will be donated after the conclusion of the *simcha*. This can help encourage your friends and family to make similar arrangements at their celebrations, spreading your commitment to social justice to those you love most.

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Mechitzas

Consider adapting one of our centerpiece suggestions above for your *mechitza*. A row of trees can serve as an elegant division between men and women's sections during the dancing. You can plant them after the *simcha* to ensure that the social justice element of your celebration lives on.

Invitations

Invitations are one of the easiest and most effective places to limit your ecological impact. Many people turn to online invitations, such as [Paperless Post](#), which are more customizable (offering graphics, photographs, etc.), cheaper and more ecologically friendly. When using physical invitations, consider using recycled paper and soy-based ink. There are many online resources including a list of eco-friendly invitation vendors [here](#).

Gifts

Since a *simcha* reflects your Jewish values of *tzedek* and *chesed*, ask your guests to give gifts that promote these values. Use the following suggestions to make all parts of your *simcha* as socially responsible as possible.

- Ask for donations to a *tzedakah* instead of gifts. The *Tzedekah* should resonate with your child's interests and values. Use the same organization for the *bar/bat mitzva* project and your child's chosen *tzedakah* for additional synergy. Appendix E is a list of *Tzedakot* that work to create *tzedek* and transform our communities.
- Ask for gifts that are [fair trade](#) or otherwise ethically produced.
- [Kiva](#) is the world's first person-to-person micro-lending website. Encourage your guests to invest in **micro-finance** through an organization like [KIVA](#) or Red Heifer to help entrepreneurs in the developing world as a gift to you. A list of other micro-finance organizations can be found on the [Forbes](#) website.

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Appendix A: Caterers with the Tav HaYosher

Below you will find a list of Tav HaYosher certified caterers with a variety of culinary specialties, rates and atmospheres. Please remember to thank your caterer for having the Tav HaYosher when you engage them to plan the menu for your *simcha*!

CALIFORNIA

[12 Tribes](#) - JCC of San Francisco at 3200 California Street, San Francisco 94118 - 415.800.8594

[Bibi's Bakery & Cafe](#) - 8928 West Pico Blvd., LA, CA 90035, (310) 246-1788

[Catering by Brenda](#) - 1467 South Durange Avenue, LA, CA 90035, (310) 203-8365

[Oakland Kosher Foods](#) - 3419 Lakeshore Avenue, Oakland, CA 94610-2307, (510) 839-0177

[Pico Kosher Cafe](#) - 8944 W Pico Blvd., Los Angeles, 90035 CA, (310) 385-9592

ILLINOIS:

[Doubletree Hotel](#)-9599 Skokie Blvd, Skokie, IL-847-679-7000

[Kosher Gourmet](#)-3552 W. Dempster, Skokie, IL-847-679-0597

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MARYLAND:

[The Pearlstone Retreat Center](#) - 5425 Mt. Gilead Road, Reiserstown, MD - 410-429-4400

[Shalom Kosher Market](#) - 2307 University Blvd. W Wheaton, MD 20902 (301) 946-6500

[Signature Catering](#) - 240.290.0032

[KosherMart](#) - 4860 Boiling Brook Parkway Rockville, MD 20852 (301) 468.0400

[Moti's Grill](#) - 4860 Boiling Brook Parkway Rockville, MD 20852 301-468-0400

NEW JERSEY:

[Above and Beyond Catering](#) - 87 Overlook Drive, Woodcliff Lake, NJ 07677 - (201) 746-6161

[Dougie's BBQ](#) - 184 West Englewood Ave, Teaneck, NJ 07666 (201) 833-6000

[Hamsa](#) - 7 West Railroad Avenue Tenafly, NJ 07670-2018 (201) 871-6060

[Josh's Place](#) - 87 Overlook Drive, Woodcliff Lake, NJ 07677 - [212-234-3178](tel:212-234-3178)

NEW YORK:

MANHATTAN:

[Flavours Catering](#) - 3291 Broadway, New York, NY 10027-7909 - (201) 746-6161

[Hummus Place](#) - 109 Saint Mark's Place (between 1st Avenue and Avenue A) - 212.529.9198

[Hummus Place](#) - 2608 Broadway (between 98th and 99th Streets) - 212.222.1554

[Morrell Caterers](#) - 200 South Woods Road, Woodbury, NY 11797, (516) 364-2000

[Park East Kosher Butcher](#) - 1623 2nd Avenue Between 85th and 84th (212) 737-9800

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[Sacred Chow](#) – 227 Sullivan St (W 3 & Bleecker St) - 212.337.0863

[Simply Divine](#) - 334 Amsterdam Avenue (W. 76th Street), New York, New York 10023 (212) 541-7300

[Terri](#) - 64 W 23rd St. (Btw 5th & 6th Ave) (212) 647-8810

BRONX:

[Mr. Bagel Cafe & Catering](#) – 5672 Broadway, Bronx, NY 718-549-0408

[Riverdale Kosher Market](#) - 5683 Riverdale Ave - 718.884.2222

[Silverleaf Caterers](#) - 5672 Broadway, Bronx, NY 201-304-5559

QUEENS:

[A and A Gourmet](#) - 188-09 Union Turnpike - 718.468.0903

WESTHAMPTON BEACH:

[Beach Bakery Cafe](#) – 112 Main St - 631.288.6552

TEXAS

[Ecstatic Cuisine](#) - 5701 Springdale Road, Austin, TX 78723, (512) 919-5100

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Appendix B: Food Banks

Donating leftover food from your *simcha* prevents waste and fulfills the mitzvah to help feed those in need.

Food banks generally accept prepared catered food as long as:

1. It was kept refrigerated.
2. It never left the kitchen
3. It is properly packaged.
4. It is not more than a couple of days old.

The following is a list of food banks that accept food from catered celebrations. For a more detailed list of food banks please visit [Food Bank NYC](#) or [Feeding America](#).

NEW YORK

| Organization (click for guidelines) | Contact Person | Pick up minimum | Location |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| City Harvest (FC) (SH) | Jeanne Traugot 646-277-7833 | 50lbs | Picks up from five Boroughs |

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|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Food Patch, Inc. (FC) (SH) | Suzanne Johnson 914-923-1100 | 300lbs | 200 Clearbrook Road Elmsford, NY 10523 Hours: M-F 8 AM-4 PM |
| Foodlink, Inc. (FC) (SH) | John Baldanza 585-328-3380 x149 | 50lbs (arrange 5 days in advance) | 1999 Mt. Read Blvd Rochester, NY 14615 Hours: M-F 8:30 AM- 4:30 PM |
| Island Harvest (FC) | Ashley 631-873-4775 x217 | Varies (must arrange in advance) | Varies |
| Bikur Cholim of Staten Island | Bikur.cholim.si@gmail.com or: (718) 494-4343 | | Staten Island |

LOS ANGELES

| Organization | Contact | Location | Notes |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Charitable Distribution Facility | Tel: (213) 622-0902 | 1601 E. Olympic Blvd., Bay 100, Los Angeles, CA 90021 | |
| Extra Helpings- Los Angeles | Tel: (213) 234-3030, x131 Fax: | 1734 E. 41st Street, Los | |

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|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Regional FB | (213) 234-0943 | Angeles, CA 90058-1502 | |
| Los Angeles Regional Food Bank | Email or call (323) 234-3030 ext 161 | | |
| West Side Food Bank | Allison Griffith Phone:(310) 828-6016 X12 Fax:(310) 828-2646 | 1710 22nd St. Santa Monica, CA 90404 | Westside Food Bank accepts donations of non-perishable food and other items M-F 7am to 5pm. Call to arrange a different drop off time or if you have a perishable food donation. |

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Appendix C: Gemachs

After your celebration is over, please consider **donating your outfit** to a *gemach* (Jewish donation agency), so others who may not be able to afford new outfits can also have clothing that will make them feel beautiful at their *simchas*.

Please note that many *gemachim* choose to remain anonymous and have listed only phone numbers and not names. *Gemachim* often close or move when the organizer moves. We have done our best to ensure correct and current information. Please let us know if any of these numbers no longer work.

| Contact | Location | Notes |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Maternity | | |
| Miriam Feman (201) 837-8340 | Teaneck/ Bergenfield | Everyday wear, Shabbos clothing, and evening wear. Clothing must be in good condition and not require any repairs. |
| (718) 897-0984 | Far Rockaway/5 Towns | Weekday clothes |
| Bridal Gowns | | |
| (718) 494-1905 | Staten Island | Any wearable gowns accepted. Must be clean; do not need to be modest. |
| (718) 868-3997 or (718) 327-0385 | Far Rockaway/5 Towns | |
| Sheitels | | |
| Sharon Stern (917) 301-7728 | Queens | |

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| Shanis Sheitel Gemach 917-763-8028 | | Pickup or drop off available. Or send by postage paid envelope. Your receipt will be for the value of the wig and is a tax-deductible contribution to charity. |
| Glenn Shaitel Gemach Rivky (Berger) 917-561-7186 | Lakewood | |
| Human Hair Sheitel Gemach 718-849-3990 (call later) or 718-591-3607 (evenings) | Queens | Beautiful sheitels collected and given away |
| Clothing | | |
| American Friends of Yad Leah C/O Jessica Katz 362 South Parkway Clifton, NJ 07014 (973) 594-9118 | Sent to Israel | Yad Leah collects modest and contemporary clothing, infant through adult. Must be in excellent or like- new condition. |
| (516) 371-0996 | Sephardic Temple, Branch Blvd, Cedarhurst | Shabbos and Casual Clothing. Drop off in bins |
| (718) 385-5002 | Congregation Ohab Zedek Young Israel of Brighton Beach 293 Neptune Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11235 | Clothing and Other Items |
| Michael (718) 453-9525 | Project Machson (Met Council on Jewish Poverty) 168 39th Street, Brooklyn, NY | Call ahead. Drop off clothing in good condition in basement level. |
| Women/children clothes | | |
| Mrs. Bruchie Linzer, Mrs. Cynthia Ohana (410) 764-2509, (410) 764-3861 | 6101 Biltmore Avenue Baltimore, Maryland 21215 | |

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| Miscellaneous | | |
| B. Pollak (718) 436-4301 | N'Shei Ahavas Chesed Brooklyn 1680 47th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11204 | Maternity clothing, standard clothing , <i>kallah</i> gowns, floral centerpieces |
| Baby | | |
| Siggy Berger (201) 486-1492 | New Jersey | Cribs, carriages, exercise swings, high chairs, car seats. No stuffed animals, shoes or bathroom items (i.e., potty seats). |
| (516) 371-4585, (516) 569-1885, (516) 295-3772, or (718) 327-8322 | Far Rockaway/5 Towns | Brit Pillowcases & Outfits |
| Men/Boys | | |
| B. Yossi Deutsch (917) 903-6260 or Dovid Herzka (718) 249-7882 | Manhattan | Suits, ties, shirts, pants, and coats |
| (718) 327-0764 | Far Rockaway/5 Towns | Boys' wedding Outfits (0-8 Yrs) |
| Formal Wear | | |
| (516) 239-7222 | Far Rockaway/5 Towns | Sun 10-12, Tu 8-9:30 (Adults) |
| (718) 337-1345 | Far Rockaway/5 Towns | Call for Appt 8:45-10 AM/8-9 PM (Children Sz 2-16) |
| (917) 578-4027 | Far Rockaway/5 Towns | (Teens) |
| (516) 239-0284 | Far Rockaway/5 Towns | |
| Accessories | | |
| (718) 868-1896 | Far Rockaway/5 Towns | Wedding Shoes/Sneakers |
| (516) 371-9734 | Far Rockaway/5 Towns | Costume Jewelry for <i>simchas</i> |

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Appendix D: Resources for Conflict-Free Precious Metals

When purchasing an engagement or wedding ring it is important to consider where and how the precious metals and stones are mined. Mining is considered one of the most brutal industries both in terms of human rights abuses and ecological impact.

Jewish texts urge us, as buyers, to support a just system and not be complicit in corrupt ones. Ensuring that your jewelry is 'conflict free' means you are not supporting resource-financed conflict and you are actively supporting the local economies in the countries of origin.

Below is a list of four jewelers committed to producing beautiful and ethical engagement and wedding rings.

- [Fifi Bijoux](#) is a British luxury brand launched in 2006. Fifi Bijoux designs Ethical Engagement Rings, Ethical Wedding Rings and collections of Designer Ethical Jewelry.
- The CRED Foundation, a charity campaigning on Education, Poverty and Human Rights issues, created [Cred Jewelry](#) in 1996 to promote ethical and beautiful jewelry. CRED are the pioneering Fair trade and Fair mined retail jeweler in Europe. So not only are their pieces designed to look wonderful, but every sale helps build a new life for the communities that provide them with the raw materials.
- [MADE UK](#) is a fair-trade accessories brand that produces jewelry and leather goods in their Nairobi workshop in Kenya. First and foremost they are a fashion brand, but we are also committed to supporting and promoting trade in Africa.
- [Brilliant Earth](#) was founded in 2005. Their goal is to make jewelry as beautiful as it can be. They are passionate about cultivating a more ethical, transparent, and sustainable jewelry industry.

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Appendix E: Tzedakah

Your *simcha* should reflect your Jewish values of *tzedek* and *chesed*. There are many ways you can give *tzedakah* at your *simcha* (asking for donations to a *tzedakah* instead of gifts, using beautifully decorated *tzedakah* boxes as centerpieces etc.). Below is a list of organizations that work to create *tzedek* and transform our communities.

| Organization (Click to donate) | Description |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Uri L'Tzedek | Uri L'Tzedek is an Orthodox social justice organization guided by Torah values and dedicated to combating suffering and oppression. Through community based education, leadership development and action, Uri L'Tzedek creates discourse, inspires leaders, and empowers the Jewish community towards creating a more just world. |

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| Natan | Natan believes that educated, engaged, and entrepreneurial philanthropy can transform both givers and nonprofit organizations. Through unique educational events and experiences, and through a rigorous, hands-on grant making process, Natan is creating an influential, philanthropically minded community of young Jews dedicated to transforming the Jewish future. |
| Repair the World | Repair the World focuses on mobilizing Jews of all ages and backgrounds to serve with integrity and authenticity, ensuring that we leave the world a better place. They work to develop high-quality service opportunities with real impact and build an inspired Jewish community engaged in service. |
| UJA Federation of New York | The UJA enables Jews to overcome crises, cope with the struggles of everyday life, and achieve self-sufficiency. They help those living in poverty, the aging, Holocaust survivors, children and adults with disabilities and special needs, and the unemployment across the economic spectrum. UJA also provides access to crucial human services to all New Yorkers, whoever they are, and Jews everywhere. |
| Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) | The Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) represents 155 Jewish Federations & over 300 independent Jewish communities. The Federation movement protects and enhances the well-being of Jews worldwide through the values of <i>tikkun olam</i> (repairing the world), <i>tzedakah</i> (charity and social justice) and <i>Torah</i> (Jewish learning). They do this through a multitude of programs including the NWP (National Women's Philanthropy) and NextGenJews (Young Jewish Leaders). |
| American Jewish World Service (AJWS) | Inspired by Judaism's commitment to justice, American Jewish World Service works to realize human rights and end poverty in the developing world. They empower over 400 grassroots organizations to work in their own communities for economic and social justice, human dignity and sustainable growth and change. |
| Camp Simcha | Through programs that address the emotional, social, and financial needs of seriously ill children, their families, and communities, Chai Lifeline restores normalcy to family life, and better enables families to withstand the crises and challenges of serious pediatric illness. |
| Hazon | Hazon programs are multi-generational and give entry points for Jews of all backgrounds who are concerned about the environment and the world. They also serve a national and international population; members of every denomination and those who are unaffiliated; intergenerational from children |

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| | to seniors – including families and singles, with a particular focus on young adults interested in developing the skills to take on leadership roles in their communities and make a difference in the world. |
| Masbia | Masbia is a nonprofit soup kitchen network and food pantry, providing hot, nutritious meals daily for hundreds of New Yorkers in desperate need of food, and every week handing out hundreds of weekend take-home packages of groceries. In 2009, Masbia expanded from one kitchen and dining hall in Brooklyn’s Boro Park, to a four-kitchen network throughout Brooklyn and Queens. |
| Bend the Arc | Bend the Arc’s mission is to connect Jews who want to make a difference with the tools they need to do so, working collaboratively across lines of race and faith with people and communities throughout the United States to create economic opportunity and secure basic rights. |