

## **Introduction to Nature Israel's Bar/Bat Mitzvah Project for Israel's Endangered Species**

**Thank you for your interest in helping support Israel's endangered species.**

Many of the materials in this project come directly from the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI), Israel's oldest and largest environmental organization. SPNI provides all of the nature and environmental education for all schools in Israel, from Kindergarten through 12th grade. We at Nature Israel, the American friends of SPNI, are bringing the issue of *Endangered Species in Israel* out of the Israeli classroom into your hands, inviting American youth like you to help protect nature and wildlife in Israel.

### **Why should we care about endangered species and biodiversity?**

SPNI works to protect Israel's open spaces and rich biodiversity. Biodiversity keeps ecosystems healthy, helping provide food, water, medicine, pollination, pest control, clean soil, flood protection, and more. Israel sits at the crossroads of three continents and is part of just 2% of the planet classified as a biodiversity hotspot, making it especially important to protect. And of course, we care about animals and nature not just for what they give us, but because they are amazing and worth protecting for their own sake.

Your endangered species poster displays 20 species of endangered wildlife in Israel. The selected species represent classes of vertebrates (mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians). The species also represent different habitats (aquatic habitats, caves, cliffs, sands, and deserts). They were also selected to represent different threats of species extinction like loss and destruction of habitats and their fragmentation (due to construction, road building, and cultivation of farmland), spread of invasive/locally overabundant species that displace local species, water and soil pollution, poisoning by pesticides, wildlife-vehicle collisions and injury from wind turbines. These are just a few of Israel's endangered species, but it's a great place to start.

As part of your Tzedakah project, you'll choose one of five animals—Gazelle, Sea Turtle, Coral Reef, Otter, or Griffon Vulture. Then you can download your learning packet which will introduce you to your animal's characteristics, the existential threats they face, and how SPNI is helping them survive and thrive in the wild through several special programs. Each packet includes an activity you can use to teach others what you've learned.

Lastly, as a part of your project, you can raise funds through your own fundraising campaign page to support the SPNI program helping the animal you choose. Your efforts will directly help restore endangered species and protect biodiversity in Israel.

We're here to support you! Contact us at [bmitzvah@natureisrael.org](mailto:bmitzvah@natureisrael.org) to set up your fundraising campaign page, get your poster, and ask any questions. You can download the rest of the materials from our website at this link: [www.natureisrael.org/bmitzvah](http://www.natureisrael.org/bmitzvah).

Best of luck with your Bar/Bat Mitzvah, and thank you for making Nature Israel part of your Tzedakah Project. We hope it's meaningful and fun!