Congregation Beth Shalom of the Blue Hills
Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah
Bar / Bat Mitzvah

GUIDEBOOK
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Revised 8/1/19
Introduction

Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah/Bar/Bat Mitzvah

*Mazel Tov!* If you are reading this, then you and your family are looking forward to a wonderful and important time in your lives. As your child approaches the age of mitzvah responsibility, the Beth Shalom of the Blue Hills Family is pleased to share in your *simcha* (joy) and will do everything possible to make the religious and social celebration of this “milestone” event in your family’s life as inspiring and uncomplicated as possible. Some people refer to this ceremony as a Bar or Bat Mitzvah (Bar = male, Bat = female) which others may prefer to use the gender neutral term, Tekes Kabbat Mitzvah (The Ceremony for Accepting Mitzvot). The choice for which term to use is up to you. Let us know!

We hope that the information provided in this booklet will be helpful. We are ready to assist you in any way we can. If you have any questions, please ask!

Congregation Beth Shalom of the Blue Hills is an egalitarian, traditional oriented congregation that encourages participation and lots of singing. All Jewish men and women are full participants in our Shabbat services and can partake of all honors. In addition, we welcome visitors to our synagogue and encourage them to participate.

Our philosophy – the Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah is not a competition or test. Each budding adult is encouraged to do the best s/he/they can and as much as s/he/they is capable of doing without making comparisons to others. It is our goal that your child does as much as his/her/their own talents and capabilities permit. Our desired outcome is that for each student and family, the Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah is a joyous, Jewish learning experience that engenders wonderful, life-long memories, affirms a deep commitment to Jewish identity and expresses a deep sense of belonging to the Jewish People.

“I had studied Jewish history and prayers, learned to read Hebrew, and to chant Torah and Haftarah. I constantly complained about how horrible it was. But up on the bimah, I realized that every minute of study and practice had been worth it. Standing there, reading the stories my ancestors have been reading for thousands of years, I felt important and special. It was exciting to read the ancient language of my people in the sacred Torah.”

Reminiscence by Jennifer Greenberg.
Setting a Date

Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah dates are set according to the child’s Hebrew birth date and are given a date that falls after their 13th Hebrew birth date. You will be contacted by the Rabbi asking if you have any date preferences. The Rabbi will let you know which dates are and are not available. If you have a preference or any special circumstances that should be considered when deciding on a date, please speak with the Rabbi. Dates are assigned in consultation with the Spiritual Life & Ritual Committee approximately a year and a half ahead.

Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvahs are scheduled from September to the end of June with the exclusion of certain Jewish holidays and secular holiday weekends. For more information, please speak with the Rabbi or Chair of the Spiritual Life & Ritual Committee.

Invitations

Necessary information to include: your child’s name, Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah date, service starts at 9:30 A.M., name and address of synagogue: Congregation Beth Shalom of the Blue Hills, 18 Shoolman Way, Milton, MA 02186, statement re: appropriate dress and silencing of cell phones along with other customs (see page 5) and, if appropriate, overflow parking map and directions.

Recommended information: Bar/Bat Mitzvah’s Hebrew name, Hebrew date, Torah portion.

As a matter of sensitivity, we strongly encourage that all the other students in your child’s Religious School class be invited.

Educational Preparation and Religious Requirements:

1. In order to celebrate a Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah at Congregation Beth Shalom of the Blue Hills, each child is required to participate in an approved religious educational program. This can take the form of attendance at a Jewish Day School, the Rabbi Jerome Weistrop Religious School (or other acceptable Jewish Religious School) for at least the previous 4 consecutive years, having attended classes regularly and fulfilled the class requirements, or participated in an acceptable private tutoring arrangement due to special needs/circumstances. The commitment to attend Religious School through the end of 7th grade is required regardless of the Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah date.

2. In order for each Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah child to develop a sense of ease and confidence leading services, arrangements are to be made with the Rabbi for each student to attend 6 Shabbat morning services – 3 of which can be School Shabbat services. Students should arrive at regular Shabbat services by 9:25am so s/he/they can begin leading those parts of the service with which s/he/they is familiar.
3. No doubt, parent involvement and encouragement is essential. We recommend that parents attend services with the child whenever possible; this will familiarize all involved with the order of the service and what is involved with service honors.

4. Each Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah student is encouraged to complete a Mitzvah Project, under the supervision of the Education Director. Complete description of Mitzvah Project options are provided when tutoring begins.

5. Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah tutoring begins approximately 6 months before the date or 7 to 8 months if the student will be away for any length of time during the summer. The student meets once a week for half an hour with the tutor for a total of 25 lessons to learn how to lead sections of the Shabbat morning service, chant the Torah and Haftarah (Reading from the Prophets) along with the appropriate Brachot (blessings). In addition, starting approximately 2 months prior to the Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah date, the student will meet with the Rabbi to study his/her/their Parashah (Torah portion) in preparation for writing a D’var Torah (commentary or lesson s/he/they feels is important). Tutoring is arranged by contacting the Religious School office. If tutoring occurs after regular office hours or in the family home, one parent must remain on the premises during the lesson. Please Note: There is a $750.00 fee for Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutoring. Additional lessons can be arranged at a rate of $30/session.

6. How much will my child do at his/her/their Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah? Our educational approach is to make it possible for each child to flourish according to his/her/their talents and abilities. The more s/he/they can do, the more s/he/they will do. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak with the Rabbi or Education Director.

Parents: Financial and Congregational Obligations

Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah dates are assigned as long as families are current in their financial obligations to the Temple. If a family is experiencing unique circumstances, please call the office to set up a private and confidential meeting with the Congregation’s President. All financial obligations to the Temple must be up to date one month before the Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah. This includes rental fees, Temple membership dues, religious school payments and tutoring fees. Full payment of dues and fees of the current year are required for any Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah held after March 1.

Flowers - It is customary for the family to provide small flower center pieces that will grace the gallery and tables. The number of tables will depend on the number of people expected. Please remember that flowers, as well as anything else needed for the day, are to be brought into the Temple before the office closes at 2 PM on Friday.

Shabbat Kiddush or Luncheon – (light meal after services) - At the end of the service, it is our custom that the Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah family sponsor or host the entire congregation at the Kiddush. The Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah will say the blessings over the wine and the challah. The family has various ways of providing the congregational kiddush. Contact the office to discuss options, for a list of approved Kosher caterers/accommodators and to discuss procedures and fees for kiddush and facility rental.
Ushering - In order to experience and understand all that goes on at a Shabbat service where there is a Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah, we have found that it is extremely helpful for each family to serve as ushers at a Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah service that precedes their own. You will be contacted to set this up.

Temple Customs

Tzedakah / Giving to others in honor of your Simcha - When celebrating times of joy, it is a longstanding Jewish custom to keep in mind those in need. There are many ways to do this, such as making a donation to a worthy charity: a Food Bank, Mazon (a Jewish organization that fights world hunger – Mazon.org), Jewish Family & Children’s Services, Jewish National Fund (plant trees in honor of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah) to name a few. It is also possible to “partner” your child’s Bar/Bat Mitzvah with others, such as Israeli Jewish children with special needs. There are many options; the key is for the donation to go to an organization or group that is of special meaning to you and your family. Please speak to the Rabbi to get more information about options.

Honoring Family and Friends - During the months before the Bar/Bat mitzvah ceremony, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah and his/her family will be invited to the Temple to meet with the Rabbi to finalize all arrangements and to discuss the honors to be given to his/her family and guests. Throughout the service, there are many honors which can be assigned. (See Appendix D) Most honors can be given to Jewish men or women as long as they are over 13. The honor of leading the congregation in English readings can be given out to non-Jewish guests or relatives. Please speak to the Rabbi if you have any questions.

Brief Explanation of Service Honors:

Ascending and descending the Bimah (Service “platform”) – Facing the Ark, it is customary for all honorees to approach the bimah on the right side and depart on the left. An usher will always be nearby to help or answer any questions you may have. Be sure to shake hands with all who wish you Mazel Tov or Yasher Koach! (Well done! Literally, “Remain Strong”)

Opening and closing the Aron HaKodesh (Ark) consists of two people standing on either side of the Aron HaKodesh doors in order to slide them open for the removal of the Torah at the beginning of the Torah service, then closing those doors and participating in the Torah procession. When the procession around the sanctuary is completed, the 2 people who received this honor return to their seats. Note – the Ark doors are heavy especially on the left side.

Carrying the Torah involves approaching the Aron HaKodesh to hold the Torah (on one’s right shoulder) as the Hazzan (Cantor, Service Leader or Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah) chants the appropriate selections, leading the Torah procession around the Sanctuary and then placing the Torah on the Torah reading table. The one with this honor will then be directed to his/her/their seat. Note – Keep in mind that Torahs are heavy. This honor should only be given to those who can hold and walk with the Torah without difficulty.

Aliyot – (literally: “coming up” or “ascending both physical and spiritually to the Torah”) There are generally 7 aliyot during the Shabbat morning Torah reading in addition to the Mafir Aliyah—which goes to the Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah. The first is reserved for a Kohain (descendant of Temple priests) and the second for a Levi (a descendant from the Tribe of Levi).
The rest are reserved for Israelites. The usher will direct those getting *aliyot* up to the *bimah* and then, at the appropriate time, back to their seats. People getting this honor are called up by their Hebrew names: X ben/bat/m’beit (son of/daughter of/from the house of) parent/s’ Hebrew names. For parents who are not Jewish, their English name is used.

**Torah Reading** – Family and friends are encouraged to share in the honor of chanting from the *Torah*. Please speak to the Rabbi to make arrangements.

**Hagbah** – After the *Torah* has been read, the scroll is lifted above the head, with the columns of words facing the congregation. **This requires one with strong arms and back!**

**Gelilah** – Once the *Torah* has been lifted, the person honored with *Gelilah*, wrapping the *Torah*, comes forward and re-dresses the *Torah* by rolling it together and replacing the belt, cover and all other adornments. **Those unfamiliar here must come in for a practice session.**

**English Readings** - such as “A Prayer for our Country” or for “The State of Israel”.

**Carrying the Torah** at the conclusion of the Torah service consists of holding the *Torah* (on the right shoulder) while the Service Leader chants the appropriate prayers, carrying the *Torah* around the Sanctuary and returning the *Torah* to the *Aron HaKodesh*. The one with this honor will then be directed to his/her/their seat. **Note – Torahs are heavy. This honor should only be given to those who can hold and walk with the Torah without difficulty.**

**Opening and closing the Aron HaKodesh** consists of two people standing on either side of the *Aron HaKodesh* in order to slide open the Ark doors for the return of the *Torah* at the conclusion of the *Torah* service, remaining in front of the *Aron HaKodesh* while the appropriate prayers are chanted and then closing the doors. Those getting this honor will then be directed to their seats.

**Other Important Shabbat Customs & Policies**

To make your guests feel comfortable, as well as out of respect for our congregation, please share the following customs with those who might be unfamiliar with synagogue etiquette and conduct. For those who are unfamiliar with Shabbat services, it is suggested, especially for classmates and friends of the Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah, that they arrive at around 10:15. Please let them know that services will end at approximately 12:15.

**Smoking/ Live Flame** - are not permitted on Shabbat in the building or on Temple property.

**Money** – In keeping with the spiritual focus of Shabbat, no business dealings are to take place on Shabbat.

**Photography / Live-Streaming / Writing / Cell phones** – Photography, sign-in boards or the use of a cell phone (except in the case of an emergency) are not permitted in the synagogue during Shabbat services or during Kiddush. Speak to the Rabbi regarding photography and cell phones during private luncheons.

The service is automatically Live-Streamed. Contact the office to purchase a CD of the service.

If you would like to have pictures taken to commemorate this occasion, we will be more than happy to accommodate you during the week before the Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah date.

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Pictures that do not involve taking out the Torah or opening up the Ark do not need to have the Rabbi present. If the family does want the Ark to be opened and/or the Torah removed, the Rabbi’s presence is required. In this case, the Rabbi’s role in picture taking is to set up shots that parallel moments in the service. The family should coordinate with the Rabbi the time slot (approximately 20 minutes) when these shots will be taken and his presence necessary. Please notify the office and/or the Rabbi to make arrangements.

**Deliveries** – All deliveries for items associated with your Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah must arrive before the office closes on Friday at 2 PM. Please coordinate your deliveries with the office staff.

**Parking, Overflow Parking and Buses** – The Temple parking lot can accommodate a maximum of 40 cars. *As a matter of sensitivity, we have an agreement with our neighbors that there is NO TEMPLE RELATED PARKING ON LODGE OR MAITLAND STREETS.* Parking is permitted on both sides of Pleasant Street. When necessary, arrangements can be made with St. Elizabeth’s Church for a fee (two blocks away on Randolph Ave) or Cunningham/Collicot Schools for overflow parking. **Contact the office if you expect more than 25 cars for your guests.** If you plan to transport guests after services by a hired bus, please coordinate arrangements with the office.

**Appropriate Bimah Attire** - It is Congregation Beth Shalom of the Blue Hills’ custom that all those taking part in the service wear a kippah or other head covering while on the bimah. Jewish men, over the age of 13, are also required to wear a tallit while up on the bimah. The wearing of a tallit while on the bimah is an option for Jewish women.

*Kippah / Tallit* (prayershawl) - While a tallit is only worn by Jewish people over the age of 13, as a sign of respect for Jewish custom, we ask that all men cover their heads by wearing a kippah during services in the sanctuary. For others a head covering is optional. Contact the office if you would like to order special BBM kippot.

**Modesty** - We ask that all of our guests dress modestly: shirts or blouses that cover the shoulders. Long pants are appropriate as are dresses that are at least knee length.

**Candy** – It is not our synagogue’s custom to throw candy at a Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah. This is reserved for weddings!

**Children’s Behavior** – The family of the Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah is responsible for the conduct and behavior of the children who are your guests during the entire time they are on synagogue property. This expectation extends to all Temple spaces inside or outside the building. We have found that it is very helpful for those who are unfamiliar with Shabbat Services to include in the invitation an explanation of Temple customs and expectations. Babysitting during services can be arranged. Contact the office.

**Rabbi / Parents’ Talk** - After the final maftir aliyah is chanted by the Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah, the Rabbi and a representative of the congregation will say a few words and present gifts. If not already on the bimah, the parents will be asked to come up to the bimah for a special prayer with the child. (See Appendix B) Parents may also choose to share a few words of their own (optional). Should this be the case, please know that the Rabbi has been entrusted by the congregation with the responsibility to ensure that everything said or done on the bimah is appropriate. A copy of any “Parents’ Talk” is to be given to the Rabbi no later than the week prior to the Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah. Should the Rabbi have a concern about any aspect of the talk, he will inform you that certain parts are best shared at another time and place. If the Rabbi is unsure about the appropriateness of any aspect of the talk, he will contact the chair of our Spiritual Life & Ritual Committee who will weigh in to make a decision that will then be shared with the parents.
**The Day Itself**

Shabbat morning services begin at 9:30 AM. Please arrive by 9:20. Services end at approximately 12:15. Family and friends of the Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah will be shown to their seats by ushers. We strongly recommend that your child’s friends who may not be familiar with a traditional Shabbat morning service be encouraged to arrive at around 10:30.

**Luncheon**

We encourage our Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah families to have the luncheon for their guests in the synagogue. If you choose to do this, we will be more than happy to assist in planning. Contact the office for a list of approved Kosher Caterers. Go here for Use of Facility Forms [https://www.bethshalombluehills.org/spiritual-life/life-cycle-events/](https://www.bethshalombluehills.org/spiritual-life/life-cycle-events/)

**Music** – After the Shabbat Congregational Kiddush is over (approx. 1:15pm) live and/or electronic music are permitted at a private family event. For details about this option, contact the Rabbi.

**Staff Responsibilities and Contact Information**

Staff Responsibilities for all aspects of the Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah process:

**Rabbi Benjamin** – [RabbiFredBenjamin@gmail.com](mailto:RabbiFredBenjamin@gmail.com) / 617-698-3394

Coordinates the setting of the date with the Spiritual Life & Ritual Committee; works with the Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah to help him/her/they prepare the *D’var Torah*; co-supervises run-through, meets with family before the service; works with family to assign honors; helps with unique family circumstances.

**Cantor Lisa Kipen-Hershenson** – [EdDirector@BethShalomBlueHills.org](mailto:EdDirector@BethShalomBlueHills.org) / 617-698-3394

Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah tutor; helps coordinate dates for the student to lead learned parts of the Shabbat service before the Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah; facilitates selection of Mitzvah Project, co-supervises run-through the week before the Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah.

**Office Staff / Arlene Klotz, Harriet Pollard** - [office@BethShalomBlueHills.org](mailto:office@BethShalomBlueHills.org)

617-698-3394

Arranges for use of facility; coordinates deliveries, information regarding kosher caterers and accommodators, overflow parking and hired bus.

**B’hatzlacha! - Enjoy**

All of us at Congregation Beth Shalom of the Blue Hills wish you *hatzlacha* (much success) with your Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah preparations and celebration. We look forward to many more years of learning, growing and rejoicing with you.
APPENDIX A

Time Line

January of Kitah Gimel / 6th Grade:
- Speak with Rabbi to discuss Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah date preferences.
- Date is coordinated with Spiritual Life & Ritual Committee and confirmed by office.
- Contact office to discuss use of Social Hall and other facilities.

9 months prior to Date:
- Speak with Education Director to arrange for tutoring to begin.

6 – 8 months prior to date (depending on summer plans):
- Tutoring 30 minutes/week begins for 25 total sessions.
- Child and parent/s begin attending Shabbat morning services.
- As tutoring progresses, child leads Shabbat morning services 3 times.
- Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah fees due.

6 months prior to date:
- Call or email the office to set up a meeting with the Rabbi.
- Purchase a tallit for your child! Ordering kippot is optional

3 months prior to date:
- Rabbi will arrange meeting with your child to begin working on his/her/their D’var Torah.

2 months prior to date:
- Honor sheet is completed and returned to the Rabbi.
- Parent/s practice Torah blessings, Parent Blessing and Shehechiyanu prayer.
- All remaining fees to the Temple are paid in full.

4 weeks before date:
- D’var Torah is completed.

2 - 4 weeks before date:
- Education Director, in consultation with the Rabbi, sets “run-through” day and time.
- Contact the office and/or the Rabbi to set up a time for the use of sanctuary for picture taking.
- Meet with Rabbi with any final questions or concerns.
- Optional but encouraged - Parent/s write “talk” to their child.

Week before the Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah:
- “Run-through” for child and parent/s on the bimah with Education Director and Rabbi.
- Parent talk is shared with the Rabbi.
**APPENDIX B**

**Parent Blessings**

**For Daughters**

**Y'simaich Elohim k'sarah, rivka, rachel v'leah.**

**Yivareichayich Adonai v'yishmarayich.**

**Ya'er Adonai panav elayich v'yihunayich.**

**Yisah Adonai panav alayich vayasem lach shalom.**

May God make you like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah:
May the Holy One bless you and keep you.
May the Holy One shine light upon you and be gracious to you.
May the Holy One turn towards you and grant you peace.

**For Sons**

**Y'simaich Elohim k'ephraim v'achi'menashe.**

**Yivarechecha Adonai v'yishunayich.**

**Ya'er Adonai panav elecha v'yihunecha.**

**Yisa Adonai panav elecha vayasem lecha shalom.**

May God make you like Ephraim and Menashe:
May the Holy One bless you and keep you.
May the Holy One shine light upon you and be gracious to you.
May the Holy One turn towards you and grant you peace.

**Gender Neutral – Delete first sentence in Hebrew and English or say both.**

**Shehechiyanu**

**Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech Ha'olam, shehecheyanu v'kiy'manu v'higanu laz'man hazeh.**

Blessed are you, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe, who has given us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this moment.
Honor Sheet for Bar/Bat/Tekes Kabbalat Mitzvah- Shabbat Morning Service

Child’s name: English______________________ Hebrew ______________________

Date of Service:_________ Torah Portion ___________ Haftarah _____________

Honors (In Order of Service)

Open/Close Ark: (Parents) ____________________________________________

Carry Torah: English Name_________________________________________

Aliyot to the Torah for Jewish family or friends: **BBTKM family may assign up to 4 of these 7. Do not assign Parent/Child and Siblings consecutive Aliyot. Couples may come up together.**

Kohayn*: English Name:_______________________ Hebrew:________________________

Levi*: English Name: _________________________ Hebrew:________________________

Third: English Name:________________________ Hebrew:________________________

Fourth: English Name:________________________ Hebrew:________________________

Fifth: English Name:________________________ Hebrew:________________________

Sixth: English Name:_______________________ Hebrew:________________________

Seventh: English Name:_______________________ Hebrew:________________________

Maftir Child’s: Hebrew Name:_______________ ben/bat/m’beit____________________

Hagbah (lift Torah) English Name:________________________

Glee-lah (Wrap Torah – must be at least 13): English Name:______________________________

Holding Torah during chanting of Haftarah (optional): English Name:______________________________

Heb. or English Prayer for Israel (p.149): English Name:______________________________

English Prayer for Peace** (p.149): English Name:______________________________

Open/Close Ark (Parents): __________________________

Carry Torah back to Ark: English Name:_________________________________________

OTHER ISSUES / CONCERNS:

PLEASE RETURN THIS LIST TO RABBI AT LEAST 4 WEEKS BEFORE SERVICE!

* If you do not have a Kohayn or Levi an appropriate congregant will be given this honor.

** Person does not have to be Jewish for these English readings.

Questions? Contact Rabbi Benjamin at RabbiFredBenjamin@gmail.com or call 617-698-3394
APPENDIX D

Temple Floor Plan
First Floor

Second Floor