

Guide to  
Benei Mitzva Observance  
at  
Congregation Beth El–Keser Israel

ק"ק בית-אל--כתר-ישראל

Sixteenth Edition

85 Harrison Street  
New Haven CT 06515-1724  
[www.beki.org](http://www.beki.org)

5777-5778 • 2016-2018

See also  
[Appendices](#) to this Guide  
and  
[Guide to Shabbat Morning Services](#)  
[www.beki.org/guide-to-shabbat-morning-services](http://www.beki.org/guide-to-shabbat-morning-services)



# Guide to Benei Mitzva Observance at Congregation Beth El–Keser Israel

A Guide, Checklist and Resource Packet for Logistic Planning  
for a Youth Bar- or Bat-Mitzva Observance

Sixteenth Edition

Congregation Beth El–Keser Israel is a traditional egalitarian Conservative synagogue  
community affiliated with the [United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism](#)

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This booklet can be found as an Acrobat document at  
[www.beki.org/bmitzva.pdf](http://www.beki.org/bmitzva.pdf)  
(PDF: ~750K/~70 pages)

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# Foreword

To the Sixteenth Edition

July 2016

In September 1999, BEKI initiated a formal [Benei Mitzva Preparation Program](#). Students planning to celebrate becoming *benei mitzva* should register for the Program (“The Benei Mitzva Class”) 18 to 6 months before their celebration date. Please speak with the Rabbi Tilsen immediately if you are not certain as to when to register.

During the 2016–2017 5777 Academic Year, the Benei Mitzva Program will meet *mostly* on Wednesday afternoons from 5:00p to 6:15p. It will be taught by Rabbi Tilsen and Cantor Shoshana Lash along with a team of talented tutors.

As part of the Benei Mitzva Program, meetings are held each year with parents, BEKI officers and staff to discuss religious, educational, planning and logistic issues. Parents are strongly urged to attend these meetings in order to make their experience more meaningful and enjoyable. These meetings also serve as one important feedback vehicle to help us develop the Program to best meet the needs of our families.



**Benei Mitzva Program Class of 5760**

*Photo by Tsvi Benson-Tilsen*



**Nina Caledonia London Bender  
With parents Sharon & David  
March 2001**

*Photo by Wayne Greene 933-5366*

## CHECKLIST KEY:

- Required, normally done, normally included
- Optional items

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**Ben Zlotoff with father Ron Zlotoff &  
Rabbi Tilsen, June 2000**

*Photo by T & Y Photography (860) 344-9990*



**David Botwick-Ries  
April 2002**

*Photo by Sirota Rosenthal Productions  
(203) 281-5854*

## I. הקדמה INTRODUCTION by *Rabbi Jon-Jay Tilsen*

When a young Jew reaches the age of 12 or 13, she or he is considered for most purposes an adult under הלכה *halakha* (Jewish law), responsible to God and answerable to humanity for her or his own deeds. In Hebrew such a person is termed a בת-מצוה *bat-mitzva* or בר-מצוה *bar-mitzva*, a woman or man "subject to the *mitzvot*" (commandments). This status is attained by virtue of age (barring mental incompetence), and is not a function of any ritual sacrament or performance. This is analogous to a minor becoming an adult under Connecticut civil law at age 16 (for purposes of operating a motor vehicle or getting married), or at age 18 (for voting) or 21 (for purchasing alcohol).

With adulthood comes responsibility—the responsibility to live according to the Torah of Moshe and the traditions of the Jewish People, as described, in part, by *halakha*. This means fasting on Yom Kippur, giving *tsedaqa* (periodic monetary support to communal institutions), being honest, dealing kindly with others, honoring one's parents, studying, and observing Shabbat and *kashrut* (dietary laws)—among the 613 *mitzvot*. This means joining as a full partner in the Jewish mission of *Tiqun HaOlam*, of improving the world by living according to the *mitzva* system.

With adulthood comes privilege—the privilege of fulfilling *mitzvot*, counting toward a *minyan* (prayer quorum), representing the congregation before God as *shelihat-* or *sheliah-tzibbur* (prayer leader), and taking part in all areas of private and communal Jewish life in a serious way.

We celebrate the young person's status as a *bat-* or *bar-mitzva* because it is a milestone for the individual, family and community. The *bat-* or *bar-mitzva* celebrates her or his new status by exercising the adult privilege of serving as *shelihat-* or *sheliah-tzibbur*. The celebration takes place in the context of the community's regular Shabbat, Festival, Rosh Hodesh or weekday service because the celebration *belongs* to the entire community.

The year of preparation before the celebration serves for many as an incentive to master "synagogue skills" and to grapple with what it means to be an adult Jew responsible for the

*mitzvot* (commandments). Study, practice, a "mitzva project" and *צדקה tsedaqqa* (monetary contribution) constitute the experience that is celebrated by our Congregation on the appointed day. As each person is different, each preparation and celebration will be different, designed to maximize the spiritual and educational benefit of the young Jewish adult.

It is our hope that the celebration will be kept in this perspective, and that it will thereby be joyous and meaningful. Please know that the Congregation's staff and Rabbi are eager to help make this time a very special one for the celebrant and family.

We have been very fortunate to have a team of caring and skilled adults developing and implementing our Benei Mitzva Preparation Program. Working closely with Rabbi Tilsen are a cadre of teen-age tutors. The bonds of friendship through Torah that are forged among class members, their teachers and tutors, we hope, will be as life-long.

At BEKI, we are committed to creating a knowledgeable, sensitive and caring community. One aim of this Guide is to educate parents and their children, to instill respect for Jewish values and to promote a decision-making process within each family that will express these values.

The Congregation also arranges for what are commonly called "Adult Benei Mitzva" (*Bat Torah or Ben Torah*) experiences; for more information contact Rabbi Tilsen.



Benei Mitzva Class 1960s  
With Rabbi Andrew Klein

## II. PLANNING AHEAD: A CHECK-LIST OF THINGS TO DO AND KNOW

### A. THREE OR MORE YEARS BEFORE

**1. Educational Requirements: Enrollment, Attendance and Attainment** are required for celebrating *benei mitzva* at BEKI. The celebrant must demonstrate ongoing enrollment in Congregation Beth El–Keser Israel's [religious school](#), [Ezra Academy](#), or an equivalent program approved by the Rabbi, *including* during the year in which the celebrant is enrolled in the Benei Mitzva Program. In exceptional circumstance, when these requirements have not been met, please consult with the Rabbi about options that may be available for appropriate bar- or bat-mitzva observance in the Congregation.

**2. Reserve a date** well in advance. Dates may be reserved by BEKI members in good standing on a first-come-first-served basis. For a bat mitzva, the date should be after her twelfth birthday; for a bar mitzva, after his thirteenth birthday, according to the Hebrew calendar. Generally it is preferred to celebrate the bar- or bat-mitzva as close to the actual birthday as feasible. While most families choose a Shabbat, it is also possible and appropriate to choose a ראש חודש *Rosh Hodesh* (New Month) or other special day on the liturgical calendar. For some families, days other than Shabbat may be preferable for logistic reasons. To reserve a date, please contact the Office Manager at [office@beki.org](mailto:office@beki.org) 203.389.2108 x14. The Office Manager will explain procedures and availability, and will make your reservation. At the same time, you must receive approval of the date from the Rabbi, who will verify that the date is compatible with the liturgical calendar and explain any liturgical considerations that might affect your preference for dates. At that time, your date will be held for thirty days. Your reservation will be completed only upon receipt by our office of your signed contract form and non-refundable reservation fee. A written confirmation will be sent to you (a [sample of this form](#) is in the appendix). If our office does not receive your completed contract and deposit within thirty days, that date will be released and made available for other functions. ***Be sure you have a written confirmation of your reservation.*** Surcharges apply to certain civil and Jewish holiday dates.

**3. For Students with Special Needs**, parents are urged to consult with the Principal and Rabbi at an early stage to help plan appropriate educational goals and strategies. The Principal and Rabbi can help identify tutors and other resources available to address the celebrant's particular needs.

**4. Mastery of basic liturgy** should be attained. The celebrant should be able to recite the Friday night קידוש *Qiddush*; the שמע *Shema* (all three paragraphs); the weekday עמידה *Amida* (nineteen blessings); אשרי *Ashrei* (Psalm 144-145); and ברכת המזון *Birkat ha-Mazon* (grace after meals), by this time. These are among the most basic prayers, mastery of which indicates readiness to begin more advanced material such as הפטרה *Haftara* and Torah reading, and the specialized liturgy of Shabbat. Audio files of some of this liturgy are available in the [Audio Library](#) of BEKI's website. Additional files can be provided in mp3 format to registrants of the [Benei Mitzva Program](#).

**5. Budget planning** may begin at this time. How much are you able to spend on this event? What is most important? We suggest that keeping current in obligations to the synagogue, providing for educational supplies and tutoring, *tallit* and *tefillin*, and providing *tsedaqa* be placed at the top of the list of priorities. Please remember that while there are synagogue fees for *benei mitzva* observances, there is no additional fee for regular staff time, including the Rabbi's time. A typical *bar-* or *bat-mitzva* observance requires many hours of regular staff time. Your synagogue dues and contributions are only a part of what makes this staff support possible, and provide for the maintenance and upkeep of the facilities so that they can be available for your events. Although some families opt for elaborate celebratory affairs, a simple and relatively inexpensive observance is in keeping with traditional values and the expectations of the BEKI community. The inclusion in this document of guidelines for DJs and party favors, for example, is not meant in any way to suggest that these need be employed. To the contrary, simplicity is encouraged.

Typical expenses include the tuition for the BEKI Benei Mitzva Program, \$1,750 (*or* private tutoring, \$3,000–\$6,000); simple Qiddush, \$2500; facility rental, \$600; invitations, \$300; *tallit*, *tefillin*, *siddur*, \$600; *tsedaqa* contribution, 10%. More elaborate qiddush-luncheons may cost from \$6,000 to \$30,000. Consider joining the Benei Mitzva Qiddush Cooperative. **The tuition for the BEKI Benei Mitzva Program includes a sizable credit toward facility rental, plus a *siddur*, kashrut supervision, and other services.**

**6. Knowing with whom to speak** can make planning a little easier. Questions pertaining to the Benei Mitzva Program, including registration and classes, and questions pertaining to the worship services, Shabbat and Kashrut observance should be directed to Rabbi Tilsen. All questions of logistics for caterers, deliveries, staff support and billing should be directed to the Office Manager. Any member of the staff will always be happy to refer you to the appropriate staff member or officer for any issue not within their own purview. Phone numbers and email address of staff and volunteers are listed at the beginning of this Guide under “[Contact for More Information.](#)”

**7. Understand the limitations of the facility and its staff.** While the Congregation seeks to be a "full-service" synagogue and while the staff is eager to do its best to make this a special and happy time, there are limits to what our facility and staff can support. By discussing your plans with the Office Manager early, you can find out just what types of activities and schedules the facility and staff can support. Fire codes limit the number of people who may use the social halls at one time. Our staff cannot be available at all hours. While the Congregation cannot accommodate all requests, please be assured that the staff will do their utmost to be helpful.

**8. Understand and respect the religious and aesthetic standards** observed by the community. A broad range of approaches is found within the Jewish world, but each community holds its own standards. The practices of the BEKI community represent the product of an ongoing process of careful evaluation and consideration. Respect for community standards, even (or especially) for those with which one might not agree, is an important value to be honored and

modeled by the celebrant's family. While at BEKI we acknowledge and celebrate the uniqueness of each individual, we nonetheless expect each person to respect the rules.

**9. Clarify Candidate's *Halakhic* (Legal) Status.** If the celebrant was adopted, or was born of a mother who was not Jewish at the time of the celebrant's birth, or (if a male) has not undergone *brit mila* (ritual circumcision), or was converted, or if you have any outstanding concerns about the *halakhic* (legal) status of the celebrant, please speak with Rabbi Tilsen. As the celebrant is attaining the "legal" status of "adult," for most purposes, under Jewish law and in the eyes of the community, it is important to the celebrant's Jewish identity, self-image and standing in the community that any such issues or questions be put to rest at the earliest opportunity. These issues are common and most are easily resolved.

## **B. TWO YEARS BEFORE**

**1. Planning for celebrations** that will take place at the synagogue can be facilitated by meeting in person with the Office Manager. The Synagogue Office Manager will be able to answer questions and explain exactly what resources the Congregation offers. All matters of building set-up and use, building access, payment, and the like, will be arranged with the Synagogue Office Manager. In addition, the Synagogue Office Manager will be able to refer you to the right person to address your questions or concerns for matters not in the Synagogue Office Manager's purview.

**2. Celebrations held outside of the synagogue** must be held in accordance with the laws of Shabbat and *kashrut* (kosher dietary laws). A bar- or bat-mitzva party is somewhat of a *seudat mitzva*, a **religious** celebration. At the time when a youth is attaining the age of *mitzvot*, it would be ironically inappropriate to celebrate that in a way that does not respect the fundamental observances of Shabbat and *kashrut*. This is so even (or especially) for families that do not observe traditional Shabbat or *kashrut* at home. Since the Congregation comprises many traditionally observant families, only affairs conducted in accordance with Shabbat and *kashrut* can fully include all in the celebration. If you are contemplating a function in a home that does

not have a kosher kitchen, the Rabbi can suggest simple ways to accommodate those observing a kosher diet. Please note the restrictions under “Invitations” below.

Without an assurance of Kashrut and Shabbat observance, many BEKI parents and youth will feel uncomfortable attending a celebration or will decline an invitation as a statement of their loyalty to Jewish law and tradition.

**3. Food presentation** planning can begin. All food served at Congregation Beth El–Keser Israel must meet strict *kashrut* (kosher) requirements as determined by the BEKI Rabbi. BEKI adheres to the local standards and procedures established by the New Haven Area Rabbinical Assembly ([NAHARA](#)). Food may be prepared, delivered and served only by the caterers on the "[Approved Kosher Caterers](#)" list, which is appended, and by *exclusively* kosher caterers under rabbinic supervision approved in writing by the BEKI Rabbi, or by BEKI’s Benei Mitzva Qiddush Cooperative. “Self-Catering” (also known as “do it yourself” catering) is not permitted at BEKI. If you are contemplating a smaller-scale presentation, please speak with the Office Manager about your options, such as the Benei Mitzva Qiddush Cooperative. Note that the caterer must be under approved *kashrut* supervision *at the time of the affair*. As sometimes caterers change or lose their approval, be sure to make *approval at the time of the affair* a condition of your agreement with your caterer.

**4.** An Oneg Shabbat is usually *not* served after the 6:00 P.M. Service, on the assumption that most participants will be going to a Shabbat dinner afterwards. However, those wishing to present an *Oneg Shabbat* may do so. According to Board stipulation, “An Oneg Shabbat served after the Shabbat Evening (Friday Night) service shall be strictly pareve (i.e. containing neither dairy nor meat products or by-products). This may include fruit, coffee, cake, punch, tea, cookies and the like.”

**5. The Qiddush on Shabbat Morning** is *part of* the celebration. Therefore, the family is required to sponsor the event for the entire congregation present as well as their guests. BEKI families have affirmed the importance of community by including all those present in an



extended Qiddush. United Synagogue and BEKI policy require that grape juice be available for the benefit of those who do not drink wine. The caterer should be informed that a card with the Shabbat morning Qiddush blessing, and "grape juice" and "wine" labels, are available on the refrigerators in the kitchens adjacent to the Social Halls, and that these cards and labels or their equivalent should be placed next to the qiddush cup and on the grape juice and wine trays during set-up for Shabbat morning Qiddush. The caterer should also be instructed to set up the available **high-chairs** to accommodate our youngest worshippers at qiddush in the Social Hall and at any affair in the Lower Level Social Hall. Any time bread, bagels, rolls, pita or halla is served upstairs, washing stations must be set up by the caterer to accommodate ritual hand-washing before *HaMotsi*; a permanent washing station is located on the lower level next to the stairway. The Qiddush must be dairy or pareve. Candles may not be displayed or lighted on Shabbat.

BEKI permits the serving of re-heated food on Shabbat on condition that such re-heating is done strictly in compliance with Shabbat regulations. Ovens and urns must be left on and at their desired temperature *before* Shabbat, and may not be adjusted during Shabbat. Instant coffee and tea may be mixed in water heated before Shabbat, but fresh-brewing is not permitted. Fires and electric heaters may not be lighted, started or plugged-in on Shabbat by any person. Stovetop and open-flame re-heating are not permitted. Please be sure your caterer understands that BEKI follows Jewish law in these matters and plan your menu accordingly. Please see the "[Dear Kosher Caterer Letter](#)" in the Appendix for additional information on food service rules and considerations. The Synagogue Office mails this letter to your caterer once you inform the Office of which caterer you have engaged.

**6. The *Se`uda Shelishit*** (third meal) is presented on Shabbat afternoon following the *minha* service. Presenting at least a modest *se`uda shelishit* is appropriate when the celebrant will participate in both the Shabbat afternoon or *Motse'ei Shabbat* (Saturday evening) and *havdala* services. The *Se`uda* includes two *hallot* but not wine. The *Se`uda* should be dairy or pareve.

**7. Bands, DJs and musicians** often book their engagements years in advance. If you have a particular group in mind, it is never too early to call them. Please note that the use of musical instruments, recordings, and electric amplification are not permitted in the synagogue building on Shabbat and Festivals, but are permitted on Saturday nights and weekdays, including weekday Rosh Hodesh. For events taking place on *Motse`ei Shabbat* (Saturday night), please note that *all delivery and set-up must be accomplished before or after (but never during) Shabbat*. As this may necessitate careful logistic planning, please speak with the Office Manager before engaging a band. Please inform the Office Manager if you have engaged a Band, DJ or other vendor, so that we may send them the “[Dear DJ, Band Leader,](#)” etc., letter (see Appendix). Inclusion in this *Guide* of information on Bands, DJs and other entertainers is not meant to encourage their engagement for benei mitzva celebrations.

**8. Enrollment in the Benei Mitzva Program should be completed.** By this time, the celebrant should be registered for the BEKI Benei Mitzva Preparation Program (BMP) (also known as the “BEKI Benei Mitzva Class”). Please speak with Rabbi Tilsen to determine the best dates of enrollment for your celebrant. Celebrants typically begin the BEKI program 18 to 6 months in advance of the event. The program includes class time, individual instruction, individual tutoring, informational parents’ meetings and other activities. The program fee includes substantial credits toward room rental and other fees.

Each registrant in the BEKI Benei Mitzva Preparation Program is provided with a copy of *Siddur Sim Shalom* as well as audio recordings to use for preparation for leading services as well as daily prayer.

Registration form and program information is at <http://www.beki.org/wp-content/uploads/bmp.pdf>.

**9. Evening affairs held after Shabbat** entail special logistic considerations. For events taking place on *Motse`ei Shabbat* (Saturday night), please note that *all delivery and set-up must be accomplished before or after (but never during) Shabbat*. There is no access to the synagogue

building on Shabbat for set-up for affairs taking place after Shabbat. Caterers, bands, DJs, florists, and other vendors must work closely with the Office Manager to insure they are able to accomplish their tasks. Therefore *it is crucial that the set-up period needed by caterers and bands and the ending time of Shabbat be taken into consideration when determining what time an evening affair will begin.* This consideration may constrain menu options and sequence of food service for affairs that immediately follow Shabbat.

10. **Service Participation and Continuing Learning of Liturgy:** During this year, students may master *Birkhot HaShahar* (early morning prayers), *Pesukei DeZimra* (introductory morning prayers), and *Qabbalat Shabbat* (the first half of the Friday night service). Students who have learned these service parts will be invited to lead them at the regularly scheduled synagogue services. Such participation will greatly increase the students' comfort in leading services.

### C. ONE YEAR BEFORE

1. **Regular attendance** at Shabbat services by the celebrant with her or his family is *required* and provides for familiarity and comfort with the service. Regular attendance and the familiarity it brings is a crucial way of reducing the anxiety that many parents and celebrants experience in anticipation of their celebration. The bar- or bat-mitzva celebrant may be called on to participate in the adult service as well as **Junior Congregation** during this period. The celebrant should also attend daily and Festival services. *Students must also attend either **BEKI's Religious School** or a Jewish Day School such as **Ezra Academy** for the complete academic year.*

2. **The "Benei Mitzva Program"** meets during the school year to prepare for the participants' celebrations and to discuss some of the implications of their impending status as *benei mitzva*. This group includes students based on the date of their planned celebration. In addition, most celebrants will meet individually with the Rabbi to discuss religious issues associated with their new status. Students are required to participate in the program for the complete academic year, including the period after their own observance.

**3. A tsedaqa (financial contribution) recipient** should be selected by the celebrant and family. Suggestions include the [George G. & Leah Posener Endowment for the Education of BEKI Youth](#); the Ari Nathan Levine Children's Library at BEKI; the [Rosenkrantz Family Library Endowment](#); or the [Borick Family Endowment for Special Education of Youth](#). The celebrant should plan to contribute a set percentage of his or her "income" for the year to this cause. (The Biblically prescribed proportion is ten percent.) Families of greater means are encouraged to speak with the rabbi or with the Jewish Foundation director about the "Build a Tzedakah Fund" for youth at the [Jewish Foundation](#), which provides matching funds to name an endowment that can benefit the synagogue or its programs. Some have established [named restricted endowments](#) for the benefit of the synagogue or other agencies. "Build a Tzedakah Funds" and Tsedaqa projects that benefit the synagogue may be featured in the BEKI *Bulletin*.

**4. Training in *tallit* and *tefillin*** is required. During the weeks before the bat- or bar-mitzva observance, the celebrant will meet with the Rabbi to verify that the celebrant understands how and why *tallit* and *tefillin* are worn, or to learn such. Parents will provide *tallit* and *tefillin* for the celebrant when required. The *tallit* should be large enough to cover at least one-half of the celebrant's body. A *tallit* may be purchased through the BEKI [Sisterhood Giftshop](#) or wherever fine Judaica is sold; prices for a basic *tallit* begin at \$60. Speak with Rabbi Tilsen about how to purchase *tefillin*; a basic set begins at \$275.

**5. A Torah pointer** may be created by the celebrant who is planning to read from the Torah. Wood or other materials may be used. Please consult with the Benei Mitzva Preparation Program Coordinator if you are interested in creating your own pointer.

**6. Planning ahead for the service** can ease anxiety and insure spirited and meaningful worship. Congregation Beth El–Keser Israel is a participatory egalitarian community that encourages the family and friends of the celebrant to participate in the service with the guidance of Rabbi Tilsen. The celebrant is encouraged to lead any portions of the services that she or he knows well. The Rabbi, in consultation with the parents and Benei Mitzva Preparation Program tutors, will determine whether or not a celebrant or others may lead any specific portion of the service.

**7. Which parts of the service the celebrant will learn and lead** is an individualized decision that takes into account the celebrant's reading and musical abilities, public speaking ability, interest, and stamina. The period of preparation and the event itself are intended to celebrate a new status marking the celebrant's personal growth; motivate additional learning; recognize actual accomplishment; increase the celebrant's comfort in leading public worship; and reinforce positive feelings about being Jewish. It is hoped that the celebrant will come away from the experience with a sense of affirmation and accomplishment, as well as new "Jewish living skills" that will be of use for a lifetime.

**8. Reciting the *Haftara*** is **not** the *sine qua non* of a bar- or bat-mitzva observance, contrary to popular belief. In fact, under *Halakha* (Jewish law), a minor may recite a *Haftara*. *Haftara* should be viewed as one liturgical option among many that the celebrant may lead. The emphasis at BEKI is on training students with liturgical skills that they can use for years to come, as opposed to preparing fetes for a one-time performance. *Haftara* is thus a low priority for many students.

**9. Invitations to the service** and affairs may include Hebrew as well as English text. The name of the Congregation should appear correctly as "Congregation Beth El–Keser Israel." **Directions** to BEKI, maps and parking information is available at [www.beki.org/about/directions-to-the-synagogue](http://www.beki.org/about/directions-to-the-synagogue). Include service times for Friday Night (**6:00 P.M.**) and Shabbat Morning services (**9:15 A.M.**). Please consult with Rabbi Tilsen for service times for Shabbat Mincha (Afternoon) and Ma`ariv (Evening) services and for services on other days. Be sure to verify *in writing* the starting time of a Saturday Night affair with the Office Manager and Rabbi, and your food and music providers, before printing invitations. You may wish to make clear whether your invitation is extended to adults, children or everyone in the recipient's household. It is appropriate although not required to indicate on the invitation, "Dietary Laws Strictly Observed," or "Kosher Supervised," or "Supervised by KINAHARA Kosher" for affairs held at the synagogue.

Affairs held outside of the synagogue or celebrant's home connected with a bar- or bat-mitzva observance also must be in compliance with Shabbat and Kashrut standards. Permission to use the name "Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel" or "BEKI" on written or electronic invitations or other printed material is granted to members on condition that the invitation or other printed material does not include reference to a non-kosher or non-Shabbat compliant commercial, institutional, or public facility.

**10. Deciding whom to invite** can be difficult due to budget constraints and other considerations. It is an important opportunity to reflect the values of inclusivity and generosity of spirit. It is required to invite *all* of the celebrant's classmates in the Benei Mitzva Program. The BEKI ethic prefers including as many as is feasible, even if it means providing less elaborate food or entertainment. An invitation can serve as a gesture of reconciliation to family members or friends who harbor bad feelings from the past or as a way to renew relationships. It is appropriate to invite the Rabbi, Principal, and Benei Mitzva Program teachers and tutors and their families to the service and following *Qiddush* at the synagogue, but it is not necessary to invite them to subsequent parties designed for children or to family-only affairs. The Office Manager will need to know the approximate number of guests expected in order to provide for their needs while in the building.

**11. Children of guests** are welcome to attend the [Children's Services](#) on Shabbat morning, all of which begin at 10:45 A.M. An adult must accompany children participating in the [Children's Shabbat Havura](#) for preschoolers. High chairs are available in the upper and lower social halls. **Changing tables are located in the Men's and Women's restrooms and in the [Accessible Washroom](#) area adjacent to the lobby on the first floor.**

**12. Classmates:** It is required to invite the celebrant's Benei Mitzva Program classmates to the *benei mitzva* observances. Hosts must make arrangements to supervise their young guests, so that the flow of synagogue services is not interrupted. All children, including classmates, should either be in services with their adults or in one of the children's or youth programs. Please

designate a few friends or family members to make sure youngsters are supervised. We also recommend inviting the classmates' parents to attend as well. Youth who are not accustomed to attending services at BEKI, such as public school classmates or members of other synagogues, may not be familiar with the etiquette and expectations of our congregation. You are responsible for your invited guests.

**13. Inform guests and vendors of synagogue etiquette and rules.** Smoking is not permitted at BEKI. Photography, recording, use of cell phones, use of hand-held computers and writing are **not** permitted in the sanctuary and chapel at any time during services (Shabbat, Festival and Weekday) and are **not** permitted on the premises on Shabbat or Festivals. In the sanctuary, all men (Jewish and non-Jewish) are required to wear a head covering, and men and women are required to wear a head covering while on the *bima* or at the reader's table. Guests who are *not* Jewish are *not* encouraged to wear a *tallit*. Gum, candy, food and drink should **not** be consumed in the sanctuary. If you are inviting guests who might not be aware of these rules, please inform them in an appropriate manner. Guest required to wear a head covering may want to know that there is no particular religious significance to the *kipa*; it is simply one convenient form of headcovering. Wigs and toupees do not constitute headcoverings for these purposes. (See [jewishencyclopedia.com](http://jewishencyclopedia.com) entry, "[Bareheadedness](#)".) It is **not** customary to clap hands during services following a scriptural reading, devar Torah or other presentation.

**14. A telephone for emergency use** is available on the lower level in the stairwell. It is restricted to local calls, which are free, and 911 emergency calls. Dialing instructions are printed on the telephone. There is a telephone in the kitchen on the lower level for kitchen emergencies as well. Physicians and others using cell phones for emergency calls are asked to conduct their conversations in the small vestibule along Harrison Street near the driveway, which offers good reception and affords a measure of privacy.

**15. Personalized "Guides to Services"** have been printed by some families for the benefit of guests not familiar with traditional Conservative Jewish worship. The introduction to Siddur *Sim Shalom* (the prayer book used at BEKI) includes a useful outline of the services, which you may

wish to consult in preparing a guide; or you may wish simply to note in your guide the presence of the introduction in *Sim Shalom*. The Guide can serve to help visitors feel more comfortable by explaining the order of the service as well as synagogue etiquette. If you wish to print such a guide, we suggest having Rabbi Tilsen or a member of the Ritual Committee review it for accuracy. A model text of a *Guide to Shabbat Services at BEKI* is available in electronic form at BEKI's web site at <http://www.beki.org/guide-to-shabbat-morning-services/>.

**16. Souvenir kipot (skullcaps) and birkatonim** ("benschers" or Grace After Meals song booklets) **and table decorations** are optional. Other "party" souvenirs go beyond the model of simplicity, but if they are used, may we suggest that Judaica items be included. These items can be ordered from the BEKI [Sisterhood Giftshop](#) and wherever fine Judaica is sold. Items that are not permitted to be handled on Shabbat, such as coins, musical instruments, writing and coloring utensils, candles, cameras, electronic or electrical devices or battery-operated toys may not be used as "favors" on Shabbat. A small number of wicker baskets may be available for *kipot* and other uses; speak with the Office Manager for more information. Food items may not be used as table decorations, party favors, game prizes or in any other way unless written approval is obtained at least ten days in advance from our office. All food items brought into the building must be delivered at a pre-arranged time and under the BEKI rabbi's kashrut supervision. Non-kosher food items may not be used as table decorations.

**17. Throwing candy** during services is *prohibited* as it disrupts the reader and the children's services, and can be hazardous. Candy may be distributed during the *Qiddush* after services or during other celebrations. Candy, like all food items, must be brought in only under the supervision of caterers and the kashrut supervisor. The prohibition of throwing candy in the sanctuary is pursuant to a Ritual Committee ruling endorsed by the Board of Directors, and with the support of the Rabbi for reasons of *halakha* and tradition. Candy should not be distributed or eaten in the sanctuary.

**18. Confetti, glitter, sparkles and canned string** are not permitted anywhere in the building. Please be sure to inform guests who might not be aware of this rule.



## D. SIX MONTHS BEFORE

**1. Plan the *aliyot* (honors) for the service** with Rabbi Tilsen. To honor the celebrant and her or his family, the Ritual Committee extends to the family the privilege of offering many (but not all) of the *aliyot* to the family and their friends. Since the celebration is taking place as part of the community's regular worship service (as opposed to a private affair), some parts of the service, including some of the Torah-blessing *aliyot*, will be reserved by the Ritual Committee for members of the Congregation other than the celebrant's family and friends, to be assigned by the Ritual Committee.

Rabbi Tilsen will work with the family to help determine how those honors can most appropriately be distributed. The [aliya worksheet](#) (on our website under “Benei Mitzva Program”) may be reviewed with the Rabbi. Additional copies of the worksheet are available from the Rabbi and the Office, along with information about any possible liturgical peculiarities for the date of the observance. A description of the Torah Service *aliyot* is appended (see “[Your Aliya at BEKI](#)”).

On Shabbat morning, five Torah-blessing *aliyot* are delegated to members of the family plus one to the celebrant. Several additional *aliyot* (non-speaking) are delegated to members of the family as well. On Shabbat afternoon, additional Torah-blessing and other *aliyot* are delegated to the celebrant's family. Only one person is called for each Torah-blessing *aliya*. (For information on the reasons for not allowing “Joint *Aliya*,” see [Rabbi Tilsen’s](#) essay “[Joint Aliya](#).”) It is recommended that all those with Torah-blessing honors be given copies of the blessings ahead of time and urged to become familiar with them (see our website for a [copy of the blessings](#)). Only adults who are *halakhically* (legally) Jewish (as determined by the Rabbi) may be called for *aliyot*. All (men and women) who have an *aliya* are required to wear a head covering. In some cases, depending on the liturgical calendar and other considerations, there may be additional *aliyot* available.

**2. Reading from the Torah** (as distinct from the *aliya*) is one way family members and friends might participate in the service. The Ritual Committee normally arranges the Torah Readings about a month in advance. If family members or friends wish to read Torah, the Ritual Committee member in charge of Torah readings should be consulted. Contact Rabbi Tilsen for more information.

**3. Non-Jewish family members** may be recognized and participate in various ways during the events. Please speak with Rabbi Tilsen about how to involve and recognize these family members in appropriate and comfortable ways.

**4. Proper Attire: What to wear** at the service is an individual choice that should take into consideration *halakha* (Jewish legal requirements) and community standards. Celebrants are required to have a head covering. The wearing of a *tallit* is required for male celebrants and encouraged for female celebrants. Tradition requires that dress on Shabbat and Festivals be special and distinct from what one wears during the week, and that clothes be unstained and unturned. The values of respect, leisure (as opposed to work), beauty and *tsniut* (modesty) are among those that can be appropriately expressed in dress. Exertion, anxiety and the lights on the *bima* (sanctuary stage) may make the participants warm; remember to plan for comfort as well.

**5. The *Devar Torah*** (sermon or Torah lesson) is an important part of the service, as tradition considers study on par with prayer as a form of worship. The Rabbi may invite the celebrant to prepare a *Devar Torah*. This affords the celebrant and the celebrant's family an additional opportunity to learn about the Torah text that is read on the Shabbat or some topic fitting the liturgical calendar. The celebrant prepares a *Devar Torah* with the help of parents, Benei Mitzva Class instructors, rabbi or others. Only some celebrants choose to present a *Devar Torah*. For those who choose not to, Rabbi Tilsen can suggest other ways to include a personal message in the service.

Once a topic is chosen, the celebrant is directed to the treasury of explanation, commentary and analysis produced by our scholars and sages over the past 2,500 years. Among the popular

sources available in BEKI's [Rosenkrantz Family Library](#) (as well as from Judaica stores, and in electronic form) are Rashi's commentary, which purports to give the *peshat* or "contextual" meaning; Louis Ginsberg's *The Legends of the Jews*, a synthesis of midrash; Nachmanides' commentary on the Torah; *The JPS Torah Commentary* (five volumes); and Nehama Leibowitz's *Studies in Bereshit* (*Genesis*), *Shemot* (*Exodus*), *VaYikra* (*Leviticus*), *BeMidbar* (*Numbers*), *Devarim* (*Deuteronomy*). The *Encyclopedia Judaica* and *Jewish Encyclopedia* and other reference works can provide helpful historic, cultural and political background to the Biblical events. Rabbi Tilsen strongly advises students *not* to "search the web" for Bible commentaries, but rather to learn to use the basic and recognized quality Jewish commentaries.

**6. The service parts that will be lead by the celebrant** will be determined during this period. This is decided by the Rabbi in consultation with the celebrant, family, and, when necessary, the Ritual Committee.

**7. Notice in the BEKI *Bulletin*** will appear giving the date of the service. Please submit a clear black-and-white or color print (about 3"x5" or 5"x7") or (preferably) electronic file (any format) of the celebrant to the attention of the BEKI *Bulletin* [Editor](#) at least three months prior to the date of the event (four months prior for September observances). School photos are often ideal for this purpose. The photo can be returned if requested. Unless otherwise requested, a notice may be sent to the *Connecticut Jewish Ledger* for publication. Unless otherwise requested, the photo will also appear in the Web Edition of the BEKI *Bulletin*.

**8. Regular attendance** should now include at least one daily morning (such as Sunday 9:00 A.M. to 9:30 A.M.) service and one daily afternoon or evening service (5:45 P.M. to 6:15 P.M.) *per week*. During this period, the celebrant will have actual practice in leading parts of public worship in an intimate setting. Benei Mitzva Program participants will attend some afternoon or evening weekday services that take place during the Program's scheduled meeting hours. Shabbat evening, morning and afternoon services should be attended each week as well.

## **E. THE MONTH BEFORE**

**1. A meeting with the Office Manager** at this time will confirm logistical arrangements. Schedules should be decided for caterers' deliveries and other vendors' deliveries. A review will be made of plans for decorations, centerpieces, party favors, liquor and soft drinks, parking and visitor management and other items to insure they comply with *kashrut*, Shabbat, safety, custodial and logistic procedures. Arrangements will be made for removing leftover food and decorations and for other clean-up after the event. Working closely with the Synagogue Office Manager at this time can prevent last-minute difficulties.

**2. A rehearsal** or "walk-through" with the teacher, tutor or Rabbi Tilsen can be helpful. After having attended Shabbat and other services on a regular basis, the service outline will be familiar. Nevertheless, some people like to walk through the service a few days before. Since every Torah scroll is unique, the celebrant may benefit from seeing the writing in the actual scroll that will be read on the day of the event. This is also an opportunity to practice a *Devar Torah* or other spoken presentation in the sanctuary. Call Rabbi Tilsen about a month before the event to schedule this rehearsal.

**3. Photography** is permitted during the rehearsal (but *not* during the service). Be sure to check with your photographer for availability. Photography is not permitted any time on Shabbat or Festivals at the synagogue, and is not permitted during any actual service (even on weekdays). If you would like to schedule a photo session, please contact the Office Manager for room availability. The rehearsal may be photographed, but formal posed photography should take place before or after the rehearsal at its own reserved time.

**4. Those receiving aliyot** at the invitation of the family should be informed of that invitation at this point. Those who might benefit from reviewing the [Torah blessings](http://beki.org) (beki.org under Resources / Audio Library) and other [instructions](#) (appended below) beforehand should be sent a copy. **The completed (or partially completed) "Aliya Worksheet" should be presented to Rabbi Tilsen at least ten days before the event.** If the "Aliya Worksheet" is not submitted at

least three days prior to the event, all of the aliyot and service leadership segments will be assigned by the Ritual Committee.

**5. Caterer's Inventory:** A complete list or itemized bill from the caterer must be presented to the office to facilitate *kashrut* and inventory control. This should be done at least two or three weeks before the event.

**6. A meeting with Rabbi Tilsen** at this time will finalize plans for the service. In addition, the Rabbi will request an oral report on the celebrant's *mitzva* and *tsedaqa* projects.

**7. Reflecting on the meaning and purpose** of the celebration can help keep things in perspective. Is the celebrant learning and feeling good about his or her accomplishments? Are the family's real values reflected in the type of celebrations planned and in the allocation of resources?

#### **F. THE WEEK OF THE OBSERVANCE**

**1. Attending Shabbat afternoon, Monday and Thursday** morning services and other services during this week affords the celebrant opportunities to gain comfort leading public worship in an intimate setting. The Torah portion that will be read on the Shabbat of the *bar-* or *bat-mitzva* observance is in most cases read on the preceding Shabbat afternoon, Monday morning and Thursday morning. The celebrant who is reading Torah is invited to read their portion at these times.

**2. A meeting with the Office Manager** will review and finalize plans for set-up and deliveries. Because the Synagogue Office Manager is experienced in facilitating synagogue events, the Synagogue Office Manager can be helpful in anticipating and solving logistical problems.

**3. Caterers' delivery** must be scheduled in consultation with the office. Usually delivery requires support of the synagogue staff, including custodial staff and a *kashrut* supervisor. A

complete inventory of food being served must be provided to the Synagogue Office before delivery will be accepted. The inventory must bear the signature or seal of the caterer's kashrut supervisor. To insure availability, careful planning is required. Deliveries must be *completed* by noon Friday or 2:00 P.M. Monday through Thursday. We suggest that a family member or representative attend the delivery with an inventory in hand to assure that a correct and complete delivery is made. The BEKI staff is not able to provide this service.

## **G. ORDER OF THE SERVICES**

**1. Friday Night services** begin *promptly* at 6:00 P.M. During summer months the service begins with the weekday *minha* afternoon service. *Minha* service takes approximately fifteen minutes. It can be lead by the celebrant, a family member, or someone assigned by the Ritual Committee. Selections from *Shir HaShirim* (the Biblical Song of Songs) may be read as an option. Then the Qabbalat Shabbat service, a collection of psalms and hymns, is lead by one person. The *Ma`ariv* evening service is then lead by the prayer leader. *Ma`ariv* may be lead by the same person who lead Qabbalat Shabbat or by a different person. The Qiddush recited during *Ma`ariv* may be recited by the celebrant even when someone else is leading *Ma`ariv*. During some services, English readings are incorporated which may be read by the celebrant or other family members. Friday night services end by 7:00 P.M.

**2. Shabbat Morning services** begin *promptly* at 9:15 A.M. The family may wish to have someone present by 8:45 A.M. to greet guests coming from a distance who may arrive early. The celebrating family should arrive by 9:00 A.M. The first section of the service, *pesuqei de-zimra* ("verses of praise") is lead by one person who should be present and announce himself or herself to the Rabbi no later than 9:10 A.M. Then (typically by 9:35 A.M.) a new leader takes over for the *shaharit* morning service. The *shaharit* service includes the recitation of the *Shema* and the *Amida*, which constitute the core of the liturgy. While it is only natural to feel an urge to greet guests and family members during this time, the family is requested to respect the service by

remaining in their seats and refraining from talking. Greetings may be offered before the service or during the Qiddush.

The Torah Service can be lead by the person who lead *shaharit* or by another. Persons participating by opening and closing the ark doors or handling the scrolls should be sufficiently strong, ambulatory and able to walk steps up and down the *bima*. They ascend the *bima* when the reader reaches "*qaddish shalem*" and await the Rabbi's cue. Since the Torah service includes numerous details of protocol, please speak with the Rabbi before extending honors to family or friends.

The *Devar Torah* (Torah lesson or "sermon") is given after the conclusion of the entire Torah Service. It is followed by special presentations. Some parents choose to make a brief presentation to their son or daughter at this time; others prefer not to do so.

If the bar- or bat-mitzva must have water during the service, a bottle with a "sports top" should be kept at the celebrant's seat, or placed on a shelf under the reader's table or pulpit. A cup of water may **not** be placed on the reader's table.

**3. The *Musaf* ("Additional") Service**, part of every Shabbat, Festival and Rosh Hodesh service, comprises a special *Amida*. *Musaf* concludes with *Ein Kelokenu*, *Aleinu* and *Adon Olam*, which may be lead by the celebrant's classmates and friends, along with all of the children who wish to help.

**4. The Qiddush or Luncheon immediately follows the service.** The entire congregation is invited to the lower social hall for *Qiddush*. A card with the text of the Shabbat morning *Qiddush* blessing is posted on the refrigerators in the kitchen. The celebrant and family should proceed immediately to the *Qiddush* table for qiddush; there will be ample time for visiting once the *Qiddush* commences. If a luncheon is served (i.e. if bread is served), the meal should be concluded with *birkat ha-mazon* (Grace After Meals).

**5. Shabbat Mincha Afternoon** services include a brief Torah Reading (but no *haftara*) with three (and no more) Torah-blessing *aliyot* and the Shabbat *mincha amida*. The *mincha* service has its own unique and beautiful melody. Celebrants who lead Shabbat evening and morning services are urged to learn and lead this service as well. During winter, this service begins approximately 30 minutes before sunset; during summer, at 5:45 P.M. The service typically takes 40 minutes. Please verify the correct starting time with the Rabbi for this service.

**6. The Se`uda Shelishit** immediately follows the service. It begins with *hamotsi*, may include singing and *divrei Torah*, and concludes with *birkat ha-mazon*.

**7. The Maariv Evening Service for Motse`ei Shabbat & Havdala** takes about 20 minutes and concludes with the *havdala* ceremony over wine, spices and candlelight. The *ma`ariv* service begins, at the earliest, 45 minutes after sunset. The service time is set by the Rabbi. *Benei mitzva* are encouraged to learn and lead these services as well. One person leads *ma`ariv*; another or the same person may lead *havdala*. The *havdala* service indicates the conclusion of Shabbat.

**8. Rosh Hodesh and days other than Shabbat** have their own liturgy and unique logistic considerations that should be discussed with the Rabbi and Office Manager.

## **H. AFTER THE OBSERVANCE**

**1. Thank-you notes** should be sent to the Synagogue President or Sisterhood President for any gifts presented to the celebrant by the Synagogue. Rabbi Tilsen does not accept gratuities from synagogue members; appreciation for special services can be expressed through a verbal "thanks" or a contribution to the Rabbi's Tzedaka Fund or other BEKI fund. Those wishing to offer gratuities to the office or custodial staff are asked to speak first with the Office Manager.

**2. Suggestions and reports of problems are welcomed** as they help the staff learn to do a better job in helping subsequent celebrants. Please address your suggestions or complaints to the



Office Manager, the President, Ritual Affairs Chair, Education Director or the Rabbi. Phone numbers, email addresses and the office mailing address can be found in the “[Contacts](#)” list at the beginning of this *Guide*.

**3. Express your pride and your gladness.** By keeping in mind what is truly important in the celebration, you will enjoy an affirming spiritual experience that will enhance the religious life of your family.

**4. Debriefing: Meet with Rabbi Tilsen** as a follow-up to the experience. This can help the celebrant “process” the experience and direct the special feelings from the event toward productive continuing involvement.

**5. Continue the momentum** by finding new ways to grow intellectually and spiritually. Benei mitzva are welcomed to participate in all of BEKI's [Torah for the Hungry Mind Adult Education](#) programs, and are urged to join our [Kadima](#) and [USY](#) (United Synagogue Youth) group (203.389.2108 ext. 30). Our tradition is concerned not so much with where one stands on the ladder of Jewish learning and living, as on the *direction* one is moving. *Qedusha* ("holiness") is felt not from being at a certain "height" but rather from the feeling of motion as one ascends.

**6. Rotation for Service Leaders:** The bar- or bat-mitzva is now part of the adult community, responsible for its welfare, and is urged to attend services and to volunteer to lead the parts of public worship he or she has mastered on a regular basis. Our Shabbat services are organized by a system of “Rotations,” that is, a self-regulating system of turn-taking for service leaders. Benei mitzva are expected to participate in the “Rotations” in the years following their observance. The current [Rotation schedule](#) and explanation are available at <https://www.beki.org/worship/service-leader-rotation/> and in the “Rotations” booklet in the literature rack in the lobby.

**Mazal Tov!**

### III. GLOSSARY OF HEBREW TERMS

*aliya* (pl. *aliyot*) — an honor of participating in the Torah service; lit. "ascension."  
*amida*—basic series of seven or nineteen blessings in each service.  
*bar-*, *bat-mitzva*—a person subject to the *mitzvot*; one who has reached the age of majority.  
*benei-mitzva*—plural of *bar-* or *bat-mitzva*.  
*bima*—sanctuary stage.  
*birkat ha-mazon*—grace after meals.  
*birkhot haShahar*—morning blessings  
*brit mila*—"covenant of circumcision" which enters male Jews into the covenant of Abraham.  
*devar Torah*—sermon or Torah lesson. Also known as a "*derash*."  
*dreidel*—(Yiddish) spinning toy associated with Hanuka.  
*gelila*—"rolling" and binding of Torah scroll  
*haftara*—selection from Prophets that complements Torah reading.  
*halakha*—Jewish law; a specific law; the body of law.  
*havdala* candle—candle used for *havdala* ("separation") service at end of Shabbat.  
*hotsa'a*—"taking out" of Torah Scroll from ark  
*humash*—Pentateuch, Five Books of Moses; printed edition of Five Books with Haftarat.  
*kashrut*—Jewish dietary laws.  
*kipa* (pl. *kipot*) — a skullcap  
*ma`ariv*—evening service.  
*minha*—afternoon service.  
*minyán*—quorum; usually refers to quorum of ten adult Jews for certain public prayers.  
*mitzva* (pl. *mitzvot*) —lit. "commandment," a religious imperative; a specific *halakha*.  
*motse`ei Shabbat*—Saturday night after Shabbat ends.  
*parasha*—portion of Torah read on a given week according to liturgical calendar.  
*pesuqei de-zimra*—"verses of praise," the introductory morning service.  
*petiha*—"opening" of ark doors during Torah service  
*qiddush*—prayer sanctifying Shabbat or festival said over wine; refreshment period following q.  
*qiddusha*—"holiness"; a particular component of the *Amida* which is recited responsively.  
*rosh hodesh*—new month on Hebrew calendar  
*sedra*—cf. *parasha*.  
*se`uda shelishit*—third meal of Shabbat, after *minha* and before *ma`ariv*.  
*shaharit*—morning; morning service every day of the year.  
*sheliah-* (m.) or *shelihat-tzibbur*—leader of public prayer; lit. "emissary" to God.  
*Shir HaShirim*—Biblical *Song of Songs*, also known as *Song of Solomon*.  
*siddur* (pl. *siddurim*) — prayer book.  
*tallit* (pl. *tallitot*) — prayer shawl.  
*tefillin*—prayer amulets.  
*tiqun ha-olam*—to repair, mend, improve the world.

*tsniut*—modesty.  
*tsedaqa*—charity.

Appendices to  
Guide to Benei Mitzva Observance  
at  
Congregation Beth El–Keser Israel

Sixteenth Edition

85 Harrison Street  
New Haven CT 06515-1724  
[www.beki.org](http://www.beki.org)

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See also

[Guide to Benei Mitzva Observance](#)

and

[Guide to Shabbat Morning Services](#)

[http://www.beki.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/bnai\\_mitzvah\\_guide.pdf](http://www.beki.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/bnai_mitzvah_guide.pdf)



## IV. APPENDICES

- A. Bar/Bat Mitzva Date Confirmation Form
- B. Caterers Approved for BEKI
- C. Caterer's Checklist for Event at BEKI *sent by BEKI office to your caterer*
- D. Dear Kosher Caterer letter *sent by BEKI office to your caterer*
- E. Dear DJ, Band Manager, Party Planner Letter
- F. Room Rental & Qiddush Set Up Fee Schedule & Conditions
- G. Torah Blessings for Aliya
- H. Torah Service Aliya Descriptions

# Congregation Beth El–Keser Israel

ק"ק בית-אל--כתר-ישראל

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## Bar/Bat Mitzva Date Confirmation Form

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Celebrant/Parents: \_\_\_\_\_

Proposed Date of Event: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Action:**

This date is being held for you for 30 days pending receipt of your signed contract and non-refundable reservation fee of \$150 made to "BEKI." If your signed contract and deposit are not received by that time, the date will be released and made available to others on a first-come-first-served basis. Your fee may be applied to another date.

We have received your signed contract form and your non-refundable reservation fee of \$150 and confirm the reservation of this date. Approval: Office Manager\_\_\_\_\_. Rabbi \_\_\_\_\_. Your date will be reserved as long as you remain a member in good standing.

Dates may be reserved only by BEKI members for themselves and their dependants. If you wish to join the Congregation, please complete the enclosed membership application forms and return them to the BEKI office along with your payments.

Dates may be reserved only by BEKI members in good standing. Before a date can be reserved, you will need to fulfill the financial obligation(s) listed here or on attached sheets.

We have not received your signed contract and your non-refundable fee of \$150 for the date that was held for you 30 days ago. Therefore that date has been released and is now available to others on a first-come-first served basis.

Other:

Note that in addition to reserving the date for the service, you will also need to make reservations for the specific room rentals or other services you wish. Please call the Office Manager at 389-2108 ext. 14 ([office@beki.org](mailto:office@beki.org)) if you have any questions or concerns.

Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel

ק"ק בית-ישראל כתר-ישראל

85 Harrison Street • New Haven CT 06515-1724 USA

(203) 389-2108 • fax (203) 389-5899

[www.beki.org](http://www.beki.org)

## **Approved Kosher Caterers & Vendors**

as of 1 September 2014

**Caterers are approved only as of the date of this list. Before engaging a caterer, please verify with the BEKI office that the caterer is still approved for BEKI, and make sure that your contract with the caterer is conditional upon the caterer having approved Rabbinic Supervision *at the time of the affair*.**

Please ask Office Manager for current list.



## Caterer's Checklist

for Event at

### **Congregation Beth El–Keser Israel**

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(203) 389-2108 • Fax (203) 389-5899  
[office@beki.org](mailto:office@beki.org) • [www.beki.org](http://www.beki.org)

- Scheduled kitchen and room set-up times with BEKI office
- Scheduled food delivery with BEKI office
- Faxed complete list of food and utensils to be delivered, signed by caterer's *mashgiah*
- Presented certificate of insurance to BEKI office
- Paid \$100/day kitchen use fee
- Set ovens at desired temp *before* Shabbat (if hot food will be served on Shabbat)
- Set up hot water *before* Shabbat for instant or reconstituted coffee or tea
- Prepared BEKI kitchen by covering work surfaces, kashering oven
- Reminded workers no smoking, no bringing in food without supervision, no adjusting ovens on Shabbat
- Set up grape juice along with wine for qiddush, with labels
- Placed qiddush card near large qiddush cup
- Set up washing stations when bread is served upstairs
- Set up highchairs at some tables

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Dear Kosher Caterer,

We understand that you have been contracted by \_\_\_\_\_  
for the date of \_\_\_\_\_ at our synagogue.

Congregation Beth El–Keser Israel can receive deliveries on Mondays through Fridays from 9:00 A.M. until noon. We ask that you call our office several days before your delivery so that our custodian and our *mashgiah* can plan to meet you.

Deliveries of food will be accepted only upon presentation of (1) a complete **inventory** and invoice signed by your *mashgiah*; (2) a **certificate of insurance** and documentation of **Workman's Compensation** coverage, if your employees will be working on our premises for the affair; (3) payment of a \$100 *per day* kitchen use fee. Rabbi Tilsen or his representative will monitor the unloading of the delivery for purposes of kashrut supervision. Items not on the inventory (unless bearing a recognized kashrut seal) and unsealed containers will not be accepted.

Please understand that our Congregation is a traditionally observant Conservative community. Lighting fires, operating electric appliances such as coffee makers and can openers, and cooking are **not** permitted on Shabbat. Reheating of food is permitted only when the ovens are set at the desired temperature before Shabbat and are not adjusted on Shabbat. Stovetop reheating and use of open flame are not permitted on Shabbat. Reconstituting instant coffee or tea is permitted only if the water is kept hot from before Shabbat. Fresh brewing coffee is *prohibited* on Shabbat.

For Saturday Night Affairs (commencing after Shabbat ends), no preparations may be made at the synagogue on Shabbat. Cleanup from an afternoon affair may be completed at the time of the affair. Access to the building for Saturday Night Affairs will not be allowed until **one hour after sunset**. Please plan menu and logistics accordingly. Please plan accordingly. For the date indicated above, deliveries and set-up can take place only after \_\_\_\_\_ p. \_\_\_\_ (BEKI Rabbi's initials.)

At BEKI we maintain the highest standards of kashrut. We recommend that you *kasher* the oven, dishwasher and sink before and after your use and we require that you cover the surfaces you will use for food preparation in the BEKI kitchen. We do *not* permit the use of "kosher gelatin," although vegetable-derived gums are permitted.

When you will be using our kitchen to prepare food or when you are serving food in our facility, we require the presence of our *mashgiah* working under the direction of our rabbi.

Your employees may not bring food or drink to our premises unless it is under the supervision of your *mashgiah* and our office is so informed in advance by your *mashgiah*. Our facility is non-smoking. There is a telephone in the kitchen for **emergency** use, restricted to local, 1-800 and 911 calls.

Synagogue policy requires that **grape juice** be served whenever wine is offered. There are magnetic "Grape Juice" and "Wine" **labels** on the refrigerator in the upper level kitchenette; please use them to mark the trays at qiddush. There is a large blue card on the refrigerator in each kitchen with the Shabbat morning qiddush blessings; please place that card next to the large qiddush cup that the leader will be using.

Whenever bread (bagels, pita, rolls or *halla*) is served upstairs, **washing stations must be set up** to accommodate ritual hand washing; a permanent station is located at the bottom of the lobby stairwell for downstairs events. The highchairs in both the upper and lower level Social Halls should be set up at tables for use by our members.

We would be appreciative if you could instruct your staff of these rules and procedures. We trust that all will go well and we look forward to working with you. Failure to comply with Synagogue policy may result in suspension or cancellation of your approval to serve this Congregation. Please be aware that we regularly share information about *kashrut* and *Shabbat* compliance and administrative irregularities with the Connecticut Valley Rabbinical Assembly, the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism Connecticut Valley, and local Conservative and non-Conservative synagogues. If you have any questions about the contents of this letter or about other matters of concern please do not hesitate to call our Office Manager at 389-2108 ext. 14. Thank you for your careful attention.



Rabbi Jon-Jay Tilsen

Rev. 01 July 2015

## Congregation Beth El–Keser Israel

ק"ק בית-ישראל כתר-ישראל

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Dear DJ, Band Manager, Party Planner, Photographer or Vendor:

We understand that you have been contracted by \_\_\_\_\_  
 for the date of \_\_\_\_\_ at our synagogue.

Congregation Beth El–Keser Israel can receive deliveries on Mondays through Fridays from 9:00 A.M. until noon. We ask that you call our office several days before your delivery so that our custodian can plan to meet you.

Please understand that our Congregation is a traditionally observant Conservative community. Lighting fires, writing, recording, using musical instruments, filling balloons, operating electric appliances such as amplifiers, phones and cameras is not permitted on Shabbat. **Delivery and set-up of equipment may not take place on Shabbat.** All deliveries and set-up must be made *before* Shabbat or *after* Shabbat.

For Saturday Night Affairs (commencing after Shabbat ends), no preparations may be made at the synagogue on Shabbat. Cleanup from an afternoon affair may be completed at the time of the affair. There is a worship service every day 5:45 P.M. to 6:30 P.M. (except on Saturday afternoons from November to March, in which case the service begins 20 minutes before sunset and ends 60 minutes after sunset) held in the small chapel adjacent to the upper level kitchenette and dumbwaiter; please be sure your staff is quiet in this area during this time. Access to the building for Saturday Night Affairs will not be allowed until **one hour after sunset**. Please plan accordingly. For the date indicated above, deliveries and set-up can take place only after \_\_\_\_\_ p. \_\_\_\_\_ (Rabbi's initials.)

You and your staff may not bring food or drink items into our building at any time without the direct supervision of our *kashrut* supervisor. This includes food to be served at meals, table decorations, candy, your staff's personal meals and snacks, coffee and soft drinks, and any other consumable items. Please notify us several days in advance of the affair if you wish to bring in any food or drink items.

Our facility is non-smoking. There is a telephone in the lower-level kitchen for emergency use, restricted to local, 1-800 and 911 calls.

We would be appreciative if you could instruct your staff of these rules and procedures. We trust that all will go well and we look forward to working with you. Failure to comply with Synagogue policy may result in suspension or cancellation of your approval to serve this Congregation, fines, or both.

We regularly share information about *kashrut* (kosher) and *Shabbat* compliance and administrative irregularities with the New Haven Area Rabbinical Assembly (NAHARA), Connecticut Valley Rabbinical Assembly, the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism Connecticut Valley, and local Conservative and non-Conservative synagogues. If you have any questions about the contents of this letter or about other matters of concern please do not hesitate to call our Office Manager at 389-2108 ext. 14. Thank you for your careful attention.



Rabbi Jon-Jay Tilsen

Rev. 1 July 2015

## **Congregation Beth El–Keser Israel**

### **Room Rental & Qiddush Set Up Fee Schedule & Conditions For Benei Mitzva Observances (Members)**

*Effective 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016*

***Please See Office Manager for Current Rates***

*Rates guaranteed at time of Contract Execution. Other fees may apply*

All families celebrating a bar- or bat-mitzva will sponsor either a Regular or Extended Qiddush. Additional room rentals and food service are optional.

## **Your Torah Blessing *Aliya* (Honor) at BEKI**

All honorees must have a head covering during their *aliya*, and men must wear a *tallit*. When called to the reader's table, you will be shown the starting place in the Torah scroll that will be read as your honor. With the fringe of your tallit, or with the Torah binder on the table, touch the indicated place in the scroll and kiss that fringe or binder. Then look at the chart on the right of the scroll and say the first line, "Barkhu...."

If you receive this instruction prior to the event, you can hear the Torah blessings on line at <http://www.beki.org/resources/audio-files/#torah> and find a copy of the chart we use at <http://www.beki.org/wp-content/uploads/aliyab.pdf> .

## **Your Aliya at BEKI**

The following pages include detailed descriptions of the choreography of the various participants in the Torah Service. If you are offering these honors to people unfamiliar with the order of our service, you may wish to provide them with a copy of the description of their part, along with the diagram below.

A [worksheet for assigning the various aliyot](http://www.beki.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/aliya_worksheet.doc) is included available at [http://www.beki.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/aliya\\_worksheet.doc](http://www.beki.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/aliya_worksheet.doc) .



## **Your Aliya at BEKI: Petiha – Whalley-Side**

You have been extended the following honor to participate in the Torah Service at BEKI:

### **Petiha – Ark Opening** (American Flag-Whalley Avenue Side)

Please be sure you have a head covering (*kippa*, *yarmulke*, hat or scarf).

When the time for your *aliya* approaches, a Shamash or “Aliya Usher” will direct you to a seat on the bima (“stage”) on the American Flag - Whalley Avenue side. Please ascend the steps on the American Flag - Whalley side.

On Shabbat & Festival mornings, the time for this aliya is following the Shaharit Amida, when the reader begins “Kaddish Shalem,” page 138 in *Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat & Festivals*.

On Shabbat & Festival Afternoons (Minha), the time for this aliya is at the very beginning of the service, when the reader begins “Hatzi Kaddish,” page 229 in *Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat & Festivals*. (If you arrived late for services, you will have missed this honor. Please inform the usher of your late arrival.)

On Weekday Mornings (including weekday Rosh Hodesh), the time for this aliya is following the Shaharit Amida, when the reader begins “Kaddish Shalem.”

When the Rabbi (or other officiant) announces “We rise as the ark is opened,” please rise and go directly to the ark door and slide it slowly to the left. The door is heavy. Do not be concerned if it rolls back a little when you have fully opened it.

Then, still facing the ark, step back one step, below the raised ark step immediately before the ark, joining the others in line. You are at the “end” of the line of people.

At the rabbi’s cue, step again to the ark and slowly slide your door closed. Then, still facing the ark, step back one step, below the raised ark step immediately before the ark, joining the others in line.

Morning Service: Wait for the rabbi’s cue to turn to face the congregation. Then wait for the rabbi’s cue to turn to face the ark again.

Remain in the Torah procession until we circle the sanctuary and reach the bima or reader’s table. Then return to your seat. You are done. Thank you. *Mazal tov!*

## **Your Aliya at BEKI: Petiha – Courtyard-Side**

You have been extended the following honor to participate in the Torah Service at BEKI:

### **Petiha – Ark Opening (Courtyard Side)**

Please be sure you have a head covering (*kippa*, *yarmulke*, hat or scarf).

When the time for your *aliya* approaches, a Shamash or “Aliya Usher” will direct you to a seat on the bima (“stage”) on the Israeli Flag - Courtyard side. Please ascend the steps on the Israeli Flag - Courtyard side.

On Shabbat & Festival mornings, the time for this aliya is following the Shaharit Amida, when the reader begins “Kaddish Shalem,” page 138 in *Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat & Festivals*.

On Shabbat Afternoons (Minha), the time for this aliya is at the very beginning of the service, when the reader begins “Hatzi Kaddish,” page 229 in *Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat & Festivals*. (If you arrived late for services, you will have missed this honor. Please inform the usher of your late arrival.)

On Weekdays (including weekday Rosh Hodesh), the time for this aliya is following the Shaharit Amida, when the reader begins “Kaddish Shalem.”

When the Rabbi (or other officiant) announces “We rise as the ark is opened,” please rise and go directly to the ark door and slide it slowly to the right. The door is heavy. Do not be concerned if it rolls back a little when you have fully opened it.

Then, still facing the ark, step back one step, below the raised ark step immediately before the ark, joining the others in line. You are at the “end” of the line of people.

At the rabbi’s cue, step again to the ark and slowly slide your door closed. Then, still facing the ark, step back one step, below the raised ark step immediately before the ark, joining the others in line.

Morning Service: Wait for the rabbi’s cue to turn to face the congregation. Then wait for the rabbi’s cue to turn to face the ark again.

Remain in the Torah procession until we circle the sanctuary and reach the bima or reader’s table. Then return to your seat. You are done. Thank you. *Mazal tov!*

## Your Aliya at BEKI: Scroll Carrier at Beginning of Torah Service

You have been extended the following honor to participate in the Torah Service at BEKI:

### Scroll Carrier – Service for Taking Out the Torah (Courtyard Side)

Please be sure you have a head covering (*kippa*, *yarmulke*, hat or scarf).

When the time for your *aliya* approaches, a Shamash or “Aliya Usher” will direct you to a seat on the bima (“stage”) on the Israeli Flag - Courtyard side. Please ascend the steps on the Israeli Flag - Courtyard side.

On Shabbat & Festival mornings, the time for this aliya is following the Shaharit Amida, when the reader begins “Kaddish Shalem,” page 138 in *Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat & Festivals*.

On Shabbat Afternoons (Minha), the time for this aliya is at the very beginning of the service, when the reader begins “Hatzi Kaddish,” page 229 in *Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat & Festivals*. (If you arrived late for services, you will have missed this honor. Please inform the usher of your late arrival.)

On Weekdays (including weekday Rosh Hodesh), the time for this aliya is following the Shaharit Amida, when the reader begins “Kaddish Shalem.”

When the Rabbi (or other officiant) announces “We rise as the ark is opened,” please rise and go directly to the step in front of the ark but do not go up the step. While facing the ark, you will be near the middle, with the service leader (or bar- or bat-mitzva celebrant) on your left. On your right will be the person opening the ark door.

The rabbi will direct another person (not you) to take the scroll out of the ark. Just wait – do **not** go up the step. The designated person will hand the Torah to you. Accept the Torah scroll on your right (or preferred) side. Wrap your right arm around the scroll’s bottom third and grasp the wood disk on the left side. Place your left arm across the front of the scroll for stability and support.

Make sure you are comfortable holding the scroll. If you are not holding it comfortably, clearly tell the rabbi: “Adjust!” If you realize the scroll is too heavy for you, or you experience pain, hand the scroll to the rabbi or to another strong person in the procession. Whatever you do, don’t fall, and do not drop the scroll.

Morning Service: Wait for the rabbi's cue to turn to face the congregation.  
Then wait for the rabbi's cue to turn to face the ark again.

Remain in the Torah procession until we circle the sanctuary and reach the reader's table. A gabbai or usher will take the scroll from you and place it on the table. Then return to your seat. You are done. Thank you. *Mazal tov!*