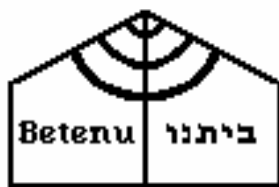


# Congregation Betenu Religious School



## Parent Handbook

2009-2010  
5770

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Amherst, NH 03031  
(603) 886-1633



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## **From The Rabbi**

August 30, 2009  
Elul 10, 5769

Dear Parents,

When I officiate at a Bar/Bat Mitzvah or at Confirmation, I always have great hopes that the students will make a real difference to the Jewish community. When I look back five years later, I am sometimes very surprised to see that some of my former students, who I would never have expected to find Judaism, have remained connected, while unfortunately others, who I was sure would stay active, have not. This is probably why the rabbis said, "Raise many pupils". The rabbis knew that if many Jewish children were exposed to Jewish knowledge, the better the chances were for Jewish survival. The rabbis also knew that one could not accurately predict the future, and merely handpicking the children whom they thought were the most promising would not guarantee success.

When selecting topics for any grade, we recognize that we can only scratch the surface and that many important subjects might be completely omitted. Nevertheless, it is our hope that the combination of parents, services, school, youth group, camps, and friends working together will provide our students with a clear and simple message: Judaism is a good way of life and is the one that I want for myself and for my children after me.

Be-ve-ra-cha,

Joshua L. Segal, Rabbi

## **From the Principal**

August 30, 2009  
Elul 10, 5769

Dear Parents,

Along with our Rabbi, Education Committee, and staff, I welcome you and your family to a new year at Congregation Betenu Religious School.

The mission of Congregation Betenu is to **be a home for all to participate in a Jewish community – a community to learn Torah, to worship God, and to improve the world.**

The religious school builds on that mission, providing Torah-based instruction that serves as a guide to living a Jewish life. This includes weekly instruction in Jewish Studies and learning Hebrew both as a sacred biblical language and as the modern day living language of our people. Mandatory service attendance provides a first step towards integrating academic studies with every day Jewish life and lifestyle. We expect our students to actively engage in and pursue Jewish life even after they finish their studies. As it is written in our Torah and repeated regularly in our liturgy; *“You shall love your God with all your mind, with all your strength, and with all your being. Set these words which I command you this day, upon your heart. Teach them faithfully to your children; speak of them in your home and on your way, when you lie down and when you rise up. Bind them as a sign upon your hand; let them be a symbol between your eyes. Inscribe them on the doorposts of your house, and on your gates.”*(Dvarim/Deuteronomy 6: 4-9 - the V’ahavta prayer)

When parents are committed to their child’s and their own active participation in a Jewish community, the Jewish educational experience becomes so much more rewarding to both parent and child. Please join us as a partner in your child’s Jewish education by engaging in the richness of Jewish life and by actively committing to becoming a vital member of the Betenu community.

Sincerely,

Rahel Limor, Principal

## Religious School Philosophy

### **Union of Reform Judaism (URJ) Educational Philosophy**

*The goal of Jewish education within the Reform Movement is to deepen Jewish experience and knowledge for all Jews, so as to strengthen their commitment to God, their identification with the Jewish people, their involvement in the Temple, their participation in Jewish life, and their determination to live as Jews.*

*-URJ Commission on Reform Jewish Education*

### **Guiding Principles**

Congregation Betenu is a member of the Union of Reform Judaism (URJ), and our Religious School builds upon the URJ educational goals. We seek to strengthen the commitment of our students to God and a Jewish way of life according to the following guiding principles:

- **Gemilut Hasidim (Acts of Loving Kindness) and Respect for Others**

We expect our students to meet their responsibilities in doing acts of kindness within the community, as well as treat their teachers and fellow students with respect.

- **Tikkun Olam (Improving the World)**

We expect that their study of Judaism will inspire them to find ways to improve the world.

- **Parental Involvement**

We expect that parents will take an active role in their children's education and in the Betenu community.

- **Recognition of Each Child's Special Qualities**

In our school environment, we recognize, appreciate, and bring to fruition the very best qualities that each member of our school community has to offer.

- **Torah, Jewish History, Judaic Culture, Israel**

We teach Judaic culture by studying the Torah, celebrating rituals and holidays, learning about the land of Israel, and studying the history of the Jewish people. We want our students to learn that whenever Jews face adversity and attempts to exterminate us, we, as Jews help one another to meet the challenge to ensure the survival of Judaism.

- **Avodah (Worship)**

We teach prayer as a means of coming together with the Betenu community to praise God and better understand what God expects of us.

- **Hebrew Language**

We teach the Hebrew language because it is the spark by which we ignite our lives as Jews; it is a part of our worship, our Jewish culture, and it is the sacred and living language of our people.

## Policies and Procedures

### **Religious School Schedule**

There are 30 religious school sessions, and students are required to attend worship services, the number of which varies according to their grade (see p. 7). The religious school meets on Sundays, from 9:30-12:30, and is divided into three (3) semesters of ten (10) classes each. Students will receive a progress report, which will also document service attendance, at the end of each trimester and a final report card on the last day of school. Two-thirds of the service requirements should be met by end of the second trimester. (see p. 7).

The school day is divided into 3 periods as follows:

**9:30 am - 11:30 am: Grades 1-2** meet during this time. The students are invited, but not required, to attend periods three and four (music, prayers and blessings). They eat their snack in the classroom.

**9:30 am – 10:25 am: Period 1:** Grade 3-4 Hebrew and Grade 5-7 Jewish Studies

**10:25 am – 10:35 am: Snack / Restroom/ Break**

**10:35 am - 11:30 am: Period 2:** Grade 3-4 Jewish Studies and Grade 5-7 Hebrew

**11:30 am – 12:10 am: Period 3:** Music, Prayers and Blessings

**12:10 pm-12:30 am: Period 4:** Service Journal in Homerooms

### **Dismissals**

**Early Dismissal** – Students who must leave early should bring a note from their parents to the Principal explaining who will pick them up and at what time. **No student will be released to a non-custodial adult without a note from the custodial adult.**

**Regular Dismissal** – **Students will not be allowed to leave the building without an adult. Parents are expected to come into the building to pick up their child.** This ensures the safety of the children and also gives the staff and parents an opportunity to communicate if desired.

### **School Cancellation**

The Principal will make the decision to cancel school due to inclement weather by 7:00 AM on Sunday morning. An email message will be sent out to parents and teachers stating that school has been cancelled for that day. Additionally, closings will be announced on WMUR-TV, and on the synagogue's phone answering system.

### **Parent Meetings**

There will be parent meetings during the school year to keep you updated and to receive your feedback. We will announce the time and date of these meetings in advance of each meeting.

## Attendance

Regular attendance reinforces the students' abilities to learn, encourages bonding with the Congregation Betenu community, and provides an atmosphere of continuity. It establishes a routine from which children benefit.

We understand that some absences are unavoidable. Please call the Temple office at (603) 886-1633 if your child will be out of school. Students are expected to make up missed class work. Our teachers communicate via e-mail. Please contact them about any missed class work and assignments so that your child does not fall behind. (see the staff contact list provided at the end of this Parent Handbook).

We are always concerned about the health of our students, and ask that you keep your child at home if the following is present:

- A fever of 99 or greater
- A fever within the last 24 hours
- Vomiting or diarrhea within the last 24 hours

If the number of absences becomes excessive, we will contact you for a conference and may recommend supplementary tutoring to help the student return to a level of successful achievement.

## Service Requirements

Each student has a required number of services to attend.

Grades 1 and 2	4 services
Grades 3	7 services
Grades 4 and 5	10 services
Grades 6 and 7	15 services

A sign-in sheet, as well as a status chart tracking each student's service attendance is available in the Temple lobby. It is the responsibility of the student and parent(s) to document attendance.

Two-thirds of the service requirements should be met by the end of the second trimester. More than half of the total required services must be attended at Congregation Betenu. For services attended elsewhere, the parent(s) should notify the Principal *in writing* so that attendance is accurately documented and credited. **For the student to become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, ten (10) services must be attended by the end of the second trimester.** Parents will be expected to petition the Education Committee if this requirement is not met.

## Books and Supplies

Students are issued one copy of a textbook or workbook that is being used for each class. If a student loses a book, the replacement will be charged to the parents at the cost that the Temple must pay to replace the book. Students are expected to bring a writing utensil.

## **Homework**

Homework reinforces the concepts learned in class. Students are expected to complete their homework assignments in a timely and satisfactory manner.

## **Report Cards**

Progress Reports are issued twice a year at the end of each ten (10) week semester. They should be returned signed the following week. A final Report Card is issued at the end of the year on the last day of school.

## **Snacks**

Snack time is at 10:25am. **Please provide your child with a healthy snack from home.**

Students eat their snacks in the kitchen area of the Temple. Eating and drinking beverages other than water is not allowed anywhere else in the building. Water is allowed in the classroom. We encourage students to have eaten breakfast before attending school to fuel their brains and bodies.

Although the building is not strictly kosher, all food brought into the building must comply with Congregation Betenu's non-kosher food policy which prohibits pig-derived (including pepperoni pizza) and shellfish products. If in doubt as to what foods may or may not be brought in, contact the Temple office.

## **Parent Involvement**

The parent(s) of Congregation Betenu Religious School students are encouraged to support and participate in Temple-wide events in which students are involved, including the parent hosted class Oneg Shabbat at Friday Evening Services and holiday parties. Services and events are posted electronically weekly and monthly. Be sure you are included on the email list.

## **Behavioral Expectations**

Our school promotes the ideals of self-respect, respect for other human beings, and respect for the special nature of the building and the subjects taught. It is our goal to foster a greater sense of personal responsibility in the student for his/her own behavior (kavod atzmi), and to establish an environment conducive to learning for all students (k'vod hamkom). Students should come to school ready to learn, share, and interact with members of the community.

Our teachers reward appropriate and positive behavior to establish a community of learning in each classroom. We recognize that certain circumstances in the student's life may impact behavior. Please inform the school of any life change or medical situation that may affect your child's learning or behavior. Each situation will be considered on an individual basis. We adhere to strict policies of confidentiality. Non-compliant or dangerous behaviors will be reported immediately to parents. The safety of all students is of high consideration to the Betenu staff.

Respect for our building is taught by our staff. If a student purposefully damages the property, parents will be informed and reimbursement for damages inflicted may be requested. A parent conference may be requested and scheduled at any time.

## **Successful Completion of School Year**

Students who successfully complete the following minimum requirements will move to the next grade level and will receive credit for successful completion of one (1) year of attendance at Congregation Betenu Religious School:

1. The student must complete the academic requirements and class attendance requirements of each grade level. In case of disagreement, the Principal, Rabbi, and Education committee will arbitrate. Special arrangements can and will be made for learning disabled children and/or special needs children.
2. The student must attend the required number of services for the student's grade level. Parents are responsible for documenting services attended. As previously stated, two-thirds of the required services need to be at Congregation Betenu, and parents taking children to services at another synagogue must notify the teacher or the rabbi *in writing* to document that they have fulfilled the requirement elsewhere.

## **Scholarships**

The Diantha Gross Educational Endowment Fund provides need-based scholarships to Religious School students.

If you are in need of financial assistance for your children to attend Religious School, please call or email the Betenu office for application forms. All information will remain confidential. Members may apply at any point during the school year.

## **Curriculum Overview**

### **Grades 1 and 2**

Grades 1 and 2 are taught using an "open classroom" concept where children work at their own pace and level under the supervision of a teacher and the teacher's assistants. The children study the URJ Mitkadem Hebrew curriculum, CHAI Jewish studies, music, and arts and crafts. Classes meet every Sunday from 9:30-11:30am. The students have the option to stay for the final hour from 11:30am -12:30pm.

# Grades 3 through 7

## Jewish Studies

Students study Torah, Avodah, G'milut Chasadim, and Jewish History using the URJ CHAI curriculum.

## Hebrew

The Hebrew language is the spark by which we ignite our lives as Jews. It is integral to our worship service, Jewish culture, and it is the sacred and living language of our people.

The URJ *Mitkadem* program is constructed of 23 *ramot*, or levels. Students may work independently or with other students at a similar level, and/or with a student madrich (aide) in a "tutorial" relationship.

The curriculum includes:

- ❖ Knowledge of the Alef-Bet; consonants, vowels, phonetics, building vocabulary.
- ❖ Ability to parse Hebrew to be able to read words the students have not seen before.
- ❖ Ability to recognize familiar words and to be able to read those with fluency.
- ❖ Prayers that are recited at services, at home, and at Jewish communal celebrations.
- ❖ Understanding the general underlying meaning of the prayers and some modern vocabulary.

## Period Three: (Music, Prayers & Blessings)

All students will assemble in the Sanctuary for music and further exploration of prayers and blessings. They will then engage in discussion and apply what they have learned in a weekly service journal.

## Bar/Bat Mitzvah and Confirmation

### Bar/Bat Mitzvah Date Scheduling

The parent(s) will normally be notified during the Spring term of the sixth grade year as to their student's eligibility for scheduling a Bar/Bat Mitzvah date at Congregation Betenu. The parent(s) will be permitted to reserve a Bar/Bat Mitzvah date with the Rabbi and Temple Office if:

1. The student will be at least thirteen (13) years of age on the desired date of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
2. The student has expressed a desire to become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah and to do the required work, and the parent(s) have expressed a desire to support the student, as demonstrated by a signed commitment.
3. The student has expressed a desire to practice Judaism exclusively, and the parent(s) have expressed a desire to support the student, as demonstrated by a signed commitment.

4. The parent(s) has (have) met their current financial obligation to the Temple, as verified by the Treasurer, or have made other arrangements.
5. The student has met their service attendance requirements, as defined in the Policies and Procedure section, for all prior years of attendance at Congregation Betenu Religious School, as verified by the Principal of the Religious School.
6. The student is in good academic standing in the Religious School, as verified by their Religious School teacher.
7. The student has met the following educational and residency requirements:
  - a. The student has successfully completed a minimum of (3) consecutive years of Jewish religious education at Congregation Betenu, including the year prior to Bar/Bat Mitzvah. The requirements for successful completion of a year of religious school at Congregation Betenu are defined in the Policies and Procedures section.
  - b. For those students who have transferred to Congregation Betenu Religious school from another area, proof of successful completion of at least two (2) consecutive years of Jewish religious education just prior to transfer must be submitted AND, the student has successfully completed at least one (1) year of Jewish religious education at Congregation Betenu, including the year prior to Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
  - c. If the student's Jewish religious education is from a non-formal setting, credit for the two (2) years of Jewish religious education in (a) above can be received by permission of the Rabbi, Education Committee, and Religious School staff, however completion of at least one (1) year of Jewish religious education at Congregation Betenu, including the year prior to Bar/Bat Mitzvah will not be waived under any circumstances.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah dates are scheduled on a first-come first-served basis. It is the responsibility of the student and parent(s) to maintain eligibility during the period between scheduling and the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. The staff will make every effort to inform the parent(s) if eligibility problems should arise, however, **the Rabbi and Executive Board reserve the right to rescind the date if eligibility is not maintained and arrangements have not been made.**

## **Post Bar/Bat Mitzvah Continuing Education**

The student and parent(s) must be committed to completing the following post Bar/Bat Mitzvah requirements:

1. If the student is a Spring Bar/Bat Mitzvah (13th Birthday between Jan. 1 and Jul. 31), then he/she is required to finish the current year of religious school. In addition, two (2) years of post Bar/Bat Mitzvah classes at Congregation Betenu are required.
2. If the student is an Autumn Bar/Bat Mitzvah (13th Birthday between Aug. 1 and Dec. 31), then he/she is required to take two (2) years of post Bar/Bat Mitzvah classes at Congregation Betenu.
3. Those not falling into category 1 or 2 will be considered on an individual basis.

This requirement may be waived for children who are learning disabled and/or special needs. Post Bar/Bat Mitzvah class is billed the same as any of the other religious school classes.

**Students and parent(s) may be required to sign an agreement allowing the Rabbi and/or the Temple to charge the parent(s) for uncompleted post Bar/Bat Mitzvah classes.**

## **Bar/Bat Mitzvah Service**

### **Minimum Service Requirements**

At a minimum, the student must perform the following parts of the service as a Bar/Bat Mitzvah:

1. Recite the Torah Blessings before and after the Torah portion in Hebrew.
2. Recite the Torah portion in Hebrew.
3. Lead the majority of the service (English/Hebrew mix depends on the individual)
4. Give a D'var Torah (original speech in student's own words) on a subject that is relevant to the Torah portion.

These requirements can be modified or waived for students who are learning disabled and/or have special needs, but still want to have a Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony.

Optionally, the student may perform additional parts of the service, which can be arranged with the Rabbi (eg. Haftarah in Hebrew/English, Haftarah Blessings, etc.)

### **Location**

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah service must be held at the Temple, unless anticipated attendance exceeds Temple capacity (about 225).

### **Time**

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah service may be performed during either the Friday Evening or Saturday Morning services.

### **Parent's Responsibilities at Service(s)**

The parent(s) are responsible for hosting the Oneg Shabbat immediately following the Friday Evening service and for hosting the Kiddush following the Saturday Morning service, if the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is held on Saturday. Even if there is a luncheon outside the Temple, a minimal Kiddush must be provided at the temple. This may be as minimal as wine and a loaf of Challah.

### **Invitations**

The parent(s) must place a blanket invitation to the congregation to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony (not the reception or party) in the Temple newsletter. Deadline for the newsletter is the 15th of the month and it is usually delivered before the first of the month. (eg. if the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is scheduled for May 8, then the announcement should be in the Temple office by the 15th of March!).

In addition, it is required that all members of student's Bar/Bat Mitzvah class receive individual invitations to all events that include children (eg. ceremony and reception/party). Each student should support his or her classmates by making a concerted effort to attend everyone's Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony.

Although many family friends and relatives may receive individual invitations and be present at the ceremony, it is the congregation that certifies the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony. **THERE SHOULD BE AT LEAST TEN (10) ADULT POST BAT/BAT MITZVAH AGED**

**MEMBERS OF CONGREGATION BETENU IN ATTENDANCE AT THE CEREMONY TO MAKE THE EVENT "OFFICIAL". It is the responsibility of the parent(s) to ensure this invitation requirement is met.**

### **Service Prayerbooks**

The Temple's prayerbook, "Gates of Prayer" may be used for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service, however many students and parent(s) choose to create their own prayerbook. Sample prayerbooks are available for reference in the Temple Office and members of the Religious Practices committee can provide assistance in preparing a Bar/Bat Mitzvah prayerbook. Contact the Rabbi or Temple Office for more information.

### **Honors**

Up to twelve (12) honors may be given during the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service. All honorees must be older than thirteen years of age, except for siblings under 13 who are permitted to open and close the ark. Non-Jewish participants are welcome and requested to participate. The parent(s) should plan on speaking to their children from the pulpit. Congregation Betenu policy requires that if both parents are Jewish and married to each other, then both must be members. In the few rare cases where this policy has not been enforced, non-member Jewish spouses will be treated as non-Jews for the purpose of pulpit honors.

## **Confirmation**

Confirmation may occur after the completion of the "continuing education" requirement following Bar/Bat Mitzvah. An actual Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony is not a requirement or prerequisite for confirmation. Confirmation will be held at the Friday Evening service closest to the Shavuot celebration (May/June time frame). Congregation Betenu views confirmation as an affirmation by the student, who is making the following statements:

- I am now into my teenage years and more mature than a 13 year old, Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
- The Jewish knowledge that I have gained since my Bar/Bat Mitzvah reflects my thoughts as opposed to merely echoing my parents' commitment and wishes for me.
- Based on what I know to date, I have decided that Judaism is and will be something that is an important part of my life.
- For families practicing multiple religions, where the choice is being "left to the child", Confirmation is a re-affirmation of Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

# School Calendar

Congregation Betenu Religious School

Calendar

2009-2010 School Year, 5769 - 5770

August 30	First Day of School - <b>Parent Meeting at 11:30am; 12:10pm - Meet the Teachers</b>
September 13	
October 4	Rabbi visits the school
October 11	Simchat Torah
October 18	
October 25	
November 1	
November 8	
November 15	
November 22	Progress Report #1 - End of First Trimester
December 6	First day of Second Trimester
December 13	
December 20	Winter Break until January 3rd
January 3	
January 10	
January 17	
January 24	
January 31	
February 7	
February 14	Progress Report #2 - End of Second Trimester
February 21	Beginning of Third Trimester
March 7	
March 14	
March 21	
March 28	
April 4	
April 11	
April 18	Rabbi visits the school
May 2	
May 9	Last Day of School <b>11:30am Parents Meeting - 12:00pm - Diploma Ceremony &amp; Reports</b>
May 16	Possible Snow makeup days
May 23	

## **Staff Contact List**

Congregation Betenu Religious School

Staff Contact List  
2009-2010 School Year, 5769 - 5770

<b>Name</b>	<b>Phone</b>	<b>Email</b>
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Sheryl Liberman, VP Education	(603) 424-4609	saml54@comcast.net
Rahel Limor, Principal	(603) 672-3682, 769-9553	rahel@rahelmusic.com
Sonia Campeanu, Hebrew Teacher	(603) 421-9015, 244-9650	skamener@hotmail.com
Don Wunderlich, Jewish Studies Teacher		donaldwunderlich@comcast.net
Sandra Whitman, Teacher, Grades 1 & 2	(603) 867-2422	dclbrewer@msn.com

## Revision History

Revision Number	Date	Comment
1.0	September 2005	First version
2.0	September 2007	The following sections were revised: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Religious School Schedule</li> <li>- Parent Meetings</li> <li>- Snacks</li> <li>- Behavioral Expectations</li> <li>- School Calendar</li> <li>- Staff Contact List</li> </ul>
3.0	September 2008	The following sections were revised: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Religious School Schedule</li> <li>- Service Requirements</li> <li>- Snacks</li> <li>- Curriculum</li> <li>- School Calendar</li> <li>- Removed Staff Contact List. It will be made available separately.</li> </ul>
4.0	August 2009	The following sections were revised: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Principal's Message</li> <li>- Religious School Philosophy</li> <li>- Policies and Procedures</li> <li>- Curriculum</li> <li>- School Calendar</li> <li>- School Cancellation Policy</li> <li>- Teacher Contact List</li> </ul>

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Congregation Betenu is a member of the Union of Reform Congregations.