

*You shall love the Adonai you God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your being. Take to heart these instructions with which I charge you this day. Impress them upon your children. Recite them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them serve as a symbol on your forehead; inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. -Deuteronomy 6: 5-9*

These are the words that begin the *V'ahavta* prayer which are recited during a Jewish prayer service (*t'filah*). This prayer serves as a reminder for Jews that loving God and learning are connected, as well as explaining how Jews are to mark certain transitions: recognition of God's oneness when one transitions in and out of sleep (and their soul has returned to them); affixing a *mezuzah* on the doorposts in order to mark the transition into and out from a Jewish space; *tefillin* to mark the transition in and out of a *t'filah* service; and teaching children all of the instructions so that they can make the transition into becoming members of the Jewish community.

These transitional markers serve the function of enacting a ritual, even when the enactment is as simple as touching their hand to the *mezuzah* (and sometimes kissing their hands before or after). However, the act of touching the *mezuzah* is not just to acknowledge the presence of the Jewish space one is entering or leaving, but also a recognition of the piece of parchment encased within the *mezuzah*. By touching the *mezuzah*, one is expressing their love and respect for God and God's commandments and this small ritual enactment is a reminder of those commandments contained within.

Religions have many rituals in order to serve as reminders of the value placed on the system and community one is subscribing to. Famed French sociologist, Emile Durkheim, described religion as a "unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, i.e., things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community, called a Church, all those who adhere to them."<sup>1</sup> Religion serves as that cultural system to which one can belong and that religious community can then function to make meaning between a way of life which adheres to that religion and the universe. Religion frames human belief and action within the context of some cosmic order which can be reflected back

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<sup>1</sup> Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 115.

onto human existence.<sup>2</sup> By belonging to a religious community one is accepting that there is something larger at play that they can be a part of: to the larger immediate community one finds themselves in, that larger religious community across the world, and to God. The *V'ahavta* prayer is a part of the larger religious framework that makes up the conceptual notion of Judaism – the value system which outlines worldviews, cultural expectations, behaviors and practices, and sanctified places and moments.

Rituals, then, hold up what binds community together.<sup>3</sup> Rituals cannot exist solely in the minds and hearts of the religious community members. Rituals are enacted within a religious framework and play out as sanctified moments within the calendar cycle that brings the community together either physically or spiritually. Rituals serve as markers of transition either within the set calendar of the tradition or as moments to set aside to demonstrate a level of respect or importance. When done well, ritual has the potential to connect generations of that religious community, “linking fellow participants but often going beyond this to connect a group of celebrants to wider collectivities, even the ancestors and those unborn.”<sup>4</sup> Ritual has the potential power to create personal meaning-making which can guide members to action and purpose in order to serve the larger collective. Enacting a ritual can affect our senses causes us to become stimulated mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and physically. The ritual itself acts as the transitional marker between two states of being on a symbolic level. The ritual is performed, and the moment and its participants are transformed, a momentous metamorphosis - a moment after which one is never again the same.<sup>5</sup>

When enacting existing or creating new rituals, Jews will typically utilize the following components of their “Jewish toolbox”:

- Texts (e.g. biblical passages, teaching of the sages, folktales, prayer liturgies, poems, and songs)
- Familiar and resonant Jewish ritual actions and objects (e.g. blessings, praying, singing, lighting candles, Torah scrolls, prayer books, prayer shawls)

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<sup>2</sup> Clifford Geertz, *Religion as a cultural system* (Fontana Press, 1993), 90.

<sup>3</sup> Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, 115.

<sup>4</sup> Barbara G. Myerhoff, *Death in Due Time: Construction of Self and Culture in Ritual Drama* (Philadelphia: ISHI, 1984), 395.

<sup>5</sup> Ronald Grimes, *Deeply into the Bone: Re-Inventing Rites of Passage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 6.

-Enduring, core Jewish understandings (e.g. presence of God, merit of ancestors, obligation to lead a sanctified life, blessing of the land of Israel, significance of preserving Jewish memory through study, ethical obligations held toward fellow Jews and all of humankind)<sup>6</sup>

These components make the ritual being performed feel Jewish as it grounds every act done and every word spoken during the ritual to provide clear boundaries that the space and moment that the participants are in is a Jewish one.

Rituals exist for a moment in time within the context of a religion which will ideally be sustained beyond that moment. This is all the more so true in Judaism as it is understood that learning is a lifelong activity – that “the Torah is a tree of life to all who hold fast to it.”<sup>7</sup> One can sustain one’s self by studying Torah as it contains all of the knowledge and wisdom one would ever need to lead a meaningful and satisfying life. In turn, this recognition of Torah’s value sustains Judaism and it binds the Jewish people together, regardless of denominational differences. As adults we can understand that Torah is that lifelong process which we can return to and derive new meanings from at different stages in our lives. Jewish tradition even has a ritual for this lifelong process of learning as being without end during *Simchat Torah*, a holiday on which Jews celebrate the starting over of our weekly reading of *Torah*. As we finish reading the final verse in the book of Deuteronomy we immediately begin with the first line of the book of Genesis. The ritual is the beginning again as we know that it only last for that ritualistic moment; we do not have to continue to read the rest of Genesis right then and there.

Therefore, the transitional moment of beginnings is seen as important as it sets the tone for what follows. Ideally, Jewish children are exposed to Judaism in their homes from an early age. The beginning stages of a Jewish child’s engagement with Judaism is important as it sets the stage for their entire Jewish life. Children can observe their parents enacting certain Jewish rituals: affixing and touching the *mezuzah*; lighting and blessing candles for *Shabbat* each Friday evening; reciting blessings of gratitude over their meals; decorating the home for various holidays such as building a *sukkah* on *Sukkot* or lighting the candles on *Hanukkah*; and reading through a *haggadah* on Passover for the *seder*. Even if a family is engaging with these rituals in a cultural manner, the informal education of the child as to what it means to do Jewish is valuable.

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<sup>6</sup> Vanessa L. Ochs, *Inventing Jewish Ritual* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2007), 5-7.

<sup>7</sup> Proverbs 3:18

As referenced in the *V'ahavta* prayer, Judaism places value on the education of children. Before, a child's Jewish education (and education in general) was the responsibility of the parents; today, we "outsource" in the form of Religious Schools or Jewish Day Schools that are usually attached to the larger synagogue or Jewish community center. There, Jewish children learn to read and write Hebrew, gain a better understanding of their Jewish heritage, and prepare to become contributing members of the Jewish community as a whole. At these Jewish Schools, Jewish children can interact with their peers and learn from the community as a whole as they will be integrated into the Jewish calendar through learning and activities. The goal is that, over many years, our children will grow into learned and active Jewish individuals and will come to understand that Judaism is a process and is meant to be engaged with over the course of one's life. There will be milestones along the way that will be infused with Jewish meaning, such as *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* and Confirmation, but that these are only milestones and not ends themselves. What we have witnessed over a few decades now is the shift in perspective from *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* as a milestone ritual to be performed and not allowing for it to be a ritual which transforms. The rabbinic understanding of the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* is that the child makes a transition into Jewish adulthood and is committed to the lifelong pursuit of justice and learning. However, the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* has come to be seen by many as an end to one's Jewish education. This leads to generations growing up as teenagers and adults who have not engaged in Jewish education since they were 12 or 13 and coming back into the synagogue or Jewish community center if and when they have children of their own. This, in turn, makes for the "outsourcing" of one's Jewish education truly feel distant as the parents drop the child off at school and do not regularly engage in Judaism in their own homes as Judaism is seen as something that only happens for a few hours a week in a building across town.

How, then, can we possibly begin to shift the narrative of Jewish education? Most Jewish professionals want to better prepare families who are committed to raising their child(ren) as Jewish. We know that parents used to be the ones responsible for educating their child(ren) and much of what we do in our Jewish Schools only focuses on the child(ren). Even at many of these education milestones the parents are only asked to be audience members or maybe give a short speech – they are hardly included in the process leading up to the event outside of logistical

needs. It seems as though we must turn our attentions to the very beginning of the child's Jewish educational journey and figure out how to get the parents involved from the start so that they are invested and active participants learning alongside their child(ren).

Many of our Jewish Schools already have a ceremony set up for the beginning of a child's Jewish education: Consecration. The idea behind this ceremony is to mark the important first step in the child's Jewish education and to consecrate the moment, make it sacred. The idea of consecration can be traced back to Talmud when it mentions that a parent must train/initiate/dedicate the child with regards to their religious responsibilities in order for the child to understand how to uphold the commandments properly when they themselves are adults and are fully responsible for their actions.<sup>8</sup> The ceremony itself is a relatively newer concept which can be attributed to Rabbi David Einhorn, one of the early leading figures of Reform Judaism in America. Rabbi Einhorn was adamant about spirituality being more important than *halakhah*, so he suggested that Judaism replace the *brit milah* ritual with a consecration ritual as the more appropriate beginning of a child's life in the Jewish community.<sup>9</sup> The purpose of the Consecration ritual, then, was to mark the beginning of one's Jewish learning within an organized Jewish setting, such as a synagogue or Jewish community center.

Consecration often takes place at the end of the High Holidays and will typically occur during or around the community's celebration of *Simchat Torah*. We can look to Deuteronomy 31:12 to find a textual basis as to why a community would place Consecration on the calendar at this time: "Gather the people – men, women, children, and the strangers in your communities – that they may hear and so learn to revere Adonai your God and to observe faithfully every word of this *Torah*."<sup>10</sup> During *Simchat Torah* the community typically will celebrate by reading from *Torah*, singing and dancing with *Torah*, unrolling the scroll for everyone to see the words of the tradition. The celebration is interactive and engaging – perfect for young children to participate in and to get excited about joining the community. Other communities look at Consecration as a statement of dedication and choose to recognize their new students around

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<sup>8</sup> Yoma 82a

<sup>9</sup> Barry Shinker, "Simchat Torah and Consecration," Ten Minutes of Torah, URJ, posted October 21, 2011. <http://www.jewishduluth.org/rabbi/2011/10/21/simchat-torah-and-consecration-an-article-from-the-union-for.html>

<sup>10</sup> Deuteronomy 31:12

*Hanukkah*, a holiday commemorating the survival of the Jewish people at a time when they needed to rededicate the desecrated Temple. Other communities will schedule their Consecration ceremony to take place in the spring during *Shavuot*, the holiday commemorating the reception of *Torah* which correlates to the beginning of a child's Jewish education. This is also the time of the year when our teens are typically Confirmed as a reaffirmation of their dedication to their Jewish learning up until that point in their lives. Regardless of where the Consecration ritual falls on the calendar, it is clear that the event is important and a constant reminder to the commitment that the Jewish community makes to educating the next generation.

The ceremony itself should be just as inspiring as the community can gather to see the excitement the children have for beginning their Jewish education, and the community can gain a renewed sense of spirit and passion for their own continued learning. However, many Consecration ceremonies cater to being photo opportunities for the parents in the room, once again removing them from this momentous occasion they have chosen to participate in. That is not to say that parents can't *kvell* over their child(ren), but the ceremony should try to include the adults as well as they are making the public declaration that their child are raising this child as Jewish.

Consecration exists as a ceremony to welcome young children into Judaism and it makes sense that it is shorter and geared towards a more tactile engagement to stimulate the needs of this age group. There is no one way to do a Consecration ritual, but many include the giving of miniature *Torah* scrolls to the young child(ren) in order to make the tradition feel tangible and let them gain a sense of ownership over their participation in this journey. Some communities look to Ezekiel 3:3 for inspiration as it says: "God said to me, "Mortal, feed your stomach and fill your belly with this scroll that I give you." I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey to me." From this verse came an Ashkenazic tradition:

on the first day of school all new students were given slates with Hebrew letters and a few verses from *Torah* written on them with honey. The teacher would read the letters and verses out loud, the child would repeat them back to the teacher, and the child

would then lick the honey off of the slates, forever correlating learning with the sweetness of honey.<sup>11</sup>

Along with the miniature *Torah* scrolls and use of honey, many communities will invite the young students up to sing a song or two and receive a blessing from the rabbi(s) while standing under a *tallit*. Due to the age of the students participating in this ritual, hardly any information is provided as to why some of these blessings are offered, or why they are standing under the prayer shawl. Therefore, utilizing the concepts discussed along with our "Jewish toolbox," I would like to quickly explore a few ways to enhance the Consecration ceremony as it currently exists.

#### Suggested Texts for Use Throughout the Ritual

Ezekiel 3:3 is useful to relate the sweetness of *Torah* and learning to a child and their family, however, it may come off as being too much teaching for young children. Everyone loves a good story and I have included one relating to the sweetness of learning at the end of this paper which can be adapted. Stories are incredible teaching tools that can convey values and meaning, all while capturing the imagination of those listening.

Kindergarten is a wonderful age to begin learning some Hebrew songs and the Consecration ritual can be that time to let these students feel like active participants in the ceremony. Some fairly easy songs one can teach Kindergarten-age students are "Five Book Strut" by Noam Katz, and "*Torah Tziva Lanu Moshe*," (from Deuteronomy 33: 4) both of which are attached at the end of this paper. These songs are wonderful ways of introducing the students to the books of *Torah* as well as teaching a little bit of Hebrew which places the receiving of *Torah* for our ancestors and can link to them receiving the miniature *Torah* scrolls on the date of their Consecration.

When appropriate, the Priestly Blessing (Numbers 6: 24-26) is a powerful way to close out any ceremony or ritual. The blessing is one of our oldest and it can provide a great deal of comfort and grounding for the moment. The blessing itself is fairly simple and one can tinker

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<sup>11</sup> William Barclay, *Educational Ideals in the Ancient World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974), 12-13.

with the translation depending on the setting and those being blessed. I am including a translation<sup>12</sup> I find to be appropriate for both the Kindergarten students and their families who will be hearing these words of blessing:

יְבָרֵךְ יְהוָה וְיִשְׁמְרֵךְ

May God bless you and protect you always

יֵאָר יְהוָה פְּנֵי אֱלֹהֵיךָ וְיִהְיֶךָ

May you feel God's light graciously guiding you

יִשָּׂא יְהוָה פְּנֵי אֱלֹהֵיךָ וְיִשָּׂם לְךָ שְׁלוֹמִים

May you come to see the Divine in every face that you encounter,  
and may you know peace now and forever

#### Suggested Familiar and Resonant Ritual Actions and Objects

First off, I would suggest that this ritual take place during *Shabbat*. Much of what is ailing Jewish education at the moment is having so many isolated events and ceremonies that take the community out of the experience. *Shabbat* is Jewish time and space when community can come together and feel united in tradition. The *Shabbat* chosen should be at the beginning of the year as that is when the students will be starting their Jewish education. It can be up to the community whether this falls near *Simchat Torah* or not.

Also, with placing the Consecration ceremony during *Shabbat* one can lead the service and integrate a few more teachings over the course of the service instead of cramming everything in at once and potentially having the intended message of the Consecration be muddled and hurried. By grounding Consecration within a *Shabbat* service, we can link the holiness of education with the holiness of *Shabbat*, an experience the child and family can participate in every week and be reminded of their commitment to live Jewishly. The ritualistic aspects that accompany *Shabbat* – the candles, wine, challah, etc. – all of these are recognizably Jewish and accessible in any community they will find themselves in.

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<sup>12</sup> Keshira haLev Fife. *Interpretation of Birkhat Kohanim (and Kohanot)*. Ritual Well.  
<https://www.ritualwell.org/ritual/interpretations-birkhat-kohanim-and-kohanot>

The miniature *Torah* scrolls are a bit kitschy, but I believe that it is important for the child(ren) to feel that sense of ownership over the tradition – that they can physically hold it in their hands, not be afraid of it, and take it with them back to their homes. All of this will serve to allow the child and their families to recognize that Judaism happens outside of the walls of their synagogue or Jewish community center.

The use of a *tallit* or *tallitot* (depending on the size of the class) should be understood as the tent we are welcoming these new students into. The opportunity for them to learn is open and welcoming, they can come and go as they explore and experience, and that their journeys will always have the protection and backing of their community. The *tallit* will be raised above their heads to serve as that symbol of protection as well as a goal to reach for, as it will be years until they will wear a *tallit* themselves in honor of the *mitzvot* they will one day be responsible for engaging with.

Jews often give their child(ren) a Ritual name at birth and it is hardly used outside of those certain ritual moments of honor in the religious community. Consecration is a ritual, therefore, it is strongly suggested that the child's Ritual name be included on any certificate that is given to the child and their family to keep a record of. The Secular and Hebrew dates should also be included for continuity purposes and grounding the experience in Judaism. If the child was not given a Ritual name at birth, this should be known ahead of time and will provide the family and the rabbi(s) a wonderful opportunity to create a meaningful Ritual name for the child that they will have for the rest of their lives.

#### Suggested Enduring, Core Jewish Understandings

Presence of God – this should be achieved by grounding the event within a *Shabbat* service, a time in which we dedicate ourselves to resting just as God rested and continuing to acknowledge the blessings we have because of God. Kindergarten-age children may not have a strong concept of God, but I would argue that many of the adults we will be serving do not either. The more we can keep God accessible to our participants, the more likely they are to want to engage in their own relationship with God and to the tradition.

Generational Engagement – Judaism is not a new thing. Judaism as a religion, culture, tradition, people – whatever and however one connects to Judaism has been around for a long time and will continue to be in some form as time moves on. As noted earlier, it is important to recognize that this is the beginning of the formal Jewish education for these students but that should not come at the expense of recognizing the family's choice to raise their child(ren) as Jewish. This is a huge moment for the family and should be celebrated as such. The parents should be involved in the ceremony and it is recommended that they are the ones who hold the *tallit/ot* over their child(ren). This will demonstrate to the students that the parents are committed to their education and it will make the moment feel all the more communal – that all of the parents are responsible for this experience, and not just to their own child(ren). There may be a question of participation from those adults who are not Jewish, however I see it as still being permissible for those adults to hold the *tallit/ot* over the children as it demonstrates the commitment to the child's Jewish upbringing, not their own personal practices or beliefs.

Importance of Education and Lifelong Learning – Including the adults can fit into this category as well, however, I am considering how meaningful it would be for everyone involved if communities could include their 6<sup>th</sup> Graders in this ceremony. My suggestion is having the 6<sup>th</sup> Graders be the ones who hand the miniature *Torah* scrolls to the Kindergarten students. This act will serve as a demonstration to the Kindergarteners that even older kids participate in Judaism, it will remind the 6<sup>th</sup> Graders that they were once in that moment and that they have come so far in their journey which will continue well into their future, and it will show the community that *Torah* and Jewish learning is indeed the ongoing process we all want it to be.

I recognize that the act of being handed a miniature *Torah* by a total stranger might be intimidating, and I suggest that the community works to have at least one meeting during Jewish School hours between the Kindergartners and the 6<sup>th</sup> Graders before the Consecration *Shabbat*. At this meeting, the 6<sup>th</sup> Graders can introduce themselves to their Kindergarten buddy, they can all enjoy a bagel and shmeor, and the 6<sup>th</sup> Grader can bring their favorite childhood book to share with the Kindergartner. The rationale behind the bringing and reading of their favorite book is to create that shared joy of childhood reading and imagination, and to connect the book with *Torah* for both parties: the book being shared is just as accessible to them as the

*Torah* is (we are the People of the Book, after all). By creating a successful meeting between these two grades,

- the Kindergartners will feel welcomed into the community by someone older, wiser
- the 6<sup>th</sup> Graders can then sit with the Kindergartners at future services, snack times, or just be a friendly face around the school
- the 6<sup>th</sup> Graders will recognize the importance of their Jewish educational journey up until this point, and perhaps even give them a renewed spirit and perspective going into their *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* year

Consecration has been a very cute and kitschy event up until this point, and that's not necessarily anyone's fault. We are honoring Kindergarten-age children who have not necessarily been Jewishly educated to understand the implications of the ceremony. However, I am confident that if we put a little bit of effort into crafting a genuinely unique and holy moment for the students and their families that is inclusive of every member of that family – along with other members of the community – we will be setting our communities up for success in the long run. Consecration can be a beautiful moment of transition and should be a ritual of renewal every year for those communities that commit to recognizing that Judaism is the lifelong process of active engagement we were promised when we were children.

## Suggested Outline of the Service for Consecration *Shabbat*

### *Kindergarten teachers light Shabbat Candles to open up services*

"Shabbat is a time we set aside to experience something different from the rest of the week. We take Shabbat as a day of rest, and also as a way to connect with the Divine. We are given a small taste of what the world could be and when Shabbat is over we try to hold onto to those ideas and feelings until Shabbat comes again. Each Shabbat is new, each Shabbat makes us new.

On this Shabbat, we set aside a special group of individuals as we welcome them into our community of learning and doing. Our Kindergartners will be Consecrated this evening. They will get a taste of the holiness that is Shabbat, that is this community, and they will start to take with them into next Shabbat, and the Shabbat after that, and the Shabbat after that.

We begin Shabbat every week by lighting two candles to show us that this is indeed a new and holy time, a new and holy space. We would like to invite up our Kindergarten teachers to light these Shabbat candles this week, as they will be the lights to show our students the way this year."

*Shabbat Services* will run as they always per tradition in the community. *Iyyunim / Kavanot* can be included throughout that connect the spirit of the evening with the prayers.

### *In lieu of a sermon, we will perform our Consecration Ritual:*

-Sweet as Honey story (attached)

-Kindergartners are invited up to sing the songs they prepared ('Five Book Strut' and '*Torah Tziva Lanu Moshe*')

"Tonight, on this *Shabbat*, we welcome our Kindergartners into our community for their Consecration. There are many years ahead of them of learning and doing Jewish, and tonight they have the chance to show us what they have learned so far. We would like to invite our Kindergartners up to raise their voices in song and to teach us a little bit about *Torah*."

-Kindergarten and 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Parents are invited up to hold *tallit/ot* over the student

"We are going to ask that our Kindergarten students stay up here because we are going to have some very special people joining you to help make this moment extra special.... Our sages asked, "who is considered to be wise?" They believed that someone was wise if they learned from others, not just thinking that they knew everything on their own. Our Kindergarten class is here tonight to celebrate the start of their Jewish education. We are also here tonight to celebrate those who have helped you get to this moment: your parents. They have been teaching you everyday of your lives so far, and they will continue to share their wisdom with you for many years to come. We would like to invite your parents up now and we ask that they grab a *tallit* on their way up. ... We're going to have all of the parents standing across from each

other, holding out the *tallitot* so as to create a protective covering, a tent of peace that our Kindergarteners will now stand under as they are welcomed into our community. ...

-Invite up 6<sup>th</sup> Graders to come hand the miniature *Torah* scrolls to the Kindergarten students  
"we don't want your parents' arms getting too tired, so we want to have our 6<sup>th</sup> Grade students come on up right now. These are members of our community who have already spent years in this building, under this roof of peace, learning and doing Jewish. In about a year's time they will all be called to read from *Torah* for the first time, standing in front of this community and taking responsibility for their Jewish journeys. They are here tonight to give our Kindergarten students the gift of a miniature *Torah* scroll, one that our students can take home with them and maybe even start practicing for their own *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* ceremonies..."

-6<sup>th</sup> Graders find their Kindergarten buddies and hand them the miniature *Torah* scrolls

-6<sup>th</sup> Graders are asked to stay as they join the Kindergarteners under the *tallitot* covering

-rabbi(s) offer Priestly Blessing upon all members being honored this evening – the Kindergarten students, their parents, and the 6<sup>th</sup> grade students

"before we let everyone sit back down we want to offer the Priestly Blessing over our Kindergarten students, their parents, and our 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. The Priestly Blessing is one of our oldest blessings in our tradition and it is still used today when parents bless their children on *Shabbat*. Tonight, we celebrate all-things holy: we set aside *Shabbat*, we consecrate our Kindergartners and welcome them into our community, we celebrate our 6<sup>th</sup> grade students as they continue to learn, and we honor our parents and teachers as they show us how to live Jewishly."

*Priestly Blessing is offered*

-Everyone is dismissed to go back to their seats to finish services.

-Kindergarten teachers hand each student/family their Consecration certificate with the child's Secular and Ritual name along with the Secular and Hebrew date

-*Oneg* after should have honey sticks, honey cakes, etc.

## Songs

### Five Book Strut (by Noam Katz)

First there's B'reishit – that's Genesis  
Sh'mot – Exodus  
Vayikra – Leviticus – and just two more  
The book of Numbers – BaMidbar  
And the very last book that we read  
In Hebrew it's called D'varim  
Deuteronomy – doo doo doo doo  
Deuteronomy – it's in the Torah

(repeat)

### Torah Tziva Lanu Moshe (Deuteronomy 33: 4)

Torah, Torah, Torah  
Torah, Torah, Torah  
Torah tziva lanu Moshe.

*The Torah was given to us by Moses*

## As Sweet as Honey (Story)

Once upon a time, there was a man named Simcha the Shoemaker. If someone in Simcha's town needed help, only a word to Simcha was necessary. He was such a good and generous man that even the angels in heaven knew of his kind acts.

Simcha lived in a small house with his wife and their son, Matok. Although Matok was only three, everyone could see that he was exceptionally intelligent. Matok knew the names of all the flowers in the field. He could tell you when it was going to rain and when it would be a nice day.

Everyone was sure that Matok would be a great scholar when he grew up. Everyone, that is, except Simcha.

Simcha knew that although Matok was very smart, he was also very lazy. Day after day, Simcha would try to interest Matok in learning the alphabet or in memorizing a few simple prayers. But Matok would always say, "Oh, father, the sky is so beautiful! Please let me look at it a little longer."

The only way Simcha could get Matok to do anything was to give him a bit of something sweet to eat. Then Matok would willingly do anything that Simcha asked. But there were few sweet things to eat in that little house. The pennies that Simcha brought home each day were used to buy basic foods like flour, salt, and potatoes. There was no room in the budget for expensive "extras" like sugar or candy.

When Matok was four, Simcha told him it was time to begin his religious education, so he could learn to read *Torah* and pray properly in *shul*. Of course, Matok was not enthusiastic about going to school. He wasn't sure what school would be like, and he was a little afraid of leaving the comfort of his home. He preferred staying near his house, gazing at the sky and enjoying all God's creation.

The night before Matok was to start school, Simcha stayed up all night and worried. How could he lessen Matok's fears and encourage him to look forward to learning in school?

Simcha's concern for Matok moved the angels, and they began to talk to one another. "Simcha is such a good man," they said. "How can we help him with his son?"

They talked and talk. Finally, one angel said, "Matok likes things that are very sweet. And that makes sense since his name, Matok, mean sweet. So, let's gather the sweetest honey from the very best hives, and I'll show you what we can do."

Working together, the angels gathered the honey, and while it was still dark, they put a drop of honey on the top and bottom of each page of Matok's schoolbook.

The next morning, when Matok opened his book in class, he noticed something sticky on the top of the page. He rubbed and licked it with his finger. It was honey! Not only was it honey, but it was the very sweetest honey he had ever tasted. He let his eyes scan the whole page and travel to the bottom of the page. There he saw another dot. He touched it, and it, too, was sticky. Again, he licked his finger and found more of the most delicious honey in the whole world. Matok began to think, "Gee, maybe school isn't so bad after all!" He soon came to appreciate the sweetness of learning even without being enticed by honey.

When he grew up, Matok became a famous teacher. Parents brought their children from miles away to his school because they heard that he knew how to transmit the sweetness of learning to children. Do you know how he did it? On the first day of school, Matok put honey on the pages of each new student's book. The students would read and lick the honey off each page. Soon they would discover that learning is "as sweet as honey."

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With all your energy, with every faculty, with every possibility of your nature. 6. And these words, which I command you this day, shall be in your heart. Oh, how blessed to have them written on the heart by the Holy Spirit! We can never get them there except He who made the heart anew shall engrave upon these fleshy tablets the Divine Precepts. 7. And you shall teach them diligently unto your children. Christian parent, have you done this? "You shall not 7. And shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up. Our common The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ~ Mt 22:37-39~.Â™; Happy Mother's Day!â™; She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come. She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue. She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: ~Proverbs 31:25-28~.