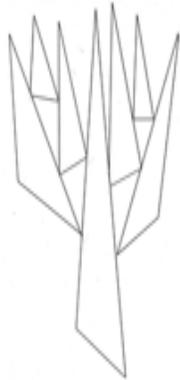


PARENT HANDBOOK

Temple Sha'arey Shalom Religious School



**Rabbi
Renee Edelman**

**Director of Education
Cantor Amy Daniels**

SCHOOL HOURS

GRADES K-2 Hebrew Together Thursdays 4:30 p.m-5:30 p.m.
Holiday Haverim – monthly Holiday activities

GRADES 3-7 Tuesday and Thursday 3:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

GRADES 8-10 Confirmation - Tuesday 5:45 p.m. – 7:45 p.m.

KeSHeT gr. 8-12 Thursday evenings, Sunday trips and events

TEMPLE OFFICE PHONE

973-379-5387

If you need to reach your student in an emergency, please call the temple office. Cell phones are to be turned off during class hours.

TEMPLE WEBSITE www.shaarey.org

TEMPLE EMAIL office@shaarey.org

TEMPLE FAX NUMBER 973-564-7516

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL SECRETARY EMAIL scroll@shaarey.org

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL DIRECTOR EMAIL
cantoramydaniels@gmail.com

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PLEASE SAVE THIS HANDBOOK!

YOU WILL ONLY RECEIVE THIS ONE HANDBOOK WHILE YOUR CHILD IS ENROLLED IN THIS SCHOOL.

UPDATES AND CALENDARS WILL BE DISTRIBUTED AT THE BEGINNING OF EACH SCHOOL YEAR.

Dear Parents,

We are delighted to welcome your child to Sha'arey Shalom Religious School. Our synagogue is proud of its outstanding education program including religious, cultural, educational and social activities.

The Jewish education of our children is a shared responsibility of the synagogue, the school and the family. Our Rabbi is integrally involved with the students at every level of their education. Family Education programs provide engaging, enriching family experiences that enable parents to strengthen the Jewish identity of their families while becoming Jewish teachers and role models for their own children.

We believe that practice of Judaism, participation in worship, rituals and ceremonies, and living Jewish values are as important to a child's Jewish education as classroom learning.

Be sure to note the dates and times of your child's class service and grade level field trips and family education activities.

Through your participation we look forward to working with you as partners in the task of passing along our heritage to the children who are our future.

Sincerely,

Cantor Amy Daniels
Director of Education

GOALS OF REFORM JEWISH EDUCATION

According to the Talmud, the world stands on three things: Torah (study), Avodah (worship), and G'milut Chasadim (deeds of loving kindness). These three basic elements of Jewish religious life comprise the core of our approach to Jewish education.

Torah: In today's highly materialistic, complex and technologically sophisticated world, communicating the centrality of Torah in our lives can be a challenging task. We strive to help students examine the stories and lessons of the Torah in a way that mirrors their own real world experiences.

Avodah: The Hebrew word for "prayer" is the same as the word for "work". The Jewish people have long understood that finding a sacred and meaningful connection to God, community and self requires intention and effort. We want our students to understand the meaning and relevance of prayer as well as achieve mastery of the Hebrew and rubrics of key synagogue and home observance prayers.

G'milut Chasadim: Though we cannot directly "know" God, we can experience the Divine Presence when we imitate God's goodness by performing acts of loving kindness that help make the world a better, more holy place. We strive to help our students make this key aspect of Jewish values and ethics a framework for living.

Adapted from CHAI: Learning For Jewish Life

How We Achieve Our Objectives

Curriculum

Our school has graded curriculum beginning in preschool and continuing through Bar/Bat Mitzvah and Confirmation. All children are encouraged to begin religious school training as early as possible. Our curriculum is designed to give our students a broad understanding of the various facets of their heritage: God, holidays, life cycle celebration, Bible, history, prayer and Hebrew language, ethics, Jewish literature and culture. Jewish holidays are celebrated in the school through assemblies, worship service and classroom activities. We also will invite parental participation in many of our celebrations and programs.

The curriculum provides the framework for each student to enrich his or her educational experiences: through regular classroom learning activities, through

individual studies using various resource materials and through arts, crafts, music and dance, which will be incorporated into the program.

Standards and Expectations

We maintain the highest possible standards in all phases of the educational process; curriculum, faculty and environment. In return, we ask that our students remember that they are in a Temple, as well as a school, and that they extend to us the same courtesy and cooperation which we give to them.

It is our goal to encourage, to stimulate, to teach, to seek mutual respect between students, and between students and their teachers. Continuing disruptive activity can only deteriorate school programs.

Trips and Special Programs

At various times during the year, we plan trips and special programs for students in different grade levels. We believe that learning takes place in many ways, and that our students benefit substantially from an enrichment of our usual curriculum through participation in a variety of activities. All pupils are expected to participate. Time and place will be announced as scheduled.

Tzedakah Program

Tzedakah is a Hebrew word that is often translated as charity. In reality, tzedakah is much more than charity. Tzedakah means "justice" and it is one of the highest mitzvot in the Jewish tradition. The performance of this mitzvah is an important part of our curriculum on all levels. Our students are encouraged to contribute to various worthwhile organizations which they learn about in their classes. We would like the children to be aware of the impact that they can have, both as individuals and as part of a larger group, in making the world a better place in which to live.

Family Services

Youngsters are encouraged to worship with their parents at all services. Certain Shabbat and holiday services, however, are particularly significant and emphasized. Family services usually begin at 7:30 p.m. and although a certain class may be responsible for participation in the service, all students and their families

should plan to attend. Please refer to your school calendar for dates and times of Holiday and Family services.

Parking

Parking is restricted to areas removed from the building itself. This is necessary in order to permit orderly and safe delivery and pick-up of children at school. When dropping off or picking up children, please drive into the lot and remain in your car. **AT PICKUP, DO NOT MOVE YOUR VEHICLE WHILE CHILDREN ARE WALKING TO THEIR CAR, WAIT FOR A SIGNAL TO MOVE!**

Please refer to the “Parking Lot Procedures” letter for more information.

Inclement Weather

Our policy is to cancel school only when absolutely necessary. Mid week classes will be cancelled on any day that the Springfield Public School system is closed because of inclement weather. If it is decided to cancel school, a notice will go out by email.

School closings will also be posted in the Temple Facebook Group. It is imperative that we have emergency contacts for each child in our records.

Textbooks

Textbooks, provided by the School, are selected for each grade level, and libraries are set up in each class. Certain books will become the property of the student. Parents are requested to become familiar with all the textbooks used by their children. At the end of the school year, textbooks belonging to the school will be collected. If textbooks are lost, a lost textbook fee will be assessed.

Progress Reports – Report Cards

Report Cards will be issued twice during the year in January and May. Parents are strongly urged to discuss with their children the progress as evidenced by the student’s grades and the teacher’s comments. Nothing is more encouraging to our young people than the interest shown by their families.

Mid semester progress reports are issued in grades 3-7 to promote ongoing communication and parental involvement. Hebrew reading assessments will be provided periodically to alert parents about students who may need extra help with Hebrew reading.

Early Dismissal

We strongly discourage having your child leave the school early, except in emergencies. The teachers have only four hours per week to meet with your children and each minute is so valuable. Not only is early dismissal disruptive to the class (or school if we are all together), it leaves your child without the opportunity to finish the lesson being taught.

Please note: Students cannot be released to anyone other than their parents without written permission from the parent.

When you come to pick up your child, please come directly to the Temple office; **do not go upstairs** to the classroom to get your child.

Please be aware that on Tuesday and Thursday we are often together as a school during worship at the end of the day. In line with our goal for school worship, we ask that you respect the decorum of the service. Teachers can only dismiss students at appropriate times during the service.

Promotion Requirements

The student who has satisfactorily completed the work of a school year will be promoted to the next grade. Promotion requirements include:

Quality of Work - a passing grade must be achieved for each course taken.
Any previous "incomplete" grades must have been cleared up.

Behavior – Satisfactory behavior must be maintained by the student in order to receive a promotion to the next grade.

Attendance

We know that you place as much importance on your children's Jewish education as we do, and by working together we can create a positive learning experience for all children. Since our faculty has so little time and so much to teach, it is required that students attend Religious School regularly.

With this in mind, the Religious School Board has adopted the following attendance policies:

If your child is absent for **two** consecutive classes, makeup work will be sent home and due back within one week. If the work is not completed, you will be contacted.

For promotion to the next grade to occur, students must attend at least **80% of the scheduled classes, as well as complete all required class work. This translates into a maximum of 6 absences per each semester.** Failure to do so will result in the student having to attend tutorial sessions, the cost of which is the responsibility of the family.

Promotion With Condition – Excessive Absences

A student receiving an “incomplete”, “failing”, or “unsatisfactory” grade may be promoted “with condition” to the next grade. The teacher will indicate the work that must be completed before the beginning of the next school year, in order for the student to be admitted to the higher grade. **(The cost of any tutoring necessary must be borne by the parents.)**

Visitors

If your child would like to bring a visitor to the classroom, the teacher’s permission must be obtained and the office notified. Visitors are expected to obey school rules.

Homework

Throughout the course of the curriculum, your child will be asked to do homework. It is very important that your child do this work in order for him/her to receive the full benefit of our program. Assignments will not be long and will be given for a specific purpose.

Students learning Hebrew should practice reading aloud each day for ten (10) minutes even if no specific homework is assigned. This will increase both fluency and accuracy and form a firm foundation for Bar/Bat Mitzvah training and Confirmation. When parents and teachers work together, children have a better chance for success.

Contacting your child in an emergency

Please be aware that students are **not** allowed to use cell phones in the building at any time. If you need to contact your child in an emergency, please call the **Temple Office at (973) 379-5387** and they will relay the message to your child.

Property Damage

In the case of damage to Temple property by a student, parents are obligated to pay the cost of any repair.

STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

1. Students will be courteous and respectful to each other, their teachers, and to the staff and visitors at all times.
2. Students will show respect for all areas of our temple by taking care of it, i.e. picking up all litter, not eating in the building unless food is provided by the school in a supervised situation, NO gum chewing.
3. Students will participate positively in class activities.
4. Students will attend required number of classes and complete all assignments.
5. Students will be on time and come to class prepared with books, notebooks, pens and pencils.
6. Students will leave the classroom only with permission from the teacher.
7. Students will ask and obtain permission from teacher and Director BEFORE bringing guests to school.
8. Students are not permitted to use cell phones when class is in session.
9. Students will follow any other school rules as set forth by the Director of Education and Religious School Committee.

Our aim in all of the above is to allow each of our students to realize his or her full potential as a student in our Religious School. We have a great deal to offer our students, and we hope that each will take full advantage of it.

GUIDE FOR HANDLING BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS

Every effort will be made to deal with disciplinary problems within the classroom. Should such efforts prove ineffective, disciplinary action will be taken.

The faculty and Director of Education believe that children deserve respect. They should not be intentionally humiliated, hurt, or embarrassed. We also believe that children learn to respect others by respecting themselves, and by being able to be accountable for their actions. We want your children to enjoy the learning process, and we want to help them develop their own motivation for learning. We hope to do our best to encourage your children to succeed in their attempts to learn.

- If it is necessary for the teacher to instruct the student to leave the classroom because the teaching process is being interrupted by that student, the teacher will fill out a referral slip indicating the nature of the misconduct, and arrange for the student to report to the school office. Students will not be allowed to return to the classroom for the remainder of the scheduled session, but will be expected to make up all class work missed. Student will complete and sign a “Reflection form” and told they are on **Step 1**. Form is sent home to be signed by parent.
- A student who continues to interrupt teaching and learning in the classroom will be sent to confer with the Director of Education. They will be asked to fill out a second “Reflection Form” and told they are on **Step 2**. Parents will be notified and asked to explore ways of working together to help the student improve his/her behavior.
- If a student’s misbehavior reaches **Step 3**, a Behavior Contract will be drawn up by the principal, student, parent and teacher. Permission to attend class will be contingent on the daily monitoring of adherence to the Behavior Contract.
- Any situation that continues to be unresolved after the above steps may require the child to be put on individualized instruction at the parents’ expense.

It is our goal to encourage students to take responsibility for their behavior, to understand the consequences of the inappropriate behavior and to work towards helping our student achieve a positive Religious School experience.

COURSE OF STUDY

Primary: Grades K-2

Holiday Haverim: monthly sessions in preparation for Jewish holidays. Activities include baking, arts and crafts, music, stories and trips

Hebrew Together: a weekly one hour Hebrew Immersion Experience, using a multi-sensory approach to develop a love of Hebrew language and Israeli culture.

Intermediate:

Grades 3 – 7 meet on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. for Judaic Studies and Hebrew. In addition to regular classroom activities, the students also participate in a monthly Worship Assembly and music class with the Cantor, as well as special programs and projects throughout the year. Each grade incorporates tzedakah, mitzvot and holiday study into the class curriculum.

Confirmation and KeSHeT

KeSHeT – Konnecting Sha'arey Shalom Teens. Keshet means rainbow. The rainbow represents who we are and what Judaism is about today. Keshet is a program of a rainbow of choices that are interactive, creative, interesting educational and fun. Choices include: Jewish film, Helping Hands, Israel, Politics and Modern Issues, TSSHY- Youth Group, Madrichim, Bamitbach- Cooking; community service and mitzvah projects. Keshet activities will take place weekly on alternating Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Tuesday classes will include Confirmation study with Rabbi Edelman. Tenth grade studies culminate in the Service of Confirmation held on the holiday of Shavuot.

WHY TEACH HEBREW?

Hebrew is the language of our ancestors, a link to the past, a connection to the future. It is that common thread that connects generation to generation.

Goals of the Hebrew Program:

To enable our students to be “functional” Jews, i.e. Jews who can:

1. Read with fluency and accuracy.
2. Comprehend liturgy with relative ease using a key word approach.
3. Participate actively and comfortably in holiday celebrations where the use of Hebrew is involved.
4. Participate capably and effectively lead a Shabbat morning and evening service.
5. Write Hebrew letters.
6. Know Hebrew alphabet in order.
7. Develop a basic prayer/holiday vocabulary

Although we encourage an appreciation of Hebrew as a spoken and written language in today’s world, our main goal is reading accuracy and fluency within a prayer oriented curriculum. Time does not allow us to have our students proficient in conversational Hebrew. We do however, hope to instill in our students a desire to someday pursue the study of the Hebrew language.

Each grade level curriculum will highlight several key prayers. Students will be responsible for content, vocabulary meaning and history of each prayer. Relevancy to everyday living, from the student’s perspective, will be examined. Testing of these prayers will be required.

HEBREW READING MUST BE PRACTICED AT HOME. HEBREW READING PRACTICE MUST BE TEN MINUTES DAILY AND ALWAYS “OUT LOUD”.

Jewish holidays will be studied incorporating Hebrew vocabulary and building on themes and concepts sequentially in each grade level.

Goals of School Worship:

1. Exposure of children to Reform Jewish Worship, as both a large group activity and as an enjoyable experience.
2. Identification of the basic components of Jewish worship service, order and structure.
3. Participation in and leading of a Shabbat Service
4. Cooperation of students in a multi grade Religious School experience.
5. Transfer of actual classroom curriculum and learning into practice.
6. Teach a positive attitude toward prayer, God and the Jewish People.
7. Fluent and accurate prayer reading, along with an understanding of the meaning and vocabulary of certain prayers.
8. Encourage attendance at Shabbat and Holiday services.

Grades 3-7 In school monthly Worship Assemblies

Family Shabbat Services: Each class has an assigned date to help lead a Friday evening service. **These services are curriculum requirements.** Any child who must be absent from their class family service will be **Required** to complete an alternative assignment.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah

Grades 8-10 Holiday Study sessions and creative prayers/worship experiences during the school year.

Confirmation

Please make every effort to attend services with your student(s) as often as you can. This is a wonderful opportunity for families to be together, to hear the Hebrew skills your child is learning in the class room and for you to make Judaism a meaningful part of your life.

FAMILY EDUCATION

GRADE K-2 Holiday Haverim

GRADE 3

Seder Plates

Work with your child to create a ceramic Seder plate that will become a family heirloom!

Shabbat Dinner and Hebrew Reading Ceremony

GRADE 4

Shofar Factory

Gain insight into the significance of the Shofar in the celebration of Rosh Hashanah and craft a genuine Shofar from the raw horn of a ram! (During class, parents are welcome)

Wimpel Workshop

Parents work with students to create a "Wimpel" (Torah Binder) to be used at their Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Shabbat Dinner and Hebrew Name Ceremony

GRADE 5

Shabbat Dinner and Class Shabbat Service

5th graders are presented with their own Siddur (prayerbook) with personal inscription from parents.

Torah Factory

Parents are invited to sit in on this dynamic presentation of how a Torah scroll is made. Students imitate a Torah scribe and practice writing their Hebrew name with a goose quill.

GRADE 6

Mitzvot of Metro West

A community wide event at the Whippany Campus for pre Bar/Bat Mitzvah 6th graders and their parents. Inspirational presentations about Mitzvah projects that 12-13 year olds can do.

Tallit Workshop

Create you own beautiful and ritually Kosher Tallit to wear at your Bar/Bar Mitzvah. A deeply meaningful Parent/Student activity.

Class Service and Shabbat Dinner

6th Graders show their mastery of Hebrew in leading the Friday evening service and present songs and readings in celebration of Israel.

GRADE 7

“My Yad” Students design and assemble a silver yad (Torah pointer)

Friday Evening Service and/or Bar/Bat Mitzvah Demonstration Service

INFORMAL EDUCATION

Senior Youth Group (TSSHY) – Grades 9 - 12

Our Senior Youth Group serves our High School age students, and is known as Temple Sha'arey Shalom Youth, or TSSHY for short. They are affiliated with NFTY, the National Federation of Temple Youth, our Reform movement's youth program. They are an active group who plan their own activities and events under the guidance of our Youth Group Advisors. They attend and host many regional events, as well as run activities for our own group. Most activities are social, and often have a Jewish theme or Tzedakah component as well. There is a nominal membership fee, which allows participation in all events, both local and on a national level. All of our Confirmation students are automatically members.

Watchung 678

This joint group with two other synagogues provides opportunities for middle schoolers to participate in fun social gatherings such as bowling and ice skating as well as giving back to the community by working on social action projects. This is a wonderful chance for pre-teens to remain connected socially with their local peers.

Junior Youth Group - Grades 3-5

Junior Youth Group serves our youngest midweek Religious School students, and is designed to offer our students a social experience outside of the classroom.

Junior Choir

Junior Choir is the pride of our Temple. Open to students in grades 3 to 7, Junior Choir sings at all Family Shabbat services and special events during the year.

Teen Choir - Grades 8-12

Teen choir is featured on special occasions, and also works with the Cantor to create recordings of instructional materials for the school.

Summer Camp and Youth Scholarships

Temple Sha'arey Shalom strongly encourages families to consider summer camp experiences and programs in Israel, as a wonderful enhancement of their child's Jewish identity. In particular, we maintain a strong connection with other programs at NFTY (The National Federation of Temple Youth).

Out of our commitment to helping our children to participate in Jewish summer camp or Israel programs, Sha'arey Shalom has scholarships available for those purposes. Applicants must be enrolled in our Religious School or have completed Confirmation in order to be eligible. A reminder regarding the availability of scholarships is printed in a late Fall or early Winter issue of the Temple "Scroll". Parents or students over age 13, are then expected to write a letter to the Rabbi requesting a scholarship. A committee then meets to make a determination.

Upon being awarded a scholarship, the funds are often sent directly to the appropriate program. Students symbolically receive their scholarships at the annual Service of Installation, and may be asked to speak before the congregation about their experience, upon its completion. For more information, please contact the Rabbi.

ARE OUR CHILDREN JEWISH?

In Reform Judaism, whether or not your children are considered Jewish depends on you. In Orthodox and Conservative Judaism, the child of a Jewish mother is automatically considered Jewish. The child of a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother is not considered Jewish and must undergo a formal conversion to be recognized as Jewish. On the other hand, we Reform Jews hold that the children of one Jewish parent (mother or father) is presumed to be Jewish. Their Jewishness is established by giving the child a positive and exclusive Jewish upbringing. This upbringing includes life cycle events such as a brit/child naming and giving the child a formal Jewish education leading to Bar/Bat Mitzvah and Confirmation. To the non

Jewish parent: We appreciate the efforts that you make in raising your children as Jews. As much as you may see this as something you and your spouse have chosen for your family, we know that the choice to raise your children as Jews may represent a real sense of loss on your part. We thank you for what you are doing for the Jewish People.

BAR/BAT MITZVAH

The goal of our education program is to promote life long Jewish learning. The celebration of becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is seen as a milestone along the way to Confirmation. All students are expected to continue their studies through Confirmation in our religious school.

Usually, students approximately 13 years of age become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. In preparation for the ceremony, the students will receive special training from the Cantor and Rabbi, in addition to attending regular classes. Listed below are requirements for becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah as well as examples of various situations.

- > Our religious school curriculum requires at least five years of attendance beginning in grade three and that the student be in good standing in order to receive Bar/Bat Mitzvah lessons and become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
- > Dates for Bar/Bat Mitzvah will be issued by the Religious School Committee. It is our Temple's goal to issue a Bar/Bat Mitzvah date in proximity to a student's birth date, if that date is available. Dates may be assigned prior to or sometimes after a student's 13th birthday and/or satisfactory completion of the required curriculum.
- > Candidates for Bar or Bat Mitzvah and their parents are required to attend any special classes conducted by the Rabbi prior to the student becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah. A Bar/Bat Mitzvah guide book will be presented to each family at this first meeting.
- > Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidates must attend the required number (10) of Shabbat and holiday services once Bar/Bat Mitzvah training begins. A log of each student's attendance will be kept by the Cantor. It is the student's responsibility to make sure

that the Cantor records his/her attendance at services. Additional clarification will be provided at the parent Bar/Bat Mitzvah meeting.

There may be special situations, including educational and/or behavioral situations, which affect a student becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. These situations will be handled on an individual basis by the Director of Education, Rabbi, Cantor, and if necessary, Religious School Committee.

CONFIRMATION

To become a Confirmand the student must have met the requirements for Bar/Bat Mitzvah and attended post Bar/Bat Mitzvah classes in grades eight and nine. Confirmation shall occur upon completion of the tenth grade. Special situations, such as that of new members who have recently moved into the community, will be considered by the Rabbi, the Director of Education and the Religious School Committee.

Members of the Confirmation class will have special and specific requirements as outlined by the Rabbi and the Director of Education. The Confirmand must have a basic knowledge of the Bible, Jewish ethics, religious thought, history, customs, ceremonies, and Hebrew language.

The Confirmation Service takes place at Shavuot each year. A special Confirmation Service will be prepared by the students with the help of the Rabbi and Cantor.

Madrichim

Madrichim means counselors or guides. In our Religious School Madrichim serve as aides to our teachers, tutor students in the classroom and contribute their creative skill to developing special activities for the students. This unique program offers our teens the opportunity to interact with their peers, to develop communication and leadership skills, to increase self-confidence, express Jewish values as they learn, and practice a variety of practical teaching skills and methodologies.

Teens who participate in the Madrichim program are positive role models for our younger children as they express their Jewish identity through their active involvement

in our school program as leaders and as students who have continued their own Jewish education into Confirmation studies.

Requirements for in class madrichim and tutors:

Open to 8th-12th graders who are members of Sha'arey Shalom

Students must commit to at least eight weeks of regular attendance in their Madrichim time slot.

PARENT REFERENCE GUIDE

For parents to truly become teachers to their children, they must first become serious learners themselves. Parent Education programs enable parents to explore essential texts, concepts, and observances and engage in dialogue. Parents are encouraged to participate in our Adult Education programs, including Adult Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

There are wonderful resources both in book form and on the web. Below are just a few exceptional ones.

ON THE WEB

www.urj.org

The website of the Union for Reform Judaism

www.myjewishlearning.com

A website with all levels of learning for children and adults

BOOKS

The Blessing of a Skinned Knee by Wendy Mogul

Using Jewish teachings to raise self-reliant Jewish children

The Blessing of a B-Minus by Wendy Mogul

Using Jewish teachings to raise resilient teenagers

How to be a Jewish Parent by Anita Diamant

Parenting Jewish Teens: A guide for the Perplexed by Joanne Doades

HOLIDAYS AT A GLANCE

Rosh Hashanah

Literally means “the Head of the Year”, a time when we are asked to begin a time of honest introspection. We are asked to review the past year, look at the choices we have made and try to improve our behavior, relationships and our commitment to Judaism.

Yom Kippur

Known as the “Day of Atonement”, when we are asked to make the commitment to work harder to achieve our full potential. We ask forgiveness for things we are not proud of, and offer forgiveness to those who have wronged us.

Sukkot

This eight day festival re-enacts our ancestors’ journey through the desert from Egypt to the land of Israel. Many people invite our “ancestors”, known as “Ushpizin” to their Sukkah, to help connect to our rich past.

Simchat Torah

We celebrate that we have finished reading the Torah and begin reading it again. Every year as we read the same portions, we learn something new from the Torah. We parade and dance with the Torah and celebrate.

Chanukah

We remember that after the Romans destroyed the Temple, the oil for the Eternal Light lasted for eight days when there appeared to only be enough for one night. This is a great opportunity to focus your family on family time, rather than gifts.

Tu B'Shevat

Celebrated as the “New Year of the trees”, it is a time when we give thanks for the earth and all its goodness. We often plant trees in Israel, as well as focus on preserving the world around us.

Purim

On the surface the story of Esther and Haman represents good conquering evil, although more deeply it highlights standing up for who you are and feeling proud of being Jewish. Costumes, noisemakers and general rowdiness are encouraged during the reading of the Megillah.

Passover

One of the most important lines we read from the Haggadah is “In every generation, all are obligated to see themselves as though they themselves had gone out of Egypt”. It reminds us of our strong connection to our ancestors, and to Jews all over the world.

Yom Hashoah

Remembrance of all who lost their lives in the Holocaust, also known as the Shoah (the Yiddish word for total ruination).

Yom Hazikaron

The equivalent of the American Memorial Day, when Israelis remember those who lost their lives fighting for a Jewish state.

Yom Ha'atzmaut

Celebrates the creation of the state of Israel on May 14, 1948.

Lag B'Omer

During the 49 days between Passover and Shavuot, we mourn the tragedies that befell the Jews in the 2nd century, when Jews were forbidden to study and many Jews were killed. Lag B'Omer falls on the 33rd day during that period, when there are often picnics and celebrations.

Shavuot

Commemorates the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai. Our congregation celebrates Confirmation on Shavuot, the ceremony in which 10th graders confirm their acceptance of Torah and Commitment to Judaism.

Tishah B'Av

Commemorates the destruction of the Temple, as well as many of the misfortunes said to have befallen our people on the same day in subsequent years.

