

PARENT HANDBOOK

Temple Sha'arey Shalom
Religious School



Rabbi Renee Edelman
Director of Education

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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.

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, observances and engage in dialogue. Parents are encouraged to participate in our Adult Education programs including Adult Bat/Bar 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

Dear Parents,

We are delighted to welcome your child/ren 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. 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 the 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.

B'Shalom,

Rabbi Renee Edelman, Director of Education

EDUCATION PROGRAM

SCHOOL HOURS

CLUB hour for 5,6,7 2:30-3:30- once students are in building they cannot leave. Students may not order food to the building. If they wish a snack, they must buy it before coming into the Temple, or bring it from home.

GRADES 3-7 Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:30-4:30

GRADES K-2 Hebrew Together Thursdays 4:30 p.m-5:30 p.m.

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

TEMPLE OFFICE PHONE 973-379-5387

If you need to reach your student in an emergency, please call the temple office. Do not reach out to your child on their phones. They will not be available to them during religious school 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 rabbirenee@gmail.com

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.

This year we will have service requirements for each grade level. It is very helpful for our students to have a sense of how we pray at Sha'arey Shalom so that they can learn to pray everywhere. Students may attend family B'nei Mitzvah, or pray with family and friends at different synagogues and this does count at attendance.

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Grade 3 needs to attend 3 Friday night or Shabbat morning services.

Grade 4 needs to attend 4 Friday night or Shabbat morning services.

Grade 5 needs to attend 6 Friday night or Shabbat morning services.

Grade 6 needs to attend 10 Friday night or Shabbat morning services.

Grade 7 needs to attend 12 Friday night or Shabbat morning services.

Attending services allows our students and their families to know what to expect when they become B'nei Mitzvah. When you add up the special events, holidays and services with friends you may realize that you are already going to more services that you truly know. If they are not at the half way mark by January, your student will have make-up work. Holidays do not count.

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.

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.

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Progress Reports – Report Cards

We have a new progress report this year for Hebrew. All the prayers that your children will learn in religious school will be listed by grade. The teachers will let you know twice a year, whether your child knows the prayer, needs additional help or is struggling. This is not only for you, but for us in teaching your children and for next year's teachers in moving your child forward.

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 do not text or call your child. They will not be able to respond.

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.

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.

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. **Each of the prayers that they need to know are chanted on the web-site by our Cantor so that parents and students can study together.**

Contacting your child in an emergency

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, 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 may bring their cell phones to school and should follow this procedure:
 1. A new plastic shoe bag will be provided in which the cell phones will be placed.

2. cell phones can be used for research when necessary for a class or individual project.
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 be brought to the school office, where the referral slip will be reviewed and discussed with the student. The student will then return to the classroom.
- A student who continues to interrupt teaching and learning in the classroom (even if the student has just returned from the school office) will be sent to confer with the Director of Education.. **Parents will be notified and asked to explore ways of working together to help the student improve his/her behavior.**

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

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 – Connecting 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. Students 8-10th grade meet Tuesday evenings from 5:45 to 7:45 to discuss issues relevant to modern Judaism and their lives. Keshet activities will take place weekly on Tuesday evenings with Rabbi Edelman and Elizabeth Best

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.

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.

Junior Youth Group Grades 3-5: Advisors Amy Kass & Dotti Shtafman

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

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.

BAT/BAR MITZVAH

The goal of our education program is to promote lifelong 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 school. 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 Rabbi. It is the student's responsibility to make sure that the Rabbi 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.

Keshet

Students 8th -10th grade meet Tuesday evenings from 5:45 to 7:45 to discuss issues relevant to modern Judaism and their lives

Madrachim

Madrachim 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.

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.

