



Religious School Parent Handbook

2018-2019

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Program Schedules

Core Curriculum

K-6 Classes	Sunday	9:00 AM - 11:30 AM
K-3 Tefillah *		9:00 AM - 9:30 AM
3-6 Tefillah *		9:35 AM - 10:05 AM

Hebrew:

Hebrew Head Start (3rd Grade)	Sunday	11:30 AM - 12:30 PM
Hebrew Beit Midrash (4th-6th Grade)	Sunday	11:30 AM - 12:30 PM
Drop-In Hebrew Lab	Tuesday	4:00 PM- 5:30 PM
iLearn Hebrew (1-on-1)		arranged directly with tutor

*We love having families join us for *t'fillah*! Please feel free to join us in Plotkin Chapel on any Sunday morning.

Philosophy and Goals

Al shloscha d'varim ha-olam omed (Pirke Avot 1:2)

The ancient sages taught that the world stands on three pillars: on *Torah*—our sacred text(s) and study; on *avodah*—prayer and a connection to God and the people Israel; and on *gemilut hasadim*—on good deeds and a commitment to *tikkun olam*, repairing the world.

At Stephen Wise Temple Religious School, families and learners engage with classroom and experiential learning on all three pillars. In each grade, we are committed to providing our learners with a joyful, safe, and meaningful Jewish experience—while providing a foundation of Jewish and Hebrew knowledge to foster Jewish identity, participation, and preparation for bat/bat mitzvah and at Stephen Wise Temple and beyond.

Vision Statement

“We are a *Beit T’fillah* – a house of prayer and worship; a *Beit Midrash* – a house of education and study throughout the life cycle; and a *Beit Knesset* – a house of assembly and a community. We pursue these three interconnected identities in a caring and accessible way, encouraging a diverse membership to develop their spiritual lives, their connection to our people, and their support of the State of Israel within the traditions, perspectives and values of a progressive vision of Judaism.”

This statement guides our Religious School to foster the deepening of knowledge and the Jewish experience for our each of our learners in order to strengthen relationship with prayer and the divine, build love of Torah, and identify with the Jewish people through involvement in the synagogue and participation in Jewish life. We believe that Judaism contains answers to the challenges and questions confronting our children every day and that Judaism provides answers to these challenges.

Linked to this vision, our Religious School aims to encourage and enable our students to:

- understand and appreciate the basic stories, history, and teachings of our tradition
- take pride in their Jewish identity and feel connected to the Jewish people, through words, prayer and action
- understand the *brit* (covenant) between God and the Jewish people and make meaning from the practice of *mitzvot* (commandments)
- articulate their connection to the past, present, and future of *Eretz Yisrael* (the land of Israel), *Am Yisrael* (the Jewish people) and *Medinat Yisrael* (the modern State of Israel).

- honor the study of Hebrew, the language of the Jewish people and understand its role in our spiritual and cultural life
- feel comfortable with and find meaning in the practice of *t'fillah* (prayer)
- pursue acts of *tikkun olam* (the repair of our world) while furthering the Jewish quest for *tzedek* (righteousness) and *g'milut chasidim* (acts of loving kindness)
- find joy in the celebration of Shabbat and the holidays, living the Jewish calendar proudly
- value the role of Judaism in modern life, incorporating Jewish wisdom and values into modern moments
- express kinship with *K'lal Yisrael* by actively seeking the welfare of Jews throughout the world
- support and participate in the life and vision of the Stephen Wise Temple community

Our curriculum is designed to prepare learners for a lifetime of Jewish learning. Learners are introduced to Torah, Israel, holidays, Jewish ethics and history. Our learners are taught Jewish practice, history and belief, love for Israel and the Jewish people and an awareness of their obligation to better the world in which they live. Hebrew, music, prayer services, and parent-child learning opportunities round out the Stephen Wise Temple Religious School experience.

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

Kindergarten

In a warm and loving environment, our Kindergarten learners are provided an in-depth, age-appropriate understanding of Jewish holidays, and begin to learn introductory stories and lessons from the Torah. The year culminates with our *Kabbalat Torah* (receiving Torah) ceremony. This endearing rite of passage is a time for family and friends to join their kindergartener in celebration of their formal entry into Jewish learning. Enrollment in Religious School at this time is a meaningful sign to children that parents value their religious and moral education as much as their secular one.

Grade 1 – The book of *Bereshit* (Genesis) tells the story about the first Jewish family. With a focus on Biblical characters, our Grade 1 learners learn these basics of Jewish identity and age-appropriate tools for text study. In addition to learning about Genesis, learners will also continue their exploration of the Jewish calendar.

Grades 2-6:

Grades 2-6 use the “Chai Curriculum”, published by the Union for Reform Judaism. Using the principles of backward design, the Chai Curriculum focuses on the enduring understandings we want learners to take with them in order to establish a strong basis for later Jewish learning and living. The curriculum focuses on a different topic in each grade, through the lenses of *Torah, Avodah and G'milut Hasadim* - study and modern conversation with ancient texts, worship and sacred connection to God, community and self, and acts of loving-kindness and personal responsibility. . these values are the core of our curriculum. As a spiral curriculum, learners encounter themes, stories, and

holidays in multiple years, learning something new about the idea and themselves with each encounter. because they are different each year, our learners ***Because the holiday curriculum spirals, students learn something new about each holiday every year. Each Grade has its own specific focus.***

Grade 2 – In this introductory year, learners begin to learn about *Torah, Avodah, and Gemilut Hasadim*—in the texts and traditions of Judaism and in their own lives. With a focus on the book of *Shemot* (Exodus), learners begin to explore significant stories of Jewish history, basic questions about and connections to God, and their own power to make the world a better place.

Grade 3 – In Grade 3 learners focus on the book of *Vayikra* (Leviticus) in which God teaches how to live a life filled with *K'dushah*-holiness. Building on the foundations of *Torah, Avodah, and Gemilut Hasadim*, the Grade 3 year emphasizes the role of prayer in their lives and in the world. **In addition to the *Chai* Curriculum and the ongoing study of holidays, Grade 3 learners begin to learn Hebrew letters and vowels. This introduction focuses on letter recognition and pre-reading skills. In Grade 3, families have the option of enrolling in the Hebrew Head Start program (Sundays, 11:30-12:30).**

Grade 4 – The exploration of *Torah, Avodah, and Gemilut Hasadim* continues in Grade 4 with a focus on community, from the micro (home, family, synagogue) to the macro (city, country, world). Beginning to understand their membership in *am Yisrael* (the Jewish people), our Grade 4 learners examine the connection between the *am Yisrael* (the Jewish people) and the *Eretz Yisrael* (the Land of Israel), particularly through the lens of *Brit* (covenant) found in the last two books of the Torah, *Bamidbar* (Numbers), and *Dvarim* (Deuteronomy).

Grade 4 learners begin their Hebrew studies in earnest, mastering the letters and vowels of the aleph-bet and learn to decode them. By the end of the year learners can connect letters with their sounds and are able to read. **In Grade 4**, learners choose between multiple Hebrew enrichment options: Sunday (11:30-12:30), Tuesday (4-5:30), or our [iLearn](#) option.

Grade 5 – The Grade 5 focus is on the Prophets and Reform Judaism's special relationship to their message—again through the lens of *Torah, Avodah, and Gemilut Hasadim*. Grade 5 Hebrew learners show a rapid growth in skills as they move beyond letter recognition and decoding to prayer fluency. Learners focus on the *Shema* and the blessings surrounding it. An understanding of the rudimentary construction of Hebrew language including roots, pronouns, prefixes, and suffixes will be introduced.

Grade 6 – Grade 6 is the final year of the *Chai* Curriculum. In Grade 6, learners investigate how the collection of stories, poems, and words of wisdom known as *Ketuvim* (writings) relate to the individual's relationship with *Torah, Avodah, and Gemilut Hasadim*. Grade 6 is the final year of the formal Hebrew program of the Religious School. By this point learners are able to demonstrate fluency in decoding, familiarity with central prayers, and have a small modern Hebrew vocabulary. Our 6th grade year culminates in the *Aliyah* ceremony, where learners demonstrate their skills and learning by leading the community in prayer, celebrating their passage from Religious School into our Wise Temple Youth Community.

Hebrew

Hebrew is a central component of our Religious School- it is vital to who we are; it helps us access the texts and prayers of our ancient faith and connects us to Jews all over the modern world and in Israel. At Wise Religious School, we value and prioritize Hebrew learning, and we strive to create an atmosphere in which Hebrew permeates the space: from our t'fillah, where learners gain familiarity with our Reform liturgy, to music and art, and our classroom learning, Hebrew is not just what we learn, it is part of who we are. Hebrew instruction begins day 1 and is present throughout our school.

All of our learners are exposed to Hebrew in our celebration of holidays, through prayers and song and it is a focus of classroom education. Our younger learners are exposed to Hebrew with the Hebrew Through Movement program. Hebrew Through Movement, or HTM, is a language acquisition strategy based on the idea of Total Physical Response, or the idea that using your whole body to learn is effective and fun. The HTM approach applies the science of human development and language acquisition; just as we first learn to hear our native language before speaking and reading, HTM is another way that our learners gain familiarity with the sounds of the Hebrew language. Prior auditory input is crucial to our success as readers in any language, and we do this with Hebrew through prayer, music, vocabulary and, now, Hebrew Through Movement.

When learners reach our upper grades, there is increased focus on decoding the Hebrew language. All our Grade 4 – 6 learners (some start in Grade 3!) receive increased Hebrew instruction through our Hebrew Beit Midrash and iLearn programs, where we utilize the Hebrew Step-by-Step curriculum. Developed, piloted and tested in our school from its inception, Hebrew Step-by-Step meets learners where they are, providing a self-paced approach to letter and liturgical learning. All our older learners are also invited to our Hebrew Learning Lab, meeting every Tuesday afternoon for those who wish to advance in their studies or get extra confidence in their Hebrew skills. Our educators implement our multifaceted approach with direct attention to each child's learning.

From Kindergarten to Grade 6, our goal is for our students to appreciate the Hebrew language, feel confident in prayer and feel connection to world Jewry through a shared vocabulary. While we wish we could teach our learners modern, biblical and rabbinic Hebrew, in our supplementary setting we give learners the foundation to decode the Hebrew language, recognize the liturgy, and be active participants in Reform Jewish prayer. And, we hope to ignite a spark—inspiring our students to pursue further knowledge of Hebrew throughout their lives.

Family Education

In each year (and twice in 6th grade), we ask our families to spend a day learning with their children, the teachers, and our clergy. These Family Education experiences are designed to complement the grade-level curriculum and to build on Jewish life and conversation in the home. We know that parental involvement and commitment is a key component of educational success, in a primary or supplementary school setting, and so we expect at least one parent to attend each session. If neither parent is available to

attend, a grandparent or family member is welcome to come; please let us know in advance so that we can better prepare. Family Education programs are specifically tailored to your child's curriculum and are meant to give him or her "special" time with you. If you must bring a younger sibling along, please also plan to bring quiet games or activities to occupy him or her.

Jewish Life at School

T'fillah (Prayer) - Each day of learning includes a prayer service, held in our beautiful Plotkin Chapel. Learners participate in age-appropriate prayer experiences to help them develop a familiarity with and an appreciation for prayer and build an inner spiritual life. Services are led by our Religious School songleader and our Wise clergy, allowing learners to build relationships with our clergy.

As a Reform congregation, all community members are invited, but not required, to wear a kippah when they enter the chapel.

Families are always invited, and encouraged, to join us for *t'filah*.

Tzedakah (Righteous Giving) - Collecting *tzedakah* from learners at the beginning of each class is a time-honored Religious School tradition and a wonderful way to begin Jewish learning. If you are able, please send your child to school with some change each day. Participating in this important *mitzvah* instills Jewish values in our learners and encourages them to think of others.

As a culmination to a year of learning about social justice and the Jewish practice of *tzedakah*, our Grade 5 learners put on a *tzedakah* fair, where our school will have the chance to choose the Jewish organization to which they wish to make their donation of *tzedakah*.

Shira (Music) - Music is in many ways the soul of Jewish practice. Our song leader, in partnership with our cantors, works with learners on Israeli and holiday music in addition to prayer and liturgical songs. In addition, learners have opportunities to learn music specifically related to their curriculum. Occasionally, students will be invited to bring their own musical instruments and play during music time.

Community - We are not just a school; we are also a community of learners, parents, faculty and administration working together as part of Stephen Wise Temple. Our goal is for every child to feel welcome and comfortable. Families are encouraged to see the Religious School as just one part of their involvement in the Wise Temple community.

Parents - Parents and family members are always invited and encouraged to join us at different events during school. Each week families are encouraged to join their learners for *t'filah*; We also see our mission as helping you deepen your own Jewish and spiritual

lives, so we offer various parent opportunities including hiking with clergy, yoga, study and more!

Code of Learner Behavior

Judaism is rooted in the belief that each person is created *b'tzelem Elohim*, in the image of God. This obligates us to treat everyone with honor and respect. Learners are expected to apply this principle to their interactions with teachers, other learners, parents, families, and everyone they encounter during Religious School.

EXPECTATIONS OF BEHAVIOR

1. Learners will be ready on time to participate in classroom activities.
2. Learners will not keep other learners from learning, or the teacher from teaching. This includes physical behavior as well as emotional.
3. Learners will keep their hands to themselves and use proper language in the classrooms and Temple facility.
4. Learners will respect the property of other learners and staff.
5. Learners will respect Temple property and the facility as a whole, including Elementary School property in the classrooms.
6. Learners will behave appropriately in the Chapel and other prayer spaces of the synagogue.

The following are **strictly** prohibited: alcohol, defiance, dishonesty, drugs, tobacco, fighting, stealing, profanity, and vulgarity.

PROCEDURES

1. If a learner repeatedly disrupts classroom work, the teacher will speak directly with the learner and may call parents to discuss the child's behavior.
2. If infractions continue, the child may be sent to the Director. The Religious School Director may speak with the teacher and learner. The Director will most often call parents if a learner is sent to the office for misbehavior.
3. If there are further problems, or problems of a severe nature, parents will be called for a conference with the Religious School Director, and/or teacher and/or the learner to determine further action, which may include any or all of the following: Parent(s) observing in classroom during school hours; suspension for a period of time with satisfactory completion of homework/study assignments; any mutually agreed-upon arrangements by parents, learners, and Religious School Director at a conference.

School Information and Policies

OFFICE PERSONNEL, LOCATION AND HOURS

If at any time you have questions or concerns, feel free to call the CYE office at 310.889.2211. The Religious School office is located across from Classroom 43. Our office hours are:

Monday— 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Tuesday—9:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Wednesday— 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Thursday— 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Friday— 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Saturday – Closed

Sunday— 8:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Carpool:

Carpool is in the circle from 8:45 AM - 9:00 AM and 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM. If you are parking to walk your child in, you must park in the parking lot - **there is no parking in the circle**. Please follow any and all instructions from our security personnel.

Pictures and media:

By receiving this handbook, you are acknowledging that you give consent to your child's picture being used for promotional purposes. If you do not consent, you must inform us in writing.

BAR/BAT MITZVAH ELIGIBILITY

Learners are required to complete a minimum of four consecutive years of Religious School immediately prior to and including the entire Bar/Bat Mitzvah year. Families whose learners enter the Religious School after the Grade 4 must make special arrangements with the Religious School Director and clergy to meet grade-level requirements and the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date may be delayed. Learners who have attended another accredited Religious School prior to arriving at Wise Temple are eligible for Bar/Bat Mitzvah, provided all requirements have been satisfied. Learners with disabilities and special needs will be accommodated by the School and Bar/Bat Mitzvah Department whenever possible and/or appropriate. Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparations and dates are handled through the clergy office. Any questions relating to Bar/Bat Mitzvah should be directed to WiseBBM@WiseLA.org or 310.889.2213.

Families must be enrolled in a Stephen Wise Temple School to keep their Bar/Bat Mitzvah date on the calendar.

ATTENDANCE

Your child's regular attendance is the largest indicator of his or her success in Religious School. We understand the time constraints that busy families face; however we ask that you make school a priority. If you know your child will be absent in advance, please let the school know as soon as possible so that make up work can be assigned *before* the absence to prevent your child from falling behind.

LATE ARRIVAL/EARLY DISMISSAL

Learners are expected to be in class and ready to learn when the school day starts at 9 a.m. on Sunday and 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday. When your child is late, he or she misses out on important instructions and activities and disrupts the classroom. Promptness helps your child acclimate to the school day and integrate into the classroom environment. Our teachers make use of every part of the school day, so please allow us to maximize that time by bringing your child to school on time.

From time to time, you may need to pick your child up early from school. When doing so, you must **first come to the Religious School office** and sign your child out. Children will not be released from class unless they have first been signed out in the office. Children will not be released early to wait at the carpool circle. If a non-parent/guardian will be picking up your child, please call the Religious School office in advance to let us know.

DROP-OFF/PICK-UP

Walking your child to class is a great way to check in with your child's teacher and to meet other parents. If you wish to walk your child to class, you must park in the parking structure. You may not leave your car in the carpool circle.

Parents who are picking their child up from the classroom at the end of the day are asked to wait outside the classroom until the children are dismissed. This will help your child focus on his or her schoolwork until the end of the day. Any students not picked up in the classroom will be walked to the carpool circle. Please understand that to keep your children safe, they must wait on the sidewalk until you pull up and may not cross the driveway.

At 12:45, all learners not picked up will be brought to the office and a family member will be called.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The information you provide in your enrollment form assures us that in the case of an emergency, if parents cannot be reached, we will be authorized to provide medical care for your child and that no liability is attached to such a decision. Please select your emergency contacts carefully. If your child is ill or sustains an injury at school and we

cannot reach you, these are the people we will call. Trained school personnel will treat minor injuries.

If your child contracts a communicable disease, please report it to the Religious School office immediately so that we can take appropriate measures.

Wise Temple has undertaken an extensive emergency preparedness program in regard to major disasters. Emergency supplies have been stored on campus, allowing us to safely house our learners for 72 hours. Please make sure that if your child requires any type of maintenance medication, a 72-hour supply is given to our Religious School administrative assistant.

The Temple Schools' out-of-state emergency contact is Temple Albert in Albuquerque, New Mexico: 505.883.1818.

BOOKS AND MATERIALS

Learners are expected to care for and maintain any books or school material they are given. learners must bring their books with them to each class session, as well as any other materials, such as notebooks or pens that the teacher requires. learners who lose their books **will be required to purchase another textbook.**

FOOD IN SCHOOL

At the beginning of the school year every teacher and room parent will coordinate a snack sign up list for their class. Each family is encouraged to provide healthy snacks for their learner's class one a year. For learners in the Hebrew Beit Midrash program, parents are encouraged to provide their learners with a snack for that extra hour. Wise Religious School is a "nut-safe" program; we ask that you refrain from bringing snacks with nuts in them. If a child in a particular grade has a nut allergy, the classroom/grade level is designated as nut-free.

DRESS CODE

Because Religious School learners attend services in the Chapel and spend time learning about and participating in *t'fillah* (prayer) and other sacred subjects, they are expected to dress appropriately.

CELL PHONES

We ask that learners not bring toys or electronic games to school, as they are a distraction during class time. Learners must turn their cell phones to silent while at school and may not answer the phone during class time. They can check messages only during breaks or recess. If there is an emergency and you must reach your child, please call the Religious School office and we will get them for you.

GUEST POLICY

Guests are welcome to come learn with your child. However, please note the following rules:

1. Guest visits must be approved by the Religious School Director prior to the guest's arrival. A call, note, or e-mail is fine, but it must be done before the School day begins. This is for School safety reasons, and to allow teachers to prepare for a guest.
2. All guests must be brought to the Religious School's office before attending class. Guests will need to provide an emergency phone number.
3. All guests must comply with School policies and standards. Guests who arrive without permission and/or are unable to meet the above requirements may not be permitted to visit class or remain on school premises.

COMMUNICATION

We encourage an open flow of communication between the home and the school. Toward the beginning of each school year you will receive a roster of the learners in your child's class as well as contact information for your child's teacher. Feel free to contact your child's teacher, as well as the school Director, if you have any questions about your child's education.

You can expect to get an e-mail update from your child's teacher about once a month detailing class projects, what children are learning and upcoming events. You can also expect to get phone calls from your child's teacher. The phone calls allow teachers to check in with you about how your child is doing in class and are another means of increasing communication.

ROOM PARENTS

We always welcome parent involvement in the school. At least one parent from each grade is asked to volunteer to be a room parent. Room parent responsibilities include organizing social events and helping to promote and publicize Religious School community events and programs, as well as serving as a liaison between the school and the parent body at large. There are often other groups and task forces on which parents will be asked to serve.

A FINAL WORD

We know that it can be challenging to wake up on a Sunday morning and we try our best to make our school an exciting and engaging place for our learners and families. We strongly encourage parent participation in our school and community as a way to support and set a strong example for your children.

We are looking forward to a great year of community, learning and Jewish study. If you have any questions, please feel free to call us or meet with us face to face. We look forward to a wonderful year!