

TEMPLE BETH

TORAH

CANTOR

NICHOLAS

FENAKEL

RELIGIOUS
SCHOOL



*PARENT
HANDBOOK*

2011-2012

5771-5772

*900 Big Blue Trace
Wellington, Florida*

561-793-2700, Fax: 561-793-1072

September 2011

Dear Parents and Students,

“This is my covenant with you...
the words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from you...
nor from your children, nor from your children’s children henceforth and forever.”

These words from the Bible speak beautifully of our Jewish commitment and obligation to educate our children *l’dor v’dor* – from generation to generation. Each of you, in providing for and participating in your child’s Jewish education, is a link in the unending chain the Bible mentions. As we embark upon a new school year it is my hope that we, a partnership between families and the school faculty, continue to dedicate ourselves to the holy task of educating our children to ensure the continuity of Jewish life “henceforth and forever.”

The Religious School, in an effort to share with you our plans for the education of your children, present this guide. We hope you will use it to participate in your child’s educational progress. Families, both new and old to our school, will find it a valuable source of information. Please read through this guide as soon as possible so that no family or student misses a chance to participate in the life of our congregation and our school. Comments about this guide or any aspect of the Religious School are welcomed and encouraged.

This year we welcome back many of our fine teachers and we receive them with warm hearts and high expectations. We also welcome a new member to our faculty. We welcome your participation, suggestions, kind words and most of all, support. Together we can bring Jewish learning into our homes and into our community. Together we can enrich our children’s Jewish heritage through education.

Jodi Kaufman, RJE
Director of Education

JUDAIC GOALS

Each grade level has its own goals with a spiral curriculum that builds from year to year. This means that the students may study the same subjects each year, but the depth of the study will increase as they grow older.

Gan

(Kindergarten)

Sunday Mornings, 9:00-11:00 a.m.

Kindergarten is the first step on the way to learning about the joys of Judaism. Through stories and hands-on activities, our children learn about and experience holidays, Bible, and the customs and ceremonies of Judaism. Learning about Shabbat is integral to each week's class as the children participate in a "*Learners' Kabbalat Shabbat*." The Hebrew alphabet is introduced and key words and expressions in Hebrew are used during every class. Music and art are also key components of this introductory year.

Kitah Alef

(First Grade)

Sunday Mornings, 9:00-11:00 a.m.

In *kitah alef* the children continue their studies of Jewish holidays adding another layer of depth. In first grade a comprehensive curriculum dealing with the themes of family, synagogue, and holidays is implemented. These lessons introduce central vocabulary, practices, and the meaning of most major Jewish celebrations. Students are exposed to the many traditions that are unique to the Jewish community. An extended unit on synagogues and the people who make them work is a large part of this unit. The holidays are celebrated in class to effectively model Jewish rituals and observances that are home-based, with the hope that the children will add new dimensions to family traditions. The exciting element of this curriculum is a Hebrew reading readiness program designed specifically for first grade. It introduces the Hebrew *Alef-Bet* throughout the year.

Kitah Bet

(Second Grade)

Sunday Mornings, 9:00-11:00 a.m.

Kitah bet students are ready, willing, and able to jump right into learning. The students begin a study of the Jewish life cycle, Torah and holidays. Hands-on projects help to reinforce what they are learning. The children are beginning to learn to decode Hebrew. Letter recognition is enhanced with games and through the games, words are created that the children can read. Various blessings are introduced orally.

Kitah Gimel
(Third Grade)

Sundays, 9:00-11:00 a.m.; Tuesdays, 3:00-5:00 or 5:15-7:15 p.m.

Kitah gimel students are now attending school twice a week. The pace and depth of learning has increased and we capitalize on the fact that there is a self-awareness by the students of the learning curve that they are beginning. Initially, the children are memorizing the blessings and recognizing the words as “whole words” as opposed to being able to decode them through phonics. The third grade explores Israel as a modern country with the Great Israel Scavenger Hunt as their guide. This year, we begin to give short homework assignments in both Judaica and Hebrew.

Kitah Dalet
(Fourth Grade)

Sundays, 9:00-11:00 a.m.; Tuesdays, 3:00-5:00 or 5:15-7:15 p.m.

Students in *kitah dalet* are more independent and curious about the unknown. They are especially anxious to know about God as they begin their journey of understanding using a text with a clear and comfortable way to introduce Jewish concepts of God. Students broaden their background of Bible. Hebrew skills have developed to the point of being able to read prayers, not just blessings.

The Jewish Life Cycle is a major component of *kitah dalet*. Students study rituals which include *Brit Milah*, *Simchat Bat*, Consecration, *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, Confirmation, Marriage, The Jewish Home, Death and Mourning. The sanctification of Jewish life is what the life cycle events convey through meaningful ceremonies and celebrations.

Kitah Hey
(Fifth Grade)

Sundays, 9:00-11:00 a.m.; Tuesdays, 3:00-5:00 or 5:15-7:15 p.m.

A central focus of *kitah hey* is the Prophets. There are more options for the children to work in groups on projects or study in *hevrutot* (small partnerships) for Hebrew. Students are beginning to have an understanding of history and they learn about the evolution of the Jewish people and their Covenant with God. In Hebrew, the *Shabbat* morning service is begun.

Kitah Vav
(Sixth Grade)

Sundays, 9:00-11:00 a.m.; Tuesdays, 5:15-7:15 p.m.

The sixth graders spend the year looking at Jewish heroes and the values they pursued. They also immerse themselves in the Jewish immigrant experience. An integral part of the curriculum is the 6th grade *B'nai Mitzvah* Learners' Service. Hebrew study builds on the previous year and introduces more prayers from the *Shabbat* morning service as the student approaches the *b'nai mitzvah* year.

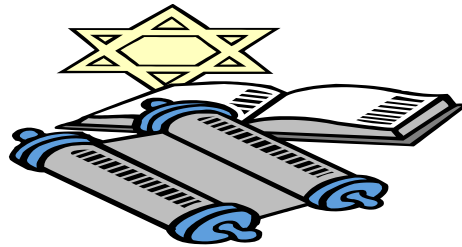
Kitah Zion
(Seventh Grade)

Sunday evening; Tuesdays, 5:15-7:15 p.m.

The seventh graders will spend time learning about the Holocaust, Reform Judaism and Comparative Judaism, *Mitzvot*, and Tough Questions Others Ask About Judaism. Their study of Hebrew includes prayer Hebrew.

B'NAI MITZVAH CLUB

Our B'nai Mitzvah Club is another crucial component in the process of becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah. We meet four to six times a year, on Sundays, and breakfast will be served. During the session we will focus on what it means to become a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. This program is geared toward parents and their 6th graders. The B'nai Mitzvah Club is part of the preparation for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah and as such, is mandatory. If you have any questions about this, please contact the Rabbi or the Director of Congregational Learning.



COMMUNICATION

Communication between parents and teachers is essential and should be ongoing. The teachers are encouraged to be in touch with you, both about the class and about your child. Sometimes, contact will be by phone and sometimes you will receive mail (postal and e-mail). If something significant occurs in your child's life (a birth, family illness, etc.), please notify the school so that we may be aware of what is going on and how it might influence your child's behavior. We will then be better prepared to offer assistance if necessary.

If you have any concerns regarding your child's progress or a problem in the class, we encourage you to first speak directly with your child's teacher. If, after speaking with the teacher, you wish to speak with the Education Director, do not hesitate to call. In addition, we love to get positive feedback!

To reach the Religious School office;

Telephone: 561-793-2700

Jodi Kaufman: Ext. 103 or e-mail, educator@templebethtorah.net

Secretary: Ext 105 or e-mail, rsadmin@templebethtorah.net

ATTENDANCE

We all want the same thing for your child – for them to succeed and to become Jewishly involved in their synagogue, community and family. To make this

happen, we need to work together to ensure that the children get the best Jewish education. An important component of that is regular attendance. Coming to religious school consistently is the key to successful Jewish learning.

If an absence is absolutely necessary, please try to inform the school **PRIOR** to the date. When extended absences are anticipated, please contact the Religious School office so that we can work together to make sure your child doesn't fall too far behind.

UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

If your child has two consecutive unexcused absences, or any three in a marking period, his/her teacher will call the parent or caregiver to find out if there is an issue, and with the assignments, so that the child can keep up. At five unexcused absences, the school office will contact the parents or caregiver. If your child has ten or more unexcused absences in a marking period, (without a doctor's note), and the student hasn't fulfilled any assignments, tutoring from a school-approved tutor will be necessary (at the parent's expense). Failure to fulfill this responsibility will have an impact on the child's progress in school and on B'nai Mitzvah preparations.

An excused absence is a communicated absence by calling the office at 793-2700, or emailing to educator@templebethtorah.net.

DRESS CODE

Students are asked to come dressed in appropriate attire for school. Remember, this is also a synagogue and the students will be entering the sanctuary. Boys are required to wear a head covering, be it a hat or *kippah*. Girls may wear a *kippah* or hat if they so choose. When attending services, students should wear appropriate clothes.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

We want to provide our students with positive and motivating Jewish educational experiences. Toward that end, we instill values for interpersonal relations in the classroom. We try to teach our students to be good people – *mensch*s.

Unfortunately, at times students exhibit behavior that prevents other students from learning. Our focus will continue to include positive incentives to encourage student interest. With this in mind, please make the teacher aware of any special needs that may influence your child's behavior.

The first time a student acts inappropriately in class, the teacher will do everything possible to deal with the situation within the classroom environment. If this fails to resolve the issue, then the following steps will be taken:

Misbehavior #1: Student sent to Director of Education with verbal warning, and first written notification to be sent home by teacher.

Misbehavior #2: Second written notification sent to parents. Parents will be called by the teacher.

Misbehavior #3: Third written notification plus a call to the parents for a conference with the teacher and the Director of Education.

Misbehavior #4: If the student continues to act inappropriately, s/he may be removed from the class, for a period of time to be determined by the Director, to perform an independent project and/or some form of synagogue community service. Both of these consequences will take place during Religious School hours and at the building. Further intervention may be considered after consultation with the parents.

IF MISBEHAVIOR POSES A HEALTH OR PHYSICAL SAFETY PROBLEM, IMMEDIATE INTERVENTION BY THE DIRECTOR AND THE PARENTS WILL BE NECESSARY.

ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL

TRAFFIC PATTERN

To insure our children's safety, please abide by the following traffic procedures. When dropping off or picking up, proceed to the southern end of the parking lot and continue around to drop off/pick up area.

IMPORTANT: PLEASE MAINTAIN A 10 MPH SPEED LIMIT IN THE PARKING LOT. CELL PHONE USE IS FORBIDDEN DURING DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP. REMEMBER – THIS IS FOR THE SAFETY OF YOUR CHILDREN.

Children will enter and exit the car from the **curbside only**. Once the children are inside the car, pull out of the area **slowly**. This procedure does not take very long and will protect the lives of our children.

Ten minutes after dismissal, a teacher will bring all the remaining children inside the building. **Please be sure to pick up your children on time.**

Students who violate the parking lot procedures by displaying any form of unsafe behavior will be asked to remain inside the building. Parents will be asked to park and come inside the building for these children.

Please do not drop your child off more than 10 minutes before school begins. We are not an aftercare facility and do not have the manpower to supervise and maintain your child's safety. Please be on time for dismissal. Children, especially younger ones, become anxious if you do not arrive in a timely fashion.

LATE ARRIVAL/EARLY DISMISSAL

Please try to have your child arrive on time for Religious School. Late arrival or early dismissal can hamper your child's progress, as well as impact what's happening in class. If you know that you will be arriving late or leaving early, please inform the school office. If you need to pick up your child early, please come to the school to let us know you have arrived. For the sake of your child's safety, the teacher **cannot release a child directly to the parking lot**. Please, don't go directly to the classroom. Students will be dismissed from the school office.

HOMEWORK

Homework is a tool to reinforce what has been taught in class. We understand the pressures our students are under from their secular school work and other extra-curricular activities. On occasion your child will come home with a short assignment that will enhance what s/he is doing in class. Sometimes it may be a family project involving you. It will NOT be busy work.

Like any language, practicing Hebrew will help your student progress and excel. Hebrew reading needs daily reinforcement. The students should spend **at least 10 minutes a day reviewing**. Your support helps your child succeed.

PROGRESS REPORTS

We will be constantly evaluating the students during the year. Twice a year, in December and at the end of the school year, we'll be sending home report cards. However, if we feel that your child needs some extra help, or is exhibiting outstanding behavior, we will be in touch with you as well.

Our goal is to help your child succeed. Any student who is having trouble keeping up with his/her class or adjusting to the school situation will be aided in every way possible. Of course, we will involve you in choosing the best course of action.

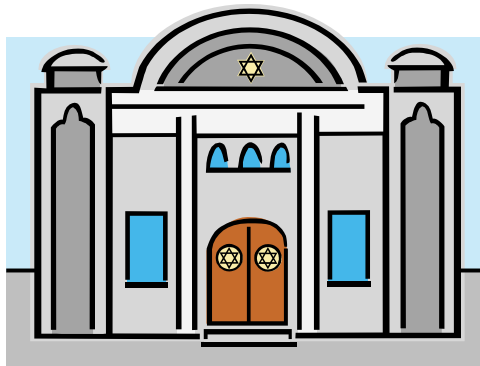
FOOD

Children should not bring food with them into class. If you give your child a snack in the car, please make sure that it is finished before entering the Temple. There will be no gum chewing in class.

Often, individual teachers will bring in (or ask parents to donate) *challah* and grape juice to teach blessings. **If your child has a particular food allergy or is diabetic, you must notify the school so that we can protect and accommodate your child. Due to children with food allergies, any food brought into class must be store-bought and in it's original packaging.**

VISITORS TO OUR SCHOOL

The Temple Beth Torah Religious School is your school. Parents are encouraged to take an active interest in what goes on. Feel free to stop by. Please call the school office prior to your visit. There are certain times when a class visit is inappropriate due to special programming or particular curricular needs. If you wish to set up a conference with a teacher, please arrange for it in advance. Student drop off and pick up are NOT good times to have such a conference as the teachers are watching the students or are preparing for class. Contact the school office to set up a meeting. We realize that students enjoy bringing friends to visit and attend classes. Please contact the school office PRIOR to such a visit.



MILESTONE EVENTS

Consecration

Just as a toddler's first steps are marked as an exciting transition, so, too, is the study of *Torah*.

Study and learning have always been considered important for the Jewish people. An old tradition had children learning the *alef-bet* on the first day of school by tracing letters spread with honey. Licking their fingers after tracing the letters, children would know the sweetness of learning.

Consecration marks the beginning of a child's formal Jewish education. This special event is celebrated at Temple Beth Torah for all new students in the Religious School as part of the *Sukkot Eve Service*. The children are called to the *bima* by Rabbi Pinsky and Cantor Barry and they stand before the *aron hakodesh* (the Ark) to receive a special blessing.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah

When a child becomes a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* ("son/daughter of the commandments"), he/she becomes an adult in the eyes of the Jewish people and is, therefore, accountable for the observance of *mitzvot* – commandments.

In our Reform tradition, a person having studied Hebrew and Judaism has a right to decide which ritual laws he/she will accept as commandments. Becoming a *bar/bat mitzvah* marks the beginning of adult level of Torah study. It is a life cycle event that is not an ending, but rather a transition point that acknowledges the need to move toward a more mature study of Jewish tradition and adult understanding.

The year before becoming a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, children and their parents will meet to study together. The program will enable parents and their children to learn with the Rabbi, Cantor, Educator, and each other. This is an opportunity for genuine learning to be shared by parents and children and will bond the group together as they progress toward the service when each will become a *Bar or Bat Mitzvah*.

In order to become a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* at Temple Beth Torah, the candidate and family must meet the following requirements:

1. The family must be members in good standing.
2. The child must have completed **a minimum of four (4) uninterrupted years** of Religious school and minimally be between 12 and 13 years old.
3. The family must attend the 6th Grade *B'nai Mitzvah* meeting.
4. If a child becomes a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* before the end of the Seventh Grade he/she must make a commitment to satisfactorily complete the Seventh Grade.
5. The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* candidate must attend a minimum of six (6) *Shabbat* Eve services and six (6) *Shabbat* morning services at Temple Beth Torah in the six (6) months prior to his/her becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Parents are, of course, strongly urged to attend these services with their child(ren).
6. It is expected that the student will continue with Mitzvah Corps classes in preparation for Confirmation at the conclusion of Tenth Grade.

Mitzvah Corps

This program is designed for 8th and 9th graders who have completed elementary Religious School. Students continue their Jewish education by attending monthly Mitzvah Corps meetings. Students share discussions of issues, both Jewish and secular, relevant to their lives.

Confirmation

Confirmation enables the post *B'nai Mitzvah* students to expand their learning on a more mature level. Continuing to learn enables these young adults to better understand not only Judaism, but also their place in the Jewish community. The Confirmation itself will take place at the end of 10th grade during *Shavuot*, the holiday that commemorates the giving of the *Torah* at Mt. Sinai.

The Confirmation program culminates a three-year commitment beginning in 8th grade. In order to become confirmed, the student must attend at least 80% of classes each year. Classes and/or work missed must be made up. In addition, the student is expected to attend at least six *Shabbat* services each year. It is hoped that each potential Confirmand will also participate in services by reading *Torah* or Haftarah; lifting or dressing the *Torah* (*hagba* and *galilah*); lighting candles or reciting *Kiddush*; or any other religious ritual assigned by Rabbi Pinsky.

Summer Camp/Israel Trip

Attending Camp Coleman, Kutz Camp Leadership Institute, or going on a NFTY sponsored trip to Israel can be a life-transforming experience for a child or teenager. We, at Temple Beth Torah, encourage each family to investigate these opportunities to give your child(ren) a life-long involvement with Judaism.

Tefillah (Prayer)

Nothing teaches as well as experience! Our goal is for each of our graduates to be comfortable and competent in a synagogue setting, whether it be at Temple Beth Torah, a NFTY (National Federation of Temple Youth) event, a Hillel service in college, or any synagogue in Jerusalem. To achieve this goal, we teach synagogue skills and

emphasize the prayer experience as an essential component of our curriculum. This is done through a variety of ways.

- Students are taught prayers through our Hebrew Program. In addition to becoming competent in reading, they learn the accompanying choreography (i.e. bowing, bending, standing) and discuss the concepts of the prayers.
- *Shabbat* Family Experience: As our students learn about prayer and Jewish home practices, we will provide an opportunity for TBT's parents to "keep up" with their children so that families can have the joy of performing home rituals together each *Shabbat* and on the holidays. At our Friday night dinner, families join together for *Shabbat* table rituals and *Z'mirot* (songs). While we hope that you will enjoy all of our congregational dinners, attendance at your child's special class *Shabbat* dinner is expected.
- Students attend *Shabbat* services at Temple Beth Torah throughout the year. Families are encouraged to attend together as a way of bringing *Shabbat* into everyone's home. When parents attend services with their children, the message is clear – attending religious services is an important part of our lives as Jews. While families are encouraged to attend services regularly, we have established service attendance requirements for each grade. (Please note that during *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* preparation, the Rabbi/Cantor will have additional requirements.) Students will be provided with service cards that are to be signed and are stored in the box inside the back of the sanctuary. While we encourage you and your children to explore services throughout the diverse communities within our faith, only services attended at Temple Beth Torah count towards fulfilling this requirement.

Service Requirements are as Follows:

Kindergarten – Students should attend the Kindergarten Family service.

1st Grade – There is one *Shabbat* service required, plus the 1st grade Family service.

2nd Grade – There are two *Shabbat* services required, plus the 2nd grade Family service.

3rd Grade – There are three *Shabbat* services required, plus the 3rd grade Family service.

4th Grade – There are four *Shabbat* services required, plus the 4th grade Family service.

5th Grade – There are five *Shabbat* services required, plus the 5th grade Family service.

6th Grade – There are six *Shabbat* services required, plus the 6th grade Family service.

7th Grade – The students are required to attend six *erev Shabbat* and six *Shabbat* morning services and the *Siyyum*.

ENRICHMENT

Special Programs

These programs offer further dimensions to the Jewish learning experience. All grades participate in school-wide celebrations and observances of the major Jewish holidays. These may include a *Megillah* reading, *Purim* Carnival, family and model *seders*. Recent programs have included puppet shows, dramatic presentations, films and guest speakers. All grades experience the world of Jewish music with Cantor Barry. In addition, they enjoy visits to the Temple library, which include story time and the opportunity to take books home. Upper grades (7th through 10th) hear from guest speakers who offer unique perspectives on Jewish life.

Junior Choir

Junior Choir, under the direction of Cantor Barry, will not meet this year.

Tzedakah

Tzedakah is a *mitzvah* that should be a fixed part of all of our lives. Each classroom will have a *tzedakah* box. Students bring contributions to school each time they come, and at the end of the year they decide upon the recipients of the funds.

Field Trips

Beginning in the intermediate grades, students may participate in field trips that are relevant to their course of studies.

Family Education

Religious education that is part of a family experience is most effective. Family Education days are held for Kindergarten through sixth grade students and their parents. They include participatory activities, songs, stories, and arts and crafts centered around a major Jewish theme.



What is VPO?

The Volunteer Parent Organization (VPO) of Temple Beth Torah Religious School is a group of dedicated and concerned parents who are committed to enhancing and promoting the educational opportunities available for all children at our Religious School.

We work to accomplish this through promoting closer ties and fostering communication among parents, teachers and administration in order to achieve a feeling of community spirit. We provide support to teachers and the administration for both curriculum and social enrichment activities.

A supportive VPO helps plan fun Religious School holiday programs as well as weekend family events.

The VPO generates funds through membership dues and fundraisers such as Pizza Tuesdays. The VPO donates or uses the money to benefit the Religious School and Temple with a goal of enriching and supplementing the curriculum and the basic needs of the school.

The VPO is open to all Religious School parents and families. Everyone is encouraged to become involved in any way they can. Parents are invited, from day one, to be a part of their child's Religious School experience by helping with our VPO committees.

If you are interested in assuming a leadership role in VPO, or would like to learn more about our programs, please feel free to contact us.

We look forward to getting to know you!

VPO Co-Chairs

Alice Rosenblatt

Abby Levy

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**Cantor Nicholas Fenakel
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**Cantor Carrie Barry
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