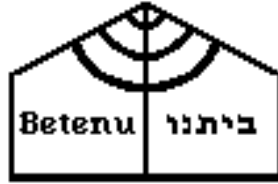


Congregation Betenu Religious School



Parent Handbook

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From The Rabbi-

Dear Betenu Families—

As I write this, I am just a few short weeks from going back to Hebrew College to begin classes for my third year in the Rabbinical School program. And with that, the summer tapers off and we begin thinking about starting over: new Jewish year, new school year.

These transitional moments, preferably enjoyed with sunshine and slowness, give us a chance to think what matters to us, and what we have learned that we want to carry forward.

One of my favorite activities this summer has been leading a casual weekly “pop-up” Mishnah group that met in various parks during my time as student rabbi in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Each Wednesday evening, we’d gather outside (*ice cream encouraged!*) to study and discuss a few selections from the Mishnaic literature. I love Mishnah study for informal learning because it packs a lot of wisdom into short selections; there is always something new to be discovered.

One of the Mishnayot we studied might sound familiar to you: Avot 1:2, which says:

Shimon haTzadik ... used to say, “The world stands on three things: on Torah, on holy work, and on deeds of kindness.” (*Al haTorah, v'al haAvodah, v'al gemilut chasadim*)

A few pages later, we get Avot 1:15, which says:

Shammai says, "Make your Torah study a habit, say little and do much, and receive every person with a friendly face."

Although they lived five generations apart, it seems to me that both Shimon haTzadik and Shammai are pointing in the same direction: teaching us that learning is important not only for itself, but for the ways that it leads us into righteous action and lives of kindness. That these three things are considered to be the foundation of the world should tell us to pay attention not just to our learning but to what we do with it. It's *that* important!

As we begin our learning together, I hope that we'll approach it with diligence and joy, for the purpose of expanding our minds and hearts. I look forward to sharing our studies this year and finding our own individual ways to contribute to the foundation of the world.

Kindness and shalom,

Rav Naomi Gurt Lind

..... SEPT 2022

From the Education Committee

Elul 5783

Dear Parents,

Along with our Rabbi and staff, we welcome you and your family to a new year at Congregation Betenu Religious School.

The mission of Congregation Betenu is to **be a home for all to participate in a Jewish community – a community to learn Torah, to worship God, and to improve the world.**

The religious school builds on that mission, providing Torah-based instruction that serves as a guide to living a Jewish life. This includes weekly instruction in Jewish Studies and learning Hebrew both as a sacred biblical language and as the modern day living language of our people. Mandatory service attendance provides a first step towards integrating academic studies with every day Jewish life and lifestyle. We expect our students to actively engage in and pursue Jewish life even after they finish their studies. As it is written in our Torah and repeated regularly in our liturgy; *“You shall love your God with all your mind, with all your strength, and with all your being. Set these words which I command you this day, upon your heart. Teach them faithfully to your children; speak of them in your home and on your way, when you lie down and when you rise up. Bind them as a sign upon your hand; let them be a symbol between your eyes. Inscribe them on the doorposts of your house, and on your gates.”* (Dvarim/Deuteronomy 6: 4-9 - the V’ahavta prayer)

When parents are committed to their child’s and their own active participation in a Jewish community, the Jewish educational experience becomes so much more rewarding to both parent and child. Please join us as a partner in your child’s Jewish education by engaging in the richness of Jewish life and by actively committing to becoming a vital member of the Betenu community.

Sincerely,
The Education Committee, Congregation Betenu

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Religious School Philosophy

The goal of Jewish education within the Reform Movement is to deepen Jewish experience and knowledge for all Jews, so as to strengthen their commitment to God, their identification with the Jewish people, their involvement in the Temple, their participation in Jewish life, and their determination to live as Jews.

Congregation Betenu supports the principle that “the Reform religious school is a primary pathway for Outreach to interfaith families. As Reform Jews, we welcome interfaith families and encourage them to affirm the Jewish identification of their children.”

We recognize the child of an interfaith marriage as fully Jewish provided that the parents have agreed to raise their child as a Jew and are following up on that decision.

Enrollment in our religious school is open to

- Children who are being raised and educated exclusively as Jews and
- Children who are not concurrently receiving formal education in another religion.

If you are struggling with this decision or uncertain of its implications, we urge you to speak with either the Rabbi or the Education Committee *before* registering you child in religious school.

Guiding Principles

Congregation Betenu seeks to strengthen the commitment of our students to God and a Jewish way of life according to the following guiding principles:

- **Gemilut Hasidim (Acts of Loving Kindness) and Respect for Others:** We expect our students to meet their responsibilities in doing acts of kindness within the community, as well as treat their teachers and fellow students with respect.
- **Tikkun Olam (Improving the World):** We expect that their study of Judaism will inspire them to find ways to improve the world.
- **Parental Involvement:** We expect that parents will take an active role in their children’s education and in the Betenu community.
- **Recognition of Each Child’s Special Qualities:** In our school environment, we recognize, appreciate, and bring to fruition the very best qualities that each member of our school community has to offer.
- **Torah, Jewish History, Judaic Culture, Israel:** We teach Judaic culture by studying the Torah, celebrating rituals and holidays, learning about the land of Israel, and studying the history of the Jewish people. We want our students to learn that whenever Jews face adversity and attempts to exterminate us, we, as Jews help one another to meet the challenge to ensure the survival of Judaism.

- **Avodah (Worship):** We teach prayer as a means of coming together with the Betenu community to praise God and better understand what God expects of us.
- **Hebrew Language:** We teach the Hebrew language because it is the spark by which we ignite our lives as Jews; it is a part of our worship, our Jewish culture, and it is the sacred and living language of our people.

Policies and Procedures

Religious School Schedule

There are 30 religious school sessions, and students are required to attend worship services, the number of which varies according to their grade (see p. 6). The religious school meets on Sundays, and is divided into three (3) trimesters of ten (10) classes each. Students will receive a progress report, which will also document service attendance, at the end of each trimester and a final report card on the last day of school. Two-thirds of the service requirements should be met by end of the second trimester. (see p. 6).

The typical School day schedule is here and is subject to immediate change due to community health restrictions: **9:00am - 12:00 PM: Grades K-8.** Parents must provide snack.

Dismissals

Early Dismissal – Students who must leave early should bring a note from their parents to the Principal explaining who will pick them up and at what time. **No student will be released to a non-custodial adult without a note from the custodial adult.**

Regular Dismissal – **Students will not be allowed to leave the building without a parent present and an adult/teacher dismissing them.** This ensures the safety of the children and also gives the staff and parents an opportunity to communicate if desired.

School Cancellation

The Principal will make the decision to cancel school due to inclement weather by 7:30 AM on Sunday morning. An email message will be sent out to parents and teachers stating that school has been cancelled for that day.

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Attendance

Regular attendance reinforces the students' abilities to learn, encourages bonding with the Congregation Betenu community, and provides an atmosphere of continuity. It establishes a routine from which children benefit.

We understand that some absences are unavoidable. Please contact the Temple or Principal if your child will be out of school. Students are expected to make up missed class work. Make up work for absences is available through the classroom teachers. Please contact them when your child is absent, so that your child does not fall behind. (See the staff contact list provided at the end of this Parent Handbook).

If there are 3 or more absences, paid tutoring is available, if necessary, in order to make up the missed work. It is the parent's responsibility to arrange for tutors, and names of tutors are available from the Principal.

We are always concerned about the health of our students, and ask that you keep your child at home if the following is present:

- Positive COVID test in the past 5 days (Masking for the next 5 days may be necessary)
- A fever of 99 or greater
- A fever within the last 24 hours
- Vomiting or diarrhea within the last 24 hours

If the number of absences becomes excessive, we will contact you for a conference and may recommend supplementary tutoring to help the student return to a level of successful achievement.

Class and Service Attendance Requirements

Each student has a minimum required number of classes and services to attend.

| | Services | Classes |
|----------------------------|-------------|---------|
| Grades K, 1 and 2 | 4 services | 27 |
| Grades 3, 4 and 5 | 7 services | 27 |
| Grades 6 through B-Mitzvah | 15 services | 27 |

A sign-in sheet, as well as a status chart tracking each student's service attendance is available in the Temple lobby. It is the responsibility of the student and parent(s) to document attendance.

Two-thirds of the service requirements should be met by the end of the second trimester. More than half of the total required services must be attended at Congregation Betenu. For services attended elsewhere, the parent(s) should notify the Principal *in writing* so that attendance is accurately documented and credited. **For the student to become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, ten (10) services must be attended by the end of the second trimester.** Parents will be expected to petition the Education Committee if this requirement is not met.

Books and Supplies

Students are issued one copy of a textbook and/or workbook used for each class. If a student loses a book, the replacement will be charged to the parents at the cost that the Temple must pay to replace the book. Students are expected to bring a writing utensil.

Homework

Homework reinforces the concepts learned in class. Students are expected to complete their homework assignments in a timely and satisfactory manner.

Progress and Report Cards

Progress Reports are issued three times a year at the end of each ten (10) week trimester. They should be returned signed the following week. A final Report Card is issued at the end of the year on the last day of school.

Snacks

Please provide your child with a healthy snack and drink from home.

We encourage students to have eaten breakfast before attending school to fuel their brains and bodies.

Although the building is not strictly kosher, all food brought into the building must comply with Congregation Betenu's non-kosher food policy which prohibits pig-derived (including pepperoni pizza) and shellfish products. If in doubt as to what foods may or may not be brought in, contact the Temple office.

Parent Involvement

The parent(s) of Congregation Betenu Religious School students are encouraged to support and participate in Temple-wide and school events in which students are involved, including the parent hosted class Oneg Shabbat at Friday Evening Services and holiday parties. Services and events are posted electronically weekly and monthly. Be sure you are included on the email list.

Behavioral Expectations

Our school promotes the ideals of self-respect, respect for other human beings, and respect for the special nature of the building and the subjects taught. It is our goal to foster a greater sense of personal responsibility in the student for his/her own behavior (kavod atzmi), and to establish an environment conducive to learning for all students (k'vod hamkom). Students should come to school ready to learn, share, and interact with members of the community.

Our teachers reward appropriate and positive behavior to establish a community of learning in each classroom. We recognize that certain circumstances in the student's life may impact

behavior. Please inform the school of any life change or medical situation that may affect your child's learning or behavior. Each situation will be considered on an individual basis. We adhere to strict policies of confidentiality. Non-compliant or dangerous behaviors will be reported immediately to parents. The safety of all students is of high consideration to the Betenu staff.

Respect for our building is taught by our staff. If a student purposefully damages the property, parents will be informed and reimbursement for damages inflicted may be requested. A parent conference may be requested and scheduled at any time.

Successful Completion of School Year

Students who successfully complete the following minimum requirements will move to the next grade level and will receive credit for successful completion of one (1) year of attendance at Congregation Betenu Religious School:

1. The student must complete the academic requirements and class attendance requirements of each grade level. In case of disagreement, the Principal, and Education committee will arbitrate. We accommodate all students' learning needs and styles.
2. The student must attend the required number of services for the student's grade level. Parents are responsible for documenting services attended. As previously stated, more than half of the required services need to be at Congregation Betenu, and parents taking children to services at another synagogue must notify the teacher or the rabbi *in writing* to document that they have fulfilled the requirement elsewhere.

Scholarships

The Diantha Gross Educational Endowment Fund provides need-based scholarships to Religious School students.

If you are in need of financial assistance for your children to attend Religious School, please call or email the Betenu office for application forms. All information will remain confidential. Members may apply at any point during the school year.

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Curriculum Overview

Grades K and 1

Grades K and 1 are taught using an "open classroom" concept where children work at their own level under the supervision of a teacher and/or the teacher's assistants using the CHAI Jewish studies, Aleph bet materials, music, reading books, games, songs, and arts and crafts.

Grades 2 through 7

Jewish Studies and History

Students use the URJ CHAI curriculum to establish an understanding of Torah, Avodah and G'milut chasadim. These lessons, activities and projects help students integrate important knowledge and skills into their lives for Jewish learning and living. (Refer to pages 4-5, "Guiding Principles" for details.)

Hebrew

The Hebrew language is the spark by which we ignite our lives as Jews. It is integral to our worship service, Jewish culture, and it is the sacred and living language of our people.

Younger students use The New Siddur Program books. These texts prepare the students to read Hebrew with proficiency and fluency, helping them to decipher the language beginning with the Aleph Bet. Prayers and stories help the students relate to their ancestors, family roots and Jewish traditions. They help the students understand prayers and their importance in Jewish life.

Older students read from the Tanach, providing them with skills to understand and question their Jewish heritage, see Judaism as a culture which brought to the world the basics to maintain a respectful society, and the idea of a monotheistic perspective to inspire them for the future to develop a deep interest in their Judaism.

Assembly (Music, Prayers & Blessings)

All students will assemble in the Sanctuary and side areas for further exploration of prayers and blessings, stories, arts and crafts, and music.

8.2022

