



Religious School Parent Handbook 2018-2019

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Dear Families,

Welcome to the Religious School at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire! The following handbook is intended to serve as a guide to the comprehensive course of religious study for children and young people.

Religious education at Hevreh strives to move beyond the traditional notion of religious school. We aim to create a community of young learners and leaders who will explore their heritage and develop a personal understanding of Jewish identity. We wish to engage our students in over 5700 years of Jewish history, discovering where their Jewishness reflects and merges with who they are today.

Our philosophy of religious education is supported by the involvement of parents and extended family. It is our hope that children and young people will enter our learning community with clear messages from family that what they learn on Wednesday afternoon and Sunday morning is valued as an integral part of their total education. We further hope that parents and families will further encourage Jewish learning through participation in the temple community and at home. Your observance of traditions and rituals and your ongoing discussions about Judaism and Jewish identity will complement and enhance the learning that takes place at religious school. School/parent communication is vital to the success of our program. We welcome your questions, comments and concerns.

Beyond our Hevreh community, our school relies on the financial support of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires. Federation provides a stipend for each student enrolled in our school, which accounts for one-third of the total cost of educating each child. We rely on them not only for financial support, but also for creating a more expansive sense of community here in the Berkshires. We hope you will show your appreciation for their investment in your child(ren's) education by making a contribution to the Federation at www.jewishberkshires.com.

Together with Rabbi Gordon, Rabbi Hirsch, our teachers, and the entire Hevreh community, we welcome you.

Warmly,

The Hevreh Religious School Committee
Tim Lee, Aviva Wichler, Betsy Gross, Lisa Sloane, and Beth Nathan

WHO WE ARE

Our Vision

We aim to provide families with the tools for living Jewishly, on Jewish time. The Hevreh Religious School will provide a comprehensive Jewish learning experience to children and young adults that includes the study of Torah, Hebrew, prayer and ritual, Jewish culture and values, Jewish literature, music, art, and Israel.

Our Mission

At Hevreh, children are an integral part of our community. Our mission is to instill in all students a love for Judaism that will foster a strong Jewish identity to sustain them throughout their lives.

Our Approach

We believe:

- Children and families should learn together by doing.
- Students should be encouraged to explore their unique Jewish identity.
- Curiosity, questioning, exploration, and discourse should be encouraged.
- The unique learning styles of individuals should be respected.

We seek to create a place that our children and their families will view as their own: a place where they may bring their enthusiasm, their curiosity, their questions and their ideas for exploration. We provide an experience where children and their families learn by doing.

What are our *Middot* (Values)?

- *Kehillah Kedosha (Being a Holy Community)*
- *Derech Eretz (Communal Expectations)*
- *Tikkun Olam (Working to Repair the World)*

➤ ***Kehillah Kedosha: Being a Holy Community***

Each member of our Hevreh community is created *B'tzelem Elohim* (in the image of God) and is worthy of love, care, and respect. We create a holy community by treating each other with dignity, being a part of each other's lives, and helping others. Being a *Kehillah Kedosha* means reaching out to each other in times of need, and spending time getting to know one another. Our holy community includes our students, teachers and young teachers, parents, family members, and members of the Hevreh staff and community.

➤ ***Derech Eretz: Communal Expectations***

Being a part of a holy community requires each one of us to treat others with kindness, respect, and care. If there is an issue of disrespect toward a teacher or another student, or inappropriate behavior in the building, we will address the situation immediately and arrange a parent conference to plan an appropriate course of action.

Additionally, we believe that to treat ourselves with dignity and respect is essential to becoming responsible members of our Jewish community. To that end, we expect students to come to school each week dressed in clothing that lends itself to an educational and spiritual environment. Finally, we ask that unless requested by the teacher for classroom purposes, students leave cell phones, ipads/ipods/laptops, and electronic games at home.

➤ ***Tikkun Olam: Working to Repair the World***

As a Jewish community, we believe we have a responsibility to leave the world around us in better shape than we found it. We do this in many ways at Religious School: by participating in community service projects, raising money for *Tzedakah*, and by being conscious of our own waste and its impact on the environment. We believe that helping others is central to what it means to be Jewish, and work to create good habits around giving, generosity and service in our community and beyond.

COMMUNITY

➤ **Creating a Connected Parent Community**

Parents are the first and primary teachers of their children. All our work at Hevreh is intended to support parents as they guide and lead their children to a life informed by Jewish ethical precepts and love of Jewish values and Jewish community. We encourage participation by parents in all aspects of Hevreh's Religious School. Many of Hevreh's teachers are parents of students who are or have been at Hevreh's Religious School. Parents serve Hevreh's students in many capacities. To find out more about participating in the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) or other groups at Hevreh, please contact Rabbi Gordon.

➤ **Shabbat and Holiday Service Participation**

In grades K-7, each class hosts a Friday evening Shabbat Family service. Attendance at the service in which your child participates is an expected part of the Religious School experience.

Every student at Hevreh is encouraged to attend *T'fillot* (worship services) during the school year. It's a way of sharing Shabbat and holidays with our friends and family. By attending services, students will have a direct familiarity with rituals, prayer and practice at Hevreh. We believe the best way to study and learn about Jewish liturgy is to personally experience it.

At the end of the year, recognition is given to those students who attend at least the following number of services:

Grades K-3: any 4 services

Grades 4-6: any 5 services

(Members of the B'nai Mitzvah Class are required to attend 12 services in the year leading up to their Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

These services are mandatory)

Grades 7-Confirmation: any 7 services.

Curriculum Highlights

Grade	Sundays	Wednesdays
K/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jewish values of celebration and sharing. • Shabbat and Jewish holidays through crafts, stories, and music. • Introduction to Alef-Bet 	n/a
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blessings for Shabbat and Jewish rituals for holidays. • Thinking about God • Stories from the Book of Genesis • Alef-Bet 	n/a
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shema and Prayer • TaNaKH (Torah, Prophets, Writings) • Jewish Ethics and Values • Intro to Israel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review/reinforcing the Alef Bet • Learning the vowels • Intro to reading and decoding Hebrew
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding God • Weekly Torah Portion • Tzedakah & Justice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decoding and reading skills • The “Blessing” formula (comprehension)
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jewish life cycle • Environmentalism • Blessings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced reading skills • Introduction to Shabbat liturgy
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jewish history & important Jewish figures in history • Israel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shabbat liturgy • Introduction to trope
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jewish ethics & law • Holocaust history • B’nai Mitzvah • Israel & Current Events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shabbat morning liturgy • Torah & Haftarah trope

B'nai Mitzvah at Hevreh

Qualifications

- The family must be a member of the Congregation.
- The student must have completed at least three years of Religious & Hebrew School education. The Rabbis will determine competency through oral and/or written evaluations in all cases.
- A Bar/Bat Mitzvah date will be assigned only if a family is in good financial standing with the Congregation.
- Students and families must meet the following expectations.

Expectations

Our goal at Hevreh of Southern Berkshire is that the Bar/Bat Mitzvah experience is an enriching experience for both the student and parents. We can best prepare our students by asking for the following commitments.

- In the year leading up to the student's Bar/Bat Mitzvah, attendance at Religious and Hebrew school is paramount. Students may not miss more than three (3) scheduled Sunday classes or three (3) scheduled Wednesday classes. Absences beyond this must be discussed with the Rabbis in advance.
- Students and parents should attend and participate in 12 worship services during the year prior to becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
 - 3 Friday night services
 - 4 Shabbat morning services when there is NOT a Bar or Bat Mitzvah
 - 5 services of your choice. Friday night or Saturday morning with or without a bar or Bat Mitzvah but not including the High Holidays
- Parents of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student should participate in and support the preparation process. Parents and Bar/Bat Mitzvah students are expected to attend all of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah family meetings. In this way the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony will be a spiritually meaningful and significant life cycle event for the entire family.
- Students will be expected to participate in a Mitzvah Project under the direction of the Rabbis.
- Bar/Bat Mitzvah students are expected to continue in Hevreh's Religious School after their Bar/Bat Mitzvah through the completion of confirmation.

Dates

- Dates will be assigned to all B'Nai Mitzvah by the end of May of 5th grade.
- The date chosen will be a date on or after the 13th birthday of the B'Nai Mitzvah student

Special Programs & Opportunities

***Yachad* Family Education Programs**

'*Yachad*' means 'together'. Our family education program is made possible by a generous grant of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation. At Hevreh, we integrate families into our educational programs by offering various types of family education programs throughout your children's school years. Every family is invited to participate in family education. Active learning with your child reinforces your student's Jewish identity and promotes Hevreh as a place for family interaction. We hope you will participate with your children in all of our family education workshop events.

***Chuggim* (or "Specials")**

Throughout the year, students in Kindergarten-7th grade will have the opportunity to participate in *Chuggim*, or "*specials*" on select Sundays. These *chuggim* are an opportunity for teachers and other members of the Hevreh community to share their passions and talents in a special educational setting. *Chuggim* can include (but are not limited to): cooking, music, yoga, fine arts, arts and crafts, Jewish environmentalism, theater, conversational Hebrew, cartooning, Jewish literature, and more!

Purimspiel

A time-honored Hevreh tradition, our Purimshpiel takes place each year as part of our Purim celebration (usually in late February or March). Our Confirmation Class (9th-12th grade) prepare and present the Purimshpiel with original script, music, sets, and choreography.

Confirmation Class Trips

Each year, one of our rabbis travels with our Confirmation Class students on a three to five day trip that connects the class with a larger Jewish community. Past class trips have been to Alabama for a Jewish Civil Rights program, Washington, D.C. for the Religious Action Center L'Taken program, Amsterdam and Prague.

Young Teachers

Young teachers are members of the Confirmation Class who enrich the Religious School by serving as "*madrikhim*" (roughly translated as "role models") for younger students. Their responsibilities include: Hebrew tutoring, assisting class teachers by helping to prepare materials, working with individual children and on occasion, preparing and leading a classroom lesson. Young Teachers are compensated for their work, and are a valued part of our teaching team. All Confirmation Class students are eligible to apply to be Young Teachers.

Youth Groups

Youth group membership is an excellent way to develop a strong sense of Jewish identity. At Hevreh, we offer two youth group opportunities. **SCOOBY** (South County Berkshire Youth) for 6th and 7th Grade and **HoTY** (Hevreh Temple Youth), which is open to 8th-12th graders.

SCOOBY meets twice a year as part of the Sunday Religious School day, and is an opportunity for 6th and 7th grade students to get a taste of what youth group programming is like. **SCOOBY** events may include bowling, a day at the farm, a trip to Butternut, or an on-site “Top Chef” style program.

HoTY sponsors social, educational, religious, and social action activities throughout the entire year. Youth group events are planned by the students in conjunction with an adult Youth Group Advisor, under the supervision of Rabbi Gordon. **HoTY** events may include a “Shul-In” (sleep-over at Hevreh), Havdalah and Movie Night, trips to Ramblewild or Six Flags, and more. Our Jewish youth community extends beyond Hevreh, and **HoTY** members often participate in county-wide, state-wide and national youth group experiences. **HoTY** is a member of **NFTY** (North American Federation of Temple Youth) Northeast. Hevreh’s youth groups are partially funded by a generous grant of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation.

What You Need To Know

➤ **When is Religious School?**

Sundays

Kindergarten-7th Grade: Religious School begins promptly at 10:00am and ends at 12:30pm.

It is essential that students be in their classrooms prior to 10:00am so they can be ready for the school day.

Pre-Confirmation & Confirmation: Class meets twice a month from 9am-10:30am.

➤ **When is Hebrew Skills?**

Wednesdays

3rd Grade-Bar/Bat Mitzvah: Hebrew skills classes run from 4:00pm to 5:30pm

Children in grades K through 3 must be picked up from their classrooms promptly by parents at the end of school (5:30pm on Wednesdays; 12:30pm on Sundays).

➤ **Let's Talk Attendance...**

In order to create a class community and to support your child's education, regular attendance is expected.

In case of a necessary absence:

Notify Jodie Friedman at Hevreh 413-528-6378 or jfriedman@hevreh.org as soon as you know your child will be absent.

➤ **What if my child is getting picked up early, or by someone other than me?**

If your child is to be picked up by someone other than a parent, please notify Jodie Friedman.

For early dismissal --- Please send a note to the teacher and notify Jodie Friedman. Please pick your child up from the class room. No student will be dismissed early to wait for a parent in the lobby.

➤ **Where can I park at Hevreh?**

You may park in our main lot, and additional parking is always available behind the kitchen. Please do not leave your car in the Turn-around OR on the grass in front of the main entrance.

➤ **What should my student bring to school each week?**

Students should come to class each week prepared to learn. In addition to any educational material supplied by the teacher, students should bring a folder and a pencil. Lastly, each week we ask that students contribute to the on-going Tzedakah project in their classroom as described below.

1. Tzedakah: money is collected each week in class. Please help your children to develop the habit of giving money to help people in need. Older children can be encouraged to give a portion of their allowance or chore money, younger children can earn money or be given money by their parents. There is no set amount of money that is required, we just ask that each week the children give some money for tzedakah. As a class, teachers will help students decide where they want to donate their class collection at the end of the year.
2. Food Drive: we ask students to bring a non-perishable food item on the 1st Sunday of each month to donate to Hevreh's on-going efforts to support the People's Pantry, a local food bank.

➤ **Snacks**

We rely on our families to provide snack for our classes. Each family will be assigned Sunday dates on which they are responsible for providing snack for their child's class. Parents providing snacks for Religious School are asked to send healthful, no nut, low-sugar foods, paying attention to any restrictions that may be in affect due to food allergies. Parents are urged to carefully consider the quantity of food accounting for the fact that they are intended as snacks. Typical Sunday school snacks may include: challah, juice, fruit, cheese, hummus, crackers, etc. Please make sure your children eat a good breakfast before attending Sunday religious school.

For students coming to Hevreh prior to 4pm on Wednesdays, Hevreh will provide a very light snack. If your child requires a more substantial snack, please send that with them.

➤ **Class parents**

Each class has a volunteer class parent. We count on that parent to help organize class potluck dinners for class Shabbat celebrations, a snack rotation for all of the families in the class, and to help the classroom teacher communicate about special programs or events coming up.

➤ **What happens when school is canceled?**

A decision to cancel school for inclement weather will be made on Sundays before 8am. An email will be sent to all Religious School Families. The outgoing Hevreh phone message will be changed.

Hevreh will not hold afternoon classes on days when the Berkshire Hills Regional School District cancels school.

If severe inclement weather occurs on Wednesdays during the school day - we will notify the children's schools (so they can be told and take the appropriate bus). We will send an email to all Religious School Families.

➤ **Student Health and Wellness**

One of the goals of Hevreh's Religious School is to promote wellness in our students and our community members. Additionally, it is the obligation of religious school to keep students safe and healthy while under the care of our teachers and staff. Given these goals and responsibilities, the religious school asks parents to read, understand and comply with the following wellness guidelines:

Illness: Please do not send your child to religious school if they are ill. A good guideline to follow in making this determination is if the child shows any signs of a fever or has had any flu-like symptoms (diarrhea, vomiting, or fever) within the past 24 hours.

Medications: Temple policy and insurance restrictions prohibit religious school staff from dispensing or storing any type of medication. If your child requires any type of prescribed or over the counter medication it is assumed that these will be administered by parents outside of the religious school setting. Religious school staff may not store, hold, or dispense any medication to any student. No students of any age may self-administer any form of medication during religious school hours. There are **two exceptions** to this rule:

1. Students requiring a *rescue inhaler* for asthma or other respiratory conditions may carry and administer medication from an inhaler, provided the student has written parent permission and the location where the inhaler is to be stored is pre-determined by the student, the teacher, and the religious school director.
2. Students with life-threatening food or other allergies may carry and administer an *epi-pen* or other similar emergency treatment for anaphylaxis, provided the religious school director and teacher are informed in writing that the student possesses this medication and the student, teacher, and religious school director have discussed and understand where the medication will be stored and when it will be used. The Religious School Director reserves the right to

modify or interpret the policy based on consultation with parents on an individual basis.

Life threatening allergies: As described above, the religious school staff will permit identified students to carry and store epi-pens as emergency treatment. **All food served as part of our Religious School program is nut-free, however our synagogue building is not.** Additionally, the religious school will familiarize all Religious School staff members with the identification of anaphylaxis and the use of an epi-pen. These staff members will be the designated responders in the event of a food or other allergy emergency. In the event of any food allergy issue, parents will be called.

First Aid for minor injuries: the director of the religious school and/or his/her designee may provide care for minor cuts and scrapes that may happen during the course of the religious school day. Such care will be limited to the cleaning of the injury with soap and water and the application of a Band-Aid or similar covering. Scrapes and cuts will not be treated with Neosporin or other topical antibiotic. In the event of injuries, parents will be informed.