



2018-2019
Religious School
Family Handbook

Rabbi Mara Nathan
Rabbi Marina Yergin
Cantor Julie Berlin
Rabbi Samuel M. Stahl, Ph. D., *Emeritus*
Leah Apothaker, Director of Congregational Learning
Joel Swedlove, Director of Youth Programs & Informal Education
Jim Halff, President
Sara Planto, Religious School Administrator
Leah Bullock, Chair, Education and Youth Committee

Welcome to Religious School!

Dear parents,

On behalf of the faculty and staff at Temple Beth-El, welcome! We are glad your family has joined us as partners in your child's Jewish Education. Together, we will continue to work as a team to ensure that all of the students in our school foster lasting and meaningful relationships with one another, their teachers, and our rich religious traditions.

We offer our students and engaging program of study focused on both *limud* (learning) and *zechut* (identity).

We proudly offer:

- A spiraled curriculum from the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life (ISJL) which provides our students with a road map on which to grow their Jewish literacy.
- Instruction on 10 key-content areas (Community, Holidays, *Mitzvot* and Values, *Tanach*, God, Hebrew, Israel, Culture, Lifecycle, and History). As students matriculate, they revisit the content areas with increased sophistication.
- Formal Hebrew instruction in grades 3-6 using a self-paced curriculum and small class size to ensure maximum success.
- Special classes in Jewish cooking, art, music, and movement.
- Scheduled time to read with the librarian and check out books in our Bendiner library.
- Family education opportunities for each grade level to build community.
- Family service opportunities to build a infuse a spirit of *tikkun olam* in our learners.
- Built in time to socialize and open youth lounge hours for teens.
- An inclusion specialist who ensures that all students are given access to the curriculum as well as the social and spiritual energy of our school.

We surely have a fabulous year ahead of us!



Leah Apothaker
Director of Congregational Learning
leah@beth-elsa.org

Stay in Touch!

Director of Congregational Learning: Leah Apothaker

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**Director of Youth Programs:
and Informal Education**

Joel Swedlove

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- Please let us know when your child will be absent by calling the Religious School office or Sara at 210-733-9135 x108
- If you're running late for pick up, please give us a call. You can either use the Temple line or call Sara's cell phone at (210) 260-8520. Students will be waiting for you in the Education office.
- If your child has an allergy or other condition that might require medication during religious school, please help us make arrangements to keep those remedies on hand. If your child carries an Epi-Pen, please send that to school in a ziploc bag along with clearly written instructions including your child's name.
- If your child is being picked up by someone other than a parent, please let us know in advance so we can make sure your child has a safe way home.
- Please contact us in advance if your child needs to leave school early. In these circumstances, please plan to come inside to pick up your student.
- We're happy to have your child bring a friend to class. Please let us know in advance so that we are sure to have precautionary forms on hand for all of our guests. This helps us keep everyone safe.
- To cut down on cell phone use in the classroom, we ask that you please use our office numbers to reach your students while they are in class.
- Be on the lookout for regular, grade-level updates of school happenings from Sara. Be sure to add sara@beth-elsa.org to your list of safe senders since these updates will be your main source of information about upcoming events.

Class Hours:

Sunday classes:

All classes will begin with T'filah (worship) from 9:30-10:00 am.
Parents are always welcome and we would love you to join us!

Preschool (3's & 4's):	9:30-11:00 am
Kindergarten-Grade 7:	9:30 am-12:00 pm
Grades 8-9 (Pre-Confirmation):	10:45 am-12:00 pm

Confirmation	9:30-10:45 am
Post Confirmation	Once a month, 12:15 pm-1:30 pm



Weekday Hebrew classes:

Tuesdays at the Jewish Community Campus from 4:30-6:00 pm

OR

Wednesdays at Temple Beth-El from 4:30-6:00 pm

Drop Off and Pick Up:

The covered entrance on the San Pedro side of our building is one we use on Sundays and Wednesdays. Our carpool line moves fairly quickly, but we would love to have you come inside to say hello, come to *t'filah*, and/or grab a bagel when you drop off your students. You are always welcome to stay and hang out in the building during the school day.

Preschool - Grade 2

Students should be dropped off at the classroom door by either a parent or an older sibling. At the end of the day, please come inside and pick up your students in the Chapel at the end of *T'filah*.

Grade 3+

Students may be dropped off via the carpool lane or by a parent or older sibling walking them inside. Students who are picked up via the carpool lane will wait until their ride pulls up to the doors so we know that every student gets home safely.

Dates to Remember:

Sunday, August 26	First day of Sunday classes, Preschool-Grade 10
Tuesday, Sept. 4	First day of midweek classes (Grs. 3-6) at Jewish Community Campus
Wednesday, Sept. 5	First day of midweek classes (Grs. 3-6) at Temple Beth-El
Sunday, Sept. 16	New Student Consecration Orientation 9:30am-12:00pm
Sunday, Oct. 14	New Student (K-2) Consecration 11:15 am

Opening Day Information

We begin this year on Sunday, August 26; please plan to arrive by 9:15 am. We will begin with a Welcome Back Breakfast at 9:30 am for **parents and students**. At 10am you will have the opportunity to from Director of Congregational Learning Leah Apothaker, Rabbi Mara Nathan, and meet our wonderful teachers and madrichim (teacher's aides) and a special, surprise new member of our Religious School community! Classes will officially begin at 10:30 am and dismissal will follow at 12 noon. Students will receive class assignments at that time.

Joel Swedlove, Director of Youth Programs and Informal Engagement will be on hand to answer questions about this year's youth and family programing. Sisterhood will be available with information about purchasing snacks for the classrooms. The morning will conclude with group meetings with the teachers. We can't wait to see everyone on August 26!

Midweek Hebrew begins on Tuesday, September 4 at the Jewish Community Campus and on Wednesday, September 5 at Temple Beth-El.

Eligibility for Religious School

The purpose of the Religious School of Temple Beth-El is to provide a Jewish religious education for Jewish Children. A Jewish child is defined as the child of at least one Jewish parent, who is being raised as a Jew and is not formally identified with any other religion.

If a child has no Jewish parents but is being raised as a Jew by a Jewish adult, a Conversion Certificate will be issued to him/her privately at the time of his/her Bar/Bat Mitzvah or Confirmation.

Synagogue membership is a prerequisite for registration in our Religious School.

In consideration of the developmental skills needed for a smooth adjustment to Religious School, children entering Kindergarten must be age 5 by September 1st.

Registration Fee

The annual Religious School registration fee is non-refundable and includes the costs of instruction, books, materials and supplies, special programs, and a retreat for Grades 2-Confirmation.

In addition to Religious School classes and Hebrew studies, there is a separate Bar/Bat Mitzvah fee that is payable during the year of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, which helps to offset a portion of the extra costs of tutoring and special services.

Scholarships

We are absolutely committed to providing for the Jewish Education of all of our members' children, regardless of their ability to pay. Scholarship assistance will be available to all families with demonstrated need. Those families receiving scholarship assistance can demonstrate their commitment to the program by ensuring regular attendance (at least 75% of classes).

Scholarships are available for religious school, Jewish camps experiences, and Israel programs.

All requests for scholarships should be submitted in writing to Rabbi Nathan, Leah Apothaker, or Joel Swedlove. The deadline for applications for religious school is June 1st and the deadline for summer programs is February 15th.

Want to Help?

A short break is programmed into our class time each and every week so that our students can stretch their muscles and refuel. Once or twice each semester, families of students in grade K-8 will be asked to supply snacks to share with the class. When you volunteer, we'll provide specific guidelines for what and how much you'll bring but some suggestions are challah, rice cakes or pretzels, fruit, vegetables, or string cheese.

We are also looking for class parents to help coordinate get-togethers like Family Shabbat and to serve as a voice for your class to the Youth committee. Got questions? Call Leah at 210-733-9135 x105.

Educational Programs

For Our Preschool Students:

We are happy to offer a Preschool class for 3 and 4 year olds. Children must be age 3 by September 1st to enroll. Our Preschool uses the curriculum from the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish life which focuses on Holidays (including holiday symbols, food, ritual objects, and home celebration) and Jewish values (welcoming guests, caring for the world, being kind to animals, etc.). Through games, art projects, songs, and stories, our students have a chance to lay the foundation for their Jewish education in an environment that encourages them to explore and ask questions. In addition to the Preschool class, we would love you to join us for monthly Family-Friendly Shabbat and other programming designed with young families in mind. The Temple Bulletin is your source for dates and details!

Religious School, Kindergarten—Grade 8:

The Lifelong Jewish Learning Committee has adopted the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life (ISJL) Curriculum for Pre-K through Grade 8. During these 9 years, students will explore ten key-content areas of Judaism: Community, Culture and Symbols, God, Hebrew and Prayer, Israel, Jewish History, Jewish Holidays, Jewish Lifecycle Events, Mitzvot and Jewish Values, and TaNaKh (Torah, Prophets, and Writings/The Hebrew Bible).

Each grade focuses on a few specific content areas. As students age, they will spiral through this material meaning that when they return to an area they've covered in the past, they will approach it with a new degree of sophistication. In this way, we ensure students have access to age-appropriate, new content throughout their religious school experience.

Just as all students are different, so too are their educational needs. The ISJL curriculum is designed to meet the diverse needs of many kinds of learners. Whenever possible, learning is experiential, and teaching methods are varied to meet the needs of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners alike. Quiet, independent work has a place in the curriculum as well, for those who succeed best through this approach. Students who thrive on social interaction have opportunities to engage in discussions, games, and group projects. Music, art, drama, cooking, reading, and worksheets are all important educational activities included in the ISJL curriculum.

We also are proud to supplement classroom learning with weekly *T'filah* (interactive worship services) and social activities to engage students in our Temple community beyond the walls of the classroom.

Hebrew Program, Grades 3—6:

Goals and Curriculum

The goals of our Hebrew curriculum are multi-faceted; the primary emphasis is on the study of the *siddur* (prayer book). We strive to balance the need to both *kevah* (the routine) and the *kavanah* (spirituality) of prayer. In order to become fluent participants in a worship service, students learn to decode Hebrew text with accuracy and fluency, gain a working Hebrew vocabulary of approximately 100 words, and develop some basic knowledge of Hebrew

grammar. Students also have the opportunity to explore the concepts expressed in Jewish liturgy as they sing and chant many prayers from the evening and morning services.

To achieve these goals, we use the Mitkadem curriculum, a Hebrew program developed by the Union for Reform Judaism. As a highly adaptable program, it allows us to individualize instruction for each student. Students can progress at their own speed allowing our teachers to interact with the students in a more personal manner. In addition to large group instruction, our teachers offer small group instruction, one-on-one mentoring, peer group work opportunities, and computer and listening center support.

Additionally, we offer a Transitional Specialist whose primary function is to work with students who need extra support before joining their grade level or who benefit from small group instruction. Placement with the transitional specialist is possible after meeting with a family and assessing their needs.

High School Programs

For High School Students, we offer 3 courses in addition to our Madrichim program and SAFTY.

Grade 9

Our Pre-Confirmation students meet weekly from 9:30-10:45 am. The curriculum covers modern Judaism. Students will explore Jewish culture like film, music, art, humor, and food. They'll also have the opportunity to look at the modern State of Israel and discuss current events.

Grade 10

In our Reform tradition, Confirmation is a significant lifecycle event. This ceremony marks an academic milestone in the students' process of Jewish learning and their informed affirmation of their commitments as Jews.

Our Confirmation students will have the opportunity to study primarily with Rabbi Nathan and Cantor Berlin to prepare for the Confirmation Service. The Confirmation curriculum focuses on the various ways we think about God and develop a personal understanding of what a relationship with God means.

Grades 11 and 12

Post-Confirmation students meet once a month from 12:15-1:30. This seminar-style series allows students to use Judaism as a relevant lens through which to see the world around them. Taught by Rabbis Nathan and Yergin, Leah Apothaker, and Joel Swedlove, students will discuss issues that impact their lives and join as voices for justice in the broader Jewish community.

Enrichment Programs

We proudly offer a number of different enrichment programs which are part of our weekly schedule. Each is designed to expand and enrich your student's experiences in Jewish learning and living. They include *t'filah* (worship), *omanut* (art), *shirah* (music), *bishul* (cooking), and *sifriyah* (library). Holiday assemblies, field trips and Family Education programs and retreats round out our program.

Retreats

Jewish Education can happen almost anywhere, so we believe in bringing students out of the classroom as much as we can. Retreats help students build Jewish identity and help transform our community of peers into a community of friends. Our weekend retreat programs include time for recreation and social activities combined with prayer and study of Judaism. Each class, Grade 2 and up will participate in a retreat that is planned especially for that age group. Grades 2-8 will join with other 2nd-8th graders from the region for an annual retreat held at Greene Family Camp (GFC) in Bruceville, TX. The retreat is planned by camp staff and takes advantage of the best the Jewish camping has to offer. 9th graders join together to engage in *tikun olam* (repairing the world) by volunteering their time and energy to help local San Antonians in a full day of programs. Finally 10th graders will join with our clergy at their weekend-long Confirmation retreat. Because we've seen the success of experiential, retreat education, we have attempted to make your student's participation in retreats as easy as possible. Fees for retreats are included as part of religious school registration fee and we attempt to provide transportation to the best of our ability. With any questions about retreats, please contact the religious school office.

The 2018-2019 GFC Fall Camp Retreat for Grade 2-8 is included in your school tuition. It begins Friday, November 2, 2018 and continues through November 4th, 2018.

The Grade 9 New York Trip is from May 3rd, 2018-May 5th, 2019.

The Confirmation Retreat is from November 30th, 2018-December 2nd, 2018.

Special Needs and/or Circumstances

Temple Beth-El is committed to meeting the individual needs of each student. Suzanne Karfiol is our Inclusion Specialist and is in the building whenever classes are in session to work with individual students and to support teachers in ensuring children with special needs in our classrooms have the support they deserve.

If your child has a learning disability, medical condition, behavioral disability, or if there has been a special circumstance (birth, death, divorce) in your family, it may affect your student's learning experience. By informing our religious school staff or clergy of your circumstances, you will enable us to help guide your student through religious school in a manner that addresses their individual needs such that we can provide the best possible experience for the whole family.

B'nei Mitzvah Program

Becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a significant lifecycle event, shared by a student, family and Temple community. Traditionally, a Jewish person becomes Bar/Bat Mitzvah at age 13, but we believe that this *simchah* (joyous event) should be available to anyone age 13 or older who wishes to study Jewish tradition and Hebrew, and is willing to take on the commitments of our faith.

In order to qualify for our B'nei Mitzvah program, students should complete four years of Judaic and Hebrew education, including regular attendance at Sunday and mid-week classes and enrollment through their Bar/Bat Mitzvah school year. In doing so, students will be able to decode Hebrew with a certain degree of proficiency.

Those who wish to become Bar/Bat Mitzvah and who, because of extenuating circumstances, are unable to participate in the traditional Hebrew program should reach out to Leah (210-733-9135 x105, leah@beth-elsa.org) for information on how to proceed. We will work with you to ensure your student is able to reach this milestone in his or her Jewish life.

A two-part B'nai Mitzvah Shabbaton is scheduled for all students in Grade 6 and their parents. This is a chance for your family to meet with the clergy to understand the steps involved in our program from study to celebration, learn about our #MitzvahQuest mitzvah project system, and discuss their feelings about preparing for and embracing life as a Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Students Attending the Eleanor Kolitz Hebrew Language Academy

We are happy to welcome students who attend EKHLA to be part of our learning community at Temple as well. EKHLA students devote additional hours to Hebrew and are likely to have strong reading skills. As part of our B'nei Mitzvah program, they might be exempt on a case-by-case basis from attending mid-week Hebrew instruction, particularly during Grade 3. If you think your child might qualify for this exemption, please contact Leah or the religious school office.

A Final Note

We want you to feel comfortable and confident about your child's Jewish education. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Leah. We want to work with you to allay your concerns and provide the best possible experience for your entire family. Thank you for entrusting us with your child's religious education. We look forward to sharing this journey with you!