



PARENT'S MANUAL



5781/2020-2021

Rabbi Eric Goldberg

Director of Education

egoldberg@shiramipa.org

856-359-5758 | 215-968-3254

A Message from Rabbi Eric Goldberg, Director of Religious School

There is a well-known story about Isidor I. Rabi, a Nobel Laureate in Physics, that goes like this: Every day when Isidor came home from school his mother would ask him the same question. Unlike most parents, his mom did not ask him ‘Did you learn anything today?’ Rather, she asked: ‘**Did you ask a good question today?**’ Looking back, Rabi remarked that his mom’s advice - to ask good questions – guided his life and his scientific pursuits.

This story teaches two important lessons at the heart of Shir Ami’s Religious School:

- a. **Parents have an immeasurable influence on the development and strengthening of their children’s identity – especially their Jewish identity.** Our clergy, teachers, madrichim (student assistants), office staff and I are honored to partner with you in this endeavor and thank you for entrusting your children to us. Please know we are always available should you, your child or anyone in your family need anything.

- b. **In Hebrew, the Jewish People are known as *Yisrael*, which literally means ‘to wrestle/struggle with God.’ What better, more meaningful, way to wrestle with God than to ask deep and thoughtful questions!** Such questions, such exploration and the discovery that results from these questions and exploration are not only encouraged at Shir Ami’s Religious School, but the backbone of our curriculum. We encourage this questioning and exploration outside the classroom as well, engaging in activities that serve and, allow us to interact with, our community. In addition, our school provides parents with materials that can be used at home for discussion, action and thought.

I hope your family sees Shir Ami as your ‘home away from home,’ where lifelong connections and friendships are built. I invite you to join us each and every day – learn with us, chat with us, ask questions of us, connect with us. Please know we love having your family as part of our Shir Ami family! You can always be in touch via e-mail (egoldberg@shiramipa.org) and/or phone (215-968-3254/856-359-5758).

I am so excited for the year ahead! A year in which we partner together to deepen the Jewish identities of our youth. A year in which asking questions is encouraged, reminding us that we are *Yisrael*, forever wrestling with God in search of the answers to life’s most challenging questions.

L’Shalom,
Rabbi Eric Goldberg

SHIR AMI RELIGIOUS SCHOOL'S PHILOSOPHY

The acquisition of Jewish knowledge is a lifelong endeavor. It is a *mitzvah* for parents to learn and pass on Jewish beliefs, customs and traditions to their children. At Shir Ami we are dedicated to providing students with the knowledge and tools to develop and challenge their Jewish identity, as well as teaching them that Jewish learning is a lifelong pursuit.

It is our philosophy that Jewish education provide opportunities for students to experience and appreciate Judaism through many entry points. With this in mind, our primary educational goals are: 1) To have students understand that each Jew is a link to the past and directly connected to the future; 2) For students to engage in *mitzvot* in the community as well as the classroom; 3) To have students build a deep, personal love for Israel (*ahavat tzion*), understanding the importance of Israel – in all her complexities -- to the survival of Judaism, 4) To have students feel comfortable praying, leading and participating in any service and 5) To understand that being part of *Yisrael*, the Jewish people, means that we ‘wrestle with God’ and ask thoughtful questions each and every day of our lives.

EXPECTATIONS

We ask parents/guardians assist us in making sure children:

1. Attend all class sessions.
2. Arrive on time and remain through the end of class.
3. Behave in a manner appropriate for school.
4. Bring appropriate materials for class, including books, paper and writing utensils.
5. Complete homework assignments on time and to the teacher's satisfaction.

Failure to meet these expectations jeopardizes a child's opportunity to advance to the next grade.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

100% attendance is expected, but we understand this may not be possible for everyone.

In the event of an absence, parents should contact Rabbi Goldberg via phone (856-359-5758 or 215-968-3254) and/or email (egoldberg@shiramipa.org) prior to class stating the reason for the absence. Students are responsible for all in-class assignments and homework missed.

Should a student not attend 70% of classes for the school year, he/she is required to demonstrate proficiency in each subject area to the satisfaction of Shir Ami Clergy and Director of Religious School before moving to the next grade level. Students may also be required to complete a project chosen by Shir Ami Clergy and Director of Religious School.

EARLY DISMISSAL POLICY

Jewish education is of the highest importance to the Shir Ami family. To secure students maximize learning potential and have the opportunity to be part of an environment that is non-disruptive:

- 1) **It is strongly suggested that children not be signed out of school early.** School is in session a limited number of hours each week and students have the greatest success in building Jewish identity and knowledge by attending for the entirety of the session.
- 2) **STUDENTS CANNOT BE SIGNED OUT LESS THAN 15 MINUTES BEFORE THE END OF SCHOOL.** (11:15am on Sundays; 6pm Midweek and 8:15pm on Wednesdays).
- 3) **If you choose to sign a child out of school, please contact Rabbi Goldberg at least 24 hours in advance, barring emergency.** Rabbi Goldberg can be reached via phone/text (856-359-5758) or email (egoldberg@shiramipa.org).
- 4) **A note must be brought in on the day a child will be signed out. He/She should give the note to Rabbi Goldberg.** That note will be used to verify that the correct adult is picking up each child. Therefore, notes should include:
 - A) Child's name;
 - B) Time the child will be leaving;
 - C) Who will be signing the child out/picking the child up; and
 - D) The reason the child is leaving.

All children who will be signed out by the same adult can be listed on one note.

- 5) **For the safety of our students, adults cannot pick up a child early at the child's classroom (indoor or outdoor).** Adults must contact Rabbi Goldberg upon arrival and sign out the child/children. The Shir Ami team will make sure the child/children comes directly to the pick up location.
- 6) A child will not be dismissed from class until an adult arrives and signs that child out.

***Please also view Drop off/Pickup procedures in the special COVID-19 section of the Religious School Website. Procedures will be evaluated and updated on an ongoing basis.**

SCHOOL CLOSING PROCEDURES

There will no longer be days on which Religious School is closed/cancelled due to weather. When inclement weather occurs, Religious School will be held virtually. Procedures for

accessing virtual learning will be sent to Religious School families via direct email from Rabbi Goldberg.

Should virtual learning not be possible given technical or other challenges, Rabbi Goldberg will notify families via a direct email and a Facebook post (EricSGoldberg and Shir Ami - Many Voices. One Song).

Please note that email communication will be sent to the address(es) provided on the Religious School Registration Form. If that email address changes at any time, please contact Rabbi Goldberg immediately.

FOOD 'RULES' AT SHIR AMI

There are two rules we kindly ask you follow regarding food at Shir Ami's Religious School:

- 1) Food must be 'kosher-style.' While food brought to Shir Ami does need to have a *heksher* (kosher stamp), please do not bring food to Shir Ami that is explicitly non-kosher (i.e. shellfish, pork, dairy and meat mixed together). If you have questions regarding this issue, please contact Rabbi Goldberg.
- 2) Classrooms (indoor and outdoor) at Shir Ami are nut-free. If a product is made in a facility with nuts, it is OK to bring to Shir Ami Religious School.

PARKING LOT PROCEDURES

COVID UPDATE: Parking lot Drop off/Pickup procedures at the current time can be found in the special COVID-19 section of the Religious School Website. Procedures will be evaluated and updated on an ongoing basis.

Non-COVID Procedures

The safety of students and family members is the highest priority at Shir Ami. Therefore, it is our preference that parents/drivers either:

- a) Park their cars and bring students they are transporting into the synagogue, or
- b) Students can be dropped off on the side of the synagogue closest to the bypass or at the school entrance. Please note that in either case, cars should proceed around the synagogue and students should be dropped off so that the driver's side door and passenger side door directly behind the driver's door are facing the building.

Please follow traffic arrows and signs in the parking lot. If you have any questions, please ask Rabbi Goldberg.

Please do not let your children and/or those you are taking with you as part of a carpool walk through the parking lot unsupervised. Doing so puts children in danger. If you choose to park in parking lot (which we highly encourage), please meet your child inside the synagogue or on the concrete walkway directly in front of the education wing of the building.

Thank you for your cooperation and support.