

The Santa Monica Synagogue  
Religious School

# Parent Handbook

2020-2021

5781

Lori Daitch  
Director of Education

September 2020

Dear Parents:

I am delighted to welcome you and your children to what will be a very different but engaging experience for our youth. While the way we gather will look different this year, our goal remains the same: To give our youth a high quality and engaging Jewish education. We have worked hard over the summer to create new and exciting programs and curriculum. It remains my hope to gather in person, as soon as state and local guidelines allow.

Our school and congregation offer opportunities for adult engagement as well, including Book Club, Shabbat and Havdallah services, Wine Club, Movie Mavens, Torah Study, and Adult Hebrew. All of these are currently being offered virtually.

Like my temple office door, my virtual door is always open! Feel free to reach out with your questions and concerns, or just to schmooze.

With warm wishes and blessings for the New Year,

Lori Daitch,  
Director of Education

**Important Names and Phone Numbers**

Please feel free to call any of the following people with questions or concerns regarding  
The Santa Monica Synagogue Religious School.

**Lori Daitch**

(818) 384-3087

Director of Education

Educator@TheSMS.org

**Marie Robinson**

Chair, Education Committee

Educationcommittee@thesms.org

**Michael L. Cohen**

President

[President@TheSMS.org](mailto:President@TheSMS.org)

**Rabbi Jeff Marx**

(310) 453-4276

[Rabbi@TheSMS.org](mailto:Rabbi@TheSMS.org)

**The Santa Monica Synagogue**

1448 18<sup>th</sup> Street, Santa Monica, CA 90404

Phone: (310) 453-4276

Director of Education cell: (818) 384-3087

Website: [www.TheSMS.org](http://www.TheSMS.org)

### **Religious School Mission Statement**

The Santa Monica Synagogue's religious school seeks to immerse each child and family in Jewish life and learning. Our children's Jewish identities are deepened and grow ever more meaningful through discussion, study, art, music, and dance, and through their observance of Jewish holidays and life events. Through their study of Jewish history and their experience of Jewish culture, language, ritual, and text, our children deepen their spiritual life through prayer, increase their connection with Jews here and throughout the world, and engage in acts of tzedakah (social justice) and tikkun olam (repair of the world).

### **Religious School Days off**

The Santa Monica Synagogue Religious School is in session online every Sunday and Tuesday from Sunday, September 13, 2020, through Sunday, June 6, 2021, with the following exceptions:

Tuesday, November 24 - Sunday, November 29	Thanksgiving Week
Sunday, December 20 - Sunday, January 3	Winter Break (school resumes on Jan 5)
Sunday, January 17	MLK Weekend
Sunday, February 14	Presidents' Day Weekend
Sunday, March 28 - Sunday, April 4	Spring Break (school resumes on April 6)
Sunday, May 9	Mother's Day
Sunday, May 31	Memorial Day

### **Religious School Schedule 2020-21**

<b><u>Grade</u></b>	<b><u>Tuesday</u></b>		<b><u>Sunday</u></b>	
	Time	Activity	Time	Activity
K-2	See below for details about Mishpacha and Me!			
3rd			9:30-10:15 10:15-10:30	Judaica Music
4th	4:00-4:30 4:30-5:00 5:00-5:20	Hebrew (Group 1) Tefillah (prayer) Hebrew (Group 2)	9:30-10:15 10:15-10:30	Judaica Music
5th	4:00-4:30 4:30-5:00 5:00-5:20	Hebrew (Group 1) Tefillah (prayer) Hebrew (Group 2)	9:30-10:15 10:15-10:30	Judaica Music
6th	4:00-4:30 4:30-5:00 5:00-5:20	Hebrew (Group 1) Tefillah (prayer) Hebrew (Group 2)	9:30-10:15 10:15-10:30	Judaica Music
7th	4:00-4:30 4:30-5:00 5:00-5:20	Hebrew (Group 1) Tefillah (prayer) Hebrew (Group 2)	9:30-10:15 10:15-10:30	Judaica Music
8th-12th grade			4:00 pm	Tzedek America or Virtual Theater
11th/12th Grade			11:00am	In addition to Tzedek America and Virtual Theater, one Sunday morning a month. Confirmation with the Rabbi

### **Additional Online Youth Activities**

As the year gets started we will continue to add additional new and innovative programming.

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Program</b>	<b>Day</b>
K-4	Story and Shema with Lori	Tuesday's at 6:00 pm
All ages	Kabbalat Shabbat	Fridays at 6:00 pm
All ages	Weekly Havdalah	Saturdays at 7:00 pm
All ages	Pop Up Cooking Classes	Throughout the year, dates TBD

## **Educational Programs**

### **Kehillah: Community Building**

The commandment to welcome the stranger, the teaching that we are all created in God's image, and the notion that all Jews are responsible for one another are but a few of our Jewish teachings concerning the importance of community. Community building is one of the highest values of our school, even in the virtual setting. Since our children come from many different schools and neighborhoods, we take seriously the task of helping the students in our classroom feel a part of our synagogue community, especially during this time of distance.

### **Special Topics**

Over the course of your child's time in our religious school, we will discuss topics such as circumcision, illness, death, homelessness, and the Holocaust. These discussions are presented in an age-appropriate manner. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Director of Education.

## **Teen Engagement Programs**

### **Madrichim**

Madrichim are students enrolled in our Teen Program (grades 8 through 12) who work in our religious school as teaching assistants. Enrollment in our Teen Program is a requirement for applying to the Madrichim Program. There are work opportunities for students on Sundays and/or Tuesdays. Students accepted into the program help out in the classroom for grades K through 6 in our Hebrew or in our Judaica courses.

### **Madrichim Roles during virtual classes**

- Enter the online class 10 minutes prior, in order to connect with the teacher
- Manage the technology of the class, including letting students into class and removing students (after chat warnings) who are not practicing the class rules
- As needed, manage breakout sessions, launch polls, and games
- Work with the teacher on other class needs
- May also serve as *Yad B'yad* (hand in hand) mentors to younger students

## **Parent Roles in Our School**

### **Parent Volunteers**

We need your support! The programs at the SMS require parent involvement. As the year goes on and we are (hopefully) able to gather in person, we will have additional opportunities for you to get involved.

### **Education Committee**

There is no greater contribution that can be made for our children's future, our synagogue, and the Jewish people than to provide for the study of Torah. Members of the Education Committee work with the Director of Education to oversee various aspects of the school and work together to build a dynamic religious school program. If you are interested in serving on this committee please reach out to our temple president, Michael Cohen, at [president@thesms.org](mailto:president@thesms.org).

### **Room Parents**

Room parents help to keep the communication lines open between your child's teacher and their class. They help organize teacher appreciation programs and in-person gatherings (eventually). They may call and/or e-mail families in their child's class for volunteer purposes. Room parents are an integral part of our Religious School.

### **Parent Orientation**

Our parent orientation will be held on September 8th. We will discuss the curriculum, what a day at Religious School will be like, what programming is available, and answer any questions. We will break out into individual grade-level meetings with your child's teachers. We recognize that our adult members may not have attended Religious School when they were young, or that they may be part of an interfaith family and have limited knowledge of Judaism. This parent orientation is geared to new families as well as to current families who want more information.

## **Religious School Policies**

### **Attendance Policies**

Since there are approximately 30 Sunday sessions and 30 Tuesday sessions per year, absences take a large toll on an individual student's learning. In the case of unavoidable conflicts or illness, please contact Lori or your child's teacher as soon as possible. If a child's absences in any way impedes learning and becomes an obstacle for the next year's curriculum, make-up assignments or private tutoring may be required prior to the next school year, at the school's discretion.

If a student is not performing at the expected level and make-up assignments have not been completed, he or she may not be allowed to advance.

### **Homework and Testing**

Since our classes meet only once or twice weekly, reinforcement of the classroom material is necessary. Beginning in Grade Four, seven minutes of daily Hebrew reading is helpful. In the sixth and seventh grades, your child should plan on thirty minutes of Hebrew practice each week. Teachers will give written assignments, which should take no more than one-half hour to complete. Lengthier assignments will be given with sufficient advance notice. Hebrew assessments will be a regular part of grades 4-7. Summer tutoring may be recommended as needed.

### **Parent Contact and Communication**

You will receive weekly emails from your child's teacher with class information, class follow-up, and class links. In addition, each class will have a virtual classroom space where notes, materials and special assignments will be posted. We will also use the REMIND app for texting. Parents may be contacted for two consecutively missed school days, or for any academic or behavioral concerns that may arise. Missed homework, missed classes, failure to participate, and late arrivals may affect advancement to the next grade. Questions that arise during the year should be addressed immediately by contacting the classroom teacher or the Director of Education. Please be sure that all parent contact info is up to date.

### **Classroom Visitors**

Parents are always welcome to observe a class. Unless specified, these visits are restricted to fifteen minutes in an effort to avoid disruption to the classroom for in-person as well as in the virtual learning environment. Please inform the Director of Education of your desire to visit beforehand.

## **Behavioral Issues**

It is the intention of this policy to protect students, parents, faculty, and administration of The Santa Monica Synagogue Religious School and the synagogue community. One of the goals of our religious school is to provide a safe, secure, and inviting atmosphere so that learning can take place. The Board of Trustees and the Religious School Council of The Santa Monica Synagogue have adopted reasonable guidelines to ensure that all of our children can attend religious school in as comfortable an environment as possible and to avoid serious disruptions to the educational process. The Director of Education (DOE) will use her best judgment and discretion to take steps necessary to resolve discipline problems.

- Each student, during the course of a class session, will be given one opportunity to correct disruptive behavior. If the misconduct continues during that class day, the student will be directed to the DOE. The DOE will counsel the student and may, at her discretion, contact a parent to discuss the matter. The DOE will also inform the teacher about these communications.

- Should any student be sent to the DOE a second time during the semester, the child's parent will be contacted and asked to pick up the child before the end of that day's school session. Before the student is allowed back into a class, a conference will be scheduled between the student, parent(s), and DOE. If possible, the conference will be scheduled prior to the next scheduled class and, if available, the teacher will also attend.

- If a student is sent out of class a third time within the same semester, then the parents will be called immediately and the student will not be permitted to attend class for one week. Additionally, the DOE may establish criteria for the student's return, including requiring a parent to attend up to two consecutive classes with the child.

- In order to keep all of our students safe, there is a no-tolerance policy for fighting. In the event of any physical altercation between students, both students will be sent to the DOE and both sets of parents will be called immediately. The DOE will use her discretion as to whether one or both of the students will be allowed to return to class.



# Class Brit

Brit = Agreement

## Prepared

**MUCHAN** מוֹכָן

### Be ready to learn by:

- Creating a quiet, distraction-free area at a desk or table
- Having your supplies ready before class begins
- Wearing comfortable classroom-style clothing
- Typing your first name and last name initial in your Zoom box

## Here I Am

**HINENI** הִנְנִי

### Be fully present and engaged by:

- Being on time or even a few minutes early
- Keeping your video on
- Muting yourself unless called on to speak
- Focusing only on activities related to our learning
- Saving snacks for after the Zoom calls

**SHEMA**  
Listen

שְׁמַע

### May we truly listen, hear and understand each other by:

- Being attentive to your teacher, madrichim and classmates
- Being kind with your words when you speak or type in the chat box
- Limiting your use of the chat box unless asked to do so by the teacher

## Created in God's Image

**B'TZELEM ELOHIM**

בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים

### We are each created in the image of God:

- Be respectful with your words and behavior.
- Raise your hand when you would like to talk.
- Actively participate and be supportive of other's ideas.

## Peace Within Our Home

**SHALOM BAYIT**

שְׁלוֹם בַּיִת

### Remember to support each other by:

- Maintaining routines, eating well, getting good sleep
- Taking breaks between online learning sessions
- Engaging in outside time and activities that you enjoy
- Being kind, patient, and helpful with others in your family
- Being kind and gentle with yourself

## May we:

- join together as a learning community with kindness, caring, and respect
- find strength and wisdom in new understandings of Jewish values, Torah, Hebrew, Israel, God, and Jewish holidays
- learn more about ourselves and our ability to make the world a better place
- grow in our love of Judaism, our recognition of blessings, and our commitment to others
- be able to safely gather together soon!

## **In-Person Emergency Procedures**

The Santa Monica Synagogue has an emergency plan and is well equipped with supplies to deal with an emergency at both campuses. Precautions have been taken to ensure the safety of your children. Please be assured that all staff will remain until the entire emergency situation has been assessed, controlled and any necessary first aid has been administered.

**Procedures:** Parents are asked to read and follow these emergency procedures in the event of a major emergency occurring during school hours once we are back together for in-person school.

1. Please limit calls to the school. Phone lines will be needed for emergency communication with city officials, emergency services, etc.
2. Students, faculty and staff will be evacuated from the buildings to either:
  - the parking lot at Santa Monica Synagogue
  - the basketball courts at Crossroads

At the discretion of the Rabbi and/or Director of Education, the children may be walked from one location to the other.

3. The parking lot must be kept free for the children and emergency vehicles. Please use street parking.
4. Staff will write down the name of the child, the adult picking up the child and the time of pick-up.
5. Children will only be released to adults authorized on the child's Medical/Emergency Release Form. Children will be released to the first person listed on the emergency form that comes to the school.

**NOTE:** Please make sure your Medical/Emergency Release Forms are completely filled out with emergency contacts and are updated if there are changes during the year. These forms will be pulled and referred to prior to releasing your children.

- Director of Education cell -: (818) 384-3087

**Medication:** The school will have on hand over-the-counter medications such as: hydrocortisone cream, Benadryl, Zyrtec, Tylenol, Motrin, and first aid cream. These medications will be administered by and at the discretion of the Rabbi or Director of Education.

If you do not want any of these medications given to your child(ren), be sure these instructions and/or restrictions are on the Medical/Emergency Waiver Form on the back of your child's enrollment form.

If your child frequently requires special medications, please give the school a two-day supply with your child's name and directions for administration clearly indicated.

## **B'nai Mitzvah - Educational Policies**

### **Basic Prerequisites**

1. The Bar or Bat Mitzvah student must be at least 13 years of age on the day of their Bar or Bat Mitzvah.
2. The student must be enrolled in, and attending, the Santa Monica Synagogue Religious School at the time of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah ceremony.
3. The student must be in good standing, academically, at the time of the ceremony. This standing is to be reviewed by the Director of Education prior to the student's commencing with private tutoring sessions.

### **Educational Requirements**

- Successful completion of four years of Religious School including the year of the ceremony, or the equivalent, to be determined by the Director of Education.
- Fluency in reading the prayers of the service. A list of prayers for which each student is responsible is located in the B'nai Mitzvah Handbook.
- Attendance at a minimum of four one-hour summer sessions. During this class, we will introduce Torah and Haftarah trope and review prayers for which students will be responsible. Seven sessions will be held. Students may opt to attend all of these sessions according to personal schedules.
- Learning the trope system for chanting. (Trope symbols are the musical signs used for chanting both Torah and Haftarah portions.)
- Attendance at a minimum of 10 Shabbat services (in addition to the High Holy Days) during the year preceding the ceremony. We strongly encourage the parent(s) to attend these services regularly with the student in order to become familiar with the order of the service and, in addition, to experience at least one Bar or Bat Mitzvah ceremony at the SMS. Your presence at services is an indication of your support for your child and for continued Jewish learning. Currently, services are held via Zoom. While we are operating virtually, we will have an online sign-in sheet for 7th graders to mark off when they attend a service.
- Successful completion of the 7th grade Tzedakah Project.
- Special Needs: Expectations and requirements for children with special needs are worked out on an individual basis in consultation with the Director of Education and the Rabbi.

## Curriculum

The SMS Religious School is planning for online learning through at least January of 2021. Our synchronous programming will meet on Zoom, and asynchronous learning will utilize platforms including SeeSaw ShalomLearning and Flipgrid.

### **K - 2nd Grade**

Mishpacha and Me! A new virtual family and me program for K-second graders exploring jewish values and symbols through crafts, cooking and stories.

Monthly Sunday's

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Topic</b>
10/4	11:00am	<i>Hachnasat Orchim</i> -Welcoming Guests
11/15	11:00am	<i>Shalom Bayit</i> -Peace in the home
12/6	11:00am	<i>Tzedakah</i> -Charity
1/24	11:00am	<i>Ba'al Tashchit</i> -Taking care of the earth
2/21	11:00am	<i>Chesed</i> -Kindness
3/21	11:00am	<i>Ometz Lev</i> -Strength of the Heart
4/18	11:00am	<i>Eretz Yisrael</i> -Israel
5/16	11:00am	<i>B'tzelem Elohim</i> -Being Created in God's Image

### **3rd – 4<sup>th</sup> Grade**

Sunday

9:30AM - 10:30AM

- An interactive shira session that includes singing and movement.
- Hebrew through Movement.
- *Mifgash* (encounter/meeting), a 15-20 minute activity to explore a Jewish value with the [LaBriut: To Our Health and Wellness Curriculum](#) and values-based learning through [ShalomLearning](#). *Materials for hands-on projects will be available to be picked up during the year.*

AND

Tuesday (4<sup>th</sup> grade)

4:00pm-5:30pm

Tuesday afternoons will include:

- An interactive Tefillah service that explores a different prayer each week in and learning a melody or interpretation of that prayer.
- Small group Hebrew learning in *chavruta* (30 minutes each, groups and exact time TBD with teacher).

### **5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Grade**

Sunday and Tuesday

9:30AM - 10:30AM

- An interactive shira session that includes singing and movement.
- *Mifgash* (encounter/meeting), a 15-20 minute activity to explore a Jewish value with the [LaBriut: To Our Health and Wellness Curriculum](#) and values-based learning through [ShalomLearning](#).

AND

Tuesday

4:00pm-5:30pm

Tuesday afternoons will include:

- An interactive Tefillah service that explores a different prayer each week in and learning a melody or interpretation of that prayer.
- Small group Hebrew learning in *chavruta* (30 minutes each, groups and exact time TBD with teacher).

## **7th Grade**

Sunday and Tuesday

9:30AM - 10:30AM

- An interactive shira session that includes singing and movement.
- *Mifgash* (encounter/meeting), a 15-20 minute activity to explore a Jewish value with the [LaBriut: To Our Health and Wellness Curriculum](#) and values-based learning through [ShalomLearning](#).

AND

Tuesday

Hebrew times to be set up with the teacher

Tuesday afternoons will include:

- An interactive Tefillah service that explores a different prayer each week in and learning a melody or interpretation of that prayer.
- Small group Hebrew learning in *chavruta* (30 minutes each, groups and exact time TBD with teacher).

## **Teen Program**

### **Tzedek America Online**

Tzedek America, the leader in immersive and experiential social justice education for Jewish teenagers, will provide ten 60-minute digital social justice workshops throughout the academic year. These powerful sessions, available to synagogues and day schools in North America, will inform, encourage, and inspire Jewish teenagers to face the social justice issues of North America and the world.

Each motivational workshop elevates the voices of individuals and families impacted by social injustice and connects Jewish teenagers to Jewish texts, traditions, and values.

Participants can expect each highly produced online experience to incorporate frontline speakers, engaging media, curated breakout groups, idea-sharing, and achievable action plans.

The teen program will meet at 4pm on Sunday afternoons approximately three times each month. Twice each month (one time per month in the community program and one time per month in an SMS-only reflection and debrief) we will be part of a community social justice program created by Tzedek America (the link for more

information is below). Tzedek America provides all of the pre and post-learning materials.

### **SMS Teen VTP (Virtual Theater Arts)**

Once a month students will meet with congregant Doug Kaback, Professor of Drama at Cal State Northridge. Doug will create an opportunity for our teens to explore dramatic arts and cultural identity. Over the course of ten sessions on Sunday afternoons, teens will enjoy improvisation script writing and theater games to create original characters as they reflect on today's times. All conducted via Zoom, students will engage in a dialogue about their Jewish identity: family, spirituality, education, gender roles, aesthetics, food and more. Performances and monologues will be recorded, and if teens desire, can be shared.

In addition, teens may continue to serve as Yad B'yad mentors with our younger students, and some will serve as Madrichim for our online classes.

All teen classes will be held via Zoom.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Class Topic</b>	<b>Facilitator</b>
9/13	Tzedek America - Social Justice Starts with me	Tzedek America Staff/Lori Daitch
9/20	Social Justice Reflection/Debrief	Lori Daitch
10/4	SMS Teen VTP-S'lichah/Forgiveness	Doug Kaback/Lori Daitch
10/18	SMS Teen VTP-Kehillah/Community	Doug Kaback/Lori Daitch
10/25	Tzedek America - Food Justice	Tzedek America Staff/Lori Daitch
11/1	Food Justice Reflection/Debrief Class	Lori Daitch
11/8	SMS Teen VTP-Hakarat Hatov/Being Grateful	Doug Kaback/Lori Daitch
11/15	Tzedek America - Systemic Racial Oppression	Tzedek America Staff/Lori Daitch
11/22	Systemic Racial Oppression Reflection/Debrief	Lori Daitch
12/6	SMS Teen VTP-Nedivut/be generous	Doug Kaback/Lori Daitch
12/13	Tzedek America - Environmental Justice	Tzedek America Staff/Lori Daitch (Reflection TBD)
1/10	SMS Teen VTP-Ometz/Courage	Doug Kaback/Lori Daitch
1/24	Tzedek America - What is Social Enterprise?	Tzedek America Staff/Lori Daitch

1/31	What is Social Enterprise Reflection/Debrief	Lori Daitch
2/7	SMS Teen VTP-Sh'mirat Ha-Guf/Protect your body	Doug Kaback/Lori Daitch
2/21	SMS Teen VTP-La Shon Hara/Hurtful Speech	Doug Kaback/Lori Daitch
2/28	Tzedek America - Understanding Homelessness	Tzedek America Staff/Lori Daitch
3/7	Understanding Homelessness Reflection/Debrief	Lori Daitch
3/21	SMS Teen VTP-Herut/Freedom	Doug Kaback/Lori Daitch
4/11	SMS Teen VTP-Kavod/Respect	Doug Kaback/Lori Daitch
4/18	Tzedek America - Supporting People with Diverse Disabilities	Tzedek America Staff/Lori Daitch
4/25	Supporting People with Diverse Disabilities Reflection/Debrief	Lori Daitch
5/2	Tzedek America-Immigration Justice	Tzedek America Staff/Lori Daitch
5/16	Immigration Justice Reflection/Debrief	Lori Daitch
5/23	SMS Teen VTP-L'dor V'dor/From Generation to Generation	Doug Kaback/Lori Daitch
6/6	Tzedek America - Honoring Older Adults	Tzedek America Staff/Lori Daitch
6/13	Honoring Older Adults Reflection/Debrief	Lori Daitch

### **GRADE TWELVE-Confirmation with The Rabbi**

With Rabbi Marx as teacher, this class will focus on issues as seniors prepare to leave home for college, gap year, work, and life. The year will culminate with a student-led Confirmation service. The class will meet monthly, dates TBD.

**Teen Travel:** Our teen trips are on hold for this year. Once we are again able to travel, any teen who did not have the opportunity to travel during the pandemic will be able to participate in programs including Jewish New York and the Washington DC social justice trips.