A Note for Our Hebrew School Parents
3rd-6th Grade

Dear Parents,

Amongst the goals of our Hebrew program is for our students to fluently read the prayers associated with the weekly and Shabbat evening and morning services, become confident prayer leaders, and be comfortable when attending services at other congregations. We want to provide the best Hebrew education for our students and set them up for success when they prepare for their B’nei Mitzvah.

Your clergy have spent the past few months focusing on how we achieve these goals in a one day a week Hebrew School program. We are proud to be launching a new model of Hebrew Education at Congregation Shir Hadash beginning in Fall 2019. Highlights include:

- An increased use of Jewish Life Vocabulary both in our Hebrew School and Religious School.
- The incorporation of the Hebrew Through Movement approach to Hebrew learning in Grades 3-5. Hebrew Through Movement is a language acquisition strategy in which students learn Hebrew by hearing and responding to Hebrew commands. After a long day in secular school, we know that it is important for our students to be active. As such, one of the aspects of Hebrew Through Movement is learning by moving and doing.
- The adaptation of a prayer based curriculum in Grades 4-5 called Hebrew Through Harmony that uses the power of music to engage students in prayer.

Perhaps the greatest shift in our program is that beginning in Fall 2019, we will be combining our 4th and 5th grade classes and dividing students based on their ability and skill, rather than by grade. Students will be assessed at the end of this school year, as well as the first day of school, and be placed accordingly.

We are confident that this model will allow us to be more responsive to the various learning differences each student has. All 3rd grade students will begin the program together learning the Aleph-Bet and basic decoding skills, and will end the program together in 6th grade and study with Cantor Felder-Levy.

In keeping with our desire to introduce Jewish Life Vocabulary in our program, as well as avoiding an explicit differentiation between classes, we will no longer use the terms Kitah Aleph, Kitah Bet, Kitah Gimmel, and Kitah Dalet to distinguish between our classes. There will be new names for each class:

- Rishonim, “The First Ones,” (3rd Grade)
- Kochavim, “Stars,” (4th-5th Grade) - geared for those students who will need additional help with letter and vowel recognition, decoding, and additional time to work on prayer fluency.
- Chalutzim, “Pioneers,” (4th-5th Grade) - geared for those students who are able to recognize letters and vowels and decode multiple syllable words.
- Giborim, “The Mighty Ones,” (6th Grade)
There is another important thing to note as we think about next school year. We want to do everything we can to ensure that our students have the option of attending class on Mondays or Tuesdays. We also acknowledge that sports, rehearsals, and appointments sometimes can get in the way of attending Hebrew School.

We have also have observed over the past few years, our class sizes on Mondays and Tuesdays have been uneven. This greatly impacts the quality of learning that occurs in the classroom. When students switch days of attending Hebrew school on a recurring basis, it can affect the dynamic of the classroom. All of our classes are unique, and requires the teacher to adjust his or her schedule to accommodate his or her students. What students are learning on one day may differ from what they are learning on another. This may become more apparent with our new class structure.

We will continue to be as flexible as possible and do not want schedules to be a barrier to your child’s Hebrew education. We can do this with some parameters and considerations by you:

1. If you know that your child will be missing class on a Monday or Tuesday for 4-6 consecutive weeks, consider registering your child for Hebrew School on the opposite day.
2. We want to avoid having students switch their attendance days intermittently (i.e, due to a doctor’s appointment). Our preference would be for you to work with your child’s teacher in having a private makeup session 30 minutes prior to class.
3. Any request to switch attendance days must be made in advance and approved by the Rabbi Educator and teacher.
4. We can provide Hebrew tutors who can meet with your child, in addition to coming to class, at an additional cost to you.
5. As a last resort, our private Hebrew Tutoring Program allows you to schedule a once a week, 45-minute session with our private Hebrew Tutor at a time that is conducive for you and your child. This option is in lieu of attending school on Mondays or Tuesdays.

Our preference would be to have your child(ren) attend Hebrew School on Mondays or Tuesdays. There is great value in learning a new language with friends.

For Monday Hebrew School Classes: Due to many of our holidays falling on a Monday, there will be 4 sessions throughout the year on Sundays, from 12:15pm-2:00pm. An optional pizza lunch will be available for purchase. This will ensure that both Monday and Tuesday students have 29 sessions of Hebrew School each. Please look at the calendar for specific dates.

As always, do not hesitate to contact us with questions and concerns. We are excited for another year of growing, learning, and fun.

Sincerely,

Rabbi PJ Schwartz
Rabbi Educator