

# Religious School Handbook

## 2019-2020



## Policies and Information for Parents

Rabbi Debra Stahlberg Dressler  
rabbi.dressler@templeisraelondon.ca

V.P. Education, Elizabeth Teevan  
elizabeth@templeisraelondon.ca

Coordinator, Margie Wienburg  
margie@templeisraelondon.ca

519-858-4400

## Welcome

Dear Parents:

We are thrilled that your family's Jewish journey has brought you to our community. On behalf of the Board and members of Temple Israel, let us extend to you our warmest welcome.

At Temple Israel we are blessed to have a vibrant community of lifelong Jewish learners, from our youngest preschoolers to our veteran Lunch and Learn participants. Some are learners of the most basic skills--aleph-bet and Jewish holidays--and others have ascended to advanced topics in Bible and rabbinic literature. But the heart of that journey in lifelong Jewish education remains constant. As London's Reform Jewish congregation, the "big idea" behind Temple Israel's educational programmes is as follows:

***"Reform Judaism weaves the gifts of our Jewish past into the promise of our future."***

"So what does that mean?" you might ask. It means that there is a purpose behind the educational choices we make. While we embrace the spectrum of Jewish topics, from the ancient to the cutting-edge, we do so with a specific lens. We look at Jewish tradition through Reform eyes, and we prioritize our choices with an eye toward the traditions of Judaism that speak to us today, and that can guide us toward the future.

In the following pages, we will articulate the ways we fulfill this broad agenda through each stage of our religious school program. I hope you will find your values reflected in these ideas. We also outline the basic policies of our school. And as always, do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

Warmly,

Elizabeth Teevan, V.P. of Education

Rabbi Debra Stahlberg Dressler

*Last Update: September 1, 2019 EFCDT/DSD*

## Schedules and Class Assignments

### Sunday Religious School

- Classes run from 9:30 a.m. to noon.
- We begin each morning in the sanctuary with a morning assembly and blessings.
- Our Sunday School program is organized into four classes:
  - Alef - grades 1 and 2
  - Gimel - grades 5 and 6
  - Bet - grades 3 and 4
  - B'nei Mitzvah - grades 7 and 8

### Wednesday Hebrew School

- Classes run from 4:45 p.m. to 6:15 p.m.
- Students should report directly to classrooms.
- Our Wednesday classes are organized by grade and/or Hebrew level. Children attend mid-week Hebrew School from grade 4 through their Bar or Bat Mitzvah in grade 7 or 8.
- Private Tutoring: if your student or family require one-on-one tutoring, at Temple or off-site, please contact Rabbi Dressler. Additional charges may apply.



### High School

- Grades 9 through 12; eligible for volunteer hours
- See weekly REMIND message for Sunday's activities. Drop-ins welcome!
- Projects or tasks available ANY Sunday class, such as:
  - Cooking
  - Music, Art
  - Filming video yearbook
  - Promoting Tzedakah projects
  - Creating animation for class use
  - General classroom assistance

### Parent Pick-up:

For safety, on Sundays and Wednesdays please park your vehicle and come inside to pick up students.

## Curriculum

To address the two-grade span in each class, we have an alternating, two-year curriculum:

Class	Judaics		Hebrew	
	Even Years	Odd Years	Sunday	Wednesday
Alef <i>Grades 1 and 2</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bible: Exodus</li> <li>● Holidays and Jewish Values</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bible: Genesis</li> <li>● Shabbat and Holidays</li> </ul>	Alef-Bet Letter Recognition	None
Bet <i>Grades 3 and 4</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Israel</li> <li>● God and Spirituality</li> <li>● Holidays</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Community</li> <li>● Jewish Values</li> <li>● Holidays</li> </ul>	→ Gr. 3: Alef-Bet Reading Readiness → Gr. 4: Build on Midweek Hebrew	Grade 4 Only
Gimel <i>Grades 5 and 6</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Israel</li> <li>● Bible: Exodus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● God and Spirituality</li> <li>● Bible: Genesis</li> </ul>	Prayers and Blessings	Grades 5 and 6
B'nei Mitzvah <i>Grades 7 and 8</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Israel</li> <li>● Bible: Prophets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Life Cycle</li> <li>● Jewish Values</li> </ul>	Bar/Bat Mitzvah Preparation	Grades 7 through B'nei Mitzvah

## Library

In addition to the assigned texts, children in Chevrah Alef and Chevrah Bet visit the Temple library once or twice a month for a story. At that time, they are invited to check out books. Please keep track of Temple books and return them after your children have finished with them. Children in the older classes, as well as parents, are also invited to browse and make use of our wonderful library.

## Tzedakah/Food bank

Each week, children are encouraged to bring small change for Tzedakah and/or canned or boxed food to donate to the food bank. During the year, classes may also plan a special funds or goods drive to benefit a charitable organization. Parents are notified via email of these when possible.

## Snacks

Children in Chevrah Alef and Chevrah Bet enjoy a mid-morning snack. Snack duty is shared by the families on a weekly rotation; a snack schedule will be created at the beginning of the year, with reminders in our parent emails. **Please make sure all snacks are nut-free.** If you plan to bring anything containing meat, note that we are “Kosher style” at Temple Israel: no pork or shellfish products, plus meat and dairy are not mixed within a single served dish.

## Shabbat Services

Families are encouraged to attend Shabbat services at Temple whenever possible. Children acquire worship skills best through experience, reinforcing the prayers and blessings they are learning in class. To that end, students will be assigned participation pieces occasionally throughout the year. If your family is unable to attend on an assigned date, please let the Rabbi or Margie know. **Beginning in Grade 4, we ask that students and their families attend at least four worship services each year in addition to special holiday programs.** See below for specific policies for B'nei Mitzvah candidates.

## Communication

We communicate regularly with our school families via email. Please make sure that the Temple office has your current email addresses. Registration forms were mailed out over the summer; please return a completed form by the first day of classes.

### **Inclement weather**

If weather conditions become hazardous, we will send an e-mail blast at least two hours before the beginning of class. Please keep an eye on your email for the most up-to-date information. Also, if weather conditions are bad in your area of town, please let the Rabbi or Margie know; the Windermere Road area is sometimes clear when other areas of London have become treacherous.

### **Absences**

Prompt attendance in class is critical for student success. We recognize, however, that our children and their families have other commitments that sometimes warrant absences. If your child will not be at Hebrew or Religious School, please contact Margie at [margie@templeisraelondon.ca](mailto:margie@templeisraelondon.ca). In the case of numerous absences, make-up work may be assigned in consultation with Rabbi Dressler.

## Health and Accommodations

We strive to be an inclusive school, and we want to support any learning or medical needs of our students. Please ensure that you keep us up-to-date on any health or educational needs your child has. Rabbi Dressler is available to discuss any of these matters confidentially as needed.

## Siblings

Please see below for details on our multi-child discount. When a student joins the Temple Israel religious school, younger school-aged siblings are expected to join as well.

## **B'nei Mitzvah Policies** (as of August, 2019)

We know that the choice to give your child a Jewish education is not one you have entertained lightly. To pursue the objective of a Bar or Bat Mitzvah is a significant family decision, one which affects all its members. So that you and your family can make the best decision possible, allow me to share with you how our Temple community views the B'nei Mitzvah process and its goals.

A Bar or Bat Mitzvah is a community event, the culmination of a collective process of education and Jewish exploration. At Temple Israel, we learn in our classrooms, in our worship, and in our actions. But none of these exists independently of the relationships we share with the rest of the Temple family. Judaic and Hebraic “content” are only important inasmuch as we live and celebrate the values they represent with each other.

We take pride in watching each of our students grow and mature. Our interest in them as individuals as well as our concern for you as a family neither begins nor ends with the B'nei Mitzvah curriculum. As a community we are extending this opportunity to you because we genuinely want to get to know you and support you as family choosing to raise Jewish children. We hold this as a sacred honour, and this commitment is shared by the breadth of our Temple community.

**In the spring of 2019, we met with parents to review our programs and the idea of expanding the ways our students may mark their B'nei Mitzvah was met with enthusiasm. As your children approach their grade seven year, you may want to discuss with Rabbi Dressler if such an option might add meaning to your children's experience.**

What we ask of you is that you share this enthusiasm for community. We want you to find a spiritual home at Temple Israel, and we pledge to work together with you to fulfill your desire to offer your child the rich gift we have found in Jewish living.

Please do not hesitate to contact us to discuss our program further, or to express any questions or concerns you may have.

### **General B'nei Mitzvah Policies**

- Families electing to celebrate a Bar or Bat Mitzvah at Temple Israel are making a commitment for their child to continue through High School:
  - B'nei Mitzvah program--grade 7 and 8
  - High School program--grades 9 to 12
- Students and their families are expected to **attend six services and/or holiday celebrations** during the year prior to B'nei Mitzvah; two of these services should be Saturday morning Shabbat services.
- Families are asked to host or sponsor one congregational Oneg/Kiddush in the year prior to B'nei Mitzvah.
- B'nei Mitzvah candidates are asked to coordinate one Social Action event or project, during grades 6, 7 or 8 school year (such as soup group, food drive, etc.).
- Members must be current with all dues and financial obligations to the Temple.

## **B'nei Mitzvah Policies (continued)**

### **Additional B'nei Mitzvah Policies**

#### **For Students Entering Religious School in Grade 4 or Later**

Passed by the Temple Israel Board, March 2011

*Deviation from these policies will be considered on a case-by-case basis, particularly in the case of financial need.*

- Families must join Temple Israel. No new-member dues offers are applicable if a student is Grade 5 or older; dues variances must be approved by the Executive Committee of the Temple.
- Families will assume financial responsibility for any remedial Hebrew instruction deemed necessary by the Rabbi to catch up to grade level.
- B'nei Mitzvah dates are assigned but not confirmed until progress review after one year; consequently, B'nei Mitzvah dates may fall during the Grade 8 year for students entering in Grade 5 or later.
- Younger children in the household are expected to join the religious school, including any necessary private Hebrew remediation to reach grade level.

## Tuition

### Members (As of August 2019)

Alef	Bet 1	Bet 2	Gimel	BBM*	Post B'nei Mitzvah (Grade 8)	High School
395	495	595	795	995	n/a	n/a

\*Note that there is no separate B'nei Mitzvah fee.

### Multi-child Discount

We offer members in good standing **HALF-PRICE** tuition for the third student per family; discount applies to lowest tuition rate.

### Tuition Assistance

Tuition assistance is available for any family in need. Please contact Rabbi Dressler.

### Non-members

We offer non-members with children in grades 1 or 2 an option to “try out” Temple Israel’s religious school at a tuition premium of 50% for one year. Families interested in this option should contact Rabbi Dressler.

**Coming soon:**



**Temple Israel's very own smartphone app!**

**Get school alerts and messages, and check the  
Temple calendar and website with one click.**

---

**Don't Forget to Follow Us!**





<https://www.facebook.com/groups/TIRSchool>



**@TIRSchool**