

*Rabbi Robert and Margaret Miller
Education Center
of
Temple Beth Avodah
Newton Centre, Massachusetts*



*Family Handbook
2006-2007
5766-5767*

*Class Schedule Information
Curriculum and Standards
Parent Participation*

The Rabbi Robert and Margaret Miller Education Center
Temple Beth Avodah
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Who's Who at Temple Beth Avodah ...

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Nancy Natowitz Executive Director	Ext. 180	nnatowitz@bethavodah.org
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Becky Ostrow Youth Educator	Ext. 171	bostrow@bethavodah.org
Heidi Baker Preschool Director/ Renaissance Educator	Ext. 140	hbaker@bethavodah.org
Shukie Sapir Bar/Bat Mitzvah Coordinator	Ext. 135	
Felicia Sloin, Cantorial Soloist	Ext. 178	fsloin@bethavodah.org
Amy Cohen		President of Temple Beth Avodah
William Friedler		Vice President of Education
Robin Saitz Liz Coleman		Religious School Committee Co-Chairs

Our Congregation ...

Temple Beth Avodah is a Reform congregation that is affiliated with the Union of Reform Judaism. Temple Beth Avodah is known for its warm and welcoming environment, and is a congregation devoted to serious Jewish education, cultural awareness and communal involvement through acts of social justice. The worship services as well as the educational programming reflect a deep respect for Jewish tradition as well as a contemporary approach designed for liberal American Jews who live and work in the society-at-large. We value our history of steadfast support for Jewish organizations and for charitable causes of importance to the community at large.

Our School ...

As a *Beit Midrash* (house of study), Temple Beth Avodah is dedicated to a community-wide learning process that will empower each individual and family with a deep-rooted understanding of their cultural and spiritual origins, while appreciating the beauty of living a Jewish life that is founded on social justice and responsibility. Temple Beth Avodah is devoted to the dignity of every child and every human being and envisions the educational process as a partnership between home and synagogue and as a sacred endeavor shared by students, parents and teachers.

Welcome . . .

To Temple Beth Avodah's Religious School

We are delighted that you have chosen to join our school community for a year of learning, praying and celebrating for students as well as their families. It is a goal of the school to offer the students a wide base of Jewish knowledge from which they can further pursue their Jewish Education. The topics emphasized throughout the Sunday Religious School program are: Jewish identity formation, Torah, Jewish texts, theology, ceremonies and celebrations, history, Israel, ethics and community studies. We are delighted that Susan Bamel Glickman will be with us on Sunday mornings teaching music and leading our Youth Choir. In addition, our newly imagined and restructured midweek Hebrew program features not only fundamental concepts in Hebrew prayerbook literacy, but also experiential learning activities that will assist students in becoming comfortable with the Hebrew language. Once again this year, our students in Grades 3-6 will receive reinforcement for their midweek Hebrew on Sundays through a light integration of Hebrew prayers and blessings as well as games and enrichment. Our *Midrasha* program is designed for students in Grades 7-12 and meets on Monday evening. *Midrasha* offers our students a program that combines formal and informal study opportunities and time for socializing and spending time with other Jewish teens.

Following are the meeting days and times for our many and varied program offerings for students in Kindergarten through Grade 12:

Sunday Religious School Schedule

First Session: 9:00 am -10:40 am - Kindergarten through Grade 6

Second Session: 10:50 am-12:30 pm - Kindergarten through Grade 6

Tuesday Hebrew School Schedule

First Session: 12:30 - 3:15 pm (includes time for lunch) - Grades 3,4,5

Second Session: 3:30 - 6:15 pm - Grades 3, 4, 5, 6

(Preference for this session is given to siblings of Grade 6 students, private school students and those in non-Newton public school programs.)

Monday Evening High School Midrasha Schedule

Dinner at 6:00 pm followed by classes from 6:30-8:30 pm for Grades 7 - 12

***Please see Page 10 of this Handbook for important information for our Grade 7 students and Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidates for 2006-2007.

Grade Five

In fifth grade, our students participate in the great historical adventure of our people that begins in Jerusalem in the first century and ends, hundreds of years later, in modern Israel.

This course is about the concept of "Israel" in its many and varied meanings: as it relates to our people, the land, the State and religion. Students will study the connection between Jews and Israel, from God's promise to Abraham and the Jewish people to the founding of the modern State of Israel in 1948, continuing through to modern day. Students will look at how the State of Israel brings together Jews from many different ethnic backgrounds, who, despite the great diversity, make up one people, *Am Yisrael* -- the Jewish people. Students will study life in Israel today through an innovative "School Match" program with Grade 5 Israeli students who live in Haifa, Israel.

Family Education: Sunday, January 28 Special Israel Program

Grade Six

Sixth grade students are introduced to a wide variety of Jewish men and women - "heroes" -- who have helped shape pre-modern and modern Jewish history, and who stand as role models to us today. As each personality is studied, students will gain an understanding of the historical moment during which s/he lived as well as the cultural and intellectual milieu of that particular time and place. In addition to focusing on the traditional Jewish value(s) by which these Jewish "heroes" lived and worked, students will be exposed to the art, film, music, creative thinking and social activism that Jews have contributed to the societies in which they have lived.

In addition, students will confront a series of moral dilemmas and encounter core Jewish values such as *Tzaar Baalei Chayim* (concern for animals), *Pikuach Nefesh* (saving a life) as they solve ethical dilemmas using Jewish texts and opinions. They will also discuss the Jewish and secular legal principles surrounding such issues as abortion, suicide, AIDS, euthanasia and more.

**Family Education: Sunday, January 7 B'nai Mitzvah Parent Workshop
 Saturday, February 3 Shabbat Morning Learners' Service
 Friday, March 16 Shabbat Evening Learners' Service**

Tuesday Hebrew School Program

Temple Beth Avodah offers a Midweek Hebrew Program on Tuesday afternoons. The grade level entry for a child into the formal Hebrew program is Grade 3. For those who wish to become Bar/Bat Mitzvah, five years of Hebrew studies, as well as Religious School enrollment and participation, are required through the seventh grade year.

Students are introduced to the language, its alphabet, basic grammar, prayers and blessings and are taught to read and write in our Hebrew program. Once a week, classes will join together for *Beyt Keneset*, a learners' service that familiarizes students with the liturgy and prayerbook used at Temple Beth Avodah. During the 2006-07 school year, students in our Tuesday Hebrew program will also have regular sessions with our Youth Educator, Becky Ostrow and Cantorial Soloists, Felicia Sloin and Susan Glickman. There will be informal youth programming that focuses on Jewish culture and arts, the Hebrew language, and the modern-day State of Israel. Both Felicia and Susan will be involved in exposing our students to the melodies used regularly at Temple Beth Avodah worship services as well as teaching some of the exciting contemporary music of today's Reform Movement.

Grade Three - Matchilim

"*Matchilim*" means "beginners." It is the first year of formal Hebrew education and begins in Grade 3. *Matchilim* is a year of exposure to the Hebrew language, alphabet recognition and reading development. Students are introduced to and gradually develop a familiarity with the language. Towards the end of this year's Hebrew studies, students and parents will participate in the Grade 3 *Matchilim* "*Siyum Ha-Sefer*" ceremony in which students will receive their own inscribed prayerbook from their parents.

Grade Four - Alef

The "*Alef*" class is a year of Hebrew language development. Students are introduced to and gradually develop a familiarity with the language. The emphasis of the class is learning to read and comprehend. Students will study the alphabet, prayers, learn their meaning and study some basic Hebrew grammar. They focus their learning on the Hebrew blessings and prayers related to the *Shema* in both the morning and evening services and learn to identify key words and phrases that are found in Hebrew prayers.

Grade Five - Bet

The "*Bet*" class is the third year of the Hebrew program. The emphasis on Hebrew reading proficiency continues. Studies center around specific prayers of the Shabbat evening and morning services. Students deepen their understanding of the concepts of Creation, Revelation and Redemption as they relate to Shabbat evening and morning services. They will strengthen their reading of the blessings that are found in the first half of the prayer services through the *Mi Chamocha*. Students will be encouraged to understand the translations and messages of the prayers from traditional as well as personal perspectives.

Grade Six - Gimmel

"*Gimmel*" level students continue an in-depth study of the Shabbat liturgy. Focusing on the prayers of the *Amidah* and the concluding prayers, these students prepare themselves to be able to read and lead the entire Shabbat evening or morning service. Grade 6 students pay particular attention to the rubric of the morning and evening service known as the *Amidah*. As Bar and Bat Mitzvah candidates, they will also learn the prayers and blessings associated with the reading of Torah and Haftarah and will gain fluency with the cycle of Torah readings through the study of "*Parashat Hashavuah*" - the weekly study of Torah portions.

Midrasha:
A Youth Education Community Program
For Students in Grades 7-12

Grade 7

Students in Grade 7 meet on Monday evenings from 6:30 pm-8:30 pm (dinner 6:00-6:30) at the same time as Midrasha (High School program for students in grades 8-12). It is expected that by the beginning of Grade 7, the student will be able to read and lead the entire Shabbat evening or morning service. The Grade 7 program will be primarily taught and facilitated by Rabbis Stern and Eiduson, in addition to Becky Ostrow and Felicia Sloin. Students will join Midrasha faculty members and students in grades 8-12 for dinner from 6:00 and 6:30 pm and will then have classes designed solely for Grade 7 students from 6:30-7:30 pm and then from 7:30-8:30 pm. The Monday evening coursework will include a variety of topics including: prayer, Torah study, current events, Israel, American Judaism and women in Judaism. In addition, students will also study the significance of mitzvot in their lives and will participate with their families in a family mitzvah project decided on by the class.

******* PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDARS...Grade 7 Highlights:*******

Outward Bound Day-Long Trip -Required of all Grade 7 students - Sunday, October 15, 2007

D'var Torah Workshops for Grade 7 Students and Parents:

Sunday mornings: December 10, 2006 and March 11, 2007 (Select one date)

Grades 7-12: General Information about Midrasha High School Program:

Midrasha is a wonderful program for students beginning in grade 7. The Hebrew root of the word *Midrasha* means: to inquire, to explore, to draw out, to interpret.

Our seventh through twelfth grade students come together once a week on Monday evenings to discuss relevant topics and issues they confront as Jewish teens, and to learn and grow as Jewish young adults. The *Midrasha* program blends formal and informal learning opportunities in order to provide a meaningful and safe Jewish environment for our teenagers.

From 6:00-6:30 pm we begin with a community dinner followed by the *Birkat HaMazon* (Blessing after the Meal) and announcements. Students enjoy this opportunity to spend time socializing with their Jewish friends and classmates in an informal setting. From 6:30-7:25 pm, students attend their grade-level core courses. Core course topics include: Israel, God, and Torah. From 7:25-7:35 pm, students have a break between classes. Following the break, our second hour of programming (7:35-8:30 pm) is a mixture of elective courses and school-wide programs. *Midrasha* offers youth the opportunity to investigate the depth and beauty of Judaism. *Midrasha* balances the need for Jewish education with an awareness of the numerous activities and responsibilities of today's teens.