



The Village Temple Religious School

Family Handbook 2008-2009 5769

“Without knowledge, there is no understanding;
without understanding, there is no knowledge.”

[Pirke Avot, 3:21]

“You shall teach them diligently to your children.”

[Deuteronomy/D'varim 6:7]

“Get yourself a teacher;
acquire yourself a friend.”

[Pirke Avot, 1:6]

33 East 12th Street
New York, NY 10003

212-674-2340
Fax 674-1744

<http://www.villagetemple.org/>



June 2008/Sivan 5768

Dear Parents,

B'ruchim Ha-Ba'im, welcome to the Village Temple Religious School for 5769 / 2008-2009. We very much look forward to teaching your children, to studying and learning with them, and to renewing, as a community, our appreciation and knowledge of our rich Jewish tradition.

We're taught that our world rests spiritually on three things:

- *Torah* -- Jewish texts, Bible, stories, rabbinic thought;
- *Avodah* -- prayer, knowledge of the meaning and history of prayers, experience or prayerful time;
- *G'milut Chasadim* -- acts of loving kindness, honoring parents and one another, giving Tzedakah, treating all living creatures with kindness and dignity.

The Religious School experience is an opportunity for students to involve themselves in these teachings and to gain the spiritual nurturing from Jewish learning that can sustain and inform and enrich all aspects of their lives.

This handbook is for you to use throughout the school year. Please consult it often. It contains the answers to many of the questions you might have about school. However, no handbook can take the place of regular communication between parents and teachers. Please keep in close touch with us during the year so that together we can provide the best experience possible for your child(ren). Each family's Jewish journey is unique and special yet made of the same threads of connection. We are partners in the weaving of these threads with your family. Let us work together to achieve all that we can.

I hope it will be a year full of joy in learning, and a year of inspiration for the students in discovering the gifts that their heritage holds for them.

Best wishes for a fine and sweet year.

Sincerely yours,

Alex Tansky
Director of Education

Introduction

Vision, Beliefs, Values, and Goals

Our Vision:

To serve the local Jewish community as a progressive school that provides a comprehensive Jewish education which allows each learner to develop a strong sense of self as a human being and as a Jew.

Our Beliefs and Values:

Jewish values and ethics, Hebrew for prayers and conversation, appreciation of Jewish history and of Israel, the celebration of life cycle events, holidays and festivals: all make up the "text" the children study. In lively and compelling ways, teachers guide students toward a deeper relationship with their Judaism.

By studying Torah, reading age-appropriate fiction and non-fiction, creating calendars and historical timelines, mapping family trees, praying, singing, dancing, dramatically acting the Bible stories, cooking traditional foods and creating visual art, students develop a strong sense of community and Jewish identity. It is our hope that our students will grow into life-long learners who enjoy studying and participating as members of their larger Jewish community

Experiential Jewish learning is highly valued in the Religious School. Decorating the Sukkah on Sukkot, lighting the Chanukiah on Chanukah, enjoying a seder for Tu B'Shvat, creating a model seder for Pesach and gathering for Family Education sessions and Shabbat dinners are all important aspects of the Religious School year.

Our Goal:

"The goal of Jewish education within the Reform Movement is to deepen Jewish experience and knowledge for all Jews, so as to strengthen their commitment to God, their identification with the Jewish people, their involvement in the temple, their participation in Jewish life, and their determination to live as Jews." - URJ Commission on Reform Jewish Education

It is our goal to pass on to our students the joy and meaning of Judaism through the observance and practice of life cycle events, Shabbat and holidays. We want to give each child a framework for decision making founded in Jewish ethics and values, carried out in an inclusive atmosphere. We hope to create within each student an understanding that the vitality of being Jewish today stems from being part of the community.

Teachers

The teachers of the Religious School, Beit Midrash and Youth Groups are drawn from many sources: Some are college and graduate students; some are studying to become clergy in the Jewish community. Our teachers bring formal degrees as well as professional experience in Jewish

education, elementary education, youth culture and camp counseling. Their graduate studies include preparation for the Rabbinite, the Cantorate, Judaic studies, Jewish history, and child psychology. In addition, many of our teachers are also artists in the fields of dance, music, painting, photography, sculpture, drama and writing. All have been chosen not only for their knowledge but also for their creativity, enthusiasm, and potential to inspire their students.

Parents

We believe that your child's Jewish learning will be enhanced without measure when you study and learn with your child. Some ways you can help with your child's Jewish studies are: listening to your child read and practice Hebrew at home, talking about ethical or historical issues your child is studying, performing Jewish rituals and ceremonies at home, such as Shabbat candle lighting, or prayers before sleeping, and attending Temple services together.

We encourage you and your children to practice and experience the classroom lessons at home, and to use your children's Religious School experience to enhance your home and synagogue observances. You and your family are welcome at all Temple services, for Shabbat, holidays and festivals.

Shabbat services are every Friday evening at 7:30 (Synaplex Shabbat services start at 6:30) and Saturday morning at 10:30. We offer Bim Bam Shabbat services emphasizing stories and music for young children, ages 3-7 and Junior Congregation for children, ages 8-12. Families have the chance to meet the clergy and our educator at the oneg following these kid-friendly Friday night services, which begin at 6:00 and last no more than 45 minutes. Family Shabbat Services are popular with young families who enjoy their children's involvement and the presence of other young families. It also offers a great way to experience Shabbat's warmth and joy. A special prayer book, songs, and a story time also serve to welcome young families. Your child's Class Shabbat dinners, Family education sessions, the special festivities for Sukkot, Chanukah, TuB'Shevat, Purim, Pesach, Yom HaAtzmaut and Shavuot all will be wonderful chances to celebrate Jewish heritage with your family and community.

Lending a hand at the weekly Shabbat Soup Kitchen is a great way to begin to deal with the difficult issues of poverty and homelessness in the city. Students also take field trips during school time, for which we like parent chaperones, to such places as museums of Jewish significance or to areas of social service such as Dorot.

Rabbi Koster is available to meet with you to talk about ways to enhance and deepen your family's Jewish observances. Alex Tansky and the teaching staff welcome the opportunity to share ideas for helping your children in their studies, for your home observances, and for involvement in the life of the congregation.

The Village Temple Curriculum Overview

Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten

At this level, the primary focus is to introduce the children to the holidays - their observances, symbols, and customs - through age-appropriate songs, games, stories, and arts and crafts projects. Holidays are introduced by a sensory approach, so that the children can relate to the holidays personally. .

Grade 1

In the first grade, students deepen their connection with the life of the Jewish people through learning about Judaism's basic symbols. Knowing these fundamental aspects of Jewish life will provide a strong foundation for more Jewish learning. First graders are introduced to the Hebrew alphabet and being guided in their observing of the letters, naming the letters, drawing, coloring and tracing the letters, and shaping the letters with clay and other pliable media.

Grade 2

In the second year of primary school, students connect themselves with important stories of the Jewish people, and the values they contain. The stories give examples of such basic values as honesty, responsibility, justice and helping other people. With puppets, art, music, acting, games and discussion, students become familiar with the personalities of Torah stories and begin to connect the lives of those figures with their own lives. Students also study the Hebrew letters and vowels, and begin to read Hebrew syllables and short words.

Grade 3

In the third grade, students become acquainted with the structure and format of the Bible. They explore heroes and heroines from Jewish history, especially as they are connected to the holidays and festivals throughout the year. This year provides the basis for meaningful, joyous holiday observance throughout students' lives. The students practice their reading skills and learn some basic Hebrew conversational words and phrases.

Grade 4

In fourth grade, students begin their formal study of prayers in Hebrew, learning to read selected prayers. Included in this study are such questions as: Why do we pray? Why do Jewish people pray together? How is Israel represented in prayer? This year offers students more opportunities to take personal responsibility for their Jewish lives, through prayer, holidays, history and Torah. Fourth graders proceed into learning how to read prayers. Their curriculum includes learning about the Hebrew root system, suffixes and prefixes, and gaining basic prayer and conversational vocabulary.

Grade 5

Fifth graders begin more intensive study of Hebrew, through learning more prayers and reading with greater fluency. Fifth graders learn words and phrases in conversational Hebrew. Fifth graders learn about Jewish life during the Middle Ages. They learn that despite traveling throughout the world often as the result of oppression, the Jewish people have maintained and nurtured their own religion and tradition, adapting and influencing elements of each culture they have visited. Fifth graders learn about the connection between the holidays and the Torah. Fifth graders study Jewish life cycle rituals and observances.

Grade 6

Sixth graders consolidate their ability to read Hebrew and their knowledge of Hebrew prayers. They concentrate on identifying their own thoughts about the prayers they've learned, and study midrashim associated with the prayers. Students continue the study of the weekly Torah portion. Working on their understanding and interpretations of the Torah prepares students for their B'nei

Mitzvah speeches and their future approach to the Torah. Students learn about Zionism, Holocaust and the founding of the state of Israel.

Grade 7

Seventh graders review prayers they've learned and add knowledge of midrashim and practices surrounding those prayers. They study Torah as the most sacred text of the Jewish people. Selections from all five books are read and discussed on developmentally appropriate level. The simple meaning of the text and its relevance to the students' own lives are the topics to consider. Midrash is introduced as an integral tool for understanding the Torah. Students learn the order of the books and their names in Hebrew. Seventh grade is the last year of Religious School. (Next year, students will participate in Beit Midrash, exploring Jewish Ethics and reading from primary sources.)

Bar/Bat Mitzvah, Junior Youth Group

"Son / Daughter of the Commandments" After passing his or her 12th birthday, a student begins to prepare for Bar/Bat Mitzvah. All candidates must have attained an appropriate level of Hebrew competence, and must be enrolled in Religious School or Beit Midrash. If a student has a particular learning difficulty, the ceremony is designed to suit his or her unique needs. Our students work closely with **Rabbi Koster** and **Cantorial Soloist Daniel Leanse** to prepare for Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

The Junior Youth Group is for students in 6th and 7th grades. The group meets every month for a social events and social action as well as educational programs. The Junior Youth Group Advisor is **Carol Epstein**. Junior Youth Group also gathers for an overnight Shul-In each year.

Beit Midrash I / Confirmation

Beit Midrash I / Confirmation offers an opportunity for students in 8th and 9th grades to continue their formal Jewish education at the Temple, through Confirmation. Through reading and debating the traditional texts on core ethical questions, and viewing them from their own perspectives, the students in Beit Midrash confront themselves, their Jewish identities, and their Jewish values.

Eighth graders in **Beit Midrash I** this year will read texts from Torah and Talmud. Some of the topics studied in previous Beit Midrash classes are: Community, the Environment, Reform Judaism, God, Family, Tradition, Love, Consumerism, Diaspora, and Identity. Within each topic are questions to be asked and personal choices to be made. Students wrestle with questions they face in their daily lives and with their personal choices as they are informed by their Jewish heritage. Additionally, new units will be offered on Jewish Inventors, Jews in Music/Comedy, and the History of American Jewish Immigration

To prepare for **Confirmation**, the 9th grade class will be taught by our Faculty members and Rabbi Koster. The 9th graders will focus on Jewish values in the Book of Ruth and engage in a research project. In the Confirmation ceremony on Shavuot, students read the Ten Commandments and the Book of Ruth, speak on their personal views of this book, and present their project to the Temple community.

Beit Midrash II

For students in Grades 10-12, **Beit Midrash II** offers students the opportunity to choose their class. *Conversational Hebrew* gives students the chance to learn Hebrew structure and vocabulary through guided conversations. Learning about *Jewish Identity* allows students to explore how their Jewish individuality affects the choices they make as they enter adulthood. *Madrich* is a leadership development program for High School students. They learn the skills they need to prepare them for serving the Village Temple community as Teacher Assistants, tutors, and mentors to younger children. The program will be designed to help high school students fulfill their social services requirements in secular school.

Senior Youth Group

The **Senior Youth Group** consists of teens in the 9th through 12th grades who meet regularly for social, educational and community service activities. Among their many activities, youth group members run their biweekly lounge nights, participate in services and social action during the High Holy Days, and plan and attend both their own and their regional conclaves, through their active involvement in NFTY-NYC.

SCHEDULE

Religious School, Beit Midrash, Senior and Junior Youth Groups

Pre-K	Nine Sundays a year	9:30 a.m. – 11 a.m.
Kindergarten	Fourteen Sundays a year	9:00 a.m. – 11 a.m.
1st grade	Tuesday	3:45-5:45 p.m.
(choose one)	Sunday	9:00-11:00 a.m.
2nd grade	Tuesday	3:45-5:45 p.m.
(choose one)	Sunday	9:00-11:00 a.m.
3rd grade	Tuesday	3:45-5:45 p.m.
(choose one)	Sunday	11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.
4th grade	Tuesday	3:45-5:45 p.m.
(choose one)	Sunday	11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.
5th grade	Monday & Wednesday	3:45-5:45 p.m.
(choose one)	Sunday	9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.
6th grade	Monday & Wednesday	3:45-5:45 p.m.
(choose one)	Sunday	9:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m.
7th grade	Monday & Wednesday	3:45-5:45 p.m.

(choose one)	Sunday	9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.
8th -12th grades	Beit Midrash I (gr. 8)	alt. Wednesdays 6:30-8:00 p.m.
	Confirmation (gr. 9)	alt. Wednesdays 6:30-8:00 p.m.
	Beit Midrash II (gr. 10-12)	alt. Wednesdays 6:30-8:00 p.m.
	Junior Youth Group	once/month tba
	Senior Youth Group	alt. Mondays 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Beit Midrash classes meet every two weeks, alternating with Senior Youth Group. Students are encouraged to participate in both of these unique programs for an integrated Jewish experience of friendship, study and service.

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Office Hours And Communication

The Religious School office is open 10:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Sunday. Parents can leave messages on the voice mail system for teachers or for Alex Tansky at 212-674-2340, ext. 308.

Alex Tansky, Director of Education, is available to meet with parents by appointment. Please do not hesitate to call or schedule a meeting to discuss you child’s progress.

Registration

For a student’s ongoing participation in the Religious School, the following are required:

1. Family’s membership in The Village Temple*
2. Full completion of the Registration Form and Permission Form
3. Arrangement for payment of tuition

School registration is accepted from July 1 through September 10. New students may also begin classes the week of January 10. It is important for the sake of continuity of studies that students do not begin with a class except at the above times.

SECURITY: Security is of great concern to us. To ensure the security and safety of your children, upon completion of the registration process each family will be sent an identification badge to show at the door before dropping off and picking up your child. This precaution is on the recommendation of our security company. As a result, students will not be able to register on the

* Registration for Pre-K and Kindergarten classes is open to non-member families at higher rate

first day of classes. Students must register at least one week in advance of attending class, to allow time to receive an identification badge in the mail. This badge is required for parents' and caregivers' entry into the school.

Some grade levels have limited spaces available for Sunday or Weekday classes. Because we want every student to have a place on his/her preferred day and time, please register as early as possible. Due to limited space, choices of school day are honored on a first-come, first-served basis.

For the safety as well as the learning of each student, it is essential that the school have a completed registration form on file. Registration forms are sent to each family before the school year begins. You can also pick the forms up in the Temple office. The registration form must be completely filled out before the student is allowed to attend class.

Attendance

Regular attendance and punctuality are very important. Please inform the office if you know in advance your child(ren) will be absent from school. Each student is responsible for all work missed during his or her absence and should be prepared for class upon their return. If you know that your child will be absent for a week or more, please contact the Religious School office and special arrangements will be made to help your child keep up with class.

If a student consistently misses classes, the Director of Education will meet with the student and his or her parents to determine the best way for missed class time to be made up. If necessary the Rabbi and/or School Committee may be brought into the discussion.

Early Arrival

We realize that some students travel to the Temple straight from their day schools and often have some free time before Religious School begins. Beginning at 3 p.m. Monday through Thursday, students who arrive early may begin their homework, read, draw, play quiet games, visit quietly together and eat their snacks. Caregivers are requested to stay with the students until class begins for Grades 1-5.

It is a decision of the Board of Trustees that students are not allowed to leave the building on their own at any time during school hours. This means that when students have entered the building, they cannot go out again to buy snacks. This is for the students' safety. Therefore, please remind your children to bring their snacks to school with them.

Late Arrival

Students are expected to arrive on time unless prior arrangements have been made with the school office. To be late causes a student not only to miss part of the lesson, but disrupts the entire class. Also, please impress upon your children the importance of entering the school building immediately upon arrival. The Village Temple Religious School cannot be responsible for students who have arrived but have not entered the Temple building.

Dismissal

We expect that you will discuss pick-up and travel arrangements with your child. Each child should know with whom he/she can travel. It is strongly recommended by the New York Police experts that if children are travelling alone, parents should discuss which streets and which modes of transportation they expect their children to use regularly. Practicing these routes with children is strongly advised.

Monday-Wednesday Dismissal: Students will be dismissed from their classrooms at the end of the day and should be met in the lobby of the Temple.

Tuesday Dismissal: Students must be met in the sanctuary at the end of the day. Students will wait in the sanctuary with their teachers until students are met by parents or care-givers.

Sunday Dismissal: Grades 1-2 should be met by parents in the sanctuary at 11 a.m. Grades 3-4 should be met by parents in the sanctuary at 1 p.m. Grades 5-6-7 will be dismissed from their classrooms and should be met in the lobby of the Temple.

Early Dismissal

We strongly discourage you from taking your children out of school before the end of the day. Occasionally, students may have to leave class early. If a student must be picked up early, a note from home is required. The adult picking up the student must come to the Religious School office and a staff member will then get the student from his or her classroom. Since Religious School hours are so few, this provides the student with the maximum amount of time in the classroom and is least disruptive.

The safety of your children is our first priority. In order to ensure this, parents and caregivers will not be permitted to meet their child outside. No student will be excused unless picked up by an authorized adult. In any situation where authorization is questionable, an authorized parent or guardian will be contacted and the student will be released only after the parent or guardian has been reached.

Late Pick-Ups

Parents or care-givers are expected to meet their children promptly at the close of school. School ends at 5:45 p.m. Monday through Thursday. On Sunday, grades 1 and 2 are finished at 11 a.m., grades 3 - 7 at 1 p.m..

We cannot be responsible for children after the school is over. If there will be a delay in meeting your child, it is essential to let the school know ahead of time, as special arrangements need to be made for someone to wait with your child. Students are asked to stay in the building while waiting after school, rather than playing on the sidewalk or in the street. Please emphasize the importance of this to your children, for their safety.

Snacks

Students should bring snacks with them to school. The class will have a break for the students to eat their snacks. For students in all grades, special foods will be served during holidays and festivals throughout the year.

Please remind your children: it is a school policy that snacks are to be eaten during the class breaks, but not during the lesson in class.

You are strongly urged to monitor the choices your children make when buying snacks to eat before class begins. Excessive amounts of sugared snacks and drinks may affect a student's ability to concentrate in class. For your children's safety, do not send beverages in glass bottles.

Health

If your child is not feeling well during school hours, every effort will be made to contact you. No medication will be given to students by Temple or school staff. If your child needs medicine, please be sure you have given it to him or her before your child comes to the Temple. **Please do NOT send your child to school if he/she is ill, out of consideration for your child and those around him/her.**

It is important that the Religious School be made aware of any special medical or health problems that students may have. This information should be noted on the confidential form provided in the registration packet.

Safety

No rollerblades skateboards or bicycles are allowed in the Religious School. If a student brings these things into the building, they may be left in the office upstairs or in the lobby with the building caretakers. Electronic games must be put away during class. The stairs can be a hazard. Students are never to run down the steps; older students should be reminded to proceed slowly so they don't bump into younger students. Please remind your children to use the stairs carefully.

Visitors

The Board cannot accept liability for children in class who are not registered. Therefore we do not allow students to bring friends to class who are not registered in the school. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

We always welcome parents and new members who wish to visit and observe the school activities. However, we believe the students must be allowed to learn in an undisturbed environment, free of outside distractions. Therefore, we ask for arrangements to be made at least 24 hours in advance, and reserve the right to suggest alternative times for visits. You can arrange to visit by speaking with the Director of Education, at 674-2340, ext. 308.

Student Discipline

We at the Village Temple Religious School recognize that each student is an individual, and comes from unique circumstances. Mutual respect and trust are integral to the educational philosophy of

the school. Each student deserves the right and privilege of studying free from disruptions. We expect courtesy and attentiveness from each student for his/her classmates and teachers. Each student is responsible for his/her own behavior in class.

Any student who behaves in a way that disrupts the learning of other students will be counseled promptly by the teacher. If the behavior continues, the student will be asked to leave class until s/he feels s/he can contribute to class in a constructive and appropriate way. At this time the student will meet with the Director of Education.

If a student is sent out of class a second time, the teacher will phone the parents to discuss the problem. Also at this time, the teacher will write a note home describing the difficulty. The parent will need to read and sign this note, and send it back to school with the student. If the student is sent out a third time, s/he will not be allowed back into class until the parent(s), the teacher, the student, and the Director of Education have met and come up with a way to resolve the problem.

We believe that while all students have the right to attend class and to study, no student has the right to obstruct other students from learning.

We've found that it helps students to assume responsibility if they are first given the opportunity to correct any disruptive behavior by themselves. But it also helps a student tremendously to know his/her parents are supportive of the student's efforts in the school and involved in trying to give the students the best experience possible during their limited time in Religious School.

Lost & Found

At the end of every year, we have a bag of clothes, lunch boxes and toys, lost and unclaimed in the Temple office. If your child leaves something at the school, please call the Temple office as soon as possible. They will keep the item there for you to pick up.

Emergency School Closing

The Religious School follows the inclement weather school closing decisions of the New York City Public Schools. Public School closings will be announced on WOR radio, 710 am. You can also phone their Storm Center at 877-877-9135, or log onto their website www.wor710.com. Although the school remains open in almost all weather conditions, your should of course use your best judgment in deciding whether or not to send children. Please phone the school office if you have a question regarding whether or not the school is open.

Communication with Parents

Education is a partnership of teachers, students and parents working together to ensure a positive Religious School experience.

E-Mail Updates

Every other week your child's teacher will send a class e-mail highlighting what was covered in class, upcoming topics and an activity for you and your child to do together.

Curriculum Night

In the fall, parents will be invited to come to a Religious School Curriculum night. They will have an opportunity to meet their child(ren)'s teachers and learn more about the topics and goals for each class. You and the teachers can share some of your hopes and plans for the Jewish learning and involvement of your family this year.

Parent -Teacher Conferences and Phone Calls

The Director of Education and teachers are available to meet with you should the occasion arise. We encourage every parent to discuss any questions or concerns with their student's teacher at any time. Please call the Religious School office and leave a message. The teacher will return your call at his or her earliest convenience.

Please remember to honor the Sabbath and to allow our teachers to do the same by not contacting them on Shabbat or Jewish holidays. Shabbat and all Jewish holidays begin at sundown the night before the holiday. Shabbat and holidays end once it is dark outside, about one hour after sundown.

Each year in November, parents and teachers have an opportunity to meet each other individually and discuss each child's progress. These short meetings give you a chance to ask your child's teacher how your child's work is going, how s/he participates in class, and how you can help at home with your child's studies.

Student Progress Reports

Student Progress Reports will be distributed in January and June. Students' progress is evaluated in both formal and informal ways. Evaluation is an important way to help students achieve their educational goals. It also serves to help us tailor the educational program to meet the needs of individual students. Evaluation is an ongoing process.

Reports will not be letter grades, but a summary of each child's current strengths, challenges and achievements in three areas: Jewish studies, Hebrew, and Tefila. The reports show the teacher's reflection on the students' knowledge of Jewish studies, prayer, Hebrew language concepts and vocabulary, participation in activities and discussion, and cooperation. This is meant to be a positive view of how much the students are learning and growing. You are urged to share the progress report with your children.

Educational Activities, Supplies, and Preparation

Supplies

Books, Hebrew notebooks, art supplies, study sheets and folders will be provided for the students by the school. Students should bring a pencil, an eraser, and a pen to class.

Every student will be given a Religious School folder. Parents must check these folders after each class for school notices, holiday information, and homework.

At the beginning of the year, you may be asked to supply some school supplies for the community. If our collective supplies run low, you may be asked to contribute the items we are low on so that we can replenish our supply.

Your child's teacher will let you know what your child will need the week before each class throughout the year. We suggest that each student have a separate tote bag or backpack for Religious School.

Books

In most grades, each student will receive one or more textbooks at the beginning of the year. Teachers will instruct or help students to clearly label their books with their names. Students are expected to bring back and forth any books they need for homework. We will work with students to keep them organized and we count on parents to remind their children to put their Religious School books in their Religious School bag and to bring the bag with them to Religious School.

If your child forgets a book, you may drop it off at the school during the day. If your child has consistent difficulty remembering to bring his or her book, please speak with the Director of Education.

Homework

The amount of material covered in Religious School is vast, while the number of hours of instruction is limited. Homework which supplements and reinforces class work is an important part of Religious School. Homework will be reviewed by teachers in a timely fashion. Parents are encouraged to maintain an interest in their child(ren)'s assignments.

We have found that consistent review is the key to learning to read Hebrew. Students will be asked to review their Hebrew for at least five minutes each day. Your support while your child is studying will increase the value of the lesson more than anything else. Even if you don't know Hebrew, let your child become your teacher! If you sit with your child while he/she is working, it will reinforce the importance of religious education.

We make every effort for the homework assignments to be realistic and meaningful, and students are expected to complete their assignments. A homework assignment is not complete if it was left at home or lost.

Class Trips

In keeping with our philosophy of learning Judaism through many kinds of experiences, special field trips are arranged each year for students in Grades 3 - 7.

Adequate supervision is arranged at all times, and parents are encouraged to participate in the trips as chaperones. If you are interested in being a field-trip chaperone, please phone the Director of Education. Parents may be requested to cover the costs of transportation or entrance fees.

Tefillah

Each class day, there is a service in the school. Singing and prayer are core aspects of the Tefila time. Students also participate in their own Tefila/prayer by opening the doors of the *Aron HaKodesh*/ the ark, holding the Torah, announcing the pages, leading the prayers, and arranging the siddurim neatly on the shelves after Tefila.

Alex Tansky will usually tell a story or give a lesson or reading during Tefila. Bar/Bat Mitzvah students also visit to read their Torah portions. Parents are welcome to participate during Tefila. Please call the Religious School office for Tefila times.

Class Shabbat Dinners

Once a year, your child's class will celebrate their **Class Shabbat Dinner**. Families and teachers will gather for a catered, kosher dinner on Friday evening at 6 p.m., followed by a Shabbat service at 7:30. The class Shabbat dinners were begun in order to help students and their families celebrate Shabbat together, understanding that the traditions and joys of Shabbat are most meaningful when tasted, heard, seen, and created together.

We urge you to make every effort to attend your child's Class Shabbat Dinner. We've found that the class Shabbat builds community for the students and for their families, often including even their grandparents. The Shabbat dinners help students to feel connected to their Temple community, and to grow up with the experience of having an extended family in that community.

You are also especially encouraged to attend services on evenings when other classes are gathered for their Class Shabbat. Shabbat services are always open to everyone, although the dinners beforehand are just for the designated class. Attending these services gives children an opportunity to reflect on their own progress, where they have come from, and to admire and be inspired by more advanced students.

Teaching Tzedakah and G'milut Chasadim

Integrated with our curriculum is teaching the values of *Tzedakah* – giving money out of a sense of justice to those in need – and *Gemilut Chasadim* – performing deeds of loving-kindness with a spirit of good will. You can assist your children in learning about *Tzedakah* and *Gemilut Chasadim* by encouraging their involvement in the programs listed below.

Tzedakah

To help children learn that they can participate in *Tikkun Olam* -- repair of the world -- even from a very young age, we will give students a chance to collect *Tsedakah* money each week. Please help your children to remember to bring a few coins for the class *Tsedakah* box. The important thing is not how much is contributed, but the act of contributing itself. At the end of the year, the classes vote on which organizations to support with their *Tsedakah*.

Soup Kitchen

Every Shabbat afternoon, The Village Temple provides a hot lunch for homeless people in the community. Families help out with many aspects of the Soup Kitchen; there is something for everyone to do. This is a special opportunity to help children feel they are doing something to address homelessness and hunger in the city, and they learn that they can participate in a meaningful way in *Tikkun Olam/Repair of the World*. For details about helping with the Soup Kitchen, please contact Dean Chavooshian through the Temple office.

Jewish National Fund & Trees for Israel

Each year the Religious School sponsors a special campaign at Tu B'Shvat, The New Year of the Trees, to plant trees and support forestation efforts in Israel. Students receive individual certificates of thanks from the Jewish National Fund.

Holiday And Festival Programs

The Village Temple offers a wealth of opportunities to share with your children as they learn of their Jewish heritage through the many days of celebration, remembrance and observance that fill the Jewish year.

As we celebrate the cycle of holidays, children learn about the stories, history, observances, songs, and ritual objects associated with each holiday. As a family, you can join The Village Temple community in festive celebrations and services.

Other Temple Activities

Children's Choir

One of the delights of the Village Temple, for singers and listeners alike, is the Children's Choir. Once a week at 6 p.m. (the day still to be chosen), the Children's Choir rehearses. The choir welcomes all children who love to sing. They do not need to read music, but should be able to read words in English. The choir sings regularly at special events in the Temple, including its own Choir Shabbat service, the Thanksgiving community service, the Chanukkah Family Service, the Tu B'Shvat Seder, and other festive times.

The Village Temple Book Fair

Every year the Village Temple sponsors a book fair for the entire congregation and the community at large. This dynamic event features author lectures and workshops and the opportunity to buy a wide assortment of books of Jewish interest--fiction, travel, ritual, biography, history, humor and sociology. Children from the religious school are given special access to the Book Fair during religious school hours.

Adult Education

To study as a parent is not only fun and enriching in itself, but it also brings a strong message to children that continual learning is an important, integral aspect of adult life. Ability to read Hebrew is not necessary to participate fully in the adult education classes. An array of adult education opportunities will be offered this year, including classes to be taught by Rabbi Chava Koster, and by Alex Tansky, Director of Education. For more classes, see your Village Temple calendar or the Temple bulletin, *Shalom*.