



Religious School Parent Handbook

2019-2020

Stephen Wise Temple
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INTRODUCTION

Dear Parent,

Welcome home to Wise Religious School, where deep and engaging Jewish learning leads to deep and engaging Jewish living.

The mission of Stephen Wise Temple is simple: we make meaning and change the world. At Wise Religious School, our approach to Jewish education mirrors our mission, not just in its goals, but in its execution, informing the ways in which we work together, model Jewish living for our children, and encourage our students to understand the role Judaism may play in their lives. We don't simply teach Judaism for Judaism's sake. We teach Judaism because Judaism provides us with a unique means to make meaning and change the world for the better.

Our programs immerse children in rigorous, exciting learning experiences that teach them Jewish traditions, values, and perspectives, helping them discover lives of purpose and meaning. In addition, our family education programs and partnership curriculum extends the classroom into your homes, helping parents and children to live Jewish moments together.

We hope that this handbook, alongside the many resources we provide religious school families, will help you as you navigate parenting Jewish children in the 21st Century. Our goal is to serve as your partner in raising your Jewish children and crafting meaningful Jewish family life. We're looking forward to a building a wonderful relationship together.

Rabbi Josh Knobel
Director of the Center for Youth Engagement
Youth

Stephanie Schwartz, RJE
Director of Wise Religious School & Temple

WISE RELIGIOUS SCHOOL MISSION & VISION

Wise Religious School encourages deep and engaging Jewish living by offering meaningful, immersive opportunities for students to discover and experience the richness of Jewish life.

CONTACT INFORMATION

The CYE or Religious School office phone number is (310) 889-2211. Emails may be sent to the CYE office at CYE@wisela.org, or [Melanie Fisher](#), CYE Office Manager, [Rabbi Josh Knobel](#), Director, Center for Youth Engagement, or [Stephanie Schwartz](#), Director, Wise Religious School and Temple Youth. Please note that email communication may not be checked from Friday sundown until after Shabbat ends on Saturday night. In case of an emergency before or after school hours call 310.476.8561.

OFFICE HOURS

Monday	Closed
Tuesday	9:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Wednesday	9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Thursday	9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Friday	9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Saturday	Closed
Sunday	8:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL HOURS

Core Curriculum

K-6 Classes	Sundays, 9:00 AM - 11:30 AM
K-6 Tefilah ¹	Sundays, 9:00 AM - 9:30 AM

Hebrew

Extended Care (Grades K-2) ²	Sundays, 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM
Hebrew Head Start (3rd Grade)	Sundays, 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM
Hebrew Beit Midrash (4th-6th Grade)	Sundays, 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM
Drop-In Hebrew Lab	Tuesdays, 4:00 PM- 5:30 PM
iLearn Hebrew (1-on-1)	Arranged directly with tutor

¹ Prayer Services, open to parents and family members

² Only eligible for students with older siblings

JEWISH STUDIES

שְׂמֵעוֹן הַצְּדִיק הָיָה מְשִׁירֵי כְּנֶסֶת הַגְּדוֹלָה. הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, עַל שְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים הָעוֹלָם עוֹמֵד, עַל הַתּוֹרָה וְעַל הָעֲבוּדָה וְעַל גְּמִילוּת חַסְדִּים.

Simeon the Righteous, the last of the great assembly, said: The world stands upon three things – Torah, service to God, and acts of lovingkindness.

- Mishnah Pirkei Avot 1:2.

This teaching from our sages helps guide our curricular philosophy. The study of Jewish text and Jewish history (Torah), informs our relationship with God (service to God) and with one another (acts of lovingkindness). In each grade, students discover how stories and lessons from our people's past inform the ways in which we approach topics in Jewish life today, including: God, Israel, prayer, peoplehood, festivals, and values. Hebrew is interwoven throughout the course of study, with study of the alphabet and enunciating written Hebrew beginning in Grade 4. (Grade 3 students who choose our Hebrew Head Start option may begin one year early).

- **Kindergarten:** Students learn introductory Bible stories, Jewish holidays, and Shabbat.
- **Grade 1:** Students use the lens of *Bereishit*, the book of Genesis, to examine Jewish identity and the Jewish calendar.
- **Grade 2:** Students use the lens of *Shmot*, the book of Exodus, to examine their relationship with God and the value of making great happen in the world.
- **Grade 3:** Students read from *Vayikra*, the book of Leviticus, to better understand how to create holiness through prayer and ritual.
- **Grade 4:** Students study the concept of covenant found within *BaMidbar*, the Book of Numbers, in order to better understand their relationship with the Jewish community, from their Wise Religious School classroom to Israel and the worldwide Jewish community.
- **Grade 5:** Students study the Prophets and the beginnings of Progressive Judaism in order to better understand their responsibility to create positive change in the world around them. Their study culminates with a tzedakah fair, where Grade 5 students present
- **Grade 6:** Students study the collection of stories, poems, and wisdom contained in *Ketuvim*, the Biblical Writings, in order to develop their understanding of how prayer, Jewish education, acts of lovingkindness, and Jewish community can represent meaningful expressions of Jewish life.
- **Grade 7:** Students in Grade 7 begin their day with the Breakfast Club, an opportunity to nosh, socialize and discuss the role Judaism plays in their everyday lives before joining our B'nai Mitzvah tutoring program and leadership workshops. Students end their day with conversations facilitated by Temple and Clergy leadership on subjects of the students' choice, from modern Israel to gender. Students also participate in tikkun olam field trips designed to broaden their perspective about topics of importance to them.

HEBREW STUDIES

As the language of our People's history, traditions, and values, Hebrew provides invaluable insights into the significance of Judaism in the modern American life. As such, Hebrew plays an important role at Wise Religious School from Kindergarten on.

- **Hebrew through Movement:** All students at Wise participate in Hebrew Through Movement, a cutting-edge approach to Hebrew acquisition that helps students learn language the way we do as children, through movement and speech, before proceeding to writing and reading skills.
- **Prayer and Music:** Students also further their Hebrew skills through participation in services and music classes, which expose them to the sounds of Hebrew and Jewish tradition!
- **Hebrew through Hebrew:** For alumni of our Early Childhood's Hebrew Immersion Program, our Hebrew through Hebrew program, grades K-2, enables students to continue learning about Judaism in a Hebrew-only environment.
- **Hebrew Head Start:** For students determined to begin learning how to read and enunciate using the Hebrew alphabet, Hebrew Head Start offers them the chance to begin early, just after regularly scheduled Religious School hours.
- **Beit Midrash:** Following regularly scheduled Religious School hours, students in Grades 4-6 work in small groups to master the Hebrew alphabet and begin enunciating Hebrew words, ultimately leading to prayer fluency. As students progress, they tackle more and more difficult prayers, learning both the techniques and meaning behind our tradition's liturgy.
- **Hebrew Lab:** Each Tuesday, Hebrew learners are invited to join us, at no cost, from 4:00-5:30 pm for additional Hebrew instruction, helping to solidify the lessons they learn on Sundays.
- **iLearn:** For students who prefer 1:1 instruction, iLearn offers the opportunity to study one-on-one with our Hebrew Coordinator and master the Hebrew alphabet and enunciation, at additional cost.

STUDENT AND FAMILY LIFE

From class time to summertime and more, Wise Religious School offers countless opportunities for parents and children to embrace the benefits of Jewish living and learning.

- **Campus Life:** Wise Religious School is committed to creating an inclusive, caring, and welcoming environment for students and families from all walks of life. Our code of conduct, derived from our tradition's teachings, informs all student, faculty, and parent interactions, infusing our interpersonal exchanges with meaning and worth. We also infuse our love of Jewish values, traditions, and history into every aspect of life on campus, from the classroom to recess to prayer to music and more.
- **Tzedakah:** One of the many ways we fulfill our Jewish obligation to perform acts of lovingkindness toward others is through Tzedakah, the act of charitable giving. Each class day, teachers will collect tzedakah from participating students. At the end of the school year, students will vote where to direct their charitable gifts after listening to presentations from Grade 5 students on causes they identified through their study of Tikkun Olam, repair of the world. We humbly ask you to help your children participate by reminding them to bring a small offering of tzedakah to class each week.
- **Shabbatot and Festivals:** At Wise Religious School, we believe strongly that Jewish life is best learned by being lived. As such, we have organized Religious School Shabbatot on select Friday nights throughout the year, as well as family learning experiences designed to promote learning through doing, from our Religious School Family Days to Family Camp. We invite you to bring Judaism to life for yourselves and your children alike by participating in these programs.
- **Parent Participation:** We understand that you and your children are busy. In fact, we're always trying to think about ways to make giving your children the gift of meaningful Jewish education easier on your hectic schedules. However, we also know that children who truly embrace Jewish education have parents who embrace Jewish education. Whether it's participating in one of our family days or parent learning opportunities, volunteering as a classroom parent or a school committee member, or simply organizing Shabbat dinner with fellow Religious School families, taking ownership of your Wise Religious School community affirms the importance of Jewish education to your children.
- **Religious Community:** From Friday night services, to moving and thoughtful speakers, to [men's](#) and [women's](#) groups, to our social justice efforts, Stephen Wise Temple offers a variety of opportunities to make meaning through community. We invite all our families to meet someone new and try something new to enrich your lives through our greater community.
- **Parent Education:** We believe strongly that Judaism has much to teach us about raising children, so we have partnered with Wise School and Stephen Wise Temple to bring meaningful learning opportunities for parents on your schedule. [Click here](#) to see this year's slate of programs!

ENROLLMENT

Media Consent. By enrolling your child at Wise Religious School, you acknowledge that you have given consent to your child's picture being used for promotional purposes. If you do not consent, you must inform us in writing.

B'nai Mitzvah Eligibility. B'nai Mitzvah are required to complete a minimum of four consecutive years of Religious School immediately prior to and including the entire Bar/Bat Mitzvah year. Families whose students enter the Religious School after Grade 4 must make special arrangements with the Religious School Director and clergy to meet grade-level requirements, which may result in a delay for the B'nai Mitzvah date. Students who have attended another accredited Religious School prior to arriving at Wise Temple are eligible for B'nai Mitzvah, provided all requirements have been satisfied. Learners with disabilities and special needs will be accommodated by Wise Religious School and our B'nai Mitzvah Department whenever possible and/or appropriate. B'nai Mitzvah preparations and dates are handled through the clergy office. Any questions should be directed to WiseBBM@WiseLA.org or 310.889.2213. **Families must be enrolled in a Stephen Wise Temple School to keep their Bar/Bat Mitzvah date on the calendar.**

COMMUNICATION

We encourage an open flow of communication between the home and the school. Toward the beginning of the school year, you will receive a roster of your child's class as well as contact information for your child's teacher. Feel free to contact your child's teacher, as well as the Director, if you have any questions about your child's education.

You can expect to get an e-mail update from your child's teacher bi-weekly detailing class projects, what children are learning and upcoming events. You will also receive an "Ask me about" email weekly, before the end of school, that is to help spark conversation between students and parents in the car.

We encourage you to read and follow up on all these communications in order to get the most from your investment in your child's Jewish education.

GUEST POLICY

Guests are welcome to come learn with your child. However, please note the following rules:

1. **Visits.** Guest visits must be approved by the Religious School Director prior to the guest's arrival. A call, note, or e-mail is fine, but it must be done before the School day begins. This is for School safety reasons, and to allow teachers to prepare for a guest.
2. **Visitor Information.** All guests must be brought to the Religious School's office before attending class. Guests will need a visitor pass from the office and must provide an emergency phone number.
3. **Visitor Behavior.** All guests must comply with School policies and standards. Guests who arrive without permission and/or are unable to meet the above requirements may not be permitted to visit class or remain on school premises.
4. **Visitor Enrollment.** We encourage visitors to learn more about our school. However, once a student visits twice, we expect families to enroll their student before returning.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE, ARRIVAL, AND DISMISSAL

Attendance. Your child's regular attendance is the largest indicator of his or her success in Religious School. We understand the time constraints that busy families face; however, we ask that you make school a priority. If you know your child will be absent in advance, please let the school know as soon as possible so that make up work can be assigned *before* the absence to prevent your child from falling behind.

Punctuality. Learners are expected to be in class and ready to learn when the school day starts at 9:00 AM on Sunday and 4:00 PM on Tuesday. When your child is late, he or she misses out on important instructions and activities and disrupts the classroom. Promptness helps your child acclimate to the school day and integrate into the classroom environment. Our teachers make use of every part of the school day, so please allow us to maximize that time by bringing your child to school on time.

Arrival. Morning carpool is held in the traffic circle from 8:45 AM - 9:00 AM. However, walking your child to class is a great way to check in with your child's teacher and to meet other parents. If you wish to walk your child to class, you must park in the parking structure. **You may not leave your car in the carpool circle.** Please follow any and all instructions from our security personnel.

Dismissal. Parents picking up their child from the classroom at the end of the day are asked to wait outside the classroom until the students are dismissed. This will help your child focus on his or her schoolwork until the end of the day. Any students not picked up in the classroom will be walked to the carpool circle. For safety purposes, children must wait on the sidewalk until you pull up and may not cross the driveway. Dismissal carpool takes place from 11:30 AM -11:45 AM (Grades K-3) and 12:30-12:45 PM (Grades 4-7). At the conclusion of carpool, all children not picked up will be brought to the office and a family member will be called. Frequent late pick-ups or arrivals may necessitate a family meeting with a school administrator.

Early Dismissal. From time to time, you may need to pick your child up early from school. When doing so, you must **first come to the Religious School office** and sign your child out. Children will not be released from class unless they have first been signed out in the office. For safety and accountability purposes, children cannot be released early to wait at the carpool circle. If a non-parent/guardian is picking up your child, please call the Religious School office in advance to let us know.

SNACK

Snack. Snack is coordinated by room parents who manage a snack sign-up list for your class. Each family is encouraged to provide healthy snacks for their student's class at least once per year. Snack is provided at the teacher's discretion, and students are asked to participate in a communal blessing before eating.

Restricted Foods. We do not allow peanut butter or any nut products on campus grounds during school hours. We have several children in our school and in the Wise School for whom exposure to these products can be life-threatening, so please be mindful of your food content.

Additional Snack. Families with students in the Hebrew Beit Midrash program are encouraged to provide their student with an additional snack for that extra hour.

CODE OF BEHAVIOR

Judaism is rooted in the belief that each person is created *b'tzelem Elohim*, in the image of God. This obligates us to treat everyone with honor and respect. Learners are expected to apply this principle to their interactions with teachers, other learners, parents, families, and everyone they encounter during Religious School. As such, we expect all students and families to abide by the following guidelines for conduct:

1. **General.** We expect every student to respect the Temple, sanctuary, and school property, and every person in it. All students need to work respectfully and cooperatively with the faculty, madrichim and fellow students, to observe classroom rules, and to participate in class activities. There will be zero tolerance for rudeness, disrespectfulness, bullying, talking back, disrupting class, inappropriate language/conversations, ignoring the teachers' instructions or refusing to do work or participate in any class activities, including music.
2. **Wise Grounds and Property.** We will not tolerate students who destroy or deface Temple or personal property, including prayer books and school materials.
3. **Abuse.** There is zero tolerance for emotional, verbal or physical abuse, including but not limited to: inappropriate touching, and teasing someone for being behind in a subject, because they have different views or opinions, come from a different background, dress differently than you do, or any other reason.
4. **Personal Property.** Students need to respect others' belongings. Students should not bring valuables, games/electronic equipment to school; they can be a distraction. If such items are brought to school and are taken out during class time, the teacher may confiscate the item and return it at the end of class.
5. **Sharing.** If your child intends to bring something to share with their friends, they need to make sure that there is enough to share with their entire class.
6. **Disruptive Behavior.** If a student repeatedly disrupts classroom work, the teacher will speak directly with the student and may call parents to discuss the child's behavior.
7. **Mobile Phones.** Wise Religious School allows cell phones to be carried by students in school, but while students are in class, all electronic devices must be put away and powered off. Teachers may request that students place their cell phones into a class basket upon arriving to class. Students are expected to abide by their teachers' guidance. If a cell phone is not turned in when requested, teachers may take the cellular device away and send it to the school office where it will be held until the end of the day for a parent to retrieve. If there is an emergency and you must reach your child, please call the Religious School office, and we will get them for you.
8. **Dress Code.** Because Religious School learners attend services in the Chapel and spend time learning about and participating in *t'fillah* (prayer) and other sacred subjects, they are expected to wear appropriate dress. All clothing must contain respectful and appropriate logos. For safety reasons, sandals are prohibited.
9. **Books and Materials.** Students are expected to care for and maintain any books or school material they are given. They must bring their books with them to each class session, as well as any other materials, such as notebooks or pens that the teacher requires. Any students who lose their textbooks will be required to purchase another.
10. **Non-compliance.** Students who are unable to follow class rules and/or who engage in disruptive or inappropriate behavior will be sent to the school office with a referral note from their teacher. The student will remain in the office until one of the Education Team members is available.
 - a. **1st Referral:** A member of the Education Team and student will discuss the behavioral expectations. The student will be asked to sign a copy of expectations and, if appropriate, write an apology to their teacher/classmate.
 - b. **2nd Referral:** Parents will be notified. The student will be given class work to do in the Education office and will be unable to return to class for the remainder of the day. A copy

- of the behavioral expectations will be sent home for parents to discuss with their child and must be returned to school with parent and student signatures.
- c. **3rd Referral:** Parents will be notified, and the student will need to be picked up from school. The student, parents, teacher, and a member of the Education Team will meet before the student is permitted to return to class. The behavioral expectations and make-up work will be discussed, with the possibility of a parent having to attend class with the child.
 - d. **4th Referral:** A parent must attend class with the student for a period of time to be determined by a member of the Education team. The Educator(s) and teacher(s) will meet with the Rabbi to determine if further disciplinary action is required, up to and including suspension or expulsion from our Religious School program.

PARENT VOLUNTEERS

We know that it can be challenging to wake up on a Sunday morning after a long week, but we know the investment you're making in your child's Jewish development and your family's Jewish life will pay dividends. We strongly encourage parent participation in our school and community as a way to support and set a strong example for your children.

We also know that children who truly embrace Jewish education have parents who embrace Jewish education. Whether it's participating in one of our family days or parent learning opportunities, volunteering as a classroom parent or a school committee member, or simply organizing Shabbat dinner with fellow Religious School families, taking ownership of your Wise Religious School community affirms the importance of Jewish education to your children.

Room Parents. We always welcome parent involvement in the school. At least one parent from each grade is asked to volunteer to be a room parent. Room parent responsibilities include organizing social events and helping to promote and publicize Religious School community events and programs, as well as serving as a liaison between the school and the parent body at large. There are often other groups and task forces on which parents will be asked to serve.

School Committees and Task Forces. As we continue to shape and adapt our curriculum to fit the needs of our students and families, we look forward to collaborating with you on making Wise Religious School your partner in raising your Jewish children. If one of our clergy or administrators reaches out to you to participate in a task force or committee, we hope you will make time for the opportunity to advance our school and community. If you are interested in working to improve an aspect of school or communal life and have not yet been asked, please accept our apologies and let us know how we can work together to make Wise Religious School the best place for children and families to discover the richness of Jewish life in all of Los Angeles.

Community. Real community begins with curiosity. If you see a parent you have not before, we ask that you welcome them with open arms and ask questions to learn more about the journey that brought them to Wise alongside you. Better yet, make an invitation to Shabbat dinner or an opportunity for your children to connect! We can learn much from one another about living Jewishly in the 21st Century, but we can only do so if we open our minds, our hearts, and our homes to one another.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Emergency Contacts. The information you provide in your enrollment form assures us that in the case of an emergency, if parents cannot be reached, we will be authorized to provide medical care for your child and that no liability is attached to such a decision. Please select your emergency contacts carefully. If your child is ill or sustains an injury at school and we cannot reach you, these are the people we will call. Trained school personnel will treat minor injuries.

Medication. Please make sure that if your child requires any type of maintenance medication, a 72-hour supply is given to our Religious School administrative assistant.

Illnesses. If your child contracts a communicable disease, please report it to the Religious School office immediately so that we can take appropriate measures. If you feel that your child is contagious, please do not send them to school. Instead, contact your child's teacher or the Religious School Office, and we will arrange for your child to receive the material they missed.

Emergency Communications. Wise Religious School has undertaken an extensive emergency preparedness program so that we can respond in the event of an emergency. Should an emergency occur, we will contact you as soon as possible with instructions. In the event of a fire, earthquake, or another contingency, do not come to our campus until you have been asked to do so, so that emergency vehicles will have a clear path to affected areas.

The Temple Schools' out-of-state emergency contact is Temple Albert in Albuquerque, New Mexico: 505.883.1818.