



**RELIGIOUS SCHOOL
HANDBOOK
2017 - 2018**

Welcome to the Martha's Vineyard Hebrew Center Religious School. Our mission is to instill in our children a positive Jewish identity, a connection to the Vineyard community and to k'lal Yisrael (the Jewish people), and to provide our children with a strong grounding in Jewish literacy through knowledge of bible, holidays, prayer, history, values and the Hebrew language. It is our hope that once the children have become B'nai Mitzvah they will continue with their Jewish education and their involvement in the MVHC.

We hope that your children and family will experience a sense of joy and continued spiritual renewal by being part of Jewish life on the Vineyard. Please let us know if there is anything we can do for your children and family to make this a positive place to learn and grow.

Yours truly,
Martha's Vineyard Hebrew Center Religious School Staff and Education Committee

Martha's Vineyard Hebrew Center
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GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Our four main *goals* are to:

- Imbue the children with the joys of Judaism
- Create a sense of Jewish community as part of the greater community
- Provide religious and spiritual tools that empower the students to participate in the Jewish community
- Provide an understanding of the values of leading a Jewish life

The aforementioned goals will be accomplished by *teaching*:

- Hebrew language reading skills so that your children can participate in services and become a Bar/Bat mitzvah.
- Basic prayer service including portions of the Shabbat morning service.
- Jewish holidays, their history, ritual and practice.
- Jewish heritage through folklore, literature, history, special activities, and participation in practice.
- The values of Mitzvot (good deeds).

Fostering a community bond among the children will be accomplished through school-wide activities that involve celebrating holidays such as Sukkot and Hanukkah, watching educational films, etc.

ADMISSION POLICY

1. A parent of the student must be a member in good standing of the Martha's Vineyard Hebrew Center*.
2. Children whose sole religious identity is Jewish may be enrolled in the Martha's Vineyard Hebrew Center (MVHC) Religious School

For this purpose, Jewish identity is indicated by:

- a. Affirmation by the parent(s) that the child is Jewish, with at least one Jewish parent.
- b. Absence of disconfirming evidence of Jewish identity; for example, the child is not identified as "half-Jewish", or "Jewish-Christian", nor is the child enrolled in a program of religious education in another tradition (e.g., a church school).
- c. Simple attendance by a Jewish child at religious services/rituals where a non-Jewish parent or grandparent is active need not imply that the child is identified with another religion.

3. Because of the complex and sensitive situations that arise in the contemporary Jewish community, it is in the mutual best interests of both families and synagogues to clarify issues in advance in order to avoid future complications. Therefore, interfaith families considering enrollment of children in the MVHC Religious School should consult in advance with the Rabbi and Education Director.

4. Since every principle and policy takes on life in application to real people, it ought always to be stressed that sensitivity, respect and care should be operative in any discussion of synagogue policies.

*If your family is experiencing financial hardships, do not let this interfere with registering your child. We have scholarships available. Please talk to the Religious School Director if you have any questions.

BEHAVIOR CONDUCT AND PLAYGROUND SAFETY RULES

The rules of playground safety and behavior conduct will be discussed with the children at assembly and several times throughout the year. We encourage parent(s) to also review these rules with their children.

Behavior Conduct

1. Arrive ready for class.
2. Listen when your teacher is speaking.
3. Follow your teacher's instructions.
4. Work together and help others learn.
5. Be respectful and thoughtful.
6. Actions that could physically harm you or someone else are not acceptable.
7. Lashon-Harah: Hurtful speech such as swearing, gossip or name calling is not acceptable.
8. Do not leave the building without permission.
9. Clean up after each class.
10. Respect the MVHC building and grounds.

Playground Safety

1. Children can play in fenced playground or on the hill in the back yard, but only with adult supervision or junior staff
2. No playing in the parking lot

3. No playing on sides or front of the MVHC-We can't see you!
4. If a class is sent out for an extra recess, children must stay in play areas with the teacher or junior staff.
5. When playing outside stay in groups and be safe! No playing with sticks, running behind the shrubbery, etc.
6. At family events and services, families are responsible for the safety and management of their children. This includes watching them should they leave the event to go to other parts of the building or outside or after the event is over.
7. At 5:00PM children MUST wait inside until a parent/ride picks up in the entryway of the building. Parents may take their children out to the playground after Religious School only when the parent stays with the child.

PARENT(S)/CAREGIVER(S) ROLE IN JEWISH EDUCATION

1. Please make sure that your child arrives on time.
2. Please communicate with your child's teacher regarding any absences so that your child can keep up with any work missed.
3. We assign Hebrew homework and encourage parents to support children's efforts in completing this work. If parents have limited Hebrew knowledge, we are happy to pair children with a Hebrew buddy or homework helper via email or through phone calls.
4. We endeavor to provide support if your child needs additional help. Please let the teachers know immediately if you have any concerns or if you would like to get involved.
5. Each family is requested to sign up for at least two volunteer shifts either in class or at school events. This involvement is critical to the success of our program.
6. It is also important for parents to enter Hebrew Center building for picking up your child(ren). This is a good time to check in with teachers and to connect with other families throughout the school year.
7. We encourage all families to participate fully in all center events, classes and services. In particular, we strongly suggest that families attend services as often as possible on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings. Throughout the school year we have family services often followed by potluck dinners. Please look for information about these services in the master calendar or school blog. Our school will only be successful if families are actively engaged with activities and events at the center.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

1. Respect is of the utmost important to lead a Jewish life. Kavod/Respect for one another, our environment, our elders, and our community is at the heart of our Religious School teachings. Parents are asked to be partners in fostering Kavod in our children.
2. We use praise to highlight children's positive behaviors and use difficult moments as teachable opportunities.
3. Repeated disruptions and inappropriate behavior by a student will require a meeting with the student, parents, teachers and the Educational Director. At this meeting a plan for helping a student to learn more appropriate ways for handling him/herself will be developed and put in place. A parent may be asked to sit in the class to monitor their child's behavior. If the child has a behavioral plan at their secular school it is requested that it be provided in confidence to the Director and Lead teacher so those recommendations may be followed for the benefit of the child.
4. Serious or dangerous misbehavior that puts the student or others in harms way will result in a Hebrew School suspension. The Director, teachers and the Rabbi will consult regarding the appropriate time for the student to return to the school.

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL CURRICULUM

MVHC membership is required for enrollment into our religious school. We accept students in grades 3 through 7. Our curriculum focuses on Hebrew Study for prayer and holidays. Judaica Studies incorporate Bible stories, Jewish History, Jewish Holidays, and Jewish Ethics and Values. We meet on Wednesday afternoons from 3:30 – 5:30 pm. Students are encouraged to come directly from school and enjoy snacks and socialization with their peers. We discourage parents, who enroll their children in our religious school, from scheduling any other extra-curricula activities during this time. Our school staff is comprised of a group of devoted teachers who expect each child to engage in two hours of uninterrupted Jewish learning each week in order to meet our goals.

Our Hebrew program is multi-tiered allowing students whose families are more invested in Hebrew learning and religious practices to achieve at a higher level. Students whose families have less time to commit to Jewish education and study are accommodated in a more relaxed academic curriculum. Our Hebrew study groups range in size from 1:1 to groups of 3-4 students. All students have service requirements. The number of services required, increase with age, as the child approaches his/her Bar or Bat Mitzvah ceremony. Our goal is to give each student the tools necessary to chant and understand the basics of Jewish prayer. We value each child as a unique individual “b’tzelem elohim”, created in God’s image. Bat and Bar Mitzvah ceremonies cater to the learning style of each student and the varying degrees of support and involvement of each individual family.

Curriculum for 2017-18

Grade 2:

Shalom Learning:

- **Blended Program of Jewish Values and Beginning Hebrew**
- **Students learn to read all the Hebrew Letters and Vowels**
- **Students learn Jewish Values pertaining to Family**
- **The curriculum is multi-dimensional incorporating music, videos, educational technology, arts, stories and movement.**

Grades 3:

In the process of beginning reformatted for next year's class.

Presently we do not have any 3rd grade students.

Grades 4 & 5:

Hebrew Textbook: Z'man L'tefila

• Hebrew through prayer
Judaica Studies: Shalom Learning

- This curriculum is teaches Self and Peer Jewish Values. Shalom Learning programs are multi-dimensional, incorporating music, videos, educational technology, arts, stories and movement

Grade 6:

In the process of beginning reformatted to next year's class.

Presently we do not have any 6th grade students.

Grade 7:

Hebrew Textbooks: Siddur, Chumash, Torah Aura Workbooks

Hebrew: Bat and Bar Mitzvah Prep

- Classroom time is teaching and refining the Shabbat morning prayers in preparation for the bar and bat mitzvah ceremony.

Judaica:

- Study of Torah Texts and Midrashim; Creating one's own Talit
- Bar & Bat Mitzvah tutoring with the Rabbi:
- Instruction in Trope and Torah chanting, writing a Dvar Torah and creating a meaningful mitzvah project

We provide creative holiday programming for the High Holidays, Chanukah, Tu B'shevat, Purim and Passover. Students are encouraged to attend all community holiday and life cycle celebrations so that they grow and become knowledgeable, insightful and valuable members of our Jewish community.

IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER

We are here for you. Our staff is aware that it may be difficult to motivate your children or even yourselves after a full day of school. We are available to meet with you when and as necessary to assist.

Your attendance and at services and in the synagogue and other mitzvahs in our island community are vital components of our program.

Our synagogue can provide financial assistance if you choose to send your children to Jewish summer camp which is an extraordinary way to supplement what we offer in our program.

Please ask, we are here for you.

B'nai Mitzvah at MVHC

Choosing a Date

Choose a date with Rabbi once Shabbat service requirements are up to date or once there is an approved plan for completion. This date is conditional on the successful fulfillment of service requirements.

It is understood that the student commits to completing their final year in Hebrew School even if the Bar or Bat Mitzvah takes place before the end of the year.

Shabbat Service Requirements

During the year before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, students are required for nine of those months to come to 3 Shabbat services/month. Two of those services must be on Shabbat morning. In other words, over the course of the year before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah, the student must come to 27 services. Rosh Hashanah morning and Yom Kippur Kol Nidrei and morning are a required part of those 27 services. Students are requested to come on time to dress appropriately for the occasion.

Tutoring

1. Tutoring begins around 9 months before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah with weekly meetings from 15-30 minutes. The Rabbi meets with the family to assign a tutor and explain the process. The rabbi will check in with each student 1/month and meet with the student the last 3 weeks before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. The Rabbi will work with each student on their d'var Torah and on planning the service with the family. A member of the congregation assigned by the Rabbi will tutor Torah chanting and review prayers. It is important that students come on time for their appointment and come prepared. If they are not able to prepare that week, please let the tutor know in advance so they have the option to reschedule.
2. Students will learn how to chant Torah, prepare a d'var Torah, will, lead select prayers in the service. We adapt our program to each student's strengths and learning styles. The typical requirements are:
 - a) Torah chanting 9-21 verses
 - b) D'var Torah
 - c) Prayers; Friday night Kiddush and candles; Saturday morning Shema V'Ahavta, Torah service, Aliya Blessing, Tallit Blessing

3. Mitzvah Project

Planning the Service

1. When the date is chosen, let the office know the Bar/Bat Mitzvah's full Hebrew name.

2. Over the course of that year, decide on a Tallit and Kippah for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. This can be purchased, created, or handed down to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

3. Honors: Aliyot and Torah Honors

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah family is welcome to invite guests to come up for some of the Aliyot. An Aliya is an expression of belonging to the Jewish people and therefore are reserved for Jewish family and friends. Parents who are not Jewish are welcome up to the bima to stand with their spouse during the Aliya. For Torah honors such as ark openings and dressing the Torah, we also request that you ask Jewish family and friends for these honors. *Please let your honorees know that they must wear a tallis (and for men a tallis and yarmulke) when they come up to the bima for Torah honors. If they are saying the Aliya blessing, please encourage them to practice before the service. The blessing is recorded on our website.*

Give Rabbi names for Aliyot 3 weeks before service

(English name and Hebrew name _____ ben/bat _____), as well as the names for other Torah honors.

4. Readings: Readings are open to everyone including non-Jewish family and friends. You are invited to choose up to three English readings for friends and family members. Please give the rabbi these readings and the names of readers no later than 3 weeks before the service.

5. A run-through of the whole service will take place 2 weeks in advance of the service. Please schedule with the Rabbi.

6. Parents are invited to say words of blessing to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah during the service and are given up to 5 minutes for all expressions of blessing and personal words. Beyond that, family and friends are welcome to continue with personal words at the Kiddush or part.

Contributions

It is a Jewish custom to express gratitude to the community for life-cycle events with contributions that help maintain the community. Please consider a contribution to the synagogue in honor of your child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Shabbat Etiquette at MVHC Services

We try to keep the synagogue and the sanctuary a special and holy place over Shabbat and holidays. Regardless of our home practices, we therefore join to make the sanctuary a place that reflects a Shabbat of connection, holiness, prayer and rest. Therefore, please let your guests know that there is no photography permitted during the service. Use of cell phones and/or electronic devices are not permitted anywhere inside the synagogue or outside the front entrance on Shabbat and holidays. Please refrain from writing in the sanctuary on Shabbat or holidays.

Oneg and Kiddush

1. It is our custom that the Bar/Bat Mitzvah family sponsors the Oneg on Friday night and the Kiddush for Saturday morning. Some B'nai Mitzvah classes organize a coop so that families sponsor each other's Friday night Oneg. MVHC supplies the wine and challah.
2. In order to be inclusive of all our members, our Onegs and Kiddushim are pareve/milchig (no meat including chicken or chicken broths). We therefore ask you to check with the Administrator about approved caterers and permitted menus before you finalize your plans. Please submit menu to office 3 weeks in advance.
3. Check in with the office about plans for clean up after the Oneg and Kiddush.
4. Let Toni in the office know 3 weeks in advance how many invited guests are expected so she can have the room set up appropriately. Also, let office know if you require audio/video system.
5. Flatware, linens and other supplies for reception are to be supplied by the family.
6. Leftover food is to be removed after the event.
7. Clean-up after the event is the responsibility of the family. If you require assistance, someone can be hired for your event.