

**ETZ HAYIM  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION  
HANDBOOK**  
*August, 2009*

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## I. TUITION RATES

**2009 - 2010**  
**(1st child/2nd child)**

<u>Class</u>	<u>Members</u>	<u>Non-Members</u>
Sunday Family Camp ( <i>ages 4-6</i> )	\$185/\$160	\$250/\$225
Aleph-Bet ( <i>7-year olds</i> )	\$310/\$285	\$500/\$475
Step-Up ( <i>8-year olds</i> )	\$385/\$360	\$600/\$575
Midweek Religious Studies Program (Talmud-Torah, <i>9-11-year olds</i> )	\$490/\$465	\$900/\$875
Bar/Bat Mitzvah Program <i>Includes individual tutoring, group class(\$400) and Wednesday evening program(\$225)</i>	\$625/\$600	Not offered
Confirmation Class	\$260/\$160	Not offered
<u>Post-Confirmation Class</u>	<u>\$100/\$75</u>	<u>Not offered</u>

## **II. THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

### **A. Overview from the Education Committee**

The Education Program at Etz Hayim Synagogue instills in our students a strong sense of commitment to Judaic culture, values, and practice. Working with the Rabbi, the Education Committee meets monthly to monitor and strengthen our program. It is a point of pride that the Rabbi plays an active role in our educational programs and interacts with our children. We have designed an educational program which prepares our young people for an active and involved Jewish life. Our goals include:

- Fostering a Jewish spiritual foundation.
- Encouraging an identification with and respect for our people and our history.
- Teaching synagogue skills and enabling full participation in the life of the synagogue.
- Nurturing friendships within the community.

Our goal is to create positive associations with our tradition and people so that as our young people grow, they will choose a life of Jewish learning, living, and celebration.

### **B. Education Committee Contacts**

Etz Hayim Rabbi: Louis Rieser  
Education Chairperson: Jill Pelunis

Committee Members:

Lisa Adams	Lauren Maloof
Jennifer Cerino	Rivka Schwartz
Dina Michael Chaitowitz	Audra Sherman
Beth Hudson	Renee Solomon
Jon Kane	

### **C. Etz Hayim Synagogue Telephone: 603-432-0004**

### **III. CURRICULUM**

#### **A. Age Guidelines**

<b><u>Class</u></b>	<b><u>Enrollment Age Guidelines*</u></b>
Sunday Family Camp	4 through 6-year olds
Aleph-Bet:	7-year-olds
Step-Up:	8-year-olds
Religious Studies (Grades 4,5,6):	9 through 12-year olds.
Bar/Bat Mitzvah Program:	12-year olds and up
Confirmation Classes:	12 to 16-year olds

\*Ages are as of September 30

#### **B. Torah Tots**

Torah Tots serves children ages 2 and older. The children meet one Shabbat morning a month for their own celebration and introduction into Jewish life. They sing, dance, do activities related to the Torah portion, take part in the Torah procession during the Junior Congregation service, and lead the singing of Adon Olam at the end of the community service. We encourage parents to bring their young children and to participate with them in this program. Check your newsletter for exact dates. No fee is charged for this program.

#### **C. Sunday Family Camp**

Students ages 4 - 6 attend Sunday Family Camp once a month with their parents for a two-hour adventure in Jewish learning. Camp meets on Sunday mornings and combines elements of a day-camp experience with solid Jewish education. Utilizing a rich mix of music, crafts, games, dance, and drama, the curriculum introduces our students and their parents to the synagogue, the Jewish calendar, prayer, Torah, and Hebrew. Each age group has its own focus. The 4 and 5-year-olds receive a basic introduction to being Jewish which includes an introduction to the holidays of the year. The first graders begin to explore the Hebrew language, prayer, and mitzvot.

#### **D. Aleph-Bet**

Our 7-year-old students participate in a weekly enrichment program for reinforcement of their beginning Hebrew letter knowledge. Tzedakah is collected. Classes meet for 1 hour and 15 minutes, with the final segment being a combined assembly time with our older students.

#### **E. Step-Up**

The 8-year-olds have a special program, which bridges the transition from Sunday Camp to the Religious Studies program. This program meets weekly for 1 and 3/4 hours. The students engage in Hebrew reading preparation and Judaica.

#### **F. Religious Studies**

Students ages 9 - 12 meet for 2 hours and 15 minutes weekly. The evening is divided into two, hour-long sessions separated by a 15-minute school assembly. The first hour is devoted to Hebrew and the second to Judaica. The school assemblies include music, foundation of prayer, student newspaper composition, and current events. Tzedakah is collected each week, and the students vote at the end of the year to decide where to allocate the funds they contributed. There are special programs focused on individual holidays. The students are divided into Hebrew reading skill groups, focusing on the language of prayer. Some of our post-Bar/Bat Mitzvah students serve as tutors in this program.

#### **G. Bar/Bat Mitzvah Preparation and Program**

Students preparing for Bar/Bat Mitzvah participate in a weekly-hour long class with the Rabbi. A full description of the expectations and the schedule for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah year is imparted to parents and students during an initial meeting. At this time, the Rabbi's Bar/Bat Mitzvah Guidebook is distributed. This program prepares students to take their places as adults within the Jewish community. Following the Rabbi's class, students continue their studies for an additional one and one half hours. This aspect of the program focuses on history, Judaica, and preparation of D'Var Torah. All Bar/Bat Mitzvah students are required to participate in all aspects of the program.

Students must be 12 years old by September 30th to participate in the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Program. (For students who will turn 13 years of age between October 1 and

February 1, the option exists to attend Tuesday Night Religious Studies simultaneously with the first hour of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah class. These students are then expected to complete the second half of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Program the following year.)

*We require that our Bar/Bat Mitzvah youth candidates complete a minimum of two years of formal Jewish education before entering the Bar/Bat Mitzvah training program. In addition, Our Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidates are required to attend at least 12 Shabbat services during their Bar/Bat Mitzvah class year. At least six services must be attended between the High Holy Days and February. Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremonies may not occur prior to March of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation year.*

#### **H. Confirmation Program**

After completing the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Program, students are eligible to participate in Confirmation Class. Our teens gather one evening a week for a two-hour session of advanced Jewish study. The year is comprised of mini-courses alongside a curriculum from the Bureau of Jewish Education. Students must attend 75% of the classes to receive credit for the year. Over a period of two to three years, they must accumulate 36 credits. A system has been developed to award a set number of credits for completing each segment of the program. The completion of a tzedakah project each year is also required. Additional credits can be earned by attending services, leading services, participating in youth group activities, participating in summer camp activities, presenting book reports, attending adult education classes, etc. This gives our youths the opportunity to make choices as they continue their study as well as the opportunity to take “time off” if needed for school or sports activities. **Confirmation students are invited to apply for teacher aide positions in our Religious Studies program.**

#### **I. Post-Confirmation Program**

After completion of the Confirmation Program, students may opt to continue their religious studies under the direction of the Rabbi. Classes will meet two Wednesday evenings per month. Curriculum will be varied with opportunities for independent study provided.

#### **J. Special Circumstances**

Special circumstances should be brought to the attention of the Rabbi and Education Committee Chairperson/Director. Appropriate recommendations will be

presented to the Education Committee for approval.

If an individual, one-on-one teacher aide is requested for a student, a discussion will be held among the Rabbi, parent(s), and Education Committee Chairperson/Director. If deemed necessary and approved, the parent will be responsible for half of the cost; the Education Committee will recommend and provide the specific aide.

#### **IV. JUNIOR CONGREGATION**

One Sabbath morning each month our Step-Up and Religious Studies students gather for their own Sabbath morning minyan and assist in leading the service. Participation in Junior Congregation reinforces the studies of our students in Step-Up and Religious studies and nourishes spiritual growth. Parents are expected to encourage their children's participation in Junior Congregation. There are service attendance requirements for each grade level. These services are open to ALL members of the congregation. A Junior Congregation Guide is distributed at the beginning of the school year. (*See the policies section for requirements on attending services.*)

#### **V. YOUTH GROUP**

The Etz Hayim Youth Group maintains an affiliation with the National Federation of Temple Youth. The Youth Group sponsors a broad range of social and religious activities in our own area and sponsors get-togethers with youth from other area synagogues. The Youth Group has its own advisor who helps the young people develop their own leadership.

#### **VI. POLICIES**

##### **A. Registration**

<b><u>Class</u></b>	<b><u>Membership Requirements</u></b>
Sunday Family Camp	No membership requirements
Religious Studies ( <i>includes aleph-bet and Step Up</i> )	Any local synagogue affiliation
Bar/Bat Mitzvah	Family members of Etz Hayim
Confirmation Class	Family members of Etz Hayim
Post-Confirmation Class	Family members of Etz Hayim

## B. Books and Supplies

Students are expected to come to classes with a pocket folder, notebook, pencil, eraser, and workbooks. A separate book/workbook charge for each segment of the program has been instituted. *It is essential for books/workbooks to be brought to class each week.*

## C. Tuition

Annual tuition fees for each of our educational programs are not abatable and are separate from the synagogue membership fees. Enrollment in any of our programs includes all special holiday celebrations throughout the year. Preregistration materials are sent out in the Spring/Summer. Parents may register (1) by mail, or (2) on Registration Night. An initial payment is required at the time of registration. Etz Hayim will confirm tuition rates on Registration Night; for those parents who registered by mail, Etz Hayim will confirm the rate after the completed registration materials have been received. As always, if you are in need of alternative financial arrangements or have special circumstances, please speak with our Education Committee Chairperson/Director. Please consult Section One of this handbook for tuition costs. Etz Hayim does have a \$900.00 cap on member family expenditures for religious education programs, exclusive of Bar/Bat Mitzvah study. **All Bar/Bat Mitzvah Program fees must be paid in advance of the scheduled Bar/Bat Mitzvah date.** If you withdraw your child from any program, the Education Committee must be informed in writing. **Outstanding tuition balances must be resolved prior to enrollment for the next year. Our synagogue policy prohibits acceptance of students into Fall programs if any Synagogue accounts are in arrears from the previous year.**

## D. Late Registration Adjustment and Tuition Refund Policy

### 1. General Fee Schedule:

<u>Registration Dates</u>	<u>Tuition Charged</u>
On or before January 31	Full
On or after February 1	One half
On or after March 1	One quarter

**D. Late Registration Adjustment and Tuition Refund Policy, continued**

**2. Refund Policy:**

Please notify Etz Hayim in writing if you are withdrawing your child from a program.

a. Sunday Family Camp

Withdrawal before second session: Full tuition refunded

b. Aleph-Bet/Step-Up/Religious Studies:

<u>Withdrawal</u>	<u>Tuition Refunded</u>
By second session	Full refund
By fourth session	Full minus a \$25.00 fee
By January 1	One half refund

c. Bar/Bat Mitzvah and Confirmation Classes:

Withdrawal before January 31: One-half tuition refunded

**E. Appropriate Behavior**

Students are expected to show respect for their teachers, fellow students, and the facilities in which the classes are held. Every student has a right to learn and no student has the right to interrupt. Parents should instill in their children a positive attitude toward Jewish education. Inappropriate, disrespectful, and/or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Each teacher will discuss with his or her students appropriate and inappropriate behavior for the classroom. If the need arises, the teacher will first warn a student concerning the behavior. At any point, if the teacher feels it is necessary, contact will be made with the student's parents. At that point a teacher, student, and parent meeting will be arranged. If talking to the student is not effective, the student will be sent to talk with the Rabbi or Education Committee Chairperson/Director to determine conditions for return to class. In extreme cases, a student may need to be removed from the class either for a period of time or permanently. There will be no refund of tuition under such circumstances.

## **F. Appropriate Dress**

### **1. The Bima:**

Anyone who participates on the bima will follow these guidelines for dress:

- Clean pants with no tears or patches
- Shorts, skirts, skorts, and dresses at mid thigh or lower
- Clean shirts/blouses with no writing or pictures

Anyone not dressed appropriately will be politely asked to step off the bima.

### **2. Religious Education Class**

When attending religious education classes, appropriate school attire and footwear is expected. The wearing of a Kippah for both boys and girls during school hours and services is strongly encouraged.

## **G. Photographs and Videos**

As part of our liability form, we have a photograph and video permission section. These should be completed prior to each school year. Separate forms will be provided for any “special” activities which may arise during the school year.

## **H. Parent Concerns/Responsibilities**

It is the parents’ responsibility to inform the school of any special needs pertaining to their child. Parents having concerns regarding their children's education are encouraged to consult with the classroom teacher. Those concerns may include special needs, student progress, and/or classroom activities. If the parents do not feel the issue has been resolved, they should then discuss their concerns with the Education Committee Chairperson/Director. If appropriate, the Rabbi may be called upon to speak with the parents. If the concerns remain unresolved, the parent may then proceed to the Board of Directors for a final level of review.

## **I. Progress Reports**

Progress reports will be sent home mid-year by the February break. Reports are

to encourage positive reinforcement of student's progress, to recognize notable achievements, and to alert parents to any problems and to report attendance.

#### **J. Illness**

Please use discretion in health matters. If your child shows any signs of illness, please keep him or her at home.

#### **K. Emergencies and Late Pick-up**

In the event of an emergency during religious school, please phone the Synagogue (432-0004). Be sure you provide an alternative emergency contact on the liability form who does not reside in your house. Please make every effort to be on time to pick up your child. For the safety of the students, we ask that you call the office if you expect to be late and that you come into the building to pick up your child.

#### **L. Drop off and Pick up**

**Parents must accompany their children to the classroom. After class, parents are also required to pick up children in the building. Students will not be released from the building without a parent.** Aleph-Bet and Step-Up students must be picked up at the end of their class.

#### **M. School Cancellation: Phone tree**

A phone tree will be used to inform parents of school cancellations, parent meetings, and other school activities. For emergency cancellations (i.e. winter weather), radio station WZID (95.7 fm) will also be utilized.

#### **N. Parent volunteers**

We welcome and appreciate your assistance throughout the school year. Your involvement in the school sends your child an important message that you value Jewish education. Contact the classroom teacher, the Rabbi, or the Education Committee Chairperson/Director for opportunities to volunteer. A parent volunteer is needed as a "room parent" for each mid-week class.

**O. Attendance/Make-Up**

Good attendance is required. Parents must make every effort to ensure their child arrives for class on time. It is the obligation of the student and the parent to contact the school for make-up work. It is the obligation of the student to make up missed work required for promotion. Because preparedness for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is important to us at Etz Hayim, ceremonies will be delayed for students who need additional time to prepare for this important step. The Rabbi, along with a student's teachers, the student, and the parents will determine readiness for this very important event.

**P. Remedial Work**

If students enter our program without the necessary prerequisites, it is the responsibility of the parent to arrange for and to pay for any required remedial work. The Rabbi or the Education Committee Chairperson/Director can recommend qualified tutors.

**Q. Service Attendance Policy**

In an effort to reinforce synagogue skills, the Education Committee has instituted the following service attendance requirements:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Service Requirement</u>
Step-Up:	2 services during the school year
Grade 4:	4 services during the school year
Grade 5:	6 services during the school year
Grade 6:	9 services during the school year
Bar/Bat Mitzvah	
Candidates:	Must attend 12 services a year, commencing after High Holiday Services. It is expected that 6 Services will be attended by February 1
Confirmation	
Candidates:	Must attend 6 services a year.

**R. Homework**

Parents should expect their children to have homework assignments on a regular basis. We appreciate their reinforcement in this area.