

# Frequently Asked Questions: Hebrew School 2020-2021

## **Why are Hebrew School classes being held online to start the year?**

This plan was recommended by Kerem Shalom's COVID-19 Task Force and accepted by the Board of Directors. Though in-person learning is possible in theory, the Task Force has concluded that there is no practical way to do so without exposing students and staff, many of whom come from different localities, to undue risk of infection. For more information on the Task Force's rationale, please contact Rabbi Sam.

## **What about outdoor activities?**

Most of the COVID-19 Task Force's considerations regarding indoor classes apply to outdoor activities. Additionally, Kerem Shalom's bathroom facilities are inaccessible while the building is closed, making the possibility of holding regular outdoor programming unfeasible. We are exploring options for short, one-time, outdoor activities, and we will share information about these as we are able to plan them.

## **When will we return to in-person classes?**

The COVID-19 Task Force is continually monitoring government guidelines and medical science reports regarding the safety of in-person activities. This group will meet throughout the fall, in consultation with the Kerem Shalom professional staff and Board of Directors, to determine whether resuming in-person activities in January will be both safe and meaningful. We will share any updated plans as soon as possible.

## **Is Hebrew School still tuition free for Kerem Shalom members?**

Yes! Our K-7 program is still included in your Kerem Shalom membership, though we do still ask the registration fees for K-7 Hebrew School and for Holiday Preschool. We do not want finances to be a barrier to anyone's participation, so please feel free to contact Rabbi Sam if you have particular concerns in this regard.

## **Will parents/guardians be involved?**

We affirm the primary role parents/guardians have in shaping their children's Jewish lives, and we also recognize the unique challenges they face during the pandemic to care for their children and themselves. Our goal is not to add to what is already an overwhelming time. There will be two Zoom links to activate for each session (one for class and one for Kehillah), and some children may require adult help with that. Additionally, some activities, especially for the youngest children, will be easier with adult involvement, but we hope the majority of experiences can be self-guided and self-monitored by your children themselves (along with live teacher interaction). You are always welcome to join your children for Kehillah (Community) Time, and interested parents/guardians are also welcome to sit in on their children's grade-level class time. Additionally, we do hope you will mark your calendars for your children's grade-level family programs. We also are committed to supporting parents/guardians, so we hope you will feel free to reach out to us.

**Why are the weekly Zoom classes shorter than usual, and why do some start at odd times?**

With so much happening online these days, we want to prioritize quality of live Zoom sessions over quantity. The age-appropriate lengths of live online instruction were determined in consultation with other Jewish educators in supplementary school settings. The start times of each class were picked to allow for a large-group Kehillah (Community) Time for grades K-6, as well as incorporating a 5-minute screen break for all grades K-7.

**How will my child receive necessary physical materials for their online classes?**

Each student will receive an individualized Hebrew School Toolbox. Each box will contain some standard supplies like paper, drawing materials, and a small whiteboard, and they will also contain optional, grade-appropriate, self-guided Hebrew practice resources. Additionally, toolboxes will include specific materials selected by each teacher for their grade: special project materials, handouts, and texts, for example. The first toolbox will be distributed at the Drive-Through Hebrew School Kickoff on September 21 (rain date: 23), and more information about that event is coming soon. Additional materials will be distributed periodically throughout the year as necessary. From time to time, your children's teacher may send extra worksheets or materials by email that can be printed at home, or perhaps special project items that are easily accessible in the home (such as a cup of water), and such requests will be communicated by email in advance of each session as needed.

**Will my child still learn Hebrew?**

Yes! During class and Kehillah (Community) Time for grades K-6, we will focus on auditory familiarity with our Hebrew prayers, as well as basic Hebrew vocabulary. On a grade-by-grade basis, teachers will review Hebrew decoding skills, and optional, self-guided Hebrew practice will be made available for all students. Additionally, families who want a little more can sign their students up for small-group or one-on-one Hebrew decoding practice. These sessions will occur outside the regular class times, and they will be scheduled at a mutually convenient time for families and staff. There will be no additional cost for these optional Hebrew practice sessions. Sign-up information coming soon.

**What about preparations for bnai mitzvah?**

B'nai mitzvah tutoring will continue as usual, though it will take place over the phone or Zoom. Families will arrange this on an individual basis with our tutor. Just as in any typical year, we are committed to ensuring every student feels confident and competent to lead their bnai mitzvah service.

**Will teens still be able to serve as aides in Hebrew School classes?**

Yes, teens will still have a presence in our Hebrew School classes. They will interact with students, assist with activities, and provide occasional technical help to the teachers with whom they work.

Have more questions? Please be in touch with Rabbi Sam, Director of Congregational Learning, at [learning@keremshalom.org](mailto:learning@keremshalom.org).