



# Raker Religious School

G U I D E B O O K

2023-2024



6805 E McDonald Dr., Paradise Valley, AZ 85253 | 480-991-7414



*B'ruchim Haba'im!*

WELCOME TO  
**RAKER**  
**RELIGIOUS**  
**SCHOOL**

Dear Parents, Grandparents, & Guardians,  
Welcome to the Raker Religious School Family! We are pleased to provide you with a warm, nurturing environment for your children to learn and grow.

RRS provides a well-designed and creative learning experience based on the values of Reform Judaism. We encourage our students to explore Judaism while developing a strong sense of self-esteem, and a positive Jewish identity.

Our faculty strive to achieve the following goals:

1. Foster a positive environment to empower students to grow their Jewish identity
2. Support students to develop social skills
3. Encourage creative expression and academic exploration

With these goals in mind, our teachers can curate lesson plans and class activities that encourage personal and academic growth for our students.

L'Shalom,  
Tobee Waxenberg  
Director of Raker Religious School

*Tobee Waxenberg*

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## **RRS Schedule**

Class 9:30-11:30AM

T'filah 11:30AM-12PM

## **Raker News**

Weekly updates

## **Boker Tov Bistro**

Grab a cup of coffee,  
a bite to eat, &  
schmooze with other  
parents after drop-off

**Tobee Waxenberg, Director of Raker Religious School**

[twaxenberg@templesolel.org](mailto:twaxenberg@templesolel.org)

**Jesse Edwards, Religious School Coordinator**

[jedwards@templesolel.org](mailto:jedwards@templesolel.org)

# PARENT HANDBOOK



Tobee Waxenberg, Director of Raker Religious School  
Rabbi John Linder  
Rabbi Debbie Stiel  
Cantorial Soloist Todd Herzog



**Raker Religious School**

## **Raker Religious School Mission Statement**

Raker Religious School connects students and families to the cognitive, cultural, and spiritual aspects of Judaism.

We aspire to foster a supportive environment that challenges our students to build a foundation of knowledge, relevance, and literacy.

### **Our guiding principles:**

- > Tikkun Olam ~ Repair of the World
- > Kehillah ~ Community
- > Tzedakah ~ Righteous Acts
- > B'tzelem Elohim ~ In the Divine Image
- > Talmud Torah ~ The Study of Torah

### **Inclusion & Non-Discrimination Policy**

At Temple Solel, we strive to create a welcoming, comfortable, and safe environment for all, strongly asserting the principles of inclusivity and *kehillah*. At Raker Religious School, we are committed to educating in a way that promotes acceptance and appreciation of diversity. We embrace all who wish to participate, regardless of race, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability, sensory sensitivity, or financial means. All are welcome.

## Arrival & Dismissal

Please park in the designated parking spots. NO PARKING is permitted along the emergency curb of Temple Solel nor on Monte Vista Dr., per PVPD. The speed limit is 5mph. We ask that parents do not park in handicapped parking spaces unless you have the appropriate license plate or placard displayed on your vehicle.

### D R O P - O F F

- > We encourage families to arrive beginning at 9AM to enjoy some time at our Boker Tov Bistro.
- > Madrichim need to be here by 8:45AM to assist their teachers in the drop-off process and classroom setup.
- > Classes begin at 9:30AM.

### P I C K - U P

- > All parents are encouraged to join us for T'filah in the sanctuary at 11:30AM!
- > If you choose NOT to come in for T'filah, please remain in your car in the pickup line, where students will start being released at 12PM.
- > *PLEASE DO NOT TEXT YOUR CHILD TO COME OUT OF T'FILAH EARLY TO COME TO YOUR CAR. IT'S A HUGE SAFETY HAZARD FOR MANY REASONS.*
- > If you need to pick up your child early, you must come into the front office to sign your child(ren) out. Your child will be escorted to the office by a madrich/a or a staff member.

## **Electronic Devices**

Raker Religious School does not allow any electronic devices in the classroom unless a teacher uses the phone for research or the student has documented accommodations. All phones are to be put away or collected. This allows the students to be present, respectful, and attentive to one another and to their teachers. Students and parents who need to contact each other while school is in session may do so through the office phone, 480-991-7414.

## **Behavior Policy**

Appropriate behavior and conduct is expected at all times at Temple Solel. We grant considerable freedom and respect to our students to express themselves, explore what Judaism means to them, and make friends along the way. Therefore, we expect the same respect in return to their teachers, fellow classmates, madrichim, and synagogue. If for any reason a student has difficulty with his/her/their behavior, the following procedure will be followed:

- Step 01:** The teacher will remind the student about appropriate behavior.
- Step 02:** The student will be sent to the Director's office.
- Step 03:** The student will be sent to the Director's office to call his/her/their parents for the purpose of informing them of the difficulty that they're experiencing.
- Step 04:** Parents will be required to pick up their child. Further, they will be required to meet with the Director prior to the student returning to class.

## **Emergency Procedures**

In the event of an emergency, the Director or acting supervisor will call 911. In the case of a fire, the alarm will sound throughout the property.

During evacuations, classes will evacuate the building according to the maps located in each classroom. In the event of an emergency closure or lockdown of the school, parents will be notified via phone call, text, and/or email as to the time and reason for the closure.

RRS will perform emergency drills from time to time.



## Travel Opportunities

Integrating experiential learning into our students' curriculum is pivotal in providing a holistic Jewish education. Therefore, we organize trips throughout the year to encourage academic expansion. The 10-12th grade trips will change from year to year.

### YOUTH RETREAT ~ GRADES 4 - 7

Each year, we embark on an overnight adventure to the gorgeous Prescott Valley, residing at Camp Stein. We have Havdallah around the campfire, learn the importance of *tikkun olam* with respect to caring for our natural world, play a variety of camp games and activities, and conclude the trip with a talent show!

### LOS ANGELES ~ GRADES 8 / 9 **NEW!**

8/9th grade takes on Jewish LA! Los Angeles is home to a rich Jewish culture, where our students will visit some historic sites, learn the ins-and-outs of LA social justice, and check out cool venues in Hollywood! This trip will be led by Tzedek America.

### GEORGIA & ALABAMA ~ GRADES 10 - 12 **NEW!**

Giving real-world application to the topics discussed in 10-12th grade has proven to be tremendously impactful in the students' growth and strengthening their personal sense of Jewish identity. Accordingly, we travel to Georgia & Alabama to embark on the compelling excursion through the Civil Rights Trail. Amongst many other historic sites, we will visit the Rosa Parks Museum, tour Selma, & visit the Ebenezer Baptist Church! This trip will be led by Etgar 36.

# CURRICULUM

The curriculum at Raker Religious School is designed to empower our students to reflect on the following question as it pertains to their personal identity, their family, their lived experiences, and the greater community:



**“How is Judaism relevant to me and the world around me?”**

As students continue to progress in their education year after year, their answers to this question will change and grow with them. They will grapple with new questions, encounter new ideas, reaffirm and alter their personal beliefs about the world, and engage in various experiences that will help shape their wonderful, complex, and ever-evolving identities.



# Mazel Tots, Kindergarten, Grade 1

Our younger students begin their Jewish journey by exploring foundational Jewish topics and elementary Hebrew. They will be exposed to the Jewish holidays, important Jewish symbols, basic Bible stories, and the Shabbat prayers. Furthermore, through the use of the Onward Hebrew curriculum, our students will be introduced to Hebrew letters and words, developing their pronunciation and sound recognition skills. Through the lens of Jewish values, the primary focal points of these early grade levels are building friendships, understanding acceptance, and learning how to share.

## Grades 2 & 3

Grades 2 and 3 delve deeper into the study of the Jewish holidays, the Jewish calendar, and Bible stories. Upon expansion of these important Jewish topics, students will begin to develop an understanding of Jewish values that help shape a person's character, such as 'kindness' and 'being a mensch.'



## Grade 4

Grade 4 analyzes Jewish principles and character development through the study of Jewish history, from Mt. Sinai to Israel. The teachers take a unique approach to help the students understand their own behavior by comparing their behavior to that of Biblical prophets. Additionally, Hebrew studies are elevated as students are introduced to Hebrew decoding to learn the sounds of the Aleph Bet letters and vowels.

Lesson plan: "Be Your Best Self" from the *Living Jewish Values* textbook

## Grade 5

Rounding out the students' elementary-level education, Grade 5 concentrates on the study of Israel: its people, culture, history, food, and land. Additionally, our 5th graders enroll in our one-on-one Hebrew tutoring program (required). The tutoring sessions are 25 minutes, once per week (Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday) via Zoom. This is the preliminary preparation ahead of our students' introduction into their B'Mitzvah program the following year.

Lesson plan: "Be A Good Friend" from the *Living Jewish Values* textbook



## Grade 6

The primary focus of Grade 6 is B'Mitzvah preparation. Students will be introduced to the B'Mitzvah handbook as well as study the prayers for Shabbat and B'Mitzvah services. In thematic alignment with the lessons learned during B'Mitzvah prep, students will also learn about Jewish traditions and rituals for all the major life cycles, including birth, B'Mitzvah, marriage, death, etc.

Students may continue their midweek Hebrew tutoring should they need it.

## Grade 7

The central focus of Grade 7 is the study of the Holocaust and the history of antisemitism. Students will learn the time period and geographical layout of the Holocaust as well as what life was like before and after. Further, the class utilizes the Anti-Defamation League's 'Pyramid of Hate' model to demonstrate the complexity of bias and systemic hatred. Through these studies, the class establishes a baseline to explore character development through survivor stories, text studies, film screenings, and more.



## Grades 8/9

Grade 8/9 introduces the Madrichim program. 8/9th graders will learn how to be effective teaching assistants to support teachers in the classroom, work with staff in the front office, and operate the Boker Tov Bistro. In addition, the course of study focuses on comparative Judaism, world religions, and Jewish practices around the world. Speakers from different religious groups and field trips to other houses of worship teach our students about the similarities and differences between Judaism and other religions. The curriculum alternates each year between comparative Judaism and world religions. To enhance the students' experiential learning even further, a yearly class trip will take place to build awareness and community.

## Grade 10 ~ Confirmation

In Confirmation Class, students continue to explore the interplay between their own lives and their Jewish identities. Through learning about the topics of God, Torah, and Israel in a discussion-based, interactive classroom setting, students will engage with Judaism on a deep and meaningful level. These discussions about Jewish values and identity will create the context for their winter social justice trip. They will learn about Jewish values and contemporary issues, learn the history of the places we visit, and explore how Judaism grapples with issues that matter to them. Students will have a writing opportunity towards the end of the year to showcase what they've learned in class.



## Grades 11/12 ~ Teen Leadership Council

In this program, our teens choose a social justice topic that is important to them. They learn about what Judaism has to say about this issue, and they engage with experts and those with first-hand experience on the topic. Our teens then work together with rabbinic guidance to decide on actions they can take to positively impact this issue. This is a very empowering and educational program. The teens learn how to advocate and create change, and they have the opportunity to do so. In addition, both rabbis continue to work with the students on a whole host of topics. The students also periodically have lunch with the rabbis (Rabbiyo). This program looks great on a college resume, and the students find it to be a good preparation for becoming more independent, active young adult Jews.



# STUDENT RESOURCES

At Raker Religious School, we believe in facilitating a well-rounded educational experience, providing opportunities for social, academic, and spiritual growth. That's why we're always working to improve our resources available for students, whether that be in the form of social groups, one-off events, experiences in the community, or something else in between.

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## MADRICHIM PROGRAM

Grades 8 - 12

The Madrichim program is a great leadership opportunity for our students! Our madrichim are essential members of our Raker team as they add so much vibrancy and collaboration in the classroom as they assist our teachers and connect with our younger students.



# REFORM TEEN COALITION



## Grades 7 - 9

Reform Teen Coalition (RTC) is our youth activity group in partnership with Temple Kol Ami, Temple Chai, and Congregation Beth Israel. Once a month during the school year, each synagogue will host an event for the teens to attend. Some of the great ones in the past have been Playground & Pizookies, Bingo Night, & Paint N' Sip (apple juice of course!). RTC is a great opportunity for our students to meet other Jewish teens around the Valley!

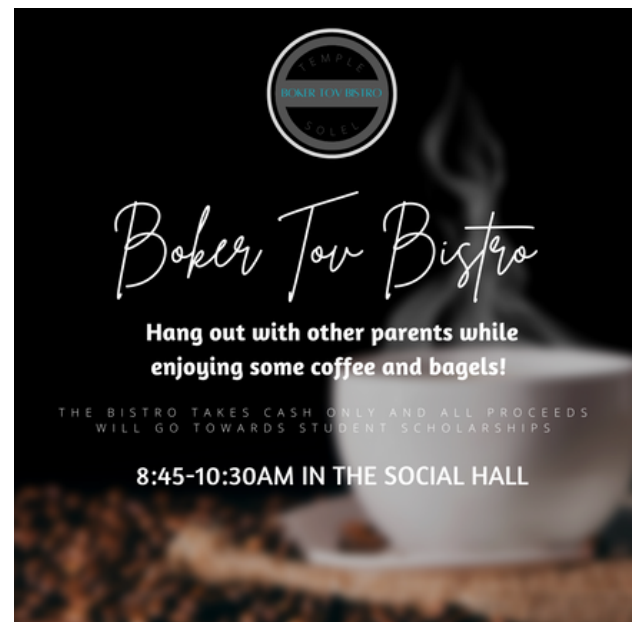
## ONLINE HEBREW

Required for our 5th graders and available for our 6th and 7th graders as needed, our online Hebrew tutoring program is a critical tool in our students' preparation for their B'Mitzvah. Our students work one-on-one with a Hebrew tutor via Zoom once per week to improve their pronunciation, increase their literacy, and most importantly, grow their confidence ahead of their big day!

# FAMILY RESOURCES

## BOKER TOV BISTRO

Our Bistro is an excellent place to meet other Raker parents, schmooze over coffee & nosh, and give back to our students as all proceeds from the Bistro go directly to student scholarships. The Bistro is run by a handful of our fabulous madrichim so swing by and check it out!



## CHAVUROT

Our chavurah program, small groups arranged by personal interests, age group, and residential proximity, is a great way to meet other members of our congregation. Chavurot meet on a regular basis for activities such as attending a comedy club, going for happy hour, and hosting a game night.

Contact Mason Marks for more information:

[mmarks@templesolel.org](mailto:mmarks@templesolel.org).

# PACT ~ PARENTS and CHILDREN TOGETHER

Our PACT program is a fantastic way to engage with the content your child is learning! Grades K-6 participate in the program. During first hour, parents will learn about a specific topic with the Rabbis while the students study the same topic with their teacher. Then in second hour, the students join their families and we all work on a project together.

## DEREKH HORIM

**NEW!**

*Derekh Horim: Parent's Path ~*

*Do it for yourself, model for your children*

On select Sunday mornings throughout the school year, parents will have the opportunity to learn with the rabbis to deepen their Jewish journey.

# FAMILY SHABBAT SERVICES & T'FILAH

At Raker Religious School, we're constantly looking for ways to spotlight our students and showcase what they've been working on in class. One of our favorite ways to do that is through family Shabbat services and T'filah for our youngest grades! Our teachers work diligently with the clergy to put together a fun, interactive service with student participation. It's so wonderful seeing all our students up on the bimah engaging with our congregation and presenting what they've learned!



# Attendance at Friday Night Services & Shabbat Morning Services

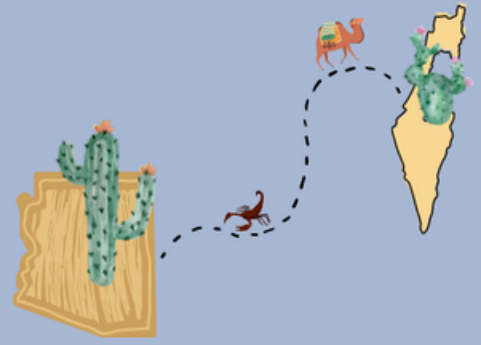
It is strongly recommended that students attend some Friday night and Saturday morning services. Friday night services start at 6:15PM and Saturday morning services start at 10:30AM. You will receive a schedule for the Shabbat morning services as those only take place when there is a B'Mitzvah. The purpose of this recommendation is two-fold: to help students and parents become familiar with the service and to make Shabbat service participation a joyful, lifelong experience for all the family! It's good for the B'Mitzvah students and parents to remove the mystery of the Shabbat services. Shabbat service attendance is in everyone's best interest! Of course, it's wonderful for the clergy to see you too!

## Recommendations:

- 4th grade 2 Shabbat evening + 2 Shabbat morning services
- 5th grade 3 Shabbat evening + 2 Shabbat morning services
- 6th grade 3 Shabbat evening + 3 Shabbat morning services
- 7th grade 3 Shabbat evening + 4 Shabbat morning services

# RAKER NEWS

Our Weekly News and Updates



Our weekly newsletter is the hub of all things Raker! Stay up-to-date on upcoming events, get notified for school closures and calendar changes, learn about exciting things happening in our local community, and so much more. As one of our primary sources of communication, Raker News will be the place you RSVP for events as well as see what's coming further down the line.

If you think you may not be subscribed to our newsletter, please contact the office at 480-991-7414.



**Raker Religious School**

*We're so happy you're  
part of our community!*

