



August 30, 2017/ 8 Elul 5777

Dear TIC Parents, Grandparents and Guardians,

We are pleased to share with you our plans for youth and family programming for the upcoming Days of Awe, and to announce that all registration for youth programming will be online this year. This letter explains our approach, outlines the various programs, and aims to provide you with enough information to register children and teens for the offerings and options most engaging and appropriate for them.

At Temple Israel Center, we are committed to enhancing and advancing the spiritual life and learning of all our members at every age and stage. As in recent years, in 5778 we offer a full complement of programs for children from 2 years old through high school on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. **Please note that pre-registration is required for each program in order to ensure adequate staffing and the safety of each child.**

New this year are several enhancements which will be explained below. In general, there will be several new activity choices for children in Grades 3-6, and more ways for children in each elective to connect with the meaning and message of the Days of Awe.

Here is an introduction to the programs we are offering this year. All participants are asked to arrive at 10 am for Welcome and Check-in. Services and activities will run from 10:15 am - 1 pm followed by the optional Extended Day (until 1:30 on Rosh Hashanah days and 2 pm on Yom Kippur).

- **For children of Nursery School age (2-4 years old)**, we provide babysitting with highly qualified educators who lead fun, age-appropriate activities. These activities will take place on the 2 days of Rosh Hashanah and on Yom Kippur from 10:15 am - 1 pm. There are three separate rooms – one for each age group (Preschool 2s, 3s and 4s). The rooms will be supervised by experienced Nursery School teachers who are familiar with our approach to helping our youngest learners connect with the themes of the Days of Awe. Children will enjoy activities similar to ones they experience in a Nursery School and day camp setting, including art, music, movement, and story time. The activities for these days will connect with key themes of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and the 10 Days of Repentance (*Aseret Y'mai Teshuvah*). These themes include beginning a new year, celebrating the world's birthday, saying "I'm sorry," forgiving others, and hearing

the shofar. For this age group, we are charging a fee of \$10 per day per child, or a total of \$30 for those who participate in the three Days of Awe.

- **For children in Grades K-2**, there will be a youth and family service for children and parents from 10:15-11 am. The service will be followed by snack and age-appropriate activities in each of the grade-level rooms. These rooms will be supervised by educators and counselors who have experience in teaching Judaic subjects to children. They are skilled professionals who will seek to engage our children in activities and learning experiences connected to the themes of the Days of Awe.
- **For children in Grades 3-6**, there will be youth services where children can participate with or without a parent. While parents are welcome to join in the service with their children, they are not required. Instead, parents are encouraged to attend our services in the Sanctuary, Auditorium, and Tent. The service for children in Grades 3-6 will run from 11:15 am - 12 pm. There will be an elective activity from 10:15-11 am and another elective activity from 12:15-1 pm.

Electives: This year, we are offering a choice of 7 elective activities for children in Grades 3-6: Active Games, Artistic Expression, Beit Midrash, Music, Quiet Room, Theater Games, and Yoga. **Several options are new, such as Music and Beit Midrash.** The Beit Midrash elective is for anyone in Grades 3-6 who would like to study a text either individually or with a friend, guided by staff who can support their exploration and discussion. The Music elective will feature songs, melodies and chants, as well as a chance to practice blowing the shofar. The elective choices are designed to help children approach the Days of Awe through different modalities, such as music, theater and art. Specialists help participants to connect with the big themes of the Days of Awe through the lens of Torah and Jewish wisdom. Each activity represents a different modality for experiencing the core concepts of the season, such as repentance, self-reflection, prayer, judgment, forgiveness, and good deeds. When children have a chance to experience these themes through different modalities, they encounter the concepts in meaningful and engaging ways. They can gain new insights and develop values and beliefs that can inform their decisions as they grow.

- **For teens in Grades 7-12**, there are three alternatives for how they can spend their time. The online registration system will invite teens to express their interest in participating in one of these options. Although in the past, teens weren't asked to register in advance, we are requesting registration this year. As in prior years, they can choose to:
 - a. **Participate in teen programming:** This will be led by highly-skilled educators and specialists, and will feature icebreakers, a prayer service, topical discussions, theater games, music, and more.
 - b. **Attend the main services** in the Sanctuary, Auditorium or Tent, or

- c. **Volunteer to work with our younger children:** Teen volunteers serve a vital role in supporting our youth programming. They may volunteer in any of a number of ways and will be invited to express their preference for which ages and activities they would like to be involved. We will do our best to honor their preferences.

Please note that training is required for all teen volunteers. Teens must attend one of the training sessions scheduled in September in order to serve as volunteers. The 2 options are: Monday, September 11, 5-6:15 pm and Thursday, September 14, 6:15-7:30 pm. If unable to attend one of these sessions, teens are asked to email Susan Ticker by Wednesday, September 6 (at s.ticker@templeisraelcenter.org) to schedule time for an individual or small group training session.

- **Extended Day for children in Grades K-6:** In addition to the various services and activities outlined above, we will offer an optional program at 1 pm each day. It will run until the time when adult services are scheduled to end: until 1:30 pm on each day of Rosh Hashanah and until 2 pm on Yom Kippur. New this year, we will not charge a fee for the extended day program, but rather offer it as a service to the community. In this way, adults (parents, grandparents and guardians) of children in Grades K-6 will have the opportunity to attend services until their conclusion on each of the Days of Awe. **While there is no charge for this program, pre-registration is required as it is with all other programs. This will ensure that there will be a place for your child in the room and that we will have sufficient staff to provide for each child's safety.**

Schedule: The schedule for youth programming on all 3 days will begin at 10 am and run through 1 pm, with the option of adding 30-60 minutes through the Extended Day program. We encourage all parents, children and teens to arrive on time for check-in. Each child will receive a name tag pre-printed with their name and all pertinent information. This includes the schedule and rooms for their services and activities, the name of their parent/guardian and the location of their seats (in the Sanctuary, Auditorium or Tent) as well as any allergy information. Each parent/ guardian will receive a set of instructions which will address issues, including what to do and where to meet your child in the unlikely event of an emergency. Following check-in, parents and staff will escort children to the rooms where their activities are scheduled to begin.

Staffing: We have hired beloved staff from prior years and some new staff you'll want to meet. One of the talented, new professionals is Cantor Melissa Puius, an engaging Cantor-Educator, who will be leading our youth and family services for the Days of Awe. A graduate of Hebrew College in Boston and a mother of 7-year old twins, Cantor Melissa lives with her family in Ardsley. She has experience leading services for adults, children and families, and we are fortunate that she will be joining our team this year. On the Days of Awe, she will lead both the K-2 Youth and Family Service and the Youth Service for children

in Grades 3-6. Cantor Melissa will also lead some of our youth services on Shabbat during the year, and we are eager for you to meet Cantor Melissa soon.

Mainstages: We have also hired an exciting educational theater arts organization called Mainstages to join us for the Days of Awe. They perform for many camps, synagogues, and schools, and are well-known for their lively and engaging theater workshops and presentations. They will be offering a family-friendly interactive performance at the Yom Kippur afternoon family service that starts at 4 pm. In addition, they will be staffing the Theater elective offered on all three Days of Awe for children in Grades 3-6.

Our staff is looking forward to welcoming you into our learning spaces and our prayer spaces. The feedback we have received so far from parents and other leaders has been very positive and we are excited to be experimenting in ways that can enhance the meaning of the day for you, your children, and your teens. We welcome your feedback and will be sending a brief survey after Yom Kippur so we can ask you what worked well and what should be improved. This will help guide our planning for the rest of this year and beyond.

Finally, we want to thank all of the volunteers, staff and clergy who have contributed to planning and developing the programming and the online process for registration. We appreciate their guidance, dedication, and partnership. They worked hard to enhance the success of our youth and family programming for Days of Awe.

We look forward to receiving your registration, and encourage you to register online today or very soon. We are eager to see you during the Days of Awe, and are busy planning for you, your children and teens. Please be in touch in advance if you have questions or concerns.

Warm regards,

Susan A. Ticker
Director of Educational Programming

Rabbi Gordon Tucker
Senior Rabbi