

Dear Shorashim Parents,

It has been a great start to our first year of Shorashim, and we are so glad that your children are a part of the program! They are having a lot of fun and learning at the same time.

I am writing to you to introduce an aspect of Shorashim that all parents of students are strongly encouraged to participate in over the course of the school year, namely our "Judaism at Home" Parent Learning Sessions, which Cantor Aronson and I will be teaching on four Shabbat mornings.

These sessions will take place on Saturday December 15, January 26, March 16 and May 4th, from 10:30 – 11:30.

I believe that Jewish education works best when children have experiences in which they are fully immersed in Jewish life. This is why Jewish summer camps and trips to Israel often have such a significant impact on the development of a positive Jewish identity. This is also why Judaism at home is so important. When children are immersed in Jewish life in these settings, they come to know Judaism not as something to learn *about*, but rather as *a way of living*. This is how they can receive the true richness of our tradition – by experiencing how it can make life more meaningful and joyous.

One of the challenges of the traditional Hebrew school model is that a few hours a week is not enough on its own to give children this type of experience. Rachel and Jill are doing an amazing job of making the hours at Shorashim a jam-packed energy-filled immersive education. But still that isn't enough on its own. In order for what our Shorashim students are learning to make sense – *for Judaism to make sense* – our students need to also have a rich Jewish life at home.

Each of you probably has different ways that Judaism is a part of your family life. For some it may be very central, for others less so. Some of you may have a great deal of Jewish knowledge and experience, and some of you may not.

Whatever the case may be, our goal with our parent learning sessions is to support you in making Judaism a deeper and more meaningful part of your family life. Even for rabbis, there is always more to learn and explore when it comes to our tradition! The content of our learning sessions will be customized to the interests and knowledge level of our group. In our first session we will begin by getting to know each other better, sharing a bit about our own Jewish backgrounds, and reflecting on the role of Judaism in our home lives and what would make it more meaningful.

Before our first session, I would appreciate if you can email me at rabbifine.sinai@gmail.com to let me know the following:

- 1) Do you plan to come to the 4 sessions?**
- 2) What is your general level of Jewish knowledge and practice?**
- 3) Is there a practical skill you would be interested in learning that would enrich your Jewish life at home?** (Such as how to say Shabbat blessings, how to bake challah, how lead a Passover seder, etc.)
- 4) Is there a topic related to Jewish life at home that you would be interested in learning about and discussing?** (Such as Jewish approaches to parenting issues, the meaning of Shabbat or a holiday, how to make *tzedakah* part of your family life, etc).

If you can email me a quick response to these questions by Thanksgiving that would be great!

Once again, I'm so happy to have you and your families involved with Shorashim. I look forward to the opportunity to learn a bit together this year.

L'Shalom,
Rabbi Fine

Rabbi Aaron Fine
Education Advisor

Rachel Jacobson
Education Director

Susan Weiner
Administrative Director

Evelyn Rothbard
Youth Oversight

Merle Hyman
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