

Why Hebrew High?

FREQUENT COMMENTS AND THEIR ANSWERS

1. MY CHILD IS SO BUSY, WORKING HARD IN ORDER TO GET INTO A GOOD COLLEGE.

As reported to us by college personnel and former students, a transcript showing four years of class work from the Phoenix High School of Jewish Studies, demonstrates to an admissions officer not only that the student has participated in an impressive educational endeavor, but also that s/he probably has the ability to follow through on commitments and has had time to develop a solid identity. Nationally, most students applying to universities have similar grade point averages and comparable examination scores. Extracurricular activities do make the difference. We send many transcripts to colleges along with descriptions about our program.

2. I PROMISED MY CHILD THAT S/HE COULD QUIT AFTER HER/HIS BAT/BAR MITZVAH.

Bargains are always subject to renegotiation especially when new knowledge is available. Furthermore, the concept of Bar Mitzvah is not one of completion but rather one of enfranchisement and obligation. This means that according to Jewish tradition, Bar Mitzvah entails the acceptance of obligation of being an active participant in Jewish life. Among the most essential obligations of an active Jewish life is that of study.

3. MY CHILD PARTICIPATES IN VARSITY SPORTS. S/HE MIGHT NEED TO BE ABSENT FOR SEVERAL WEEKS DURING HIS/HER SPORT SEASON.

Many students at Hebrew High are in varsity activities. We are always willing to work with you and your student to work out an equitable solution. The goal is to keep your child in this positive Jewish environment and the door is always open whenever s/he is able to attend.

4. MY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT IS INVOLVED IN YOUTH GROUP. I'M NOT SURE THAT IT IS IMPORTANT FOR HIM/HER TO ALSO SPEND TIME IN AN ACADEMIC SETTING WHERE THERE MAY BE LITTLE TIME TO SOCIALIZE.

While the high school fulfills an educational function, and youth groups fulfill a social role, the high school does offer many "social" experiences for teens. Beyond the time before and after classes and the 10-minute break between classes, class time too can, in a sense, be considered "social time". It is often more healthful and less threatening to meet people in a natural environment like a classroom than in an awkward social setting where everyone's motive is to "match up". Additionally, the high school offers several out-of-class social experiences like community-wide programs, concerts, and an Israel program.

5. I ALWAYS HAD TO FIGHT WITH MY CHILD TO GET HIM/HER TO GO TO HEBREW SCHOOL. I'M NOT SURE THAT THIS IS A BATTLE I WANT TO FIGHT.

The battle is worth fighting if quantitative as well as qualitative Jewish survival is important to you. All data indicates the more hours of Jewish education, the greater the likelihood of adult Jewish identification. Additionally, an education ended at an early age means that, as an adult, this person will understand Judaism in an unsophisticated and childish way (It would be comparable to ending one's English or mathematics education at age 12 or 13).

Regarding fighting battles with children, most psychologists and educators (whether secular or Judaic) point out that a child's lack of desire in attending a class or activity has little to do with the content or nature of the class and a lot to do with the child's recognition of the parent's ambivalence on the subject. More concretely, when a child knows that secular or Hebrew school is nonnegotiable, s/he generally will not bother arguing or fighting about attending.

6. MY STUDENT IS APPROACHING ADULTHOOD AND NEEDS TO START MAKING SOME CHOICES ABOUT LIFE. HEBREW HIGH IS ONE OF THOSE CHOICES I ALLOW MY CHILD TO DECIDE.

Young people do need opportunities to make choices. But there are several important factors to take into account when giving high school students chances to make choices. First, adolescents are not little adults. They are still young people trying to come to terms with their adult identity and because of this they look to their parents and other significant adults for structure and anchoring. It is a parent's role, as well as his/her obligation, to structure those choices for their young people. Those items that you value provide the basis for the choices that are not negotiable. Just as you guide your child's choices regarding his/her secular education to help direct him/her toward a successful future, so too, if a Jewish outcome is important to you, you will take the same care in assuring his/her Jewish education.

Second, successful choices are impossible when essential information is lacking. It would be purely chance, not choice, if a young person who had minimal exposure to Judaism - its beliefs, its theology, etc. - chose Judaism as an adult. If the only exposure to Judaism that a young person receives during high school is no more sophisticated than being together with some friends, then s/he will only be able to conclude (=choose) that Judaism doesn't really speak to her/his adult needs and good warm friendships can be found anywhere - not necessarily in Jewish circles.

7. HEBREW HIGH CLASSES ARE TOO DEMANDING.

The teachers at Hebrew High are realistic and are aware of the many demands in your child's life; however, in order to really learn something, one needs to expend some energy. There is a wide enough assortment of classes - some more demanding than others - such that your child will be able to find classes that meet his/her needs.

8. THE DISTANCE AND TRANSPORTATION ARRANGEMENTS TO AND FROM HEBREW HIGH MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE TO SEND MY STUDENT TO HEBREW HIGH.

This should not be an excuse for denying your young person an education. Distance is not an obstacle in going to a Suns game or a great play. Neither should it be in the case of Hebrew High. We want to help you with your transportation plans. Indicate on your registration form if you need help in this area, and we will help locate other people in your area to facilitate car-pool arrangements. We will also consider bus or van transportation if numbers warrant it.

9. MY CHILD IS ALREADY A SOPHMORE, JUNIOR, SENIOR. ISN'T IT TOO LATE?

Adolescents have specific developmental tasks whether they are freshmen or seniors. Their main task is that of figuring out and then establishing their adult identity. They have a need to explore, to challenge, and to question and then to fit all these puzzle pieces together to form an identity. We know that you want Judaism to be one of those pieces. Your child has an urgency and a right to explore all aspects of Jewish knowledge, beliefs, and to be exposed to a variety of Jewish role models. S/he also has a need to learn Jewish subjects with similar sophistication and comprehensiveness as s/he learns secular subjects. The Phoenix High School of Jewish Studies is the only opportunity in greater Phoenix that strives to meet these needs. It is never too late to begin to attend Hebrew High.