

LEARNING CENTER CURRICULUM

Educational Goals

- To create enfranchised Jewish learners for whom study becomes a lifelong passion
- To build an environment in which students feel empowered to ask questions and encouraged to find personal meaning in their study of Jewish faith and traditions
- To expose children to the richness of Jewish tradition in a modern, relevant and age-appropriate manner, connecting them to contemporary Jewish life and religious practice
- To begin to establish Jewish literacy, including Hebrew decoding, reading and comprehension, and familiarity with meaningful texts
- To engage students through an experiential, student-centered, hands-on approach that encompasses diverse learning styles
- To inspire in each student a desire to live a life consistent with Jewish values: Responsibility to one's Kehillah (community), to the Avirah (environment), and to Tikkun Olam (making the world a better and more tolerant place)
- To begin students on a path toward a personal theology and connection with God through engagement in tefillah, (prayer) and spiritually-powerful experiences in song, ritual, and communal worship

GAN (Kindergarten)

Introduction of the holidays using compelling stories associated with each holiday. To build on these stories with appropriate craft or role-playing activities grounded in the specific historical and spiritual content of each holiday. Through hands-on experiences, students will learn the symbols and celebrations for all of the festivals. Students will also be introduced to Shabbat observance.

Goals

Students will:

- Study Jewish holidays using literature, song and history
- Learn blessings associated with food and other ritual events
- Examine Jewish values and discuss their relevance to everyday life
- Participate in arts and dramatic activities in order to enrich their understanding of the material
- Study the symbols and rituals associated with each Jewish holiday
- Explore the concept of Shabbat observance

KITAH ALEPH / BET (1st and 2nd Grade)

Beginning to move from a familiarity with symbols and rituals, students begin to deepen their understanding of their meanings and relevance to Jewish life. Introduction to the study of Torah with an exploration of the book of Genesis, in particular, the stories of the matriarchs and patriarchs. Knowledge of the Hebrew alphabet and vowels.

Goals

Students will:

- Move from a familiarity with symbols and rituals to an understanding of their meaning
- Study modern Hebrew vocabulary through classroom interactions, music and literature
- Begin to recognize Hebrew letter and vowel combinations
- Begin to read and understand Hebrew words
- Explore the meaning of Tefillot (prayers)
- Demonstrate an understanding of the holidays and their basic observances and core Jewish values
- Use stories from the Book of Genesis as a lens for examining relationships among the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) and matriarchs (Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah)
- Begin to find personal significance in Bible study

KITAH GIMEL (3rd grade)

In Kitah Gimel, students will begin to approach the material as scholars. By using some in depth methods of Torah study, students will delve into the narratives of Genesis from the creation to the Joseph stories. In addition, greater emphasis on reading and speaking Hebrew, as well as building a vocabulary of useful words, will help students gain a confidence in their abilities. There will be an in depth exploration of the meaning of God in our lives.

Goals

Students will:

- Begin to approach the material as critical thinkers
- Examine the concepts of literal meaning and what the text teaches
- Increase their conceptual sophistication and appreciation of Torah texts and stories
- Continue Hebrew study using both Tefillot (prayers) and Modern Hebrew
- Develop a modern Hebrew vocabulary
- Participate in different types of learning experiences including: exploration of Jewish texts through drama, music, dance and fine arts
- Understanding some basic general concepts of God, prayer and their place in our living world

KITAH DALET (4th Grade)

Students will continue where they left last year, from the narratives of Genesis and into the Book of Exodus. In addition, they will continue with building their Hebrew and Prayer skills and cementing their Hebrew reading abilities as well as their script writing.

Goals

Students will:

- Become familiar with the narratives of Genesis and learn to approach the text critically by asking questions and finding creative answers
- Become familiar and comfortable in the Shabbat Service
- Develop a modern Hebrew vocabulary
- Participate in different ways of approaching text, including drama, music, dance and arts
- Learn the basic structure of the Shabbat morning service.

KITAH HEI (5th Grades)

In Kitah Hei, students will continue to deepen their knowledge of Jewish texts and to make connections to modern life. Students will study the narratives of the Book of Exodus and/ or Numbers through the weekly portion. Hebrew language study will include a continued emphasis on modern vocabulary, as well as a look at selected Shabbat Tefillot. Students will also develop a relationship with the land of Israel by studying the history, connecting with the people and recognizing Israel's centrality to Jewish life.

Goals

Students will:

- Continue to develop their Hebrew language reading, writing and speaking skills
- Interact with selected texts of the weekly portion in the Book of Exodus and Numbers and derive value lessons, especially related to the Land of Israel.
- Demonstrate mastery of Tefillot including the V'ahavta, the Amidah and the Ashrei
- Discuss and contextualize the meanings of these and other prayers and find personal meaning in prayer
- Participate in discussions and activities regarding the land of Israel
- Increase their use of spoken Hebrew (Ulpan)

KITAH VAV (6th Grade)

Students will study selected texts of the Books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings and the Megillot. They will continue to study the prayers for the Shabbat service, (including the blessings for the Aliyah to the Torah and the Haftarah blessings). They will study the map of the Hebrew Bible. They will increase their Hebrew vocabulary and reading skills. They will work in the Mt. Vernon Soup kitchen to understand the meaning of Gemilut Hasadim (acts of loving kindness). They will study a unit on life in Europe and the Sephardic lands before the Holocaust and a unit on the Holocaust and they will embark upon a class project, the building of a Museum of Jewish Heritage with the students' family heirlooms.

Goals:

Students will:

- Have an understanding of the centrality of the Hebrew bible in the life of the Jews across history
- Understand the role of the liturgical public readings in synagogue.
- Understand the life of the Jews in other lands before and after the Holocaust
- Have a basic understanding of the impact of the Holocaust in Jewish life and Jewish continuity
- Increase their mastery of the Shabbat service and start to lead Tefillah B'tzibbur (communal prayer) in the school.
- Prepare and research their family's artifacts that relate, in some way, to their Judaism.

KITAH ZAYIN (7th Grade B'nai Mitzvah Class)

Students will continue to develop their Hebrew language skills. They will start a unit on Mishnah (Pirkei Avot) and Midrash to learn how the Torah inspired the development of commentary and related literature. They will also study a unit on Jewish literacy and prepare for a final examination on basic knowledge of Bible, Shabbat, Tefillah and holidays.

Goals

Students will:

- Continue their study of Hebrew language both as a modern means of expression and as a vehicle for prayer
- Demonstrate mastery of Tefillot (prayers) and B'rachot (blessings) associated with Shabbat service
- Examine their own lives and seek personal meaning in Torah and related text
- Discuss and participate in making ethical choices using Jewish values as a lens
- Define what is the meaning of living Jewishly