

TEMPLE SINAI RELIGIOUS SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Dear Prospective Parents & Students,

For many, Religious School at Temple Sinai of Sharon is their main contact with Judaism. It is the place where we first learn about the holidays, to sound out Hebrew letters, and to start grasping a bit of our long history. It is also a place where life-long friendships can be born

The goal of our Religious School is to enculturate a young person into the life of the synagogue. We do this by a) teaching prayer and ritual skills so that the student can walk into any synagogue anywhere and feel that they belong, and b) by creating memories and using vocabulary so that the student has positive memories of what it feels like to be Jewish. This is a tall order. We teach Hebrew, holidays, and history, and we try to do so in a fun, engaging way. Hopefully, when our young people grow up, they can join in the prayer service, remember what it was like to be in the sukkah, and have great memories of running around our social hall at our Field Day and Israel Day festivities.

Our teachers wear their hearts on their sleeves and try to communicate love of Judaism not just with what they teach but who they are. And yet, even with this huge emotional investment, we know that at best, our Religious School only gives a child one-fourth of what they need to have a solid Jewish identity. The other three pieces are: celebrating Shabbat and holidays as a family both at services and at home, attending a Jewish camp, and going on a trip to Israel. We do our twenty-five percent best, and we try to give you the tools to do the other three parts as well.

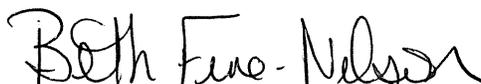
Please review the following pages for a comprehensive view of our curriculum. If you have any additional questions about our program please feel free to contact our administration and clergy.

We look forward to the opportunity to make some wonderful memories together at our synagogue.

Shalom,



Rabbi Joseph Meszler



Beth Fine-Nelson
Director of Education

CONTACT INFORMATION

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GRADES K-2

Students begin their Jewish studies by attending school once a week for 1 hour and 30 minutes. The main objective at this level is to provide enjoyable learning experiences, which will create pleasurable associations and identification with Judaism. The emphasis is on customs and rituals in the Jewish home as well as holiday observances in the synagogue. The students also learn Jewish and Hebrew songs with our Cantor.

Kindergarten (Gan) and 1st Grade (Aleph):

Students in **Kindergarten (Gan) & First Grade (Aleph)** learn about the synagogue, its symbols and various ritual objects. Children take a trip to the Sanctuary and learn what we see and why we go there. They learn how to celebrate holidays with blessings and ceremonies. Students are also introduced to home rituals and customs including a special family education program that focuses on bedtime rituals and a chance to make your own mezuzah.

There focus is on God & Mitzvot. Children are given a basic introduction to God and learn about Jewish values such as tzedakkah and the concept of a mitzvah. Family Education focuses on Shabbat and making your own Friday night ritual objects. Holiday celebrations focus on the symbols of each holiday. There is also an introduction to Hebrew with colorful pamphlets that teach the letter and make a connection through a Hebrew word. For example- gimmel=glida=ice cream (serve ice cream as a snack)

NEW THIS YEAR: Jewish & Me Series – The students will explore the holidays and mitzvot using 4 page folders that encourage hands on learning. Students will explore the basics, get up and move, build Jewish identity, and discover the joys of our Jewish tradition

Grade 2 (Bet):

Hebrew: The children formally begin their Hebrew education by working with the book Ready, Set...Go Alef Bet! It is the only Hebrew per-primer with an integrated digital companion. It prepares young students to decode by teaching all 32 letters and vowels. This is part of the five-level Alef bet-Quest/Kol Yisrael series that takes students seamlessly from letter recognition through B'nai mitzvah prep.

Judaic: The students will receive an introduction to all things Jewish through the Let's Explore Being Jewish series. This is a set of 7 magazines that touch on such topics as Mitzvot, The Bible, Israel people and places, The Synagogue, Jewish symbols and Life Cycle. It will answer such questions as: Why is Israel important to the Jewish people? Why must we be kind to animals? What happens at a Jewish wedding? How do we dress a Torah?

The students will also be partaking in the **Jewish Holiday Treasure Trail**. The students are invited to join Daniel and his Israeli cousin Rivkah along with the Prophet Elijah as they explore the Jewish holidays. We follow them as they travel through time and space, encountering people and places as old as the Bible and as new as Modern Israel. At the ancient Temple, they witness the Hanukkah miracle of the oil. Right before Passover, they cross the Sea of Reeds with the children of Israel. Readers are invited to go on-line and explore www.ElijahRocks.net for holiday games, activities and blessings to share with their family.

GRADES 3-6

Students in grades 3-6 attend school twice a week: 2 hours on Sunday morning, and 2 hours on a weekday afternoon. One hour of each day is spent on Judaica, and the other is spent on Hebrew. The curriculum also includes a prayer service of about 20 minutes each Sunday, and a music lesson of about 15 minutes on the weekday.

Grade 3 (Gimmel),

JUDAIC: The students are introduced to the Jewish concept of God and the importance of God to Judaism through the reading of various Bible Stories and doing crafts and activities to reinforce what is learned. (Holidays are reviewed through holiday-related stories and all school activities)

NEW THIS YEAR: Great Israel Scavenger Hunt – This book takes Rivkah and her cousin Daniel across Israel on an adventure in search of special objects. They are using a letter from their grandfather that gives clues for the “hunt”. The students have begun a two year program that focus’ on building their Jewish identity. This series introduces students to core experiences that are essential to developing a strong Jewish identity. It uses stories, interviews, and activities to explore the ethical teachings, laws, language, rituals, and symbols to help create a distinctive Jewish worldview. The focus for this year will be on Community and Sacred Time-The Jewish calendar and Life Cycle. Community involves how the history, stories and practices shape our identity and how they play a part in it. The sacred Time portion identifies the ways in which identity comes from living actively according to Jewish time- Shabbat, cycle of holidays, and life cycle events and develop and understanding of how time is an important and sacred part of Jewish life.

HEBREW: Students are expected to know their letters and vowels (although we are skill based and will place accordingly)

Students formally begin Hebrew reading with the text book Alef Bet Quest. This is the first multi-media Hebrew primer that fully integrates text-based lessons with computer software-teaches the students to decode Hebrew while it sends them on a guided digital adventure through Israel! Students learn Hebrew vowels and letters from key Jewish cultural words as well as everyday Hebrew words. Students can practice with on-line video games that reinforce their skills. See on-line demo at www.alefbetquest.com Student’s are introduced to writing Hebrew script this year as well as basic prayers. Preparation for the Grade 3 Siyum Ha’Sefer Ceremony (receive their own prayer book) becomes a highlight of the year. Family Education programs include a Shabbat component, service and dinner and a social action project.

Grade 4 (Dalet),

JUDAIC: The students will learn what happens after Moses brings them to the Promised Land through the Early Prophetic Books of the Bible (Joshua, Judges, Samuel I and II) these are read and discussed and there are a variety of methods used to check for understanding such as bibliodrama, crafts, dioramas, games, murals, etc. Family Education includes a B'simcha service and dinner, field trips, and a social action project.

NEW this Year: The 4th grade will begin to think about Jewish values and how they relate to their daily lives. They will be using material that will focus on Being a Good Friend and getting answers to such questions as How Can I Be a Good Friend? How is Gossip Dangerous? What is peer pressure?

Students also learn about the holidays through all school activities.

HEBREW

A continued concentration on proper Hebrew reading is stressed throughout the year. Students begin Hebrew comprehension with a Hebrew prayer track of books called "Kol Yisrael " which include interactive CD-ROM's to assist in the learning process. This series continues through the 6th grade year. Students learn to read and chant the Friday night Kiddush, Sh'ma, and V'ahavta, prayers as well as start learning Ashrei. Students continue practicing their Hebrew script writing.

Grade 5 (Hey),

JUDAIC: The theme is "Am Yisrael / Eretz Yisrael" or "The People of Israel / the Land of Israel". Students learn about the historical development of modern Israel, its cities, lifestyles and the importance of Israel to the Jewish people. In addition, our students participate in the Boston-Haifa Connection program with our partner school Ramot in Haifa, Israel. The program focuses on Jewish identity and creates a more personal connection between our students and those in Haifa. They exchange projects throughout the year and participate in a videoconference regularly as well as a pen pal e-mail program. There will be a service and dinner as well as a social action project.

They will also be looking at "Our Shared World" which has an emphasis on community, justice, mutual responsibility and repairing the world. The hope is that with the beginning of these discussions they will have a better understanding of how Jewish Values can play an important part in the way they think and live their lives as part of the greater community.

HEBREW: The students focus on the prayers of the Amidah, including the Avot v'imahot, G'vurot, and K'dushah. In addition, our students continue to learn Ashrei and how to sing Hatikvah. Continue to build on vocabulary and script writing.

Grade 6 (Vav),

JUDAIC: our Judaica piece is entitled "**Torah, Life, and Me.**" The first part of the year focuses on three approaches, corresponding with three Family Education programs preparing our children for Bar/Bat Mitzvah. The students begin studying the "greatest hits" of the Torah in translation, so that by the time they start studying to give their d'var Torah, they are well prepared. Students also look at how life cycle events are commemorated in Judaism, putting Bar/Bat Mitzvah in the continuum of birth, education, marriage, and remembrance. Field trips include a visit to Mayyim Hayyim, a liberal mikveh in Newton, and the Baker Street cemetery.

"Our Place in the Universe" is a new text book that we will use in the 6th grade. The students can now explore connections between what they believe and how they live by looking at environmentalism through a Jewish lens. Students will consider modern dilemmas including climate change, conservation and other environmental issues. They will develop and foster their critical thinking skills using Jewish texts, ideas and practices, using the powerful tool of a reflective journal.

NEW this year: Mitzvot with a focus on Tikun Olam (Repairing the World). The students will work towards a culminating activity called "Making a Difference Day".

HEBREW: Reading and chanting skills continue to be learned. Students study the Torah and Haftarah blessings, as well as the Kaddish. They polish all of the prayers that have been learned in previous years. They will complete Kol Yisrael 3 and move onto conversation if prayers are mastered.

GRADE 7

In 7th grade, students meet once a week (Monday afternoon), but cover 2 Judaic subjects.

The **Seventh Grade (Zayin)** curriculum is made up of two courses. The first, entitled "**Jewish History – The Modern Jewish Experience**", introduces students to the history, beliefs, and lifestyle of the Jews of Eastern Europe and its virtual destruction, anti-semitism, and the onset of the Holocaust. Students also learn about the birth of American Jewry and the creation of the State of Israel. Field trips include visiting the Holocaust Memorial in downtown Boston. **NEW THIS YEAR: Special "Artist-in-Residence Program" with Rosette Becker. Integrating and using art in teaching the Holocaust.**

In its second year: The Rabbi will spend about 20 minutes each week doing a range of activities including minyan, tefillah wrapping, current events, "ask the Rabbi", etc.

The second course is entitled "**Jewish Values**". Topics will be based on Jewish texts, activities, and five different categories ranging from holidays, to community. This will be a more informal, discussion, and activity based curriculum. **NEW THIS YEAR: There will be guest speakers visiting over the year in the class. The speakers will share how Jewish Ethics influences the decisions and interactions in their workplace.**

GRADES 8-10 – HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM

The Hebrew High School is implementing a new program this year called the 4 T's. We understand that our students are pulled in many different directions, but still have the desire to stay connected to their Judaism and Temple Sinai. With this in mind we have developed the 4 T's Track System. Students will have an opportunity to choose either one track or as many tracks as they would like to follow. They will also have the ability to mix and match to fit their schedules and sports seasons. The tracks include **Traditional Learning, Tikkun Olam** (Telem or social service projects of their choice), **Tefillah** (stay connected through services) and **TASTY** (Teenage Association of Sharon Temple Youth). The goal of this program is to help keep our post B'nai Mitzvah students connected to their Judaism and at the same time enable them to have a positive learning experience.

Traditional Learning- This is the Tuesday night program that meets from 6:30-8:00 p.m. with 45 minutes spent in a core class and 45 minutes in electives that change per semester and are the student's choice. Some past classes have been Sephardic cooking, Jewish playwrights, Is Harry Potter Jewish?, American Sign Language, Current Events, and Israel and the Holocaust, just to name a few. The students must complete a series of credits in order to eventually be confirmed at a Shavuot service in 10th grade.

8th Grade: "This Week, Tonight"... *Finding Ourselves in parashat ha'shavu'ah* 8th grade students will explore current events in the context of the timeless cycle of engaging with central themes in the weekly *Torah* portion. They will read, translate, and analyze verses from the *Chumash*. Important narrative, moral, ethical and legislative themes will be clarified and discussed. Then, the *Torah* text will be brought to bear on a recent issue in current American or Israeli culture, politics, or economics relevant to students' lives.

9th Grade: "If I am not for Myself..." Our 9th grade course focuses on issues of character, self-esteem, sexuality, and identity. Judaism has long had a history of discussing *middot*, values of personal conduct. As Hillel said 2000 years ago, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, what am I? If not now, when?" We hope that our young people will be able to see the synagogue as a safe place of discovery when confronting issues of personal ethics. In addition, we help students make personal and meaningful connections between Israel and their own Jewish identity.

10th Grade/Confirmation: "Jewish Ethics in the 21st Century" Students study with Rabbi Meszler during their confirmation year. They address the Jewish view of social issues such as abortion, the death penalty, war, and the environment. The course includes a long weekend in Washington, DC with the Religious Action of Reform Judaism's *L'Taken* seminar to learn about social justice and advocacy, including actual lobbying visits on Capitol Hill. Students lead the Confirmation service on Erev Shavuot, the holiday that recalls the giving of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai.

Tikkun Olam- This track will include our volunteer program Telem. Telem meets on Thursdays twice a month. A bus picks the students up at both the Sharon Middle and High School and transports them to the Westfield Child Care Center. The students spend time discussing a Jewish topic on mitzvot and then volunteer with the children. Some of the volunteer activities include homework help, reading, and playing active games.

If Telem does not fit into your schedule then you have the option of designing your own social service track (approved by the Director of Education). You would be required to log the hours

worked and check in monthly with the Director of Education, as well as submit a monthly assessment of the experience and what it meant to you. Some possible places to volunteer are School on Wheels, Cradles to Crayons, SPCA, Moose Hill Farm, House of Possibilities, Main Spring and Jewish Family Table. (Minimum of 30 hours over the course of the school year)

Tefillah – This track enables the student to stay connected through prayer services. The student will be asked to participate in at least one worship service monthly. The Rabbi will work out a plan with the individual student if they choose this track.

Some opportunities may include:

- *Rosh Hashanah services (Torah reading/recite prayers)
- *Yom Kippur
- *Simchat Torah
- *Reading your Torah portion on the anniversary of your Bar/Bat Mitzvah
- *Megillah reading at the Purim Service
- *Participate at B'Simcha (monthly family Shabbat)
- *Help with the school Sunday morning *minyana* (30 minute interactive musical service)

TASTY – This track is the high school youth group that meets every Tuesday at 5:30 p.m. in the Youth Lounge. The Temple Sinai group is an active group that plans and participates in local activities as well as at a regional level (NFTY). Illyse Habbe is our Youth Director and she can be reached at illyse@msn.com

TELEM PROGRAM

As part of the high school program, students may choose a special social action track (TELEM) as an alternative to or in addition to the standard 8th and 9th grade classes. 10th graders are welcome, but must participate in Tuesday evening classes in order to be confirmed. 11th & 12th graders are also welcome in addition to or replacement of the Post-Confirmation class.

TELEM is a Jewish service learning program which integrates community service with learning, reflection, and opportunities to effect real change. In addition to doing community service, participants learn about Jewish values and social justice issues connected to their volunteer work. Currently Temple Sinai offers the Mentoring track through a partnership with the Greater Boston Jewish Coalition for Literacy, and the Westfield Daycare Center in Brockton.

Other possible tracks, available through the South Area TELEM Youth Program, include Connecting Generations, Hunger & Homelessness, and Special Needs. Please contact the Religious School Office for additional information.