

BETH CHAI SUNDAY SCHOOL
CURRICULUM OVERVIEW
Six Points of Jewish Learning

The Beth Chai Sunday School offers a Jewish education to students from pre-K through the 7th grade B'nai Mitzvah program, and continuing with a post-Mitzvah group. Our core goals are for students to identify as Jews and to feel connected to the Jewish people, empowered as Jews to make an impact in the world.

The curriculum is organized around six themes that are wound through each grade level. In addition, the Mitzvah year includes a 13 Values Capstone Project that weaves ideas presented throughout the curriculum.

All-school events include a Sukkot festival, Hanukkah party and community work day at A Wider Circle, as well as our regular all-school assembly from 9:30 to 10 a.m.

Our major themes are:

Kehilla: Community

Students will understand that as Jews and as humanists, they are connected to the people around them. Students will appreciate the intricate network of connections in their lives: congregation, nation and our multi-faceted Jewish world.

Mishpacha: Family

Students will appreciate the core role that family plays in the Jewish experience and how Judaism celebrates family connection through life-cycle events. They will understand that the diversity of the modern Judaism is something to be celebrated.

Tikkun Olam: Repair the World

Students will feel empowered, as Jews and as humanists, to act and make an impact on the world. They will gain an understanding of the multitude ways they can make an impact, including through Tzedakah, direct action or advocacy.

Simcha: Celebration

Students will understand and appreciate the meaning, traditions, values and themes of major Jewish holidays. They will explore how Judaism celebrates connection through these celebrations.

Limud: Study

Students will appreciate texts and history as central to the Jewish experience and communal identity. They will be able to identify major moments in Jewish history and

important texts in Jewish literary history and will think critically about those texts and history. They will understand their own family's history as part of the greater history of the Jewish people.

Yisrael: Israel

Students will understand that Israel is the Jewish state, will feel a connection and appreciation for Israeli culture and learn to think critically about modern-day controversies. They will understand the deep and complex bond between Diaspora and Israeli Jews.

Each grade will touch each theme in an age appropriate way. We aim to take each class on a field trip each year that will amplify one or more of the lessons.

Here's an overview of how each grade will approach each theme. This is not a comprehensive list of topics covered, but a sense of the major points for each class.

Pre-K/K/1st grade:

Kehilla: Community

Our youngest students will focus on the community closest to them: Beth Chai. Through story books, they will explore how communities support one another and through a video project, they will interview their parents and others at Beth Chai about what makes it special.

Mishpacha: Family

The class will learn about Jewish naming traditions. They will research their own Hebrew and/or secular names and how it connects them to their families. Activities include making a name sign or necklace and learning how to introduce yourself in Hebrew.

Limud: Study

The class will explore the Jewish objects that they can find at home and how these objects connect them to the Jewish community. Activities include students making their own mezuzah and writing their own personal statements inside. The students will also visit Rabbi Cohen's home to see the Jewish objects that she has and to hear the stories behind them. The students will also be introduced to early Torah stories.

Tikkun Olam:

The class will be introduced to the definition of "Tzedakah" as giving to those with greater needs. The students will each create a Tzedakah box. They will learn about

Noah's ark in the context of caring for animals. Then, the class will engage in a class Tzedakah project to give to an organization that works with animals.

Simcha: Celebration

Through stories, hand-on projects and more, the students will learn themes of major Jewish holidays. Activities include making challah covers, baking challah, making Hamantashen for Purim, and a honey taste test for Rosh Hashana.

Yisrael: Israel

The class will go on a mini "tour" of Israel, learning about three or four landmarks such as the Dead Sea, the Western Wall and the Tel Aviv beaches.

Field Trip: Visit to Rabbi Cohen's house to see and discuss traditional Jewish items

Grades 2-3:

Kehilla: Community

The students will explore how community binds the generations together. Together, the class will prepare for and participate in singing or other volunteer activity at a senior home in Rockville.

Mishpacha: Family

The students will learn about one's own family and family history, including creating a simple family tree. They also will learn about the first family of Judaism

Limud: Study

The class will explore the difference between folklore and history. They will learn the story of the first and second temples in Jerusalem, and how surviving Western Wall still stands. Students will participate in a mock archeological dig.

Tikkun Olam:

The mitzvah of Bikur Holim, visiting the sick, is a central part of the 2 and 3 grade curriculum. The class will also participate in gift drive during Hanukkah

Simcha: Celebration

Students will learn about themes and symbols of the different holidays: The Shofar and its meaning and history (Rosh Hashanah), meaning of the dreidel and make your own (Hanukkah), create Shabbat boxes with kiddish cup, Challah cover and possibly candles (Shabbat)

Yisrael

The students will study Kibbutz life, including benefits and challenges of communal living

Field Trip: To senior apartment building to perform/volunteer

Grade 4:

Kehilla: Community

The students will research Jews who are role models, then plan and execute a Living Museum where students research and then dress up as famous Jewish person who has made contributions to our world.

Mishpacha: Family

The class will learn about Jewish marriage customs and make a “friendship Ketubah” - focus on Middot/values that makes good friendship

Limud: Study

The students will learn about the destruction of the Temple and term Diaspora, and the impact of both on Jewish life. They will explore two of the most important Diaspora communities - Shetyl life in Eastern Europe and the Golden Age of Spain

Tikkun Olam:

Students will explore the Mitzvah of Hachnasat Orchim - welcoming the stranger. Discuss how this mitzvah grows out of the Jewish historical experience of Diaspora. Discuss how this applies to refugee crisis today.

Simcha: Celebration

Holiday exploration this year will include Sephardic Food and symbols (Rosh Hashanah); discussion of Sandy Koufax's decision not to play baseball on Yom Kippur; Ushpizim - guests in the sukkah - who would the students invite? (Sukkot); learn about and create Sedar plates (Passover); introduce idea of Shavuot

Yisrael

Students will learn about Israeli's high tech culture in the context of the self-reliance and inventiveness of being a diaspora people. An Israeli involved in the High Tech world will visit. How does Israel's position politically and geographically in the world lead to its inventiveness? How does today's high tech world relate to the kibbutz culture of the past?

Field Trip: Jewish museum in Baltimore or DC

Grade 5:

Kehilla: Community

The class will learn about the social service and advocacy work in the American and Israeli Jewish communities. They will create an organizational fair with presentations for various participants and vote on which to support. (See also Tikkum Olam) Values clarification--what should our priorities be in giving?

Mishpacha: Family

The students will discuss Shalom HaBayit ("peace in the home") and the challenges for fulfilling it. Conflict resolution. Can Judaism apply to issues like sibling rivalry and conflict with parents?

Limud: Study

The class will focus on American Jewish history, including the major waves of immigration to the U.S.; history of Ellis Island; anti-Semitism and acceptance of Jews in America; Jewish immigrant experience in America. There will be a family project on personal immigration stories.

Tikkun Olam:

The students will learn about Maimonides' ladder of tzedakah, its rationale and implications. They will evaluate Tzedakah opportunities using Maimonides ladder and choose a class project based on this rubric

Simcha: Celebration

The class will study holidays from a variety of angles, including a Class tashlich trip to a stream (Rosh Hashanah); class debate: to fast or not to fast (Yom Kippur); identity masks (Purim)

Yisrael

The students will focus on the early history of modern Israel, including key moments and people in creation of the state of Israel. Major waves of immigration to Israel.

Field Trip: Family trip to NYC- Ellis Island and Lower East Side tenement museum

Grade 6:

Kehilla: Community

The class will explore: What does mean to belong to a community? What are our obligations to the community?

Mishpacha:Family

Class discussions will focus on Kavod Av v'em, honoring our parents and the guidelines and challenges for its implementation. Sophisticated family tree. Learn about B'nai Mitzvah process-- expectations and concerns

Limud:Study

Students will explore the Jewish legacy of social justice, Jewish heroes and heroines of the Civil Rights movement. The roots of Jewish Humanism.

Tikkun Olam:

The class will learn about Rodef Shalom (pursuit of peace) as a central value of Judaism and humanism.

Simcha: Celebration

Personal goal writing for coming year (Yom Kippur); gift drive (Hanukkah); look at water rights in the Arab-Israeli conflict (Tu B'Shevat); A look at Vashti--who is the real heroine? (Purim); modern plagues (Passover); class Shabbat dinner with Rabbi Cohen (Shabbat)

Yisrael

The class will explore the root issues and conflicting narratives that have lead to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Students will learn that the situation is complicated with no easy answers. Exposure to hopeful initiatives such as Seeds of Peace

Field Trip: National Museum of African American History and Culture

Grade 7:

Kehilla: Community

The class will explore the diversity of the modern Jewish world and build an understanding different movements and approaches to Judaism, including how Jewish Humanism fits into the tablau

Mishpacha:Family

Along with their parents, students will learn about Jewish mourning practices and end of life issues

Limud:Study

Utilizing the ADL's Echos and Reflections curriculum, the students will gain an overview of the Holocaust including the social forces at play, a timeline of what happened, resistance efforts and literature/art from victims. We will: Consider how we remember

the victims and memorialize them; understand anti-Semitism as an age-old issue and discuss tactics for combating it today; consider the current trend towards Holocaust denial and how to address it; and consider how the experience of the Holocaust has shaped the Jewish community and its reaction to racism and prejudice of all kinds.

Tikkun Olam:

Tikkun olam in the 7th grade will be very hands on. The class will choose a class social action or community service program, or individual projects

Simcha: Celebration

Process of Teshuvah - are you required to forgive? What if somebody refuses to forgive you? (Yom Kippur); being Jewish as a minority (Hanukkah); Lead model seder for K&1 (Passover)

Yisrael

Students will learn about modern social issues in Israel: Who is a Jew? Who can marry? Who must serve in Army?

Field trips: University of Maryland Hillel; U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum

13 Values Capstone Project

Each 7th grader will demonstrate an appreciation for what s/he has learned in Sunday school with individual and class activities around Jewish Humanist values. Students will choose 13 values--either from this list, or others that are meaningful to you—and find a way to demonstrate them. Here are some values to choose from, as well as examples of activities that one might choose (these are just ideas—come up with your own!):

Tikkun Olam, Tzedekah, Limud/Study, Israel, Forgiveness, Celebration, Debate, Community, Caring, History, Identity, Culture, Reflection, Remembrance, Family, Equality, Justice

Some examples of ways students might demonstrate each value in action: for Culture, help cook a Jewish meal; for Caring, write a letter to someone who needs some special attention; for Forgiveness, offer forgiveness to someone who has hurt you, or ask for forgiveness to someone you have hurt