



Am Yisrael
School of Jewish Studies (SJS) Manual
2019–2020 (5780)

Am Yisrael Conservative Congregation

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<https://www.amyisrael.org/>

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<https://www.amyisrael.org/sjs-calendar.html>

Welcome to Am Yisrael SJS

Our goal is to have every person who enters our synagogue and school have a meaningful Jewish experience which will inspire him or her to want to learn more. Each year of Jewish learning builds upon the previous one. Throughout these years, the relationships between the students, their family members and our clergy, faculty and staff are at the core of how these experiences are created.

The *siddur* (prayer book) has been around for almost 1,000 years and we aim to make it relevant today. The *Tanakh* (Hebrew Bible) is considered by many to be the best-selling book in the history of the world. Our students learn moral and ethical values from it in various stages at Am Yisrael. The Jewish holidays, including Shabbat and commemorations are community-building events that build Jewish identity within our congregational community. Israel is our Jewish homeland and is a cornerstone of our entire existence as a people. Performing *tikkun olam* (repairing the world) allows us to fulfill Rabbi Hillel's statement in Talmud Tractate Shabbat 31a: "You want to learn a great deal quickly, don't you? Very well, I shall teach you the Torah while standing on one foot. This is our Holy Torah: 'What is hateful to you, do not do until others...Does it mean that we must be kind to one another like brothers (and sisters)? That's it, my son (or my daughter). That's the meaning of the whole Torah. All the rest is only an explanation of that. Go, go, my son (or my daughter). Go and study it,'" said Rabbi Hillel kindly.

I take great pride in being a part of the teaching and mentoring process at Am Yisrael and I am therefore rarely at my desk during the time that our students are in class sessions. The office staff always know how to reach me. My mobile phone 847-708-1805 and email csherman@amyisrael.org are generally the two best ways to reach me. With that said, the synagogue office is open on weekdays from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., (closing at 3:00 p.m. during Daylight Savings time) and on Sundays from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. during the school year. I am typically not in the office on Thursdays. The synagogue's office is closed on Shabbat and religious holidays and we do not use the phone or respond to emails on those days except for emergencies.

Thank you for partnering with us and we look forward to sharing many outstanding experiences with you and yours.

B'Shalom,



Charlie Sherman, MAEd, CJE,
Head of School

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I. At A Glance

Class	Dates of Week	Starting Time	Ending Time
Torah Tots with a Twist (Infant-3.5 years with accompanying adult)	Sundays	9:30 a.m.	10:30 a.m.
Gan (3.5-6 years)	Sundays	9:15 a.m.	12:15 p.m.
Alef/Bet (1 st -2 nd Grades)	Sundays	9:15 a.m.	12:15 p.m.
Gimel (3 rd Grade), Dalet (4 th Grade), Hei (5 th Grade), Vav (6 th Grade) & Zayin (7 th Grade)	Sundays	9:15 a.m.	12:15 p.m.
Gimel (3 rd Grade), Dalet (4 th Grade), Hei (5 th Grade), Vav (6 th Grade) & Zayin (7 th Grade)	Wednesdays	4:15 p.m.	6:15 p.m.

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Prozdor* (8 th Grade), Pardes* (9 th -10 th Grades) & Tichon* (11 th & 12 th Grades)	Sundays	10:30 a.m.	12:15 p.m.
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- ❖ Many of our Prozdor, Pardes and Tichon students serve as Madrichim and begin their work at 9:00 a.m. on Sundays and 4:00 p.m. on Wednesdays as noted in the addendums to their contracts. On the dates that they are not assigned to work, their only formal time as students is from 10:30 a.m.-12:15 p.m. on Sundays.

Shabbat Family Programming (SFP): An essential part of our education and takes place approximately once a month on the following Saturday mornings from 9:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Kiddush Lunch follows SFP.

- ❖ Saturday, November 16, 2019
 - ❖ Saturday, December 14, 2019
 - ❖ Saturday, January 25, 2020
 - ❖ Saturday, February 22, 2020
 - ❖ Saturday, April 25, 2020
 - ❖ Saturday, May 30, 2020 (Shavuot)
- ❖ For a concise outline of SFP, please go to this link:

<https://www.amyisrael.org/shabbat-family-programming-sfp.html>

- ❖ On Shabbat mornings, services in the Main Sanctuary end at approximately 12:00 p.m. and all who attend services are welcome to join us in the Social Hall immediately following services for Kiddush lunch.

PJ Shabbat: Geared toward our 2nd Grade and younger with an accompanying adult(s). It provides an additional opportunity to gain familiarity with our synagogue and to enjoy Shabbat in a meaningful way. PJ Shabbat takes place once per quarter on Friday evenings from 5:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m. Pizza dinner is included. Older siblings are always welcome!

- ❖ Friday, August 16, 2019
- ❖ Friday, November 8, 2019
- ❖ Friday, February 28, 2020
- ❖ Friday, May 22, 2020

We will update the flyers on the PJ Shabbat for signups several weeks prior to each PJ Shabbat:

<https://www.amyisrael.org/pj>

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2. Mission Statement

The Am Yisrael School of Jewish Studies (SJS) is committed to creating a warm and nurturing environment in order to transmit a positive and meaningful religious and moral identity to its students. Following the guidelines of the Conservative Movement, we are committed to being a progressive Jewish learning community that aims to instill Jewish literacy, a sense of belonging to the Jewish people and encourage lifelong Jewish learning.

A. Guiding Principles: Virtues and values are of central importance to everything we do at SJS. The way we act; who we are; what we stand for; how we respond; how we view life and the world around us; our personal qualities, attributes and traits – all these reflect the degree to which we embrace our Jewish values: (1) The recognition that each human being is created in God's image. (2) The prohibition of passivity when it comes to saving life - the highest obligation that overrides nearly every other law. (3) The need to act with kindness and mercy towards all God's created beings. (4) The obligation to act respectfully towards others and preserve their human dignity. (5) The habit of seeking peaceful resolution of conflicts. (6) The undertaking of activities to repair an imperfect world. (7) The duty to meet the needs of others.

B. Top 10 goals for our learners: (1) Teaching them to appreciate Jewish values. (2) Helping them acquire the skills and absorb the attitudes necessary to engage in Jewish prayer. (3) Demonstrating how to reflect on Jewish moral and ethical values. (4) Illustrating the value of the legacies and lessons of the Jewish past. (5) Teaching the understanding and lasting importance of the teachings and lessons of the Hebrew Bible (*TaNakh*). (6) Recognizing the significance of the Hebrew language. (7) Imparting the importance of the State of Israel and taking pride in its accomplishments. (8) Building a sense of belonging to the Jewish people and an awareness of the challenges we face and how to do our best to overcome them. (9) Experiencing the importance of the social services provided by the local and global Jewish community. (10) Cherishing the customs and rituals associated with Jewish holidays, Shabbat and life cycle events.

C. How we reach our Top 10 Goals: (1) Through the use of dynamic curricula, educators and modes of learning that reach today's learners to make Judaism meaningful to our lives. (2) By providing a solid foundation of Hebrew reading skills and giving our students a level of comfort with these skills. (3) Studying the Torah and other Jewish texts and/or narratives, deciphering their meanings and applying these lessons to our lives. (4) Analyzing Jewish figures from the past, present and future and making sense of what they teach us. (5) Emphasizing the power and importance of lifelong Torah and Haftarah study. (6) Teaching the meaning of recurring Hebrew words throughout their years at SJS, including prefixes and suffixes. (7) By bringing the sights, sounds and culture of our Jewish homeland Israel to our congregation Am Yisrael through poignant short video clips, shared anecdotes, singing, commemorating and celebrating Israel. (8) Teaching our Jewish history incrementally throughout the SJS years. (9) Encouraging our learners to become passionate about *tikkun olam*. (10) Demonstrating the joy of chanting and/or reading from our sacred Torah scroll and becoming actively familiar with as many Jewish rituals, celebrations and commemorations as possible.

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3. Faculty & Staff 2019–2020 (5780)

<https://www.amyisrael.org/about-our-faculty.html>

Clergy and Staff	Email Addresses
Rabbi Debra Newman Kamin	rabbink@amyisrael.org
Cantor Stuart Simon	cantorsimon@amyisrael.org
Nancy Holab Nevins, Executive Director	nhnevins@amyisrael.org
Charlie Sherman, Head of School	csherman@amyisrael.org
Elliot Lefkovitz, Adult Education Coordinator	elefkovitz@amyisrael.org
Bryan Bogucki, Building and Grounds Supervisor	bbogucki@amyisrael.org
Gleivy deSouza, Administrative Assistant	gdesouza@amyisrael.org
Myra Feinberg, Assistant to the Rabbi	mfeinberg@amyisrael.org
Sandra Mieli Kamm, Youth Director	smielikamm@amyisrael.org

Faculty	Email Addresses
Mr. Allan Arnet	aarnet@amyisrael.org
Mr. Dennis Gelbart	dgelbart@amyisrael.org
Morah Annie Glasser	aglasser@ramahwisconsin.com
Morah Sandra Mieli Kamm	smielikamm@amyisrael.org
Mrs. Tikva Moustakis	tmoustakis@amyisrael.org
Mr. E. Marc Nevins	mnevins@amyisrael.org
Ms. Mindee Pinto	mpinto@amyisrael.org
Ms. Sara Preis	spreis@amyisrael.org
Ms. Diane Rosenfeld	drosenfeld@amyisrael.org
Mr. Marc Sender	msender@amyisrael.org
Mrs. Shira Sender	ssender@amyisrael.org
Ms. Sheila Serota	sserota@amyisrael.org
Hazzan Lawrence Szenes-Strauss	lszenesstrauss@amyisrael.org
Morah Aviva Tilles	atilles@amyisrael.org
Mrs. Laura Wald	lwald@amyisrael.org
Morah Lynn Washer	lwasher@amyisrael.org
Morah Myra Weisberg	myraw28@aol.com

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4. Policies

- A. Allergies:** We do our best to ensure a safe environment for children who are allergic to nuts. However, we cannot guarantee a nut-free environment. Parents who have students with allergies are expected to give Mr. Sherman a detailed allergy plan, similar to what is handed in at a student's public/private school. We will talk through the specifics and when appropriate confidentially share it with the faculty and staff.
- B. Attendance:** Please be in direct communication with Mr. Sherman and your student's teacher(s) to communicate each absence via email, text or phone call in advance when possible. Prompt and regular attendance is required. Students who fall short of this standard will need to make up work on a case-by-case basis. Students who miss class due to a religious obligation in another synagogue, youth or mitzvah activities will be granted an excused absence when a note of explanation is provided by a parent or guardian and is not to exceed six sessions.
- C. Behavioral Expectations:** Appropriate behavior is expected at Am Yisrael SJS. Our expectation is that our School of Jewish Studies is an environment where our students are able to thrive in their learning experiences. Teachers, together with students, will set specific classroom behavior expectations. Mr. Sherman and/or the teachers communicate with parents if issues arise. Every effort is made to establish a pattern of mutual respect. Our teachers have a protocol for filling out incident report forms when inappropriate issues take place. Parents are notified as to the steps taken to rectify the situation in a timely fashion.
- D. Dress:** The way one dresses is an important form of self-expression and has an impact on the learning environment. As an egalitarian congregational school, those who identify as male are required to wear a *kipah* within the synagogue and school buildings. Those who identify as female are welcome to wear *kipot* as well. We ask students and madrichim to bring their own *kipot*. If they do not have *kipot*, we will provide them. All post-B'nai Mitzvah students are expected to wear a *tallit* (prayer shawl) during morning prayer services and on the eve of Yom Kippur. From the time of B'nai Mitzvah, everyone is encouraged to wear *tefillin* when at services any morning other than Shabbat or holidays. We have several extra *tallitot* and *tefillin* for those who do not have their own. Our faculty and staff remind students and madrichim of the blessings and the way to put on these religious articles if they forget. **The following clothing items are strictly prohibited at our synagogue and school:** shirts that show midriff, low rising jeans, short skirts or shorts (length must reach fingertips with hands at sides), low-cut shirts, clothing with holes, dirty clothing, clothing with inappropriate messages on it.
- E. Drop Off:** Students are dropped off promptly to arrive in time for the start of each SJS session. Those who drop off for our Bet (2nd Grade) and younger classes may escort students to their classrooms. Please let Mr. Bogucki know if you are dropping off a student in one of these primary grades and he will show you where to park your vehicle. All students in Gimel (3rd Grade) and older must be dropped off in the circular driveway following Mr. Bogucki and/or his staff's directions.
- F. Electronic Device Policy, Updated July 2018:** We have spent a great deal of time discussing electronic devices with parents, students, faculty, staff and colleagues at other synagogues. Our policy is consistent with policies at local public, private and congregational schools in the area. In order to maintain a proper learning environment at Am Yisrael SJS, all students' and madrichim's electronic devices, such as cell/smartphones, mp3 players, hand-held gaming devices and tablets must be powered

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off during SJS hours, including times in-between class periods. All classrooms have a copy of SJS parent's phone numbers, so that teachers may reach parents if necessary. Any exception to this policy must be approved in advance by Mr. Sherman. Devices found to be in use will be held until the end of that SJS session. Repeat occurrences will warrant parental notification. Should a parent need to reach his or her student or madrich(a) during SJS hours, please call the synagogue office 847-446-7215 and/or Mr. Sherman's cell phone at 847-708-1805. Students may power their devices on at 12:15 p.m. on Sundays and 6:15 p.m. on Wednesdays to retrieve text or voicemail messages. This policy applies to all SJS sessions, Shabbat Family Programming (SFP), PJ Shabbat, the High Holidays and other Shabbat or religious holidays.

- G. Hydration:** We strongly recommend that each student bring a reusable water bottle to SJS. Students who bring water bottles are expected to bring them back and forth between home and SJS so water bottles can be properly cleaned. Please write or affix a label including one's first and last names on each water bottle.
- H. Kashrut:** All food brought for SJS snacks must be kosher, either dairy or pareve. Packaged kosher food is designated by a seal of certification, known as a *hekhsher*. Examples of the most commonly acceptable *hekhshers* can be found via this link: : <http://www.kosher-directory.com/supervisions.htm> Please note that a simple capital letter K without a circle or other shape is not a permissible *hekhsher*. A *hekhsher* is not required for fresh produce, packaged fruit and vegetables (such as mini-carrots or apple slices) if nothing is added.
- I. Parking Lot:** Mr. Bryan Bogucki, Am Yisrael Building and Grounds Supervisor, is in charge of our parking lot. The safety of our children is Mr. Bogucki's top priority and we all follow his and his staff's directions in the parking lot at all times. We request that those with vehicles in the parking lot avoid letting cars idle. For questions, concerns or feedback, please contact Mr. Sherman.
- J. Pick Up:** Students are only allowed to leave through the front doors of the synagogue or school buildings. Students are expected to wait in front of the synagogue building for pick-up. Students are never allowed to run across the driveway to reach the vehicle of the person picking them up. We also discourage picking up students early unless you have very special circumstances. When it is necessary to pick up a student early, the parent, guardian and/or caregiver must notify Mr. Sherman and check in with security in the SJS lobby and come up to the classroom to pick up the student. The student must then be signed out at the security desk in the SJS lobby.
- K. Snacks:** At the beginning of the SJS year, parents are assigned specific weeks to provide snacks. Please remember that snacks must have **no peanuts, peanut oil or traces of nut products**. In addition, snacks must be kosher with a *hekhsher* and preferably be healthy. On their assigned weeks we thank our families in advance for bringing in a total of 85 servings of snacks (e.g. 3 containers of hummus with baby carrots, string cheese, etc.). Please do not leave snacks in SJS lobby without letting either Mr. Sherman or Mr. Bogucki know. The better option is bringing it to the synagogue office if you are not able to hand snack off with either Mr. Sherman or Mr. Bogucki. We will divvy and deliver snacks appropriately to the classrooms and refrigerate perishable leftovers. If at all possible, please bring in big bags, boxes, or fresh fruit as opposed to individually packaged snacks in order to avoid excess waste. If you have any questions, please let Mr. Sherman know. **If you cannot bring in snacks on Sundays:** please contact the synagogue office 847-446-7215 and/or Mr. Sherman csherman@amyisrael.org or

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847-708-1805 (cell) to coordinate a separate time to bring the snacks in to the synagogue office (as opposed to the school building) the week(s) leading up to your assigned week. The synagogue office hours are 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. on Fridays once daylight savings time ends on Sunday, November 3, 2019. The synagogue office will be open until 5:00 p.m. when daylight savings time returns on Sunday, March 8, 2020.

5. Building Community through a Jewish Lens

Beyond what has been outlined in our SJS Manual to this point, here are some additional ways that we build our Jewish community and give our students and madrichim learning opportunities:

- A. Youth Groups:** Am Yisrael Youth Groups are open to all youths in the congregation, whether they attend our SJS or a Jewish Day School. We hope to provide our children and teens with many fun opportunities to spend time with Am Yisrael peers outside the classroom and Sanctuary settings. Programming is available to all ages, in Kindergarten through senior year of High School. Our Middle and High Schoolers have Kadima and USY Groups that are affiliated with our national movement, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism (USCJ). We hope you will take advantage of these excellent opportunities for informal youth group programming. To learn more, please contact our Youth Director Sandra Mieli Kamm: smielikamm@amyisrael.org. Please access Youth Group Registration forms on the link set up on our website: <https://www.amyisrael.org/youth-groups.html>
- B. Chanting Torah:** One of the aspects of our community for which we are most proud is our Torah chanting program. Over the past nine years we have had approximately 350 students and madrichim between the ages of 2.75 and 18 years who have chanted from the Torah scroll at our Shabbat Family Programming (SFP), Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Simchat Torah, Pesach and Shavuot services. For the High Holidays, it is our custom to have recent B'nai Mitzvah students chant from the Torah scroll. In addition, we have an Intergenerational Torah Reading program in which two, three and in rare cases four generations have chanted Torah verses one after the next as a family.
- C. Room Parents and Havurot:** Room parents encourage members of their classes to attend social and educational functions during the year. A *Havurah* is an informal gathering of friends, in our case within our synagogue community. In addition to SJS-wide *Havurah* programming, we encourage classes or special interest groups to form their own *Havurot*. Further, our room parents contact new families and pair them up with mentor families. The types of gatherings that we informally encourage parents to do together are: bike rides, Starbucks get-togethers, walking together on the trail during Sunday and/or Wednesday SJS hours. The types of gatherings that we informally encourage families to do together in *havurot* with their children include: apple picking, going to the Pavilion at Sunset Woods for kickball and frisbee, playing board games on Shabbat afternoon, a Chanukah party, Havdallah, Family Promise volunteering, Maot Chitim volunteering or Cradles to Crayons volunteering. It is our hope that these *Havurot* will build organically to be able to celebrate together and to be able to call on one another during challenging times. We will keep our community updated on the room parents for each class. Special thanks to Michelle Maer for coordinating this program. Please contact Mr. Sherman for more information.
- D. Family Education Brunches:** Family Education Brunches with Rabbi Newman Kamin are a major component of SJS. As noted earlier, we highly value the collaboration between home, our congregation and our School of Jewish Studies. Rabbi Newman Kamin meets with each class individually during the year, focusing on topics related to what each class is learning. Please be sure to save the following dates

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on your calendars for this academic year that pertain to your families:

- **Torah Tots with a Twist** (Infant-3.5 years with adult): Sun Apr 19: 9:50 a.m.-10:10 a.m.
- **Gan** (3.5-6 year olds): Sat Jan 18: 6:00 p.m.-7:15 p.m. **NOTE:** At Rabbi Newman Kamin's home
- **Alef/Bet** (1st/2nd Grade): Sun Nov 17: 10:45 a.m.-12:15 p.m.
- **Gimel** (3rd Grade): Sun Feb 2: 10:45 a.m.-12:15 p.m.
- **Dalet** (4th Grade): Sun Oct 13: 10:45 a.m.-12:15 p.m.
- **Hei** (5th Grade): Sun Jan 12: 10:45 a.m.-12:15 p.m.
- **Vav** (6th Grade): Sun Jan 19: 10:45 a.m.-12:15 p.m.
- **Zayin** (7th Grade): Sun Nov 10: 10:45 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

Please note: Once students are in the Prozdor (8th Grade) classes, their brunches with the Rabbi are for the students only, as a “Brunch and Learn” as opposed to “Family Education.”

- E. Inclusion:** We strongly encourage parents whose children have individualized education programs (IEP) or 504 accommodation plans to share them with Mr. Sherman. We will decide together as a team on a proper learning plan. Students have strengths and challenges in their learning needs. It is our goal to meet everyone's needs as best as possible and open communication is the best route. We are teaming up with the Matan Institute to best meet the needs of students who learn differently (approximately 15-20% of our students): <https://matankids.org> We also recently completed our participation in this area with United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism and the Ruderman Foundation: <https://uscj.org/blog/fourth-cohort-of-the-uscj-ruderman-inclusion-action-community-launches>
- F. Madrichim Program:** Our teens have the opportunity to serve as classroom assistants helping our teachers, facilitating one-on-one or small group Hebrew tutoring and assisting with various other tasks at SJS. The past several years we have had approximately 50 Madrichim rotate through this program at any given time. As part of this program, our Madrichim continue their Jewish learning and involvement at our congregational school.
- G. Shabbat and Holidays:** We encourage your families to attend Shabbat and holiday celebrations and commemorations at Am Yisrael as often as possible. It is fulfilling to celebrate as a synagogue community, and this is one of the best gifts to give our child(ren). Having positive associations with attending synagogue and school services and programs is crucial to the process of giving our students a strong Jewish identity. Those of us who are able to develop happy associations with the synagogue and school are often the ones who choose to continue the traditions *L'Dor Vador*, from Generation to Generation.
- H. Tefillah during SJS:** *Tefilah* (Prayer) is at the core of our Am Yisrael SJS experience. Camp Am Yisrael (newborn-3.5 years), Gan (3.5-6 years), AlefBet (1st/2nd), Hei (5th), Vav (6th) and Zayin (7th) pray as part of a community on Sundays and Gimel (3rd), Dalet (4th) and Hei (5th) pray as a community on Wednesday afternoons. We also have various opportunities to pray as a community on Shabbat and holidays.

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6. B'nai Mitzvah Process and Preparation

- A. B'nai Mitzvah Lessons:** Cantor Simon tutors all students. B'nai Mitzvah Lessons begins approximately eight months prior to the student becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Cantor Simon contacts each family to begin the tutoring process. If your child has special needs and requires a private tutor, you **must** discuss this with Cantor Simon. He has a list of approved tutors. All outside B'nai Mitzvah lessons must be approved in advance and coordinated through Cantor Simon. B'nai Mitzvah students are expected to practice diligently and daily. Cantor Simon can be reached at cantorsimon@amyisrael.org or 847-446-7215 ext. 20.
- B. Coordination:** Nancy Holab Nevins, our Executive Director, facilitates the logistical details of B'nai Mitzvah with our Am Yisrael families. Nancy can be reached at nhnevins@amyisrael.org or 847-446-7215 ext. 14.
- C. D'var Torah:** Rabbi Newman Kamin meets with B'nai Mitzvah students and their parents and studies the *parasha* with them. Rabbi Newman Kamin's assistant Myra Feinberg schedules these meetings. Myra can be reached at mfeinberg@amyisrael.org or 847-446-7215 ext. 11. It has been a long-standing tradition at Am Yisrael for our students to write a *D'var Torah*, including an analysis of their Bar/Bat Mitzvah Torah portion. There are several elements to the written *D'var Torah*. In addition, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah may opt to deliver a brief verbal *D'var Torah* from the *bimah*. Rabbi Newman Kamin can be reached at rabbink@amyisrael.org or 847-446-7215 ext. 13.
- D. Inclusion:** One of the values we hope to impart to our children is a sensitivity and kindness to others. Unfortunately, in the past we have had parents come to us deeply disturbed because their child was the only one who wasn't invited to a classmate's Bar/Bat Mitzvah. We have therefore developed a policy that requires that either all the children in the class are invited. It is an incredibly powerful Jewish life-cycle experience when the entire School of Jewish Studies class sings a prayer near the end of the service together. It promotes a sense of community within the class, and we have seen the classes that are consistently included in this celebration bond in ways that are surprising and that carry through into High School. Please let Gleivy deSouza in the synagogue office gdesouza@amyisrael.org or 847-446-7215 know if you need the addresses of each child in the upcoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah classes. Those who have online accounts can access class lists via our synagogue's website: <https://www.amyisrael.org>
- E. Mitzvah projects:** Bar and Bat Mitzvah students are expected to participate in at least three mitzvah projects in three categories, the benefits the following: (1) Our Am Yisrael Congregation; (2) Israel; (3) A student's own passion. Here is a link to learn about the mitzvah projects in much greater depth: <https://www.amyisrael.org/mitzvahprojects/> Mr. Sherman along with the B'nai Mitzvah students SJS Teachers are the point people for the mitzvah projects.
- F. On Your Special Day:** Upon becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, our Am Yisrael teens typically chant their Torah and Haftarah portions, lead selected prayers in the service and share a written *D'var Torah*. Again, the basic *D'var Torah* expectations were briefly highlighted in Letter "C" above.
- G. One Year Before:** We encourage families to come to Am Yisrael services on the Shabbat that corresponds with the Shabbat one year prior to a student becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Our main goal is to have the parents and B'nai Mitzvah students listen to the Torah reading and the Rabbi's *D'var Torah*. Our hope is that you may gain some insights on the Torah reading that will be so meaningful the

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following year and in preparation for your special day. If the date is not on another student's Bar or Bat Mitzvah we encourage students to help lead prayers on this day as well. Otherwise we will be glad to help find a different day for your Bar/Bat Mitzvah student to help lead prayers on a Shabbat, beyond their regular SFP and/or Sunday Morning Minyan participation.

H. Significance of this Jewish life cycle experience: The celebration of a Bar or Bat Mitzvah is a highly significant life cycle event for the immediate family as well as for our entire congregation. We join together to celebrate with the family and to welcome the Bar or Bat Mitzvah into the adult community. At this time, we recognize the child's educational and religious accomplishments and renew our own commitment to Judaism. A Bar or Bat Mitzvah is not an end. Rather, it is a beginning and a very exciting and important time in Jewish life when one becomes a "Son or Daughter of the Commandments." The event on that date is greatly impacted by the student's consistent attendance at our School of Jewish Studies (SJS) and/or Jewish Day School and serious application to his or her studies. We expect our B'nai Mitzvah students to become thoroughly familiar with the main Shabbat morning service by attending such services with regularity. While we do not formally take attendance at services, we ask parents to give significant attention to that attending services, which is an essential part of the child's preparation for Bar/Bat Mitzvah. In addition to Shabbat Family Programming (SFP), in order for parents to be familiar with the Shabbat service, we urge that upcoming B'nai Mitzvah students attend Shabbat services with their parent(s) at least five times during the year prior to the day of the celebration.

7. Communication

- A. Am Yisrael Events Weekly Emails:** Our Executive Director Nancy Holab Nevins sends a weekly email entitled "Am Yisrael Events" which is written for the congregation as a whole. Once you have set up a username and password for our synagogue's <https://www.amyisrael.org> website through Nancy Holab Nevins, our Executive Director nhnevins@amyisrael.org, you will be able to access all of the information contained on our website.
- B. Am Yisrael SJS Limmud/ Education Updates:** Our Head of School Mr. Sherman sends out a weekly Am Yisrael SJS Limmud/Education Update throughout the academic year. Some highlights of the Limmud updates include learning what is going on weekly in our classes, upcoming SJS reminders, learnings on the weekly Torah portion and suggestions for how you can get more involved within our SJS and congregational community. Limmud/Education Updates are also a good source of information for prospective families.
- C. IEP Meetings:** It is our goal to meet the educational, social and emotional needs of each and every SJS student. This process is made infinitely easier when families confidentially share their student's individualized educational plans from their public/private schools. Once we have this information, we are able to meet with families and come up with the best possible learning plan at Am Yisrael SJS.
- D. Parent, Teacher & Student Conferences:** We hold parent, teacher and student conferences on an as needed basis throughout the year. Open lines of communication are essential to the success of our

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SJS students and their Jewish educational progress, especially when it comes to building skills such as Hebrew reading. We strongly encourage students to attend Parent, Teacher and Student Conferences. We also hold formal Parent, Teacher and Student Conferences for all AlefBet (1st/2nd Grade) through Zayin (7th Grade) students.

E. Progress Reports/Recordings: Am Yisrael SJS sends home a voice recording by classroom teachers for each student at the end of the academic year as well as for those who are unable to attend the mid-year Parent, Teacher and Student Conferences. The purpose is to give our students' parents a sense of how their children are learning the materials that are presented and what if any skill-sets and content areas need improvement and/or extra reinforcements.

F. Social Media:

We do our best to have a presence in social media, without connecting names to faces of our students:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Am-Yisrael-Conservative-Congregation-200034300018572/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/amyisraelcongregation/>

Twitter: https://twitter.com/amyisrael_cc (@amyisrael_cc)

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/aychai18>

Flickr: https://www.flickr.com/photos/am_yisrael_school_of_jewish_studies/sets/

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/3701715/>

8. Field Trips

Field trips expand our student's Jewish experiences. Some of the most dynamic field trips come about organically during the school year, upon the recommendation of our faculty and staff, students and/or families. Either a signed field trip permission slip, an email or a text message from our students' parents to Mr. Sherman are necessary for students and madrichim to attend field trips. One of the best ways to volunteer your services to our SJS community is to serve as a carpool chaperone and/or driver and/or to make a recommendation for a field trip that proves to be successful.

9. Jewish United Fund (JUF)

Sponsored Programs from which our students and madrichim have the opportunity to benefit:

- A. jBaby Chicago:** Torah Tots with a Twist (Infants-3.5 year old with accompanying adult) is a proud grant recipient of jBaby Chicago of the Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago. Please share this link with any family or friends who have children who are newborn through 3.5 years old: <https://www.amyisrael.org/torahtots>
- B. One Happy Camper:** The Foundation for Jewish Camp and the Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago offer opportunities to make sure that every child has access to an unforgettable Jewish summer experience. One Happy Camper offers incentive grants of up to \$1,000 for children attending nonprofit, Jewish overnight camp for the first time for 19 days or longer: <https://www.juf.org/guide/detail.aspx?id=432004>

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- C. **Ta'am Yisrael (8th Grade):** Ta'am Yisrael (Taste of Israel) https://www.juf.org/cfje/taam_yisrael_about.aspx program offers 8th Graders the opportunity to tour Israel with a group of peers from the Chicago area. The purpose of Ta'am Yisrael is to instill a greater love and commitment to Israel. Mr. Sherman recently staffed Ta'am Yisrael and endorses this program highly. The foundations that have conducted research on Jewish continuity attribute visiting our Jewish homeland Israel as one of the most powerful experiences for maintaining a lasting positive Jewish identity. Ta'am Yisrael was chosen for the prestigious Slingshot award as an inspiring and innovative organization. 8th Graders and their families have a choice of Ta'am Yisrael trips this academic year: (1) Feb 17-25, 2019 or (2) Mar 24-Apr 1, 2019. The Jewish United Fund put together this fantastic video to illustrate the Ta'am Yisrael experience: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lu7qpgmqKPE>
- D. **Trips to Israel:** Taken from JUF's website: www.juf.org: Bring Jewish identity and history to life with a trip to Israel. High School students, college students, and young adults are eligible for dozens of Israel experience programs arranged by age group, personal interest and duration of travel. Each trip offers the opportunity to make new friends, connect to the Jewish homeland and visit historical and holy sites. Choose from 10-day trips, summer adventures, and semester or year-long study programs. Gleivy deSouza in our synagogue office coordinates the SKIP: **S**end-**A**-**K**id-to-**I**srael **P**rogram. For more details on SKIP, please email Gleivy at gdesouza@amyisrael.org or call her at our office 847-446-7215. For details on all of these exciting programs, please go to https://www.juf.org/israel_experience/default.aspx.
- E. **PJ Library:** For children 6 months through 8 years, please sign up to receive books and CD's from PJ Library: <https://pjlibrary.org/communities/chicago/69516>
- F. **PJ Our Way:** For children ages 9 through 11 years, please help them sign up so they can choose their own Jewish-themed books: <http://www.pjourway.org>

10. Tzedakah Donations at SJS

We encourage each student in SJS to bring at least one coin each Sunday of the year. Every SJS year, our classes have discussions with their teachers and vote on organizations they wish to donate the Tzedakah that they bring in. Our students have been donating between \$700.00-\$1,200.00 per academic year. Here are the organizations we have donated to in recent years: (1) A Just Harvest; (2) American World Jewish Service (AWJS); (3) Animal Welfare League; (4) The Ark; (5) Am Yisrael School of Jewish Studies; (6) Cantor Simon's garden at our synagogue; (7) Chicago Coalition for the Homeless; (8) Composting services provided by Collective Resource, Inc., run by our congregant/SJS parent Becky Brodsky; (9) Evanston Animal Shelter; (10) Family Promise; (11) Feed My Starving Children; (12) Friends of the Israeli Defense Forces; (13) Humane Society; (14) Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund; (15) HIAS; (16) Hurricane Maria Relief Fund; (17) Israeli Defense Forces; (18) Israel Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; (19) Israel Sports Center for the Disabled; (20) Jewish Child and Family Services; (21) Jewish National Fund; (22) Jewish United Fund; (23) Keshet; (24) Kibbutz Hanaton; (25) Leket Israel; (26) Les Turner ALS Foundation; (27) Lone Soldier Connect; (28) Lurie Children's Hospital; (29) Magen David Adom; (30) Maot Chitim; (31) Mazon; (32) Mount Sinai Hospital; (33) Northfield Food Pantry; (34) Orphans of the Storm; (35) Ronald McDonald House; (36) S'derot Playground in Israel; (37) United Hatzalah of Israel; (38) US Supports the Lone Soldier Center in Memory of Michael Levin.

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