

Beth Shalom
Parent/Student Handbook

2022-23

5782



*"The world stands upon three
things: pursuing Torah
knowledge, Service, and acts of
kindness." ~ Pirkei Avot 1:2*

Our Vision and Philosophy

It is important to share with you the vision that guided us to reshape our school curriculum and programs. We focused on these questions: what do we want to teach our children, and why? What do we hope they will take away with them, now and for their future lives?

We then looked at the practical and logistic aspects to make the experience richer, and better fitting our families and our resources. We made some changes, reorganized, and prepared to provide our children and you what we think is a truly meaningful and valuable Jewish upbringing.

Jewish educators have different approaches, multiple goals, and different priorities when it comes to what we teach at school. Some center on “literacy” – that the students get knowledge of Bible and history, focusing on Biblical texts and stories, and the norms and practices of each of the holidays and religious rituals. Some prioritize “engagement”, with less emphasis on the information given, and more on the emotional engagement with the lessons, and on the social connections made with peers. Yet others see “Jewish Values” as the key element we wish for our children to learn and acquire - focusing on character traits, virtues, and ethical principles.

At Beth Shalom, over the years, we have adopted elements of all those approaches, and produced a curriculum that is a composite of all. In our new revision, while still teaching for Literacy, and Engagement, the emphasis will be on Jewish Values: more than anything, we want our children to grow up to be a *Mensch*.

Concretely, this means that whenever we teach a Jewish Holiday, as we teach the Story and the Rituals, the goal is to instill in our students an ethical, personal and social value. High Holy Days are about self-awareness, changing to be our best; and also about our responsibility to improve the society in which we live. Shabbat is about taking the time for what matters most, and also about ensuring all people have the right to rest and enjoy life. Passover is about our own Jewish history with oppression and discrimination, and it is also about the freedom of others, especially those who are on the journey to find their promised land – like our ancestors.

When we teach Bible stories, our goal is not just that students know the story – it is that they take from it the lesson, the moral value which the story came to show us, and adopt it for themselves.

When we teach Tefillah [Prayer], our goal is that, as they learn to recite traditional prayers and songs, they get to know that prayer is a time we set for ourselves, where we are called to embrace a value or attitude, such as generosity, gratitude,

compassion, solidarity, patience, and love. This year in our Sunday Tefillah we will learn “The Value/Virtue of the Week”, ensuring that the lessons are not just implied, but are clearly presented. The goal is that when students come to a prayer service, they know the prayers, they engage with the music and words, and see this moment as the time they take to reflect on how to be at their best.

Finally, Jewish Values must fit each child at their own developmental stage. As they grow, our students will be taught more in detail and in depth. When they reach the older grades (5th to 7th) they will work weekly with books and contents such as “A Kid’s Manual for becoming a Mensch”, “Jewish values talks from the weekly Torah”, playing games of Moral Dilemmas and Jewish Values, and “Doing Mitzvot” as their studying is paired with the actual doing of the Mitzvot learned.

Our Midweek Program

We have restructured this part of our school in a few of ways:

- classes will happen on Tuesdays (not on Mondays anymore)
- curriculum was improved, and adapted also to the late-in-the-day energies of our children
- Some classes will have joint sessions (3rd and 4th; 6th and 7th grades)

We understand that coming to school during the week is demanding for children and for parents. The fact is that, until now, attendance is not consistent, and often we had classes with just a couple of students, which does not allow for good lesson plans to happen, without a critical mass of students. The efforts to duplicate the Midweek program also on Mondays, carried the challenges of finding more teachers, incurring more expenses, and – most importantly – not giving our children the best experience.

Consolidating our school on Tuesdays will make classes better attended, allowing the kids to enjoy more, learn more, and connect more. It is also a better use of our resources, and of our teachers.

Other Triangle congregations have either reduced or eliminated midweek school. We understand that attending isn’t always possible, and appreciate the realities of our busy schedules. Still, whenever possible, having a second weekly day of religious school helps students retain the Hebrew better, helps them relate more and closer with their peers and teachers, so we encourage families to attend whenever is possible, even if not in perfect attendance.

Expectations

It has been said, “80% of success is just being there”. That is certainly true for our school. Though we are very flexible, attendance makes a difference. The more regular the attendance, the better children will learn, and the more they’ll enjoy it!

This is the key message for parents: getting a Jewish upbringing, learning personal moral values, and developing a sense of belonging as a Jew – these are not things which can simply be “taken in a class”. A class can teach about a Jewish Holiday – but the holiday celebration is when we connect with it, and make it part of who we are. The same is true of teaching prayers, and teaching Mitzvot – the enduring education happens after the learning, in the doing and experiencing.

It is essential for children to experience Jewish holidays, mitzvah projects, Shabbat services, and everything they learn about in class. And the impact of doing this with their families is what reaffirms their sense of belonging to the family, to the Jewish community, and the tradition. So we invite you: be there for those experiences.

We will continue to have a Family Engagement session for each grade, and a Family Craft Project as well. These are precious opportunities for connecting with other families, building our community, and for sharing time with your Rabbi too.

The Family Shabbat – once a month – is often the glue that puts all the parts together: community, friends, song, prayers, Hebrew, Bible and traditional stories, and Jewish values.

For our school families to miss the Shabbat service is like bringing your child to soccer practices twice a week, but missing the weekend matches! We have Family Services for the High Holidays, and all holidays; we also have a Tot Shabbat for each Holiday, for the younger ones. Give your children the gift of experiencing all these as they are growing up.

In the 2 years of pandemic our gathering and volunteering muscles got weakened, as we couldn’t be there to be engaged. This year we resume the activity, and we count on the support of our School Committee and especially of Room Parents. Volunteering to be a room parent means taking a little time and help the families in the grade coordinate, and connect, encouraging each other to be engaged, and supporting the teachers and the grade’s progress. If you have done this in the past, you know how important and impactful that can be – helping families make lasting friendships. If you haven’t done this yet, try it this year.

Teens and Tots Programs, and Religious School staff reorganizing

We are thrilled to have a new Teen Program coordinator, Rachel Kasten. Rachel has an enormous experience and wealth of knowledge especially in teen engagement and education. We are creating a program for teens to engage in a variety of ways, settings, and times. Rachel will coordinate our teen Madrichim on Sundays, and lead periodic off-site teen events on topics and issues relevant to them. This is in addition to our Beshty Youth Group, which is more focused on social activities and gatherings. If you are a parent of a teen on 8th grade and above, please help (even nudge) them to join our Madrichim team, which are a great asset in our school. We are especially glad and proud to have an ongoing tradition of Madrichim that step up to become teachers! Masha Salmi is our new Tot Program coordinator, working together with Rabbi for the monthly Tot Shabbat/Holiday, and restarting a play group for tots and parents to meet regularly during the week.

[We will share more info on these two new programs separately].

From our Rabbi

I - Rabbi Ariel Edery - have assumed the role of Educator, planning, organizing and leading all the functioning of our school. I assessed and reshaped our curriculum, and will continue to work closely with our teachers, supporting, collaborating, and guiding them as needed. I will also continue to teach whenever our school is on session, at Tefillah, at Family Education and Project sessions, and through the classes supporting the teachers. I am very glad to have the joy of spending lots of quality time and good moments with each of our children.

I am committed to making our programs work for each one of our children – with their many different styles and needs - and for each one of our families – with our different schedules, abilities and situations. Please, don't hesitate and don't wait too long to reach out to me, so we work as true partners in bringing the best experience for your children and your family. I can be reached at **rabbi@bethshalomnc.org**, and directly calling/texting my cell **(919)633-2048** (please use it!).

Curriculum

We are excited to introduce our revised curriculum beginning this school year. Students will continue to learn about Judaism in developmentally appropriate ways with topics that align with their growing knowledge and curiosity. Below you will find a taste of what your students will learn in religious school:

PreK/Kindergarten students explore bible stories, holidays and mitzvot. Students learn through play, books and crafts.

First Grade students will spend Hebrew time learning and Alef Bet complete with vowels. Students will learn the concept of reading Hebrew letters combined with vowels in one-syllable words, through worksheets and games. In Judaic time, students will learn about mitzvot and why they are important through a variety of games, crafts and stories.

Second Grade students will learn Jewish holidays in connection with the Jewish calendar. Students will engage in numerous hands-on activities to enhance their learning. In Hebrew, students will build on the reading skills they learned last year, and master the decoding of all Hebrew letters.

Third Grade students will learn Torah stories through their curriculum book, art, and other hands-on activities that will engage them in a fun way. In Hebrew, students will put their reading knowledge into high gear by reading words of greater length. Students will engage in games to enhance their proficiency.

Fourth Grade students will move on to the book of Prophets and explore the different prophets and their relationships with God and the Israelites. In Hebrew, students will take all of their knowledge of Hebrew letters and vowels and put them to use as they learn B'rachot for holidays, foods and mitzvot.

Fifth Grade students will learn about how we celebrate life's moments within Jewish tradition - beginning with birth and going through b'nei mitzvah, choosing Judaism, Jewish weddings and death and mourning – the full lifecycle. They will also work on "Becoming a Mensch" and acquiring virtues. In Hebrew, students will dive into the Shabbat morning service. All students will learn the prayers beginning with the tallit blessing and continuing through the Amidah. Students will have chanting homework that should be worked on during the week. Students will be tested on each prayer, so midweek practice is essential!

Sixth Grade students will spend the year in B'nei mitzvah preparation, both in the performance details and in the meanings. Students will explore their place in their community, synagogue, and home as young Jewish adults. They will also explore 'The Hero in Me', a series presenting great characters in Jewish history, and leading to discuss the values and qualities that made them famous. In Hebrew, students will work on prayers beginning with the Torah service and continuing through concluding prayers. Students will have chanting homework that should be worked on during the week. Students will be tested on each prayer, so midweek practice is a must!

Seventh Grade students will learn to study and interpret Torah, working on each of the student's Bnei Mitzvah Torah portions. They will also learn about certain mitzvot, first in theory and then in practice, as they do mitzvah projects in the community. In Hebrew, students will perfect the Shabbat morning service prayers and learn the ins and outs of what their service will look like.

What to Bring

1. Tzedakah money.
2. Food pantry items and lightly used clothing.
3. Re-sealable water bottles

What NOT TO bring

1. **No student may bring medication of any kind, unless the school has been notified.**
2. **No toys, sports equipment or electronics.** If they are found they will be taken away and returned to the parent.
3. **No active cell phones** are to be brought into religious school. If a cell phone rings in class it will be taken away and returned only to a parent. **No texting is permitted in school. In an emergency, please call the temple directly and we will connect you with your student.**

Rules and Important Information

1. School begins **promptly** at 9:30. It is very important that all students arrive by 9:25. Students arriving late cause an interruption that delays class time. Please make sure your child is seated in class and ready to begin by 9:25.
2. On Tuesdays we begin at 5pm, and pick up is from 6:20pm - 6:30pm
3. Only registered students of Beth Shalom religious school are permitted to attend class. Please let us know in advance if you plan on bringing guests to class.
4. We feel that in religious school, just as in other school settings, disruptive behavior impairs the teachers' abilities to teach and the students' abilities to learn. We want your students to receive the maximum religious school experience and, therefore, have adopted the following behavior policies. This policy only works with parental cooperation.

Students should:

- Attend school regularly with supplies needed for each class.
- Behave with decorum befitting a house of learning, in the hallways, classrooms, lavatories, and Sanctuary.
- Behave here as they are required to in their secular school. Please be supportive of your student's teacher. Students should not interrupt teaching, nor another student's learning.
- If called by them to discuss your student's behavior, please try to remember that their goal is to provide the best religious school experience possible.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation. We are all working together for the same purpose, to maximize your student's Jewish education.

Dismissal

It is very important for the safety of all of our students that everyone follows the dismissal policy.

For Sunday dismissal, **all** (including prek-2nd grade) students will leave from the main entrance. All cars should come around to the back of the building, continue behind the first island of flowers and continue back around, ending up at the front door. Madrichim and teachers will be on hand to get all students to cars safely and quickly.

If you choose not to wait in the carpool line, but pick up in our lobby, please follow the following directions so that we can insure everyone's safety:

1. **Please wait in the social hall for your child.** Beginning this year, we will have a madrichim come there to get a list of students' names. A madrichim will bring your student to you in the social hall.
2. Please do not come into the sanctuary, socialize in the hallway or pull your students from their class line as they are heading to the sanctuary for dismissal. Remember, we are trying to keep everyone safe. Too much activity in the lobby and sanctuary makes it difficult for students to hear their names called and get them out to carpool quickly and safely.

Tuesday dismissal will be at the main entrance only! Please enter from the street and circle around the main parking lot to the front door and your students will be brought to you just as they are on Sunday dismissal.

Weekly Messages

The weekly school email is the best way to know what your student(s) did in school. Listed on the next page are other questions to spur conversation on the ride home on those days:

- What was the best thing that happened at school today?
- Tell me something that made you laugh today.
- How did you help somebody today?
- How did somebody help you today?
- Tell me one thing that you learned today.
- When were you the happiest today?
- Tell me something good that happened today.
- Where do you play the most at recess?
- Who is the funniest person in your class? Why is he/she so funny?
- Tell me about three different times you used your pencil today at school.

School Calendar

School will be in session the weeks of:

SEPT 11, 18
OCT 16, 23, 30
NOV 6, 13, 20
DEC 4, 11, 18
JAN 8, 22, 29
FEB 5, 12, 26
MAR 5, 12, 19, 26
APR 16, 23, 30
MAY 7, 21
JUN 4

** Every time there is class on Sunday there is class the following Tuesday as well.

Family Engagement sessions and Class Shabbats

It is essential to involve the whole family in our children's education, and in their growing up with a Jewish identity and pride.

Attending Class Shabbats (any Shabbat service) is a great learning, family, and spiritual experience for our children. They will also have a part leading it with their classmates.

Class Shabbats:

Nov 4 4th grade
Dec 2 2 & 3rd grade
Jan 6 K - 1
Feb 3 5th Grade
March 3 Purim
April 7 (All school - Passover)
May 5 6th Grade
June 2 (All school - Graduation & Teacher recognition)

7th Grade (*not Family Shabbat, 'regular'*)
Dec 9th
March 17th

Family Engagement: (9:30am - 10:30am) Social Hall

Jan 22 2-3rd grade Kindness and Empathy
Feb 5 1st grade Tu Bishvat
Feb 12 4th grade To see God
Dec 11 6th Grade Standing Up for Good
April 16 5th Grade Antisemitism (the week of Yom HaShoah)
April 23 7th Grade Choosing Judaism

Family Project: (9:30 am – 10:30 am) Social hall

- 2nd Grade March 19th – Seder Plates
- 3rd Grade February 19th and 26th - Torah Breastplates
- 4th Grade January 29th – Elijah’s Kiddush Cup
- 5th Grade March 26th – Yad for Torah reading
- 6th Grade April 30th and May 7th – Making my Tallit

Personalized Education – Let us know your child better

At Beth Shalom, we are aware that not every child learns the same way. Below is a check-off list that will help us to educate your child. Please fill it out and return it - either a hard copy or by email to Rabbi@bethshalomnc.org. If you have any questions, or any matter to discuss, please contact your teacher and/or Rabbi Edery.

Your child may:

- Need to sit near the board
- Need to sit near the teacher
- Function best with oral directions
- Function best with written directions
- Need advance notice for a test or quiz
- Need to frequent a lavatory (more than once an hour)
- Need to get up and move around
- Need to eat frequently
- Be extremely sensitive
- Be extremely quiet and shy
- Have difficulty reading orally
- Have left/right issues
- Be color blind
- Have a 504 or IEP in secular school
- Others

Student's Name

Grade

Student's Name

Grade

Student's Name

Grade

