

Shmita Bet FAQ

What is the structure of the Gan's calendar?

The Gan, Temple Beth Am's Youth Learning program, is a combination of three 7-week formal enrolled learning period (called a Shmita) and a series of informal, community building programs and activities (called Immersive Periods). Shmita Bet, the second 7-week trimester, begins on Sunday January 10 and ends on Sunday February 28. Note: there will be a Mid-Winter Break from February 14-18.

What is basic structure of a Sunday at The Gan?

For PreK-3rd grade (9:30 AM – 11 AM), each Sunday will include music and t'fillah (prayer), movement, stories, activities in small groups and Jewish Life Vocabulary. For 4th-7th grade (11:30 AM – 1 PM), each Sunday will include a Rabbi led t'fillah (prayer), an opportunity for chevruta (small group learning) with Madrichim and peers, and a selection of activities that will help students focus in on the topic of Jewish Identity and their grade level values and curriculum goals.

What are the primary modes of communication?

Our [Youth Learning & Engagement website](#) is a collecting hub for more information. Every week, we send out a Gan Family Newsletter, often on Wednesdays. Every Thursday, the Madrichim receive their weekly update. *Starting with Shmita Bet this Sunday, every family will receive an invitation to a Class Dojo.* This educational communication app will allow better communication between families, Faculty, and Madrichim, to keep everyone better up-to-date and to help reinforce in-class learning and discussions. **When you receive the Class Dojo invitation, you *must* accept it in order to activate your account.**

What are the goals and focus of Shmita Bet?

Building off our learning in the first Shmita on Jewish vales and forming class relationships, Shmita Bet will be focusing on Jewish identity. Through engagement with ritual, prayer, stories, music, and more, students will create an understanding that Jewish identity is diverse and intersectional.

What changes have been made since Shmita Aleph (the first 7-week trimester)?

Based on the surveys and feedback from students, Faculty, and parents, a number of adjustments have been made. We will increase class communication, through the use of Class Dojo (see above). We are emphasizing small group work in breakout rooms with teachers and Madrichim. There will be activity selections to highlight student voice and choice in the classroom. Classes will also focus more on project-based learning. Regarding our Midweek Tracks, all Tracks will use the same curriculum, but taught through different modalities. Our Faculty had a series of professional development workshops, focusing on DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) as well as lesson planning and curriculum understanding.

Will this whole year be virtual or will there be in-person opportunities?

We are closely monitoring the progress of the COVID-19 pandemic and vaccine distribution, with guidance from health care experts and the Temple Beth Am Board of Directors. We understand the challenges and complexities of online learning and we hope to offer in-learning opportunities when it is safe and equitable to do so. As all of these activities would be outside, the earliest would be in a few months when practical.