

Beth Shalom
Religious School



Parent/Student Handbook
2023-24 / 5784

"The world stands upon three things:

Torah – ethical knowledge,
Avodah – spiritual service, and
Gemilut Khasadim -acts of kindness."

~ *Pirkei Avot 1:2*

Our Vision and Philosophy: Literacy, Engagement, and Values

Lev – in modern Hebrew means ‘heart’, in Biblical Hebrew meant ‘mind’. There are multiple goals when it comes to what we teach our Jewish children, and they are represented in LEV: Literacy, Engagement, Values. We seek to reach our children’s hearts and minds through those three. “Literacy” – that the students get knowledge of Bible and history, texts, stories, and the norms and practices of the holidays and religious rituals. “Engagement”, less emphasis on mastering information given, and more on the emotional engagement with the lessons and the social connections made with peers. “Jewish values”, focusing on character traits, virtues, and ethical principles we want our children to embrace.

Every year we revise and refine our classes curriculum, looking for a good balance of those three goals. Year after year we lead our children to be competent Hebrew readers and capable to participate in Jewish rituals; we lead them to create friendships and to feel part of a community. Yet, while still teaching for Literacy, and Engagement, we put a larger emphasis on *Jewish Values - more than anything, we want our children to grow up to be a Mensch.*

This means, for example, that whenever we teach a *Jewish Holiday*, as we teach the *story* and the *rituals*, our final goal is to instill in our students the *ethical, personal and social values* brought by the tradition. So, 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 pause and equality, taking the time for what matters most to us while ensuring all people have the right to rest and enjoy life. Passover is about our own Jewish history with oppression and discrimination, and the lesson of empathy we learn to care for the freedom of all others, especially those who are oppressed now in our time.

When we teach *Bible stories*, our goal is not just that students retain info on *the story* – it is that they take from it *the lessons*, the moral values which the story came to show us, and find how they can apply those values 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 our own reflection and spiritual practice. As we sing and pray, we are called to embrace a value or attitude, such as generosity, gratitude, compassion, solidarity, patience, and love. In our weekly Sunday Tefillah we ensure that these meanings are clearly presented, so we add to the typical prayers “The Value/Virtue of the Week”. The goal is that when students come to a prayer service, they know the prayers, the music and words, and also see this moment as the time we take to reflect on how we are to be a mensch.

All grades, even the very young, learn Jewish values, holidays, prayers, rituals, and Hebrew. Our curriculum is designed to fit the developmental stage of the children, and getting deeper in each of those areas as they grow and develop.

Typical Sunday Schedule

PreK/K 9:30 – 10:20 Class

10:20-10:40 Tefilah in Sanctuary

11am Dismissal from classroom

Beyt Yeladim – Children’s House (1st – 3rd)

9:30 – 10:20 Hebrew or Judaics Class

10:20-10:40 Tefilah in Sanctuary

10:40 – 11 Recess and games

11 – 11:50 Hebrew or Judaics Class

12pm Dismissal from Sanctuary

4th -7th Grades

9:30 – 10:30 Hebrew or Judaics Class

10:30 – 10:45 Recess and games

10:45 – 11:30 Hebrew or Judaics Class

11:30 Tefilah in Sanctuary

12pm Dismissal from Sanctuary

***Monthly “Dancefillah”**

Once a month our Tefilah (prayer) time will move into the social hall, where Kate Steiman will lead a session, teaching Israeli dances, typical “Bnei Mitzvah” Horah, ... and other fun choreographies.

Planned dates: Oct 22, Nov **, Dec 17, Jan 28, Feb 25, April 28, May **

About Our Midweek Program

Classes are on Tuesdays, from 5pm to 6:20pm, **for 4th through 7th graders.**

Classes divide the time between Hebrew and Judaics, and conclude with a joint Tefillah in the Sanctuary. For 6th and 7th graders, mastering and leading the prayers becomes a central focus of Tuesday school, and they lead most of the prayers in our Tefillah, as a good preparation for their Bnei Mitzvah.

Each class has workbooks for both Judaics and Hebrew, and 6th and 7th graders transition to working on Hebrew directly on their Prayerbook/Siddur.

We understand that coming to school during the week is demanding for children and for parents. Other congregations have either reduced or eliminated midweek school. We understand that attending isn't always possible, and appreciate the realities of our busy sports, work and activities schedules. Still, whenever possible, having a second weekly day of religious school helps students retain the Hebrew better, and helps them connect better 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!

"Learning and doing" is a 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 only be "taken in a class". A class can teach about a Jewish Holiday – but the actual 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 classroom learning, in the doing, celebrating and experiencing.

At BeSH we see our children's Jewish Education as happening partly in class, and then in Jewish holidays, mitzvah projects, Shabbat services, and everything we do coming together as a community. Kids engaging in these with their families is what reaffirms their sense of

belonging to the Jewish community and tradition. So we invite you: be there for those experiences, for you and for them.

Special Classes and Events

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 students and parents to share closer time with your Rabbi.

Family Shabbat and Family Holiday services- these are the glue that puts all the parts together: community, friends, song, prayers, Hebrew, Bible and traditional stories, and Jewish values.

To miss the Shabbat service is like bringing your child to soccer practices twice a week, but missing the actual matches! These services are created and crafted especially for school-age children, **and also for the adults with them.** We have Family Services the 1st Friday each month, at 6:30pm., followed by fun and delicious Oneg (cookies and goodies). **We have Family Services for each of the High Holidays, and every holiday through the year.** We also have a monthly **Tot Shabbat and Holiday**, for the younger ones. Give your children the gift of experiencing all these as they are growing up.

School Committee and Room Parents

The Room Parents

1. The class parents' main role is *connecting families with each other – both the kids and the adults.*

Our teachers and school are focused on the curriculum, and on the students' learning in our classes. But engaging parents/families with each other is essential to build community, to develop a strong connection to our fellow BeSH people, and to have a sense of connection and belonging to our Jewish community. *The class parent is a key catalyst for that to happen.*

Ways to engage families as room parent:

- Set occasions (a time and a place) for parents to meet and socialize with each other. These can be at BeSH (like meeting for food before a holiday/Shabbat service or event), or independent from BeSH events – invite folks to informally go together to a movie, a restaurant, bowling, ...
- Encourage meeting for the monthly Shabbat Family Service – so kids have a classmate to sit with, and parents have fellow parents to socialize as well. This can be supported by an early dinner/drink before services.

2. Class/Room parents support the special school/congregational events, such as Good Deeds Day, Jewish Holidays events, Purim Carnival, Hanukah celebration, Maccabiah, etc... in three ways: giving a helping hand when possible, recruiting other parents to help, and reaching out to other families to encourage their participation.

3. When a new student enters a class, Class/Room parent reach out to the family to make them feel welcome, and be their “hosts” at BeSH in their initial stage.

4. When a teacher needs extra help with a lesson or a project, help finding volunteers, or other ways to enrich the class.

5. Help getting donations (paper goods, snacks, decorations, etc.) from parents for classes and events, collect money for teacher and madrichim gifts (typically, around Hanukah, and for Teacher Appreciation Shabbat the first week in June (as school-year ends)

6. Class Parents can be a great support to other Classes’ Parents, sharing ideas, plans, and best practices.

Every classroom needs at least one room parent. This can also be a shared role by a couple of willing parents.

The support of our **School Committee** and especially of **Room Parents** makes a great difference in our kids’ enjoyment of school activities. In the 2 years of pandemic our ‘gathering and volunteering muscles’ got weakened, as we couldn’t be there. But we have slowly rebuilt our core group of parents, and hope you will join too. If you have done this in the past, you know how important and impactful that can be. If you haven’t done this yet, try it this year.

* The School Committee meets regularly, in person and on Zoom (times will be determined by the group once the school year begins)

Teen Madrichim and Tots Program

Madrichim (Hebrew ‘guides’) are our teen teacher assistants. Following their Bnei Mitzvah and graduating 7th grade, volunteering teens are a great asset in our school. They help in class, they work one-on-one with younger students, and provide overall support for school activities. We are especially glad and proud to have an ongoing tradition of Madrichim that go on to become formal class teachers in their last years of High School!

This is in addition to our **Beshty Youth Groups: Sr Beshty for highschoolers, and Jr beshty for Middleschoolers**. These are 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. [*Volunteer hours as Madrichim look very good in teen's resumes...*]

This year we intend to launch a new program for **8th graders – Lunch and Learn**, once a month after religious school ends, coordinated by Rachel Kasten. More details and schedule TBA.

Masha Salmi is our **Tot Program** coordinator, working together with Rabbi for the monthly **Tot Holiday/Shabbat**, and restarting a play group for tots and parents to meet regularly during the week. **Tot Shabbat** is held the 3rd week of the month, Fridays at 6pm.

A Word from our School Director Rabbi Edery

"I work on planning, organizing and leading all the facets of our school, with the support of many great partners: our experienced and dedicated teachers, and the lay leaders (VP of Learning, and School Committee). I continually assess and reshape our curriculum and lesson plans, based on my close evaluation of our classes and programs, and *especially on direct feedback from teachers and parents*. Your feedback, ideas, and input are very valuable to me and to our school, please share them with me.

Beyond the organizing and planning 'behind the scenes', I enjoy being directly engaged in class with the students and the parents every day. I value the connection and engagement I get with students, and they get with their Rabbi, thru my leading the Tefillah on Sundays and Tuesdays, leading the Family Education and Family Project sessions, and working in directly the classroom on Tuesdays. I am very glad our children get to spend quality and quantity time with their Rabbi, and I cherish the time I spend with our teachers and Madrichim developing relationships over the years.

Each child is unique: this is sometimes a cliché we hear, but at BeSH – being a smaller "family-size" congregation - this is really true. In my rabbinate I always place the person above the programs and the rules. As Jewish educator, I look to reach each child with the beauty of our traditions, with the final goal of planting in each child the seeds of pride in being Jewish, the basics of Jewish knowledge, and a sense of being lovingly connected with this community and "the" Jewish community wherever they go as they grow. With this in mind, any obstacles and challenges in the learning and engaging can surely be dealt with and overcome.

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. Rabbi, teachers, and parents – we are partners working to give our children the best for them. Please, don't hesitate and don't wait too long to reach out to me, with any particular concern, need, or situation affecting your child or your family, so we can work as true partners.

Outside of school hours I can be reached at rabbi@bethshalomnc.org, and directly calling/texting my cell **(919)633-2048** (please use it!)."

Curriculum Overview

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.

Beyt Yeladim – Children's House (1st – 3rd grades) Judaics

The Judaics curriculum combines learning about Jewish Holidays and Ethical moral values. Often the Holiday is paired with a value relevant to its story or meaning (such as 'Purim' with 'Courage'; 'Sukot' with 'Gratitude'). Hands on crafts, story time, discussion, interactive games – are all combined to teach and reinforce the concepts and lessons. In addition, other values are taught referencing classic and newer Jewish stories (PJ Library books are often used).

At Beyt Yeladim all students have a common lesson, and then they may split into small groups or work individually according to their knowledge and proficiency level.

Regarding Hebrew, even as they work together, each grade has specific goals:

First Grade students will spend Hebrew time learning the Alef Bet, and becoming familiar with reading in a new alphabet.

Second Grade students will build on the reading skills they learned last year, and master the decoding of all Hebrew letters. Students will learn the concept of reading Hebrew letters combined with vowels in one-syllable words, through worksheets and games.

Third Grade students will put their reading knowledge into high gear by reading words of greater length, multiple syllables and full words. Students will engage in games to enhance their proficiency.

Fourth Grade students will explore the books of Prophets through the book series “Bible Explorers”. They will learn different prophets’ stories and messages, and their lessons for us. They will also work on a Holidays Journal, reflecting on the traditions and meanings behind each of the holidays through the year. In Hebrew, students will take all of their knowledge of Hebrew letters and vowels and put them to use as they learn B’rachot (blessings) for holidays, foods and mitzvot.

Fifth Grade students will learn about how we celebrate life’s important 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”, developing good character traits 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’ progress 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. They will also spend a series of sessions studying the Shoah (Holocaust) in ways appropriate to their age. 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. Reusable 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.** These easily lead students to be distracted, and/or disruptive.
3. If a cell phone disrupts a class in any form, it will be taken away and returned only to a parent. **No texting or other uses are permitted in school, unless if directed by a teacher for class purposes. In an emergency, please call the temple and/or Rabbi directly and we will connect you with your student.**

Rules and Important Information

1. School begins **promptly** at 9:30. 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. **There is NO CARPOOL line on Sunday.** Please park and walk your child into the building. You are welcome to stay in our social hall with your coffee, laptop, join the MahJong game, and just meet people.
3. On Tuesdays we begin at 5pm, and pick up is at 6:20pm. **Feel free to come in the building, or use the Carpool line for Drop-off and Pick Up.**
4. 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.
5. 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:

1. **Choose the Carpool line, or coming into the building for pick up**
2. **If you come in, please wait in the social hall for your child**. Madrichim will bring the students class by class to you in the social hall. Please stay in the social hall until your child/ren are with you. Do not come into the sanctuary, or 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 be dismissed quickly and safely.

Tuesday dismissal will be at the main entrance at 6:20pm. **Feel free to come in the building, or to use the Carpool line for Drop-off and Pick Up.**

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.
- Which song did you sing 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.
- What happened in Hebrew class?
- 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

1st Day of School – Sept 10

School will be in session the weeks of:

SEPT 10,

OCT 1, 15, 22, 29

NOV 5, 19,

DEC 3, 10, 17

JAN 7, 21, 28

FEB 4, 11, 25

MAR 3, 10, 17,

APR 7, 14, 21, 28

MAY 5, 19

JUN 2

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

If there is no class on Sunday, there is no class the following Tuesday either.

No School on:

Sept 17/24 HHD

Oct 8 Fed Holiday

Tue Oct 31 Halloween

Nov 12 Veterans day

Nov 26 Thanksgiving

Dec 24/31 Winter break

Jan 14 MLK

Feb 18 Presidents day

March 24/31 Spring break

May 12 Mothers day

May 26 Memorial day

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.

Special Class Shabbats:

Oct 6 Simkhat Torah – all Grades

Nov 3 6th grade

Dec 1 4th grade

Jan 19 7th Grade (*not Family Shabbat, 'regular'*)

Feb 2 2nd & 3rd grade

Mar 1 5th Grade

Mar 22 Purim – All Grades
 May 3 6th Grade
 June 7 All school - Graduation & Teacher recognition

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

Oct 22 1-3rd grade Kindness and Empathy
 Nov 5 4th grade Standing Up for Good
 Jan 21 6th Grade To be a Jew - What is a Jew?
 Jan 28 PreK-K Tu Bishvat
 May 5 5th Grade Antisemitism (the week of Yom HaShoah)
 Feb 11 7th Grade Choosing Judaism [Being a Jew After BM ...]

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

Feb 4 5th Grade Yad for Torah reading
 March 10 1st - 3rd Grade – Seder Plates
 April 14 4th Grade – Elijah's Kiddush Cup
 April 21 & 28 6th Grade – Making a Tallit
 March 17 **7th Grade Bark Mitzvah**

Good Deeds Day – coordinated by Raleigh-Cary Jewish Federation – TBD

BM Orientation:

May 19th 5th Grade 9:30am General Orientation and Date Picking (In Sanctuary)
 May 5th 6th Grade immediately after school - at noon (in Social Hall - pizzas served)

Personalized Education – Help 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.

Please fill this form if you wish to share any needs, preferences and concerns.

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