

*Pleasantville Community
Synagogue*

**Hebrew School
Curriculum
2009/2010**

Curriculum Overview

All children will have an opportunity to learn about and experience Jewish culture and religion from many different aspects. The Hebrew language and prayers will be studied so that students will be conversant at a Synagogue service. The students will learn about our tradition and culture including Jewish values, history, Bible, Israel, holidays etc. The curriculum spirals, so that each year builds on the knowledge the students have acquired the year before; students will acquire greater fluency and a deeper understanding of the language, culture, history, and ethics of our heritage with each year.

While the curriculum in the following pages gives the formal outline of our program, the way in which it will be presented is just as important to the whole experience. Art, music, drama, story telling, special programs and assemblies will all be utilized to bring the material alive.

Special class and family programs are planned for each class and will be described below in the curriculum for each level. These are a standard part of our program, but we are also open to taking advantage of new opportunities that arise during the course of the year.

Class Shabbatonim

Class Shabbatonim (a children's Shabbat experience) is one of the highlights of each year, where the children help lead the service according to the level of the class. The service is followed by a special Oneg Shabbat sponsored by the class parents. The Shabbatonim for Gan-Dalet will be on a Friday night. Hay-Zayin classes will have their Shabbatonim on a Saturday morning as part of an effort to familiarize them with the Shabbat morning service and to prepare them for their Bar/Bat Mitzvahs.

Class Mitzvot

Each grade will be assigned a special Mitzvah as part of the ethics curriculum which will be taught in more detail throughout that school year. There will be special projects related to the Mitzvah each year.

Ask the Rabbi

Each class also has a session of "Ask the Rabbi" with Rabbi Mark, which gives students the opportunity to discuss issues of significance regarding theology, ritual, history, faith, and any other area which interests the students. This is also an opportunity for the rabbi and children to develop a relationship which will continue in the coming years.

PRIMARY DEPARTMENT

The primary department consists of Gan (Kindergarten), Aleph (first grade) and Bet (2nd Grade). It is extremely important to start Jewish education early if we want it to take deep and meaningful roots and provide a firm foundation for future learning. We will do this in a warm and creative environment, in an attractive way, which will be exciting and stimulating to the students. These years are very important for the establishment of a positive and proud self-image as a Jew, making friendships and feeling part of the synagogue and the Jewish community.

Gan (K)

Gan provides the basic introduction to Jewish life as celebrated in the Synagogue and the home in a class that meets approximately twice a month. Several methods of instruction are used such as story telling, arts and crafts, drama, show-and-tell, etc. The children will be introduced to the Shabbat as well as basic Jewish concepts such as tzedakah, Torah etc. An important part of this year's curriculum will be experiencing the holidays through special projects and celebrations, including decorating and visiting the sukkah, preparing for and celebrating Chanukkah, Purim, and Pesach.

The Hebrew language will be introduced by means of including Hebrew words in games and songs and getting the child used to his/her Hebrew name. The children will also learn Bible stories and some basic blessings and prayers. The emotional connection that develops this year will carry over into the years to come and strengthen their pride in their Jewish heritage, their love of Israel, and their sense of belonging to the Jewish community.

Aleph (1st Grade) ❧

The Aleph program will continue to build on the foundation laid in the Gan class.

Hebrew

Oral Hebrew and prayers will be part of the weekly activities, and the Hebrew alphabet will be introduced through a reading readiness program. Each new letter of the aleph bet is explored through projects and children learn words that begin with that letter. By the end of the year, children should be able to recognize Hebrew letters and know many words that start with each one. Hebrew words and easy sentences are used in the classroom as part of the class routines (such as attendance, snack time, and tzedakah).

Textbooks: *Let's Discover the Aleph-Bet* (Behrman house) - a set of twenty-four 4-page folders.

Holidays, Customs and Values

Holidays, ritual observances and customs, will be further explored with special emphasis on the meaning of Shabbat. Holidays are experienced through hands-on activities to enhance the experience. The children will learn about Israel and Jerusalem, and continue with Bible stories and Jewish literature at their level. The students will be introduced to the concept of *mitzvot* through an interactive *mitzvot* curriculum.

Class Mitzvah

The special Mitzvah focus for Kitah Aleph is Shabbat observance. Every lesson includes the various steps of the Friday night Shabbat experience, including lighting candles, blessing the wine (grape juice) and the challah. Special crafts, such as making a challah cover, candlesticks etc. are an important part of the program.

Textbooks: *Lets Celebrate* (Behrman House) - a set of seven holiday magazines for the student and the family.

Special Programs

Aleph Shabbat program – students and their families will get together during class time to celebrate Shabbat together by baking challah, lighting candles, singing, and participating in a craft project (tzedakah boxes).

Bet (2nd Grade)

In Kitah Bet, the children now, with a more secure foundation in English reading will be introduced, in a more intensive way, to the Hebrew language, prayer, Bible and Holiday celebrations.

Hebrew

The children will learn the concept of Hebrew vowels and consonants, and will begin putting them together in simple reading and writing exercises as part of the Reading Readiness program. Hebrew vocabulary will be centered around classroom activities and holidays as well as blessings and prayers. A *tefilah* (prayer) session will be held at the beginning of each class, including the Sh'ma, Ma Tovu, Oseh Shalom, etc.

Textbook: *Shalom Aleph-Bet* (Behrman House).

Bible

The period from Creation to Joshua as well as Bible units connected with the holidays will be covered, bringing Bible heroes to life and emphasizing the values they teach us. In addition the class will learn about modern Jewish heroes.

Textbook: *Let's Discover the Bible* (Behrman House).

Holidays, Customs & Values

Learn about the holidays; meaning, songs and food associated with the Holidays. Stories, hands-on projects and celebrations will bring the holidays to life, such as planting seeds for Tu B'Shvat, baking Hamantashen for Purim, and preparing Charoset for Pesach.

Class Mitzvah

The children will continue to explore and experience the *Mitzvot*, with special emphasis on the *Mitzvah* of “*Tsaar Ba’alei Chayim*” compassion to animals.

Special Programs

My Hebrew Name is a program where families and students get together during class time and explore the origins and meaning of each student's Hebrew name. In addition to developing an appreciation for our Jewish heritage through this activity, students create a name plate of their Hebrew name with their parents' participation.

Guiding Eyes for the Blind – to bring to life the *Mitzvah* of “*Tsaar Ba’alei Chayim*” (compassion to animals), each year the class will be visited by a blind person and his/her guide dog who will help students understand the partnership between humans and animals and our responsibility to care for animals.

Nursing Home Visit – children and their families visit a nursing home during Chanukah to light the candles and sing holiday songs with the residents.

ELEMENTARY DEPARTMENT

The Elementary department consists of Gimmel through Zayin classes, which will be held twice a week. Hebrew reading and writing skills will be developed. Students will be taught various prayers and will be familiarized especially with the Friday Night and Shabbat morning services. They will learn Jewish history, Jewish ethics, laws and customs. Jewish celebrations and creative enrichment programs play an important part of their curriculum. The curriculum continues as a spiral, so that previous skills and concepts are reinforced each year as we build toward greater mastery and comfort in all areas.

Gimmel (3rd Grade) א

Kitah Gimmel is a crucial year for the development of Hebrew reading and writing skills. By the end of this year students are expected to be Hebrew readers, to write in print and script, and to know many of the prayers. Children who join our program this year without prior knowledge of Hebrew will still be able to participate without great difficulty, but those who begin later will have to receive additional instruction to enable them to benefit and fully participate in our Hebrew School.

Hebrew and Siddur Skills

By the end of the year, students will become Hebrew readers and will learn to write in Hebrew script. Basic Hebrew vocabulary centered around Shabbat, Holidays and classroom routines will be established. Some of the main Friday night, Shabbat and Holiday prayers will be taught, such as Ma Tovv, L'Cha Dodi, the Sh'ma, etc. A short *tefilah* session will be incorporated into each lesson.

Textbook: *Shalom Uvrachah- The Hebrew Primer*, (Behrman House) - Script Edition.

Bible and History

The period from Creation to Moses is put into historical and ethical context. These Bible stories are taught at a deeper level of understanding than in previous years. *Parashat hashavua*, the Torah portion of the week, will be discussed on the students' level from time to time, especially when they are connected to the material learned in class.

Textbook: *A Child's Bible - Lessons from the Torah* (Behrman House).

Holidays, Customs and Values

Students will learn and understand the Jewish calendar, Shabbat and Holidays through songs, food, creative projects, stories, model seder, etc. Discussions on God, life, prayer, mitzvot and Jewish spirituality.

Class Mitzvah

The special class Mitzvah this year is honoring the elderly, which is a theme that is carried throughout the year in stories, discussions and a special program (see below).

Textbooks: *My Jewish Year* (Behrman House), *Let's Talk about being Jewish* (Ktav).

Special Programs

Honoring the Elderly - The class hosts a special luncheon for senior citizens. Local residents as well as family members are invited to participate. The children prepare questions to ask their guests as well as a musical presentation. The lunch is provided the families of the children.

Rosh Chodesh celebration -- Each month on the class that is closest to the new month there is an assembly to mark Rosh Chodesh, with an emphasis on the holidays that occur during that month. This celebration will include songs, stories, and treats to make it memorable for the children.

Reading Celebration – When the children complete the aleph bet and “officially” become Hebrew readers, we mark this milestone and celebrate the occasion by inviting the families and presenting the children with a certificate. The children also give a musical presentation at this event.

Siddur Presentation – At the end of the year the children will participate in the first Shabbaton where they will be active leaders of parts of the service. They will also receive their own personalized Siddurim, which will become an important text in the following year of Hebrew School and a resource for the whole family.

Dalet (4th Grade) 7

Hebrew and Siddur skills

Students will continue to improve and strengthen Hebrew reading and writing skills. They will learn the main prayers of Friday night, Shabbat and Holiday services and achieve a higher level of fluency and comprehension. In addition to reading from the Siddur and improving their prayer skills, they will work with their first Hebrew reader and conversational Hebrew will be presented to them as a living language through easy dialogues and stories. Hebrew vocabulary and conversation will continue to be developed around classroom life and the holidays as well as daily activities. Children will be able to answer some basic questions and participate in brief conversations in Hebrew.

Every Sunday morning, the 4th and 5th grade students meet in the sanctuary for a morning service with the rabbi. The main prayers of the Shabbat service are recited together (the Amida, the Sh'ma, Adon Olam, etc.) and the rabbi leads the children to a greater understanding of the significance of the service and prayer in their lives. This is a regular opportunity for the rabbi to discuss various issues of significance for the children's Jewish identity and spiritual and ethical growth while maintaining an age appropriate atmosphere and approach.

Textbooks: *Sh'Ma Yisrael* (United Synagogues), *Shalom Ivrit I* (Behrman House) and additional sources to enhance prayer comprehension.

Bible and History

Students will study the period from Joshua and the entry into Canaan, through the time of the Judges, Kings and Prophets. Role plays are an important tool to help children make connections with these historical events and figures. In addition, students participate in biblical dialogue by reviewing classic interpretations of text and creating midrashim of their own.

Textbooks: *A Child's Bible-Book Two- Lessons from the Prophets and Writings* (Behrman House), *The Explorer Bible II: From Sinai to the Nation of Israel* (Behrman House).

Holidays, Customs and Values

Students will study the laws and customs of Shabbat and the Holidays as they come along. We will discuss Jewish concepts, moral issues and Jewish beliefs, as presented through the Holiday, Bible and History curriculum. The concept of being a *Mensch* to oneself and to others will be explored.

Class Mitzvah

The special Mitzvah for Kitah Dalet is feeding the hungry. In addition to bringing regular tzedakah to Hebrew School, the children are asked to contribute food items for the synagogue's food pantry collection.

Textbook: *The Book of Jewish Holidays* (Behrman House), *A Kid's Mensch Handbook*

(Behrman House).

Special Programs

Food Pantry Program – A member of the Social Action Committee makes a special presentation to the children about how the Food Pantry saves lives and describes the process of how the food helps the hungry in our region. This helps the children understand the important work being done by the adults in our community and how they can be part of these efforts.

Jewish Heritage Program – Children are asked to interview an older member of their family about their Jewish memories and family traditions. The written responses from these conversations are compiled into a class book. The children and their families are asked to come for a special program to present a family heirloom or story from their Jewish heritage. All participants leave feeling proud and enriched by each other's stories.

Rosh Chodesh – Kitah Dalet continues to meet for an assembly celebrating the coming of the new month, with songs stories and a treat.

Hay (5th Grade) 7

Hebrew and Siddur skills

Kitah Hay is a critical year for solidifying Hebrew reading, writing and prayer skills as a greater level of proficiency is expected in the later grades. The children have developed a greater ability to decode by Kitah Hay, which allows us to have an increased emphasis on comprehension and fluency. The students will continue to practice conversational Hebrew and dialogues from their modern Hebrew text.

Students learn the main prayers of Shabbat and Holiday services. In Kitah Hay the students learn the Ashray (one of the prayers the children often lead during their Bar/Bat Mitzvah service). As the students become proficient in this prayer, they are invited to lead the recitation of the Ashray during the children's service on Sunday mornings.

Every Sunday morning, the 4th and 5th grade students meet in the sanctuary for a morning service with the rabbi. The main prayers of the Shabbat service are recited together (the Amida, the Sh'ma, Adon Olam, etc.) and the rabbi leads the children to a greater understanding of the significance of the service and prayer in their lives. This is a regular opportunity for the rabbi to discuss various issues of significance for the children's Jewish identity and spiritual and ethical growth while maintaining an age appropriate atmosphere and approach.

In accordance with our Bar/Bat Mitzvah policy, students in the Hay class (5th grade) are required to attend Shabbat services at PCS a minimum of 5 times (including one Friday evening one Saturday morning and one Family Education Shabbat).

Textbooks: The synagogue's Siddur, *Siddur Chadash* (Media Judaica Prayerbook Press), *Yesh Lanu Llama Book I* (book & workbook), (Behrman House) and other sources to enhance prayer fluency and comprehension.

Bible and History

This year is a transition from childhood Bible tales to purposeful study of the Jewish past. Simple stories present the highlights of Jewish history from the age of the patriarchs to the destruction of the Second Temple, and from the Bar Kochba rebellion to the completion of the Talmud. Children will grasp the historical continuity essential to the development of a confident Jewish identity.

In the last three months of the school year, students study the Holocaust and its effects through the reading of *Hannah's Suitcase*, a true story which is both serious and grade-appropriate. The text is a vehicle to discuss various topics, such as survival, endurance, Jewish pride, loyalty, family attachments, justice, human rights, and how the effects of the Holocaust can still be felt today by both Jews and non-Jews. Students are able to connect to these historical events in a personal way.

Textbooks: *Introduction to Jewish History* (Behrman House), *Hannah's Suitcase* (Albert Whitman & Co.).

Holidays

Students study the laws and customs of Shabbat and the Holidays on a higher level as they Jewish calendar progresses. The students will use Hebrew calligraphy as they write their Haggadah, Megillah and many other holiday projects.

Textbook: *Understanding Jewish Holidays and Customs* (Ktav).

Ethics

Students begin in this grade to work with Basic Judaism for Young People – Vol. 1 (Volumes 2 and 3 will be studied in 6th and 7th grade). This series of books provides a multifaceted approach to Judaic Studies within a framework bound by the concepts of Jewish universality and particularity. History, ritual, theology, values, and life events are topics for discussion. Volume One of the series – Israel – develops students' sense of identity and a feel for Jewish culture and history by teaching about Eretz Yisrael, Pikuah Nefesh, Bet Knesset, Derech Eretz, and Kevod HaBriyot, among many other subjects.

Textbook: *Basic Judaism for Young People, vol. I, Israel.* (Behrman House).

Class Mitzvah

The special Mitzvah is *Bal Tashchit*, to not destroy. Students learn about the importance of caring for the environment, as we are commanded by the Torah. This includes preserving, not wasting, recycling, etc. Each student is asked to create an object made of recycled materials at home, which will be presented during the class's Havdallah service.

Special Programs

Shabbaton – This year the Shabbaton is held on a Saturday morning instead of Friday evening as part of our effort to prepare the students for their Bar/Bat Mitzvahs. These coincide with the Education Shabbat program lead by the rabbi, which involves the whole family.

Havdallah Service – As part of Kitah Hay's curriculum, the children will study the Havdallah service (the service which marks the conclusion of Shabbat on Saturday night). The students write individual Havdallah midrashim (fictional stories which illuminate the meaning of the service) which are compiled into a class book. The students also design and decorate individual spice boxes which are used during the service. Families are invited to a special Havdallah service led by the children. The children's Mitzvah project made from recycled materials is presented after the service on the same night.

Vav (6th Grade) 7

In the final two years before their Bar Mitzvahs, we turn our focus to age appropriate explorations of Jewish ethics and history. In sixth and seventh grade, Hebrew instruction continues, but there is a greater level of intensity and higher expectation for their proficiency.

Hebrew and Siddur skills

The students have one hour of Hebrew instruction each week, which includes Siddur reading and comprehension and modern conversational Hebrew. Students will review the main prayers of Shabbat and holiday services to improve their reading skills and familiarize them with the prayers they will need for their Bar and Bat Mitzvahs. Around the holidays, important texts such as the Haggadah and the Megillah are used for reading and comprehension practice.

The class will also have a tefilah (prayer) session once a week, where the students will go over the Shabbat morning service. This year the students are introduced to the torah service as part of their preparations for their Bar and Bat Mitzvahs.

In accordance with our Bar/Bat Mitzvah policy, students in the Vav class (6th grade) are required to attend a minimum of 10 Shabbat morning services, of which 4 must be Family Education Shabbatot.

Textbooks: *Yesh Lanu Lama II* (Behrman House). The synagogue's Siddur, *Siddur Chadash* (Media Judaica Prayerbook Press), *Hebrew Through Prayer, I & II* (Behrman House).

History & Bible

Journey of the Jewish people from the beginning of the Diaspora to the present day. Topics discussed will include Jewish life in the Middle Ages, Ashkenazic and Sephardic Jewry, the Enlightenment, the Emancipation, the Birth of Zionism, the Jewish world and the State of Israel today.

Parashat Hashavua (Torah portion of the week): Students will be acquainted with the weekly Torah reading, at times creating a skit for the *parashah*.

Textbook: *Journey through Jewish History-The Age of Faith and the Age of Freedom.* (Behrman House).

Holidays and Jewish Art

Continue to study the ritual observance of the Sabbath and festivals in more depth, including the understanding of the Jewish calendar and major Jewish life cycle events. The students create many Judaica projects as well as their own book of the Jewish holidays.

Textbook: *When a Jew Celebrates* (Behrman House) and other sources.

Ethics

Students will continue to work in the *Basic Judaism for Young People* series. *Volume Two – Torah*'s chapters are devoted to topics like Haftarah, Midrash, Halachah, Talmud, and Rashi with students working through key concepts of Jewish belief and behavior.

Textbooks: *Basic Judaism for Young People. Vol. 2 - Torah*

Class Mitzvah

The class will focus this year on Bikkur Cholim, visiting the sick. A representative of the Bikkur Cholim organization or the Social Action Committee speaks to the class about the importance of this Mitzvah.

Special Programs

Rosh Chodesh - Students attend a special assembly to celebrate and mark the coming of the new month with a story that highlights the important events of that calendar.

Zayin (7th Grade) ן

Kitah Zayin meets once a week in the evening for 6:15 - 7:30. The course is divided into two semesters. The first semester is focused on Israel, and the second semester is devoted to discussions about G-d and ethics, lead by the rabbi. This creates an opportunity for the students and the rabbi to develop a meaningful relationship, which deepens the Bar/Bat Mitzvah experience. There is also a bimonthly 2 hour class which focuses on the Holocaust and Jewish heroes.

This is a more intense year for the children in terms of Bar and Bat Mitzvah preparation. Students will meet with a tutor once a week, which is where they continue to improve their Hebrew and Siddur reading skills. This will require significant practice at home.

Israel

The first semester is a study of the story of the Jewish people and their connection to their homeland. Topics include the birth of Zionism, the events leading to the founding of the State of Israel, the War of Independence, the Camp David accords, and Israel today. Students will study profiles of significant figures who shaped Israeli history, including Theodore Herzl, David Ben Gurion, Golda Meir, etc.

Textbook: *A Young Person's History of Israel* (Behrman House).

Ethics

In this second semester course, the relationship between human beings and G-d is explored through discussions with the rabbi. Some of the concepts that students will wrestle with include the Jewish concept of God, the meaning of prayer, faith, truth, Bar/Bat Mitzvah, messiah, teshuvah and more.

Textbook: *Basic Judaism for Young People. Vol. 3-GOD* (Behrman House).

Torah: *Parshat HaShavua*, study of the weekly Torah portion.

Holocaust

A more in-depth and age-appropriate look at the Holocaust and its effect on the Jewish people. At this age students are more prepared to discuss the difficult moral and historical issues around these events.

Textbooks: *Pathways through the Holocaust: An Oral History by Eye-Witnesses* (Behrman House) and other sources.

Jewish Heroes and Values

An introduction to Jewish heroes of yesterday and today. Students discover how to live Jewish values by reliving some of the most dramatic moments of the 20th century with famous Jews, including: Sandy Koufax, Golda Meir, Hannah Senesh, Steven Spielberg and more.

Textbooks: *Jewish Heroes, Jewish Values* (Behrman House).

Mitzvah

In Kitah Zayin, the class does not have a specific class Mitzvah as in previous years. As part of their preparation for their Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, the students are required to participate in community service for a minimum of 10 hours. The nature of this community service is an individual decision for each student and allows them to develop a sense of ownership and purpose as they fulfill the Mitzvah requirement. It is our hope to make community service a lifelong endeavor. Some examples from prior years include helping animal organizations, helping teachers in Hebrew School classes, helping the elderly, etc.