

Congregation B'nai Israel Religious School Curriculum

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INTRODUCTION

For more than 3,800 years, the Jewish people have been growing, changing, and adapting to the world around them. Reform Judaism embodies the idea that religious identity is part of who we are everyday, and that identity is reflective of the world in which we live. A curriculum for the synagogue religious school must therefore be fluid enough to enable teachers and students to take a growing world view into account. And so, this document is a work in progress. So long as children, their families, and the Jewish people continue to grow and change, our curriculum will continue to do the same. The goal of our curriculum is to build a positive Jewish identity on a solid Judaic knowledge base so that our students will be able to live actively Jewish lives.

WHAT ARE WE LEARNING AT B'NAI ISRAEL?

There is a great body of research into the different kinds of intelligence or ways people think, feel, and learn. For each type of learning (e.g. Cognitive, Affective, Moral, Emotional, etc.), there is a corresponding developmental theory which describes how a person grows and learns in that domain. This curriculum was developed by adapting those ideas to the setting of the Jewish Religious School and is organized and presented in Jewish terms rather than in those of the educational researcher. An essay exploring the ideas of multiple intelligences and Jewish learning may be found in Appendix F. The goals are organized in two rubrics – Da'at v'Ma'aseh (Knowledge & Action) and Hargashah v'Keshet (Feeling & Connection). They are described below.

DA'AT V'MA'ASEH KNOWLEDGE & ACTION

Goals in this area cover the cognitive domain—what will the student know, understand, and do when the learning process is successful. As the students progress from kitah to kitah, the level of learning becomes more complex beginning with basic fact knowledge and moving on through comprehension, analysis of concepts, synthesis of new ideas, application of those ideas, and evaluation.

The goals are organized into twelve major subject areas or spirals. Students revisit each spiral several times during their years at B'nai Israel. Each time they do so, they will discover new facets of their Jewishness. Each kitah has two or more major focus areas. By approaching the other content areas through the lens of the focus area, students gain a different perspective each year.

There are many places where spirals intersect with one another. Our approach is interdisciplinary. We believe in exploring the relevance of each area to the lives of our students. Wherever possible we employ hands-on activities and the use of primary sources in the search for personal meaning and Reform Choice. Please see Appendix A for a detailed description of the curriculum spirals.

HARGASHAH V'KESHER FEELING & CONNECTION

This part of the curriculum focuses on the affective, moral, emotional, spiritual, and experiential domains. It is the area that results in the feelings the students develop about themselves, being Jewish, and how they connect to God and the Jewish people. We have divided the goals in this area into three categories: 1) Affect (What emotional connections will be made by a successful student?); 2) Classroom Strategies; and 3) Parent/Family Connections to learning.

This section will describe the kinds of experiences students will have in each kitah. This may include activities that are extra-curricular to the religious school. A variety of implementations and teaching strategies are discussed. How and when they are employed is at the discretion of the Director of Education and the classroom teachers. They are listed in this document as suggestions and guidelines.

HOW IS THIS DOCUMENT ORGANIZED?

The remainder of this document is divided into three sections:

⦿ GOALS FOR OUR GRADUATES ⦿

The first section, “Goals For Our Graduates,” lists goals which we intend students to achieve by the end of Kitah Chet (8th grade). Ideally students will be in this part of our program from Gan (K) to Kitah Chet. This will allow their knowledge and identity to grow and develop incrementally. Again, these are overall goals achieved over nine years.

At the end of those nine years, students will enroll in Merkaz, The Community High School for Jewish Studies. Merkaz is the high school department of our school as well as that of four other congregations. As such, its curriculum takes students further than this document. Our director and clergy have input into the creation of the Merkaz curriculum, and it is described in a separate document.



KITAH (GRADE LEVEL) CURRICULUM



STUDENT PROFILE & OVERVIEW

The first page of each kitah section consists of the Student Profile and Overview. The profile consists of a general description of the developmental abilities of children in that kitah. The Overview gives a thumbnail sketch of what children in this kitah will be learning. Parents will receive the Profile/Overview page for their child at a meeting in the fall.

OBJECTIVES

The remainder of each kitah section is much more detailed. It includes the specific goals for the kitah, organized as described above. It also contains suggestions for implementation and required text books. These goals describe what the successful student will know and skills they will acquire.

We recognize that every student is unique, and that individual needs may affect these outcomes. Some students will require additional objectives to challenge them, while others will need to adjust these goals according to their special learning abilities. This is left to the discretion of the Director of Education working with the faculty, student, and parents.

ⓘ APPENDICES ⓘ

The final section describes educational concepts behind this curriculum and specific programs in detail and includes a Hebrew glossary.

© GOALS FOR OUR GRADUATES ©

DA'AT V'MA'ASIM  KNOWLEDGE & ACTIONS

UPON SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF OUR NINE YEAR PROGRAM, STUDENTS WILL...

Am Yisrael (Jewish People)

- develop and express their connection to the Jewish people and community.

God

- articulate a God concept consistent with Jewish Belief (God is invisible and indivisible).

Torah & Texts

- demonstrate familiarity, comfort, and understanding and use Jewish texts (Torah, Talmud, Midrash, etc.) to learn about their own Jewish identity, actions, and thoughts.

History

- show an understanding of Jewish History and the role of Jews and Judaism in the history of the world.
- express understanding of the history and significance of the Jewish experience in America.

Eretz Yisrael (Land of Israel)

- express understanding of the history and significance of the Land of Israel, including the people and the modern state.
- express understanding of the relationships between American Jews and the Jewish State.

Tikkun Olam (Social Justice)

- restate situations and solutions in terms of Jewish values, recognizing that we are all created in God's image.
- identify the relevance of Jewish values, ethics, history, and culture in their own lives.
- recognize and actualize the observance of Mitzvot relating to ethics and social justice.

Moadim (Seasons)

- observe and explain the customs of Shabbat and the festivals.
- recognize and actualize the observance of holiday Mitzvot.

Kedushah (Holiness)

- articulate an understanding of the sacred, differentiating between ordinary and holy in terms of objects, time, space, and relationships with people.

UPON SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF OUR NINE YEAR PROGRAM, STUDENTS WILL...

Life Cycle

- recognize and actualize the observance of life cycle rituals, including Brit Milah/Simchat Bat, Naming, Consecration, Bar/Bat Mitzvah, Confirmation, Wedding, Death and Mourning.

Reform Judaism

- describe the basic belief systems of other major religions and contrast and compare them to Reform Judaism.
- understand the breadth of thought within Reform Judaism and the Jewish world in general & analyze different perspectives.
- demonstrate and use the skills for making informed Reform choices. express skills for investigating Jewish practices and make informed choices based on rational, emotional, ethical, and spiritual concepts.
- explain the differences and similarities between the various streams of Judaism.

Tefillah (Worship)

- demonstrate ability to use a weekday and Shabbat or festival Prayer book, in both English and Hebrew.

Ivrit (Hebrew)

- understand that Hebrew is the language of the Jewish people and utilize an active Hebrew vocabulary.

UPON SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF OUR NINE YEAR PROGRAM, STUDENTS WILL...

Affect

- develop a sense of “belonging” to the Temple, the Jewish Community, and the Jewish people.
- articulate an emotional connection to the Jewish people.
- demonstrate an awareness of paths other than the intellectual to connect to God, their Jewish identity, and the Jewish people and will have the skills to follow them.
- express empathy for those in need.
- identify themselves as active participants in the Jewish community.
- express the feeling that the Temple feels like home and the congregation like family.
- develop a lifelong appreciation and love for Jewish learning and value coming to Religious School.
- relate to God in their own way and love Torah.
- effectively reflect upon how their Jewishness impacts upon their daily lives.
- enjoy celebrating Judaism with their families and the Jewish community.
- feel that Israel is a central place for the Jewish people and that they have ownership in the land and the modern state.
- are comfortable being Jewish in a non-Jewish world.
- identify, understand, and develop skills to help them cope with anti-Semitism.
- respect the depth and progressive nature of Judaism, both old and new.
- recognize, respect, and be sensitive to similarities and differences between the religious practices and values of various individuals and groups.

Classroom Strategies

- begin each class with the prayer for the study of Torah to create a sense of shared mission, much like the Pledge of Allegiance.
- regularly engage in ongoing acts of social justice and world repair.
- identify and learn from Jewish role models.
- express through a variety of media how they value their being Jewish.
- be encouraged to approach the learning process with a sense of joy and excitement in every class in every grade, in every encounter.

UPON SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF OUR NINE YEAR PROGRAM, STUDENTS WILL...

- appreciate and draw meaning from Jewish artistic and cultural forms of expression.
- learn from many teachers who are also members of our congregation and who are reminders of the mitzvah “And you shall teach them to your children,” while reinforcing the concept of lasting connections.
- have regular meaningful interactions with the Rabbi, Cantor, Director of Education, Director of Family Education, teachers, and madrikhim.

THE PRIMARY GRADES
GAN – KITAH GIMEL (K – 3RD)

GAN (KINDERGARTEN)

STUDENT PROFILE

These students are active and purposeful, and relatively independent. Their consciousness of right and wrong is beginning to develop, but they can't always distinguish between the two or accept blame. They tend to appreciate the help of others and want to help. They often associate God with wonders of nature and friendliness of people. Gan students find God more in a sense of growth than of order, and they wonder about life and death.

From the Behrman House Catalog, 1998-99

OVERVIEW

Our Gan students are being introduced to the idea of being part of a community in our synagogue. While many have begun this process in our Nursery School, Tot Shabbat, or Mishpacha Shabbat, some are encountering Temple for the first time. This year they will meet the people in their synagogue – the rabbi, the cantor, the educator, the school secretary, teachers, madrikhim, and lots of new friends. They will also spend some time exploring the many parts of the synagogue and learn about their use – and they will begin to find their place at B'nai Israel.

The central focus of the Gan year is on the Jewish Holidays and learning from the Torah. We will explore the first part of Bereshit – the book of Genesis. We will learn stories beginning with the Creation of the World through the Tower of Babel, using a format that brings parents and bed-time stories into the process of Jewish learning.

In Gan we also begin to introduce some of the letters of the Hebrew Alef Bet, seeking the most basic recognition of letters that connect the students to holiday concepts. In addition, the Passive Hebrew Environment (P. H. E.) provides an atmosphere that is rich with the use of Hebrew language in a comfortable manner.

Our Caring Curriculum theme is Comforting the Sick. Tzedakah collections, projects, and classroom discussions will help students develop an understanding of this core Jewish value. Students will give tzedakah each session to reinforce the concept that it is an obligation and something that they associate with thinking and doing things Jewishly. Gan students will become used to reciting basic blessings (for study, for food, for important moments, etc.) in the classroom. To encourage their participation in a praying community and to develop basic worship skills, students in this grade are encouraged to participate in BISO.

Focus Areas

Gan (K)

Am Yisrael

Torah & Text

Moadim

Kedushah:

Comforting the Sick

Ivrit

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...**Am Yisrael**

- begin to develop friendships and a social group within the classroom.
- demonstrate familiarity with the temple building and its function.

God

- actively engage in questioning and seeking connections to the Divine.
- explain why we say blessings.
- identify God as the receiver of our blessings.
- describe and identify God as the central figure in the Bible.

Torah & Texts

- describe and identify themes, characters, ideas, and moral values found in various Biblical narratives.
- retell and share their interpretation of the Creation Stories, the Garden of Eden, Cain & Abel, Noah, and the Tower of Babel.

History

- discover historical connections through Bible and Holiday Lessons (e.g. the story of Esther at the root of the Purim Story).

Eretz Yisrael

- sing the Israeli national Anthem, Hatikvah, and understand it according to their age level.
- sing and understand songs from and about Israel.

Tikkun Olam

- understand and have opportunities to apply the value of Bikur Cholim – Comforting the Sick as assigned to Gan by the Caring Curriculum.
- understand and demonstrate the value of tzedakah (justice and righteousness expressed through regular monetary contribution to the needy).
- value and develop habits of performing positive mitzvot.
- identify the practices learned through the caring curriculum, worship, tzedakah, and Torah Study as mitzvot and engage in those practices.

Moadim

- identify and describe each of the festivals and Shabbat.
- identify and describe figures central to each holiday story.
- identify and practice Holiday ritual observances.

Kedushah (Holiness)

- encounter and use God language. i.e., in discussing Bible stories, holidays, and tzedakah or in reciting prayers,
- talk about God and holiness, building a vocabulary to be built on later.
- will bring money for tzedakah each week and understand according to their age level the obligation they are fulfilling by doing so.

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...**Life Cycle**

- understand and take part in a ceremony of Consecration.

Reform Judaism**Tefillah**

- be expected and encouraged to participate in regular Shabbat worship through the BISOY (The B'nai Israel Siddur Youth) Program.
- develop and demonstrate liturgical skills through school based worship.
- understand and use basic blessings in the classroom (e.g. blessings over bread, wine, other food stuffs, Torah study, etc.)
- begin a basic exploration of the prayerbook through grade level worship services on Sundays.
- demonstrate a basic understanding of and the ability to recite the Shema.

Ivrit (Hebrew)

- identify Hebrew as the language of the Jewish people.
- develop a basic 72 word Hebrew vocabulary through the Passive Hebrew Environment.
- recognize some of the Hebrew letters and their sounds on the most basic level.

We do not have specific expectations for students in the primary grades in the Reform Judaism spiral due to concerns of age-appropriateness. However we do intend that teachers be sensitive to students' needs and to respond to questions as they arise.

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...**Affect**

- feel comfortable about the environment of school and synagogue.
- demonstrate a feeling of comfort about the environment of school and synagogue.
- experience the Temple building with a sense of ownership and connection that goes beyond their classroom.
- find themselves actually acting in the community and will reflect upon how that makes them feel by exploring the concept of Bikur Cholim – Comforting the Sick – and by engaging in this Mitzvah.
- interact with teachers and madrikhim as role models of Jewish adulthood who feel deeply the value of the Religious School experience and who are passionate about being Jewish and teaching.

Classroom Strategies

- recite appropriate blessings before snack time to further the emotional connection between what we do and God.
- encounter Jewish ideas through all five senses, creating a connection with concepts that goes beyond the intellectual.
- express an understanding that they have a role that goes beyond their classroom, Temple, or family through giving tzedakah and choosing how it is disbursed.
- have the opportunity to develop a relationship with Jewish high school students, who serve as madrikhim in our school. Madrikhim exemplify the idea of maintaining lasting connections to our congregation.
- encounter the various themes of their curriculum through a coordinated list of stories told in the Sifriya by the Director, Rabbi, and volunteers.
- encounter the various themes of their curriculum through a music curriculum taught by the Cantor.
- encounter the various themes of their curriculum through a curriculum of art projects in a variety of media.

Parent/Family Connections

- The regular focus on the Jewish holidays helps to encourage families to make festival celebration part of family practice.
- Through family workshops on Shabbat and Chanukah, Gan parents will be directly empowered to make holiday observance a part of their home lives.
- Resources and workshops for parents will continue to challenge families to embrace more aspects of the festivals each year.
- Through the use of I Can Learn Torah, the Bible can become a part of the bed-time ritual so important in child development, infusing it with Jewish content as well as with *Yiddishkeit*—Jewish feeling.
- The regular giving of tzedakah in the school should engender conversation at home about why it is given and to whom. Further, families will be encouraged to make tzedakah a home-based, as well as a school-based activity.

TEXTS

- I Can Learn Torah, Volume 1: Stories of the Very Beginning, Student and Parent Editions, by Wise & Grishaver, Torah Aura Productions, ©1992.

KITAH ALEF (1ST GRADE)

STUDENT PROFILE

These children have a widening sense of the world beyond home and think in concrete, specific terms. The Alef students are eager to learn and ask many questions.

Although they have little concept of time and space, their imagination is immense. Their sense of values is growing, and they are beginning to realize conflicts between desires and an expanding sense of standards.

They have a sense of class group and their role in participating in it. Alef students are developing the rudiments of social consciousness and can accept God as Creator and Provider even though God remains unseen. They will ask about God often and want clear, honest, and immediate answers.

From the Behrman House Catalog, 1998-99

OVERVIEW

Roughly one-fourth of our Alef students are new to religious school. The challenge is to successfully introduce and help them blend into the fabric of their kitah while continuing to challenge those students who successfully completed the Gan program.

We will continue to build on the two main emphases of the Gan year—the Jewish Holidays and learning from the Torah. This year we will explore the stories of the first Jewish family from Bereshit – the book of Genesis. Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob, Leah, and Rachel will be the people we meet. We will continue to use a format that brings parents and bed-time stories into the process of Jewish learning.

We will add a third spiral as a central focus—mitzvot. Students will record and report on how they are making mitzvot in the form of good deeds a part of their lives outside of class. This also supports the concept of the Caring Curriculum—which assigns Kitah Alef the theme of Sheltering the Homeless.

This year we begin to learn Hebrew in a more structured setting, as students visit a Hebrew specialist each Sunday. By the end of the year, they will be able to identify all 22 Hebrew letters and the sounds they make. More adept students will begin blending sounds and reading words. In addition, the Passive Hebrew Environment (P. H. E.) continues to provide an atmosphere that is rich with the use of Hebrew language in a comfortable manner.

As in all kitot, Alef students will regularly recite basic blessings (for study, for food, for important moments, etc.) in the classroom and participate in school-based worship services and in BISIY.

Focus Areas

Gan (K)

Am Yisrael
Torah & Text
Moadim
Kedushah:
 Comforting the Sick
Ivrit

Alef (1st)

Torah & Text
Moadim
Kedushah:
 Providing Shelter
Ivrit

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...

Am Yisrael

- identify the Rabbi, Cantor, Director of Education, Family Educator and Religious School Administrative Assistant, and their roles in the life of the synagogue.
- develop social mores for welcoming new students into the classroom social setting.
- demonstrate an understanding that being Jewish extends their connections beyond their family.

God

- actively engage in questioning and seeking connections to the Divine.
- explain why we say blessings.
- identify God as the receiver of our blessings.
- describe and identify God in relationship to the covenants with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- begin exploring relationship with God through mitzvot.

Torah & Texts

- describe and identify themes, characters, ideas, and moral values found in various Biblical narratives.
- retell and interpret the stories of Abraham & Sarah, Isaac & Rebecca, Jacob, Leah, & Rachel.
- demonstrate an understanding of their familial connection to the first Jewish family.

History

- demonstrate an understanding of their familial connection to the first Jewish family.
- identify and retell the stories behind the festivals of Rosh Hashanah (creation), Chanukah, Purim, Pesach (redemption), and Shavuot (Sinai).

Eretz Yisrael

- sing the Israeli national Anthem, Hatikvah, and understand it according to their age level.
- sing and understand songs from and about Israel.
- identify the Land of Israel as the setting for Bible and Holiday stories.
- make the connection between the Land of Israel being Abraham and Sarah's home to being a home for all Jewish people.

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...

Tikkun Olam

- understand and have opportunities to apply the value, Sheltering the Homeless, as assigned by the Caring Curriculum.
- understand and demonstrate the value of tzedakah (justice, righteousness) expressed through regular monetary contribution to the needy.
- value and develop habits of performing positive mitzvot through weekly mitzvah reporting / recording

Moadim

- identify and describe each of the festivals and Shabbat.
- identify and retell the stories behind the festivals of Rosh Hashanah (creation), Chanukah, Purim , Pesach (redemption), and Shavuot (Sinai).
- explain why we celebrate each of the festivals and Shabbat.
- express an aspect of each festival they like best.

Kedushah

- begin to distinguish between sacred and ordinary time, actions, and stories.

Life Cycle

- understand and take part in a ceremony of Consecration.
- identify the practices learned through the caring curriculum, worship, tzedakah, and Torah Study as mitzvot and engage in those practices.

Reform Judaism

Tefillah

- be expected and encouraged to participate in regular Shabbat worship through the BSY (The B'nai Israel Siddur Youth) Program.
- develop and demonstrate liturgical skills through school-based worship
- understand and use basic blessings in the classroom (e.g. blessings over bread, wine, other food stuffs, Torah study, etc.)
- begin a basic exploration of the prayerbook through worship services on Sundays.

Ivrit

- identify Hebrew as the language of the Jewish people.
- develop a basic 72 word Hebrew vocabulary through the Passive Hebrew Environment.
- recognize all 22 Hebrew letters and the sounds they make.

We do not have specific expectations for students in the primary grades in the Reform Judaism spiral due to concerns of age-appropriateness. However we do intend that teachers be sensitive to students' needs and to respond to questions as they arise.

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...

Affect

- continue to develop friendships and a social group within the classroom.
- develop a comfortable feeling about the environment of school and synagogue.
- develop a relationship with Jewish high school students, who serve as madrikhim in our school.
- develop an understanding that they have a role that goes beyond their classroom, Temple, or family through giving tzedakah and choosing how it is disbursed.
- find themselves acting in the community by exploring the concept of Sheltering the Homeless and by engaging in this Mitzvah.

Classroom Strategies

- participate in the annual Chanukah Concert.
- participate in all-school Holiday programs which will involve informal learning strategies.
- participate in the Mitzvah Connection.
- recite appropriate blessings before snack time to further the emotional connection between what we do and God.
- encounter Jewish ideas through all five senses, creating a connection with concepts that goes beyond the intellectual.
- explore the various themes of their grade through a curriculum of stories told in the Sifriya by the Director, Rabbi, and volunteers.
- encounter the various themes of their curriculum through a music curriculum taught by the Cantor.
- encounter the various themes of their curriculum through a curriculum of art projects in a variety of media.

Parent/Family Connections

- participate in family workshops on Torah and Mitzvot.
- participate in a grade level family Shabbat Dinner & Service.
- learn skills with their parents to make holiday observance a part of their home lives.
- use I Can Learn Torah, making the Bible a part of the bed-time ritual so important in child development, infusing it with Jewish content, as well as with *Yiddishkeit*—Jewish feeling.

TEXTS

- I Can Learn Torah, Volume 2: Stories of the First Jewish Family, Student and Parent Editions, by Wise & Grishaver, Torah Aura Productions, ©1993.
- Betman's Book of Hebrew Letters, by Wise & Grishaver, Torah Aura Productions, ©1991.

KITAH BET (2ND GRADE)

STUDENT PROFILE

Kitah Bet students are becoming more introspective. They are sensitive to the approval of others, particularly of adults. They tend to be critical of themselves. They are developing better language skills that come with wider use.

They love the imaginative world but are very interested in here and now. These children can discuss and reason, and they have a growing sense of right and wrong. They look for fair play and honesty. They are beginning to have a greater sense of a larger community beyond home and school.

At this age they can think and talk about God, and may have a sense of wonder and of God's orderly power. They understand rules for living as well as for nature. The Bet students can identify with Bible heroes, and their feel for prayer is growing.

From the Behrman House Catalog, 1998-99

OVERVIEW

Just as in Kitah Alef, roughly one-fourth of our Bet students are new to religious school. As many social groupings have formed over the past two years, the challenge of successful integration continues. Our experience has been that children of this age are open to new experiences and people; and by this time, Temple is a warm, friendly place to them. Welcoming new friends comes naturally.

In Kitah Bet we introduce a new focus spiral, Israel: Land and People. It is through the lens of Israeli life and culture that we will explore the festivals, God, mitzvot, and Torah. From now on, we will learn only one or two new things about each holiday each year usually in the context of other content spirals. Torah & Text will focus on the Joseph stories.

The Caring Curriculum theme for the Bet year is Kibud Av V'em—Honoring our Elders. We will develop an ongoing relationship with the Jewish Home for the Elderly in Fairfield, as well as with Lifeline for the Old in Jerusalem.

Hebrew learning continues in Kitah Bet. By the end of the year, students will be able to read words and sentences, as well as to write. In addition, the Passive Hebrew Environment (P. H. E.) will also expand as students learn additional vocabulary useful in discussing Israel and our elders.

As in all kitot, Bet students will regularly recite basic blessings (for study, for food, for important moments, etc.) in the classroom and participate in school-based worship services and in BISO.

Focus Areas

Gan (K)

Am Yisrael
Torah & Text
Moadim
Kedushah:
 Comforting the Sick
Ivrit

Alef (1st)

Torah & Text
Moadim
Kedushah:
 Providing Shelter
Ivrit

Bet (2nd)

Eretz Yisrael
Torah & Text
Kedushah:
 Honoring our Elders
Ivrit

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...

Am Yisrael

- describe differences in ethnic customs of various Jewish ethnicities in Israel including food, clothing, and customs.
- identify Israel as a Jewish-Ethnic “mixed salad”—with different kinds of Jews from all over the world—and describe how they are related to us.
- explore and describe connections between our community and the people of the Land of Israel.

God

- continue to actively engage in questioning and seeking connections to the Divine.
- describe the traveler’s prayer and explain why we say it.
- describe and identify Joseph’s relationship to God and how that informed his relationship with his family.
- begin exploring our relationship with God as reflected in God’s promise of the Land of Israel.

Torah & Texts

- describe and retell the stories of Joseph from Bereshit (Genesis)
- differentiate between stories found in the Bible and Midrashic tales.
- analyze selected Biblical texts and synthesize Midrashic stories based on their analysis.
- explain the role of archaeological artifacts in uncovering the life of ancient Israel.

History

- describe the connection between the Biblical and modern conception of the Land of Israel.

Eretz Yisrael

- identify and describe the major cities of Israel.
- describe the varied nature of life in Israel: urban, suburban, rural.
- characterize the Jews of Israel as a diverse, multi-cultural population who share the same faith and history as they do.

Tikkun Olam

- understand and demonstrate the value of tzedakah (justice, righteousness) expressed through regular monetary contribution to the needy.
- use funds collected for tzedakah to support programs for the elderly both in our community and in Israel.
- value and develop habits of performing positive mitzvot.

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...

Moadim

- describe Jewish festivals and Shabbat as they are observed in Israel.
- explain how B'nai Israel observes festivals and Shabbat.
- compare and contrast holiday observances in Israel and the United States.

Kedushah

- describe the Synagogue and the Land of Israel as holy places.
- understand and have opportunities to apply the values assigned by the Caring Curriculum—Honoring our Elders.

Life Cycle

- understand and take part in a ceremony of Consecration.

Reform Judaism

- validate and appreciate various Mitzvah choices.
- deepen their understanding of Jewish values and how they inform their own lives.

Tefillah

- understand and use basic blessings in the classroom including the Traveler's Prayer.
- develop and demonstrate liturgical skills through school based worship
- be expected and encouraged to participate in regular Shabbat worship through the BISO Program.

Ivrit

- master and use Hebrew vocabulary useful in discussing Israel and our elders.
- master basic sound blending and reading skills.
- demonstrate an ability to write Hebrew words and letters.
- identify Hebrew as the daily language of the land of Israel.

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...

Affect

- develop a comfortable feeling about the environment of school and synagogue.
- develop a relationship with Jewish high school students, who serve as madrikhim in our school. Madrikhim exemplify the idea of maintaining lasting connections to our congregation.
- find themselves actually acting in the community and reflect upon how that makes them feel, by exploring the concept of Kibud Av V'em— Honoring our Elders and by engaging in this Mitzvah.
- develop an understanding that they have a role that goes beyond their classroom, Temple, or family through giving tzedakah and choosing how it is disbursed.

Classroom Strategies

- ...go on a simulated trip to Israel, lasting several months.
- participate in the annual Chanukah Concert.
- participate in All-School Holiday programs which will involve informal learning strategies.
- participate in the Mitzvah Connection.
- recite appropriate blessings before snack time to further the emotional connection between what we do and God.
- encounter Jewish ideas through all five senses creating a connection with concepts that goes beyond the intellectual.
- explore the various themes of their grade through a curriculum of stories told in the Sifriya by the Director, Rabbi, and volunteers.
- encounter the various themes of their curriculum through a music curriculum taught by the Cantor.
- encounter the various themes of their curriculum through a curriculum of art projects in a variety of media.

Parent/Family Connections

- participate in a family workshop at the Jewish Home for the Elderly, working with some of the residents there.
- participate in a grade level family picnic and celebration of Israel.

TEXTS

- What's An Israel, by Burstein, Kar-Ben Copies, ©1983.
- The New Siddur Program for Hebrew & Heritage: Primer, by Tarnor and Strauss, Behrman House, ©1991.
- A Child's Bible, Lessons From the Torah, by Rossell, Behrman House, ©1988.

KITAH GIMEL (3RD GRADE)

STUDENT PROFILE

Kitah Gimel students are growing up, and they know it. They are eager and curious but not as responsible as they will be shortly. They tend to be impatient to get started and to finish. These students want new experiences, but their enthusiasm often exceeds their ability.

These children waver between a desire for independence and dependence. They often resent criticism, but have developed a sense of conscience. They feel guilt at failures but will often talk about it rather than brooding. The third graders have a better sense of self and communicate well. They can read and discuss, although they sometimes talk for the sake of talking.

They are collectors and swappers. They have a strong interest in dramatics and enjoy mental games and play. Students of this age often express an interest in other lands and cultures. Time, space, and distance take on meaning so they can relate to past and future.

They like groups but are sticklers for rules. They can sense God's demands and God's forgiveness. They see their own relation to God as part of their relation to other people in far places.

From the Behrman House Catalog, 1998-99

OVERVIEW

Kitah Gimel students blaze many new trails as is developmentally appropriate. These students are reading Hebrew in earnest and, in the Fall of 2000, will begin the liturgy curriculum. This effectively advances the Hebrew curriculum by a year continuing the change begun when they were in Gan. They will also continue to develop their vocabulary in areas relevant to their two main focus areas: Life Cycle and God.

Students will have an ongoing conversation about God, exploring what it means to be a partner in creation, how we perceive, understand, and relate to the Almighty. Talking about God will provide the lens through which they will explore the Holidays, Torah, and Mitzvot. For example, they will examine God's role in the Redemption from Egypt as they learn about Passover and study the Moses stories.

This is also the year in which students begin to explore the rituals which mark the significant Jewish moments in our lives. They will learn about Brit Milah and Simchat Bat, Consecration, Bar/Bat Mitzvah, Confirmation, Wedding, and Mourning. They will have a chance to participate in a real wedding and explore the memories evoked by our cemetery.

Removing Stumbling Blocks is the Caring Curriculum theme this year. It refers to the Holiness Code in Leviticus which commands us to protect the dignity of the disabled. Our Torah & Text emphasis will be on Moses.

Focus Areas

Gan (K)

Am Yisrael
Torah & Text
Moadim
Kedushah:
 Comforting the Sick
Ivrit

Alef (1st)

Torah & Text
Moadim
Kedushah:
 Providing Shelter
Ivrit

Bet (2nd)

Eretz Yisrael
Torah & Text
Kedushah:
 Honoring our Elders
Ivrit

Gimel (3rd)

God
Torah
Kedushah:
 Removing
 Obstacles
Life Cycle

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...

Am Yisrael

- outline how Jewish life cycle observances tie a person to the community.
- demonstrate how they are connected to their own direct ancestors as well as those of the Jewish people.
- demonstrate the connections between God, the Land of Israel, and the Jewish People.
- discuss the rabbinic midrashim which describe the relationship between God and the people of Israel as a marriage.

God

- discuss and explore what God does or doesn't do, what God sees or doesn't see.
- describe what God looks like in their mind.
- compare different Jewish God-ideas.
- identify God as invisible and indivisible.
- explain the meaning of God being One.
- describe how and where one might find God and understand why one might wish to do so.
- explain how each of the Life Cycle observances is a ceremony that deepens the Jew's commitment to the covenant with God.

Torah & Texts

- retell and interpret themes, characters, ideas, and moral values found in the stories of Esther, Jonah, Ruth, and David
- identify and appreciate the artistic value of ritual objects. (e.g., Illuminated Ketubot, the chupah, Torah coverings, and scribal arts)

History

- demonstrate an understanding of the historical connections between God and the Jewish People.
- explain how Bar/Bat Mitzvah and Confirmation developed in response to changing needs in Jewish society.
- describe how the wedding rituals have changed in the 20th century.

Eretz Yisrael

- demonstrate the connections between God and the Land of Israel.
- explain differences in how Bar/Bat Mitzvah is celebrated in Israel and in North America.

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...

Tikkun Olam

- select and raise money for organizations and individuals who provide care and resources for or who educate the public about the handicapped.
- value and develop habits of performing positive mitzvot.

Moadim

- define the relationship between God and the various Jewish holidays. (e.g. How do holidays help us connect with God? What is God's role in the story of this Holiday?)
- describe the relationship between Confirmation and Shavuot.

Kedushah

- describe ways in which they observe evidence of God's presence in the world.
- explain how each of the Life Cycle observances is a ceremony that deepens the Jew's commitment to the covenant with God.

Life Cycle

- understand and take part in a ceremony of Consecration.
- identify, describe, and make meaning of the rituals of the Jewish life cycle, including Brit Milah and Simchat Bat, Consecration, Bar/Bat Mitzvah, Confirmation, Wedding, and Mourning customs.
- explore their personal Jewish Roots/Family Tree.
- identify the person for whom they are named, their origin and customs.
- discuss the rabbinic midrashim which describe the relationship between God and the people of Israel as a marriage.

Reform Judaism

- describe why the Reform Movement instituted Confirmation and its place in the culture of our congregation.
- observe and identify Jewish practices and informed choices as described and modeled by teachers, parents, and adults in the Temple community.
- validate and appreciate various Mitzvah choices.
- deepen their understanding of Jewish values and how they inform their own lives.
- have their first in-class discussion about Jews marrying non-Jews.

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...

Tefillah

- understand and use basic blessings in the classroom (e.g. blessings over bread, wine, other food stuffs, Torah study, etc.), including Birkat Hamazon
- practice and further develop worship skills and increase their comfort level in the sanctuary through regular worship services on Sundays.
- be expected and encouraged to participate in regular Shabbat worship through the BISY (The B'nai Israel Siddur Youth) Program.

Ivrit (Hebrew)

- master and use Hebrew vocabulary useful in discussing God and the Life Cycle.
- complete the first year of the liturgical Hebrew curriculum.

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...

Affect

- develop a comfortable feeling about the environment of school and synagogue.
- develop a relationship with Jewish high school students, who serve as madrikhim in our school.
- develop an understanding that they have a role that goes beyond their classroom, Temple, or family through giving tzedakah and choosing how it is disbursed.
- find themselves actually acting in the community by exploring the concept of Removing Stumbling Blocks—being sensitive to the handicapped and by engaging in this Mitzvah.

Classroom Strategies

- prepare for and witness an actual wedding ceremony.
- participate in the annual Chanukah Concert.
- participate in All-School Holiday programs which will involve informal learning strategies.
- participate in the Mitzvah Connection.
- recite appropriate blessings before snack time to further the emotional connection between what we do and God.
- encounter Jewish ideas through all five senses, creating a connection with concepts that goes beyond the intellectual.
- explore the various themes of their grade through a curriculum of stories told in the Sifriya by the Director, Rabbi, and volunteers.
- encounter the various themes of their curriculum through a music curriculum taught by the Cantor.
- encounter the various themes of their curriculum through a curriculum of art projects in a variety of media.

Parent/Family Connections

- participate in family workshops dealing with God and the nature of our Hebrew Names.
- participate in a student/parent trip to the B'nai Israel Cemetery where they will become desensitized to the place and hear stories of the people whose graves are there.

TEXTS

- Partners With God, by Gevirtz, Behrman House, ©1995.
- The Life Cycle Workbook, by Grishaver, A.R.E. Publishing, ©1983.
- Hebrew Through Prayer I, by Kaye, Trager & Mason, Behrman House, ©1996
- A Gateway to Prayer I, by Chaim Stern, Behrman House, ©1989.

THE MIDDLE GRADES
KITOT DALED – VAV (4TH – 6TH)

KITAH DALED (4TH GRADE)

STUDENT PROFILE

These students are little adults--they want to be accepted as responsible people yet remain in conscious need of help. They look for role models, are active and enthusiastic. At this age, their attention span is markedly longer, and they can work on projects for long periods. They have a poor sense of personal limits. They depend on the group and its rules and have a strong sense of group status.

Fair play and rights are crucial. They can think independently about right and wrong, and they do. They are curious about the unknown. The past can be exciting for them, and they want to identify with a group larger than their family. Individual reading skills vary widely. They prefer fact to fantasy, people rather than ideas. Fourth graders can relate new knowledge to old. They tend not to question religious teachings, and the authority of the teacher is important to them. They can see how religion teaches standards, particularly through its great role models.

Daled students can appreciate God as spiritual and have a conscious sense of the Jewish people and its desire to serve God in history. They understand specific facts and actions in the Bible and Jewish history but without real historical perspective.

From the Behrman House Catalog, 1998-99

Focus Areas

Gan (K)

Am Yisrael
Torah & Text
Moadim
Kedushah:
Comforting the Sick
Ivrit

Alef (1st)

Torah & Text
Moadim
Kedushah:
Providing Shelter
Ivrit

Bet (2nd)

Eretz Yisrael
Torah & Text
Kedushah:
Honoring our Elders
Ivrit

Gimel (3rd)

God
Torah
Kedushah:
Removing
Obstacles
Life Cycle

Daled (4th)

Torah
History
Moadim
Kedushah:
Clothing and
Feeding the Poor
Ivrit

OVERVIEW

Kitah Daled stands upon four pillars: Liturgical Hebrew, Torah, Festivals, and History. This is the second year of the liturgical Hebrew curriculum. Students are tracked in this area allowing them to move at a pace commensurate with their abilities. Students will begin attending weekly Tefillot (worship services) on Tuesdays.

Students will take a comprehensive approach to the Holidays. They will explore higher level questions like "What do holidays mean to me? How does the Jewish calendar work?"

Kitah Daled students will spend a significant amount of time studying Torah and Midrash. They will add a new layer to their understanding of the text as they focus on interpreting and making meaning. Making the lessons of the Torah directly relevant to their view of the world is key to this process as they learn to put themselves into the text.

"Where in the World is Sophie Sarasota?" is a special mid-year unit. It brings students together with their peers from other classes to explore the first stage in a thread extending over the next three years. Learning about the period leading up to the fall of Bar Kochba, students will trace the effects exile, diaspora, and different approaches to Judaism have had on our people.

The Caring Curriculum theme is Clothing and Feeding the Poor. All of their mitzvah efforts and tzedakah collection will support the work they will do with organizations such as Operation: Hope and local food banks.

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...

Am Yisrael

- identify Jewish candidates running for office and invite them to discuss their positions as a reflection of their Judaism.
- identify how different Eidot (Jewish ethnic communities) celebrate the holidays.
- explain the differences and similarities between the various streams of Judaism.
- describe how various groups of Jews approached Jewish identity differently during the periods of the Kings, the Second Temple, and under Roman Rule (c. 928 B.C.E. – 135 C.E.).

God

- identify and comprehend Biblical images of God.
- compare the Biblical idea of God with their own God-concept.
- explain God's original role in Jewish Holidays and discuss how the festivals may help us feel closer to God today.
- discuss how Jewish God concepts adapted or failed to adapt to life outside the land of Israel following the exile of the Northern Kingdom in 720 BCE, the destruction of the 1st Temple in 586 BCE, the destruction of the 2nd Temple in 70 CE, and the fall of Betar in 135 CE

Torah & Texts

- explain how and why the Torah is divided into Parshayot—portions.
- identify the parts of the Sefer Torah—the Torah scroll.
- analyze texts from the Torah in Midrash, deriving an understanding of behaviors explicitly and implicitly indicated by the text.
- evaluate behaviors indicated by the text and apply those they find meaningful to their own behavior.
- demonstrate an understanding of the implications of the documentary hypothesis on Reform Judaism.
- identify and describe these various texts: Judges, Joshua, Samuel I & II, Kings I & II, Midrash, Mishnah.

History

- demonstrate knowledge of the events of the Davidic, Judean, and Tannaitic periods (c. 928 BCE – 135 CE) and describe how the events and ideas from those periods affected Jewish life.
- explore the events of this time period and draw connections between them, identifying cultural diversity as a factor which both divided the people and provided for a surviving remnant. Events include:
 - The Division of the Kingdom (928 BCE)
 - The Babylonian exile and return (c. 586 – 400 BCE)
 - Hasmoneans (Maccabees) (167 – 164 BCE)
 - The Roman period (4 BCE – 135 CE)
 - Massada (70 CE) and Bar Kochba (132 – 135 CE)

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...

Eretz Yisrael

- explain how the holidays and Shabbat allow the secular state of Israel to live in Jewish time.
- demonstrate the connection between the Land of Israel in the biblical text to current reality.

Tikkun Olam

- describe and practice the act of clothing and feeding the poor.
- select and raise money for organizations and individuals who provide care and resources for or who educate the public about the poor.

Moadim

- take part in an Erev Shabbat observance experience.
- describe the customs of Shabbat and the festivals.
- explain how the lunar calendar functions, why some Jews celebrate 2nd days of some holidays and why we do not.
- understand the period from Rosh Chodesh Elul through Simchat Torah as a single unit and explain how the Yamim Noraim work as a vehicle for spiritual renewal and repentance.
- explain why the sukkah must be a temporary structure.
- describe the Ushpizin—welcoming guests and name the historical guests.
- explain the concept of pilgrimage/harvest holidays.
- describe Simchat Torah and how it is celebrated.
- identify and explain the different endings to the Chanukah story as found in Maccabees I & II, Josephus, the Mishnah, and the Talmud.
- describe Chanukah's history as an internal Jewish conflict in addition to the participation of the Assyrian Greeks.
- explain the connections between Amalek in the Book of Exodus, Purim & Haman, and the Holocaust.
- make the connection between Tu Bishvat and weather patterns in Israel.
- explain the significance and modern relevance of Tikkun L'eyl Shavuot.
- identify Tisha B'av and the historical events it commemorates.

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...

Kedushah

- demonstrate their understanding of the textual basis of the Jewish value to clothe and feed the poor.
- articulate how and why they share the Jewish value to clothe and feed the poor.
- understand and have opportunities to apply the values of their Caring Curriculum theme Mazon and Malbish Arumim— Feeding And Clothing The Poor.
- use midrashim to illustrate how we differentiate between the sacred and the ordinary and how we seek to introduce sacredness into our lives.

Life Cycle

Reform Judaism

- describe and critically examine Shabbat, High Holy Day, and festival practices.
- describe how Reform practice informs our celebrations.
- evaluate holiday observance in terms of personal connection and begin to explore how they will choose to make these moments and rituals meaningful for themselves and their families.
- discuss how Reform Judaism addresses the authorship of the Bible.
- identify how religious choices may be based on how one interprets Torah as a result of the above goal.
- compare and contrast Reform holiday and ritual observance with Orthodox and Conservative practice.
- analyze texts from the Torah and Midrash, deriving an understanding of behaviors explicitly and implicitly indicated by the text.
- evaluate behaviors indicated by the text and apply those they find meaningful to their own behavior.
- demonstrate an understanding of the implications of the documentary hypothesis on Reform Judaism.
- understand why some Jews avoid leather on Yom Kippur.

Tefillah

- develop a basic understanding and comfort level with the service.
- describe how differently various groups of Jews approached Jewish worship during the periods of the Kings, the Second Temple, and under Roman Rule (c. 928 B.C.E. – 135 C.E.).

There are no specific Life Cycle Goals for this year.

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...

Ivrit (Hebrew)

- demonstrate mastery of the Hebrew language goals laid out for their grade and proficiency level. (see appendix E).
- recite and explain the meaning of ten Jewish values-related Hebrew vocabulary words.
- add Hebrew vocabulary useful for discussing Liturgy, Torah, Festivals, and History.

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...

Affect

- find themselves actually acting in the community by exploring the concept of Mazon & Malbish Arumim—Feeding the Hungry and Clothing the Naked—and by engaging in this Mitzvah.
- develop an understanding that they have a role that goes beyond their classroom, Temple, or family through giving tzedakah and choosing how it is disbursed.

Classroom Strategies

- identify and define a variety of art forms: e.g. – Klezmer music, the writing of I.B. Singer, Fiddler on the Roof, Israeli folk dance. They will derive Jewish values inherent in these works.
- participate in the first level of “Where in the World is Sophie Sarasota?”
- participate in a variety of Chugim—special interest groups, providing an enrichment approach to the curriculum. Chugim may include (but are not limited to): School Newspaper; Drama; Jewish Cooking; Israeli Dance; Scribal Arts; Jewish KnowBody (A learning game); Video Production; Prayerbook Repair; and Arts & Crafts; or:
- become a member of the Junior Choir performing at family Shabbat worship and other concerts.
- participate in All-School Holiday programs which will involve informal learning strategies.
- participate in the Mitzvah Connection.

Parent/Family Connections

- participate in a grade level family Shabbat Dinner & Service.

TEXTS

- Being Torah, by Grishaver, Torah Aura Productions, ©1985.
- The Book of Jewish Holidays, by Kozodoy, Behrman House, ©1997.
- A Gateway to Prayer I & II, by Chaim Stern, Behrman House, ©1989, 90.
- Hebrew Through Prayer I & II, by Kaye, Trager & Mason, Behrman House, ©1995, 96
- Kriah U'Tefillah L'matchilim: A Reading and Prayer Primer, by Sol Scharfstein, KTAV Publishing, ©1989.
- The Ninth of Av, By Roseman, UAHC, ©1988.
- The Rabbis' Bible II: The Early Prophets, by Simon & Bial, Behrman House, ©1969.

KITAH HEY (5TH GRADE)

STUDENT PROFILE

Kitah Hey students are at the peak of preadolescent adjustment. They have good skills and wide interests with academic labor low on the list. At this age boys and girls are developing separate interests, and antagonism between sexes sharpening.

They tend not to conceptualize or generalize broadly and are good at facts and memorization. They can know and use many facts concerning the Jewish people, its history, and observances. They like to be visually stimulated and enjoy discussions. These students can do creative activities. Their sense of time is broadening to make possible study of history.

They have a sense of right that is less clear than their sense of wrong. They enjoy family but also groups beyond family. They try to be good and like people and animals. Hey students can have deep religious feelings and close relations to God, although some questions may begin to trouble their faith. From the Behrman House Catalog, 1998-99

Focus Areas

Gan (K)

Am Yisrael
Torah & Text
Moadim
Kedushah:
Comforting the Sick
Ivrit

Alef (1st)

Torah & Text
Moadim
Kedushah:
Providing Shelter
Ivrit

Bet (2nd)

Eretz Yisrael
Torah & Text
Kedushah:
Honoring our Elders
Ivrit

Gimel (3rd)

God
Torah & Text
Kedushah:
Removing
Obstacles
Life Cycle

Daled (4th)

Torah & Text
History
Moadim
Kedushah:
Clothing and
Feeding the Poor
Ivrit

Hey (5th)

Torah & Text
History
Eretz Yisrael
Kedushah:
Hospitality
Ivrit

OVERVIEW

This year we return for another focus unit on the land and people of Israel. Given the developmental issues described in the student profile, this seems an ideal occasion for making deeper and more lasting intellectual and emotional connections in this area. Likewise, the history mini-unit “Where in the World is Sophie Sarasota” continues from Kitah Daled. This year we will explore the world of the Diaspora, from the Talmudic rabbis of Babylonia through the Middle Ages. We will trace our people in two directions—through Sepharad (Spain, North Africa, and Asia)—and through Ashkenaz (Europe and Russia).

The Life Cycle will continue as a focus through Spring 2000. (See Kitah Gimel for broader Life Cycle goals). In the Fall of 2000, we will expand the History spiral to include the American Experience and our first in depth exploration of the Holocaust.

Our text studies will introduce us to the Prophets and the Writings, as well as an introduction to Talmud. We will also meet some great teachers and heroes from history, among them Rashi and Rambam (Maimonides).

The Caring Curriculum theme is Welcoming the Stranger. All of their mitzvah efforts and tzedakah collection will support the work they will do to help those who are refugees or seeking a new life.

Our Hebrew curriculum continues to cement our students ability to read and understand the siddur (prayer book). They will also learn Hebrew vocabulary that supports the conversations they will have about each of the areas described above.

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...

Am Yisrael

- describe how the Eidot (Jewish ethnic groups) have been brought together in the Land of Israel and how they interact (or fail to do so) today.
- identify American Jewry as a distinct Eidah and illustrate how its mores may be different from those of other Eidot.
- compare and contrast the practice and philosophy of the various streams of Judaism in terms of: History; The Land of Israel; Holiness; Life Cycle; Worship; Social Justice; Torah

God

- engage in inquiry tasks, explore and seek evidence of God in the world around us.
- describe the relationship between God and the Biblical prophets and identify the prophetic message.

Torah & Texts

- make an introductory study of the Prophets and the Writings, as well as an introduction to Talmud. We will also meet some great teachers and heroes from history, among them Rashi and Rambam (Maimonides).
- compare and contrast the messages of the various prophets.
- examine and interpret texts from the books of the prophets and the Writings.
- describe the vision for justice and proper behavior espoused by the prophets and make connections to their own concept of justice.

History

- describe and make meaning of the American Jewish experience in terms of education, language, work & professions, living conditions, transportation, industries, food, culture, and recreation.
- trace the history of the American Jewish experience in chronological and geographical terms.
- trace the meaning and effect upon the nature of the Jewish people of being exiled and dispersed from the land of Israel for nearly 2000 years.
- demonstrate knowledge of the events of the Middle Ages (c. 500 – 1500 CE) and describe how the ideas that arose from that period affected Jewish life.
- name and describe the significance of ten figures from Jewish History including Rashi and Rambam (Maimonides).
- compare and contrast Jewish life under Islam in Sepharad and under Christianity in Ashkenaz.
- describe the chain of events resulting in the Shoah as well as how Jews in different countries have dealt with their recovery from the Holocaust.

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...

Eretz Yisrael

- demonstrate an understanding of the major cultural, political, and historical sites in Israel.
- describe the function of the Israeli electoral system and how it differs from our own.
- compare and contrast Israeli and American Jewish society.
- demonstrate reasons and methods for American Jews to be connected with the Land and/or State of Israel.
- identify some of the causes underlying conflicts between Jews & Arabs; Israeli and non-Israeli Jews.
- explore our historical yearning to return to the Land through centuries of exile/Diaspora.

Tikkun Olam

- select and raise money for organizations and individuals who provide care and resources for or who educate the public about the poor.
- describe and practice the act of Hakhnasat Orkhim—Welcoming the Stranger.

Moadim

- demonstrate one new aspect (chidush) about each holiday.
- explain and apply to their own lives the criteria for doing teshuvah (repentance) established by Sa'adiah Gaon.
- describe what qualities make a sukkah fit for use and how it helps us establish a temporary sacred space.
- describe the purpose of Shmini Atzeret and Hoshannah Rabbah and explain how and why Reform Judaism combined the two.
- explain the relative differences between Chanukah and Christmas, making comparison to Yom Kippur and St. Patrick's Day.
- list and explain the three mitzvot of Purim: hearing the Megillah, Mishloach Manot (gifts of food), and Matanot L'evyonim (gifts for the poor).
- explain the connection between Shavuot and the Sinai experience.

Kedushah

- demonstrate the textual basis of the Jewish value of Hakhnasat Orkhim—Welcoming the Stranger.
- articulate how and why they share the Jewish value to welcome the stranger.

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...

Life Cycle

- explore and make meaning of their personal family history for four generations as described by their parents and grandparents.
- explain the historical role of the Chevra Kadisha and the cemetery in creating new Jewish communities.
- explain the history of Bar and Bat Mitzvah, describing how its observance and significance to our culture has changed over time.
- describe Pidyon Haben and explain why it is no longer observed by Reform Jews.

Reform Judasim

- explain what prophetic vision means to them and how it will inform choices they make in the future.
- describe how Reform Judaism has responded to its interpretation of the Prophetic vision through its focus on social justice.
- identify the historical basis for the development of Reform.
- use Life Cycle and ritual observance as a lens for comparing and contrasting with other faith traditions.

Tefillah

- understand and lead a Havdallah service.

Ivrit (Hebrew)

- demonstrate mastery of the Hebrew language goals laid out for their grade and proficiency level. (see appendix E).
- recite and explain the meaning of ten additional Jewish values-related Hebrew vocabulary words.
- add Hebrew vocabulary useful for discussing Israel, Tanakh (Bible), and History.

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...

Affect

- develop an understanding that they have a role that goes beyond their classroom, Temple, or family through giving tzedakah and choosing how it is disbursed.
- find themselves actually acting in the community by exploring the concept of Hakhnasat Orkhim—Welcoming the Stranger—by engaging in this Mitzvah.

Classroom Strategies

- participate in the second level of Where in the World is Sophie Sarasota? an interactive, team based history learning game.
- participate in a variety of Chugim—special interest groups, providing an enrichment approach to the curriculum or become a member of the Junior Choir, performing at family Shabbat worship and other concerts.
- participate in All-School Holiday programs which will involve informal learning strategies.
- participate in the Mitzvah Connection.

Parent/Family Connections

- participate in a grade level family Havdallah Workshop & Service.

TEXTS

- Hebrew Through Prayer II & III, by Kaye, Trager & Mason, Behrman House, ©1995.
- A Gateway to Prayer II, by Chaim Stern, Behrman House, ©1990.
- Kriah U'Tefillah L'matchilim: A Reading and Prayer Primer, by Sol Scharfstein, KTAV Publishing, ©1989.
- The Israel Connection 5: One People, Many Faces, by Breakstone, Ariav and Freidenreich, JESNA, ©1994.
- A Young Person's History of Israel, by Bamburger, Behrman House, ©1994.
- Bright Lights in Dark Times: Jewish Leaders of the Middle Ages, by Folberg, Abrams and Silver, ARE Publishing, ©1995.

KITAH VAV (6TH GRADE)

STUDENT PROFILE

Preadolescence begins to give way to adolescence in varying degrees. They find the world interesting and are eager to discover its secrets. They want to figure things out for themselves in ethical and religious matters.

Girls are beginning to be taller than boys, and this sometimes leads to antagonism. Both are more sensitive to criticism, capable of real anger, fear, dejection, elation. They are also more motivated from within and have a greater sense of reality. This makes sense of right and wrong sometimes confusing.

They are intellectually factual, concrete, specific but capable of dealing with history and geography. Interpersonal relations are important and they enjoy exploring them. They are critical of adults and are competitive even though they like groups.

Vav students can have strong feelings of attachment to synagogue and Jewish people. They can think of God as spirit, but often this makes God seem less real to them. They are open to teaching—which will help them realize more mature values—but they must reach them by themselves. They are able to see the relationship between religious teaching and personal problems.

From the Behrman House Catalog, 1998-99

Focus Areas

Gan (K)

Am Yisrael
Torah & Text
Moadim
Kedushah:
Comforting the Sick
Ivrit

Alef (1st)

Torah & Text
Moadim
Kedushah:
Providing Shelter
Ivrit

Bet (2nd)

Eretz Yisrael
Torah & Text
Kedushah:
Honoring our Elders
Ivrit

Gimel (3rd)

God
Torah & Text
Kedushah:
Removing
Obstacles
Life Cycle

Daled (4th)

Torah & Text
History
Moadim
Kedushah:
Clothing and
Feeding the Poor
Ivrit

Hey (5th)

Torah & Text
History
Eretz Yisrael
Ivrit

Vav (6th)

Kedushah:
Social Welfare
Life Cycle
Reform Judaism
Tefillah
Ivrit

OVERVIEW

As students enter the Middle School years, they are undergoing many changes—intellectually, physically, spiritually. Within the next twelve to sixteen months, they will begin formal preparation for becoming B'nai Mitzvah. To that end, we will have a special focus on what it means to become – not to “have” – a Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

We will also put the worship service under the microscope. This will enable students to weave all they have learned about Tefillah over the past six years into a unified concept. Students will learn how to make meaning – both personal and national – of the prayers.

We often talk about these teens becoming Jewishly adult. At B'nai Israel, that has a particular connotation as we talk about being Reform Jews. This year we will explore the history, philosophy, and practical application of Reform Judaism. We will learn how to make informed Jewish choices.

The Caring Curriculum theme is Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh b'Zeh—All Jews are Responsible for One Another. All of their mitzvah efforts and tzedakah collection will support the Jewish social welfare agencies.

Our Hebrew curriculum continues to cement our students' ability to read and understand the siddur (prayer book). They will also learn Hebrew vocabulary that supports the conversations they will have about each of the areas described above. Advanced students will begin to study Hebrew as it is spoken in Israel.

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...

Am Yisrael

- identify differences in how various Eidot pray.
- Identify American Jewry as a distinct Eidah and illustrate how its mores may be different from those of other Eidot.

God

- compare and contrast a variety of God Concepts with emphasis on our relationship to God through prayer.
- describe how Reform Judaism has approached God concepts including the authorship of the Torah.
- contrast Jewish God concepts with those of Christianity and Pagan cultures.

Torah & Texts

- study and derive meaning from the Torah portion assigned for their Bar/Bat Mitzvah and articulate and make relevant that meaning.
- explain how the Siddur (prayer book) was created and how it works today.

History

- trace the meaning and effect of being exiled and dispersed from the land of Israel for nearly 2000 years upon the nature of the Jewish people today.
- compare and contrast how monarchies, pluralities, and democracies have traditionally treated Jews.
- demonstrate knowledge of the events of the Modern period (c. 1700 CE to the present) and describe how the ideas that arose from that period affected Jewish life.
- demonstrate an understanding of how Reform Judaism was and continues to be a viable response to the challenges of modernity.

Eretz Yisrael

- explain the significance of the Land of Israel as it is encountered in the worship service.
- describe the historical relationship between the Reform Movement and the State of Israel.
- demonstrate an understanding of the conflict between Orthodox, Progressive, and Secular Jews in Israel and how that conflict may affect us in the United States.

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...

Tikkun Olam

- select and raise money for organizations and individuals who provide care and resources for or who educate the public about the Jewish social welfare issues locally and abroad.
- describe and practice acts that demonstrate the value that all Jews are responsible one for the other.
- perform Mitzvot for and within the Temple, their family, and the community.

Moadim

- make meaning of and apply to their own lives the concept of Cheshbon Hanefesh--a spiritual accounting.
- define the four species and how they are used and explain what each may mean.
- describe the Seder Kriat HaTorah—the service for the reading of Torah—and explain the purpose of public Torah reading.
- read and explain the Al Hanisim prayer for Chanukah.
- explain the debate between Hillel and Shammai over how to light the Chanukiah.
- discuss the consequences had Esther and Mordecai failed.
- explain the significance of the Sinai experience to who we are as a people.

Kedushah

- demonstrate their understanding of the textual basis of the Jewish value that all Jews are responsible one for the other.
- explain and demonstrate the value of Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh B'zeh—All Jews are responsible for each other.
- explain how the prayers of the worship service can help individuals and congregations make connections with God.

Life Cycle

- study and derive meaning from the Torah portion assigned for their Bar/Bat Mitzvah and articulate and make relevant that meaning.
- describe how the ceremony differs between movements and eidot.
- define what is expected of someone who has become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah by themselves and by the community.

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...

Reform Judaism

- compare and contrast the decisions made by the Reform Movement through the years with their own values and choices.
- compare and contrast the practice and philosophy of the various streams of Judaism.
- compare and contrast issues of gender roles among the movements.
- define what it means to be a Reform Jew.
- articulate Jewish ideas in terms of Reform Philosophy.
- define and describe how we DO things in a Reform manner.
- discuss how Reform Judaism was and continues to be a viable response to the challenges of modernity.

Tefillah

- describe and make meaning of the structure and ideology of the worship service and the individual prayers.
- discuss and analyze the worship service and apply their own values in deciding their personal prayers.
- define and apply the three types of prayer: Praise, Petition, and Thanksgiving.
- demonstrate the difference between fixed and spontaneous prayer.
- explain how changes made to the prayerbook have reflected our people's condition through the years.
- explain the changes made to the service by the Reform movement, including the Musaf Service, Blessing of the informers, Blessing of the years, Bringing the dead to life, Blessing for the State, and Messiah.

Ivrit (Hebrew)

- demonstrate mastery of the Hebrew language goals laid out for their grade and proficiency level. (see appendix E).
- recite and explain the meaning of ten Jewish values Hebrew vocabulary words.
- add Hebrew vocabulary useful for discussing Reform Judaism and the Siddur.

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...

Affect

- demonstrate an understanding that they have a role that goes beyond their classroom, Temple, or family through giving tzedakah and choosing how it is disbursed.
- find themselves actually acting in the community by exploring the concept of Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh b'Zeh—All Jews Are Responsible for One Another.

Classroom Strategies

- rewrite a story that may be morally ambiguous in a way that is reflective of Jewish values.
- participate in a weekend retreat at which they will explore the meaning of becoming a Bar or Bat Mitzvah.
- take part in leading an Erev Shabbat service.
- identify and describe the lessons taught by one or two key non-Jewish figures whose actions exemplify Jewish values.
- participate in a variety of Chugim—special interest groups, providing an enrichment approach to the curriculum. Chugim may include (but are not limited to): School Newspaper; Drama; Jewish Cooking; Israeli Dance; Scribal Arts; Jewish KnowBody (A learning game); Video Production; Prayerbook Repair; and Arts & Crafts; or:
- become a member of the Junior Choir, performing at family Shabbat worship and other concerts.
- identify and define a variety of art forms: e.g. – Klezmer music, the writing of I.B. Singer, Fiddler on the Roof, Israeli folk dance. They will derive Jewish values inherent in these works.
- participate in All-School Holiday programs which will involve informal learning strategies.
- participate in the Mitzvah Connection.
- meet with teens in the community to explore a variety of topics.
- read historical fiction as a vehicle for getting a “feel” of various time periods.
- create plays and skits to act out situations as scenes from differing perspectives among, Reform, Orthodox, and Conservative Jews.
- interact with parents and members of the community whose experiences relate to history and other learning goals.

TEXTS

- Explaining Reform Judaism, by Borowitz, Behrman House, ©1985.
- Hebrew Through Prayer III, by Kaye, Behrman House, ©1996.
- Shema is For Real, by Grishaver, Torah Aura Productions, ©1993.
- The Torah, A Modern Commentary, by Plaut, CCAR, ©1990.
- Where the Sidewalk Ends (Hebrew), by Silverstein, Snake Eye, ©1985.

THE UPPER GRADES
KITOT ZAYIN – CHET (7TH – 8TH)

KITAH ZAYIN (7TH GRADE)

STUDENT PROFILE

Focus Areas

Gan (K)

Am Yisrael
Torah & Text
Moadim
Kedushah:
Comforting the Sick
Ivrit

Alef (1st)

Torah & Text
Moadim
Kedushah:
Providing Shelter
Ivrit

Bet (2nd)

Eretz Yisrael
Torah & Text
Kedushah:
Honoring our Elders
Ivrit

Gimel (3rd)

God
Torah & Text
Kedushah:
Removing
Obstacles
Life Cycle

Daled (4th)

Torah & Text
History
Moadim
Kedushah:
Clothing and
Feeding the Poor
Ivrit

Hey (5th)

Torah & Text
History
Eretz Yisrael
Ivrit

Vav (6th)

Kedushah:
Social Welfare
Life Cycle
Reform Judaism
Tefillah
Ivrit

Zayin (7th)

Am Yisrael
God
Tikkun Olam
Kedushah:
Informed Choice
Reform Judaism
Tefillah
Ivrit

The pre-teens in this Kitah are facing the onset of adolescence. They are beginning slow development of traits which will eventually lead into maturity. Girls are generally more than a year ahead of boys. For both, their emotional maturity keeps pace with their physical development, but almost all fluctuate between childishness and maturity at this time.

They are undergoing an intellectual shift from collecting data to being able to think about it abstractly. They have a greater sense of relationship between events. They concentrate better, but are bored by repetitive activity. They enjoy responsibility and projects that give a sense of achievement.

Zayin students are educationally alert and can bring zeal to social and individual projects. They respond to teachers who recognize moods and respect individuality but are fair and firm. They are more deliberate in their judgment in ethical dilemmas and are capable of more thoughtful consideration.

They are open to question more childish views of God and the Bible and try out a variety of opinions, both religious and heretical. They are at the beginning of a search for a personal philosophy of life

OVERVIEW

We continue our focus on what it means to become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. In addition we will explore Christianity and Islam and their relationship with Judaism, both historically and today. Through the Zayin Seminar, all students will encounter case studies and Jewish texts. Their discussions and simulations will help them develop skills for applying Jewish thought, law, and ethics to their daily practice.

The Caring Curriculum theme is creating a Personal Ten Commandments. As teens becoming Jewishly adult, students will actively engage in the concept of making informed choices about their own Jewish behavior. In this case we will concentrate on mitzvot that are performed for the sake of others.

Two thirds of the students in this Kitah will spend a semester with the Cantor, working on those parts of the service common to all B'nai Mitzvah. For those who wish, we will have a continuing Hebrew option. All students will learn Hebrew vocabulary that supports the conversations they will have about each of the areas described above.

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...

Am Yisrael

- compare and contrast American Reform practices and mores with those of other Jewish groups.
- compare and contrast Israeli and American Judaisms.
- identify Ashkenazim & Sephardim as distinct ethnicities and describe how their history impacts upon the Jewish people today.
- compare and contrast Jewish God holiday and life cycle practices with those of Christianity and Islam.
- articulate the challenges of living as a Jew in a non-Jewish world, and begin to formulate a personal approach to those challenges.

God

- compare and contrast Jewish God concepts with those of Christianity and Islam.
- describe how the Jewish conception of God connects to ethical values.

Torah & Texts

- confront ethical dilemmas and apply Jewish values and texts in dealing with them.
- utilize text study skills previously developed in order to deduce and identify ways in which sacred texts may be relevant in their own lives.
- effectively use a variety of Jewish texts to investigate their own approach to Jewish practice.

History

- trace the historical evolution of Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
- explain how the histories of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are interconnected.
- describe how an historical approach to Jewish texts can provide a context for finding relevance in them.
- encounter, discuss, and make meaning of a variety of experiences connected to the American Jewish experience.
- trace the history of the American Jewish experience in chronological and geographical terms.

Eretz Yisrael

- explore current events in Israel including but not limited to the peace process, the Jewishness of the Jewish state, and what it is like to live as an Israeli.

Tikkun Olam

- explain and demonstrate what it means to “be a Bar or Bat Mitzvah every day of their lives.” (e.g. – through affiliation and participation, performing mitzvot on a regular basis, and continued learning)
- perform acts and articulate values that express their connection to the Jewish people and community.

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...

Moadim

- understand and apply Jewish ethics and law to the real life historical situation of a community fasting during the plague.
- explain why traditional liturgy adds the phrase Meshiv Haruach U'Morid Hagashem to the Avot prayer from Sukkot until Pesach.
- describe what is meant by the mitzvah of publicizing the Miracle of Chanukah
- argue the inherent dangers of “Ad Dlo Yada” (becoming so “joyful” that you cannot differentiate between Haman and Mordecai.)
- explain the rabbinic metaphor of Sinai being the wedding ceremony between God and Israel.

Kedushah

- apply Jewish texts and values to current social issues (e.g. adultery, perjury, etc.)
- approach the study of other faiths without prejudice and understand that each path to God is true for those who follow it.
- demonstrate what it means to “be a Bar or Bat Mitzvah every day of their lives.”
- encounter people who will provide a variety of perspectives on being a person of faith.
- identify, choose, and commit to performing Mitzvot.
- continue to celebrate and learn about Jewish holiday and life cycle observances.

Life Cycle

- explain the difference between “having” and “becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah.
- explain the origins of Bar Mitzvah and of Bat Mitzvah.
- describe how the ceremony differs between movements and eidot.
- define what is expected of someone who has become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah by themselves and by the community.

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...

Reform Judaism

- confront ethical dilemmas and apply Jewish values in dealing with them.
- effectively use a variety of Jewish texts to investigate their own approach to Jewish practice.
- compare and contrast American Reform practices and mores with those of other Jewish groups.
- identify how Shabbat worship, authority of Torah, and the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony differs between American Jewish movements.

Tefillah

- demonstrate the skills necessary to read from the Torah and to lead a worship service.

Ivrit (Hebrew)

- demonstrate a mastery of liturgical Hebrew through participation in worship.
- add Hebrew vocabulary useful for discussing all of the issues covered this year.

HARGASHAH V' KESHER  FEELING & CONNECTION

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...

Affect

- demonstrate an understanding that they have a role that goes beyond their classroom, Temple, or family through giving tzedakah and choosing how it is disbursed.
- find themselves actually acting in the community by exploring the concept of creating a Personal Ten Commandments.

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...

Classroom Strategies

- meet with older students who will share their Israel experiences.
- participate as members of a worshipping community.
- process their own Bar/Bat Mitzvah experience after the fact.
- explore the various Jewish ethnic cultural traditions (e.g. Yemenite, Polish, etc.).
- model the behavior learned from Jewish role models including their parents.
- demonstrate an awareness of current local and world events, and analyze their impact on Judaism and the Jewish people now and in the future.
- examine the works of Jewish artists, craftspeople, comedians, actors, writers, and dancers.
- participate in the Mitzvah Connection.
- meet with teens in the community to explore a variety of topics.
- read historical fiction as a vehicle for getting a “feel” of various time periods.
- interact with peers of other faiths to learn about our similarities and differences.
- participate in a Video History Project to meet and record the memories of our elders and to create teaching materials for younger students
- interact with clergy of other faiths to explore our similarities and differences

Parent/Family Connections

- explore with their parents options involved in planning a trip to Israel the summer after 10th grade.
- explore and make meaning of their personal family history for four generations as described by their parents and grandparents.
- with their parents process the parents' Bar/Bat Mitzvah and other life cycle events together.

TEXTS

- Brother Can You Spare A Dime, Beggars and Jewish Tradition, by Kurzweill, United Synagogue, © 1986.
- Doing Difficult Mitzvot, by Latham, et. al., CAJE, © 1999.
- When I Stood at Mt. Sinai, by Grishaver, et. al., Torah Aura Productions, © 1993.

Focus Areas

Gan (K)

Am Yisrael
Torah & Text
Moadim
Kedushah:
 Comforting the Sick
Ivrit

Alef (1st)

Torah & Text
Moadim
Kedushah:
 Providing Shelter
Ivrit

Bet (2nd)

Eretz Yisrael
Torah & Text
Kedushah:
 Honoring our Elders
Ivrit

Gimel (3rd)

God
Torah & Text
Kedushah:
 Removing
 Obstacles
Life Cycle

Daled (4th)

Torah & Text
History
Moadim
Kedushah:
 Clothing and
 Feeding the Poor
Ivrit

Hey (5th)

Torah & Text
History
Eretz Yisrael
Ivrit

Vav (6th)

Kedushah:
 Social Welfare
Life Cycle
Reform Judaism
Tefillah
Ivrit

Zayin (7th)

Am Yisrael
God
Tikkun Olam
Kedushah:
 Informed Choice
Reform Judaism
Tefillah
Ivrit

Chet (8th)

Am Yisrael
God
Tikkun Olam
Kedushah:
 Pursuing Justice
Reform Judasim

KITAH CHET (8TH GRADE)

STUDENT PROFILE

These students are in what is generally the most difficult year of adolescence. Their bodies are changing rapidly and emotional developments conspire to keep children unbalanced. They have a deepened sense of self but are confused and hence sensitive. Boys are starting to catch up to girls in growth. Earlier antagonism between sexes is moderating. Controls over feelings are beginning to emerge.

In groups, they are less boisterous than at 12. Insecurities manifest in complaining, withdrawal, sarcasm, unreasonable behavior. Their interests are more selective. The courageous and dramatic have strong appeal. They demonstrate greater power and interest in reasoning and discussion and have much desire to experiment with new skills, but that desire often does not last.

Most of these students believe in God but some are developing serious doubts. They are judging religion by the actual actions of its representatives. They can relate God and prayer to personal problems and to the harsh realities of the world.

OVERVIEW

The Chet year is divided into three parts. Each third of the kitah rotates through three teachers and subject areas. At present, Hebrew is taught only as vocabulary is added to the Passive Hebrew Environment of each class. The Caring Curriculum theme, Tzedek, Tzedek Tirdof – Justice, Justice You Shall Pursue is approached through the material in each class as well as through tzedakah and participation in informal activities.

Comparative Judaism is the first course. Using the hands-on media available in our Arts & Crafts center, students will explore the differences between the Reform, Orthodox, and Conservative movements.

The second course is the Jewish Spiritual Journey. This class will use Torah and other texts of our tradition to help students wrestle with the very real issues of their lives today. The idea is to further develop a spiritual and ethical base for making personal choices.

The third section, Ethical Dilemmas, uses all of the resources our tradition and the students learning experiences offer to approach a variety of case study issues. Many of these cases have been designed to explicate specific values. Others are ripped from the headlines to demonstrate the ease with which students can apply what they know and believe.

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...

Am Yisrael

- describe how the American Jewish experience has created new ethnicities among our people.
- demonstrate an awareness of current local and world events, and analyze their impact on Judaism and the Jewish people now and in the future.
- identify and confront ethical dilemmas that have been or may be caused by other peoples' responding to our Jewishness.
- articulate the challenges of living as a Jew in a non-Jewish world, and continue to formulate a personal approach to those challenges.

God

- begin to develop a personal theology.
- identify the ideas of several Jewish philosophers and discuss how those ideas might be relevant.
- continue their Jewish Spiritual Journey, exploring how they will apply Jewish values and ethics to their own lives.

Torah & Texts

- continue their Jewish Spiritual Journey, using texts to explore how to apply Jewish values and ethics to their own lives.

History

- study and examine spiritual journeys taken by our forbears as a way of charting the course of their own.
- explore how ethical dilemmas in the past have been confronted and how that may inform their own approach to conflict.
- explain how the different movements in Judaism evolved to their present states.

Eretz Yisrael

- explore how Israel might be relevant to them, creating a connection different than with any other foreign nation.
- describe how the Jewish people have had a relationship with the land of Israel for over thirty centuries.

Tikkun Olam

- explain and demonstrate what it means to be a Rodef Tzedek—a pursuer of justice.
- perform acts and articulate values that express their connection to the Jewish people and community.
- raise and allocate funds to support individuals and organizations whom the class identifies as Rodfei Tzedek – pursuers of justice.

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...

Moadim

- identify, choose, and commit to performing holiday Mitzvot.
- celebrate and learn about Jewish holiday and life cycle observances on their own.
- incorporate Jewish values in their everyday deeds.

Kedushah

- develop skills for applying Jewish values to new situations that may arise in their lives.
- confront ethical issues according to Jewish law and values (e.g. abortion, death penalty, drinking, drugs, sex, homosexuality, honesty, etc.)
- approach the study of other streams of Judaism without prejudice and understand that each path to God is true for those who follow it.
- incorporate text study and the Jewish values they have developed over a young lifetime of study to encounter some of the following subjects:
 - ◇ Assisted Suicide
 - ◇ Abortion
 - ◇ Interdating/Intermarriage
 - ◇ Motorcycle/Bicycle Helmets
 - ◇ Alcoholism
 - ◇ Crèches and Chanukiyot on Public Property
 - ◇ Beggars
 - ◇ Anti-Semitism and Prejudice
 - ◇ Cults
 - ◇ Saving the Environment
 - ◇ Who Is A Jew? Intermarriage
 - ◇ The Holocaust, Rescuers and Resistance
 - ◇ West Bank Settlers & Palestinians/Peace Process
 - ◇ AIDS, People With AIDS, Condom & Needle Distribution
 - ◇ Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) orders in hospitals
- apply their skills and values to the question of “What kind of a Jewish society would/should we create?”

Life Cycle

- demonstrate an understanding of the meaning of the Confirmation process.
- explain what it means to be in a covenantal relationship, and explore how their experiences have and will continue to relate back to the covenants at Sinai and with Abraham.

UPON SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THIS KITAH STUDENTS WILL...

Reform Judaism

- practice making personal ritual choices based on personal values combined with an understanding of the practices and their meaning.
- compare and contrast Reform history, practice, and mores with those of other Jewish denominations.
- describe how and why the various congregations of the greater Bridgeport area do things differently.
- confront ethical dilemmas and apply Jewish values in dealing with them.

Ivrit (Hebrew)

- Students will add Hebrew vocabulary useful for discussing all of the issues covered this year.

HARGASHAH V' KESHER  FEELING & CONNECTION

Affect

- develop an understanding that they have a role that goes beyond their classroom, Temple, or family through giving tzedakah and choosing how it is disbursed.

Classroom Strategies

- interact with peers of other faiths to learn about our similarities and differences.
- participate in a Video History Project, meet and record the memories of our elders, and create teaching materials for younger students
- critically explore those artists whose Judaism affects their work and how their identity influences their art.
- explore, design, and interpret various examples of Jewish ritual art as a vehicle for understanding the differences and similarities between Jewish movements.
- accept a personal invitation to attend Confirmation during Kitah Chet
- continue to be involved in leading communal worship.
- participate as members of a worshipping community.
- meet with older students who will share their Israel experiences.
- participate in the Mitzvah Connection.

Parent/Family Connections

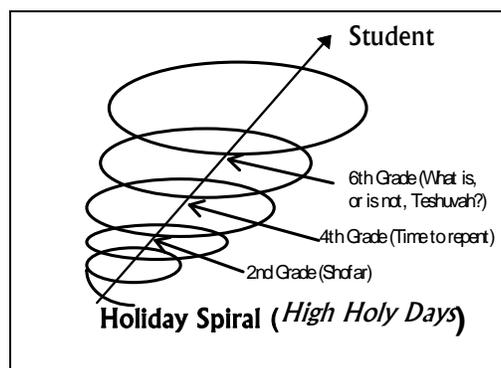
- model the behavior learned from Jewish role models including their parents.
- explore with their parents options involved in planning a trip to Israel the summer after 10th grade.

APPENDICES

A. CURRICULUM SPIRALS

Our curriculum is divided into twelve major subject areas, or spirals. Each year students explore and experience the richness of our heritage. They will revisit each spiral several times during their years as students at B'nai Israel. Each time they do so they will approach the material from a new perspective and discover new facets of their Jewishness as they grow and mature.

For example: We revisit the Jewish holidays each year. In Kitah Bet (2nd) we might discuss the sounds of the shofar and how they serve as a wake-up call for the Birthday of the World (*Rosh Hashanah*). In Kitah Daled (4th) we will look at how the shofar is used to remind us it is time to do *teshuvah* (repentance) in the context of the cycle of the High Holy Day Season. In Kitah Vav (6th), students explore what does and does not constitute adequate *teshuvah*.



Each kitah (grade) has two or more major focus areas. By approaching other content areas through the lens of the focus area, students gain a different perspective each year. For example: Kitah Gimel (3rd) has God as a major focus area. Students in that grade will examine the holidays as they relate to God. And so, they will try to determine why the Scroll of Esther, read at Purim, has no active role for God to play and what that means for us today.

Our goals for each kitah are stated in terms of learning outcomes – what a student will know, understand, and be able to apply in his or her own life by the end of the year. The goal of our curriculum is to build a positive Jewish Identity on a solid Judaic knowledge base so that our students will be able to live actively Jewish lives.

There are many places where spirals intersect with one another – no one subject stands totally independent of the others. Our approach is therefore interdisciplinary. We also believe in exploring the relevance of each area to the lives of our students. Wherever possible we employ hands-on activities and the use of primary sources in the search for personal meaning and Reform Choice. The twelve spirals are:

- 1) **Am Yisrael** (The Jewish People) – This area explores *Kehillah* (Jewish Community), *Eidot* (Jewish communities around the world), *Beit Knesset* (the Synagogue), *Tefillah* (Worship), Jewish Values, our relationships with other faiths and other Jewish Movements.
- 2) **God** – Students will investigate different Jewish ideas of God, their own God-concept, *Tefillah* (Worship), God's place in Judaism and the world, values, and our relationships with God.
- 3) **History** – This spiral approaches history through many lenses: personal and family history; the stories told by our living relatives; the sequence of events experienced by

our people; the developing relationship we have had with God. We will look at ways to apply the lessons of the past to the context of the future.

- 4) **Eretz Yisrael (Israel)** – We explore the place of the Land of Israel in the covenantal relationship between God and the Jewish people; our relationship to the land from Biblical times to the present; the roots of modern Zionism; the State of Israel (Medinat Yisrael); geography; the Israeli and their culture.
- 5) **Ivrit (Hebrew)** – Called in Hebrew *Lashon Kodesh* (the Holy Tongue), *Ivrit* is the language of the Jewish people. In Israel, it is the language of everyday communication. Among the Jewish communities throughout the world, it helps us to share our common heritage through prayer and study. This spiral is further elaborated below.
- 6) **Moadim (Seasons/Jewish Time/Holidays)** – This area covers the Holy days throughout the Jewish year, the Jewish calendar and how it works, and the marking of significant moments throughout the year through rituals, *brakhot* (Blessings), and discussion.
- 7) **Kedushah (Holiness)** – Kedushah covers the broad spectrum of Jewish values that have developed out of our understanding that we are created *B'tzelem Elohim* (in the image of God). We explore the value of human life, self-esteem, and how people should behave toward one another.
- 8) **The Life Cycle** – In this spiral students learn about the various Jewish rites of passage, as well as discover ways to make Jewish memories during all of the rest of the days of their lives.
- 9) **Reform Judaism** – Congregation B'nai Israel is a part of the Jewish Reform Movement, and in this area of our curriculum students will explore what that means. Students will explore the Synagogue, other streams of Judaism, and the history and future of the Reform Movement. Throughout a student's academic career, he or she will learn how to make informed choices about Jewish practice and apply those choices to his or her own life.
- 10) **Tefillah (Worship)** – Students will encounter worship through classroom learning, services held during school hours, Congregational observances, and our Youth Groups. Shabbat and Holy Day Worship Services are among the most important vehicles for Jewish communal connection, and our goal is to make those experiences rewarding and attractive for our students.
- 11) **Tikkun Olam (Repairing the World)** – *Tzedakah* (Justice), *Ahavah* (Love), and *Gemillut Chasidim* (loving, kind deeds) are lenses through which students will learn about social justice. Working in partnership with God to complete and perfect the creation of the world is central to the Prophetic vision of Judaism which is part of the culture of Congregation B'nai Israel.
- 12) **Torah** – Torah can refer to the five books of Moses, the entire Bible, or one specific teaching. This portion of curriculum covers the realm of Jewish text and how its interpretation can be relevant today. Among the areas students will investigate are Jewish values, heroes, Torah, Bible, Talmud, Commentaries, Responsa, Midrash, *Agaddah* (stories) and *Halakhah* (Jewish law).

B. CARING CURRICULUM

We operate under the assumption that Jewish learning for its own sake is a core value. If, however, the ethical teachings that are learned do not lead to action, then we have missed the mark. Every facet of our tradition and faith demand that we act out our values as a part of our daily living. Our Caring Curriculum is the heart of the Tikkun Olam (Social Justice) and Kedushah (Holiness) spirals, and it provides a unique opportunity for students, teachers, and families to put learning into practice.

Each kitah is assigned a single ethical value as a focus area. During the course of the year, they will revisit that value from many perspectives and through many vehicles. In the course of weekly tzedakah collection, students will learn about and choose to support institutions and individuals who act out that value. They will take part in field trips, family programs, and discussions that will help them participate in living out their value. Some class sessions might be dedicated to discussing or acting out the Caring Curriculum value. Other sessions might allot a few moments to remind students for whom they are collecting tzedakah. The theme remains an undercurrent for the entire year. The Caring Curriculum themes are:

- Gan** **Bikur Cholim—Comforting the Sick;** In Genesis, God sends three messengers to visit Abraham while he is recovering from surgery. Our tradition has taken this to be the first sick visit ever, and it is our model. Students will learn about how good they can make someone feel by caring for them when they are ill. They will learn about and support organizations like Ronald McDonald House, the Jacoby Pediatric fund at Bridgeport Hospital, and Alyn Children’s Hospital in Jerusalem.
- Kitah Alef** **Matza Miklat—Sheltering the Homeless;** The Torah and Haggadah describe Abraham as an *Arami Oved*, a fugitive. The first Jewish family sought shelter in foreign lands on several occasions, fleeing famine or drought. Students will learn how they can participate in the mitzvah of providing shelter. They will learn about and support organizations like Operation Hope and Habitat for Humanity.
- Kitah Bet** **Kibud Av V'em—Honoring our Elders;** One of the Ten Commandments is to honor our mothers and fathers. This mitzvah extends to our communal parents—the seniors among us. Students will develop a special relationship with the Jewish Home for the Elderly and have opportunities to interact with the residents. They will learn about and support organizations like the JHE, Myriam’s Dream, and Lifeline for the Old in Jerusalem.
- Kitah Gimel** **Lo Titen Mikhshol—Removing Obstacles;** The literal meaning of the Hebrew is “do not place an obstacle before the blind.” It is one of the Mitzvot described in the Holiness Code found in Leviticus 19, and which serves as one of the central texts of Reform Judaism. Students in this grade will learn about and support organizations that help provide access for, and foster sensitivity to the handicapped.

- Kitah Daled** **Mazon and Malbish Arumim—Feeding And Clothing The Poor;** In the book of Isaiah, God says “Is this the fast that I requested?” God is critical of those who are ostentatious in fasting for Yom Kippur while the poor go hungry. And we learn from the book of Genesis that God provides clothing for the naked. Students in this Kitah will learn about helping the poor maintain their dignity and provide for their basic needs. They will learn about and support organizations like food banks, Operation Hope, and Mazon: The Jewish Response to Hunger.
- Kitah Hey** **Hakhnasat Orkhim—Welcoming the Stranger;** When the messengers described in the Gan Caring Curriculum description visited Abraham, he responded by jumping up and seeing to their welcome. From him we learn the value of making newcomers feel welcome. Students will learn about and support organizations like Jewish Family Service, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, and the Joint Distribution Committee.
- Kitah Vav** **Tikkun Olam—Social Welfare;** In Rabbi Isaac Luria’s creation story, we learn that the world is incomplete and in need of repair. We are God’s partners in completing creation. Students will learn about and support organizations like the Ziv Tzedakah Fund, Hebrew Free Loan Societies, B’nai Israel’s Social Action Committee, and the United Jewish Appeal.
- Kitah Zayin** **Informed Choice;** Reform Judaism is about deciding how we will be Jewish. We teach that for those decisions to be legitimate and meaningful, they must be informed by understanding their purpose and consequence. Students will explore the range of Jewish values and make their own decisions about organizations and individuals to support.
- Kitah Chet** **Rodef Tzedek—Pursuing Justice;** Deuteronomy commands “Justice, Justice You Shall Pursue.” Our prophets proclaimed a vision of a just society where power is used for the common welfare. Students will learn about and explore social justice agencies such as the Anti-Defamation League, the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, and the Israel Religious Action Center of Progressive Judaism.

C. B’NAI ISRAEL SIDDUR YOUTH (B.I.S.Y.)

Siddur is the Hebrew word for “Prayer Book.” This year marks the debut of the B.I.S.Y. (B’nai Israel Siddur Youth) Society. Students from Gan (K) to Kitah Vav (6th) who attend six or more Shabbat Services at Congregation B’nai Israel over the course of the school year will be inducted into BISY.

Members of BISY will receive a pin and special recognition at the end of the school year. They will also become quite skilled at reading, praying, and being part of our worshipping community. By making prayer a habit and by taking the time to be part of the larger Temple community, both BISY and B’nai Israel will be enriched.

D. HEBREW

Ivrit (Hebrew) is the only common language of the Jewish People. The modern, spoken Hebrew was first developed a century ago by Eliezer Ben Yehuda. For centuries, Hebrew vocabulary, syntax and grammar were used only in prayerbooks, the Bible and a select group of commentaries and legal texts. Ben Yehuda combined that language with the ideas and technology of the modern age to revive it as a living language.

Research has taught us that in order to become conversant in a second language, we need at least three repetitions per week, as well as regular practice and reinforcement. Our main focus, therefore, is on Hebrew as it appears in our liturgy – as the language of prayer and in observing a variety of Jewish practices and rituals. This is the most readily reinforced type of Hebrew for North Americans, and is most likely to be used as adult members of our community.

We do believe, as Ben Yehuda did, that spoken, modern Hebrew is an important skill for a Jewishly literate adult. We therefore introduce and develop modern Hebrew language skills and vocabulary on a limited basis. By building on the liturgy-based learning, we lay the groundwork for later learning. Our goal is to nurture a desire to pursue life-long Jewish learning in all of our students.

Passive Hebrew Environment (P.H.E.)

Our students and parents are exposed to a Hebrew vocabulary of Jewish Life by our Passive Hebrew Environment. This begins by learning a basic spoken vocabulary of words used in class and around the Temple, and continues to grow each year the student is enrolled.

Signs in Hebrew, English and transliteration are posted throughout the school. Students and parents begin to develop a small word-stock to introduce them to the concept of Hebrew as living language.

Hebrew Curriculum

Basic letter recognition is a part of our Gan (K) and Kitah Alef (1st) program. Phonetic and whole word reading begins in Kitah Bet (2nd). Reading skills continue to grow, along with writing in Kitah Gimel (3rd). That year also marks the beginning of liturgical (prayerbook) Hebrew.

In Kitot Daled - Vav (4th - 6th) our students learn to read, write, decode, and make meaning of the prayers and to begin to become familiar with modern, spoken Hebrew, as their ability level allows. Kitah Zayin (7th) students will spend their formal Hebrew learning time in preparation for becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah. For High School students, conversational Hebrew is an option in the Merkaz program.

E GLOSSARY

Agaddah – Jewish stories, Midrash

Am Yisrael – The Jewish People

Bereshit –Genesis

Bikur Cholim – Comforting the sick

Chagim -- Holidays

Chidush – A new idea, insight

Da'at – Knowledge

Eretz Yisrael – The Land of Israel)

Gan -- Kindergarten

Hakhnasat Orkhim—Welcoming the Stranger

Halakhah – Jewish law

Hargashah – Feeling

Ivrit – Hebrew

Kedushah -- Holiness

Keshet – Connection, tie

Kitah – class or grade level

Kitah Alef – 1st Grade

Kitah Bet – 2nd Grade

Kitah Chet – 8th Grade

Kitah Daled – 4th Grade

Kitah Gimel – 3rd Grade

Kitah Hey– 5th Grade

Kitah Vav – 6th Grade

Kitah Zayin – 7th Grade

Lo Titen Mikhshol – *lit.* do not place an obstacle before the blind; providing access and fostering sensitivity to the handicapped.

Ma'aseh – Action, Deed

Malbish Arumim – Clothing the naked

Matza Miklat – *lit.* Finding Shelter; Sheltering the homeless

Mazon – Feeding the hungry

Midrash – Stories written to explain the Torah or other teachings; parables

Mitzvah – Commandment, obligation

Moadim – Seasons

Responsa – Legal decisions to questions submitted to rabbinic decisors.

Tefillah -- Worship

Tikkun Olam -- Social Justice, World Repair

Tzedakah -- Justice, Righteousness

GAN (K)

For many students in Gan, this is their first experience at B'nai Israel outside of worship services. It is essential that they start out with the feeling that this is a safe and comfortable place for them to be.

The research suggests that understandings of History and Chronology are just beginning by the end elementary school. History goals for these grades will be in the context of overlapping with goals in other areas.

Similarly, the concepts of geography on a global scale and of national identification are in their very earliest stages at this age. At this point we are planting seeds of ideas to be nurtured over time.

Please see Appendix C for more on the Caring Curriculum.

As an entry level class, this grade will have a Major Focus Unit on the holidays, with a set of specific learning goals for each holiday, in addition to the basic identification goals at right. These goals will be built upon each year a child is in our school.

Bible is a major focus area for Gan. We will use the I Can Learn Torah series to provide an opportunity for parent participation in this area. I Can Learn Torah is a book designed for bed-time reading and family discussion in conjunction with classroom use.

Please see appendix D for more on the BISH program.

Please see appendix E for more on the Passive Hebrew Environment.

Please see appendix F for specific Hebrew Objectives for Gan.

Prayer For The Study Of Torah—Barukh Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh Ha'olam Asher Kidshanu B'mitzvotav Vitzivanu La'asok B'divrei Torah
...Who Commands Us To Engage In The Study Of Torah.

Ownership—Ultimately, we are trying to develop a sense of “This is MY Temple, MY people, MY family, MY God, MY Torah.

Five Senses—e.g.: Foods can lead to taste, sight, touch, and smell; Music to sound; etc.

Bikur Cholim goes beyond visiting the sick. Gan help to raise money for research, and to provide financial aid to the sick. They will also create items that will serve to bring comfort. Examples include preparing food, creating a quilt for Ronald MacDonald House, etc.

Tzedakah—Over many years, we hope to reinforce the idea that Tzedakah means “Justice” or “Righteousness.” Charity is a non-Jewish concept meaning “from the heart.” While we do want Tzedakah to come from the heart, it remains an obligation even when we don't feel like it.

Joy and Excitement—This is done by weaving behaviors into the fabric of their experiences.

Madrikhim—Meaning “Those who lead the way.” The masculine singular is Madrikh, the feminine is Madrikhah.

Teachers—The Hebrew for a woman teacher is Morah, for a man it is Moreh, and the plural is Morim

The arts and other activities often described as enrichment can unlock our students' hearts, creating emotional connections that intelligent conversation might miss. By connecting to their hearts, we will gain greater access to their minds and teach them even more.

Family Education —This permeates the culture of the Religious School as it does the entire synagogue. We take it as a given that the desired end result of all endeavors of the B'nai Israel community is that our families will feel and act more connected to their Jewish identities, the Jewish people and to God each and every day. This is THE most basic stuff, and is important enough that we state it here, rather than assuming it.