

GAN CURRICULUM 5786

Our Mission:

In the Gan, the Temple Beth Am Youth Learning and Engagement Program, we joyfully deepen relationships to Judaism and our community by engaging the soul, heart, and mind.

- We recognize that each of our students has a unique relationship with Judaism and that there are many ways to live Jewishly. Our role in The Gan is to help foster a positive relationship to Jewish community, learning, traditions, and spirituality. (Relationship to Reform Judaism.)
- We are a warm community that is focused on building relationships through shared experience and learning. (Relationship to People/Community)
- We have a student-centered curriculum that is focused on Jewish character development and building a confident Jewish identity. (Relationship to Individual Jewish Identity)

RELEVANCY is essential to 21st century learning and is a key focus of The Gan's curriculum which flips the traditional model of Jewish learning. Rather than teaching values through content (for example, learning about Joshua teaches us about courage), we will teach content through a focus on values (such as starting with an essential question like "when did you need courage" then teaching students about Joshua's story.) Our Curriculum Team created a structure of 13 values that build on each other as students grow. The values, taught at the developmentally appropriate level, are the vehicle through which we weave and teach essential Jewish content, such as holidays, history, life cycles, prayers, and more. The Gan will also utilize project-based learning which will incorporate Jewish values and material into relevant projects, as well as social-emotional learning that focuses on the students' growth as a person, not just the mastery of content and information.

EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION can include center-based and project-based learning, but at its core it is a student-centered approach to learning that is based upon student's voice and choice, and relationship building, rather than a content delivery approach to education. This creates relevance and engages students directly in deciding how and who they learn with best. Students are not broken into individual classrooms. Instead, teacher teams construct various "centers," which help teach the same content from multiple modalities. In relationship with trusted mentors, the students pick which centers to experience, based upon what best fits their learning approach. A center-based learning, small group approach also allows students to get more one-on-one attention from both teachers and [Madrichim](#).

OUR LEARNING FOCUS in The Gan is on building positive relationships to Judaism and each other. Working with rabbis, educators and members of our community, Temple Beth Am's youth learning team put together 13 Jewish values that reflect the Temple Beth Am

community and mission. Each grade focuses on two values throughout the year, one which is introduced for the first time as their “major value” and the second revisits a previous year’s value with new content. Students learn about Jewish traditions, holidays, t’fillah/prayers, blessings and texts with their grade level values at the center. Our goal is to help students embody these values and to use them as guide stars for their lives well into the future.

T’FILLAH PRAYER PRACTICE IN THE GAN

- All Gan students spend time developing their individual connection to prayer practice and spirituality. T’fillah will include a variety of activities including havruta/partner text studies from the Torah, Reform Movement Mishkan T’fillah, Jewish texts, poetry, and stories, participation in communal prayer in the sanctuary or outside, hands-on projects, music with our clergy and service leaders, and artistic expression. We want to prepare students for prayer/t’fillah participation in the Beth Am community and the greater Jewish community through building a personal connection and understanding of prayer and prayer leadership.
- Throughout the year, students will be invited into the sanctuary as grade level cohorts to participate in morning services with our clergy and service leaders.
- Each week on Thursday evenings, 4th-6th grade students will participate in a t’fillah/prayer service in the sanctuary with our clergy or service leader. The intention for Thursday t’fillah is Shabbat service readiness and will focus on different elements of both Kabbalat and Saturday morning Shabbat services.

Learner Services (4th through 7th grade)

- Several times throughout the year, our clergy will lead a “Learner’s Service” on Saturday morning. These services are marked on both the temple and Gan calendars!
- In a learner service, clergy will explain as they lead. There will be opportunities for our 4-7th graders to practice coming up on to the bima to help lead prayers for the community. We recommend that families attend these services as often as possible.

PRE-KINDERGARTEN – 7TH GRADE CURRICULUM IN THE GAN

Pre-K/Kindergarten

Our Pre-kindergarten students begin their day with us in the Sanctuary with music and song, welcomed by our clergy and service leaders, faculty and madrichim before heading into their learning spaces.

Throughout their time with us, Pre-K and Kindergarten students will participate in a variety of activities with the goal of introducing them to their Jewish values of **Love Ahava &**

Kindness Chesed and building connections to each other in a vibrant and engaging way. Building community through Social Emotional Spiritual Learning (SESL) is the foundation of all our curriculum, and we hope to empower our youngest Jewish learners to articulate and share their personal Jewish experience, develop an understanding of themselves, their emotions, and creating meaningful connections with each other through Jewish experience and practice.

Major Topics: Students will be introduced to a variety of Jewish practices, Torah stories, and Shabbat and Holiday traditions with their grade level values at the center. Each week, classes will engage in multi-modal opportunities for experiential learning, focusing on a “major topic” which can include a Jewish concept or tradition, text or story, and cultural or holiday practice.

Music and T’fillah: Music is an important part of our program! Students will learn prayers and songs that relate to their grade level values and the material or subject matter relevant to their major topic for the day. During this time, students will practice prayers and songs, move their bodies, and engage in a variety of collaborative activities.

Hebrew: Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten begin learning Hebrew through the introduction of Jewish Life Vocabulary and Hebrew curriculum inspired by [Hebrew Through Movement](#), a language acquisition strategy from the Jewish Education Center of Cleveland with which students learn Hebrew by hearing and responding to Hebrew commands. Hebrew Through Movement (HTM) is an adaptation of the Total Physical Response (TPR) learning method for language. We hope to prime students’ ears to Hebrew, to help them to differentiate word sounds and embody the meaning of new vocabulary words in a playful and fun way, preparing them for prayer participation and Hebrew decoding and reading later on in their journey in The Gan.

1st Grade

Throughout their time with us, first grade students will participate in a variety of activities with the goal of introducing them to their Jewish values of **Kindness Chesed & Compassion Rachamim** and building connections to each other in a vibrant and engaging way.

Building community through Social Emotional Spiritual Learning (SESL) is the foundation of all our curriculum, and we hope to empower our Jewish learners to articulate and share their personal Jewish experience, develop an understanding of themselves, their emotions, and creating meaningful connections with each other through Jewish learning and practice.

Major Topics: Students will be introduced to a variety of Torah stories, Midrash, and Shabbat and Holiday traditions with their grade level values at the center. Each week, classes will engage in multi-modal opportunities for experiential learning, focusing on a

“major topic” which can include a Jewish ritual object, concept or tradition, text or story, and cultural or holiday practice.

Music and T’fillah: Music is an important part of our program! Students will learn prayers and songs that relate to their grade level values and the material or subject matter relevant to their major topic for the day. During this time, students will practice prayers and songs, move their bodies, and engage in a variety of collaborative activities. Using the values of kindness and compassion, students will discover some of the ways Judaism and Jewish spiritual practice can provide us with self-care opportunities, as well as compassion and kindness to others.

Hebrew: First grade begins learning Hebrew through the introduction of Jewish Life Vocabulary and Hebrew curriculum inspired by [Hebrew Through Movement](#), a language acquisition strategy from the Jewish Education Center of Cleveland with which students learn Hebrew by hearing and responding to Hebrew commands. Hebrew Through Movement (HTM) is an adaptation of the Total Physical Response (TPR) learning method for language. We hope to prime students’ ears to Hebrew, to help them to differentiate word sounds and embody the meaning of new vocabulary words in a playful and fun way, preparing them for prayer participation and Hebrew decoding and reading later on in their journey in The Gan.

2nd Grade

Our second grade students begin their day with us in the Sanctuary with music and song, welcomed by our clergy and service leaders, faculty and madrichim before heading into their learning spaces.

Throughout their time with us, second grade students will participate in a variety of activities with the goal of introducing them to their Jewish values of **Compassion Rahcamim & Common Courtesy Derech Eretz** and building connections to each other in a vibrant and engaging way. We translate *derech erez* as “the way we engage on earth” and so much of our time will be spent exploring the ways Judaism teaches us to interact with each other, our communities, and the world itself. Building community through Social Emotional Spiritual Learning (SESL) is the foundation of all our curriculum, and we hope to empower our youngest Jewish learners to articulate and share their personal Jewish experience, develop an understanding of themselves, their emotions, and creating meaningful connections with each other through Jewish experience and practice.

Major Topics: Students will be introduced to a variety of Jewish practices, Torah stories, and Shabbat and Holiday traditions with their grade level values at the center. Each week, classes will engage in multi-modal opportunities for experiential learning, focusing on a “major topic” which can include a Jewish concept such as being a *mensch* to practice both compassion and *derech erez*, tradition, text or story, and cultural or holiday practice.

Music and T’fillah: Music is an important part of our program! Students will learn prayers and songs that relate to their grade level values and the material or subject matter relevant

to their major topic for the day. During this time, students will practice prayers and songs, move their bodies, and engage in a variety of collaborative activities.

Hebrew: 2nd Grade continues to use Hebrew Through Movement with additional Jewish Life Vocabulary words. Students will also learn a new Hebrew letter each week and work to identify prayer vocabulary words related to their Jewish values and content that begin with that letter.

3rd Grade

Our 3rd graders begin their day with us in their classrooms with faculty and madrichim and divide up into learning groups.

Throughout their time with us on Sunday, 3rd grade students will participate in a variety of activities with the goal of introducing them to their Jewish values of Common Courtesy ***Derech Eretz & Gratitude Hakarat Hatov*** and building connections to each other in a vibrant and engaging way. Building community through social emotional spiritual learning (SESL) is the foundation of all our curriculum, and we hope to empower our Jewish learners to articulate their unique understanding of Jewish identity and the Divine through using blessings, Reform Jewish liturgical practice and experience in a variety of Jewish experiences.

Chevruta Study: In 3rd grade, we delve into the concept of Jewish partnered text study. Each week in pairs or small groups, students will engage with a combination of both traditional and non-traditional texts including images, videos, poetry and more to practice this ancient Jewish scholarly tradition. Students read from a variety of Jewish texts, including the Torah and Pirket Avot (Sayings of the Fathers) with their grade level values central to the material.

Major Topics: Developing connections with others within our community is central to the grade level values. 3rd grade will focus on the *derech erez* common courtesy and *hakarat hatov* gratitude practice to deepen their understanding around the ways in which we live our values. During major topics, students will engage with holiday celebrations and practice, characters from the Torah, the Torah as a physical book, and the role it has in our Jewish lives.

T'fillah: We will work to understand the concept of gratitude and build a relationship to both the Torah through the lens of our grade level values and the Reform Jewish Mishkan T'fillah. Starting with the construction of a Jewish blessing in the 3rd grade, the focus for t'fillah is on developing a personal gratitude practice through prayer and building comfort in prayerful spaces including discussions around God/the Divine and how to create individual connections to community prayer practice.

Hebrew: 3rd Grade will continue utilizing Jewish Life Vocabulary, building their t'fillah/prayer vocabulary. This is also the first year that students begin learning Hebrew

Decoding, moving toward reading practice. Our Learn to Decode Hebrew curriculum was developed for Temple Beth Am and approaches Hebrew learning with prayer readiness in mind. In addition to our Learn to Decode curriculum, 3rd grade students will also have access to at home practice online through Torah Aura's Prayer Tech Primer program.

4th Grade

Throughout their time with us, 4th grade students will participate in a variety of activities with the goal of introducing them to their Jewish values of **Gratitude *Hakarat Hatov* & Friendship *Yedidut*** and building connections to each other in a vibrant and engaging way.

Building community through social emotional spiritual learning (SESL) is the foundation of all our curriculum, and we hope to empower our Jewish learners to articulate their unique understanding of Jewish identity and the Divine through using blessings, Reform Jewish liturgical practice and experience in a variety of Jewish experiences.

Students will participate in bi-weekly programming tailored to their age group and unique time in their Jewish journeys. The Gan is devoted to develop the fourth grade cohort's confidence in service leadership in preparation for their B'Mitzvah and service participation, and will include Hebrew, studying relevant Jewish major topics, a T'fillah experience with faculty in their classrooms or clergy in the sanctuary, an opportunity for *chevra* community building and deepening friendships, and a communal pizza dinner each week.

Chevruta Study: 4th grade will continue to develop an understanding of partnered text study this year. Each week in pairs or small groups, students will engage with a combination of both traditional and non-traditional texts including images, videos, poetry and more to practice this ancient Jewish scholarly tradition. Students read from a variety of Jewish texts, including the Torah and Pirket Avot (Sayings of the Fathers) with their grade level values central to the material.

Major Topics: Developing connections with others within our community is central to fourth grade learning. Students will explore Jewish holidays, biblical Jewish history, and Jewish lifecycle events through the lens of community building, empathy for others and the Torah stories and characters which exhibit the values of friendship and gratitude.

T'fillah: During 4th grade we work to understand the concept of gratitude and build a relationship to both the Torah and the Reform Jewish Mishkan T'fillah. We review the construction of a Jewish blessing and move into the service order and Shabbat blessings. The focus for t'fillah is on developing a personal gratitude practice through prayer and building comfort in prayerful spaces including discussions around God/the Divine and how to create individual connections to community prayer practice.

Hebrew: 4th Grade will utilize the Temple Beth Am Learn to Decode Hebrew curriculum. Our Learn to Decode Hebrew curriculum was developed for Temple Beth Am, and

approaches Hebrew learning with prayer readiness in mind. In addition to our Learn to Decode curriculum, 4th grade students will also have access to at home practice online through Torah Aura's Prayer Tech Primer program. In the spring, students will begin focusing on prayer reading practice.

Chevrah Tracks: Chevrah tracks provide students with the opportunity to find an elective that aligns with their interests and to connect with each other, engage with their Jewish identities, and dive into rich Jewish values, traditions and history. This is a time for students to enjoy being together at temple and building lasting bonds and friends. *Chevrah* roughly translates to "a close knit group" and in order to help facilitate the building of lasting friendships, the chevrah tracks will last six to eight weeks before students will be given an opportunity to switch and try something new. In the past, tracks have included drama (the students performed the Purim Shpiel!), stop-motion animation, Jewish book club, lego bonim, game club, sports and movement, and artistic expression.

5th Grade

Our 5th grade students begin their day with us in their classrooms with faculty and madrichim and divide up into learning groups.

5th grade students will spend their time building relationships with one another, their individual Jewish identities and grounding their experience in Jewish history. Building community through social emotional spiritual learning (SESL) is the foundation of all our curriculum, and we hope to empower our Jewish learners to articulate their unique Jewish experience in the context of our Beth Am community, Seattle and the world. Using the lens of *kehilah* community, students will explore a variety of holidays, life cycle events, and worship experiences.

Students will participate in bi-weekly programming tailored to their age group and unique time in their Jewish journeys. The Gan is devoted to develop the fifth grade cohort's confidence in service leadership in preparation for their B'Mitzvah and service participation, and will include Hebrew, studying relevant Jewish major topics, a T'fillah experience with faculty in their classrooms or clergy in the sanctuary, an opportunity for *chevra* community building and deepening friendships, and a communal pizza dinner each week.

Hebrew/T'fillah: 5th Grade will begin the year with Learn to Decode reviewing the curriculum from the previous year at a rapid pace through the fall. In the spring, students will put their decoding into practice with prayer Hebrew reading and B'mitzvah prayer readiness. In addition to the in-class instruction with our Hebrew specialists, 5th graders will have access to at home practice online through Torah Aura's Prayer Tech program. Our focus for Hebrew and T'fillah is to help students create relevance to the prayers, understand where they fall in the service, and why communal prayer practice is important

for our tradition. In the spring, 5th grade students will receive their B'mitzvah dates, partners and prayer books, kickstarting their B'mitzvah journey at Beth Am.

Chevruta Study: In 5th grade, we participate in Jewish partnered text study, introducing the concept of “the argument for the sake of heaven” or debate for the sake of understanding rather than winning. Each week in pairs or small groups, students will engage with a combination of both traditional and non-traditional texts including images, videos, poetry and more to practice this ancient Jewish scholarly tradition. Students read from a variety of Jewish texts, including the Torah and Pirket Avot (Sayings of the Fathers) with their grade level values central to the material.

Major Topics: During major topics, students will participate in various activities, projects and experiential learning opportunities that emphasize the concepts of *K'lal Yisrael* and *Am Yisrael*, the concept of the underlying unity of each individual part of our Jewish community and what it means to be an American Jew living in the Pacific Northwest, while being part of a global Jewish community. Comparing and contrasting a variety of ritual and holiday traditions with a particular emphasis on shared narratives, students will connect the book of Exodus with refugee and diaspora movements today and throughout history. Through the fifth grade values of **Friendship Yedidut & Community Kehilah** students will apply their new learnings to create strategies for expanding their ability to practice Jewish thinking and address current challenges with long held traditions of Jewish problem solving.

Chevrah Tracks: Chevrah tracks provide students with the opportunity to find an elective that aligns with their interests and to connect with each other, engage with their Jewish identities, and dive into rich Jewish values, traditions and history. This is a time for students to enjoy being together at temple and building lasting bonds and friends. *Chevrah* roughly translates to “a close knit group” and in order to help facilitate the building of lasting friendships, the chevrah tracks will last six to eight weeks before students will be given an opportunity to switch and try something new. In the past, tracks have included drama (the students performed the Purim Shpiel!), stop-motion animation, Jewish book club, lego bonim, game club, sports and movement, and artistic expression.

6th Grade

Our 6th grade students begin their day with us in their classrooms with faculty and madrichim and divide up into learning groups.

6th grade students will spend their time developing their own Jewish story and exploring their grade level values of **kehilah community and ometz lev courage**. Looking at both modern experiences and historical events, students will be immersed in stories of resiliency and Jewish identity. Students will develop an understanding of multiple perspectives, connect to and share their personal feelings and opinions, and practice listening to others without judgment. Service participation is important in 6th grade, and students will have opportunities to practice Friday and Saturday Shabbat services.

Students will participate in bi-weekly programming tailored to their age group and unique time in their Jewish journeys. The Gan is devoted to develop the 6th grade cohort's confidence in service leadership in preparation for their B'Mitzvah and service participation, and will include Hebrew, studying relevant Jewish major topics, a T'fillah experience with faculty in their classrooms or clergy in the sanctuary, an opportunity for *chevra* community building and deepening friendships, and a communal pizza dinner each week.

Hebrew/T'fillah: 6th Grade will begin the year with Learn to Decode reviewing the curriculum from the previous year at a rapid pace through the fall. In the winter and spring, students will put their decoding into practice with prayer Hebrew reading. The focus will be on B'Mitzvah readiness, with an emphasis on prayer leadership and meaning making. In addition to the in-class instruction with our Hebrew specialists, 6th graders will have access to at home practice online through Torah Aura's Prayer Tech program. Our focus for Hebrew and T'fillah is to help students create relevance to the prayers, understand where they fall in the service, and why communal prayer practice is important for our tradition to prepare them for service participation and leadership. 6th graders will also explore how a communal prayer practice can support resilience and what it means to create a safe community. Students will explore the relationship between sacred and sacrifice.

Chevruta Study: Students will participate Jewish partnered text study, reviewing the concept of "the argument for the sake of heaven" or debate for the sake of understanding rather than winning from the previous year. The emphasis will be on creating a safe communal space to have a variety of different interpretations and opinions, accepting that intelligent people faced with the same facts will draw different conclusions, and multiple experiences can happen simultaneously. Using critical thinking skills, rituals and traditions in our community that help us navigate these difficult conversations, students will share their conclusions with each other using the Torah, the Sages, and sacred texts as their foundation.

Major Topics: 6th grade students will work throughout the year to articulate their own Jewish self-expression statement. Students will explore Jewish experience and expression throughout history, including common tropes related to antisemitism, assimilation in the United States, and how Jews created community despite difficult circumstances. Students will look at a variety of Jewish historical figures and characters from the Torah, discuss how they responded when presented with seemingly impossible challenges, and develop their own toolbox for how they will respond to difficult situations that arise in their own lives.

Chevrah Tracks: Chevrah tracks provide students with the opportunity to find an elective that aligns with their interests and to connect with each other, engage with their Jewish identities, and dive into rich Jewish values, traditions and history. This is a time for students to enjoy being together at temple and building lasting bonds and friends. *Chevrah* roughly translates to "a close knit group" and in order to help facilitate the building of lasting

friendships, the chevrah tracks will last six to eight weeks before students will be given an opportunity to switch and try something new. In the past, tracks have included drama (the students performed the Purim Shpiel!), stop-motion animation, Jewish book club, lego bonim, game club, sports and movement, and artistic expression.

7th Grade

7th Grade is a bridge year. As students are more prepared for prayer leadership, in 7th Grade the curriculum moves to important Jewish life topics appropriate for current middle school students. Although the 7th grade curriculum deals with many serious topics, they are led by experienced educators and given the sensitive treatment necessary to build informed Jewish citizens of the world. This mature content is interspersed with much time for cohort building, creative games, student choice and socializing. Above all else during this seminal year, we want these amazing middle school students to love both learning and being Jewish!

7th Grade topics include:

- The history of antisemitism and how it impacts them today here in Seattle
- 19th/20th century history that led to the Holocaust
- Holocaust studies, including the American response, refugees, and post war actions (Nuremberg Trials, International Criminal Court)
- Modern white supremacy movements and global genocides
- Biblical Yisrael
- Nationalism, democracy, and the State of Israel

Hebrew: 7th Grade students will have opportunities to practice their B'mitzvah prayer leadership together in class with a little bit of Modern Hebrew thrown in if there is an interest!