

University Synagogue Living Judaism

An all-inclusive experiential learning model of Jewish education

Our Living Judaism programming is an innovative and unique program that teaches both Hebrew and Judaica. We understand that different children learn in different ways, so the religious education we provide for our students is personalized, focusing on each individual student and his/her personal strengths and learning style.



KINDERGARTEN – COOKING THROUGH THE YEAR

Our Kindergartners jump into Hebrew and Judaica with an enthusiastic, hands-on approach! Their introduction to Judaica is joyous, building community, integrating values, celebrating Holidays, learning about Israel, and cooking their way through the year. Music, art, Yiddish and science are integrated into the weekly instruction, weaving together a rich tapestry of Jewish culture, tradition and identity.



FIRST GRADE – JEWISH HOLIDAYS

This year takes our students on a journey of Jewish holidays and celebrations. Our students make a holiday box for each holiday of the year, building a tool kit for families to use for years to come whenever each holiday returns. Working on Hebrew, they will recognize 200-300 words, and continue to enjoy learning enhanced by music, art, Yiddish and science, reinforcing our commitment to building an engaged community of learners.



SECOND GRADE – AROUND THE WORLD

Second grade continues to immerse our students in a rich cultural experience while they focus on building a connection to Jews around the world. Our students meet and learn about the many sides, colors, textures, stories, foods and music that comprise the Jewish people. Hebrew skills continue to grow and we begin to integrate technology into their Living Judaism experience.



THIRD GRADE – MIDRASHIM AND STORIES

In third grade, our students learn all about Jewish values through Midrashim and stories passed down through the generations. This interactive and engaging curriculum weaves together story-telling, music, history, science, art, technology and cooking as Jewish values begin to take on a more central theme in the lives of our students. Hebrew reading skills continue to grow as our students begin to decode the prayers that form part of our Shabbat and Holiday services.



FOURTH GRADE – THROUGH THE TORAH

When we teach our students “What we can learn from Torah Stories,” we focus on the fact that these stories were passed down through the generations to teach us how to live our lives and make the world a better place for all. We carefully consider the parables and fables, looking for the messages and finding meaning and relevance in our contemporary world. Hebrew through Movement is introduced to our students in Fourth Grade.



FIFTH GRADE – JEWISH LIFE CYCLE

Fifth Grade marks the all-important Life Cycle curriculum. Our students trace the life of a Jewish person from birth through death, stopping to delve into the various ceremonies and meaningful transitions along the way. The year begins with a naming ceremony, travels amongst other stopping points through a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, wedding ceremony, and death. Hebrew continues to grow in the direction of a Bar or Bat Mitzvah as the students learn to read the blessings associated with the Torah service.



SIXTH GRADE – ISRAELI IDENTITY & CULTURE

As our students get closer to the Bar/Bat Mitzvahs, we learn about Israel identity and culture. We delve deeply into the culture, tasting their food, virtually visiting different areas in Israel, meeting the people and learning the history. This is an experiential class, focused on project based learning. Students learn how to work with one another in various groupings, developing tolerance and respect for different skill sets, backgrounds and a strong sense of community. Hebrew instruction focuses on building prayer fluency.



7TH GRADE – HOLOCAUST STUDIES

As our students prepare for the Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, they learn about the Holocaust – the single, most defining event of contemporary Judaism. This builds strong Jewish identity and compassion for one another. The community of Jewish tweens that emerge from this class is bonded to one another, celebrating life cycle events together, playing and praying together, and forming a fabric of relationships that lasts for many years beyond Religious School.



8TH GRADE – THE MIDDLE EAST

This is the year our students learn about the Middle East – the good, the bad, and the ugly. We address all sides of the situation, learning the different narratives, studying the history and politics of the region, as well as delving into American influence and political agendas. Our students learn debating skills at the same time, representing sides and situations they may or may not agree with, but learning how to engage in meaningful and respectful dialogue. This curriculum is approached from a Humanistic perspective, ensuring that our students understand the values of life, liberty and respect.



TEEN HAVURAH / CONFIRMATION

Our teens come together one week a month for a three hour carefully constructed learning experience. They learn how to navigate the difficult teenage years, making well thought out decisions from a sacred space. Our teens work with a teen advisor monthly and meet with the Rabbi throughout the year. They also work in our classrooms as teacher aides, revisiting content they learned long ago, assisting struggling students and leading learning experiences under the classroom teacher's direction.