



## The Village Temple Religious School 33 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY 10003

### Curriculum Overview, PK/K - 7th grade

The Village Temple Religious School provides a comprehensive Jewish educational experience to students and children from Pre-K through Grade 12 guided by our vision and set of goals.

**Our Vision:** To instill in our children a lifelong, loving commitment to Jewish religious practice and ethics, the Jewish community, the Jewish people, and the State of Israel.

**Our Goals:** The curriculum and programming of the Religious School will enable its students:

- To understand and take pride in the history and sacred texts of the Jews as a people and as a religious community.
- To participate with confidence in Shabbat and holiday services, possessing sufficient knowledge of Hebrew for the prayers to be meaningful.

- To put the principles of Judaism into practice in the context of family, congregation, and community, including acts of Tikkun Olam.
- To develop a personal connection with the State of Israel, its people and land.

### K'tanim (Pre-Kindergarten - 2nd Grade):

Calendar-Driven Core Curriculum, Stories, Symbols, Songs and Music Time, New Friends and FUN...

**PRE-K/ KINDERGARTEN:** Our three to five year olds meet on Sunday mornings or Wednesday afternoons. The classes are taught by professional early childhood educators who are nurturing, warm and fun. In each Pre-K/Kindergarten class, students are introduced to the upcoming Jewish holiday or festival through stories, art or cooking projects, songs, games, and snacks of holiday foods. Students also are introduced to Hebrew through songs. This is an introductory program, designed to help our youngest students develop sense of pride of being Jewish and love for their temple family. Highlights include:

- Shabbat and the holidays
- Tzedakah and mitzvot
- An introduction to Israel
- Basic Bible stories
- Weekly exposure to Jewish children's literature

- An introduction to Jewish music, songs and creative movement

**1ST GRADE:** The learning continues, building on the foundation of our Pre-K/K program. Social interaction is fostered through lots of sharing, including circle times, games and story discussions. In first grade, students deepen their connection with the life of the Jewish people through learning about Judaism's basic symbols, which are found at home, in the synagogue, and used during the holidays. Knowing these fundamental aspects of Jewish life provides a strong foundation for future Jewish learning. Students are introduced to Hebrew through a pre-primer in which they trace the letters, form the letters out of clay, pretzels or licorice sticks, color the letters, and sing the names of the letters. Students sing several songs in Hebrew, and learn some basic Hebrew words of greeting. Students hear a wealth of Jewish stories, and they participate in hands-on activities such as art projects and cooking, to trigger their senses to the richness of Jewish life. Highlights include:

- Year-long Tzedakkah project
- Bible stories and projects, including Creation, Noah, Baby Moses - the concept of Torah is introduced
- Special activities celebrating holidays
- The idea of prayer is introduced

The students are introduced to the idea of Shabbat blessings, *Shema, Barechu, Shehecheyanu, Chanukah blessings and The Four Questions*. These are introduced to the children in an age-

appropriate and fun fashion - they are not expected to read at this age, only to establish a comfort with and early love of the Hebrew language.

**2ND GRADE:** Our second grade program is a continuation of our early childhood approach to Jewish learning. Second graders have a routine, and a safe and loving classroom. The students connect themselves with important stories of the Jewish people and the values they contain. They learn of the cycle of the Jewish year through stories and through the holidays. Through the stories, the students also learn that they are part of a larger Jewish community and that Jewish people live all over the world. Highlights include:

- Developing the concept of Torah and gaining knowledge of the main characters and events in its stories
- Through stories, students are introduced to how and why holidays are celebrated
- Students expand their knowledge of Jewish songs and prayers

In Hebrew, there are many games and activities that reinforce the learning of the letters and vowels. Simple sounds are joined together and read, and prayer words are lifted out to illustrate the letters and vowels being taught or reviewed. Constant connections are being made to prayer, with the intent to read and have a simple understanding of the *Shema, Barechu, Oseh Shalom, Shabbat blessings and The Four Questions*. At this age, it is more important that the students understand the general ideas behind the prayers, and try to be curious enough to want to be able to read them on their own, as they become more comfortable with Hebrew Alef-Bet. The students have weekly prayer and music sessions.

## 3rd through 7th Grade:

Hebrew becomes more prayer reading based; Judaic studies include some calendar review. History, tzedakah, values, heroes, lifecycle events and the Holocaust round out our Jewish education before bar/bat mitzvah.

**3RD GRADE:** Our third grade classes include a deeper understanding of our forefathers and foremothers. Learning is expanded in third grade through games, stories, art and creative role plays. Holiday awareness is continued and deepened as third graders learn about the heroes and heroines of the Bible who are associated with Jewish holidays. They also learn about the values and rituals associated with each holiday. Highlights Include:

- Torah stories through the time of Moses are studied, including some of the lesser known stories of our ancestors
- Special projects include story books and murals, mitzvah tree and more
- Torah, The Growing Gift is used as a resource text, supplemented by several children's bibles

Hebrew is now extended to 30 minutes, with the Shalom U'vrachah, The New Hebrew Primer, as the primary text. Prayer cards will supplement when the *Shema*, *Chanukah Blessings*, *Barechu*, The Four Questions, and the first two lines of the *V'ahavta* are introduced. Music continues for third grade students, with increased attention to learning the melodies of our liturgy. By the end of third grade, students should be able to sound out most Hebrew words, and begin to read some prayer words. A prayer

service during school will help reinforce the reading skills by putting them into context. 3rd grade will have a weekly service with the 4th grade.

**4TH GRADE:** Students will be involved in Judaic learning that has several major focuses and uses many reference texts. Fourth graders learn the format of Jewish Bible. They are introduced to selected leaders and visionaries and heroic role models. They review the Biblical roots of the holidays, their connection with the harvests and the seasons, the important people in the Bible associated with the holidays, and the values and mitzvot connected with each holiday.

Highlights include:

- Hineni 1 - learning how and why we pray.
- Living as Partners with God, by Lila Gewirtz, helps us explore this special relationship
- An introduction to Jewish heroes begins the discussion of Jewish values
- The Explorer's Bible by Scott Blumenthal

Hebrew is now extended to 45 minutes with Hineni I, The New Hebrew Through Prayer, Vol. 1. It will be taught by a Hebrew specialist, who also may be your child's Judaica teacher - enrollment determines how staff is assigned. Letters and vowels are constantly reviewed. Added to the child's Hebrew banks are three major prayers: *V'ahavtah*, *Shema* and *Mi Kamochah*. Tefillah assemblies will be opportune times for 4th grade students to have additional prayer practice. These weekly services provide

an opportunity for us to connect as school family, and to review and learn more about our prayers and holidays.

**5TH GRADE:** Beginning with the 5th grade, students double their time at the temple. This allows us to offer a more intensive study of Hebrew, through learning more prayers and reading with greater fluency. Fifth graders study increasingly complex prayers, improving their Hebrew reading and adding to their vocabulary and to their knowledge of the service. Fifth graders study prayers from the *Amidah: Avot v'Imahot, Gevurot, Birkat Shalom* and *Oseh Shalom*. Students also explore values within each prayer.

Highlights include:

- Chugim – Jewish enrichment clubs/electives on Sundays
- Hineni II, The New Hebrew Through Prayer 2 is a primary Hebrew text
- Israel - more in-depth: What does our homeland mean to us as Jews in the United States? Introduction to Modern Hebrew.
- Values are studied with greater intention in the 5th grade year: What Jewish values can we identify in our daily lives?

Fifth graders study the rituals and ceremonies surrounding life cycle events. They learn about Jewish leaders and role models from the past and present and focus on the values that have driven these leaders. Fifth graders become acquainted with how the Jewish people always retained our own religion, adapting aspects of host cultures but maintaining core Judaic concepts and

practices. Students expand their knowledge of Jewish transition and upheaval through chose your own adventure series.

**6TH GRADE:** 6th graders will be expected to help lead our tefillah assemblies during the school year. The 6th grade curriculum includes highlights of Jewish history with attention to the more recent history, which includes a study of the Holocaust. Prejudice, stereotyping, anti-Semitism and bias formation are looked at in the context of the major historical periods.

Highlights include:

- Chugim – Jewish enrichment clubs/electives on Sundays
- A Topical Bible – Students wrestle with real-live social and ethical problems, guided by biblical texts.
- Hineni III, The New Hebrew Through Prayer 3 is a primary Hebrew text
- Several Holocaust readers reviewed.
- The development of Israel after the Holocaust is part of our continued study of Eretz Yisrael. Conversational Hebrew vocabulary is introduced.

Sixth graders study increasingly complex prayers and concepts of prayer, improving their Hebrew reading fluency and adding to their vocabulary and knowledge of the service. Sixth graders are active participants in the Tefila service with the fifth and seventh graders as they know how to chant and/or read: *Bar'chu, Shema, V'ahavta, MiChamocho, Avot-Imahot, Gevurot, Kedusha, Torah and Haftorah Blessings and Kiddush*. In addition, their curriculum introduces sixth graders to new prayers and blessings.

6th grade students begin their study of Torah tropes. After a thorough review they learn to master chanting Hebrew prayers, so that there is a comfort level in reading all the major prayers and placing them in the context of our Shabbat service. We have created a course pack to help students master their prayers.

**7TH GRADE:** Seventh grade students consolidate their ability to read Hebrew and their knowledge of Hebrew prayers. They concentrate on identifying their own thoughts about the prayers they've learned, and study Midrashim and practices associated with the prayers. Students continue the study of the weekly Torah portion which they began in sixth grade. Working on their understanding and their own interpretations of the Torah prepares students for their B'nei Mitzvah speeches and their future approach to Torah. (Most students are actively training for B'nei Mitzvah in lessons with the cantor outside of class.) In History, students learn about Zionism and the founding of the state of Israel. They also learn of resistance to the Holocaust, focusing on the seeds of prejudice and group-think. Students in this course will review some of the ways Jews resisted and sabotaged the efforts of the Nazis during this time. Highlights include:

- Chugim – Jewish enrichment clubs/electives on Sundays
- The Holocaust: A History of Courage and Resistance – the history textbook
- Open the Door to our Hearts - tefilah curriculum
- B'chol L'vavcha- tefilah curriculum
- Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty curriculum

Students are encouraged to find and express their own interpretations of prayers, by asking such questions as: who wrote this? What had happened to that person to prompt him/ her to write this? What did he/ she hope would come of this prayer? How would you say it, if you were to write a prayer about this issue? What episode in your life would you write a prayer about? How might you write it? Students can make an entire dramatic story about the prayer they're studying, filling in the background much as they would do with a story from Torah which has gaps. Students learn about Zionism and the formation of the state of Israel. They begin with Herzl's dream, and study the main stages in the creation of the state.