

Sheva

Information Packet

2016-2017 ~ 5776-5777

Welcome to Sheva! Get ready for an exciting year of learning and community-building.

Sheva, the Hebrew word for “seven,” serves as a bridge year between religious school and Hebrew High. For this reason, we have created a different experience for students than they may have received at TBE Religious School up to this point.

Please read this packet carefully as it contains important information. Sheva teachers Rabbi Dusty Klass and Director of Youth Engagement Sam Swire, along with the staff and leadership of TBE’s Religious School, are always available to answer any questions about Sheva and its unique place in our students’ Jewish education.

CURRICULAR GOALS

Your children have learned and experienced so much Judaism in their upbringing so far, both at TBE Religious School and at home. In Sheva, we begin to process and develop that learning, and translate it into a 7th grade mindset.

We (Sam and Rabbi Klass) see the Sheva curriculum serving three main goals:

1. Create, build, and cultivate a 7th grade Kehillah (Community).

The community we seek to create together over this year is one in which:

- a) it is safe to ask questions and in which there are people who can answer those questions
- b) 7th graders are able to create deep learning partnerships, both with each other and with us
- c) 7th graders are able to support each other in moments of joy (all the b’nei mitzvah!) and also when times are tough.

This last point is one of the reasons for our policy around b’nei mitzvah invitations (we strongly urge Sheva learners to invite all other members of their Sheva weekday class to their b’nei mitzvah). We understand that some students have elected not to schedule a b’nei mitzvah at this time and several families will celebrate their b’nei mitzvah in Israel on the TBE family trip next summer.

This goal also motivates our once- monthly Shabbat morning session - it is important that Sheva learners see the ways in which they are part of a larger Sheva community as well as the larger TBE community.

2. Help students develop the tools to navigate their lives.

Reform Judaism highlights the story of Jacob (or Yisra-El) as one who wrestled (Yisra) with God (El). This year, we would like to nurture a Sheva class full of God/Judaism-wrestlers.

We encourage questions. Asking questions offers the opportunity both to learn new things and also to unearth potential injustices in the world. If Sheva students leave our class with more questions than answers, we are doing our job.

We want our students to leave this year with an understanding of the way Jewish history and middot (values) can serve as decision-making tools in their future. We hope to instill a love of study as an opportunity to strive for deeper understanding and find support for their decisions.

3. Guide students along this newest stage of their unique Jewish Journey.

We hope to help students recognize the ways in which Judaism helps form the groundwork of their lives. One goal within this goal includes educating students around the many and varied opportunities available to them as they move into/closer to Jewish adulthood.

This Journey is not only about learners' chronological lives. It is also about how they interact with ritual (both worship and life-cycle), Minhag (customs), Middot (Jewish Values) and Halacha (Jewish Law). This path is not straight. We want these future Jewish leaders to question and grapple just like Jacob did, all the while growing in their own ways.

CURRICULUM

Learning and exploring with Sam and Rabbi Klass, students will dive into the tapestry of Jewish history and wisdom as a way to plot new discussions and experiences in creativity, prayer, and thought.

We will begin with a unit on creating community within our classroom and then widen our understanding of community to all of America, learning about how Judaism developed and has flourished in the United States and where our own stories fit into that narrative.

Next we will think about our own beliefs and the way they shape our lives, asking questions about God, religious practice, spirituality and what it means to make Jewish decisions.

Last but not least, we will take our newly articulated beliefs and think about how we might live Jewishly through those beliefs, essentially asking ourselves and each other: "So, how do you 'do Jewish?'"

SCHEDULE: CLASS SESSION AND SHABBAT SESSIONS

Weekday Sheva classes meet whenever Religious School is in session. A Religious School calendar is included in this packet and can be accessed on the website at www.templebethel.org.

Monday/Wednesday: Each Sheva participant will attend class on either Monday or Wednesday afternoon from 4:45-6:15 PM. Classes are taught interchangeably by Rabbi Dusty Klass and by Director of Youth Engagement Sam Swire.

Reminder: Sheva students do not attend Sunday classes.

Saturdays: Once a month, the entire grade gathers to study, socialize and pray together on Shabbat morning. Most of the Sheva Shabbat programs happen on Saturdays during Congregational Shabbat. The schedule has been adjusted to account for the secular school (CMS and UCPS) schedules. **Please check the dates and add them to your personal calendars.**

Sheva Saturday mornings begin at 9:00 AM and finish between 12:30 and 12:45 PM. Students attend a dynamic class from 9:00-10:15 AM and then join the congregation for a delicious brunch before attending services at 11:00 AM. There is no charge for brunch for Sheva students.

We expect Sheva students to dress appropriately for services. They are required to stay for both the class and service portion of the morning. There will be opportunities during the year for parents to attend class with the students. Parents are always welcome and even encouraged to come to the brunch and service. We hope you will lead by example and attend with your child. Students will also receive credit for each service they attend within the 6 months prior to their B'nei Mitzvah ceremonies.

Shabbat morning sessions are taught by Rabbi Klass and Sam Swire, and may even include surprise guest educators.

2016-2017 Calendar of Sheva Saturday Programs Congregational Shabbat Services (9:00 AM-12:45 PM):

- October 22nd, 2016
- November 19th, 2016
- December 10th, 2016
- January 21st, 2017 Family Learning Day (at least one parent should attend)
- February 11th, 2017
- March 11th, 2017
- April 1st, 2017
- May 13th, 2017

CLASS ATTENDANCE

Every student who is planning to become a Bat or Bar Mitzvah at Temple Beth El must be enrolled in the Religious School Sheva program. All students are required to attend for the full year regardless of when they become Bat or Bar Mitzvah.

Students should come to each class prepared to engage in discussion and activities. Our programs will keep them moving, thinking and learning.

B'NEI MITZVAH INVITATION POLICY

In line with our commitment to cultivating community amongst our Sheva cohorts, we ask that students who are planning to become Bat or Bar Mitzvah to please invite their entire cohort (approximately 12-16 students) to their Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration. Julie Dalli, Executive Assistant to the Cantors, will provide cohort lists for this purpose. We strongly encourage students to attend all services and parties to which they are invited, in order to support their classmates and celebrate together.

In the past, some students have been excluded from services, parties or events and/or have not had fellow students attend theirs. Again, as one of the goals of the Sheva year (and indeed of Jewish adulthood!) centers on building strong community, we want to actively work against feelings of exclusion and aim for as much inclusion as possible.

Regardless of whether or not they receive an invitation, all students are welcome to attend any service. Shabbat morning services are considered community worship and are attended by members of the congregation in addition to family and friends of the B'nei Mitzvah.

DRESS CODE

Saturdays: Judaism distinguishes Shabbat from the rest of the week in terms of *kodesh*, or holy, versus *chol*, or everyday. Please wear clothing you feel appropriate for a holy (rather than everyday) occasion. Skirts, dresses, slacks and shirts are all great options. Avoid t-shirts, jeans and shorts. No flip flops please, and cover midriffs and shoulders.

Weekday Classes: Students may not wear ripped clothing or tee shirts with inappropriate writing. Skirts and shorts should be an appropriate length, and midriff must be covered. No underwear should be visible. Students are encouraged to dress comfortably but respectfully.

COMMUNICATIONS

All parents and students are encouraged to communicate with Rabbi Klass, Director of Youth Engagement Sam Swire, or Director of Education Susan Jacobs with comments, suggestions or concerns. We even like to hear from you when you have something positive to share! We welcome your thoughts.