



Congregation Tikkun v'Or

Ithaca Reform Temple
Spirit • Community • Justice

JEWISH LEARNING EXPERIENCES

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JLE:

Bet/Gimel	2 nd and 3 rd grade	Sundays 9-11 am
Dalet/Hey	4 th and 5 th grade	Sundays 9 am - noon
Vav/Zayin	6 th and 7 th grade	Sundays 9 am – noon and Wednesdays 4:30-6 pm

FAMILY JLE: Gan/Alef Kindergarten and 1st grade
Saturdays 10-11:30 am, monthly



Updated 8-2025

Mission of Congregation Tikkun V'Or Jewish Learning Experiences

Jewish Learning Experiences at Congregation Tikkun V'Or strives to create an environment in which children and families can learn the rituals, history, and traditions which will lead them to life-long Jewish commitment and learning. We support each student in cultivating relationships with Jewish practices by engaging in and wrestling with a variety of Jewish beliefs and ideas. JLE will provide a variety of opportunities to acquire Jewish **knowledge**, experience Jewish **culture**, and demonstrate Jewish **values** as individuals, families, and as a community.

Congregation Tikkun v'Or holds core values of **Spirit, Community, and Justice**.

SPIRIT: Our community embraces living with compassion (*rachamim*), love (*chesed*), awe (*yirah*), gratitude (*hakarat hatov*), joy (*simcha*) and generosity (*nedivut*).

At JLE, we see Torah as an ongoing dialogue between the text and its students. Torah is real in our daily lives; it is with us wherever we are, as we believe that developing the skills to study Torah is essential to integrating Torah into our lives.

To nurture SPIRIT, we seek to help students:

- § Affirm their Jewish identity through the celebration of holidays and Shabbat, the study of Torah and history, and the practice of *mitzvot* (commandments) and *gemilut chasadim* (acts of loving kindness);
- § Celebrate Shabbat and the festivals and observe the Jewish ceremonies marking significant occasions in their lives;
- § Develop appreciation of Hebrew as the common language of the Jewish people throughout the world, along with other languages of the Jewish people, including Yiddish and Ladino;
- § Gain the ability to read and understand Hebrew so that they will be able to participate fully in Jewish *t'fillah* (prayer services);

COMMUNITY: As a caring and loving community, we sanctify and celebrate significant moments in our lives within the framework of Jewish ritual and values.

We take to heart “my house is a house of prayer for all people” (Isaiah 56:7) and seek to include, rather than exclude. At JLE, we welcome interfaith families, LGBTQ+ students and families, and students with learning challenges. Together, we create sacred connections to God, community, and ourselves.

To develop COMMUNITY, we seek to help students :

- § Appreciate and respect the differences between each individual, family, and community;
- § Express kinship with *K'lal Yisrael* (the community of Israel) by actively seeking the welfare of all others throughout the world;
- § Affirm our interfaith relationships within the congregation and within the larger community, and cultivate connections with communities locally and globally;

- § Support and participate in temple activities and community Jewish life;
- § Expand knowledge of Jewish history, communities and practices around world;
- § Appreciate Jewish culture, art, and literature.

Justice: Inspired by the Prophetic tradition and the historical experience of the Jewish People, we are dedicated to the pursuit of justice and peace, locally and globally. The Torah teaches that humankind was created in God’s image and we honor this inherent godliness in each person. At JLE, we promote racial and economic justice for all, feed the hungry, protect the environment, support refugees in our community, and encourage education and dialogue about Israel and Palestine. We regularly do *g’milut chasadim* (acts of lovingkindness). At JLE we engage in learning and action connected to the principles of justice, freedom, and peace. Learning and action focuses on *tsedek* (righteousness), *mishpat* (justice) and *chesed* (loving deeds). We each have a responsibility to make the world a better, holier place.

To further the causes of JUSTICE, freedom, and peace we seek to help students:

- § Incorporate principles of *middot* (characteristics and values) to encourage personal growth and learning;
- § Learn about historical and contemporary instances when Jewish people and communities engaged in social movements and social transformation;
- § Participate in social justice actions through class and individual *tikkun olam* projects

JLE encourages each person to participate in acquiring the knowledge necessary to make informed choices within the spectrum of Jewish life.

We welcome families from diverse backgrounds, interfaith families, LGBTQ families and children, people who are newly discovering Jewish connections, as well as those with a wide range of Jewish experiences. We are pleased to work with many different kinds of learners, including students with special challenges. We will do our best to accommodate and nurture all students “al pi darko” (“according to their ways”).

Curriculum Overview

Jewish Learning Experiences focuses on holidays, Torah, history, *mitzvot* (Jewish ethics and commandments), and Hebrew. Each grade approaches these topics at a different level, beginning with basic concepts and advancing to complex interpretations and expressions of Jewish thought. Students have opportunities to build on what they have learned in school and at home and to appreciate their family experiences and backgrounds.

Holidays: The youngest children learn about holidays through ritual objects, songs, and crafts. They will expand their knowledge of the history, interpretations, and variations of customs as they learn the vocabulary associated with each tradition. At each level, students examine ethical and contemporary lessons of each holiday.

Torah: The stories of our people are rich and varied, starting with the words “In the beginning.” Students learn the legends and ancestors of our history. They explore the values we may learn from the Torah, and the many ways we can read and interpret it. They are active participants in the study of Torah and Jewish commentary and literature. They glean wisdom from the words and stories of the prophets.

Mitzvot and Ethics: Through Torah and history, Judaism offers us a code of behavior and moral understanding. Students are encouraged to perform *mitzvot* (commandments) and acts of *gemilut chasadim* (loving kindness), give *zedakah* (charity) and find ways to bring Jewish values into their daily lives.

History: From biblical to modern times, Jewish history offers cultural and spiritual significance. As students discover the role of Jews in American and world history, they are encouraged to understand and celebrate our heritage. Older students reflect on the effects of the Holocaust and antisemitism in the worldwide Jewish community today.

Israel: Students are introduced to Israel as a place where half of the world Jewish population lives. They consider the significance of Israel as a geographical, biblical, cultural, and spiritual homeland, and study religious, cultural, and political forces and the diversity of the Israeli population. They learn that Israel is also home to the Palestinian people, and that there is disagreement and conflict about how to share the land. We consider the role of social justice and Jewish values in Israeli society and appreciate the wide range of relationships to Israel as American Jews.

Spirituality: Students have opportunities to express feelings and emotions connected with God, to consider the ways in which we act as spiritual Jews, as well as to practice and explore their beliefs through *Talmud Torah* (study), *tefillah* (prayer), and *gemilut chasadim* (loving kindness).

Learning at TVO is experiential and hands-on. We have many resources and texts (like the Torah!) to guide us in creating interactive activities. The topics and themes below are addressed in many ways over the course of the two years each child is in the combined-grade classes.

Grades K and 1 Gan / Kitah Alef:

Introductions to Jewish holidays and stories, the alef-bet, and mitzvot.

Grades 2 and 3 Kitah Bet/Gimel

The personal relevance of *Torah and G'milut Chasadim*

Stories of people in the Torah and our connections to our ancestors

Making a difference, giving thanks, taking responsibility

Grades 4 and 5 Kitah Dalet/Hey:

Giving meaning to prayer through *kavanah* (intentions) and *kevah* (actions)

Kibud (honor) & *tzedakah* (righteousness), gratitude and blessings

Jewish communities and history around the world

Grades 6 and 7 Kitah Vav/Zayin:

Learning from Torah study, Proverbs and Psalms

Looking at history and contemporary issues of Jewish life, including Israel, the Holocaust, and antisemitism

Justice, values, and *middot* (character traits)

Making decisions about becoming a Jewish adult

HEBREW

We teach students to be skilled, involved members of the synagogue community by embracing Jewish values and installing a sense of belonging. Part of this connection to Jewish history and spirituality is gained through study of the Hebrew language.

Hebrew is a holy language, giving us access to sacred texts and allowing us to study them in the original language. It is also the language of prayer and the prayer book, enabling Jews to participate in prayer services in any synagogue in the world.

Hebrew is essential to Jewish traditions. All Jewish life-cycle events and holidays involve Hebrew. With knowledge of Hebrew, students can participate with confidence in events throughout their lives.

Hebrew expresses Jewish values. For example, the word “*tzedakah*” does not just mean “*charity*.” It comes from the root “*tzedek*” which means “*justice*” or “*the right thing to do*.” When students learn the meaning of Hebrew words, they learn the cultural vocabulary of Judaism as well as the literal translation of the Hebrew.

Hebrew is part of Jewish identity. Hebrew provides a common bond linking Jews from around the world. It is also the living language of the modern state of Israel.

Hebrew helps express spirituality. Hebrew is the language in which we express notions of God and godliness. We can connect with our ancestors by reciting their names in Hebrew and using Hebrew for ritual observances.

The JLE Hebrew curriculum focuses on Hebrew for prayers. This method provides a structure with clear goals and measurable progress. At the same time, by learning prayers students also gain a sense of the relevance and importance of Hebrew and prayer in their lives. They also learn the ethical values associated with each prayer. They learn the sources of Hebrew words and connect to contemporary Hebrew as a contemporary, vibrant language.

Children begin Hebrew studies in the Kitah Bet/Gimel (2nd/3rd grade). They learn through games using Hebrew letters and words, and some simple prayers by heart and letter recognition. Students continue to decode words in Kitah Daled /Hey (4th/5th grade).

In Kitah Vav/Zayin (6th/ 7th grade) they are reading with some fluency and are ready to concentrate on mastery of Hebrew prayers. We use a combination of primers, textbooks, the siddur (prayerbook), flashcards, and other resources.

We are committed to providing Hebrew instruction at a level appropriate for each child. We are flexible and will work with each child and will gladly accommodate any learning challenges.

*Note: "Bnai mitzvah" is the plural for both bar and bat mitzvah, but technically, it is the plural masculine form, because in Hebrew, mixed-gender groups defaults to male language. At TVO, we are using the term **bmitzvah** or **be-mitzvah** is being used as a gender inclusive way to refer to both the ceremony and the person involved.*

SCHEDULE

Students are expected to arrive on time, ready to learn, and stay for the full class time. The mornings are usually divided into several sections, which include:

- **Tefillah** - a short prayer service to practice what we are learning, with plenty of **ruach** (spirit and singing). Praying together as a community is an important way for children to practice what they are learning in class, build on their knowledge of Hebrew, and experience some aspects of Jewish spirituality.
- **Judaic Studies** - including history, holidays, mitzvot, and Torah study
- **Hebrew** – letter recognition, decoding, word recognition, phonetic reading, frequently used vocabulary and word roots, prayer
- **Hafsakah** (break / snack) Let us know if there are any food allergies
- **Chugim** (not “ch” as in “change” but “CH” as in “CHallah.”) Special projects including art, drama, dance, music, and mitzvot, to work on in a multi-grade group
- **Ha’asharah** (enrichment from special guests)

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

JLE begins promptly at 9:00 am. Please arrive early enough for your child to be in the classroom ready to start at this time. Students who arrive after attendance is taken are considered tardy. If a student has a persistent problem with tardiness, contact will be made with the parents, and together we will attempt to solve the problem.

PLEASE NOTE: Pick-up is from 12-12:15 p.m. (or 11 am for bet/gimel) ***Please do not pick up your child before dismissal except for special circumstances. If you do need to pick up your child early, you must:***

1. Check in with the Director;
2. Check in with the child's teacher, and
3. **Sign out on the form near the front door.**

ATTENDANCE

It is part of our mission to not only teach students the history, language, culture, and religious beliefs of the Jewish people, but to guide them toward an understanding of *klal Yisrael*, the community of people with which they learn, study, and celebrate. Participation in the community is a crucial element both in Jewish life and in academic progress. Attendance at JLE is the link between our Jewish classrooms and community. Please recognize that students who miss classes also place additional burdens on the teachers to provide make-up work, detract from the classroom community experiences, and distract other students from continuing to learn and progress. It is particularly difficult for students to make the transition back to class after a long absence.

IF A STUDENT IS ABSENT:

1. **Parents are expected to email the teacher** to find out about work missed and homework assignments. It is also suggested that students call classmates to find out about missed lessons.
2. **All work should be completed** by the student and brought to the next class.
3. A TUTOR MAY NEED TO BE HIRED AT THE PARENTS' EXPENSE, unless the student can demonstrate that they have mastered the missed work. A list of tutors will be available from the Religious School Director.

ATTENDANCE AT MIDWEEK CLASSES IS ALSO REQUIRED for students in grades 6 and 7.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING ATTENDANCE:

1. **What if my child is sick?**

Everyone is occasionally sick or has a legitimate reason to miss a class. **For the health of our community and your child's comfort, please keep your children at home if they are sick.** Our illness policies are in place for the protection, health and well-being of ALL our students, their families and staff.

Please keep your children at home if they:

- a) *have a fever or have had one in the previous 24 hours*
- b) *are vomiting or have had intestinal disturbance in the previous 24 hours*
- c) *have heavy nasal discharge and/or cough*
- d) *have discharge from eye(s)*
- e) *have symptoms of COVID or other communicable disease*

If your child shows symptoms of illness during the school day, we will call and request that the child be picked up. Please be sure that we have updated contact and emergency contact information.

Family weddings and b-mitzvah celebrations are good excuses for missing school; help your child be ready to talk with the class about his/her visit to another Jewish community! And contact the teacher to find out about missed work.

2. What if my child is on a sports team?

All families make decisions about what to do each Sunday morning. By deciding to enroll your child in JLE, you are choosing to provide your child with a Jewish education. This is a commitment that has great rewards for you and your child, but it may necessitate cutting back on other activities. In order for the educational experience to be both successful and enjoyable, attendance must be consistent. Just as too many absences from sports games can mean losing a spot on the team, too many absences from JLE leads to the loss of educational opportunities and Jewish experiences, and a loss of the feeling of community and growth that occurs in each of our classrooms throughout the school year.

HOMEWORK

Homework is an opportunity to involve families in Jewish education and to practice work learned in class. This may involve a question to discuss with an adult, or Hebrew reading practice. Children may have up to 15 minutes of homework each week. Please feel free to discuss homework with your child's teacher or the Director.

What if I can't help my child with the work because I don't know Hebrew or the subject being studied? Teachers will make every effort to make any homework reasonable and will provide additional support as needed. We also offer adult Hebrew courses periodically – join in the learning!

TZEDAKAH

Tzedakah ("righteousness") teaches your child how to be a righteous person. Some classes collect money for *tzedakah* every week at *T'fillah*. At the end of each semester students decide which charitable organizations to donate the money they have collected. We suggest that parents help children decide how much money to give (a portion of their allowance?) or supply money for the children to donate.

MITZVOT

As well as learning and doing *mitzvot* every week in every classroom, each class will learn about and do mitzvot to improve their own lives, the lives of others, and their understanding of the world around us. A few of these *mitzvot* are connected to holidays and community celebrations, while others may be one-time events. Families are encouraged to become actively involved in the class mitzvah projects.

BOOKS

The cost of books is included in tuition. If a second set of books would be helpful because the child has two homes, just let us know and we will provide that. If a book is lost, please inform the teacher or Director as soon as possible so that a replacement can be ordered (at parents' expense).

MATERIALS

If additional supplies are required, the teacher will send a list home. In general, each student should come to class with a notebook, folder, and pencil each week, as well as their books. A special JLE bag will be provided to each student.

SNACK

A mid-morning snack will be served each Sunday. The cost of snacks is included in tuition. We do ask our snack-buyers to be sure that all snacks are peanut-free, and have gluten-free and dairy-free alternatives if needed, but if special attention to snacks is needed for food allergies, please let the Director know.

Vav and *Zayin* mid-week families will receive separate information about snacks on Wednesdays.

STUDENT PROGRESS REPORTS

When appropriate, each student in a class will receive an individualized report. The JLE Director and the teachers are available throughout the year to talk with you about your child's progress.

BEHAVIOR

Students are expected to comport themselves in a way that is appropriate for a learning environment. If disruptive behavior becomes a problem, the teacher or Director will contact the parent(s) to work out a solution. The school reserves the right to exclude any student whose behavior is persistently disruptive.

TEACHERS

Our teachers are adult community members as well as sometimes students at Cornell University, Ithaca College, and SUNY Cortland. They have experience working with children and extensive Jewish background and knowledge, which they are eager to share with our students. Please let the teachers know about any concerns you may have about your child or the class. Most teachers are also reachable by phone and email. If you have other concerns about a teacher, please speak with the Director.

MADRICHOL* (assistants)

Working as *madrichol* is an opportunity for 8th-12th graders to contribute to the Tikkun v'Or community while strengthening and enhancing their skills and Jewish identity in the process. Madrichol are an integral part of JLE at TVO. Teens work as teaching assistants, help in the office, with students with special needs, as a tutor, and lead *chugim* (electives) and *tefillah*. Participation as *madrichol* allows teens to contribute to the TVO community in meaningful ways, while working in roles that promote skill and character-building.

Madrichol is a gender-neutral Hebrew singular or plural word, used here instead of the masculine singular **madrich (plural = madrichim) or the feminine singular **madricha** (plural = madrichot).*

USE OF SPACE AND EQUIPMENT

Our synagogue is a beautiful building that serves many purposes, including our school. We have worked hard to figure out the best arrangements for the use of limited space, but we ask for your continued patience as we share space. Room dividers work as visual separations between classrooms, but we know that the acoustics in the room require soft voices. Supplies are on wheeled carts. Each week all supplies, tables, and chairs must be put away.

At all times, we must remember that Tikkun v'Or is a house of worship as well as our school; we expect property to be treated respectfully.

The outdoor space has a designated patio and lawn; students may also go into the trails on the field when supervised by a teacher, *madrichol*, or parent.

If you are able to help or clean up for special events please let the Director know.

Please help your children be respectful of the building and others' property.

- Because of the lack of extra space, please note the continuing JLE policy that unsupervised children (those not enrolled in JLE or students before and after school) are not permitted during JLE hours.

ROLE OF THE PARENT

There is no doubt that if a child is to have a positive attitude toward Jewish studies, there must be a nurturing Jewish atmosphere in the home. We hope to reinforce this involvement within our school and congregation. We strongly encourage families to be involved in their children's studies, to attend services with their children, and to incorporate Jewish practices into their family life. We expect that parents will actively participate in school activities.

Participation in adult education classes and relevant temple and community events is also highly encouraged. JLE parents often can attend adult classes for free.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

At least one caregiver from each JLE family is expected to help at JLE at some point during the year – by purchasing snack (cost will be reimbursed), helping with a special program, or other tasks. We believe it is important for parents to be involved in their child's education. Sign-ups for participation will be available at the beginning of the school year.

CLASS PARENT

One of the Parent Participation tasks is to be the class parent. The class parent organizes the Shabbat dish-to-pass and the Oneg Shabbat refreshments at the services led by that class. The class parent is also the first contact on the class phone tree in case of snow or other emergency school closures.

JEWISH EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The Jewish Education (JE) Committee is a group of temple members who meet to plan school events, set school policies, discuss curriculum, and supervise the school director. If you are interested in participating in this committee, contact the current chair or the Director.

SHABBAT EXPERIENCES and CLASS SERVICES

Children and their families are always welcome at services at Congregation Tikkun v'or.

Congregation Tikkun V'Or holds Shabbat services most Fridays at 7:30 p.m. Your family's attendance on a regular basis is a visible way of showing your children that Judaism is not just for kids!

In addition, each class participates in a Friday night service during the year. Kitah vav/zayin also participates in a Saturday morning service. Please mark these on your calendar.

During the sixth and seventh grade year, it is expected that students and families participate in many of the Shabbat services and all holiday services, with a minimum attendance requirement at:

- **B-mitzvah services (both Friday & Saturday) of classmates;**
- **All scheduled Vav-Zayin class participation services;**
- **At least 2 additional Friday night services before the class service;**
- **At least 2 additional Shabbat morning services.**

MID-WEEK HEBREW CLASS – KITAH VAV and ZAYIN

Kitah Vav and Kitah Zayin meet twice each week – on Sundays and one weekday (*Wednesdays 4:30-6 pm*). It is a mandatory part of the JLE program, unless other arrangements have been made with the Director. The class meets for 1 1/2 hours.

B-MITZVAH PROGRAM

The attainment of the goal of becoming a b-mitzvah is a milestone in Jewish learning and growth. To guide students to an understanding of the meaning of this achievement, the class meets weekly to study Torah, discuss Jewish ethics, and practice mitzvot.

The vav/zayin classes have several special programs throughout the year, in addition to the two Shabbat services they lead (one Friday night, one Shabbat morning). These outdoor sessions have included a Day of Awe in the Woods (in the fall), a Chanukah/solstice bonfire, and Bmitzvah in the Woods or Tree Climbing (spring). These are mandatory parts of the class that are tied to learning goals about Jewish identity, spirituality, and community. They are usually instead of the Sunday morning class that week. Wednesday afternoon field trips may also occur.

In addition, the b-mitzvah teacher meets with each b-mitzvah student, beginning about six months prior to the ceremony date. Families also meet for family education.

Students in the Vav and Zayin/B-Mitzvah class are expected to regularly attend Shabbat and holiday services. See above for more details.

WEATHER EMERGENCIES

Notice of cancellation of JLE due to weather will be sent by text, email, and broadcast on WHCU 870 AM. The decision to cancel school will be made by 7:30 am and the announcement should be on air by 8 am. In addition, we will make every effort to notify families via the class phone trees, texts, and on our webpage and Facebook.

PAYMENT POLICIES

JLE tuition payment policy: Tuition must be paid by the end of December, unless payment is being made by quarterly credit card payments. If payments are not up to date, student will not be able to attend JLE, unless arrangements for tuition assistance have been made by contacting the temple presidents.

New families to JLE are considered members of our Congregation.

If you elect to pay your annual dues the first year you will be charged a lower, member rate for JLE. If possible, we prefer this as it will help fund the many programs and services we offer.

However, if you prefer, membership fees can be waived for the first year and you would pay the non-member rate for JLE. This is only available for students in Gan – Kitah Hey.

All families must be members in good standing during the kitah vav and zayin (6th and 7th grade) years.

All fees must be paid in full at least two months before the b-mitzvah service.

Contact the Welcoming Committee for information about membership.

TUITION ASSISTANCE

We want all students to be able to receive a Jewish education regardless of family finances. Tuition assistance is available to Tikkun v'Or students through a grant provided by the Ithaca Area United Jewish Community (IAUJC). Applications are available with registration forms and on our website. They should be sent to the temple presidents. Requests are confidential. We do prefer to get these forms by August 15; however, if it is later than that and you would like your child to start JLE, please contact the presidents and they will be happy to work with you on a reasonable plan for dues and tuition.