



From Infants to Elementary: Judaism Is Woven Into Every Day at The Shlenker School

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At The Shlenker School, Jewish life is not confined to one class period, it's woven into the rhythm of the day. From the moment students walk through the doors, they are surrounded by the traditions, values and celebrations that make our community unique. At our daily assembly, *Good Morning Shlenker*, fifth graders lead the entire school in morning prayer, modeling leadership and setting the tone for the day. In their classrooms, toddlers cover their eyes with their small fingers as they recite the Shema, beginning their day with the words of our tradition. Throughout the day, Judaism is seamlessly integrated into learning and experiences across the school, becoming part of every subject, every interaction, and every moment of community.

Walk through the building and you will see this integration everywhere. You might hear children singing holiday songs in music or see toddlers proudly dropping coins into a tzedakah box. In science, first graders recycle paper and use it to write thank-you notes to the trees on Tu B'shvat. In Hebrew, students may be exploring Israeli culture through language, songs, and conversation. All of this unfolds within a warm and welcoming community that embraces families from many different backgrounds, ensuring that every child feels a sense of belonging, pride in identity, and respect for the many ways Jewish life is lived.

From the very beginning, even in our Infant classrooms, children experience Judaism in age-appropriate ways. Infants listen to Shabbat songs and watch the candles being lit during Kabbalat Shabbat, joining in the rhythm of weekly celebration. Holidays are explored through sensory-rich projects such as smooshing paint inside ziplock bags to create honeycombs for Rosh Hashanah or using fingerprints to make candle flames for Chanukah. In Young Toddler and Older Toddler classrooms, Jewish traditions are introduced through touch, sound, and movement, helping our youngest learners feel the cycle of the Jewish year.

In PreK-3 and PreK-4, Torah stories are woven into the daily curriculum. When children learn about colors, for example, they hear the story of Joseph and his beautiful multicolored coat. These connections bring the stories to life and naturally teach values such as kindness, respect, and hospitality that guide children's daily interactions.

As students move into the elementary grades, integration expands and deepens. Judaism is not taught in isolation but is present in every subject, whether it be science, art, music, math, English, or Hebrew. In Kindergarten, students explore values through Torah stories and taste different kinds of apples before charting their favorites in math. In third grade, students are introduced to the Holocaust in an age-appropriate way, connected to the reading they do in class. Specialists also weave Jewish learning into their subjects: in fifth grade science, students prepare and polish their own shofar while learning about its role in the High Holy Days; in art, third graders design and decorate Havdalah boxes as part of complete Havdalah sets, preparing them for their leadership role in guiding the Havdalah service during *Good Morning Shlenker*; and in Hebrew, students explore Israeli culture through language, songs, and food, bringing modern Israel into the classroom.

All of this learning is not only about knowledge but also about action. Beginning in PreK-4, each class takes on a Tikkun Olam project, learning the value and importance of helping the community in age-appropriate ways. These projects grow with the students as they move through the grades. In first grade, children make blankets for those in need, tying the project to their math measurement unit before donating the blankets to Project Linus. In fourth grade, students partner with their PreK-4 buddies to organize a food drive for the students of the Gabriela Mistral Early Childhood Center. They deliver the donations and visit the school to read books with the children just before Thanksgiving, building both empathy and connection. In fifth grade, students extend this work to the senior community, visiting The Medallion at Seven Acres four times per year to celebrate Jewish holidays with the residents. They sing holiday songs, create crafts together, and bring joy to elders, embodying the mitzvah of honoring the generations that came before them. In this way, the values explored in stories, prayers, and classroom discussions become lived experiences that shape students' character.

By the time they graduate, Shlenker students leave with a strong academic foundation, a deep love for their heritage, a connection to Hebrew and Jewish ritual, and a meaningful bond with the land and people of Israel. They carry with them the confidence to live Jewish values authentically in the world and to see themselves as part of the ongoing Jewish story. We are honored to partner with your family on this journey.