



**Beth El**

**Religious School**

**Family Handbook**

**2025-2026**

**5785-5786**

# **Our Mission**

**To be a caring and inclusive community of meaningful and engaging learning that inspires a thirst for Jewish living and learning.**

## **Objectives**

- Provide dynamic Jewish experiences using exciting, innovative & engaging methodology.
- Explore meaningful and relevant content with an emphasis on skill building and Jewish literacy.
- Encourage a personal connection to Israel and a commitment to Judaism that will play a central role in their adult lives.
- To make Beth El a “second home” by instilling a sense of belonging to our community and the Jewish people.

## **Core Values**

- Jewish identity is to be appreciated and celebrated.
- The family and home are our partners in supporting the Jewish education of our learners.
- Every learner deserves to have their personal needs met.
- Torah, spirituality, ethics, and prayer provide a compass for living life.

Dear Families,

Shalom, and welcome to the Beth El Religious School! Thank you for sharing your children with us as we instill love and pride in Jewish life and learning. Please carefully read through this handbook, as we want you and your family to feel familiar with the policies, curriculum, and approach of our Religious School.

At Beth El's Religious School, Jewish education begins in Gan (Kindergarten) and continues through Geshet (7th grade). We also offer many opportunities for our 8th grade and high schoolers to continue their Jewish education and involvement.

In the Religious School, we strive to incorporate a variety of relevant Jewish topics and to build the base for a lifetime of Jewish learning, connection, knowledge and joy. In addition to teaching about Bible stories, Jewish holidays, *Tefillah* (prayer) and Hebrew reading, Israel, Jewish values, and living a Jewish life, we also incorporate art, music, and connection with Israeli *Shinshinim*, emissaries.

This handbook contains general information and guidelines. It is not intended to address all the possible applications of, or exceptions to, the general policies and procedure described. Please note that the policies and benefits described in this handbook may be modified or discontinued from time to time. We will inform you of any changes in a reasonably prompt fashion.

If you have any questions or concerns with any components of the handbook, please feel free to contact me. Looking forward to learning with your children for a wonderful year!

Thanks,  
*Alyssa Berman*  
Director of Youth & Family Engagement

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## GOALS OF RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

- Feel competent and confident in their Judaism.
- Instill a passion for Judaism and love for the Jewish holidays.
- Proficiently and comfortably read from the *Siddur* (prayer book) in Hebrew and act as *Shaliach Tzibur* (prayer leader).
- Embrace Jewish rituals and traditions.
- Develop an understanding of Jewish history.
- Build a connection to and passion for learning Torah.
- Inspire connection to and love for the State of Israel.
- Strive to fulfill *mitzvot* (commandments) and do *Tikkun Olam* (repair the world).

## DISCIPLINE POLICY

All Religious School learners should have an opportunity to learn and study in a safe educational environment built on a foundation of *chesed* (kindness) and *kavod* (respect). We expect that all learners will behave in an appropriate, polite, attentive, and cooperative manner. Each class writes a “*Kavod Code*” at the beginning of the year, outlining the expectations and rules for each class. This *Kavod Code* will be sent home for parents to sign, so that everyone is aware of the rules and expectations. Please see below for an explanation of our expectations of learners and families, as well as policies around consequences for violating the *Kavod Code*.

### Learners Rights

We believe that our learners...

- Have the right to learn free from disruptions cause by other learners.
- Are a part of a community which values *chesed* (kindness), *kavod* (respect), and *nedivut* (generosity of spirit).
- Have the right to learn in an environment that protects their physical safety and values emotional health.
- Are responsible for making their peers feel welcome and valued.

### Expectations of Learners

- Learners will arrive on time and prepared to engage in meaningful learning with their peers and teachers.
- Learners will not enter classrooms before the scheduled start time and will stay within eyesight of the educator until they are picked up by a guardian.
- Only food items with a *hechsher* (kosher certification) that are peanut- and tree nut-free may be brought into the synagogue. No food cooked or prepared at home may be brought into the building.
- Learners will be respectful of their peers and Beth El personnel, property and procedures. If someone is behaving disrespectfully, they will speak up and encourage their peers to stop, if possible, or get help from an adult.

### Family Partnership

Another important aspect to our Religious School is the idea of Family Partnership. At Beth El, we view Jewish life and learning as a partnership between families and the synagogue. Please support this by:

- Completing all registration forms, submitting the registration deposit early, and sharing any additional learning documentation in a timely manner to ensure that the Religious School is prepared for the learner.
- Helping your child arrive on time and regularly.
- Emailing the educator if your child will be absent, and, when necessary, partnering with the educator to help the learner to feel prepared for their return.
- Supporting your child's learning by working together on any at-home projects.
- Partnering with the Religious School to ensure a safe educational environment built on a foundation of *chesed* (kindness) and *kavod* (respect) to support everyone's learning.
- Joining Beth El for programming and events outside of Religious School. While we learn and celebrate Judaism from our teachers, we are also part of the larger Beth El family. Please join us for our Shabbat, holiday and other social and educational programs, including Shabbat dinners, Family Services, Havdalah programs, Mitzvah projects, etc. throughout the year.

### **Procedures**

If there are consistent violations of the *Kavod* Code that each class writes together at the beginning of the year, the educator and/or learning specialist will conference with the learner, and try to come to a mutual understanding of expected behavior. If infractions continue, or are more extreme, the educator will alert the Director of Youth and Family Engagement and they will contact the parents for assistance, which can include conferencing with the educator, learning specialists, Director of Youth and Family Engagement, and/or clergy to determine next steps and consequences.

Possible next steps and consequences can include (but are not limited to):

- Restitution, apology, and/or restorative practices;
- Creating a behavior plan or contract;
- A required break or suspension from Religious School and/or Youth programming for a set period of time;
- A modification to the Religious School schedule on a temporary or permanent basis;
- Requiring an adult, non-parent support person (such as a SEIT) to accompany the learner during Religious School;
- Termination of enrollment.

### **ANTI-BULLYING POLICY**

Beth El Synagogue Center is completely opposed to bullying and will not tolerate it in any form. It is entirely contrary to the values and principles we work and live by. All members of the Beth El community have the right to learn in a secure and caring environment. They also have a responsibility to contribute, in whatever way they can, to the protection and maintenance of such an environment. "Bullying" means the creation of a hostile environment by conduct or by threats, intimidation or abuse that has or would have the effect of interfering with a student's educational performance, opportunities or benefits, or mental, emotional or physical well-being. We are committed to ensuring a safe and secure learning environment for all our students and their families.

## **POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

### **CELL PHONES**

Learners should not be on their cell phones, smart watches, or other electronic devices during Religious School hours without educator permission.

Upon arrival, learners will receive an envelope with their name on it. They will put their devices (cell phones, smart watches) on silent in their envelope when they *enter* Beth El—before RS starts on Thursdays, and before they go to class on Sundays. We will collect the envelopes holding the devices at the beginning of each day. The envelopes will go into containers that will be given to the educators. Devices will be returned at the end of the day when the learners are dismissed. Of course, when learners are dismissed early, they will get their devices before they leave.

Any messages that need to be given to learners during Religious School hours should be sent to Clive ([cbenmor@bethelnr.org](mailto:cbenmor@bethelnr.org)) and/or Alyssa ([aberman@bethelnr.org](mailto:aberman@bethelnr.org)) or phoned in to the office at (914) 235-2700 ext. 221. For dismissal changes, please email us with “Dismissal for \_\_\_” in the subject line. *Please do not text, call, email, or otherwise contact your children during Religious School.*

### **ATTENDANCE**

We encourage our Religious School learners to have consistent attendance during the year. We understand that other commitments arise, but we believe that attending Religious School regularly throughout the year will help a child learn more, feel more comfortable, and have a better experience. Please email Alyssa, Clive, and/or your child’s educator(s) if they will be absent.

### **HOMEWORK**

To support our learners in their Hebrew reading, many families have requested that we give out short homework assignments. We encourage everyone to practice their Hebrew reading for five minutes a few times per week, outside of Religious School. If your family would like support with this, please email Alyssa at [aberman@bethelnr.org](mailto:aberman@bethelnr.org).

A few ideas (thank you, Morah Laurie) include:

1. Read aloud to yourself or to someone (even a dog or stuffed animal).
2. Read from a cell phone in the car while going to sports, school, music lessons.
3. Record yourself (audio or video) and send it to Alyssa or to your educator.

Your learner will be provided with a list of the prayers (or PHD Hebrew materials) to work on at Beth El and at home. Please reach out with any questions.

## **EARLY DISMISSAL**

Parent(s) should let the Administrative Coordinator and the Director of Youth & Family Engagement know if a learner requires early dismissal. Parents should email [cbenmor@bethelnr.org](mailto:cbenmor@bethelnr.org) and [aberman@bethelnr.org](mailto:aberman@bethelnr.org) with the words “Dismissal for \_\_\_” in the subject line and/or call the office to indicate at what time the learner should be dismissed and who will be picking them up. Learners will wait for pickup in the lobby at the appropriate time and under adult supervision, unless an alternative is discussed.

## **SNACK**

The school will provide a snack to each student, which they will be permitted to eat before religious school and when the classroom educator allows. Please do not bring any outside food into the building. If outside food does arrive, we are a tree nut and peanut-aware facility. All food must be hechshered and Kosher. While we do accept most mainstream hechshers, we do not accept “Tablet K ” or the letter K with no other identifying markers. If you have questions about a product’s kosher status, please consult a Beth EI staff member.

## **COMMUNICATION AND PROGRESS REPORTS**

Weekly during the school year, we send a Youth & Family email. Those going to the whole community occur approximately once a month; the *Shavuon* email is sent just to the Religious School community. Please read this email carefully, as it always includes lots of important information, monthly class updates, and upcoming events. We will also send grade or class-specific emails on occasion, as well as reach out directly to discuss our learners as needed. Twice each year (Winter and Summer), we send out detailed progress reports.

## **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

All faculty members of the Religious School are familiar with the emergency procedures. We regularly practice fire drills, and all of our classrooms and communal spaces are equipped to “lock down” for intruder alerts. We also have off-site evacuation locations at secure locations nearby. In case of emergency, we use the EZ Text alert text messaging system and emails to communicate with parents.

## OUR CURRICULUM

Our Religious School focuses on three areas of curriculum—our “general” curriculum, our “Tefillah” (prayer) curriculum, and our “Middot and Mitzvot” (values) curriculum.

Our general curriculum focuses on helping our learners access their rich heritage of Jewish learning, thought, history and culture. We aim to balance the breadth of Jewish learning with the depth to allow our learners to feel confident in their knowledge. We focus on multiple topics in every grade, and some topics also spiral through the years as learners explore them through different angles and levels of complexity. While each grade covers a variety of topics, the extent to which the educators focus or emphasize one topic more than another depends on the learners each year.

Each of our topics has some Essential Questions which provide overarching ideas that our learners will explore throughout their years through different perspectives and with increasing levels of complexity.

### These Topics and Essential Questions are:

#### **Prayer & Brachot**

How can we connect to God and to our communities, in times of joy and gratitude, as well as in times of challenge through prayer?

#### **Theology**

Who and how is God to me?

#### **Jewish Values**

What does it mean to treat others appropriately? What does it look like to "be a mensch?"

#### **Israel & Am Yisrael**

Why is Israel important as the Jewish homeland, and how do I feel connected and knowledgeable about life?

#### **Hebrew**

How can Hebrew be part of my life in New York and in Israel? How can Hebrew help me feel connected to Am Yisrael?

#### **Bible**

What can the Torah (and Tanakh) teach us about our past, our future, our peoplehood, and our obligations?

#### **Holidays**

How and why do we celebrate Jewish holidays? How are Jewish holidays meaningful to me?

#### **Shinshinim (Israeli Emissaries)**

How do I feel connected to Medinat Yisrael and to Israelis?

#### **Jewish Life**

What are basic concepts, rituals, vocabulary, objects and ideas that Jewish people encounter in Jewish homes, schools, synagogues, etc.?

# GENERAL CURRICULUM SCOPE & SEQUENCE

	Gan (K)	Alef (1st)	Bet (2nd)	Gimel (3rd)	Dalet (4th)	Hey (5th)	Middle School Year 1	Middle School Year 2
<b>Values/ Middot &amp; Mitzvot</b>	<b>Middah of the Month:</b> Chesed, Kavod, Hakarat HaTov, Nedivut, Tikkun Olam, Shmirat HaGuf, Shmirat HaLashon, Emet, Achdut <b>Additional Mitzvot:</b> derech erez, tzedakah; hachnasat orchim; bikur cholim; v'ahavta l'reacha kamocho; b'tzelem elohim; hiddur mitzvah; tzaar baalei chaim, ba'al tashchit, etc.							
<b>Big Project or Jewish History</b>	decorate kippot & tzedakah boxes; Hebrew name & meaning	Shabbat Boxes; Shema pillow; decorate mezuzot	Make Jewish calendars	Hebrew names; Tallit & Tefillin experience	Siddur Ceremony	"My Jewish Story" project; intro to Jewish history	Israel's History	Holocaust History
<b>Hebrew</b>	Alef Bet, Count to 10 in Hebrew; People/ Places in the Synagogue	Begin PHD Books; Family Members; routine classroom words	Continue PHD (Book 2), Hebrew Months & Days of the Week	Continue PHD (Book 3), intro to Shorashim; basic school supplies	Continue PHD (Book 4); reading prayers & identifying Shorashim	PHD script; focus on prayers; Modern Hebrew elective	1:1 and small group Hebrew by level for reading assistance; focused prayer work; Modern Hebrew	
<b>Theology</b>	What is God like?	God as Creator (with Breishit)	How do I connect with God?	Who is God in the Torah?	What does it mean to "love God"?	Who is God in the Torah? Who is God in my life?	Spirituality of Lifecycle	What do I think about God?
<b>Bible</b>	What is Torah? Core Stories	Bereishit - Narratives - highlight Hachnasat Orchim	Parshat HaShavua with <i>Torah Comics</i>	Breishit with Middot & Mitzvot ( <i>Torah Comics</i> )	Shmot - Mitzvot & Values	Vayikra, Bamidbar, & D'varim - Key Events & Themes	Torah story review; studying their BM Parsha in context	Written Torah (TaNaKh) & Oral Torah; Megillot Esther & Ruth
<b>Holidays</b>	Symbols & Themes of Holidays & Shabbat	Holidays at Home	Holiday Stories	"How" of the Holidays	"Why"/ Stories of the Holidays	Jewish Holidays Around the World	Source sheets: the "why" of each holiday	Source sheets: the "how" of each holiday
<b>Israel &amp; Am Yisrael with Shinshinim</b>	Connecting to the Beth El Community	Israel as the Jewish Homeland through Torah Stories; <i>Israeli songs &amp; music</i>	Israeli symbols & culture; famous Israelis; holidays in Israel	Israeli geography 1; famous Israelis; holidays in Israel	Israeli geography 2; famous Israelis; holidays in Israel	Jewish Identity, Diversity; Groups in Israel; Life as an Israeli	Israel's Narrative: Biblical & Modern History	Intro to Israeli Politics & Complex Conversations
							<i>Connections to Israelis; Israeli culture and daily life (food, slang, holidays, school, IDF); famous people and places</i>	
<b>Jewish Life</b>	Basics of Kippah and Tallit; mitzvah; tzedakah	How to treat a Tanakh and Torah; physical parts of the Torah	Hebrew months and calendar; handwashing; food blessings	Mezuzah, Tefillin; Siddur; service decorum	Minyan; using and navigating the Siddur; obligation for daily prayer	Types of mitzvot; Jewish Heroes	Jewish Lifecycles	Kashrut
							6th: BE Mitzvah & yads 7th: Minyan; Kippot, Tallit, Tefillin as a Daily Obligation, Involvement in Beth El	

## TEFILLAH CURRICULUM

Tefillah is a cumulative experience—each year, we will continue reciting prayers we’ve learned in the past, while adding new prayers. Each learner and class moves at a slightly different pace, and our curriculum leaves room for adjustment as needed.

<p>Gan (K):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Shabbat blessings—candles, Kiddush, HaMotzi</li> <li>● Modeh Ani</li> <li>● Mah Tov</li> <li>● Halleluyah</li> <li>● Shema (first line only)</li> <li>● First of the 4 Questions</li> </ul>	<p>Kitah Aleph (1<sup>st</sup> grade):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Blessing for sitting in the sukkah</li> <li>● Chanukah blessings</li> <li>● Barechu</li> <li>● Yotzer Or</li> <li>● Shema (both lines)</li> <li>● Adonai S’fatai</li> <li>● First two lines of Ashrei</li> <li>● First two of the 4 Questions</li> </ul>
<p>Kitah Bet (2<sup>nd</sup> grade):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Shehechyanu</li> <li>● Blessings over food</li> <li>● Al Netilat Yadayim (washing hands)</li> <li>● Ein Keloheinu</li> <li>● Oseh Shalom</li> <li>● First four lines of Ashrei</li> <li>● All of the 4 Questions</li> </ul>	<p>Kitah Gimmel (3<sup>rd</sup> grade):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Havdalah</li> <li>● Adon Olam</li> <li>● V’Ahavta</li> <li>● First 6-8 lines of Ashrei</li> </ul>
<p>Kitah Dalet (4<sup>th</sup> grade):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mi Chamocha</li> <li>● Aleinu</li> <li>● First half of Ashrei</li> <li>● El Adon (if time)</li> </ul>	<p>Kitah Hey (5<sup>th</sup> grade):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Amidah, includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Avot v’Imahot</li> <li>○ G’vurot</li> <li>○ Kedusha (if time)</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Finish Ashrei</li> </ul>
<p>Kitah Vav (6<sup>th</sup> grade):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Torah Service, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ein Kamocha</li> <li>○ Av Harachamim</li> <li>○ V’yhi Binsoah Ha’aron,</li> <li>○ Ki Mitzion</li> <li>○ Shema, Echad, Gadlu</li> <li>○ L’cha Adonai</li> <li>○ Y’haleleu, Hodu</li> <li>○ Etz Chaim Hi</li> <li>○ Aliyah blessings</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Anim Zemiroth (if time)</li> </ul>	<p>Gesher (7<sup>th</sup> grade):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fine tune prayers for B’nei Mitzvah as needed</li> <li>● If time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Hatzi Kaddish</li> <li>○ Mourner’s Kaddish</li> <li>○ Yigdal</li> <li>○ Friday night Kiddush</li> <li>○ Shacharit</li> <li>○ Birkat HaMazon</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## MIDDOT (VALUES) & MITZVOT CURRICULUM

Beth El Religious School is built on a foundation of *chesed* (kindness) and *kavod* (respect). To help support our learners in building their social emotional skills and strengthening this foundation to develop into wonderful *mentches* (good people), we will incorporate “*Middot/Mitzvot HaChodesh*,” or values/mitzvot of the month, into our Religious School programming. Additionally, as other values and mitzvot come up in other topics, such as Torah stories and holidays, they will also be emphasized.

Our calendar for Middot/Mitzvot HaChodesh is:

- September: Chesed (kindness)
- October: Kavod (respect)
- November: HaKarat HaTov (gratitude)
- December: Nedivut Lev (generosity)
- January: Tikkun Olam (repairing the world)
- February: Shmirat HaGuf v'HaOlam (caring for ourselves & our environment)
- March: Shmirat HaLashon (guarding our words)
- April: Yosher (honesty)
- May: Achdut (unity)

### A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A RELIGIOUS SCHOOL LEARNER

Here is a sample schedule for both elementary and middle school.

#### Thursdays: Elementary School

4:00-4:30	30 min.	Class: Torah stories, Holidays, Israel, Jewish values, Jewish life
4:30-5:00	30 min.	Tefillah with Cantor Gaby
5:00-5:20	20 min.	Snack & Hebrew
5:20-5:55	35 min.	<i>Shinshinim</i> (Israeli emissaries)
5:55-6:00	5 min.	L'hitraot (see you later) and daily closure

#### Thursdays: Middle School

4:00-5:00	60 min.	Period 1: Art, <i>Shinshin</i> (Israeli emissary), Judaics or Hebrew
5:00-6:00	60 min.	Period 2: Art, <i>Shinshin</i> (Israeli emissary), Judaics or Hebrew

#### Sundays:

9:00-9:35	35 min.	Havdalah & Kehillah
9:40-9:50	10 min.	Welcome, community building, settling in
9:50-10:15	25 min.	Hebrew
10:15-10:30	15 min.	Shabbat Party & snack
10:30-10:55	25 min.	Class
10:55-11:00	5 min.	L'hitraot (see you later) & daily closure for K-2nd
11:00-11:55	55 min.	Class (3rd-5th); Tefillah groups (6th-7th) & Moadon (K-2nd)
11:55-12:00	5 min.	L'hitraot (see you later) & daily closure

## **ADDITIONAL PROGRAMMING**

### **Youth & Family Engagement Shabbat**

Join us for our annual Youth & Family Engagement Shabbat! We invite children and families of all ages, stages, and schools to join us at Beth El. Shirateinu performs on Friday night during our extra-kid-friendly services and Shabbat dinner, and our Teens takeover Shabbat morning services on Saturday—filling every role from announcing pages to reading Torah to giving the sermon!. We also include an educators' panel during Kiddush luncheon and invite representatives from a variety of local Jewish day schools to join our community for this special Shabbat on **December 12 & 13, 2025**.

### **Mini Minyan & Junior Minyan**

Mini Minyan is our service for K-2nd grades, and Junior Minyan is for 3rd-5th grades. These children's services meet every Saturday and on Jewish holidays at 10:30 am. Family attendance is welcome but optional in Mini Minyan, and not needed in Junior Minyan. In both services, we focus on learning and leading prayers, as well as Torah-themed discussions and activities.

### **Youth Programming**

Join us for social programming with similarly-aged peers! These events are generally drop-off events, and will occur on Sunday afternoons and some Saturday nights. We aim to have two to four events for each grade throughout the year.

### **Family Programming & Havdallah**

We enjoy a few events that are special for the whole family each year! These include programs like apple picking, ice skating, PJ Havallah, our Purim carnival, etc. throughout the year and are a great way to connect outside of Beth El's walls.

### **Family Mitzvah Days**

Come do *Tikkun Olam*, repairing the world, as a family! We will address food insecurity, among other family-friendly mitzvah projects as we partner with Hope Community Services and other organizations around Westchester!