



**CONGREGATION BETH YESHURUN
WILLIAM S. MALEV SCHOOLS
OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

**RELIGIOUS SCHOOL/SULAM HANDBOOK
2019 - 2020
5780**

**Sheryl Eskowitz, Education Director
Shari Kammerman, Administrative Assistant**

**Congregation Beth Yeshurun
4525 Beechnut Street, Houston, TX 77096
Phone: 713-255-8034
Fax: 713-481-9800
www.bethyeshurun.org**

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Policies and Procedures

MISSION STATEMENT

The Religious School of Congregation Beth Yeshurun serves the Jewish educational needs of the children of Congregation Beth Yeshurun in Pre-Kindergarten through Sixth Grade. The aim of our Religious School is to provide the child with a firm Jewish foundation encompassing moral and ethical values coupled with spiritual growth which can be built upon throughout the elementary and high school years and later into college and adulthood.

HOURS

Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, 1st grade, and 2nd grade meet on Sunday mornings - 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

The 3rd grade, 4th grade, 5th grade, and 6th grade classes meet on Sunday mornings - 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., and Wednesday afternoons - 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. **All students in 3rd - 6th grades are expected to attend MyShabbat a minimum of 1 time per month during the school year and are expected to attend regularly (please refer to page 12 for more information).**

Sulam 7th grade students meet on Sunday mornings – 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. There is a light breakfast for the students from 10:30 – 11:00 a.m., and classes meet from 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL OFFICE INFORMATION

The Religious School Office serves the Religious School, Sulam, and Kehillah High (the community program for 8th – 12th graders) and is located in the school wing near the Swartz Youth Activity Lounge. Visitors should enter through the school entrance.

The office is open Tuesday – Friday and Sunday mornings during the school year. During the summer and school breaks (winter break and spring break), the office is open Monday – Friday.

Please contact the office at any time if you need more information or answers to your questions.

Sheryl Eskowitz, Education Director
seskowitz@bethyeshurun.org
713-255-8040

Shari Kammerman, Administrative Assistant
skammerman@bethyeshurun.org
713-255-8034

ENROLLMENT POLICY

Students need to enroll in Religious School when in 3rd grade. Those students attending a Jewish Day school do not need to attend. Pre-Kindergarten – 2nd grade, while not mandatory, provides a solid foundation for the Religious School years; enrollment in these grades is strongly encouraged. You must be a synagogue member in good standing in order for your child(ren) to attend.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Every day of instruction is important. Absence from school prevents attainment of high academic standards, hinders growth and understanding and interferes with classroom activities. We require **regular and punctual** attendance at Religious School; your child's success in our program depends on your commitment to having him/her here. Students should not miss any classes or leave early except for illness, family celebration and/or a family emergency. No excused absences will be given for vacations, sports and/or extracurricular activities.

Beth Yeshurun has guidelines that are followed which relate to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation. There are four levels of prayers a child may lead at his/her Bar/Bat Mitzvah, depending on ability. All children are evaluated prior to tutoring. Our experience has shown there is a direct correlation between Religious School attendance in conjunction with Junior Congregation and your child's ability to confidently lead the congregation in prayer at his/her Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

CORRESPONDENCE/SOCIAL MEDIA

All of our correspondence is handled through e-mail. Please be sure we have your correct e-mail address to ensure you are kept up to date with information. During the school year, we will be sending e-mails on Thursdays with important announcements and on Sunday afternoons with information about what has happened in our classes.

Website: <https://www.bethyeshurun.org/learn/william-s-malev-schools-religious-studies>

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/CBYTXReligiousSchool/>

DRESS CODE

We abide by HISD dress code. We expect all students to be dressed respectfully when attending Religious School classes. The type of clothing one wears influences behavior. When students come to the synagogue for class dressed inappropriately, their behavior reflects that informality and their ability to study their religion and sacred texts is compromised. We ask that every student come dressed in a manner which will facilitate their learning in a positive manner. For safety reasons, flip flops are absolutely not allowed.

ALLERGY POLICY

The safety and well-being of each of our students is our primary concern. The Beth Yeshurun Day School has a policy regarding peanuts and nuts in the school. Because we share classroom space with the Beth Yeshurun Day School, **students may not bring in foods that contain peanuts, nuts or nut-based products.** The Religious School will not provide any products containing peanuts or nuts for snacks or art projects. Food is not permitted to be eaten on the playgrounds or in the preschool open area.

If your child has food allergies, please alert us as *soon as possible*.

KASHRUT

In accordance with synagogue policy, all food served in our building must be kosher. Sealed products with these symbols of Kosher supervision may be used in the school without prior approval:



SNACKS

We do not provide snacks for students in any grade level. We encourage all Pre-Kindergarten – 2nd grade parents to send a Kosher snack, including a drink (no sodas). If your children are in 3rd – 6th grades and you feel they might get hungry, please send a snack with them. We encourage you to send a healthy, dairy or pareve snack with your child to school. Please be respectful of the synagogue rules and only send Kosher foods. Suggested snacks: fruit, crackers and cheese, vegetables, popcorn, granola bars, chips, juice boxes, water bottles, etc. Please do not send sodas. **French fries or other items from fast food establishments are not allowed. Any packaged food without the appropriate Kosher symbol is NOT permitted, and students will not be allowed to open the item.** If you have any questions about Kosher symbols, please contact the Religious School Office.

Because we have children with severe allergies to all nuts, we ask that you not send any snacks that contain nuts or peanut butter.

PHONES

Students are not allowed to use cell phones at any time during school hours, and we ask that you help us with this by talking with your older children and encouraging them to leave phones at home. If cell phones are used in class, teachers may take away the phone during class, but will notify the parents if this occurs. If using a cell phone at school becomes a regular problem, parents will be asked to come in to get the cell phone. The school telephones cannot be used by the students except in an emergency.

If parents need to reach their children, please contact the Religious School Office since students are asked not to use their phones her.

EMERGENCY OR INCLEMENT WEATHER SCHOOL CLOSING

Please listen to KTRH radio (740 AM), KPRC radio (950 AM) or watch KPRC (Channel 2) to find out about school closings. Generally if HISD is closed, so are we. If possible, we will send out an e-mail. In the event that parents need to be reached quickly about an emergency or unexpected school closing, a mass text will be sent to the cell numbers listed on the registration forms notifying you of the closing. If Religious School has not been cancelled, but the weather in your area is a cause for concern, please use your judgment in attempting to make it to Religious School.

SECURITY

Security is of utmost concern. Strong measures are in place, and a police officer is on duty during all sessions.

CODE OF STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Our code of student behavior which is based on Jewish tenets, directs our interaction with each other. The following behavior is expected of all students in Religious School:

- ❖ Respect each other and accept individual differences.
“Who deserves respect? Someone who respects others.” (Ethics of our Fathers 4:1)
- ❖ Behave honestly.
“Stay away from dishonesty.” (Exodus: 23:7)
- ❖ Show thoughtfulness, consideration and appreciation.
“Greet every person cheerfully.” (Ethics of our Fathers 1:15)
- ❖ Listen respectfully to others.
“Who is wise? Someone who learns from every person.” (Ethics of our Fathers 4:1)
- ❖ Take responsibility for the safety of yourself and others.
“All Jews are responsible for each other.” (Talmud, Shavuot 39a)
- ❖ Use respectful language.
“Death and life can depend upon the tongue.” (Proverbs 18:21)
- ❖ Resolve differences in an appropriate way.
“Seek peace and pursue it.” (Psalms 34:15)
- ❖ Make amends if you hurt others.
“The wrongdoer must make peace with the injured person and ask that person’s pardon.” (Mishna Torah, Repentance 2:9)
- ❖ Respect each other’s and school property.
“The property of others should be as precious to you as your own.” (Ethics of our Fathers 2:17)
- ❖ Share in each other’s joys and support each other in times of need.
“You shall love your fellow person as yourself.” (Leviticus 9:18)
- ❖ You are an important part of our community! You do make a difference!
“Do not keep yourself apart from the community.” (Ethics of our Fathers 2:5)

DISCIPLINE POLICY

Without Torah there is no Derech Eretz (respect), without Derech Eretz there is no Torah. Ethics of our Fathers 3:21

The purpose of discipline should not be punitive, but be instructive. Our goal in the Religious School is to work together to treat each other with Derech Eretz. Respect for G-d, Torah, and mitzvot is our guiding principle. We expect all members of the Religious School community, both adults and students, to abide by this principle.

1. When an incident first occurs, the teacher will counsel the student in the classroom in a professional manner.
2. At the time of the second incident, or the first incident if it is extremely serious in nature, the student will be sent to the Education Director. A discipline report will be filled out by the teacher and given to the Education Director to be placed in the student’s file. The Education Director will contact the parents and explain the discipline report.

3. The third time a student causes a significant class disturbance, the student will again be sent to the Education Director. The Education Director will have the student telephone his/her parents. The child will be suspended, and the parents will be required to come into the school to discuss the situation with the Education Director, the teacher, and the child. No child will be readmitted to class prior to this meeting with the Education Director and the teacher.
4. After two suspensions from the Religious School, the student may be subject to suspension for the remainder of the semester, with the parents providing the tutoring necessary to keep the child at class level. The Education Director must approve the tutor, and testing may be required before re-entry into classrooms.
5. Incidents of misbehavior may include but are not limited to the following:
 - ◆ Disrespect to faculty and or peers.
 - ◆ Defacing school or synagogue property.
 - ◆ Theft of property.
 - ◆ Persistent refusal to comply with the school rules resulting in major classroom or school disruption.
 - ◆ Insubordinate behavior despite teacher direction.
 - ◆ Abusive language or action (including physical violence.)

EARLY PICK-UP PROCEDURES

If you are picking up your child early, your child must bring a note. They may not wait for you outside; you will need to come in and talk with the person at the front desk. We will then find your child and bring them to the front desk. Parents are NOT allowed to go to the classroom to get their child(ren).

If someone other than a parent is picking up your child early, that person needs to bring a picture ID to the front desk. If that person hasn't been designated on your transportation form, we will need to talk with a parent on the phone.

CARPOOL DISMISSAL PROCEDURES/SAFETY RULES

Religious School students will be outside near the circular drive at the end of school. Parents are encouraged to go through the carpool line to pick up students, but parents will be allowed to walk up to the waiting area to pick up students. Teachers will be on duty during carpool dismissal. Please be courteous and respectful.

The safety of your child is our number one concern. Your adherence to carpool rules will help us in safeguarding your child. We ask that you refrain from talking on cell phones while in the parking lot.

- ❖ Enter the parking lot at a reduced speed.
- ❖ All children must wait at the curb when exiting the school.
- ❖ Drive along the curb to pick up your carpool.
- ❖ No child will be permitted to walk into the parking lot to meet a parent.
- ❖ Before driving off, be sure all doors are properly closed.
- ❖ DO NOT DOUBLE PARK.
- ❖ Please respect reserved parking spots, and do not park in them at any time.
- ❖ Do not park in handicapped spaces.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Individualized tutoring sessions are also provided by tutorial aides to assist children with special needs in order to strengthen their Hebrew skills.

It is crucial that you inform us of any special needs that may affect your child's behavior or performance at Religious School by filling out the information sheet in the Registration Packet. Whether it is a food allergy or a learning difference, it is imperative that we have this information in order to meet the special needs of your child. As stated in the opening paragraph of the information sheet, this information will remain strictly confidential. Please contact the Religious School Office if you have information you need to share with us and haven't yet done so.

TUTORING

We provide tutoring sessions, in which tutorial aides assist children who need additional support to strengthen their Hebrew skills. This will be based upon teacher assessments at the beginning of the year.

Religious School Curriculum

We are proud to be a partnering institution with the The Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life (ISJL), and their curriculum is used throughout the Religious School. The ISJL Education Curriculum is a spiraled curriculum, in which students revisit the 10 key content areas explained below with increased sophistication as they progress through the curriculum. The curriculum is developmentally appropriate, nurturing students' Jewish identity, equipping students to live rich and meaningful lives. There are a variety of activities in each lesson that implement the idea that students have different learning styles. Visual, Auditory and Kinesthetic learning activities are used throughout each lesson. For more information about ISJL, go to www.isjl.org.

Throughout the curriculum, students will continue to be exposed to these key content areas:

- **Community** - By being part of the religious school experience, students will feel a particular pride for their heritage as southern Jews and identify with the larger American and global Jewish community.
- **Culture and Symbols** - The ISJL curriculum provides students with the opportunity to experience the colorful culture of Judaism and the symbols. The students will develop a deeper understanding of Jewish culture as their religious school education builds.
- **God** - Religious school is a place where students can openly discuss their thoughts and feelings about God. Students will learn that throughout history Jews have explored their relationship with God.
- **Hebrew and Prayer** - During religious school, students will have the ability to participate in synagogue prayer services and find personal meaning in them, recognizing Jewish worship as an essential facet of Jewish life and as an opportunity for self-discovery, self-assessment, and self-development.
- **Israel** - Throughout the curriculum, students learn to identify with Israel as the Jewish homeland, understanding its history and recognizing our obligation to visit and support the State of Israel, and consider participating in an educational program there.
- **Jewish Lifecycle Events** - The spiraled curriculum allows students to mark the passages of time and seasons through Jewish lifecycle ceremonies using the symbols, rituals, prayers and traditions of their Jewish heritage.
- **Jewish History** - Students will develop a meaningful identification with Jews past and present through the study of Jewish history, culture, Hebrew language, liturgy, music, literature, arts, and texts.
- **Jewish Holidays** - Whether it is with the entire religious school at an All School Program or in each grade, students will familiarize themselves with the many rituals and traditions that are celebrated during Jewish holidays.
- **Mitzvot and Jewish Values** - The ISJL curriculum provides students with a chance to view *mitzvot* - both ritual and ethical - as opportunities to build a relationship with God.
- **Tanach (Torah, Prophets, and Writings)** - Through the religious school experience, students will recognize that Jewish education is a lifelong endeavor, one that involves a critical and inquiring approach, whereby the process of questioning is as valued and important as the quest for answers.

PRE-KINDERGARTEN

The early childhood curriculum is designed to provide young children with multi-sensory experiences that will help them build a foundation for Jewish living. Students will be exposed to Jewish values and holidays and display their knowledge through various means. They will create many projects throughout the year that relate to these topics. It is our hope that parents will record some of their family activities related to each holiday that their children can share with their class.

KINDERGARTEN

The Kindergarten focuses primarily on Jewish holidays and stories from the Torah. Using those two content areas as a backdrop, others areas like *mitzvot* and Jewish values are introduced, as they pertain to holidays and the Torah. For the first time, students are exposed not only to what Jews do, but also why they do them. The Kindergarten curriculum illuminates many Jewish rituals, customs, and traditions.

1ST GRADE

As the students continue to grow, they continue their understanding of Judaism. In this year, the students will focus on Jewish holidays and *mitzvot*. The curriculum teaches how *mitzvot* play a role in daily life and continues to build the students' knowledge of Jewish holidays. Students will learn that God is a central part of Judaism and that we all explore God in our own way.

2ND GRADE

As students mature, they will delve deeper into their exploration of Jewish life, gaining greater skills and knowledge of the rubrics of Jewish life. This year the students will explore the Jewish community and their role in it. They will be exposed to a variety of activities that demonstrate the community in the synagogue through holiday celebrations, life cycle events and symbols that identify Jewish people and places. The students will begin their exploration of Israel as the Jewish homeland.

3RD GRADE

The reading skills of third graders have progressed to the point where they are able to gain insights into the values and messages of the Torah. Students' spirituality will deepen as they develop Jewish God-concepts and contemplate their relationship with God. Students continue to increase their appreciation and understanding of Jewish holidays.

4TH GRADE

In the fourth grade, students will be guided to think critically about concepts such as God and Jewish text. The curriculum focuses on prophets found in the *Tanach* by giving an overview of their actions and impact on Judaism. Through the lens of different Jewish holidays, the students will explore God and the role God plays in their lives.

5TH GRADE

In the fifth grade, we see a clear maturation of the students. They are ready and able to explore concepts of an intellectual and emotional nature. The students are taken on a "Jewish Journey" through the lens of eight important Jewish values that they apply to their lives. They also carry those values into units on the Jewish lifecycle and study of Israel.

6TH GRADE

As students continue to develop intellectually and spiritually and prepare for their Bar and Bat Mitzvah celebration, they will delve deeply into Jewish sources and critically examine three core areas of Judaism: Torah, God, and *mitzvot*. Each week the students will study one or multiple Torah portions, and they will discuss them in relation to five main themes: Family Relations, Leadership, Miracles and Revelation, *Mitzvot* Between People and People, and *Mitzvot* Between People and God.

HEBREW

Due to the time allotted for Hebrew School instruction, it is not within our capacity to have the students become fluent in Hebrew conversation. Rather, our goal is to provide our students with a basic course of Hebrew instruction, with an emphasis on reading Hebrew with fluency and accuracy. An integral component of the Hebrew curriculum is the reading and comprehension of the Friday evening and Shabbat morning prayers.

In the early grades (Pre-Kindergarten – 2nd grade), the emphasis will be on learning Hebrew letters and becoming familiar and comfortable with the *Alef-Bet*. Initially, the students will be expected to recognize the name of each letter, identify the sound that the letter makes and print the Hebrew letters.

The 3rd grade year will serve as a transitional year with students beginning the year with a review of the Hebrew letters and decoding short sequences of letters that form words or sounds. The students will also be introduced to specific prayers during the course of the year learning to read and explain them as they study them.

Beginning in 4th grade, there will be a transition from learning the foundations of Hebrew to concentrating on liturgy, the most practical use of Hebrew for these students. In addition to being able to read and explain each prayer, students will gain an understanding of the overall design of Jewish worship. During each grade, students in 3rd – 6th grades will focus on various prayers in the Shabbat evening and Shabbat morning services.

We are very excited about a new addition to our Hebrew. The program is adapted from Hebrew Through Movement and is being used in all Pre-K – 6th grade classes. From a very young age, we learn language by listening to other people speak, watching for visual clues about words' meanings, and following the actions that others. This program follows that pattern with teachers introducing vocabulary and modeling the meaning of words, and inviting the students to join in the actions that go with the vocabulary as it's introduced. Students are not asked to say the words; they just need to follow the actions. The students' vocabulary will increase throughout the year.

PRAYER

Through the use of our Hebrew texts, the students will become familiar with and will be able to recite the prayers of the various services, specifically the *Shacharit* (morning) service and the *Shabbat* service, as well as holiday prayers. Students in the older grades will become familiar with and will understand the content and meaning of the prayers. Our goal in this subject is to provide the students with a positive attitude towards religious services and rituals. On Sunday mornings, there will be 3 different times for *tefillot* (prayer) - for Pre-K – 1st grade, 2nd – 3rd grades, and for 4th – 6th grades - led by the teachers with student participation.

Sulam

The word “**Sulam**” means ladder in Hebrew. Becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a major step along a lifelong Jewish journey. As our students mature, it is important that they continue their Jewish education in a setting that meets their cognitive, social, and emotional development. We are pleased to engage our 7th grade students in their own program designed to meet their unique needs.

Sulam offers teens the opportunity to learn in an increasingly sophisticated and critical manner and to experience the joy and beauty of Judaism. This year is designed to offer our students distinct and personally relevant insights into their heritage and responsibilities as Jews. This year our curriculum includes: Learning about Judaism and its relevance to our students’ lives, The Holocaust, and Israel.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

10:30 – 11:00	Light breakfast in the Swartz Youth Activity Lounge
11:00 – 12:30	Classes meet

Please note there will be some weeks when students will have a different schedule and will be expected to arrive at 9:30. We will give you as much advance notice as possible.

GEMILUT CHASADIM

It is our responsibility to repair the world—“*tikkun olam*” through deeds of loving kindness. Teens are encouraged to do volunteer works of kindness in the community. We will help facilitate such endeavors which can also fulfill community service hours.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Throughout the year, our students will have the opportunity to participate in a variety of special programs. Those opportunities will be announced in advance.

Special Programs

MyShabbat

Students in 3rd grade (Gimel) through 6th grade (Vav) classes are expected to attend MyShabbat a minimum of 1 time per month during the year. MyShabbat will typically meet on Saturday mornings twice a month (on the second and fourth Shabbat) from **9:30 – 10:30**. Please refer to the school calendar or the synagogue calendar to see which dates MyShabbat will meet. In addition, e-mail reminders are sent on the Thursday before each MyShabbat. Rabbi Sarah Fort will conduct our service with the able assistance of Cantor Diane Dorf. This is a fun and relaxed service where our children are provided with the background to feel comfortable and knowledgeable about the Shabbat morning service. Children will have different opportunities to get involved in the service (more information will be coming soon). We strongly urge you to take advantage of this opportunity to help your child grow and become more confident by leading a part of the service.

We encourage parents to attend MyShabbat with their children. This is a wonderful opportunity to become reacquainted with the service in a comfortable atmosphere. Synagogue attendance is not just preparation for a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, but is a celebration of Shabbat with family and friends and connects us with God. **All the children who attend the minimum number of times will be recognized at our closing ceremony on the last day of school.**

PLEASE REMEMBER – Attendance and participation in our MyShabbat program is a very important part of your student’s B’nai Mitzvah preparation!

MITZVAH PROJECTS AND FIELD TRIPS

All grade levels will be participating in mitzvah projects that are age appropriate. During the year, if an opportunity arises for us to participate in a special project, we will look for ways to make it happen. We also take field trips during the course of the year which enhance what we do in class. **In order for your child to go on the field trip, you must have given permission on the Field Trip Authorization Form included in the Registration Packet.**

We will continue to have in house field trips with visits from the Living Legacy program which include, Shofar making, Olive Press, Mezuzah, Tefillin, Tallit, Havdallah, Matzah Bakery and the Torah Factory.

Students are asked to bring money for *tzedakah* each time they attend Religious School to be donated to several worthwhile organizations. During the year, the students will have the opportunity to vote on the recipient organizations so that they help decide where the money is going. As in the past, we are emphasizing everyone’s contributing something for *tzedakah* every class period. Please send your children to school with the amount you want them to give for *tzedakah* and not expect us to be able to make change for them.

CLERGY

We are very fortunate to have our Rabbis and Cantor involved in our program. Their participation is an important part of our overall curriculum. Not only is their knowledge available to us, but the interaction the students have with them provides a special bonding with our clergy.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS

We are very excited to continue the family engagement programs that are offered throughout the year for every grade in the Religious School. Rabbi Fort works closely with us to create special opportunities for each family to connect to Judaism.

ZAMRANIM

Our 3rd – 6th grade students are proud to sing in Friday night services once a month. Cantor Finkelstein works with the students during Religious School to teach the prayers they will be singing. *Zamranim* has been a wonderful addition to services!