



1st Grade Judaic Studies Purpose Statement Mihal Stern, 1st Grade Teacher

Sh'tilim is a mutual teaching environment of laughter, fun, and playfulness. Involvement, accountability, and collaboration are the focus. Students work together in pairs, hevruta, and in small groups to ensure a high level of participation and mind activation. The goal in Sh'tilim is for the students to observe each other, model for each other, and gain inspiration from each other. The role of the teacher is to support and cheerlead for the students in their roles as leaders and supporters of their peers, and encourage them in their social skills, work skills, mitzvot, and Dereh Eretz. Independence is a goal of 1st Grade. Learning to take care of one's self, of each other, and to be problem solvers. We strive to create holiness in the classroom as expressed through how we interact with each other. We emphasize Dereh Eretz, listening, mitzvot, kindness, problem solving, and showing compassion. Our focus is to cultivate a love of Judaism, an appreciation for Jewish practices, and a positive Jewish identity.

Torah Study takes both a general and intensive path. General Torah studies include portions relevant to the upcoming holidays and to the weekly Torah portion, and the Sidrah is reinforced each week at the Oneg Shabbat. The in-depth Torah study teaches children how to study a biblical text. Various passages are studied in Hebrew, and the students examine key phrases, words, and Hebrew roots. Students also examine Rabbinic understandings of the text, and discuss issues that arise from the text.

The use of Hebrew language is woven through all Judaic studies subjects, and is a central element in the Sh'tilim curriculum. In addition to cultivating a love of the language, the main goals of our Hebrew program are to enable students to read, comprehend, and begin to express themselves orally and in writing using basic vocabulary. We use as much Hebrew in the classroom as possible in order to familiarize the students with the language and with everyday words and phrases. The year begins with a review of the alef-bet, and then moves into learning phonetic reading skills and developing sight-word vocabulary. Once students acquire Hebrew reading competence, their continued fluency and vocabulary acquisition is emphasized through practice using the Siddur, Humash, Haggadah, and other Jewish texts.

T'fillah (prayer) is a central part of our curriculum. Havdallah, Shaḥarit, and Torah service are part of our weekly schedule. At times we will pray together as a whole school, and at times with Gan and Alim. Throughout the course of the year the students study braḥot (blessings). We "unpack" the meaning and purpose of braḥot, and study many braḥot and their applications. We look at the braḥa formula, and learn to differentiate between birhot ha-nehenin (brahot of appreciation) and birḥot mitzvah (braḥot said when performing a mitzvah).

Holidays are a central focus of the Sh'tilim curriculum. We study the essence of each holiday, and the associated mitzvot, customs, blessings, and liturgy/blessings. We use the holidays as an opportunity to integrate relevant Hebrew language and Jewish Children's Literature. Art, cooking, buddying with other classes, writing in English, making books in Hebrew, and working with partners to address discussion topics are some of the ways we explore the holidays. We begin with what the holiday is about, and then take it to a higher level by asking questions that are deeper and more introspective.

Our simulated trip to Israel generates a lot of excitement and is much anticipated. We spend a lot of time preparing for it by looking at cities, land forms, and becoming familiar with the map of Israel. We also look at what's in each city, what it is known for, and where it is located. We engage in lots of activities with the map, and can locate many places in Israel. We also explore our connection to the state of Israel, and why Israel is important to us.