

WHY SHORASHIM LIMMUD

When we redesigned our educational program at Beth Am Israel, we looked outside our back door and decided to bring our learning into the Ya'ar. Over the last year, we witnessed the positive effects of kids learning and praying together outside and affirmed that this setting is transformative. For these reasons, we are committed to integrating the essential learning of traditional Hebrew School with our unique nature-based education:

- **Time outside helps kids grow!** Learning and playing outside improves kids' physical and mental well-being. The time our kids spend outside is already limited, so this time is important for their growth.
- **The Jewish calendar reflects seasonal rhythms.** Our calendar cycles with the seasons, reflecting the intimate connection between Jewish tradition and the natural world. All we need to do is tap into this ancient wisdom to bring Judaism alive anew, from celebrating springtime each Passover to the fall harvest each Sukkot. The agricultural calendar and lunar holiday cycles all directly inform Jewish practice, not the other way around.
- **We are guardians of the Earth.** We only have one earth and we are responsible for it! The best way to teach kids to be responsible for our future planet is to cultivate love of / wonder for earth. When they see their role in creation, they know how to exist in it and care for it.

One must look no further than our Torah to discover Judaism's intricate connections with the natural world. We see it in the stories of the Torah. In the book of Beriesheet [Genesis], on the sixth day of creation, Hashem turns towards all of creation and says, "naaseh adam b'tzelmenu," let us create an earthling [a human] in our image. We learn from the very first verses of Torah that we as humans are both part of the rich tapestry of creation and a reflection of its elements.

VISIONS FOR EACH COHORT

Kindergarten-Second (Gan-Bet): Playfulness

We cultivate a love of being outdoors in our participants in classes Gan, Aleph, and Bet. Together we approach the world with wonder and encourage asking questions about Judaism and the world in which we live. Through our time together, learners feel comfortable and safe spending time in our Ya'ar and are exposed to the rhythms of the Jewish year, different crafting skills, Jewish vocabulary, and short basic prayers.

Third-Fourth (Gimel-Dalet): Friendship

Our Gimel and Dalet classes are oriented to the outdoors and begin to stretch themselves more in their surroundings. Learners begin to develop competency and skills with handcrafts, a deeper awareness of nature through exploring the Ya'ar, and increase prayer and Hebrew fluency. They begin to interact more with one another and form deeper bonds and friendships, and their sense of the Jewish cycles of time and their connection to the outdoors grows stronger. We support them to stretch themselves through growth edge experiences and begin to test leaving their comfort zone to their growth zone.

Fifth-Sixth (Hey-Vav): Flexibility

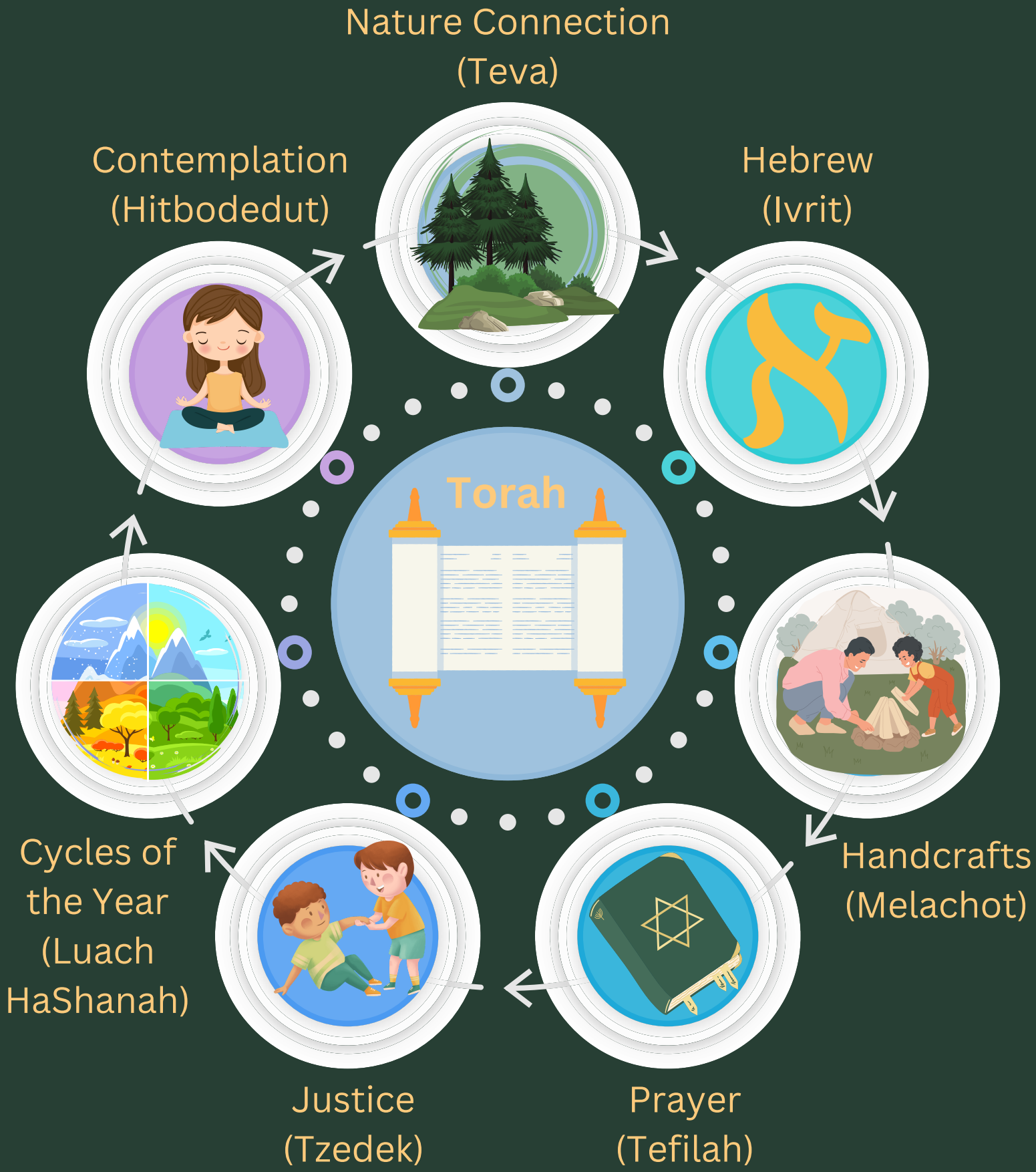
Through our support and guidance, our hey and vav classes grow increasingly confident in themselves in their explorations in the Ya'ar and in their Jewish identity and knowledge. Together, we begin to explore what it means to become b'nai mitzvah and commit to reaching the milestone alongside their peers. They become personally invested in their Jewish learning and in the world around them, and they grow in their sense of connection to themselves, their community, their Jewish identity, and the web of life.

Seventh (Sheva): Contentment

Our sheva learners take on a personal commitment to Jewish life and the *mitzvot* (commandments). They cultivate agency in their relationship with Jewish tradition and feel empowered as Jewish community members at Beth Am Israel and in the greater community. The curiosity they have cultivated at Shorashim empowers them to further investigate their passions. They understand their impact in the community and see their power as role models at Shorashim Limmud, joyfully living and modeling the values, skills, and traits that they have learned at Shorashim over the last six years.

THE ELEMENTS: AN OVERVIEW

All Shorashim Limmud sessions have the following elements



THE ELEMENTS IN DEPTH

Torah sits at the center of all our learning, exploring, and doing. Exploration in the Ya'ar and engagement with Jewish wisdom connects us to written, oral, living, and wild Torah and gives us access to its innate wisdom in our daily lives.

Nature Connection provides a needed antidote to modern day life and a welcome breath of fresh air in the bustling weeks our kids live. It connects us to ourselves, our tradition and one another in profound and joyful ways.

Crafting with our hands forms connections both immediate and ancient. Engaging the *melachot* is a unique inroad to Jewish tradition and captivates each of our senses.

Mindfulness invites each of our students in the tradition of Rebbe Nachman: to spend time alone in nature “pouring” their “hearts out like water,” whispering and shouting and communicating with God, letting all on their minds and hearts out until they found stillness and the ability to connect and be present within the majesty of the natural world. It is increasingly radical to unplug from our devices and offer ourselves fully to the present moment and increasingly necessary to do so.

Cycles of Jewish time are intimately connected with the natural world: days begin as the sun sets, months renew with the moon, and years track the solar cycle. Our festival holidays celebrate the seasons: Passover, also called *chag haaviv* (the springtime holiday) welcomes in spring, and Sukkot centers the season's harvest.

Justice and its pursuit remind us to recognize the imperfections in ourselves and the world around us. We strive to center *tikkun olam* and make the world a better place through our actions. What our students learn has the power to affect them and their communities in profound ways.

TEFILAH

Judaism offers us many ways to pray: through our liturgy and prayer services and through spontaneous prayer in experiences like *amidah* and *hitbodedut*. Engaging in reflective practices including *hitbodedut* (spending contemplative time alone in nature) supports us throughout our lives and is especially helpful in times of transition and growth. Each grade will focus on specific prayers throughout the year and participate in age-appropriate tefilah services, led by our clergy. The services will focus on the Saturday morning prayers to help our students grow in comfort and familiarity with the Shabbat morning service.

Sample K-4

Tefilah Service

Mah Tovv

Psalm 150

Barechu

Shema

Mi Chamocha

Silent Prayer

Oseh Shalom

Closing Song

Sample 5-7 Tefilah

Service

Mah Tovv

Psalm 150

Barechu

Shema w/V'ahavta

Mi Chamocha

Amidah

Silent Prayer

Oseh Shalom

Adon Olam

HEBREW

Hebrew is woven throughout each Shorashim session through tefilah and key Hebrew words. In addition, students in grades 3-6 work with a tutor in small groups on their Hebrew skills either on Zoom during the week or in person on Saturdays.

K-4 (Gan-Dalet) Students will be able to...

- Actively participate in tefilah services
- Identify the meaning of key words in prayers
- Assign personal meaning and understanding to prayers
- Formulate thoughtful questions about prayer, God, and spirituality
- Cultivate spiritual experiences during tefilah, in community, and personally
- Recognize the context of the prayers (when they happen in the service, day, calendar)

5-6 (Hey-Vav) Students will additionally be able to...

- Work towards being able to lead prayers and blessings for their b'nai mitzvah service
- Decode and recognize the letters of basic Hebrew prayers
- Learn to wrestle with higher level concepts about God, prayer, and the world
- Actively participate in tefilah services and Shabbat morning services

7 (Sheva) Students will additionally be able to...

- Lead key prayers in the Friday night and Saturday morning services
- Participate in a meaningful course of Hebrew study for their b'nai mitzvah
- Continue to build on their foundation of Hebrew learning if they wish

RHYTHMS OF THE YEAR

Yearly Theme

Each day at Shorashim Limmud connects to our yearly theme. The theme gives us a lens through which to examine the content that our students are learning. The three themes that we will cycle through are:

- Brachot and Tefilot (Blessings and Prayers)
- Middot and Kehilah Kedosha (Values and Sacred Community)
- Avot/Imahot and Torah (Ancestors and our Stories)

A theme allows us to look at the learning each year with fresh eyes. Instead of teaching the same lessons about Sukkot each year, a year focused on blessings might explore the blessings we say in the sukkah, while a year focused on values might lift up the value of *hachnasat orchim*, welcoming guests. Of course, each year contains blessings, values, and stories, but the theme helps us whittle down the Jewish learning and connect it to something larger than just the content itself.

Trimesters

Our year is broken into trimesters that reflect the seasons: Fall (September-November), Winter (December-February), and Spring (March-May). These are the natural breaking points for Shorashim as the daylight becomes shorter and we enter the darker and colder months and then begin to emerge with longer days and warmer weather into spring. Each semester will have a unit that groups the lessons together in a more focused way, related to the theme.

SAMPLE DAYS

K-4 (Gan-Dalet)

4:00 Arrival, snack, check in with teachers

4:15-4:45 Tefilah with clergy

4:45-5:55 Learning the Ya'ar

- Hike of 100 Blessings
- Sharing Shehecheyanu moments
- Crafting nature museums
- Hitbodedut: quiet reflection in nature

6:00 Dismissal

5-6 (Hey-Vav)

4:00 Arrival, snack, check in with teachers

4:15-4:45 Tefilah with clergy

4:45-5:30 Learning the Ya'ar

- Meditative Hike
- Mah Tovu shelter building
- Hitbodedut: quiet reflection in nature

5:30-5:55 B'nai Mitzvah prep w/Hazzan Harold

6:00 Dismissal

7 (Sheva)

4:00 Arrival, snack, check in with teacher

4:15-4:45 Tefilah with clergy

4:45-5:30 Learning the Ya'ar

- Meditative Hike
- Hitbodedut: quiet reflection in nature

5:30-5:55 B mitzvah topic discussion w/Rabbi David

6:00 Dismissal

COME LEARN WITH US!

The best way to understand Shorashim Limmud is to experience it for yourself. Join us for one of our parent learning opportunities and see the magic of an outdoor, hands-on, Jewish learning experience.

2023-24 Dates

Thurs. October 19

Sat. October 28

Sat. February 10

Sat. March 16

