



Sholem Sunday School

The Sholem Sunday School teaches:

- Major Jewish historical events through the context of world cultural and political history;
- Jewish culture and why cultural preservation is important;
- The cultural aspects of holidays and traditions;
- A *bisl* (little) Yiddish and a *ktsat* (little) Hebrew;
- Motivation for progressive social action from Jewish culture and history;
- Openness to competing ideas and opportunities for students to form their own values through discussion and reflection;
- Creative and analytical modes of expression of self, identity, and culture.

Classes include:

- A monthly parent-and-me group for babes-in-arms through three-year-olds (called Bagels ‘n Blox)
- A *Bar/Bas Mitsve* (Ashkenazic/Yiddish pronunciation) *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* (Sefardic/Israeli pronunciation) year-long program culminating in a final presentation to the community.
- A youth development program, and teaching assistant positions for 10th – 12 graders.

Curriculum

Our excellent teachers have substantial training and experience in progressive teaching modalities, such as project-based, problem-posing, inquiry-based, experiential, student-centered learning. Our classes are fun, creative, connected, caring, contextualized, and rigorous in their pursuit of critical and independent thinking.

What follows is the focus of each two-year class; however, it should be noted that we teach a recursive, or “spiral” curriculum, where content is scaffolded to be developmentally appropriate, and to be returned to throughout the years, both deepening and broadening the scope as students develop. Further, our teachers work very closely together to ensure continuity in class content, and also to help students develop their own expressive and intellectual inquiry.

Grades

Pre-K – Kindergarten

Marking Time Together

The PreK-Kindergarten class, *Marking Time Together*, follows a curriculum centered around the year of Jewish holidays with an emphasis on both natural and human cycles. This is paired with an exploration of community, family, identity, and cultural heritage. Children will become

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familiar with Jewish holiday traditions and their common roots with other cultures in the cycles of the year, as well as Yiddish and Hebrew words and phrases, and Jewish folklore. They will build community and an appreciation for diversity by sharing events from their lives and family stories, as well as through play and time to develop relationships with their classmates. Children will access the material through singing, art, stories, and play, engaging all of the senses with a spirit of fun and curiosity. This class is designed to develop a healthy grounding in the process of marking time together as a community in a way that is familiar and reassuring to young children. **The inquiry question of the *Marking Time Together* two-year cycle is: Who Are We?**

First and Second Grade

Many Ways of Being Jewish

The 1st-2nd grade class, *Many Ways of Being Jewish*, will explore Jewish cultures around the world, past and present. One year will focus on contemporary Jewish cultures around the world, cultivating respect for diversity and a sense of Jewish community. Beginning at home in Los Angeles, children will learn to "think like anthropologists" and examine their own culture, customs, traditions and heritage. From there they will investigate the cultures of their grandparents and great-grandparents, discovering where our customs came from. Inspired by the popular children's book *Flat Stanley*, with home-made "passports" in hand, children will engage in a whimsical and meaningful exploration of Jewish communities of the 20th and 21st centuries, including North America, Israel/the Middle East, South America, Europe, and elsewhere. They will learn what life is like for Jewish children in these locations, and what life was like for those children's grandparents and great-grandparents during the great cultural changes of the 20th century. Through stories, photographs, video, guests, pen pals, and other primary sources, the class will learn to ask and investigate their own questions about how Jews express who we are today.

The other year of the two-year cycle will focus on Jewish cultures in the post-Biblical, pre-industrial era, including *shtetl* life in Eastern Europe, the Golden Age of Spain, and Jewish life in the Middle East and Mediterranean region. After building community by constructing our own "time travel machine," children will explore the daily life of each culture through folk tales, music, art, food, and holiday celebrations. The class will learn words in Yiddish, Hebrew and Ladino and be exposed to the Hebrew alphabet. Students will examine the diversity of Jews throughout history, and how Jews have chosen to express their Jewishness throughout time. Through age-appropriate discussion of current events, the class will relate aspects of Jewish history to contemporary issues of diversity and inclusion that affect our lives today.

The inquiry question of the *Many Ways of Being Jewish* two-year cycle is: "How do we express who we are?"

Third and Fourth Grade

Beginnings

The 3rd-4th grade class, *Beginnings*, will explore the historical and mythological origins of early humans and ancient Jewish culture and their migrations over time, culminating in Jewish immigration to the United States. One year of the 3rd-4th grade class will look through the lens of astronomy and astrophysics coupled with the mythology of Genesis as seen through creation myths of cultures around the world. The class will examine the history of the Ancient Jews, and archaeological evidence, pairing this with the common threads of mythology, superstition and history—in an effort to gain a broad sense of how ancient peoples, including the Jews, made sense of their world. Students will create dynamic family maps, broadly interpreting the meaning

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of “family” to include humankind, life itself, love, and students’ own very personal (and sometimes very complicated) origin stories. We will continue the Hebrew learning begun in previous years, and also learn some Aramaic by singing songs about characters we encounter in Genesis, and by learning holiday greetings and words for family members.

The other year of the two-year cycle will focus on our closer ancestors—Jewish immigrants to North America. The class will explore the Jewish immigrant experience in early America, including exploring what life was like for Jewish immigrant children. The language study of this year will be primarily Yiddish, as the language of Eastern European Jewish immigrants. There will also be an exploration of culture through music, literature, and theatre. As the class learns about the labor movement and Jewish involvement in workers’ rights issues of the early 20th century, they will weigh these immigrant and worker experiences against those happening now, looking critically at similarities, differences, historical context, and commonalities in social justice movements. The class will work on a non-traditional digital family mapping project in order to discover, explore, and ultimately share details about our genetic and cultural heritages, which may or may not overlap.

The inquiry question of the *Beginnings* two-year cycle is: Where Do We Come From?

Fifth and Sixth Grade

Roots

The 5th – 6th grade class, *Roots*, is an in-depth exploration of Jewish holidays including their purpose and meaning, their historical context, and their role in our lives today. One year of the 5th-6th grade class explores the connection between the cycles of nature and holidays from around the world, with a significant focus on Rosh Hashanah, shabbes/shabbat, Hanukah, and pesach/Passover. Students will compare and contrast several fall harvest holidays from a wide variety of cultures, and will explore the cultural connections between holidays, as well as the Jewish folk, cultural, religious, and peoples’ traditions surrounding Jewish holidays. Students will also create a new holiday observance for their class, and for the Sholem Community. The guiding question for this year is: How and why do people create rituals connected to the cycle of the year?

The other year of the two-year cycle delves further into the Jewish holidays, with an emphasis on the historical context in which holidays developed and changed over time. The class will focus on sukes/sukkot, purim, shabbes/shabbat, and shvues/shavuot. Students will learn more about how the celebrations of these holidays, and their meanings, have changed, and how those changes reflect the politics and historical context of their time. This year will include a significant exploration of values, with the guiding question: How can we tell what values a holiday is teaching and how do we decide for ourselves?

The inquiry question of the *Roots* two-year cycle is: How does what we do reflect what we believe?

Seventh and Eighth Grade

Who Are the Jew? The Ancients and the Moderns

The 7th-8th grade class, *Who are the Jews*, explores Jewish literature, art, music and political life through a close study of the Torah and other ancient Jewish texts, as well as modern secular Jewish literature and history. One year of the 7th-8th grade class is an in-depth analysis of the Torah and other Jewish texts including Judges, the Prophets, the Talmud and more. Students will become familiar with some of the content of the texts, the context in which they were written, the archaeological and mythological history surrounding the writing and impact of these texts, as well

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as how they influence current day politics and culture. The guiding question for this year of study is: Who wrote Jewish religious texts, why, and what do they mean today?

The other year of the two-year cycle explores the history of the secular Jewish movement through its political movements, literature, music, and art. Students study the historical context of the activists, artists, writers, and musicians who helped build the secular Jewish movement along with primary source documents. This year will include interviews with community members, collaborations with secular Jewish communities in other areas, and a focus for each student on exploring the Jewish part of their identity in the context of all of the aspects of their identity. The guiding question for this year of study is: Where do secular Jews come from and what does it mean to be a secular Jew today?

The inquiry question of the *Who are the Jews* two-year cycle is: How do we know what we think we know?

Ninth and Tenth Grades

Jews in the 20th century, today, and tomorrow

The 9th-10th grade class explores ideas from all sides, providing students with a lens in which to study the world not through simplistic dualities, but rather the harder-to-define grey area in which truth is ever-elusive, and is approached by looking critically at issues from multiple points of view. One year of the 9th-10th grade class focuses on important events from the 1930s to present day, including Holocaust studies and resistance to oppression; the founding of Israel and subsequent Israeli-Palestinian (and larger Arab/Muslim world) relations; post-WWII US Jewish assimilation; the evolution of the organized labor movement; McCarthyism and the Blacklist; Jewish involvement in the Civil Rights Movement; and the many different ways in which a person can be Jewish in today's world. This year will include a look at the diversity of Jewish life in Los Angeles and how different communities are expressing their Jewishness.

The other year of the two-year cycle takes these themes and explores them through the lenses of literature, art, music, cinema, television, and the internet. In addition, students will explore parallel subjects to gain deeper understandings into these themes, such as using the Stanford Prison Experiment as a way to delve deeper into genocide studies; how the rise of super hero comics (created largely by Jewish talent) were parables of the Jewish immigrant experience— itself a parable of all immigrants; or how the literature of classic secular Jewish authors (including Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*) might be interpreted and reinterpreted today to represent an aspect of the Jewish psyche—as well as commenting on universal aspects of the human condition.

The inquiry question of the *Jews in the 20th century* two-year cycle is: What is truth, and how do we reconcile when one person's truth is at odds with another's?

Eleventh and Twelfth Grades

Belfer

The eleventh and twelfth grade students participate in the community as *belfer*, Yiddish for "helper." These students serve as teaching assistants in the classroom, and help to organize and run the community including helping with the music program, adult events, and more.