



CURRICULUM OVERVIEW SEVENTH GRADE

JUDAICA

As our students prepare to become b'nai mitzvah, our seventh grade curriculum pushes our students to define the concept of *mitzvot* and *tzedakah*. During this unit, our students will consider the difference between seeing *mitzvot* as obligations as opposed to good deeds, and how *tzedakah* is not charity, but rather an act of justice. Students will debate where, when, and with which organizations they should engage in order to do acts of social justice. Additionally, our students will have the opportunity to plan and create their own *mitzvah* projects, which they will show case to one another.

During the Mitzvah & Tzedakah unit, we will focus on the following goals:

- Exploring what it means to see the word “*mitzvah*” as meaning “obligation” or “commandment,” rather than as “good deed”;
- Discovering how we can make different *mitzvot* meaningful parts of our lives;
- Exploring the larger concept of justice in Judaism and how *tzedakah* is a part of this idea;
- Learning about various organizations and how they make the world a more just place;
- Figuring out how we can make the world a more whole, just place; and
- Creating a *mitzvah* project that honors the concept of a *mitzvah* as an obligation or commandment and helps to make our world a more just place.

Our seventh graders will continue their learning with a brief study of the Holocaust. During this unit, they will explore the history of anti-Semitism, how the Nazis and Hitler were able to gain power in Berlin, and what actually happened to the Jews between 1933 and 1945. We recognize that this is a heavy topic; however, it is important for our students to understand our history, particularly one that is so significant to the current American-Jewish experience.

During the Holocaust unit, we will focus on the following goals:

- Enabling students to study the Holocaust in a safe, Jewish environment;
- Guiding students to a deeper understanding of anti-Semitism, its roots and its uses throughout Jewish history; and
- Exploring the personal stories of the Holocaust to find real people to whom each student can connect.

CHUGIM (ELECTIVES):

Our sixth and seventh grade students will have a second elective Judaica class each week. The *chug* class will change every six to eight weeks and fall under the umbrella of one of three units: PEOPLEHOOD, ANI MA'AMIN (I Believe), SOCIAL JUSTICE IN ACTION. Each *chug* in the PEOPLEHOOD unit will explore worldwide Jewish diversity and the things that connect and divide us. Our ANI MA'AMIN unit will explore various *middot* (values), Jewish laws and precepts, ideologies and core values of the Jewish religion. Lastly, during the SOCIAL JUSTICE IN ACTION unit, students will study a social justice topic that they care deeply about from a Jewish lens and then have the opportunity to engage in an action around that topic.

HEBREW

At Stephen Wise Free Synagogue's Religious School, we want students to see Hebrew as a living language of the Jewish people and to be able to use it confidently in prayer and in Jewish life. We work to ensure that every child is capable of decoding (reading without full comprehension) Hebrew prayers and blessings in preparation for leading the bar/bat mitzvah Shabbat morning service. During Hebrew class, students will work to decode a specific prayer to the best of their ability before moving on to another prayer. B'nai mitzvah tutors and Hebrew teachers will be in communication as well. Throughout the school year, we will also have *tefilah* (prayer) instead of Hebrew class, where our group will come together and students will be asked to lead certain prayers. This will help students to use the prayer decoding they are practicing and to become more comfortable on the *bima*.