

Beit Midrash Frequently Asked Questions

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What Are Beit Midrash's Hours?

Preschool (3 & 4 year olds)	Temple Beth-El	Sunday, 10:00 am – 11:30 am <i>(Optional Free-play from 11:30 – 12:00)</i> Beginning August 29
Religious School (Kindergarten – Grade 7)	Temple Beth-El	Sunday, 10:00 am – 12:00 noon Beginning August 29
Pre-Confirmation (Grade 8-9)	Temple Beth-El	Sunday, 10:00 am – 12:00 noon Beginning August 29
Confirmation (Grade 10)	Temple Beth-El	Sunday, 10:30 am - 12:00 noon Beginning August 29
Post-Confirmation (Grades 11-12)	Temple Beth-El	One Sunday per month 12:15-1:30 pm Beginning August 29

Where and When Are Hebrew Classes Held?

Wednesday Midweek Hebrew	Temple Beth-El	Wednesday, 4:30 – 6:00 pm Beginning September 22
Online Midweek Hebrew	Zoom	Tuesdays and Thursdays, times as assigned Beginning week of September 20

Who Is Eligible for *Beit Midrash*?

Enrollment in *Beit Midrash* is open to students in Preschool through Grade 12 whose families are members of Temple Beth-El or committed to conversion through our “Stepping Stones” and Conversion program. Our preschool class is open for students who will be at least age 3 by September 1st of 2021. We kindly ask that all preschool students be potty trained prior to enrolling.

How Can I Register for *Beit Midrash*?

You can register today using this secure link and filling out the fields. If you would prefer a paper application, we would be happy to email one to you. Please contact our religious school administrator, Sara Planto, at sara@beth-elsa.org to request a paper form.

How Does the *Beit Midrash* Program Work?

We proudly offer a completely customizable learning experience for our students. During their class time on Sunday mornings, students learn in interactive, experiential classroom settings with our caring and experienced faculty.

Our Preschool class explores Judaism through their senses in a combined 3- and 4-year-old class. Students will have the chance to experience all Temple has to offer with visits from our clergy, holiday celebrations, and plenty of time to explore Judaism through free play.

In Kindergarten through Seventh Grade, students will select their own classes from a yearly selection to understand how Judaism interacts with their preestablished interests. Science, theater, reading, online gaming – all of these can help our students have fun while they learn about Judaism and our sacred community.

During the course of their eight years in our program, students will enjoy classes in 9 content areas selected by our education committee as vital to understanding modern Reform Jewish life: community, Jewish values, holidays, Hebrew and liturgy, Israel, sacred texts, Jewish culture, Jewish history, Jewish lifecycle celebrations, and God-concepts.

Students working toward becoming *bar*, *bat*, or *b'nai mitzvah* will complete one to three classes in each content area throughout the course of their studies, with ample room for free choice along the way. At the start of the school year, families will receive an update of the content areas their student has completed to help plan for the year ahead.

Classes are offered based on three age groups:

- Primary (Grades K-2)
- Intermediate (Grades 3-5)
- Advanced (Grades 6-7)

Following registration, families receive an email with a class selection form so students can pick the offerings that most appeal to their interests.

What is Pre-Confirmation?

Following their *Beit Midrash* studies, our students matriculate to our Confirmation program, beginning with our Preconfirmation series. During Grades 8 and 9 our students take on a more difficult and nuanced curriculum. This combined group spends two years learning our material – one year on Comparative Religion and Jewish Culture and the other in an exploration of the history and beliefs of Reform Jews. This seminar-style class introduces students to the challenges

and exciting learning of their upcoming Confirmation year. **We will offer our Reform Jewish History course in the 2021-2022 school year.**

What is Confirmation?

In our congregation's history, Confirmation stands as the pinnacle of a student's Jewish education and a graduation of sorts from our program. In Reform tradition, it is a significant lifecycle event. This year of study and ceremony marks an academic milestone in the student's on-going Jewish learning and signifies their informed affirmation of their commitments as Jews.

Students meet weekly with Senior Rabbi Mara Nathan and take on a curriculum that focuses on varied, Jewish concepts of God and are challenged to develop their personal understanding of what a relationship with God means to them.

After they complete these studies, students lead a Confirmation service as a class, linking themselves to Judaism and the Confirmands who came before.

What is Post-Confirmation?

Following their Confirmation, students are encouraged to keep learning with us. Once per month, students join a seminar-style series that features topics students select themselves. Past sessions have included panel discussions featuring Jews of Color, trainings to discuss anti-Semitism and answer questions about Israel on high school and college campuses, and discussions about the Jewish perspectives on topics like the environment, vaping, body image, and food insecurity.

The highlight of the Post-Confirmation years are two trips, offered in off-setting years.

We are proud to offer our students the opportunity to attend the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism (RAC)'s *L'Taken* Social Justice Seminar. During this trip, we bring these students to Washington, DC where they meet with their members of Congress to discuss the issues with which they are concerned. Students join with other teens around the country to learn about the issues the RAC lobbies for and are trained in how to do this sacred justice work while they tour and enjoy a weekend in our nation's capital. **We will offer *L'Taken* in the 2021-2022 school year.**

We also offer a civil rights history trip that takes students on a tour of the locations they learn about in their textbooks while they meet with civil rights movement veterans and learn about the ways that Jewish communities grappled and continue to grapple with issues of race and civil rights. With stops in Selma, Birmingham, and Memphis, students will feel inspired to continue to do the work of ensuring equal rights for all.

What Youth Group Programs Do You Offer?

Temple Beth-El sponsors four youth group options for students as they grow up. Students in Kindergarten through Grade 2 can join **Club Rishon**, which meets up for fun, family events once a month. Club Rishon members are also invited to All Youth events.

Club Haverim is our youth group for students in Grades 3-5. Club Haverim meets once a month for fun, parent-optional activities and service projects. Club Haverim members are also invited to All Youth events.

Jr. SAFTY includes students in Grades 6 and 7. During Jr. SAFTY students bond in preparation for their *b'nai mitzvah* years and for our senior youth group, SAFTY. Jr. SAFTY members have a monthly event, which is often community service oriented, and help plan their own informal, fun-focused programs.

SAFTY is our high school youth group, which includes students in grades 8-12. As members of NFTY-TOR (National Federation of Temple Youth – Texas/Oklahoma Region) our members. SAFTY members spend much of their time doing community service and volunteer projects as representatives of Temple Beth-El. On a regional level, they attend NFTY-TOR programming around the state and many of our members serve on the NFTY-TOR board.

If you would like to register your child(ren) for a Youth Group, you can opt in as a part of Beit Midrash registration or by contacting Leah Apothaker leah@beth-elsa.org .

What is Yachad?

Yachad is our Parent/Teacher organization. Our Yachad parents help our teachers by chaperoning local field trips, helping set up for Family Education days, and providing b'nai mitzvah members of our school community and holiday gifts for our faculty. We ask that families contribute \$25 per year to Yachad and love parents who are ready to volunteer!

What is Included with My Registration Fee?

Your *Beit Midrash* registration fee covers all student instructional materials and school supplies. It also covers our non-traditional supplies like ingredients and take-home cooking tools for students in cooking classes, art supplies for students in fine art classes, or video game software for students in our online gaming classes (hardware is not included).

Included for students in Grades 2-6 is a *Shabbat* weekend retreat at URJ Greene Family Camp in Bruceville, TX. We take care of transportation, chaperones, lodging, meals and snacks, and activities all weekend long.

Included for students in Grades 3-6 is a midweek Hebrew class. Students can either enroll in a group class or work with a private tutor for the included fee.

How Much Does *Beit Midrash* Cost?

Our *Beit Midrash* registration fees below are based on the number of instructional hours and included materials and activities offered for your child(ren's) grade. The fee is subsidized by the entire congregation in an attempt to keep the cost down for families balancing a number of expenses.

Preschool	\$ 350
Kindergarten – Grade 1	\$ 415
Grade 2	\$ 585
Grades 3, 4, 5, 6	\$ 680
Grade 7, 8, 9	\$ 510
Confirmation (Gr. 10)	\$ 625
Post-Confirmation (Gr. 11-12)	\$ 100 *Trip will be a separate, additional cost and is optional.

Are Scholarships or Payment Plans Available for *Beit Midrash*?

Yes! Absolutely! We understand that families have a number of expenses and **we are committed to making sure all of our families can enroll regardless of financial circumstances.**

Many families set up payment plans for Religious School. These plans are interest-free and you can set up the installments in a variety of ways. For more information, contact Temple's Controller, Michael Ringel, michael@beth-elsa.org.

Additionally, we have scholarships available to families who need financial assistance. The form is available as part of our *Beit Midrash* registration or by contacting Director of Congregational Learning, Leah Apothaker, at leah@beth-elsa.org.

All financial arrangements are kept confidential.

Are Refunds Available?

We are pleased to be able to offer full refunds of your registration fee until August 1, 2021. If a student drops out because of a move out-of-town or illness prior to the end of the first semester, we are able to offer a prorated fee and refund the fee for the second semester.

We regret that, otherwise, we are unable to offer refunds.

What Does *Beit Midrash* Mean?

Beit Midrash is the Hebrew for “House of Study.” Early rabbinic literature refers to synagogue buildings as serving three purposes: to be a *beit t’filah* (house of worship), a *beit k’neset* (a house of gathering), and a *beit midrash* (house of study). Designating spaces for study has long been part of Jewish tradition. Our name refers to our hopes that we will be more than a school for our students – just teaching classes and assigning grades. What we are in reality is a community of learners, working together to discover the impact that Judaism can have on every aspect of our lives and how we can impact the Jewish world in return. At *Beit Midrash* we explore Judaism in our own ways, with each student, like the rabbinic scholars in early centuries, finding what excites us and pursuing those interests.