

# Hebrew School Reimagined at Kerem Shalom

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is “reimagined” about Hebrew School Reimagined?**

Hebrew School Reimagined is based on [newly defined values and goals for our Kerem Shalom youth experiences](#). Based on this vision, Hebrew School Reimagined now includes: more opportunities for relationship building across age cohorts, more hands-on and experiential learning, more agency for students and families to define their own learning journey, and more emphasis on individuals developing their own sense of meaning in Judaism. In practice, this means we have mixed-aged cohorts, a new approach to Hebrew education, and interest-based electives. See below for more information on each of these new elements of Hebrew School Reimagined.

### **Why are these changes being made now, and who decided on them?**

In the past few years, Kerem Shalom leadership sensed that it was time to reinvigorate our youth learning experiences, to better meet the changing needs of children and families. The Covid-19 pandemic forced us to reinvent some things a little sooner than anticipated, but that time also helped us clarify what is really important and where we want to go next. As we look hopefully to emerging from the pandemic, it is a fitting time to reset and restart our programs.

Hebrew School Reimagined, and the entire new vision for youth experiences at Kerem Shalom, is the result of a months-long visioning process. Rabbi Sam and Rabbi Darby worked with a small, representative advisory group of Kerem Shalom members, and the rest of the KS professional staff, the Education Committee and Board of Directors, and members of the current Hebrew School faculty all also gave feedback and input. We plan to solicit further feedback from students and families, as we evaluate the first year of this program and plan for the future.

### **When and where will Hebrew School Reimagined take place?**

Hebrew School Reimagined takes place weekly on Monday afternoons, 4:15-6:15pm. In partnership with the KS Covid-19 Task Force, we are developing plans to hold Hebrew School Reimagined in person, at Kerem Shalom. We will announce details as opening day approaches.

### **What will Hebrew School Reimagined cost?**

Kerem Shalom values communally supported education for its young members, and thus Hebrew School Reimagined is funded by the entire Kerem Shalom community. Families are asked to pay a \$300 registration fee to cover administrative and materials costs (this equates to less than \$15 per session). Families who register for Hebrew School Reimagined by July 1 will receive a \$50 early-bird discount. We are committed to ensuring that finances never present a barrier to participation, so if you are concerned about your particular situation, we will gladly work with you in a confidential manner to make an arrangement. (For registration fee information about Holiday Preschool, Kindergarten, and the 7th Grade Cohort, see the Kerem Shalom website.)

### **What grades will participate in Hebrew School Reimagined?**

Hebrew School Reimagined is for children in grades 1-6. Kindergarten will now take place monthly on Sundays, on the same schedule as Holiday Preschool, and the 7th Grade Cohort will still meet Monday evenings.

### **How will my child get more choices of experience in Hebrew School Reimagined?**

Students in grades 3-6 will get to choose one interest-based elective each semester, and over the course of their time in Hebrew School Reimagined, they will get to pick from a variety of activities. These may include: drama, visual arts, STEM, music and drumming, Jewish debates, and more. Students in grades 5-6 will also have One-On-One Hebrew (see below), where they will get to proceed at an individualized pace according to their own goals. All students and families will also have a variety of Family Adventures and Workshops throughout the year (see below).

### **What does “experiential learning” mean?**

Jewish learning and Jewish living go hand in hand, and it is by doing Jewish that we discover what Judaism means for us. We do not simply focus on imparting the knowledge and skills “needed for Jewish life” in the future. Rather, we emphasize living Jewishly now, at every age and stage of life, and reflecting on the meaning of those experiences. In doing so, we build Jewish “muscle memory” for a lifetime of meaningful Jewish living. In practice, this means we don’t just study the prayers, we *pray* them and discuss their meaning; we don’t just hear Jewish stories, we act them out and create art with them; we don’t just learn about the holidays, we celebrate them together. In this way, we learn to bring Jewish values to life in our everyday lives and we discover what they mean to us.

### **Will my child still learn Hebrew?**

Yes! We’re excited to bring a new approach to Hebrew education to Kerem Shalom that consists of four components:

1. Hebrew Through Movement - Students in grades 1-4 experience this innovative methodology for language learning. For 15-20 minutes each week, they will get up and move around, learning to use Hebrew as a living language, in a joyful, kinesthetic, playful, and social way. [Click here to watch a brief introduction to Hebrew Through Movement.](#)
2. One-On-One Hebrew - Students in grades 5-6 will meet with a teacher for individualized instruction in the skill of Hebrew decoding (“reading” the letters and words to be able to vocalize them). The individualized attention and pacing removes the social anxiety of classroom decoding practice, and it allows students to progress beyond the basics to deeper levels of reading comprehension if they wish. One-On-One Hebrew will take place on Zoom, from home, for 20 minutes per week, on a different weekday from when students are in Hebrew School Reimagined.
3. T’fillah (Prayer in Hebrew) - Beginning in grade 1, all students will have weekly learners’ services in which they will learn and practice the Hebrew prayers aurally. This acclimates children immediately to synagogue services, and it allows them to deepen their understanding of the prayers and explore big spiritual questions.

4. Jewish Life Vocabulary - We will use intentionally chosen vocabulary throughout Hebrew School Reimagined, to build contextual familiarity with Hebrew as a living language. The more students get used to hearing and using Hebrew words, the more quickly they pick up the skill of decoding later on.

Other congregations report that this new approach to Hebrew education leads to *increased* proficiency in Hebrew with *decreased* instructional time. It is less stressful and more joyful, and it engages multiple learning modalities and leads to a deeper sense of meaning. To learn more about this approach and see the data, [click here](#).

### **What does family education look like for Hebrew School Reimagined?**

Throughout the year, we will offer a series of Family Adventures and Workshops. These are out-and-about field trips and in-building, hands-on activities focusing on family bonding, exploration, creativity, and discovery. They change from year to year and are open to multiple age groups depending on the activity. Furthermore, every Kerem Shalom holiday celebration and Mitzvah Day will have opportunities for families to learn and live Jewishly together, and there will be a number of Shabbat services throughout the year that are specifically designed to engage the spirituality of school-age children and adults alike. We encourage families to participate in a variety of experiences at Kerem Shalom!

With further questions, contact Rabbi Sam, Director of Congregational Learning ([learning@keremshalom.org](mailto:learning@keremshalom.org)).