

# Jewish Cultural School



*To find out what the school is currently up to, please visit the [JCS blog](#)!*

For a printable summary of the school, please view [our brochure](#)!

The Or Emet Jewish Cultural School (JCS) is a monthly Jewish secular Sunday school program for preschoolers through bar/bat mitzvah age. The curriculum emphasizes Jewish history, culture, and the traditions that shape our identity and values. Each class session incorporates a Hebrew lesson as well as a short Jewish music lesson.



Humanistic Jewish education is non-theistic, meaning we focus on our shared identity, values, and cultural history - not religious doctrine. Humanistic Jews believe a logic-based worldview and Jewish identity are complementary. We teach Jewish history as a human saga, a testament to the significance of human power and responsibility. Our children learn that morality and ethics come from the human experience, and from the documented history of Jewish leaders and heroes who came before us. (For more information about Humanistic Judaism, see the Society for Humanistic Judaism website at [www.shj.org](http://www.shj.org).)

Or Emet celebrates Humanistic Judaism's proud tradition of leadership in social movements for peace and justice, and teaches the responsibility of Tikkun Olam—working to improve our world. We encourage our children to develop their own convictions and seek truth and meaning on the basis of knowledge, reason, ethical values and compassion.

The JCS provides an open environment where students may freely express thoughts, feelings, and questions. Family and community participation are central to the success of our school. We welcome and affirm children of interfaith, intercultural, and LGBT families.

### **2016 - 2017 SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM**

The JCS Sunday School is held once a month from 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the centrally located [Talmud Torah of St. Paul's Marjorie Smith Hofman Educational Building](#). Dates for the current school year are listed below. A dynamic and engaging program for adults runs concurrently, with speakers and discussions of interest to both parents and other Or Emet community members.

*Sunday, September 18, 2016*

*Sunday, October 16, 2016 (Sukkot party afterward)*

*Sunday, November 20, 2016*

*Sunday, December 4, 2016*

*Sunday, January 8, 2017*

*Sunday, February 12, 2017 (including Tu B'Shevat Seder)*

*Sunday, March 12, 2017 (including Purim Carnival)*

*Sunday, April 9, 2017*

*Sunday, May 7, 2017*



Other family-oriented Or Emet activities include an annual Hanukkah party and a Passover Seder that focuses on family and student contributions with the full congregation. There are opportunities for students to participate in Or Emet's High Holidays services as well. Additionally, we organize field trips, book clubs, and service events, giving students and families more opportunities to build relationships and community. See the [Calendar page on this website](#) for complete information about congregation-sponsored events, including secular Friday Shabbat Services.

### **Curriculum**

The JCS curriculum is based around a chronological, three-year Jewish history cycle; it also strongly emphasizes holidays, Jewish cultural traditions, and

Humanistic Jewish values. In the first year of the three-year curriculum cycle, lessons focus on biblical and ancient Jewish history, in the second year focus shifts to the post-Second Temple period through the early 19th century, and in the third year the focus shifts again to modern Jewish history. This same cycle is repeated for students in all but the youngest class, first at a basic level and again at more advanced levels for older age groups. This approach helps ensure real mastery of critical information by the time students are ready for bar/bat mitzvah. The preschool-age Littles learn the foundational basics about holidays, songs, customs, and the Hebrew language through play, art, hearing stories, and other participatory activities.

Students of all ages learn about celebrating the High Holidays, Sukkot, Hanukkah, Tu B'Shevat, Purim, and Passover humanistically, and explore Jewish culture through cooking, art, music, literature, theater, and games. Teachers stress the importance of tikkun olam (improving the world) and tzedakah (righteousness) and offer age-appropriate opportunities for social action. Students learn basic Hebrew and sing Hebrew and Yiddish songs. We explore Humanistic Judaism in particular and often invite members of the congregation to share skills, expertise, or simply stories. From baking challah and knishes and writing poems about trees on Tu B'shevat to talking about Jewish heroes from the Exodus story to the Civil Rights Movement and drawing on study of the Ten Commandments to brainstorm our own list of Humanistic Commandments, we help students form a sense of Jewish identity and community.

### ***Classes***

JCS classes are available for the following age groups:

The Littles class is typically open to 3- and 4-year-olds. Students learn the basics about holidays, customs and values through play and activities.

The K + 1 class is for kindergarten and 1st graders. Students build on their knowledge of holidays, customs, and humanistic Jewish values through games and activities.

The Middles class, for 2nd and 3rd graders, typically spends some time focusing on Jewish historical topics, following the three-year cycle, in addition to learning more about holidays, traditions, and values through fun, hands-on activities.

The Juniors class is for 4th and 5th graders. The curriculum for this class focuses

on Jewish history, and emphasizes learning to think critically about the Torah, Jewish history, and Jewish culture. Students in the Juniors class do a mixture of reading/writing/discussion and creative hands-on activities.

The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Prep class is for 6th and 7th graders. Students build on learning begun in the Juniors class, engaging in higher-level study of the Torah/Tanakh, Jewish history, and Jewish identity from a humanistic perspective that encourages critical and original thinking. Reading/writing/discussion and creative hands-on activities connect to these themes and help students prepare for bar/bat mitzvah.

The Or Emet Bar/Bat Mitzvah Program is arranged and led by Madrikh Harold Londer and the JCS school director, Eva Cohen. The program meets an additional time each month, and students take part in youth-selected Jewish cultural, service, and tikkun olam activities while also each working on an independent research project on a topic of Jewish interest. Each student creates a presentation on her/his research that becomes the centerpiece of the bat/bar mitzvah service. To participate, the family must be Or Emet members and the bar/bat mitzvah candidate must be actively enrolled in the Jewish Cultural School. Interested families should contact Or Emet as soon as possible.

### ***Family Involvement***

Our small class sizes and once-a-month format offer an excellent educational program at a considerably lower cost to families than a traditional Jewish education program. We rely on volunteer help from families when possible. This builds community, helps families become involved in their children's Jewish education, and exemplifies Humanistic Judaism's emphasis on human resourcefulness.

### ***Enrollment Fees and Options***

JCS enrollment is open to both members and non-members of Or Emet. JCS families who join Or Emet pay membership dues and enjoy a lower tuition rate. A non-member, tuition-only option is available for new students, allowing families to try the JCS for up to three years before committing to membership, which is required the fourth year. The tuition-only option does not extend to bar or bat mitzvah candidates, whose families must be members of Or Emet to participate in the bar/bat mitzvah program. Please consult the tuition chart below for details. Single parent and part-year rates are also available, and scholarships or rate

reductions are available for those in need.

<b>2016/17 Tuition Rates</b>	<b>First Child</b>	<b>Additional Children</b>
<p><b>Or Emet Members</b> (<a href="#">With family membership</a>)</p>	<p>\$155</p>	<p>\$100 each</p>
<p><b>Non-Members</b></p>	<p>\$200 year 1 \$275 year 2 \$330 year 3</p>	<p>Same as first child rate</p>
<p><b>Drop-In &amp; Guest Visitors</b> (We appreciate one week of advance notice.)</p>	<p>First visit is free; additional visits are \$28/session</p>	<p>First visit is free; additional visits are \$17/session</p>

### ***Visiting the School***

Families are welcome to visit any of the Sunday School sessions planned for the year and get to know us better. Please contact the [JCS coordinator](#) one week in advance so our teachers know to expect you, and have adequate supplies to accommodate your child in the classroom.

### ***Questions? Ready to Enroll?***

To enroll, or learn more about Or Emet's Jewish Cultural School, contact the JCS coordinator, Eva Cohen, at [school-1@oremet.org](mailto:school-1@oremet.org).