

# Chavurah

## An Alternative Model for 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Families

***Building Community through Meaningful Jewish  
Learning and Living Experiences***

### What are the building blocks of the Chavurah model?

Weekly  
*Mifgash*  
(Meeting)

5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> graders will meet ("*mifgash*") weekly in various settings. They'll explore Jewish answers to their everyday questions, as well as their questions about specific Jewish content areas.

Family  
*Limmud*  
(Learning)

Several times a year, the whole family will come together for a family learning ("*limmud*") experience. As role models for their children, parents will play active roles as both learners and educators.

Community  
*Kesher*  
(Connection)

Throughout the year, the Chavurah will connect ("*kesher*") as families for holiday celebrations and with the larger synagogue community for worship together ("*t'filah*").

**Who are the learners in Chavurah?**

The Chavurah model sees the whole family as learners on a journey together. *5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade families who choose to participate are committing themselves to being active participants in their child's experience of Jewish learning and living.*

**Who is the Chavurah educator?**

Each Chavurah is led by skilled and knowledgeable educators who build rapport among Chavurah learners and coordinate and facilitate learning experiences.

**When and where does Chavurah meet?**

Chavurah generally meets on a rotating basis among the homes of the Chavurah members and at Community Synagogue. At times Chavurah meets off-site for Jewish learning in real-life settings. Family learning sessions often take place over Shabbat (Friday evening or Saturday morning). The day and time Chavurah meets depends on the availability of the educator and families.

**When do 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> graders learn Hebrew?**

Each learner will receive one-on-one Hebrew tutoring remotely with a Hebrew tutor. Each family coordinates with the tutor to find a time to "meet" online weekly for a short tutoring session. There is also the option for learners to meet weekly in person with a tutor at Community Synagogue.

**What is the time commitment for learners and families?**

Learners meet once a week for 2 hours with their educator. They have a Hebrew session once a week with a Hebrew tutor and are expected to complete their Hebrew homework before their next session. Families reconnect with the synagogue community by participating in 6-8 family learning and worship sessions.

**Will everyone who is interested in Chavurah be able to participate?**

Our goal is to create groups that are large enough to accommodate as many families as possible, but small enough to encourage community building. We hope to be able to include everyone but cannot guarantee it as the ideal size is 8-10 families.

**How do I apply for admission to Chavurah?**

An online application will be emailed to all incoming 5<sup>th</sup> grade families.

**Should I still submit a CJL registration form?**

Yes, submit a CJL registration form no matter which learning track you choose.

**Can my child decide to go back to the classroom model if we sign up for Chavurah?**

Yes. Children and families should be willing to commit to this model, but if children and/or families find that it isn't right for them, they can rejoin CJL classrooms.

**What is the cost of Chavurah?**

Tuition for Chavurah is slightly higher than for the CJL classroom model. This covers costs for additional trips and experiential programs, resource materials, individualized Hebrew instruction, and subsidizes the 9:1 learner to educator ratio.

# What kinds of experiences will children and families have as participants in Chavurah?

## Weekly Mifgash (meeting)

The weekly *mifgash* is designed to encourage community building within the Chavurah and includes opportunities for learners to check in with their educator and each other. The learning will range from discussing Jewish answers to learners' real-life questions ("What does it mean to be a good friend?") to exploring questions about Jewish content areas (such as God, Torah, ritual, and Israel). The educator will engage the learners in a way that uncovers their questions and then create learning to address those questions.

A Chavurah *mifgash* can take place anywhere: in Starbucks or a food bank, at a museum or hiking trail, in a learner's home or at the synagogue. Different locations allow for different kinds of learning to take place.

See the next page for some examples.

## Family Involvement:

### **Limmud (learning), Keshet (connection) & T'filah (worship)**

Chavurah requires three types of family involvement: *limmud* (learning), *keshet* (connection) & *t'filah* (worship).

**Limmud** is an opportunity for Chavurah groups to come together to learn with the greater CJL community in our J-Life program. Four or five times a year, J-Life sessions provide opportunities for CJL and Chavurah families to participate in grade-level family learning.

Family **Keshet** is the opportunity for the Chavurah to come together periodically to build community and share in Jewish rituals and learning in authentic Jewish moments. These could include holiday celebrations, Shabbat dinners, building a Sukkah, or assembling *mishloach manot* (Purim food baskets). These moments allow families to build meaningful relationships with each other and encourage children to see their parents as Jewish role models.

Family **T'filah** encourages each Chavurah family to attend Friday night or Saturday morning services. This experience strengthens spiritual connection, re-enforces prayer skills, and helps to build relationships with the clergy.

# Mifgash Examples

## Starbucks

As part of an exploration of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world), learners discovered the various programs that Starbucks runs to help people throughout the world. Alongside a Starbucks site manager, learners gained a different perspective on their favorite Starbucks drink.

## Whole Foods Market

When learning about the value of *tza'ar ba'alei chayim* (caring for animals and living creatures), Chavurah visited Whole Foods Market in Port Chester. There we saw how a large and growing company is staying true to its values of selling the "highest quality natural and organic products available" while "promoting environmental stewardship" by providing healthy produce and meat.

## Mikvah

Learners visited the *Mikvah* (ritual bath) in White Plains and had a tour led by the *Mikvah*'s coordinator. During this session, learners explored *Mikvah* rituals and created some of their own.

## Plaster Palace Pottery

As part of a unit of learning about Passover, learners visited this pottery painting store to create Seder plates and other ritual objects to use at their own family seders.

## Saxon Woods Park

One unit focused on finding connections between learners' own lives and the stories in the Torah. The Chavurah group went on a hike through Saxon Woods Park to connect with nature and gain a new perspective on the Torah. They stopped at various points along the hike to act out, analyze, and discuss Abraham's journey throughout his life.



5<sup>th</sup> graders baking a "Bible cake" as part of a unit of Torah learning.

5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders created masks & packed *mishloach manot* food baskets for Purim.



7<sup>th</sup> graders and their families built a Sukkah together.