



**PARK AVENUE SYNAGOGUE**  
Congregational School

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### **Zayin – Grade 7**

The Zayin curriculum is comprised of two main components:

1. **Grade-wide programming focused on building Jewish identity**, as this bnei mitzvah year is an important time in the evolution of each learner’s Jewish identity. We also hope to explore our identities within the larger culture and world, looking at various perspectives and identities and grappling with difficult dilemmas. Learners will additionally examine how we can embrace Jewish values of justice and look to our Jewish texts and sources for insight into living our daily lives.
2. **Electives taught by experienced educators on a variety of topics**, such as conversational Hebrew, the Jewish perspective in films and role in movie production, and matters of law and justice debated from a Jewish platform.

During grade-wide programming, learners will hear from a variety of inspiring guest speakers. Such presentations include:

- Rabbi Cosgrove on how we grapple with the “hyphen within” our Jewish and American identities
- Community members and museum educators on the Holocaust and the necessity of listening to stories and passing along the narratives
- Israeli *shliha* Zehava Tesfay and Rabbi Isaiah Rothstein on racism in global current events and the intersecting identity of being Jewish and a BIPOC
- An Israeli sharing unique technical advances from Israel in a “shark tank” setting for learners to exercise their creative minds
- Josh Rosenberg and Mira Davis from the PAS cantorial team on music and Jewish languages, focusing Hanukkah music in Yiddish and Ladino
- Members of the community on their experience of converting to Judaism
- Several meaningful art projects with Artist in Residence Ellen Alt, designed to connect with others and reflect on our identities within

Each learner will participate in two electives, one each semester (though they may opt to remain with the same elective all year). Each class examines a different topic through the lens of Jewish values and ethics. Current options are:

- *Law & Order: J-E-W* – examining and debating topics in the Bible and Talmud with a modern-day edge
- *Ulpan* – conversational Hebrew learning with an Israeli educator and performer in order to speak and engage like a real sabra
- *Jews & the Movies* – studying specific films and Hollywood’s history through a Jewish perspective
- *PASTA* – preparation for those interested in becoming a teacher’s assistant and exploring methods of inclusive education

During this school year, many learners are also participating in individual bnei mitzvah preparation. Each child’s bar/bat mitzvah date determines where they are in this process, but the common experience of reaching this milestone is frequently woven into the program.