

Shomrei Adamah Curricular Manual Fall 2013



*A program of Hazon and
Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center*



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Residential Jewish Environmental Education - General Information

Teva is a non-denominational educational service for students who attend Jewish Day schools, Hebrew schools, camps and community alliances. Teva is a program of Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center and Hazon.

Goals: The residential program for 5th and 6th grade students integrates the study of ecology and environmental education with Jewish concepts and values through hands-on activities in a cooperative outdoor setting. By using the forest as their classroom, Teva students also develop a greater sense of responsibility, independence, and self-esteem. They leave the program having forged intimate connections with each other and the natural world and with a deeper knowledge of how Judaism can inform our interactions with the rest of creation.

Curriculum: Over the course of four days and three nights, students participate in two types of daytime classes: *Limudei Chutz* (outdoor learning) and two *Chuggim* (electives). In *Limudei Chutz*, students study earth sciences, plant and animal life, and the connections between them that allow ecosystems to function. Through experiential activities, they will also explore Jewish wisdom on humanity's role in Creation. They also participate in group challenges, which promote communication, trust, and creative problem solving. In *Chuggim*, students are able to choose from electives relevant to Teva's mission. *Chuggim* options often include drama, music, arts and crafts, cheese making, movement, survival skills, meditation, and more. One of the two *Chuggim* slots is a hands-on *Beit Midrash* (Jewish text study) where students learn that *Torah* is not only studied on a page but is brought to life in practical application in the world. Evening programs include a night walk and an exciting interactive presentation. New songs are taught daily and journal writing is strongly encouraged. Also, the students lead *shacharit* services, with input from the Teva educators. *Brachot* (blessings) are said before and after eating, and taught for other natural events, as a means of heightening awareness and expressing wonder and gratitude.

Schools will lead *shacharit* (morning prayer) services in collaboration with Teva staff members. Blessings are said before and after eating and taught for other natural events as a way of cultivating awareness and expressing wonder and gratitude. Additional prayer times can be scheduled upon request.

Facilities: Teva is hosted by several sites. Each offers excellent hiking opportunities and outdoor recreational space. All sites offer comfortable lodging and strictly kosher vegetarian food.

Safety: All Teva staff members are first-aid and CPR certified and carry first-aid kits at all times. They also receive basic wilderness medical training. In addition, a medical professional is on site and on duty all day. In case of a medical emergency, there is a hospital less than 20 minutes away from each site.

Staff: The resident Teva staff includes the Program Director, Education Director, medical professional, and a team of passionate and talented field educators and specialists. In addition, schools bring adult teacher chaperones.

Thematic Overview of the Teva Curriculum

Awareness

Ecology

Responsibility

Teva's curriculum follows a three-part thematic progression of "Awareness," then "Ecology," then "Responsibility." The theme of "Togetherness" is also woven in throughout the program.

AWARENESS

Pokeach Ivrim

Before students are taught the details of how the natural world works, they need to develop a physical and emotional connection to their surroundings. Awareness reflects the state of consciousness that we hope to evoke in ourselves and in our students as we make the transition to nature's classroom.

The phrase "*pokeach ivrim*" (gives sight to the blind), from *Birkot Ha'shachar* (morning blessings), embodies Teva's goal of challenging students to open their eyes to the beauty all around us. Our games and activities focus on heightening not only our sight, but all of the senses we use to observe and experience the world. We also work to remove the emotional and psychological barriers that prevent us from seeing the world in all of its richness and diversity. Core values in this part of the program include play, discovery, sensory exploration, curiosity, wonder, and gratitude.

ECOLOGY

Bein Adam L'Chavero/Chaverah

Once students have a sense of their new environment, they can begin to investigate and understand their connections to others, human and non-human.

The Talmudic phrase "*Bein adam l'chavero*" describes the relationship individuals have with other people. At Teva, the phrase serves as the starting point for exploring the relationships students develop with each other, as well as for the bonds they create between themselves and the natural world they come to explore. The Ecology curriculum provides an intellectual understanding of how the natural world works and the interconnections between humans, animals, plants, water, soil, air, and sun.

RESPONSIBILITY

L'ovdah u'lshomrah

Students who have become more aware of their surroundings and have begun to understand their connections to the rest of Creation are then challenged to develop a personal sense of responsibility for the health of their community and the natural world.

The phrase "*L'ovdah u'lshomrah*" (to work and to keep) from Genesis 2:15 describes contrasting responsibilities for humankind: we must simultaneously work the "garden" and conserve it. Although we are no longer living in Eden, finding the appropriate balance between these two tasks is perhaps a greater challenge for our generation than for any which has preceded us. Teva students explore a wide variety of environmental topics and focus on ways that they, individually and as a class, can contribute to creating a sustainable world.

***Shomrei Adamah* Curriculum Guide**

Teaching at Teva is accomplished through: (1) hands-on exploration of the natural world, (2) study and discussion of Jewish texts and practices as they relate to the natural world, and (3) non-competitive group-building activities, projects and games.

The *Shomrei Adamah* program, created primarily for 6th graders, is the longest running Teva program. The goal of the program, to instill a strong Jewish environmental ethic, is the heart of Teva's purpose.

A. The Natural World

The following is an overview of the main ecology concepts that students will be introduced to during their time at Teva. With each ecology concept they will also learn about environmental issues that are associated. As students learn the workings of a healthy ecosystem, they also understand what can make an unhealthy system.

Please note that the sentences following each concept are a summary in the manner in which students will be learning the concept. For the teacher's reference we have listed the ecological and environmental terminology as well.

1. **Energy Flow:** Sunlight is the source of energy for all life. It is absorbed by producers and transferred in decreasing amounts to consumers and decomposers. *Main concepts:* photosynthesis, food chains, trophic levels, entropy, and personal food choices.

2. **Cycles:** As these organisms grow, they use, in addition to sunlight energy, materials which are essential for their survival. These materials are found in reservoirs in the earth's air, soil, and water. They are used and returned in an endless cycle. *Main concepts:* decomposition, plant and animal respiration, condensation, precipitation, evaporation, and filtration; greenhouse effect, climate change, water usage, and compost.

3. **Interconnectedness:** In meeting their needs, organisms interact with one another and their habitats in complex ways. Groups of plants and animals that live together in specific areas create communities. *Main concepts:* food webs, predator/prey relationships, habitats, competition, and mutualism.

4. **Diversity:** The abundance of clean water, rich soil and pure air has permitted an extraordinary number of organisms to evolve and inhabit earth. *Main concepts:* niches, adaptations, and biodiversity; deforestation, habitat loss and urban sprawl.

B. Current Environmental Issues: Human beings have impacted the natural world in profound ways. Teva students learn about environmental issues that affect them most directly. They also learn what they can do to live more sustainable lives. Natural science and Jewish ethics provide the foundation for our moral imperative of literal *Tikkun Olam*, repairing the world. *Main concepts:* Generally – pollution and over-consumption; Specifically – recycling, re-using, and reducing consumption, organics, energy and water efficiency, etc.

C. Judaics

It is Teva's goal to a) renew the ecological wisdom inherent in Judaism and b) allow students to experience Jewish learning and living in a new, vibrant way. Throughout the program, students are challenged through study and discussion of Jewish texts, concepts, laws and values. In addition to text study, Teva recognizes the power of *tefila* (prayer), *hitbodedut* (meditation), journaling, and singing to create meaningful Jewish outdoor nature experiences for children. While it is impossible to list every Jewish concept or text your students may discuss, the following is an overview of our core curriculum:

Tefilot and *Brachot* (Prayers and Blessings):

- *Brachot ha'nehenin* and *Brachot ha'hodaot*
- *Birkot ha'shachar*
- *Tehillim*
- *Shema*
- *Amidah*
- *Maariv Aravim*
- *Tefilat Geshem v'Tal*
- *Birkat Hamazon* and *Hamotzi*
- *Borei Nefashot*
- Radical Amazement as discussed by Rabbi A. J. Heschel, and *brachot* as a means of pausing to notice the miracles of the world

Tanach:

- *Breishit* (Genesis 1 and 2) – This is the most central text that we reference. For a more detailed description of what we teach from *Breishit*, please contact us.
- Jacob's dream (Genesis 28)
- Wandering in the *Midbar* (wilderness)
- Revelation at Sinai
- Biblical concept of "*brit*" and important *britot* in the Torah
- Prophetic warnings of Isaiah and Jeremiah

Mitzvot and *Halachot* (Jewish laws):

- *Bal Tash'chit*
- *Tza'ar Ba'alei Chaim*
- *Shabbat*
- *Shmita*
- *Yovel*
- *Tikkun Olam*
- *Pikoo'ach Nefesh* and *Shmirat Ha'Goof*
- *Shiloo'ach ha'ken*
- *Peah, Orlah, and Leket*

Chaggim (Holidays), Jewish Life Cycles, and Rituals:

- *Shalosh Regalim* – Passover (and counting of the Omer), Shavuot, and Sukkot – especially the agricultural and spiritual implications of the holidays
- *Shabbat* and *Havdalah*
- *Rosh Chodesh* and *Kiddush Levanah*
- Becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah
- *Chanukah*

Figures in Jewish history with close connections to nature, their stories and writings:

- Patriarchs and Matriarchs
- Miriam and Moses
- King David, Job and the Prophets
- Honi Ha-M'agal
- Rabbi Akiva
- Rambam
- Baal Shem Tov
- Rebbe Nachman of Bratslav
- Rachel and A.D. Gordon
- Rav A. I. Kook
- Rabbi A. J. Heschel and Rabbi L. Kushner

D. Group Building Activities

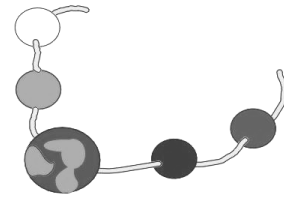
Students are presented with a wide variety of physical and mental challenges that need to be solved as a group. Some challenges occur as formal group-building initiatives; others, such as deciding which trail to pursue or how to divide an extra sandwich, provide real-life opportunities to build communication and cooperation skills.

Teva Beads

Teva beads are a motivational tool to encourage and engage students. While at Teva, students have an opportunity to earn four different beads, corresponding to the major Teva themes of Awareness, Ecology, Responsibility, and Togetherness (please see the Thematic Overview above for details).

The beads provide:

- A tool to define the structure and flow of the units
- Incentive to learn while at Teva
- An element of fun
- A way to instill pride in students' accomplishments and their new level of learning
- A tangible symbol of what Teva stands for once they leave Teva; We have heard from kids who have worn their beads every day for a year after their Teva experience
- Continued incentive to work on their personal commitments upon leaving Teva (see below)



To help the students remember our themes, the beads correspond to the acronym T.E.V.A.

Togetherness

Ecology

(V)Bal Tashchit – we have chosen this mitzvah to represent our Responsibility curriculum

Awareness

In addition, six weeks after their Teva program, students have the opportunity to earn a fifth bead, in the design of the earth. Once students have made an emotional and sensory connection with the forest and have learned about the relationships that govern life on earth, they are ready to examine their responsibility to sustain Creation. The *Bal Tashchit* unit serves the dual purpose of introducing students to basic environmental problems and empowering them to make earth-sustaining changes in their personal lives, schools and communities.

At the end of the Teva week, each student makes a personal commitment to help the planet, called a *Brit Adamah* (Covenant with the Earth). These commitments are changes in their daily life that affect the health of the planet. When students have completed their task and maintained the change for at least six weeks, they have the opportunity to send a postcard to Teva informing us of their accomplishment. These students receive the special fifth “earth bead.” Wearing their completed necklace is a constant reminder of their ongoing relationship with the earth. For further explanation, please refer to the enclosed student manual and *Brit Adamah* postcard.

Teva Beyond the Four Day Experience

Experience has shown that thoughtful, committed preparation for and follow-through after students' stay at Teva greatly enhances their overall experience as well as their long-term retention of subject matter and values. Teva is committed to providing teachers and schools with practical and effective resources to reinforce our message back in the classroom. Please email us at tevaprogams@hazon.org.

Bringing It Back To Our School

All *Shomrei Adamah* students participate in the Bringing It Back to Our School program. On their last day at Teva, they are asked to sit as a class and plan a project to help make their school more environmentally aware or friendly. In the past, this opportunity for students to make a group commitment to change their schools has succeeded or failed mostly on the strength of school and teacher support. It is helpful for teachers and administrators to brainstorm good, achievable projects that students can do once they return to school. When teachers arrive at Teva, we can help them to organize for a project that both they and the school feel is accomplishable.



Teva School Garden Alliance

Many schools that come to Teva have started their own school garden or compost initiatives in recent years. Recognizing that these schools are doing similar work and often dealing with similar challenges, Teva has created a School Garden Alliance network and email group. The purpose of this group is to harness the collective wisdom of the community; teachers from different schools can share experiences, questions, and advice with one another, benefiting from ideas and approaches that others have tried. If your school has or is starting a garden or compost initiative and would like to be part of this network, please let us know.

Teva School Visits

Teva has had great success in refreshing students' enthusiasm and reinforcing the Teva message through follow-up school visits. The following is a list of potential types of visits Teva can make to your school.

- A. **Basic Recognition Visit:** Check in with students about their personal pledges to the environment and issue earth beads that have been earned. Find out how the Bring it Back to Our School projects are coming along, sing a few songs, and generally get the Teva spirit back in the classroom. This program would last 1 class period (45 min average).
- B. **BBTOS Specific Visit:** Will include the basic check-in from "A," but would also involve giving specific support on the current BBTOS project. For example, Teva staff could supply some needed personnel for the project such as physical work or planning. This program would last 2 class periods (1.5 hours)

Please email tevaprogams@hazon.org to schedule your school visits.