

**TEMPLE BETH-EL EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CENTER**  
**The Marjorie and Mark Gershwind Campus of Living Judaism**  
**5 Old Mill Road, Great Neck, NY 11023**



# **GROWING TOGETHER**

**Vicki Perler, Director**  
**April 23, 2021**

Dear Families,

Yesterday, we celebrated Earth Day. The children have already been introduced to the age-old Jewish imperative of Tikkun Olam, our responsibility as Jews to care for the earth. The concepts of Earth Day and Tikkun Olam are not difficult for a young child when the adults in the child's life teach by example about how we all can help make the world a better place. The first step is to get outdoors and enjoy nature, often and in all seasons. This year, more than any other year, we have exceeded our own expectations about spending as much time outdoors as possible. And we have experienced extraordinary learning opportunities along the way!

This year has also brought back my early parenting memories of how creatively children can play with natural materials outdoors. When my four sons were in their early childhood years, our family spent a tremendous amount of time outdoors. I'm sure that having our home situated at the entrance of a state park in Maryland was helpful in fostering a love of the outdoors, but it did not stop there. We hiked and camped, picked berries and fruit, planted gardens, and more. We built a sandbox in the yard and built tree houses and "forts." And our children went outside to play nearly every day after school. Perhaps one of the most important lessons learned this year was that creating a priority for the children to play outside

almost every day intensified their relationship with their outdoor environment. Anything is everything, and they continually invented and reinvented experiences from prior seasons.

Familiarities with nature enhance a child's developing senses, and current studies show that time spent in natural outdoor environments is vital for healthy child development. Richard Louv, author of Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder, mentions over a hundred studies that show that time spent in natural outdoor environments reduces stress for children and adults. Research shows that a lack of quality outdoor time, and the resulting nature deficit, robs children of foundational sensory and intellectual experiences. Always actively learning outdoors, children use their natural curiosity and all their senses to make discoveries, investigate materials, solve problems, learn skills and develop relationships. In addition, it provides each one with an increasingly necessary way to engage with and respect the natural earth.

One of our tasks, as educators, is to help the children discover this rhythm of nature and by doing so, learn about the world and figure out how to protect it. Children's ideas are insightful and interesting, reflect clarity and thoughtfulness, and represent emerging care and concern about our earth and environment. You can expand these concepts by simply taking walks, playing in the park or playground, and finding simple ways around your home to honor and keep the earth clean. Venture further by going to the beach, go camping, participate in an organized nature hike, plant a garden or participate in a community gardening project. In the quest to help preserve the environment, you can also easily begin to make a difference.

Happy Earth Day! Here are some suggestions from Heritage Farm and Garden, East Norwich, NY

1. Plant a garden or add some green to your space. If you have access to a backyard (or even a window box), now is the perfect time to plant a garden. A small herb garden is easy to grow and maintain, and it provides fresh flavors for your future dishes.
2. Take a walk and discover native plants. If you are able to do so, take a walk around your neighborhood and learn about the plants and animals that live in your area.
3. Learn about recyclables. You recycle plastic bottles and aluminum cans, but there are probably a lot more things that you could be recycling. Take this time to refresh your knowledge of local recycling rules and find out where you can recycle materials like textiles and electronic waste.
4. Rethink food scraps. Approximately 30 to 40 percent of the U.S. food supply becomes waste, according to the USDA. Consider starting a compost bin to "recycle" your organic kitchen and yard waste. Your garden will thank you.

*Shabbat Shalom*

*Vicki*

## **HAPPENINGS & DATES TO REMEMBER**

**Monday, April 26**  
**Wednesday, April 28**  
**Thursday, April 29**  
**Friday, April 30**  
**Monday, May 3**  
**Wednesday, May 5**

**Pee Wee Pros - Sports Program for Threes and Pre-K**  
**PTC Meeting – 9:15 AM**  
**Matt the Music Man Program for the School**  
**Lag BaOmer**  
**Picture Day**  
**PTC Mother's Day Boutique**

Sunday, May 9  
Wednesday, May 12  
Thursday, May 13  
Monday, May 17  
Monday, May 31

Mother's Day  
Rosh Chodesh Sivan  
PTC Sponsored Challah Bake  
Shavuot – School Closed  
Memorial Day – School Closed

## CONNECTIONS

**Mazel Tov** to the many families who have new babies. We wish you many years of happiness, good health, and blessings with your new “bundles of joy.”

**Shelter in Place Drill** – We had a successful Shelter in Place Drill on Wednesday. As you know, our school has a comprehensive Emergency Plan. Teachers are familiar with procedures for fire, accident, disaster and medical emergencies. In some situations, it may be necessary to remain on-site while taking special precautions to ensure the safety of the children. Every class has a designated safe place in their classrooms and the school building to remain quiet if necessary. Shelter in Place drills are conducted at least twice a year. Our fire and evacuation drills are conducted monthly.

**Thoughts about Passover** – It seems like the holiday was so long ago, but the children are still singing the songs. This week, during lunch in a two-year-old class, one child was singing “Mah Nishtanah.” Within minutes, others joined. In another class, several children were singing “Dayenu.” Learning often occurs long after the actual experience. So, don't be surprised if you hear your child singing the songs and acting out the story of Passover. I hope you still have good feelings about your Seders this year. The passing of time is always highlighted during Pesach, especially when a young child recites “MahNishtanah” for the very first time!

**Car Seats are Mandatory** - New York State law requires that all children eight years old and younger wear a safety restraint that meet the manufacturer's suggested weight and height requirements. The following is New York State's Car Seat Laws: **Children two and younger should use a rear-facing car seat until they exceed the manufacturer's suggestions. Once a child is over the age of two and goes over the manufacturer's weight and height requirements, s/he can move on to a forward-facing seat. After the age of four and when a child is over the manufacturer's requirements for a forward-facing seat, s/he can be placed in a booster seat with both the shoulder and chest straps. Although not required, NY authorities strongly recommend parents keep their children in the back seat until they reach the age of twelve.**

**Registration for the Summer Program** – The Summer Program registration is in full force. We still have spaces available. Give your child a summer of fun. Stress-free transitions are important for young children. **Our Summer Program is a wonderful way to provide consistency and a seamless flow of the year. We are offering programs for children who are two, three, four and five years-old.** If you would like more information about our programs, please don't hesitate to call.

**Registration for 2021-2022** – Don't get closed out of a class! Registrations are still coming in for the 2021-2022 school year. If you have any questions about our program for your child for next year, please don't hesitate to call or email me.

**Travel Requirements** – **Please continue to be safe. We have been blessed with continuous in-person education for our children, and we want to continue that way until June! It is highly recommended**

that you do not travel unless it is absolutely necessary. If you must travel, it is imperative that you follow all travel-related quarantine protocols set by New York State. Any traveler coming into NYS (who traveled outside NY, PA, NJ, CT, MA or VT for more than 24 hours must quarantine for 14 days UNLESS they receive a negative Covid test before departure and then again on day four of their return. A 14-day quarantine is mandatory for a return to school unless two negative tests results are provided to the school in writing.

**PTC Challah Fundraising Program** - We are offering an opportunity for you to order dough for your weekly challah to take home on Thursdays. This is a fun and educational way to enhance your Shabbat experiences with your children by making a fresh challah at home every week. **The Challah Program began this week. You can still sign up!** A huge thank you, to Marianna Costa and our extraordinary PTC, for initiating this wonderful experience for our children and families.

**Challah Dough Details if Your Child is Absent from School** – The school will put your dough in the freezer, and we will give it to you when you return. Once you receive the dough, it will need to be completely defrosted. It takes 6-7 hours to completely defrost, and then needs to be brought to room temperature before you prepare it and braid.

**Dressing for the Outdoors** – Thank you for being so attentive to the weather every day to ensure that your child is appropriately dressed for outdoor play. We have had extraordinary experiences in the school this year! Our goal in all weather is to keep the children warm, dry and comfortable. If they are not dressed properly, the class is unable to take advantage of the open air and the many interesting outdoor spaces around the temple building. Boots, raincoats, snow pants, an extra pair of sneakers, two complete changes of clothing (to be left in school), sweaters, hats, mittens, and a warm jacket are necessary. We are outdoors when the temperature is above 30 degrees. Please label all children's clothing! Thank you.

**Health and Safety Precautions During the Pandemic** - The health and safety procedures in the ECEC are very specific this year. Please wear your mask, stay physically distant from each other, and never bring your child to school if s/he appears ill. We will need to send your child home if s/he exhibits symptoms. **All children in the school MUST be symptom free.** Your cooperation is essential and very much appreciated.

**Parent Teacher Council** – The PTC is comprised of parents, teachers and lay leaders from the Temple and school community who work together to make decisions and provide ongoing support for the school. Our PTC Co-Chairs for the 2020-2021 school year are Dalia Hagooli, Marianna Costa, and Samantha Talasazain. Thank you for your hard work and dedication to our school. If you would like to be a part of our exciting Parent Teacher Council, please feel free to contact Dalia ([dharoooni@aol.com](mailto:dharoooni@aol.com)), Marianna ([mari.mostovaya@yahoo.com](mailto:mari.mostovaya@yahoo.com)) or Sam ([stalis625@gmail.com](mailto:stalis625@gmail.com)) at any time. We are grateful to all of you for your participation.

**Shabbat Sing** – On Friday, we join together to experience a beautiful sing-along with me. It is the highlight of my week - every week. I feel very blessed to be able to teach your children beautiful Shabbat melodies. Our Shabbat Sing experiences will be different this year as they will be outdoors and physically distant. We look forward to creating joyous Shabbat celebrations every week.

**Hot Lunch Program** - The foods children eat and lifestyle habits they learn have a lasting effect on their health. Due to the overwhelming interest of our families to provide nutritious meals for lunch, we offer meat and dairy lunches for all students. As you know, one of the values of our school is to maintain the highest quality of care whenever possible. This value should also be reflected in the foods we eat.

**Lunch Menu:**

**Monday** – Pasta, meat sauce, vegetables

**Tuesday** – Baked chicken fingers and vegetables

**Wednesday** Pizza and Israeli salad

**Thursday**- Grilled cheese and vegetables - NEW

**Friday** – Baked fish, rice, vegetables

This year, the lunch is provided in individual packages for each child. We also have whole wheat bread and soy butter available to children who have not yet acquired the taste for these new foods. We hope that over time, children will discover and enjoy a variety of foods.

**Important ECEC Telephone Information** – If you have an important message and cannot reach me or Nancy on the telephone during the day, please ask someone in the main office to find us and relay the message. We hope this system will help you if you are unable to talk to us in person.

**Contact Information** - Please call, email or see me if you have anything you would like to discuss. My email address is [vperler@tbgreatneck.org](mailto:vperler@tbgreatneck.org). This is usually the best way to reach me.

**Links to Remember** – I invite you to visit the websites connected to the links below. The links relate to information about early childhood education, Jewish life and learning, and helpful hints for parents.

<https://www.parents.com/toddlers-preschoolers/activities/outdoor/earth-day-activities-preschoolers/>

<https://pjlibrary.org/yomhaatzmaut>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ysg4R\\_LMzeI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ysg4R_LMzeI) (Children singing Hatikvah)

<https://www.wbur.org/cognoscenti/2016/04/08/children-play-nature-john-lee>

<https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/explore-great-outdoors>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/joyful-parenting/201705/not-naughty-10-ways-kids-appear-be-acting-bad-arent>

<https://www.jnf.org> (Plant a tree in Israel for Tu B'Shevat)

[https://parenting.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/09/04/teaching-children-empathy/?\\_php=true&type=blogs&\\_php=true&type=blogs&smid=fb-share&r=5](https://parenting.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/09/04/teaching-children-empathy/?_php=true&type=blogs&_php=true&type=blogs&smid=fb-share&r=5)

*Harvard Psychologists Say: Parents Who Raise 'Good' Kids, Do These 5 Things!*  
<https://tinyurl.com/y97pbd6p>

*35 Children's Books That Teach Empathy and Kindness* <https://tinyurl.com/y5aczd6p>

<https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/helping-kids-navigate-scary-news-stories>

<https://www.zerotothree.org/early-development>

<https://www.mommyshorts.com/2015/03/5-ways-kids-learn-at-a-reggio-emilia-preschool.html>

<https://pjlibrary.org/home>

<https://pjlibrary.org/getmedia/c63e85f1-58d9-44fd-ae8a-696825e88d25/Jewish-values-ECE.pdf>

<https://childhood101.com/an-image-of-the-child-understanding-emergent-curriculum/>

[https://www.huffpost.com/entry/if-we-dont-let-our-children\\_b\\_1017485?guccounter=1](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/if-we-dont-let-our-children_b_1017485?guccounter=1)

<https://www.wbur.org/cognoscenti/2016/04/08/children-play-nature-john-lee>

<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/mar2018/promoting-social-and-emotional-health>

[www.tbe-ecec.org](http://www.tbe-ecec.org)

<http://www.naeyc.org/>

<http://families.naeyc.org/>

<http://www.reggioalliance.org/>

<http://www.brainy-child.com/article/reggioemilia.shtml>