

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
March 25, 2021

"In every generation every individual should feel as though he or she had personally gone forth from Egypt." The Haggadah

"And you shall explain to your child on that day, it is because of what the Eternal did for me when I went forth from Egypt." The Torah and the Haggadah

Dear Families,

The past week has been a whirlwind of Passover celebrations in our school. These hands-on, age-appropriate, child-centered, and meaningful experiences were the culmination of many weeks of learning and preparation. Each class shared their interpretations of the story, and the concepts and messages of Passover came through to the adults. The teachers and I are so impressed by the children's immersion in the holiday and understanding of the meaning of freedom. Passover is timeless and ageless. I want to express my sincerest gratitude and respect to each one of the teachers in our ECEC. They truly created meaningful and memorable Passover celebrations for the children and families this year. We hope you enjoyed seeing and hearing about the experiences as much as we did creating them!

The teachers in our Reggio-inspired Jewish school set the scene and honor the children's curiosity, acting as facilitators and resources for learning. The result is that the children have had numerous experiences relating to Passover. None of us anticipated the children's involvement, reactions, and learning with such joy. The teachers and I want to share some impressions of our school's Passover experiences. The reflections are from the teachers. I hope you take a few minutes away from your holiday preparations and read them. Perhaps the readings will provide you with some new perspectives on your own Seder this year. They are thoughtful and insightful and can help you involve your children at your Seder.

Reflections from Teachers:

We have taken our young explorers back in time to the land of Egypt, to join our ancestors on their journey from slavery to freedom. We've transformed boxes into building bricks and painted the river Nile. We've cared for baby Moses in his basket and watched over him as he grew up. We painted an army of green frogs (and our hands, arms, hair...) and patiently counted 10 plagues (in English and Hebrew) to help Moses convince Pharaoh to let our people go. When he finally did, we quickly baked our own Matzah, gathered our belongings, then walked barefoot in the sand (on the floor of our classroom). At last, we were ready to cross through the Sea of Reeds to freedom! The age-appropriate story, songs, and personal experiences of each child are documented in his/her individually decorated and personalized Haggadah and matching placemat for the Seder.

Morah Dorit and Morah Phyllis

It is both a sacred responsibility and absolute blast to be the first teachers in your children's lives to introduce them to our Jewish holidays. Pesach is the most celebrated of all the holidays, and by arriving in the spring, toddler classes are able to experience the stories and rituals which bring the Torah to life. Since the end of Purim (another month, another despot), we have been reading an age-appropriate version of the story. And, as that story became familiar, the children began to illustrate their own Passover story to share with their families at their seders. As they worked, we all talked about the story, sang the songs, and sampled the foods. But it was not until we collated their work into the book format that they truly appreciated what they had done. They were spellbound. So so proud, of themselves and each other. And, when this class is excited, they burst into song. Dayenu is number one, followed closely by the leaping, jumping, ribbiting frogs. That communal joy is the goal of every step of our Exodus. *The Colors of Pesach*, the matzah covers, the special treats are simply our way of sharing the joy with our families.

Morah Abby and Morah Robbie

Morah Guly and Morah Donna's class especially enjoyed acting as King Pharaoh and Moses when Moses asked King Pharaoh to "let my people go." King Pharaoh wore his crown and sat on a throne of stacked chairs while Moses held a staff and wore a head covering and shawl. All of our "Moseses" and "King Pharaohs" were animated when they sang the song asking King Pharaoh to release the Jewish slaves only to hear King Pharaoh answer "no, no, no."

Passover has been a wonderful and exciting time. Certain themes in the Passover story really resonate with the children. Taking care of baby Moses in his basket is a perfect example. Just like the Jewish slaves in Egypt, the children work hard building structures using blocks and Legos. Each child spent lots of time creating his/her own Haggadah. It's been a fabulous learning tool and we used it at our classroom Seder. We hope they use it at their Seder at home as well. It's a joy to hear the children sing all of the Passover songs that they all know so well.

Morah Barbara and Morah Lauryn

After the completion of our Haggadahs each child's is shown and read to the class. Every day we are asked, "Whose Haggadah are we going to look at today?" They learn to appreciate each other's individual work and learn the story of Pesach. Along with the story they can reenact it using our figure of King Pharaoh, which the children made. One of the children asked, "How did the Pharaoh make the Jewish

people slaves?" After looking at the story again it was decided the soldiers scared the Jewish people. They didn't give them enough food and things they needed. They hurt them if they didn't work hard. Never underestimate children's ability to question and think.
Morah Barbara and Morah Ronit

The Pre-K has been immersed in the rich traditions and history of this significant celebration. The children have been engaging their hands and senses while making pyramids out of clay to simulate an Egyptian city. They recreated artifacts representing The Ten Plagues and listed them, practicing handwriting skills. They have enjoyed cutting and baking and mixing many of the foods they will eat throughout Pesach: charoset, matzo brei, mandel bread, chocolate covered matzo and even matzo-pizza! Listening to stories that reflect the history of the holiday, the children learned about the bravery that Moses demonstrated, empathized with the Jewish Slaves as they endured Pharaoh's cruelty, and rejoiced as the Jews marched out of Egypt. Contemporary stories share the joys of cooking foods, reinforce the singing of the Four Questions, and impart the practice of hiding the Afikomen. The children will also proudly include some of their artistry with their families, as they bring home a handmade Seder plate, Matza cover and planted parsley for dipping. This is a special time for classroom community, as we prepare for our classroom Seder- wishing everyone a Chag Sameach and Zissen Pesach!
Morah Karen and Morah Irit

The Passover Seder is a time to sit back, finally relax, and reflect on another beautiful year of growth and rebirth. Again, I want to personally thank Morot Guly and Donna, Abby and Robbie, Dorit and Phyllis, Barbara and Lauryn, Barbara and Ronit, Karen and Irit, Sarah and Nancy. Thank you, thank you, thank you!! You have all created memories to last a lifetime!

On behalf of the entire ECEC faculty, we wish you the most wonderful Pesach - filled with love, joy and memory-making experiences.

Shabbat Shalom
Chag Pesach Sameach - Zissen Pesach
Vicki

HAPPENINGS & DATES TO REMEMBER

Fri-Mon, March 26-April 5	Passover Recess – School Closed
Tuesday, April 6	School Re-Opens
Thursday, April 8	Yom Hashoah
Thursday, April 8	PTC Meeting – 9:30 AM
Thursday, April 8	Tkiya Jewish Music Program for School
Mon&Tues, April 12&13	Rosh Chodesh Iyar
Tuesday, April 13	Pee Wee Pros Sports Program for 3s and Pre-K
Wednesday, April 14	Yom Hazikaron
Thursday, April 15	Yom HaAtzmaut – Dress in Blue and White
Thursday, April 15	Special Music and Dance Program for School
Tuesday, April 20	Parent-Teacher Conferences – School Closed
Tuesday, April 27	Pee Wee Pros Sports Program for 3s and Pre-K
Friday, April 30	Lag BaOmer

CONNECTIONS

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.

Parent-Teacher Council - The next meeting of the PTC will be held on Thursday, April 8. Please join us! Now that the weather is getting warmer, we will be planning for new outdoor events for our school.

Registration for the Summer Program – Register Now! We are offering programs for children who are two, three, and four years old. We are excited to offer the opportunity for our students to continue their experiences at Temple Beth-El during the summer. Stress-free transitions are important for young children, and our Summer Program is a wonderful way to provide consistency and a seamless flow of the year. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call or email. We are very excited to announce that Karen Wasserman, our fabulous Pre-K teacher, will be our Summer Program Director this year. Morah Karen is an exemplary teacher and has taught in our ECEC for the past 15 years. She has much experience with children in school and in camp, and she is very eager and motivated to take on this new role. We are excited for you to get to know her.

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.

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 (dharoni@aol.com), Marianna (mari.mostovaya@yahoo.com) or Sam (stalis625@gmail.com) at any time. We are grateful to all of you for your participation.

Inclement Weather Arrival and Dismissal Procedures – Please arrive on time and sit in your car until the teacher notifies you. Your child's teacher will text you to inform you that it is your turn for arrival. **By intentionally following this staggered procedure, we have created an organized and efficient arrival and pick-up.** Thank you, parents, for your help and cooperation. Please note that during these extreme inclement weather days, the designated outdoor drop-off and pick-up location for the Rabbi's Garden Play Area is outside the Temple's main entrance. The designated outdoor drop-off and pick-up location for the two-year-old classes is the Rudin Garden entrance.

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@tbegreatneck.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://pjlibrary.org/beyond-books/pjblog/february-2017/the-passover-story-for-kids>

https://d2gesac5hma2c2.cloudfront.net/uploads/attachment/file/1690/Winter_Thrive_Guide_2021.pdf (Ideas for Family Fun During Winter Months)

<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

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://pjllibrary.org/home>

<https://pjllibrary.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.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-eccc.org

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

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

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

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