

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 11, 2022

“When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, ‘Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.’” Mister Fred Rogers

Dear Families,

My grandparents, Joseph and Esther Baum z’l, fled Ukraine in 1921 following a devastating pogrom in their town. Not far from Lviv, Ukraine, an area with which we have become familiar, their lives were filled with fear and hardships from the villains who continually perpetrated horrific acts of violence against Jewish people. Many of us have similar family stories. And here we are again - witnessing the horrors inflicted upon innocent people by a ruthless tyrant, as well as hearing stories of compassionate and brave individuals who are providing humanitarian aid to devastated communities.

In the weeks before Purim, our children are immersed in the concepts and meaning of the holiday, and their play centers on the roles and attributes of the Purim characters. Purim, like many of our holidays, is a timeless story filled with heroes and villains. Heroes and villains are the central theme in most stories, books, movies, TV shows, museum exhibits, and popular culture. It’s so pervasive that it has been the subject of hundreds of parenting columns. Our job is to harness this ubiquitous concept in a way that guides our children into mature, loving and caring adults.

Who are our children's heroes? There are ancient and modern heroes, humble and great heroes, and real and imaginary heroes. Children and adults delight in the adventure, the struggle, and the victory. Heroes are symbols with attributes to which we aspire. As adults, our choice of heroes reveals much about ourselves. Dressing up in costumes as a favorite hero or villain makes the concept of "good guys and bad guys" more tangible to the children, and it stimulates thoughtful conversations among parents and their children.

It is wise to use our rich Jewish history and tradition to give children healthy role models from whom they can learn about strength and wisdom. But heroes are also found closer to home - neighbors, friends, and members of our own families. Many years ago, my fifth-grade son was asked to write about a hero he admired. How wonderful that he chose his Zayde! The important people in our lives often embody strength, courage and compassion, and they are the perfect examples for our children to emulate. As every parent knows, children imitate what they see and hear. They naturally look for examples to follow. It makes a very big difference when parents and teachers make efforts to point out actions that merit honor and familiar individuals who deserve to be admired.

Most heroes are not men and women of note. They live close to us and perform deeds that are noticed only by a few. They come from all walks of life - boys and girls, mothers and fathers, men and women, teachers and other community helpers, and neighbors who lend helping hands. We admire them because they've shown laudable examples of compassion, by persevering through struggle, or by taking a stand and doing what is right. Each one gives us a chance to convey to our children: "that person has done something worth imitating and is a real hero." If we want our children to reach for and emulate the best, they need to have a complete, developmentally appropriate picture of what the best looks like.

Villains also have a place in learning. The rich stories of Purim and Passover introduce the hero-villain paradigm. For young children, historical and imaginary villains serve as illuminating foils to heroes before they clearly understand good versus evil. Children who choose villain costumes are not choosing evil over good, because that concept is not yet relevant to them. They are acting out one side of a story that always has at least two sides. As they play hero and villain roles, they make connections and begin to understand the desirability of heroes prevailing over villains. For example, when speaking of Haman and King Pharaoh, we are overjoyed when some of our youngest toddlers mention the Chanukah villain, King Antiochus, in the same context! They get it - the story helps them to distinguish between villains and heroes. Once they figure it out, they quickly are drawn to the many heroes from Jewish history - from Judah Maccabee to Esther and Mordechai, and from Moses to Theodor Herzl and Golda Meir. All this will become a solid foundation for their understanding of the difference between good and evil.

Our ECEC takes pride in our efforts to help each child develop a sense of emotional and social well-being. Symbolic play, role-playing, and language skills help children identify and understand their own feelings, show an awareness of good or bad behavior, conquer their fears, and manage their emotions in constructive ways. We help children develop empathy for others and guide them as they respond to others. Our goal throughout the early childhood years is to help children create positive and harmonious interactions in the social world they inhabit.

As we try to highlight appropriate role models for our children, we should be mindful that we encounter wonderful heroes every day. Whether real or imaginary, ancient or modern, our children will continue to act out the roles of heroes and villains in their everyday play. When we truly value this type of play, as well as point out everyday heroes, our children ultimately will conquer their fears and prevail in their struggles, and they will delight in their personal adventures and victories.

Shabbat Shalom
Vicki

HAPPENINGS & DATES TO REMEMBER

Friday, March 11	Pajama Shabbat Day – Wear or Bring Pajamas to School
Sunday, March 13	Daylight Savings Time Begins (Set Clocks Forward One Hour)
Sunday, March 13	Kulanu Purim Carnival – 11-12 PM
Monday, March 14	Purim Tzedakah Drive Begins - NEW Packaged Children's Clothing Items
Thursday, March 17	Purim – Dress in Costume – Purim Sing-a-long with Tkiya, a Jewish Music Program (Outdoors, Weather Permitting)
Tuesday, March 22	Pee Wee Pros for 3s and Pre-K – Weather Permitting
Tuesday, March 29	Parent-Teacher Conferences – School Closed
Saturday, April 2	Rosh Chodesh Nisan
Tuesday, April 5	Pee Wee Pros for 3s and Pre-K
Tuesday, April 12	Pee Wee Pros for 3s and Pre-K
Thurs-Fri, April 14-22	Passover Recess – School Closed
Tuesday, April 26	Pee Wee Pros for 3s and Pre-K
Wednesday, April 27	Picture Day
Thursday, April 28	Yom Hashoah

CONNECTIONS

Purim Carnival - Please join us for the Kulanu Purim Carnival on Sunday, March 13th from 11:00-12:00. There will be music, fun age-appropriate booths, face painting and a bouncy house! There is no cost for the carnival. We look forward to seeing the children in costumes! Questions? Reach out to Joy Allen at Jallen@tbgreatneck.org <<mailto:Jallen@tbgreatneck.org>>.

Purim Tzedakah Drive – NEW Packaged Children's Clothing Items - Fulfill one of the mitzvot of Purim and support our Tzedakah Drive by helping to provide much-needed clothing to children in Ukraine! One of the ongoing goals of early childhood educators is to make concepts real in the minds of our young students. Our children are learning the important mitzvah of giving tzedakah and helping those in need. Please help by donating new, packaged clothing items for children. Thank you for supporting our Tzedakah Drive.

Purim Tzedakah Drive – <https://www.ujafedny.org> – Help provide humanitarian aid to families in Ukraine.

Purim Costume Day - Dress your child in costume on Thursday, March 17. The Tkiya Jewish Music Program will return to our school for a special Purim Sing-a-long with families outdoors, weather permitting.

Registration for the Summer Program – We are very excited to announce that our wonderful Summer Program Director, Karen Wasserman, will be returning to Temple Beth-El this summer. She is very excited to re-connect with our returning families and to meet our new families. **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, 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. **Register now!**

Registration for 2022-2023 - Don't get closed out of a class! Registrations are still coming in for the 2022-2023 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. I'm always happy and proud to talk about our school.

Mask Protocols – Beginning on Wednesday, March 2, 2022, a mask-optional approach for the school was implemented. Students and staff members have the individual choice whether to wear a mask indoors. Masking is also optional outdoors. Please be supportive of whichever decisions are made by individuals. Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have worked hard as a school and temple community to be tolerant, respectful and caring for one another. Under these new guidelines, I hope each one of us will continue to be kind and considerate of everyone’s personal choices. Thank you.

Health and Safety Precautions – If your child or anyone in your household is sick, **DO NOT send your child to school.** Wash your hands!! Hand washing, when done correctly, is the single most effective way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases. Good hand washing technique is easy to learn and can significantly reduce the spread of infectious diseases among both children and adults. The health and safety procedures in the ECEC are very specific as we strive to reduce the spread of infection in our school. Your cooperation is essential and very much appreciated.

School Closings - Snow Policy – Our Parent Handbook details the Snow/Inclement Weather Policy on Page 11 – School Closings. Please familiarize yourself with the policy: “If Great Neck Schools are closed, we are closed, if Great Neck Schools has a delayed opening, we usually have the same delayed opening.” Our emergency text messaging system is up and running. We have been very pleased with the results of using this technology to make time-sensitive school communication more efficient and effective. You can also find the closing listed on www.News12.com and FIOS 1 (under Temple Beth-El Early Childhood Education Center). Thank you, in advance, for your cooperation and flexibility during the winter season.

Dressing for the Outdoors – Please be attentive to the weather every day to ensure that your child is appropriately dressed for outdoor play. 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, an extra pair of sneakers, two complete changes of clothing (to be left in school), sweaters, hats, mittens, a warm jacket, snow pants and snow boots are necessary. As the weather becomes colder, we will be outdoors when the temperature is above 30 degrees. Please label all children’s clothing! Thank you.

Challah Fundraising Program - We are offering an opportunity for you to order a weekly challah dough 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 on January 6. You can still sign up.

Nut-Free School – Reminder - We are a Nut-Free and Sesame-Free School. Please do not send food with nuts or sesame seeds in any form. And please do not give any of these foods to your child on school grounds. We have many children with serious food allergies this year. Thank you so much for your cooperation.

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 – Plain pasta, sauce, shredded mozzarella and vegetable

Tuesday – Baked chicken fingers and corn

Wednesday Pizza and Israeli salad

Thursday- Sliders/hamburgers, sweet potato fries and cucumber salad

Friday – Pancakes and applesauce

Our 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.

Shabbat Sing – Every Friday, I celebrate Shabbat with the toddlers, three-year-olds and Pre-K students. We join together on Friday mornings 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. We sing, dance, and work together as a school community to create a joyous Shabbat celebration.

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 yperler@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://www.ujafedny.org> (Purim Tzedakah Drive to Support Humanitarian Aid in Ukraine)

<https://pjlibrary.org/purim>

<https://www.reformjudaism.org/jewish-holidays/purim>

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

https://www.peacequarters.com/harvard-psychologists-say-parents-raise-good-kids-5-things/?utm_medium=social&utm_source=Facebook&utm_campaign=hiylfb

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

<https://www.invajy.com/20-happiness-quotes-for-making-you-smile/>

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

<https://www.mindful.org/noticing-connecting-with-our-kids-in-the-midst-of-busy-lives/>

<https://pjlibrary.org/beyond-books/pjblog/february-2017/how-to-talk-to-children-about-anti-semitism>

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

<https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/playing-music-home>

<http://www.cnn.com/2010/OPINION/12/29/christakis.play.children.learning/index.html>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2015/09/01/the-decline-of-play-in-preschoolers-and-the-rise-in-sensory-issues/?noredirect=on>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2015/04/12/report-debunks-earlier-is-better-academic-instruction-for-young-children/?noredirect=on>

<https://pjlibrary.org/beyond-books/pjblog/june-2021/what-is-rosh-chodesh>

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

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/223-creating-routines-for-love-and-learning>

<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/may2019/outdoor-play-is-essential>

<https://www.communityplaythings.com/resources/articles/2010/outdoor-play>

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

www.tbe-ecec.org

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

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

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

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

<http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/>