

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
September 16, 2022

“And you shall teach them to your children.” Deuteronomy 11:19

Dear Families,

As we approach Rosh Hashanah during these days of Elul, it is a time to slow down and reflect on many aspects of life. Parents share their deepest wishes for their children’s future with me during this time, and I find myself referring to Jewish values as the prescription for a successful future.

Jewish values and traditions are transmitted from generation to generation and are the core of Jewish strength and survival. They are the foundation upon which we form the character and personalities of our children. Jewish educators in early childhood settings have the awesome responsibility of transmitting Jewish values to the children and, at the same time, helping young families begin their own personal Jewish journey. When we talk about Jewish values enough, children can draw upon these values and grow up to be good, responsible individuals.

Jean Piaget, the great pioneer of cognitive development, proposed that children develop concepts about morality through an interactive constructive process. The Constructivist Theory states that morality cannot be taught – it is learned through children’s early experiences with peers and adults. As educators of young children, we provide the environment and the experiences to help children internalize Jewish values. What we do is far more important than what we say, and the most important lessons are learned from the way we practice Jewish

values. While many “American” values provide us with words like honesty, courage and responsibility, Jewish values propose very different ideas.

Most Jewish values are practiced widely in society without people realizing that these values are rooted in the Torah, like *Derech Eretz* (proper, decent behavior), *Tikkun Olam* (repairing the world), *Bal Tashchit* (don’t destroy), *Gemillut Chasadim* (acts of loving kindness), and *Kavod* (respect for others and oneself). Our intensive work years ago with the Jewish Early Childhood Education Initiative (JECEI) continues to have a huge impact on transmitting foundational Jewish ideas and values to our children in the classroom. The teachers and I continually strive to help children be kind and respect others. We help children understand the impact of their actions, especially when they have hurt others, and we model behaviors that teach them how to be kind to their friends. In fact, *T’shuvah* (repentance) is the very essence of the High Holidays as well as an integral part of everyday life in our school.

There are ways that you can teach Jewish values to your children at home. If we talk about Jewish values enough, children can draw upon these values as they grow, and they will grow up to be kind, responsible and caring individuals.

Tzedakah (sharing, generosity) – The root of the word, *Tzedakah* is *Tzedek*, justice or fairness. Natural opportunities for being fair and sharing with others build the foundation for *Tzedakah*.

Derech Eretz (the way of the land) – Proper, decent behavior, manners, respect. Practice manners at the table during meals. Wait for everyone to sit down before you eat. Talk about feelings. When children are upset about something, help them put their feelings into words. Play games that require taking turns.

Rachamim (compassion) - Encourage naturally occurring tendencies for compassion. When a child shows signs of empathy towards an unhappy child, or attempts to offer aid, validate and support these feelings. Foster empathy when someone is hurt by providing appropriate words. Give the child the ice pack to bring over to an injured person.

Tikkun Olam (repair the world); *Bal Tashchit* (do not destroy) - Pick up toys after playing. Fix books when they are ripped. Create a garden and plant vegetables, spices and flowers.

Gemillut Chasadim (acts of lovingkindness) - Foster kindness by sharpening the child’s awareness of the needs and feelings of another person requiring help. Reinforce self-motivated acts of kindness and label it *Chesed*. Help each child build a self-image as a kind and helpful person. Whomever you’re with and whatever you do, be kind, loving and thoughtful.

Hachnasat Orchim (hospitality, welcoming guests) - Make the connection to the biblical story of Abraham and Sarah, invite guests to your home and encourage children to act as hosts.

Practicing our values and rituals in celebrating everyday life is as important as planning for meaningful and inspirational Shabbat and holiday experiences. Warmest wishes to each one of you for a beautiful Shabbat.

Shabbat Shalom

Vicki

HAPPENINGS & DATES TO REMEMBER

Tuesday, Sept. 20
Thursday, Sept. 22

Pee Wee Pros for 3s and Pre-K
Fall Begins

Thursday, Sept. 22	Coffee with Clergy – 9:15-10:15 am
Mon & Tues, Sept. 26&27	Rosh Hashanah – School Closed * Tot Service (9 am - Children under 6 with adult) at TBE on Monday
Tuesday, October 4	Erev Yom Kippur – School Closed
Wednesday, October 5	Yom Kippur – School Closed * Tot Service (9 am – Children under 6 with adult) at TBE
Monday, October 10	Sukkot/Columbus Day – School Closed
Tuesday, October 11	Pee Wee Pros for 3s and Pre-K
Friday, October 14	Sukkot Parent-Child Special Event – 9:30 am
Monday, October 17	Shmini Atzeret/Simchat Torah – School Closed

CONNECTIONS

Hot Lunch - 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 with sauce on the side, and vegetable
Tuesday – Baked chicken fingers, French fries and vegetable
Wednesday Pizza and Israeli salad
Thursday- Quesadillas, cucumbers, salsa and sour cream
Friday – Grilled chicken, rice and vegetable

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.

Health and Safety Precautions – 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. **Do not bring your child to school if s/he appears ill.** We appreciate your cooperation at all times.

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.

Shabbat Sing –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. Our Shabbat Sing experiences are outdoors, especially during these beautiful days. Singing and music is a vital part of education, and we embrace the language of music as often as possible.

Shabbat with the Rabbi or Shabbat with the Cantor – This year, we are also blessed with having Rabbi Stoller and Cantor Adam share beautiful Shabbat experiences with the children in our Chapel every week. Having meaningful relationships with the Rabbi and Cantor are one of our goals this year, and we look forward to creating joyous and memorable Shabbat celebrations with them every week.

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

<https://reformjudaism.org/jewish-holidays/rosh-hashanah/rosh-hashanah-family-activities>

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/>