

# **bethisraelhebrewschool**



## **Shalom!**

Welcome to Beth Israel Hebrew School! For those of you that have been with us before, welcome back! I am VERY excited about the upcoming school year and I am getting ready to order books and plan out our activities for the first few months. I'm so excited to tell you that this year we will be incorporating computer based learning into our curriculum and that our new books allow each child to have their own license to a fantastic set of computer based games and interactive learning that will allow Beth Israel's teachers to track your child's progress at home and in the classroom.

Our school's most underlying theme is for the children to enjoy the time spent at Hebrew School so that they are left with positive feelings and warm memories of their Jewish education. As in previous years, this year's program will be blended with songs, games, incentives, arts and crafts, dramatics, holiday family celebrations and other exciting activities designed to keep your child engaged and excited to learn about and participate in Jewish society. It is a primary goal of our program that your children leave here with a strong feeling of identity with their heritage and that they develop a sense of love and pride in being Jewish.

To help your children develop a feeling for Judaism's beautiful teachings, traditions and historical lessons, there will be a considerable amount of time spent this year guiding your children through understanding of the Mitzvot, traditions and practices that Judaism stands for, study of the morals, values and behavior of the Torah and to development of and appreciation for a hands-on approach to the celebration of Shabbat and all of the Jewish holidays.

This year we are continuing our approach to helping your child master the skills of Hebrew reading and to gradually develop the ability to understand basic Hebrew words. We will continue to have an emphasis on learning the Hebrew words for many everyday objects at home, school and in the Synagogue and will also include a special emphasis on prayers so that the students will feel comfortable attending and participating in services. For those children coming close to Bar and Bat Mitzvah, this will go a very long way to preparing them to taking a greater role by leading the services at their Bar and Bat Mitzvah ceremonies. Our new computer based learning system will also include access to audio files that you and your child can listen to together and home. This will help them learn and be prepared for attendance at all synagogue functions. We want your children to be able to participate in Shabbat and holiday services as if it's second nature.

I have enclosed a copy of this year's calendar. It is based on the St. Mary's County Public School calendar, the calendar of Jewish Holidays and the weekends that Rabbi Shemtov is currently planning to be with us in Lexington Park. You will see that I have tried to balance the calendar as much as possible and have made sure that we have off on special days such as Mother's Day (yeah for the moms!) so that we can enjoy some downtime with our families on holiday weekends and other weekends that coincide with full days off from public school.

I'd like to continue to encourage all parents to get involved with our school at any level where you are comfortable. There will be many opportunities throughout the school year for you to learn, teach and celebrate with us and I hope that you will take advantage of as many of these as possible. You absolutely do not have to read Hebrew to participate, so please do not let that hold you back. However, if you are interested in brushing up on your Hebrew reading skills or would like to start working at the basic level, I'm happy to announce that I will be arranging classes for adults this year. Please keep an eye out for announcements.

Enclosed you will also find several forms including registration, medical and photo release and a parent's questionnaire. Although most of you did fill out these forms for the last school year, I will need updated copies for each child for this year. A copy of each of these forms will need to be filled out for each of your children that will be attending Hebrew School this year. Please let me know if you have any questions on the content of the forms as you are working through them.

I have also enclosed a copy of the school supply list. Please be sure that your child is prepared with these supplies on the first day of school. Please be sure that your child brings their school bag with them every week as this year we will be having the children bring their work books home each week to facilitate use of the computer based learning during the week when they are home.

Finally, I have enclosed a copy of our Parent and Student Handbook, updated for this year. Please read it over and feel free to ask questions. I would like to call your attention to our continuation of administrative procedures this year that are intended to help keep our children safe and support a learning environment with fewer distractions. Please also note that we are continuing our "no cell phone" policy for the classroom. We greatly appreciate your assistance in helping the children meet this requirement.

Note that we are continuing our start time of 9:30 a.m. this year. I would like to take this opportunity emphasize that this is the start time for lessons and that it is important for your child to arrive 5 minutes early to allow them time to get their books in order and take their seats. This will insure that the children are provided the opportunity to completely enjoy the lessons, crafts, games and other activities planned to reinforce the day's lessons without loss of valuable class time. My main goal here is to not cut corners on teaching the children. I do appreciate that this early start time does require an early start to your Sunday morning routine. I myself live in the northern part of St. Mary's County and do appreciate the length of time it takes for many of you to get to the Synagogue. I'd like to give my thanks in advance for your continued support of this early start.

It is my fondest desire that your children maintain Jewish feelings and involvement beyond the years at Hebrew School and ultimately perpetuate this onto future generations. I am hoping that your child's Hebrew School education at Beth Israel will add an enriching spiritual dimension to the lives of your entire family!

Warmest Regards,  
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