

# **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 have been working VERY hard on our curriculum for the next several months so that we will be up and running in time for school to start in August!

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. I have therefore structured this year's program to 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 also taking a new approach to helping your child master the skills of Hebrew reading and to gradually develop the ability to understand basic Hebrew words. We will 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. We will be using the concept of "immersion" where we will use Hebrew as much as possible while we are in session to refer to everyday objects, to use phrases such as "hello" (shalom), "thank you" (todah) and will encourage children to use their Hebrew names during class time. Our curriculum will also include learning to recognize and write Hebrew "script" which will greatly facilitate your children's practice of their Hebrew vocabulary and will help them to earn points and rewards based on the number of words they accumulate in their "Hebrew Word Bank". More information will be given about the word bank along with our learning incentive programs available for your children to take advantage of this year in the first few weeks of school.

I recently put together this year's calendar and I was surprised to see that we have only 28 weekends in which to accomplish all that I have discussed above. I therefore encourage you, as a parent 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.

Enclosed you will find several forms including registration, medical and photo release and a parent's questionnaire. 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 current school calendar and a school supply list. Please be sure that your child is prepared with these supplies on the first day of school on August 30th as we will be taking some time during the first class to get the children's supplies and notebooks organized for the year.

Finally, I have enclosed a copy of our Parent and Student Handbook, new for this year. Please read it over and feel free to ask questions. We will be implementing several new administrative procedures this year that are intended to help keep our children safe and support a learning environment with fewer distractions.

One particularly important item for you to note from the Handbook is that the start time for school this year has moved up fifteen minutes. **We will now be starting at 9:30 a.m.** I want you to be assured that I thought VERY long and hard about this change, but I truly feel that it is necessary given our goals and the relatively short school year. This fifteen minutes will allow us provide a few minutes of time between each class to allow the children to move about and then get re-settled while the teacher gets ready to switch gears from one topic to another. 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 departure from the previous start time may result in adjustments 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. If I truly didn't see a benefit to the additional fifteen minutes, I can assure you that I would not have considered it. Please accept my thanks in advance for your support of this change.

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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