

**CONGREGATION
B'NAI ISRAEL
RELIGIOUS SCHOOL**



**2014-2015 (5775)
PARENT HANDBOOK
AND CALENDAR**

GOALS OF REFORM JEWISH EDUCATION*

Congregation B'nai Israel supports the following goals set forth by the URJ Department of Education. These goals serve as a guideline to “foster the deepening of the Jewish experience and knowledge for all Jews in order to strengthen faith in God, love of Torah, and identification with the Jewish people through involvement in the synagogue and participation in Jewish life.”

Linked to these goals, the programs of our religious school embrace experience and learning activities, encouraging children, young people, and adults to become...

- Jews who affirm their Jewish identity and bind themselves inseparably to their people by word and deed.
- Jews who bear witness to the *berit*, the “covenant” between God and the Jewish people through the practice of *mitzvot*, “commandments,” as studied in the Torah and the classic Jewish literature it has generated and as interpreted in light of historic development and contemporary liberal thought.
- Jews who affirm their historic bond to *Eretz Yisrael*, the “Land of Israel”.
- Jews who cherish and study Hebrew, the language of the Jewish people.
- Jews who value and practice *tefilah*, “prayer”.
- Jews who further the causes of justice, freedom and peace by pursuing *tzedek*, “righteousness”; *mishpat*, “justice”; and *chesed*, “loving deeds.”
- Jews who celebrate Shabbat and the festivals and observe the Jewish ceremonies that mark the significant occasions in their lives.
- Jews who esteem their own person and the person of others; their own family and the family of others; their own community and the community of others.
- Jews who express kinship with *K'lal Yisrael* by actively seeking the welfare of Jews throughout the world.
- Jews who support and participate in the life of the synagogue.

*Taken from the Union for Reform Judaism (www.urj.org)

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL INFORMATION

Religious School Office Contact Information

Jessica Yellen, Religious School Director

Phone: 985-351-8032 cell

Email: relschoool@bnaibr.org

Julie Tepper, Assistant R/S Director

Phone: 225-343-0111 x205

Email: asst.relschoool@bnaibr.org

Rabbi's Office Contact Information

Rabbi Jordan Goldson

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Cathy Duplechin, CBI Office Administrator

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School Hours

Religious School: 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Sundays

B'nai Mitzvah: 4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Wednesdays

Confirmation: 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Sundays (see online calendar for specific dates)

Religious School Programs

*"The World is sustained by three things: by the Torah, by worship and by loving deeds."
– Simon the Just*

Within our Religious School program, we try to ensure the future of the Jewish people by leading students to a love and understanding of these three pillars of our religion: Torah, worship and loving deeds.

Sunday Morning Religious School:

Our Sunday morning Religious School program follows an organized curriculum based on age-appropriate content that includes Jewish holidays, values, life cycle events, God, Torah, Israel, Hebrew, music, and more. The school is a setting for animated discussions, dramatic role play and creative artistic expression. The responsibility of the Jewish person as part of the greater community is reinforced at all grade levels through our yearly mitzvah theme and activities relating to *tzedakah*, righteous acts. The joy of being Jewish is present not only during holiday celebrations, but each Sunday as our dedicated faculty members share their own appreciation of the depth and meaning of what Judaism encompasses. Through the invaluable partnership between Religious School education and family life, students are able to integrate Judaism into their developing personal identity.

Students that are preschool (potty-trained and at least 3 years old) through eighth grade are eligible to enroll in Sunday morning Religious School.

Hebrew:

An introduction to Hebrew begins in preschool and continues through the second grade. These “Hebrewland” classes meet individually for fifteen minutes each week to become familiar with the Hebrew alphabet and words that are associated with Shabbat and the holidays.

Students begin a more intensive Hebrew study beginning in third grade and continue throughout Religious School. As students prepare to become Bar and Bat Mitzvah, they will participate in a B’nai Mitzvah Hebrew class and will study individually with the Rabbi several months prior to their Simcha. Additional tutoring for these students may be required and will be addressed on an individual basis.

Mini Mishpocha Playtime (“M&Ms”):

For the children who are too young to attend Religious School, we have our Mini Mishpocha playtime (M&Ms). This is a “parent (or grandparent) and me” playtime that provides an introduction to Religious School in a safe, fun, and social setting. Children are exposed to a variety of stories, songs, and snacks led by Rabbi Jordan. Please see our online calendar for a schedule of these programs.

Confirmation:

Confirmation with the Rabbi is a two-year program beginning in ninth grade. This class meets on Sunday mornings and consists of a broad-based discussion of Jewish values, current events, theological ideas, and social issues relevant to high school age students. Confirmation students will have the opportunity to participate in a trip to The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., which is made possible by a generous gift from the Lee Berg family. For their Confirmation, second year students lead a special Shabbat service.

The Charles Norman Rubin award is presented at the Confirmation service to the second-year student who demonstrates outstanding participation and commitment throughout the class.

Religious School Family Shabbat Dinner and Service:

We offer a Religious School Family Shabbat Dinner and Service one time per year. We begin with a family Shabbat dinner at 5:00 p.m., followed by Shabbat services at 6:00 p.m. Each grade level group will have a special, age-appropriate, role in their Shabbat service. Please check the Religious School calendar for the upcoming date.

Each family will be responsible for contributing to the Oneg on the evening of the Religious School Shabbat. Each grade level is usually assigned a food or beverage item to bring.

Religious School Honors and Recognition:

- Shem Tov Attendance Award: presented at the closing assembly to children who have had two or less absences all school year. Many of our students have perfect attendance. We understand that illness, the celebration of out of town simchas, and emergencies arise. It is for this reason that we allow for up to two absences to qualify for this recognition. ***If chronic illness is an issue in your family, please contact Jessica Yellen.***
- Hebrewland Merit Award: presented at the closing assembly to the child in each grade that demonstrates outstanding participation and exemplary *derech erez* (proper manners, respect, and decency to others) in Hebrewland. Preschool through second grade students are eligible for this honor.
- Hebrew Achievement Award: presented at the closing assembly to the child in each grade that demonstrates exceptional commitment and growth in their knowledge of Hebrew. Third through eighth grade students are eligible for this honor.
- B'nai HaBayit Recognition Award: presented at the closing assembly to the children who have brought Jewish learning from Religious School into their homes. Each grade level has specific goals to accomplish throughout the school year. Parents and students will sign an interest form in the beginning of the year to begin the process of engaging in these home ("Bayit") educational goals. Each interested student will complete one goal item from each of the three categories: Torah (study), Avodah (prayer), and Gemilut Chasadim (acts of kindness). Parents must sign the interest form and return the B'nai Bayit Completion form to Jessica Yellen or Julie Tepper no later than **APRIL 19, 2015** in order to receive this recognition at the closing assembly.

Family Education:

F.A.I.R.E.: Families Are Involved in Religious Education is a program designed to include parents and children in activities centered on Jewish learning. We offer a **Breakfast with the Rabbi** for each grade level one time throughout the year in Religious School. This is a special time for students and their parents to come together with the Rabbi to discuss relevant topics. ***At least one parent is required to attend with each student.***

B'nai Mitzvah Family Orientation:

Families who have a child becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah within 12-18 months will receive an invitation to attend a B'nai Mitzvah Family Orientation in the fall. During this meeting, the Rabbi, parents and students come together to learn about this important life cycle event and to add deeper meaning to their family experience.

Religious School Policy

The following are school guidelines supported by the Director of Education, Rabbi, and the Board of Trustees of Congregation B'nai Israel:

Attendance:

- Regular and prompt attendance is essential to a quality Jewish education for your child. If you know in advance that your child will be absent, we appreciate parents for sending an email or leaving a message to let us know.
- Subsequent Absences: If a child will be out for more than one week, please notify us as soon as possible. For upper grade students, every effort will be made to send home a Hebrew “make-up” assignment if a request is made by the parents. While there is no substitute for attending class, parents can help to alleviate the gap during an absence by working with their child at home.
- The Shem Tov Attendance award is presented at the closing assembly. Please see ***Honors and Recognition*** below for more details.

Arrival and Departure Procedure:

- Arrival: School begins promptly at 9:30 a.m. Preschool through second grade will begin in the Gary J. Weill Youth Room with music. Please enter through the Religious School door. All Students are encouraged to wear a kippah. Parents and other family members are welcomed to stay for music each Sunday.
- Third through eighth grades will arrive at 9:30 a.m. through the Religious School entrance and go immediately to their assigned classes.
 - Late Arrival: If you are arriving to Religious School after 10:00 a.m., the doors to the Religious School will be locked for safety purposes. Please walk your child(ren) to the Religious School entrance and ring the bell located to the right of the window. From there, we ask that you walk your child to his/her classroom.
- Dismissal: Religious School is dismissed at 12:00 p.m. Dismissal is done through a carpool line at the Sanctuary entrance under the porte-cochere. We appreciate your respect for our faculty by picking up your child(ren) on time. At 12:10 p.m., if parents have not arrived, children will be relocated to the Religious School Office to wait for their parents’ arrival.
 - Early Pick-up: If your child needs to leave Religious School early, please walk into the building and pick up the child at his/her classroom, making sure the teacher is aware of the child’s departure.

Snack:

Students share a snack together each Sunday. During holiday celebrations and/or other special events, the Religious School will provide an appropriate snack. For all other days, parents are asked to provide (1) snack and (1) beverage per child at the assigned time during the year. Snack is assigned by grade level each month (see list below). Please bring a snack and beverage on the first Sunday of your child's assigned month **or send \$5.00 per child at the beginning of the year.** We ask that parents do not bring soft drinks beverages. Suggestions for snacks and beverages include:

Snack (Large pkg)

- Goldfish
- Crackers
- Chips
- Pretzels
- Cookies
- Snack mix
- Fruit popsicles (Del Monte Fruit Chillers work great)
- *Challah
- **Fresh Fruit

Beverages (Plastic Container)

- Apple Juice
- White Grape Juice
- Lemonade

*Challah can be purchased at Whole Foods in the bakery department or sometimes can be found at Albertson's.

**If bringing fresh fruit, please call the Religious School office (343-0111 x205) in advance to set the date for morning delivery by 9:30 a.m. Please have the fruit washed and pre-sliced if necessary. Thank you.

Snack Schedule:

| | | |
|----------------|---|-----------|
| Preschool | - | September |
| Grades 1 and 2 | - | October |
| Kindergarten | - | November |
| Grade 4 | - | December |
| Grade 3 | - | January |
| Grade 6 | - | February |
| Grade 7 | - | March |
| Grade 8 | - | April |

Attire:

Religious School provides a hands-on learning experience that varies in activities from week to week. We ask that children are dressed in clothes that are casual, comfortable, and conducive to being active and creative. When weather permits, students may have an outdoor recess. We recommend that students wear closed-toed shoes for playground use.

Preschool children are asked to bring a complete change of clothes in a large Ziploc bag, labeled with their name, on the first day of school. This will be kept in the preschool classroom during the year.

Illness / Medical Emergency:

A parent or guardian will be notified as soon as possible in the event of an outward sign of illness (vomiting, fever, etc.) or medical emergency. Please do not bring your child to Religious School unless s/he has been fever-free for at least 24 hours. If a parent or guardian is unable to be located in a medical emergency and physician care is deemed necessary, the child will be transported to the closest hospital accompanied by a member of the Congregation B'nai Israel faculty. The faculty member will remain with the child until a parent or guardian has arrived.

It is important to update all current home, work and cell phone numbers on your registration form and in the event your information changes during the school year. It is also imperative that current medication and medical history are reflected and up to date on your child's registration form.

Discipline:

Congregation B'nai Israel Religious School's discipline philosophy is guided by the Jewish value of *kavod*, respect towards all people and the synagogue, and *derech eretz*, proper manners and decency. All children should have the opportunity to learn and grow in an environment supported by these values. Therefore, our discipline policy is as follows:

- Teachers are responsible for maintaining classroom management during Religious School hours. Teachers will give fair and adequate opportunities for students to adjust or correct behavior.
- In the event that a student's behavior continues to be disruptive, the student will be sent to the Religious School Assistant Director. Parents may be contacted by the Religious School Director or Assistant Director, if the student's behavior warrants such action.
- A student that persists with disruptive behavior will result in a request for a parent conference, or further action as deemed necessary by the Religious School Director or Assistant Director.

Handheld Electronic Devices:

Electronic devices such as mobile telephones, personal digital assistants, ipods, cameras and videogame players are not permitted to be used during the hours of Religious School or Confirmation, unless directed by the Faculty. If students choose to bring any electronic device to the synagogue, the following policy, consistent in secular schools, will be enforced:

The power switch on the device must be turned “off” from the moment the student arrives at Congregation B’nai Israel until the moment the student departs, unless otherwise directed by Faculty. If a student chooses not to follow this policy or the direction of the Faculty, the device will be kept in the Religious School office until it can be returned to the parents’ possession at dismissal. Congregation B’nai Israel does not accept responsibility for any device that is lost or misplaced.