

Congregation B'nai Israel
Religious School

Family Handbook

5772 • 2011-2012



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Opening Day, Back-to-School Sunday, & Annual Picnic

Sunday, September 11, 2011

Tefillah: 9:30 am (All families)

Back to School session: 10:00 am (All families)

Freedom & Diversity Program and Mitzvah Projects: 10:45 am
(Everyone welcome)

Brotherhood Picnic: 12:30 pm (All families)

Congregation B'nai Israel Religious School

Our Education Program

Welcome to our school. The school's lay and professional leadership are excited and honored that you choose to be part of our learning community.

Our Judaica and Hebrew programs at B'nai Israel serve as the pathway for our children to learn, grow and be challenged Jewishly. Our programs exist to help create and strengthen the Jewish identity and commitment of our children and their families as we encounter what is central to Judaism: our love for God, our love for Torah and our identification with the Land of Israel and the Jewish people.

Our congregation recognizes that a Jewish education should meet the needs of each child. With this goal in mind, our school is committed to working with any family with a child requiring a specialized Jewish Education. We look forward to partnering with families to use our resources in creative ways to meet these needs.

We view our educational programs as having significant ties with the home, with the larger synagogue community, the larger Jewish community, and the Jewish people. We feel it is our responsibility to actively develop and strengthen these bonds.

We seek to develop a sense of *menschlichkeit*, of being good people who are sensitive both within and outside of our community and who see the world Jewishly.

In our Judaica and Hebrew Programs we seek to create a community in which:

- ✧ Students feel that others know who they are, care about them and notice if they are absent.
- ✧ Students feel that they can trust the other individuals in the community.
- ✧ Students feel that they have a sense of shared goals and values.
- ✧ Students feel that they have a role in the decision-making process and in their temple experiences.
- ✧ Students are aware that they are a part of a specifically Jewish community and participate in living Jewish experiences through study of Torah, Avodah: Worship and celebration, and Gemilut Chasadim: loving acts that serve the community.

Goals of Congregation B'nai Israel Religious School

The goal of Congregation B'nai Israel is to provide Jewish Education in accordance with the guidelines set by the Reform Movement and the values of our congregational community. Through involvement in the synagogue and Jewish life, we aim to deepen Jewish experience and knowledge and to strengthen our relationship with God, love of Torah, and identification with the Jewish people. We believe that Judaism responds to the challenges and questions confronting us daily, and that a knowledgeable Jew can be nurtured by its teachings and practice. Linked to these beliefs, our education programs embrace experiences and learning activities encouraging children 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 *Brit* (Covenant between God and the Jewish People) by embracing Torah through the study and observance of Mitzvot (Commandments) as interpreted in the light of historic development and contemporary thought.
- Jews who affirm their historic bond to *Eretz Yisrael*, the Land and State of the Israel.
- Jews who cherish and study Hebrew, the language of the Jewish People.
- Jews who value and practice t'fillah (prayer).
- Jews who further the causes of justice, freedom and peace by pursuing *tzedek* (righteousness), *mishpat* (justice), and *hesed* (loving deeds).
- Jews who celebrate Shabbat and festivals, and observe Jewish ceremonies marking significant occasions in their lives.
- Jews who esteem their own person and the persons of others; their own family and the families of others; and their own community and communities of others.
- Jews who express their kinship with *K'lal Yisrael*, the community of Jews, by actively seeking the welfare of Jews throughout the world.
- Jews who support and participate in synagogue life.

Such Jews will strengthen the fabric of Jewish life, ensure the future of Judaism, and the Jewish people, and approach the realization of their divine potential.

Family Involvement: A Holy Partnership

Jewish education is a partnership. It is a unique and holy relationship between home and school; between parents, students and teachers. We believe that the synagogue and school must partner to make for a meaningful Jewish learning experience for each child.

In our school, we will do our part to make our educational program the best it can be. Families will receive a letter of welcome and introduction from teachers at the start of the school year. This letter will include general goals, outline special projects for the year, and explain how your child can help create a successful experience for themselves and their community. Teachers will continue throughout the year to communicate with families. Midyear and year-end evaluations are another way teachers provide feedback about student progress and share information with parents.

Another aspect of a child's Jewish education is the home—perhaps the most central and influential arena in a child's life and development as a Jewish individual. As Rabbi Morrison Bial states in his book *Your Jewish Child*:

Your home will be the single most important influence in the Jewish upbringing and fundamental Jewish education of your child. From earliest times, Judaism has been based on the supposition that the home is the foundation of our religion.

The skills and appreciations students learn in school can best be integrated into a child's life, identifying and understanding when they are practiced in the home. We, therefore, encourage observances, discussions, learning experiences and celebration of Jewish life with family and friends at home. And we are happy to support you in this endeavor.

In her book, *The Blessing of A Skinned Knee*, author Wendy Mogel points out that,

“Religious School alone won’t accomplish the two things you may most hope to give your children: a lifelong commitment to ethical and spiritual teachings and a legacy that they can pass on to your grandchildren....learning values and developing a sense of the holy must start at home.”

Through consistent communication, parent participation and education, and promotion of observance and learning at home, we hope to develop a true home-school partnership. Together we can fulfill the *mitzvah* of “*v’shinantam l’vanekha*—you shall teach them [the Torah’s teachings] to your children”

To help complete this partnership, we ask parents can take cues from the school's information and follow up appropriately with their child(ren). When parents know that a particular item was required for class, they can ask specifically how that object was used during that class. When a holiday is approaching, parents can check for the particulars that are being learned, and ask what the child can now do at home for the upcoming celebration. When asked to participate in a class project, enthusiastic involvement from parents will mean a great deal to the child—demonstrating for him or her that Religious School and the things learned here are valuable.

Below are some questions parents could ask children at the end of the school day.

- ✧ What was the funniest thing that happened today?
- ✧ What art project did you do today?
- ✧ What question did you ask today?
- ✧ What prayer did you discuss today?
- ✧ What does that prayer mean to you?
- ✧ What was your favorite part of class today?
- ✧ What story did you read from the Bible today?
- ✧ Tell me 3 different ideas you talked about in class.
- ✧ Let’s read one of your Hebrew pages together.
- ✧ Tell me three different things you did today.
- ✧ Show me what pages you read in school today.
- ✧ Teach me something you learned today.

Family and Parent Education

Family Education remains an important component of our religious education program. But, like many parts of our program, we are inventing new ways to bring families together to learn and connect in our school community. Please look for flyers and/or emails with updates about opportunities and invitations to share with your child/ren in the learning we do here at B'nai Israel.

Shabbat Service Attendance

The weekly observance of Shabbat is the place where our tradition is most readily accessible to our students. Attendance at Shabbat services affords students the opportunity to demonstrate and apply what they have learned, live Jewish life in a real and tangible way, take pride in their accomplishments, and become involved with their families in the life of the congregation. Students in our Religious School are encouraged to attend Shabbat Services throughout the school year—especially on 2nd Shabbes nights, the second Friday of every month, for Tot Shabbat and/or the 2nd *Shabbes* Service.

2nd Shabbes: Tot Shabbat, Shabbes Dinner & 2nd Shabbes Service

Our second Shabbat of each month is family-friendly and it enhances the joy of Shabbat through *zemirot* (singing) and a child-friendly menu at dinner. Each grade will have an opportunity to participate in leading part of our Tot Shabbat or 7:30 2nd *Shabbes* service (depending on the grade). We also invite families to register for dinner and enjoy dining by grade-level at a shared table, especially on the evening of their grade's service participation. The 2nd *Shabbes* service will be a participatory service that all of our members, young and older, can enjoy.

Our Friday 2nd Shabbes Schedule:

6:00: Tot Shabbat
6:30: 2nd Shabbes Dinner
(by reservation)
7:30: 2nd Shabbes Service

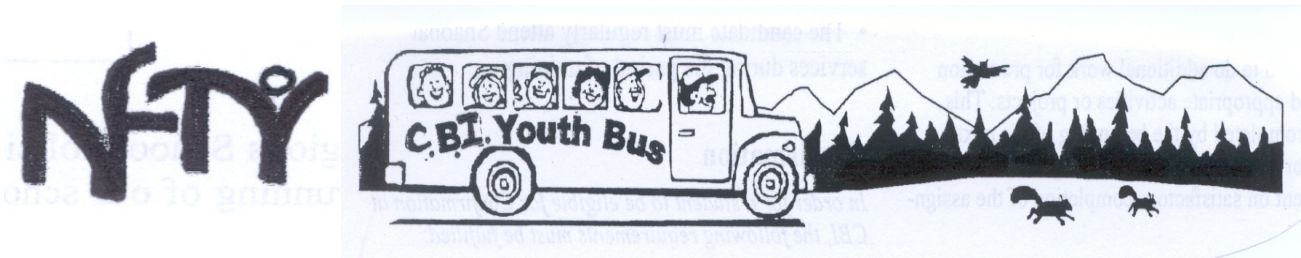
2nd Shabbes Dates 2011-12

9/9 – BISO Installation/Welcome Back Israel Trip Students	2/10 – Shalom School
10/14 – 1 st Grade (Tot Shabbat) 5 th Grade (7:30 Service)	3/9 – 2 nd Grade (Tot Shabbat) 4 th Grade (7:30 Service)
11/11 – 3rd Grade (Tot Shabbat) 7 th Grade (7:30 Service)	4/13 – Teen Program
12/9 – PreK/K (Tot Shabbat) 6 th Grade (7:30 Service)	5/11 – Education Shabbat
1/13 – Camp Shabbat	6/8 – Bless Israel Trip Participants

Informal Youth Programs & Activities

Important Jewish learning can happen in both formal and informal contexts. In addition, educators, community leaders and parents know the importance of social networks in helping youth connect with Judaism and the Jewish community. Our informal youth programs aim to augment the social connections that we hope also grow in our more formal Religious School program.

The goals of our informal youth programs are to: foster social interaction among peers in the synagogue, cultivate social interaction among peers from other area synagogues, develop social action programs for youth within the synagogue community, and in the general community, engage young people in spiritual experiences in a youth context, and facilitate trips to places of Jewish and general interest.



BISY for 9th thru 12th Graders

BISY, B'nai Israel Senior Youth, our popular senior high school youth group meets regularly, according to its own calendar, for parties, trips, mitzvah projects, concerts, pool parties, overnight events, and all kinds of fun and youth-led learning.

Our Youth Group Advisor assists in directing BISY. BISY is formally affiliated with NFTY, the North American Federation of Temple Youth, the national youth movement of Reform Judaism. This year, BISY will coordinate our annual Purim Carnival, have social events throughout the year, engage in youth-led worship and lead other *tzedakah* projects at the synagogue and in the community at large. Members will also have the opportunity to attend regional NFTY events.

This year we are also looking forward to a strong partnership between our new post-B'nai Mitzvah program, Keshet, and BISY.

Informal Youth Programs & Activities

Madrachim: Leaders, Guides and Role Models

One of the ways that our post-B'nai Mitzvah teens can demonstrate their newly adult commitment to Judaism and their community is through service. One service opportunity we offer is the chance for our teens (grades 8-12) to participate in the day-to-day life of our Religious School. The word *Madrach* (singular) means leader or guide, and we look to our *Madrachim* (plural) as important role models in our classrooms and programs on Sunday mornings and Tuesday afternoons. There is also a training component to the program, giving participants a chance to gain skills and grow personally through their work. *Madrachim* can earn community service hours or credit toward youth group, camp or Israel scholarships. Information and applications are available on our website at www.bnais.com or by contacting Ede Swidler, our *Madrachim* Coordinator at esmft2000@yahoo.com.

Class Family Gatherings: Parents and Kids Celebrating Together

During the school year parents in grades PreK-7 assist in planning a variety of informal fun activities for each grade level. These various parties and activities provide a time to socialize as well as to learn informally. The class parent in each grade can be instrumental in making these special programs happen. **(If you would like to serve as a class parent, please let your child's teacher know).**

Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing - Entering its Fourth Year!

"Rosh Hodesh: It's A Girl Thing!" continues this year for a new 6th and 7th grade cohort, an 8th and 9th grade cohort, and also a cohort for girls in 10th grade and up. New members are also welcome to join. These groups of girls mark the new moon and new month, a time when Jewish girls and women traditionally gather to celebrate. This program gathers a "girls only" group that meets monthly from 1:00-3:30 PM on or near the new moon to engage in ritual, munch, talk, learn, and explore what it means for them each to become a Jewish woman.

"Rosh Hodesh: It's A Girl Thing!" will meet once a month on Sunday afternoons. Wendy Fischer, a licensed Marriage Family Therapist, will lead our ongoing program for our older groups. Leslie Oberst, long-time Hebrew teacher in our school, will lead our youngest and newest group.

We are grateful for the generous support of this program we receive from the Women of B'nai Israel. If your child is interested in participating in this nationally renowned program, please make a note of the following meeting dates:

6 th and 7 th grade cohort	8 th and 9 th grade cohort	10 th and up cohort
9/18	9/25	9/18
10/16	10/16	10/2
11/13	11/13	11/6
12/11	12/11	12/4
1/15	1/15	1/8
2/12	2/26	2/5
3/18	3/18	3/4
4/15	4/15	4/1

Ensemble Katan

What is it? A youth choir for young people in the 4th Grade and older who are enrolled in Religious School or whose family are members of the Congregation B'nai Israel. Ensemble Katan sings at congregational Shabbat and festival services, Religious School T'fila, and other events.

Do you have to read music? No. Rehearsal tapes are provided along with lyrics and music.

Do you have to read Hebrew? No. All Hebrew is transliterated.

When and where are rehearsals? Normally, alternate Sundays after religious school, 12:30-1:30PM, in the chapel. To prepare to sing with the adult choir, two 1-hour rehearsals with the adult choir are scheduled for the Wednesday evenings before a service. Typically this rehearsal runs from 7:15-8:15 PM and is crucial for everyone in both choirs to learn how our parts fit together and the balance the voices, and work out technical problems.

Is attendance at all rehearsals mandatory? No. Regular attendance is encouraged because we cover a lot of material in a very short time. But, if schedule conflicts force a chorister to miss a series of rehearsals, the chorister can return when the conflicts resolve.

How do enroll my child? E-mail the information below to JEmick@comcast.net.

To enroll your young person, at your earliest opportunity, please e-mail the following information:

Chorister's Name:

Grade in School:

Parents' Names:

Phone Numbers:

E-mail Address:

US Postal Service Mailing Address:

to: JEmick@comcast.net You can reach me by telephone at (916) 424-1071.



Sosnick Library Rules and Policies for Students

The Sosnick Library is open for students and congregants Sundays 9:30 – 1:00 (when Religious School is in session). Opportunities for visiting the Library to check out books are a regular part of the Religious School curriculum. For additional Library hours or services, please contact our Librarian, Posh Mikalson.

The following is an overview of the Library rules and policies. Please remember that these policies are in place to help insure that our growing collection remains intact and available for everyone. If you have any questions, or need further details of the Library policies, please free to contact Posh Mikalson by phone (446-4861 ext. 18), e-mail (library@bnais.com), or in person.

Circulation

Students may check out two books at a time or one book and one video/DVD. Books and video/DVDs are due three weeks from the time of check out. (A one-week grace period is given if your child is absent or forgets to bring their library book/video/DVDs to class.)

While the Librarian and her staff will guide students in picking out library materials most suited to their age, reading ability and maturity, in the spirit of intellectual freedom all materials are made available to all students (with the exception of films rated beyond the child's age). We encourage parents to review all materials their children check out both for suitability and the opportunity for discussion.

Reference materials

The Sosnick Library has many reference materials available for use by Religious School students. Reference materials may not be removed from the Library. The Librarian's Asst. will help students make copies of reference materials, if needed.

Renewals

Books may be renewed on or before the date due and may be renewed twice. Books can be renewed in person or by phone (446-4861 ext. 18). Please include your child's name and the title(s) of the book(s) you are renewing.

Overdue, damaged and lost book fines

Overdue charges for students are 10¢ per book/video/DVD per day. Damaged book fees are \$1.00 per page or the replacement cost of the book/video/DVD if the damage is irreparable. The fee for a lost book/video/DVD includes any overdue fines plus the replacement cost of the book/video/DVD.

Students are encouraged to return their books on time and in good condition so that others may have the same opportunity to borrow and read them. Fines and fees may be paid by cash or check (made payable to: "CBI Sosnick Fund").

If you have a question about any fines or fees, or feel you have received a fine or fee in error, please notify the Librarian as soon as possible!

*Now that you have waded through what may seem like endless rules & policies, please remember the Sosnick Library is a wonderful place for parents and students to learn about everything Jewish. The Library is also a great place for parents to enjoy a cup of coffee/tea at Café B'nai and schmooze with friends on Sunday mornings. **Enjoy!!!***

Congregation B'nai Israel

Education & Youth Funds



Most of our special programming and projects depend on our special purpose funds. Please honor your family members' and friends' *simchas*, sorrows and recognitions while helping our religious school and youth programming. The following funds are available for you to choose from. Please feel free to share this list with family and friends, especially if you are approaching a special event yourself:

B'nai Israel Playground Fund

Allows us to maintain the quality of our playground.

Dalton & Joyce Feldstein Israel Scholarship Fund

Provides scholarships based on financial need to teenage students who upon completion of Confirmation travel to Israel on a Confirmation class trip.

Director of Lifelong Jewish Learning's Discretionary Fund

At the DLJL's discretion, funds are provided to CBI students and families in need of scholarship assistance for educational and camp programs.

Price Campership Fund (Women of B'nai Israel)

Available to provide scholarship assistance to any B'nai Israel students attending a URJ summer camp program, such as Camp Newman.

Religious School Scholarship Fund

Helps those B'nai Israel Religious School and post B'nai Mitzvah (Keshar) families who may not be able to continue their children's Jewish education without assistance.

Summer Camp Scholarship Fund

Provides need-based funds for Camp Shelanu campers.

Weinberg Godparent Fund

A need-based scholarship fund to provide assistance for Religious School students to attend informal educational programs.

William Henry Zimmerman URJ Camp Scholarship Endowment Fund

A fund maintained at the Jewish Community Foundation of the West. The fund's purpose is to provide one or more URJ camp scholarships.

Youth Group Activity Fund

To assist youth group programming and provide scholarship assistance to youth wishing to attend regional and national youth group events.

Congregation B'nai Israel

Education & Youth Funds: Here for You



We at B'nai Israel are aware that this is a difficult time for many families. Jewish learning and Jewish community are never so important as in challenging times. Many of our congregants and other donors make donations to our various scholarship funds throughout each year. They do so to honor and remember others through making Jewish learning possible.

The most important parts of all our educational programs are our teachers and our learners. If you or your child is a potential learner, your presence in our community is so much more important than the money you might not be able to pay to participate. While we ask participants to pay fees to the best of their abilities, our scholarship funds exist, so that we are able to run our programs, even when members cannot pay the full amount. However, we do receive the funds into our operating budget when you apply for a scholarship, allowing us both to run our programs and have everyone as part of the learning together. Please do not hesitate to apply if you are in need.

If you have any need of financial assistance, please see the application below or speak with Rabbi King-Tornberg or Mandy Greene about the scholarship opportunities available. There will be some paperwork involved, but it will allow us to serve everyone who wants to be part of our learning community.

CBI Religious School and Post B'nai Mitzvah Programming (Kesher)

If you need help with the cost of attending our religious school (including any post B'nai Mitzvah programming), you can apply for funds from: **Religious School Scholarship Fund** (Application on our website.)

Confirmation Class Israel Trip

If you are a Confirmation student who will be travelling to Israel on our Confirmation class trip, in addition to the funds your class will raise, you, as an individual, can apply for funds from: **Dalton & Joyce Feldstein Israel Scholarship Fund** (Application available through contacting Rabbi King-Tornberg and based on demonstrated severe financial need.)

B'nai Israel Senior Youth (BISY) Events

If you are a member of B'nai Israel Senior Youth (BISY) and need assistance attending a local, regional or national event, you can apply for funds from our: **Youth Group Activity Fund** (Application on our website.)

Camp Shelanu

If you are interested in attending Camp Shelanu, depending on your situation, you can apply for funds from our: **Summer Camp Scholarship Fund** (Application on our website.)

Camp Newman

If you are interested in attending Camp Newman, depending on your situation, you can apply for funds from one or more of the following:

Price Campership Fund (available through the Women of B'nai Israel)

William Henry Zimmerman URJ Camp Scholarship Endowment Fund (Applications on our website.) The URJ also has funds available to Newman campers. *Please also be sure to contact Rabbi King-Tornberg if you have further financial need.*

