



A Word of Welcome

Back in the villages of Eastern Europe, there was a beautiful custom observed on a young child's first day of religious school. The teacher would spread a little honey on a slate in the shape of the letter Aleph, the first letter of the alphabet. The child would lick off the honey and then recite the following verse from the Book of Psalms: "How sweet are Your words to my palate ó sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psalm 119:103)

Although our instructional tools are far more modern, the educational goals at Congregation B'nai Israel are not so different than those of our ancestors. We seek to cultivate in our students a lifelong love of Jewish learning. We want to affirm their identity as Jews, infuse them with the values of Torah and instill in them a deep sense of appreciation of our sacred rituals, customs, and holidays. We want every day of their Jewish experience to be as sweet as that honey on the slate.

In order to promote our children's Jewish development and make the most of their religious education, we need your support. We encourage you to work closely with our teachers, the Educational Director, the Rabbi and the Education Committee. We also urge you to take advantage of all the wonderful experiences and programs at Congregation B'nai Israel.

This handbook will answer many of your questions about our program. But remember that Jewish education is a partnership between the family, the synagogue and the school. If you have any additional questions or concerns, please give us a call.

We look forward to another exciting year of Jewish living and learning. Let your love of Judaism be like the honey on the slate. Help your children experience the sweetness of Jewish life.

*Rabbi Charni Flame Selch, Education Director
Amy Wolpin and Alan Singer, Education Committee Co-Chairs*

Education Director contact information: 584-3593 ext. 203 or cbieducation@verizon.net

Class Names

As a general practice Hebrew names are used for the classes as follows:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Class Name</u>
Kindergarten	Gan
First	Aleph
Second	Bet
Third	Gimel
Fourth	Dalet
Fifth	Hay
Sixth	Vav
Seventh	Zayin
Eighth	Chet
Ninth	Tet

Classes will be referred to by these names throughout this manual, in all school publications and congregation and community communications.

Schedule

Gan/Aleph and Bet (K-2 nd):	Sundays 9:30 - 11:30 am.
Gimel/ Dalet (3 rd and 4 th):	Sundays 9:30 - 11:30 am, Thursdays 3:30 - 5:30 pm.
Hay/Vav (5 th and 6 th):	Sundays 9:30 - 11:30 am, Tues. & Thurs. 3:30 - 5:30 p.m.
Zayin (7 th):	Sundays 9:30 - 11:30 am & Wednesdays 5:30 - 7:30 pm. (Oct.-May, includes light dinner)
Chet:	Wednesdays 5:30 - 7:30 pm. (Oct.-May, includes light dinner)
Tet:	To be determined

See the school calendar or ðCalendar at a Glanceö for dates of supplementary programs and Shabbat dinners.

Derech Eretz Kadma L'Torah

Respectful behavior precedes the study of Torah. In order to create an atmosphere conducive to learning for all students and achieve a warm and inclusive environment, the Congregation B'nai Israel Religious School encourages that these standards be followed for each individual student:

1. The right to learn without interference from other people.
2. The right to work together as students and teachers in an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding.
3. The right to have one's personal property and synagogue property respected by others.
4. The right to be protected from physical harm.

In order to fulfill these rights, the participants of the program must follow expectations of behavior which include:

1. The expectation to treat others kindly and with respect.
2. The expectation to respect the property of others.
3. The expectation to be responsible for their own behavior.
4. The expectation to make a positive effort.

Registration

Religious School enrollment is open to members of Congregation B'nai Israel and non-members with students in kindergarten to 2nd grade. New families in K-2nd may request a one year membership waiver prior to joining CBI. Membership information and school registration forms are available from the synagogue office: 584-3593 and bnai.israel@verizon.net or online: www.cbinorthampton.org. Abatements are available for those who feel they cannot afford full membership and school fees. If you have questions or concerns regarding abatements, please speak to the Synagogue Director, Ben Cuperman (cbidirector@verizon.net).

General questions regarding registration should be directed to Rabbi Charni Flame Selch (cbieducation@verizon.net, 584-3593 ext 203), Education Director.

Parents as Teachers and Learning Partners/Family Education Programs and Event Schedule

Jewish tradition believes that the parent is the most important teacher to their child. When you enroll your child in our Religious School, we are given a precious trust: to build and expand upon the Jewish education already begun in the home. Parents can help by encouraging a positive attitude toward Judaism and Jewish studies, participating together in Jewish experiences in the synagogue, such as holiday celebrations and Shabbat programs, and communicating with the teachers and Education Director with any question, concern, idea or suggestion.

One of the most exciting enhancements of our program has been the Family Education Experiences during the year. This component of the schedule has been successful in its inherent ability to encourage intergenerational Jewish study, offer the children to see adults as learners, and build friendships and community. We strongly encourage families to attend. Families will receive a reminder notice and/or an email before each class program. Please refer to the school calendar for class and school specific events. In addition to school based programs, there will be CBI and regional collaborative family education activities throughout the year. Please see CBI's newsletter *Kehila* and the weekly CBI emails for upcoming events.

Home Reinforcement

We believe that Jewish education extends beyond the confines of the Religious School institution. As such, we urge parents to do what they can, in the context of their personal commitments to Judaism, to reinforce the teachings of the school. Encourage children to discuss what they are learning here. Urge them to recite the blessings and prayers that they have learned. Try to provide opportunities for introducing home rituals that fit into your lifestyle. Your participation with your child at community holiday celebrations and family education programming is a fun way to share with them the joys of being Jewish. Gimel and Dalet classes have homework on a regular basis to support their introduction to Hebrew reading. Other homework is assigned based upon the discretion of the teacher. It is designed to support and reinforce the learning that occurs in the classroom. As Jewish education involves the entire family, it is our hope that you will participate in the homework assignment with your child in an appropriate way.

Curriculum

The following class outlines give a general overview of the school curriculum. To bring classes to life, teachers share their enthusiasm, stories and examples of living Judaism to create vitality and depth of learning that is only possible when teaching from the heart.

GAN/ALEPH: The kindergarten and first grade have a two year rotating curriculum. In year one, the focus of learning is on holidays, Shabbat and Israel. The second year is a study of Bible stories and God. During both years, basic Hebrew letters are taught through fun activities and important cultural concepts. With active learning, art projects, singing and dancing, students integrate concepts and values that reflect an exciting experience.

BET: Bet students continue to learn prayers and begin Hebrew reading with a primer called *Journeys through the Aleph-Bet*. Units in the Bet class include: the study of the people and objects in the synagogue, including the Torah scribe, Jewish values through basic Hebrew words, and an exploration of Bible stories. As always, the holidays are examined. A parent/student book list and lending library augments the emerging understanding of Jewish thought and community. Gan/Aleph and Bet meet for community enrichment via song and dance.

GIMEL/DALET: Hebrew reading, decoding and comprehension are the focus of the class. This program is a rotating two year curriculum. In year one the study of life-cycle, an overview of the five books of the Torah and how to understand Jewish values through being a *mensch* are the pillars of the curriculum. In year two, there are Judaic units such as understanding blessings and prayers, the cycle of the Jewish year, and the Ten Commandments. These add another layer to the emerging base of Judaic knowledge garnered from the students' early years. Each student in the Gimel grade receives a Siddur with personal inscriptions from their families as part of a mid-year ceremony. These students join the older classes once a month with Rabbi David for a community *Tefila* experience.

HAY/VAV: The students continue to build their Hebrew reading and comprehension skills and in-class Tefila experiences. This program is a rotating two year curriculum. In year one, they study ancient and modern history, and the geography of Israel, with a multi-faceted curriculum that incorporates art, music, creative writing and role-playing. They also learn about the important concepts of tzedakah and the *mitzvot* of ethical behavior and holidays through discussions and activities. A recent addition to the curriculum is *BabagaNewz*, an educational classroom magazine, for Jewish middle school students. Look it up on line to discover a rich world of current events, science, Torah, Israel and more. In year two, they

are introduced to the *Tzedek Partner Program* that teaches learning, giving and organizing for social justice. Students study Prophets and *Pirkei Avot*, the ethical teachings of our ancestors. *Tefila* (prayer) includes the Torah service, and blessings recited before and after the *Haftarah*. On Sundays, these students join other classes once a month with Rabbi David for a community *Tefila* experience.

VAV SHABBATON: To build community and support families before the *B'nai Mitzvah*, there is a *Shabbaton* in the spring of the sixth grade year. CBI members (students and parents) from LGA and the Religious School join for Friday evening services, socializing and dinner followed by a class on the transition from adolescence to adulthood. On Shabbat morning, two classes that investigate the holiness of prayer and the value of *mitzvot* are led by master teachers. Requirements for the *mitzvah* project and Shabbat service attendance before the *B'nai Mitzvah* are discussed on Saturday night followed by a movie, popcorn and socializing. This final session of the *Shabbaton* is just for kids.

ZAYIN: Students explore values and consider their coming of age in an intellectual and creative environment as they continue to prepare for their *B'nai Mitzvah* year and beyond. On Sundays Zayin students study three topics over the course of the school year. During the first trimester, using a curriculum from AVODAarts called *The Jewish Lens*, students explore values and community through photography. The second and third trimesters are dedicated to immigration to the United States and an overview of the Holocaust. Holocaust studies include a viewing of the movies: *The Pigeon* and *Paperclips*, and a visit with a Holocaust survivor. The Zayin year like all grades in our school, concludes with a *Siyum* – an opportunity for students to share oral or written work on a topic of their choosing.

ZAYIN AND CHET/TET STUDENTS: On Wednesday evenings seventh graders join eighth grade students as part of the Middle School. A light dinner is served at 5:30 pm, followed by two classes that conclude at 7:30 pm. The first class for seventh grade students is taught by the Rabbi and focuses on the study of Torah text, as it relates to *mitzvot*. The second class of seventh graders will look at the topics of Genesis and ethics from the perspective of an emerging adolescent. The eighth and ninth grade students will have two different experiences as well. One hour will be spent looking at contemporary social and political issues through a Jewish value lens. The other hour they will expand on their own growth as Jewish adolescents learning together about ethics, Jewish values and hot topics. We will also bring in various artists-in-residence to offer Jewish experiences in art, cooking and other creative media.

Education Committee

The Education Committee acts as an advocate for the educational program of the school, working to enhance and encourage its continuous growth and development. This committee works together with Rabbi David and Rabbi Selch to examine such various experiences as family education, mission and vision, curriculum, teen programming, and the overall objectives of the religious school and educational programming of the congregation.

Amy Wolpin and Alan Singer are the co-chairs of the Education Committee. If you would like more information about the committee and its work, please contact them. The committee meets monthly; sessions are open to the community. Dates will be posted on the weekly CBI emails and on the school calendar.

Communication with Families

We will be communicating through school email lists. Each class will have a specified list and there will also be an all-school list. Emails will be sent to the appropriate lists. Please make sure that we have up-to-date contact information for you in the school office.

Abuse Policy

Given our growing recognition of this problem, we are developing avenues for promoting safety for all children and for protecting those who are abused. These include, but are not limited to a teacher orientation/training on these issues, awareness of mandatory reporting laws, and access to resources through the main office. If you have any concerns about someone you know or love, please contact Rabbi David or the Education Director.

School Shabbat and Holiday Services

All classes have an annual Friday night dinner that may be held in conjunction with other classes from CBI or LGA. These Shabbat dinners include singing, socializing, dancing for lower grades, opportunities for dialogue and study in the upper grades. All family members are invited to these dinners. The 2011-2012 schedule is listed in the school calendar.

Students are welcome to celebrate other Shabbat services. We strongly recommend that they attend services to supplement their studies, to feel at home in the synagogue, and to lay the groundwork for preparation for becoming B'nai Mitzvah.

Students are encouraged to attend the synagogue for all major festivals with their parents. We will be glad to communicate with the teachers or administrators of public schools in the event of problems in obtaining excused absences for holidays.

Shabbat Programming

Shabbat is the most celebrated holiday in the Jewish calendar. Here at CBI, we offer a myriad of opportunities for families to join together with the rest of the community to sing, pray and worship in joy. Shabbat monthly programming for students and families include: Tot Shabbat led by Peggy Walker, Shabbat Sing led by Pamela Schwartz and Joel Feldman, Family Minyan led by Anna Sobel and Junior Congregation. All of these Shabbat programs include song, some movement and creative expression to foster community in joyous celebration. Programs begin at 11 am and are listed on the school calendar and the CBI website: www.cbinorthampton.org. We look forward to sharing together these uplifting Shabbat experiences with everyone and encourage you to attend several programs to experience this variety of offerings at CBI.

Arrival and Departure

Students are expected to arrive on time. Weekday classes begin at 3:30 p.m. and conclude at 5:30 p.m. Sunday classes begin at 9:30 a.m. and end at 11:30 am. We respectfully request that parents accompany their children from the parking lot into the classroom.

It is important for your child's complete Jewish education that he/she attend the entire Religious School day. Therefore, please avoid making other commitments for your child during school hours. In instances where this is unavoidable, and your child must be dismissed early repeatedly, please contact the Education Director. The school wishes to accommodate family needs without disrupting our educational program. Mutual respect and communication helps our school function smoothly and effectively.

For safety reasons, once children arrive, they are to remain on the premises until dismissal unless you notify the office otherwise. If you are picking your child up before dismissal, PLEASE ENTER THE BUILDING, NOTIFY THE OFFICE AND THEN PICK UP YOUR CHILD FROM THEIR CLASSROOM. DUE TO SAFETY REASONS, PLEASE DO NOT ASK YOUR CHILD TO MEET YOU IN THE PARKING LOT.

Please be on time for dismissal. For safety reasons, parents are asked to park their cars and greet their children in the corridor near the office or at the entrance to the building. We do not want students crossing the parking lot unattended. The parking lot and premises are monitored during dismissal, and a staff member will remain in the building until all students have departed.

If you will be more than five minutes late for at dismissal time, please call the office, 584-3593 ext. 203 to update us on your pick-up plan.

Absences

Good attendance is essential for your child's learning in our school. Please make every effort to see that your child comes to class regularly. However it is important to keep ill children at home. If a child will be absent for three days or more, please notify the school office at 584-3593 x 203.

Illness and Emergencies

If your child becomes ill during school hours, you will be notified in order to make proper arrangements for pick up. Family emergency information is on record at the school from the registration packet. If emergency numbers change during the school year, please keep us up to date.

Family medical release forms are also on file. In the event that your child is taken to Cooley-Dickinson Hospital for emergency services during school hours, we will make every effort to reach parents prior to the administration of any action outside of normal first aid.

Cancellation due to Inclement Weather

- When public schools in Northampton close due to inclement weather, our school will also be closed. This includes afternoon cancellations.
- On days when public school is not cancelled, but weather conditions deteriorate during the day, we will leave a message on the CBI Religious School answering machine by 2 p.m. and a notice will be posted on the CBI website.
- For Sunday morning cancellation information, please call the Religious School office at 584-3593 x203. We will make a cancellation determination by 8 a.m.
- Sunday morning cancellation information will also be posted on the website when possible.

Dress Code Recommendations

Students are expected to dress respectfully. Please note that boys are expected to wear a *kipah* (*yarmulke*) in class. *Kipot* for girls are optional. Caps are not an acceptable replacement for *kipot* in sanctuary services. On Shabbat and holidays, students should dress in a manner that reflects the holiness of the day. (For safety reasons, oheelinesö are not permitted during school hours.)

Electronic Devices

In order to allow the classroom to maintain a sense of community and decorum, we must ask that the following not be allowed during school hours: iPods, electronic games and cell phones.

Kashrut - Snacks

The Jewish Dietary Laws (Kashrut) are maintained within the synagogue. Students are welcome to bring a snack to eat before school begins or to eat at recess on Tuesday and/or Thursday afternoons. The school does not provide a formal snack.

On Sunday mornings, snack is provided for the Gan/Aleph and Bet classes. Each family participates in bringing snacks; class parents create a schedule of rotation. As always, any food brought into the synagogue must be marked with a symbol of kashrut. Please note on the calendar that the kitchen will be closed before and on Passover.

Here are a few basics about our kosher snack policy.

- All snacks must be dairy or pareve.
- You may use your own utensils and containers.
- Snacks may be packed in any type of small bag or box.

All fresh fruit and vegetables are kosher. Canned, packaged, or frozen products should have a kosher symbol on the package. These are readily available and include many store brands and major brands.

There are several students in the school with severe peanut allergies. To ensure their health and safety while at school, we ask everyone to refrain from bringing peanuts and peanut products into the building.

Discipline Policy

Teachers will make every effort to deal with disciplinary problems in a positive and productive manner. Every effort will be made to deal with disruptive behavior within the classroom. Occasionally, however, such efforts may prove ineffective. In that case, the following procedure will be followed:

The teacher will discuss the disruptive behavior with the student in a respectful manner. Students will be advised of consequences of continued disruptive behavior. In the event of further disruption, the Education Director will be contacted to implement a plan appropriate to the situation including notifying parents. If necessary, a meeting will be set with the Education Director, the parent and perhaps the teacher to create a viable plan for continued student participation in the classroom or if necessary to recommend temporary suspension from classes.

Evaluation of Students

It is the goal of the Religious School that progress reports serve both the parents and the students as a positive and honest reflection of the student's work in class. Progress reports are issued twice a year in December and May. The reports update parents on student work and effort. Any classroom concerns by teachers, parents or students should be discussed as soon as possible during the school year. You are encouraged to talk directly to your child's teacher when a concern is apparent.

Special Needs

The staff at the CBI Religious School works hard to insure that every child is successful in school. The registration form asks for information concerning special needs of any student who is enrolling in our school. Children with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan should submit a copy to the Education Director for review. Such information is important for ensuring your child's success.

Siddurim (Prayerbooks)

Each Gimel student will receive a *Siddur* (prayer book) at the Gimel class *Siddur* ceremony. If your student is in classes Dalet through Zayin and does not have a *siddur*, we request that your family purchase *Siddur Sim Shalom*, the prayer book used by our congregation. This one time purchase will preclude the necessity of photocopying pages prior to leading services. It is also a good way for families to familiarize themselves with our prayer book. Books can be ordered from The Israel Book Store: 800-323-7723.

Bar and Bat Mitzvah Requirements

1. All candidates for becoming *B'nai Mitzvah* must be Jewish in accordance with the view of the Conservative Movement's Committee on Law and Standards as interpreted by Rabbi David. This means that candidates must be the children of Jewish mothers or have undergone a conversion ceremony including immersion in a *mikva* (ritual bath) for boys and girls, and circumcision for boys. It is expected that conversion procedures for adopted children, or children of a non-Jewish mother who are being raised as Jews, will be done while the children are young rather than waiting just prior to becoming *Bar or Bat Mitzvah*. Please contact Rabbi David if you have specific questions.
2. We prefer that all candidates attend our religious school program for five years. Students transferring from other schools will be expected to show comparable study for the five years leading up to becoming *Bar or Bat Mitzvah*. Students who do not meet the educational requirements will be tested to see if they meet the appropriate standards for becoming *Bar or Bat Mitzvah*. Additional tutoring at the parents' expense may be necessary to meet these requirements.
3. It is understood that *B'nai Mitzvah* candidates must have satisfactory attendance and satisfactory completion of required work in the school.
4. The parent(s) or guardian(s) of students must be members of the synagogue in good standing in order to have a *Bar or Bat Mitzvah* service at Congregation B'nai Israel.
5. Students in the seventh grade, unless they are enrolled in a Jewish day school or yeshiva, must attend the Zayin class in order to be eligible for a *Bar or Bat Mitzvah* service at Congregation B'nai Israel.

In addition to Religious School attendance, private tutoring is required to prepare for *B'nai Mitzvah*. There is a meeting led by Rabbi David, in the fall of the Hay class year for parents/guardians to learn more about the *B'nai Mitzvah* year at CBI. Families will receive the *B'nai Mitzvah* Guide from the synagogue office.

Post Bar and Bat Mitzvah

Becoming a *Bar or Bat Mitzvah* is not the end of a Jewish education or Jewish life connection. We have added a special Wednesday evening program for 8th and 9th grade students which is designed to encourage thoughtful discussions of how Judaism fits into their lives. Post-*B'nai Mitzvah* students are also encouraged to maintain their Hebrew and prayer skills by participating in regular Shabbat and Festival services throughout the year. We particularly urge those who learned parts of the service for their *B'nai Mitzvah* to maintain their skills by leading parts of the service or chanting *Torah* and *Haftarah* portions.

Teen Programming

Madrichim ó Students in 9th through 12th grade are eligible to work in the Religious School as Classroom Assistants from September through May. Interested students should contact the Education Director who matches classroom availability, student Judaic background and teacher needs to create a supportive and productive working relationship for the school. Teens are paid for their work.

Youth Group ó Our congregation understands that associations with other Jewish children must go beyond the classroom setting. The CBI youth group offers events for teens to enjoy that will bring them together for social, religious and social action experiences under the leadership of our Youth Advisor. Look for announcements of these events in our newsletter and through e-mail.

JTOV: Jewish Teens of the Valley

JTOV is open to Jewish teens in grades 7-12 in the Upper Valley. This collective is funded by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation Teen Initiative, Congregation B'nai Israel, Jewish Community of Amherst, Beit Ahavah, and Temple Israel in order to bring together teens from all over the valley. This program sponsors regional events such as; JVCorps: A Community Service Program, It's A Girl Thing: Rosh Hodesh Groups, and Monthly Jewish Yoga. Each event is open to all our teens and is a great opportunity to meet others from the region. For more information contact JTOV directly.

School Withdrawal Policy

In the event that a family decides to withdraw their child from the school, they must notify the Education Director, in writing of their intent. Refund of tuition will be as follows, from the date the written notice is received:

- First 2 weeks of school - 75% refund based on the full year tuition
- Week 3 to the end of first semester - 50% refund based on full year tuition
- First 4 weeks of second semester - 25% refund based on full year tuition

We look forward to another wonderful school year!