

Summer 2009

Dear Families,

“If we only educate the kids and not the parents, it’s like heating your house in the winter but leaving the windows open.” – Parent comment at our May focus group.

Tishrei 5770 marks the beginning of our New Year, spiritual and academic. We begin this school year with a Board-appointed education committee charged with re-envisioning and clearly defining CBI’s youth and family educational mission. While this important process will take place over several years and requires input from the CBI community at-large, this year there are enhanced and expanded Shabbat family programs. In order to make your children’s Religious School education more relevant, families are encouraged to participate in Shabbat, holiday and Judaic programs both at the Synagogue and at other Valley institutions. Look for information about programs on the CBI website [www.cbinorthampton.org](http://www.cbinorthampton.org) and in the monthly synagogue newsletter, Kehila.

The following pages are filled with important information to familiarize you with protocol and programs that support the functioning of the school. Please read this handbook and contact us with any questions. We welcome you into the CBI school community in anticipation of a productive and engaging year!

We look forward to the work of the year ahead and to the opportunity to create deeper connections to Torah, mitzvot and ma’asim tovim – good deeds.

Brachot, (blessings)

Alison Morse, M.Ed.

Education Director

Lisa Barondes and Shelley Schieffelin

Education Committee Co-Chairs

**Education Director contact information: 584-3593 x203 or [cbi.edu.dir@verizon.net](mailto:cbi.edu.dir@verizon.net)**

## 1. 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

Classes will be referred to by these names throughout this manual.

## 2. Registration

Religious School enrollment is open to members of Congregation B'nai Israel and non- members with students in kindergarten – 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 or [bnai.israel@verizon.net](mailto:bnai.israel@verizon.net) or online: [www.cbinorthampton.org](http://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, Janis Levy ([cbidirector@verizon.net](mailto:cbidirector@verizon.net)) or Beth Goldstein, Chair of dues and assessment ([bethgoldstein@juno.com](mailto:bethgoldstein@juno.com)). General questions regarding registration should be directed to Alison Morse ([cbi.edudir@verizon.net](mailto:cbi.edudir@verizon.net), 584-3593x203 ), Education Director.

## 3. Schedule

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

See the school calendar or “Calendar at a Glance” for dates of supplementary programs and Shabbat dinners.

#### 4. 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.

**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 GET YOUR CHILD FROM THEIR CLASSROOM. 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. **On Sundays, Gan/Aleph, Bet and Gimel students are dismissed from their classrooms** and Dalet, Hay, Vav, and Zayin students are dismissed at the entrance to the building. 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.

#### 5. 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**.

#### 6. 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.

#### 7. 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.

## 8. 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

## 9. 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 a 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 God, bible stories and Jewish values. Through active learning, art projects, singing and dancing, students integrate concepts and values that reflect classroom discussions. Hebrew words are introduced and incorporated into the classroom vocabulary and the aleph-bet, is taught with the *Alef to Tav Activity Book*. Tefilot (prayer), songs, parent involvement and snack complement the curriculum.

**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 Torah scribes and their work, objects and people in the synagogue, and the meaning of kashrut. Emphasis is placed on greater knowledge of the holidays and Torah stories. A parent student book list and lending library augments the emerging understanding of Jewish thought and community. Gan/Aleph and Bet meet weekly for community enrichment via song and dance.

**GIMEL:** Hebrew reading, decoding and comprehension are the focus of the first part of class on Sundays and Thursdays. Judaic units such as blessings, the cycle of the Jewish year, the Ten Commandments, and Jews around the world, add another layer to the emerging base of Judaic knowledge garnered from the students' early years. Gimel class participates in a Thursday afternoon sing with Dalet – Vav students. Each student receives a Siddur with personal inscriptions from their families as part of a mid-year ceremony.

**DALET:** Students continue learning Tefila (prayer), Hebrew reading and comprehension skills. The Modern Hebrew reader for this class is called, *Shalom Ivrit*. Students learn to construct their own Hebrew sentences and are introduced to the script alphabet mid-year. Life-cycle events (including two family sessions led by the Rabbi), an overview of the five books of the Torah and text study from *A Child's Bible – Lessons from the Torah*, are the pillars of the Dalet curriculum. On Sundays, students hear tales of Elijah the Prophet and on Thursdays the class joins the other grades for an afternoon sing.

**HAY:** The year begins with the study of the Shabbat Amidah with an emphasis on reading accuracy. Students study ancient and modern history and the geography of Israel, with a multi-faceted curriculum that incorporates art, music, creative writing and role-playing. 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. Kitah Hay students continue to build their Hebrew reading and comprehension skills with the *Shalom Ivrit* reader. The Rabbi meets with parents of the Hay class twice during the year to discuss Israeli politics.

**VAV:** Students are introduced to the Tezedek Partner Program that includes learning, giving and organizing for social justice. Students study Prophets and Pirkei Avot (ethical teachings as they prepare for the B'nai Mitzvah year. Tefila (prayer) includes the Torah service, and blessings recited before and after the haftarah. Hebrew language learning continues with Shalom Ivrit Two. On Thursday afternoons, Vav students join the younger grades for singing.

**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 visit to the Hatikvah Holocaust Center in Springfield, a book discussion of The Man from the Other Side by Uri Orlev, a viewing of the movies: The Pigeon and Paperclips, and a visit with a child 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 EIGHTH GRADE 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. Eighth grade students have conversational Hebrew at this time. The second class for seventh and eighth grade students, over the course of two years, includes the study of: topical issues, why pray, ethical quandaries and Israel.

## 10. Home Reinforcement

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 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 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. This is an important aspect

of their religious and pre-bnai mitzvah education and every effort you make helps make their Jewish education more meaningful.

## 11. J-Tov – Jewish Teens of the Valley

J-TOV is a new teen collaborative, of four synagogues (CBI, Beit Ahava, JCA and Temple Israel in Greenfield) that is funded in part by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation. The JCA is coordinating the J-TOV collective and will sponsor a variety of programs to broaden the scope of informal learning opportunities and the social context for teens (6<sup>th</sup>- 12<sup>th</sup> grades) in the region.

### **Program overview:**

1. Monthly community service learning projects in Northampton and Amherst
2. 4 regional events for teens (i.e. Arts Fest, Teen Rekindle Shabbat, Shabbat retreat, Gleaning with Gladness etc)
3. Coordination with B'nai Tzedek for Retreat and community service projects
4. Monthly Teen Jewish Yoga - holiday based and co-ed
5. Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl's Thing, monthly groups

On site at CBI, we will continue the madrichim and middle school programs.

**Middle School for 8<sup>th</sup> Grade** – The Middle School program meets on Wednesday evenings from mid-October through May. A light dinner is served at 5:30 pm followed by two classes: “Conversational Hebrew and Israeli Film”, and “Jews that Rock and Rhyme”, a course that blends performance art, music, and insightful discussion.

**Madrichim** – Students in 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> 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.

## 12. Family Education Programs and Event Schedule

Each class is offered a curriculum-based family education program that enhances the classroom experience. We strongly encourage families to attend. These programs are a great way to build friendships, learn, and spend quality time together as a school. Families will receive a reminder notice and/or an email before each class program. Please refer to the school calendar for class specific events. In addition to school based programs, there will be CBI and regional collaborative family education activities throughout the year. Please see Kehila and the weekly CBI emails for upcoming events.

## 13. Special Needs

The staff at the CBI Religious School works hard to insure that every child is successful in school. We have a Hebrew tutor on site for children requiring educational support. When possible, we provide aides for children needing one-on-one assistance. Children with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) should submit a copy to the Education Director for review with our Education Specialist who advises the teachers.

## 14. Junior Congregation and Shabbat Services

Shabbat monthly programming for students and families include: Tot Shabbat led by Peggy Walker, Shabbat Sing led by Pamela Schwartz and Joel Feldman and Family Minyan led by Ari Reis. All three Shabbat programs include song, some movement and creative expression to foster community in joyous celebration. Join Ari, with Rabbi David at the monthly Family Minyan (new offering this year) as we establish a mini service that includes Torah discussions and inspired learning. Programs begin at 11 am and are listed on the school calendar and the CBI website: [www.cbinorthampton.org](http://www.cbinorthampton.org). Other programs to watch for are Tot Kabbalat Shabbat, offered several times per year on a Friday evening (includes song, story circle and vegetarian pot luck dinner) and Marla BB Sing! (focus on song dynamics). Junior Congregation is in a planning/re-envisioning stage. We look forward to sharing uplifting Shabbat experiences with everyone and encourage you to attend several programs to experience this variety of offerings at CBI.

## 15. Discipline Policy

Derech erez kadma l'Torah – respectful behavior precedes the study of Torah. The philosophy of Congregation B'nai Israel's discipline policy is one of mutual respect. Each student is expected to act with dignity and show respect for him/herself, other students, the Rabbi, Education Director, teachers, other staff members, and the synagogue. Teachers are also expected to act with dignity and respect for themselves, other teachers, and students. Our Religious School follows a disciplinary system that allows teachers and students a clear understanding of acceptable classroom behavior. For students who are unable to behave accordingly, there is a protocol in place to encourage them to make better choices.

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. If resolution is not reached, the Education Director will meet with the parent and teacher either together or separately to create a viable plan for student participation in the classroom or if necessary to recommend temporary suspension from classes.

## 16. 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 the Rabbi or Education Director.

## 17. Evaluation of Students

Progress reports are issued twice a year in December and March. 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.

## 18. 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 parve.
- 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.**

## 19. Mailboxes

Each child in the school has a mailbox located in the hall next to the back door. Please check your boxes on a regular basis for updates to the school calendar and information regarding upcoming events.

## 20. 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 2009-2010 schedule is listed in the school calendar.

There will be one Erev Shabbat and one Shabbat morn designated for student led services. Please check the school calendar and save the date.

Students are welcome to explore other 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 b'nai mitzvah preparation.

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. The Gimel, Dalet, Hay and Vav classes attend a Shacharit (morning) service once a month on a Sunday.

## 21. 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. On Shabbat and holidays, students should dress in a manner that reflects the holiness of the day. Caps are not an acceptable replacement for kipot in sanctuary services. For safety reasons, “heelies” are not permitted during school hours.

## 22. Electronic Devices

The following are not allowed during school hours: iPods, electronic games and cell phones.

## 23. Prayer Books

Gimel students will receive Siddurim (prayer books) at the Gimel class Siddur ceremony. If your student is in Dalet-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/one per family purchase should help prevent the loss of books from the synagogue and 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.

## 24. Bar and Bat Mitzvah Requirements

1. All candidates for b’nai mitzvah must be Jewish in accordance with the view of the Conservative Movement's Committee on Law and Standards as interpreted by our Rabbi. 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. Contact the Rabbi if you have specific questions. 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 for bar or bat mitzvah.
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 bar or bat mitzvah. Students who do not meet the educational requirements will be tested to see if they meet the appropriate standards for the 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 b’nai mitzvah celebration 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 bar or bat mitzvah at Congregation B’nai Israel.

## 25. Bar and Bat Mitzvah Instruction

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-b'nai mitzvah students are 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.

## 26. Education Committee

Shelley Schieffelin and Lisa Barondes are the co-chairs of the Education Committee. If you would like more information about the committee and its work, please contact Shelley - [shschieff@comcast.net](mailto:shschieff@comcast.net) or Lisa- [lbarondes@yahoo.com](mailto:lbarondes@yahoo.com). The committee meets monthly; sessions are open to the community. Dates will be posted on the weekly CBI emails.

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**Thank you for taking the time to read this manual!**