

**Congregation Beth Israel**

**Religious  
School  
Handbook**

**2006-2007  
5766**

**5600 North Braeswood  
Houston, Texas 77096  
Phone: 713-271-7369 ~ Fax: 713-771-5705  
Website: [www.beth-israel.org](http://www.beth-israel.org)**

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# Religious School Staff

## Director of Education

Sharon L. Wechter: ext. 605                      swechter@beth-israel.org

## Assistant Director of Education

Kitty Kahn: ext. 312                              kkahn@beth-israel.org

## Judaic Studies Coordinator

Barbara Garber: ext. 380                      bgarber@beth-israel.org

## Hebrew Studies Coordinator

Susan Perry: ext. 307                            sperry@beth-israel.org

## Administrative Assistant

Barbara Muster: ext. 313                      bmuster@beth-israel.org

## Clergy

David Lyon, Senior Rabbi                      dlyon@beth-israel.org  
Adrienne Scott, Asst. Rabbi                    ascott@beth-israel.org  
Robert Gerber, Cantor                           rgerber@beth-israel.org

# Hours of Operation

## Religious School Office Hours

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday	8:30 AM – 5:30 PM
Wednesday	8:30 AM – 6:00 PM
Friday	8:30 AM – 4:00 PM
Sunday	8:30 AM – 1:00 PM

## Class Sessions

Religious School: Grades Pre-K – 6	Sunday, 9:00 AM-11:15 AM
Hebrew Classes: Grades 4-7	Wednesday or Thursday, 4:30-6:00 PM
High School: Grades 7-12	Sunday, 11:30 AM – 1:00 PM

*Please note time change for Religious School, ending at 11:15 this year; additionally, Seventh Grade will be meeting during High School from 11:30 am to 1:00 pm.*

# General Information

## Welcome

We are so pleased that you have made the commitment to be a part of Congregation Beth Israel's Religious School! We hope that you and your children will find our school environment to be a safe, sweet and spiritual one. Our teachers are extremely dedicated – from Pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> Grade – to providing our students and their families with positive Jewish learning experiences, which will only enrich their Jewish souls, their homes, and their lives.

## Philosophy of the School

Through the Judaic, Hebrew and social programs at Congregation Beth Israel, we seek to create an exciting and supportive environment, where our children can learn, grow and be challenged. Religious school programs help nurture a strong Jewish identity and sense of commitment to Judaism within our students and their families. We strive to establish significant ties with the larger synagogue community, the Shlenker School, the home, and the Houston Jewish community.

Ultimately, it is our goal to develop within each of our students a sense of *Derech Eretz* (the proper way of treating other human beings), a love of Judaism, and a body of knowledge that will allow each individual to see the world through Jewish eyes.

## Goals of the Hebrew Curriculum

The Beth Israel Hebrew curriculum will provide students with the opportunity to:

- \* Know the name and sound of each letter and vowel of the Hebrew alphabet;
- \* Understand the central role prayer and Hebrew language play in our heritage;
- \* Identify and translate key Hebrew terms;
- \* Acquire a Hebrew prayer and holiday vocabulary;
- \* Understand the structure of Shabbat services;
- \* Read the siddur prayers fluidly;
- \* Participate and lead worship;
- \* Progress at an individual pace.

## Parental Support for Jewish Learning

Receiving a Jewish education is the right of every Jewish child. We invite you to become an active participant in your child's Jewish education and in the Beth Israel community through the many learning and social activities for adults and families. Join us in building our Religious School! – attend a family learning day...chaperone a class trip...bring your child to Shabbat or holiday worship services...or contact us to explore ways in which you can become involved.

We in the Religious School are eager to meet with you to discuss questions or concerns you may have about your child's Jewish learning. Please call or email to set up an appointment. We also urge you to meet your child's teacher early in the year, especially if he or she has any special learning, physical, or emotional needs.

# Family Learning Opportunities

*Please check the Religious School calendar for dates.*

## **Family Education Programs:**

Family Education programs bring parents and children together for a fun, Jewish learning experience. These family programs not only reinforce classroom learning, but provide opportunities for families to get to know one another through engaging activities led by Sharon Wechter and members of our faculty. *Please mark your child's Family Education Program on your calendar!*

- ◆ **Kindergarten: Shema Program, Sunday, October 8, 2006; 9:00-11:15am**
- ◆ **Consecration: Friday evening, October 13, 2006, 6:30pm**
- ◆ **First Grade: Shabbat Services and Dinners, Friday evenings, November 3, 2006 and Friday evening, May 4, 2007, 6:30pm**
- ◆ **Second Grade: Synagogue Program, Sunday, November 5, 2006, 9:00-11:15am**
- ◆ **Third Grade: Tu B'Shvat Program, Sunday, February 4, 2007, 9:00-11:15am**
- ◆ **Fourth Grade: Mock Wedding, Sunday, April 29, 2007, 9:00-11:15am**
- ◆ **Fifth Grade: Galveston Program, Sunday, April 22, 2007, 9:00-11:15am**
- ◆ **Sixth Grade: Bar/Bat Mitzvah Program, Saturday evening Havdalah Program, October 21, 2006, 5:00-7:30pm**
- ◆ **Tenth Grade(Confirmation): Family Study, Sunday, September 17, 2006, 11:45am-1pm**
- ◆ **Eleventh and Twelfth Grades: College Prep Program, Sunday, October 22, 2006, 11:45am-1pm**
  
- \*\* **Family Lunch (Pizza) in the Sukkah (Pre-K-6<sup>th</sup> Families), Sunday, October 8, 2006, 11:30am-1pm**
- \*\* **Pancake Breakfast, Sunday, January 7, 2007, 9:00-11:15am**
- \*\* **Pre-K through 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Passover Family Program, Sunday, March 11, 2007, 9:00-11:15am**

## **Special Programming**

We have planned several special programs for our students in addition to those mentioned above:

- **Eleventh Grade Students:** Selichot Program, George Observatory (transportation provided), Sunday, September 16, 2006, 5:00pm – midnight
- **Twelfth Grade Students and Families:** *Friday Night Live* worship service, Friday, February 2, 2007, 6:30pm, followed by dinner
- **Twelfth Grade Students:** Twelfth Grade Class Trip, Thursday, March 15-Sunday, March 18, 2007, details to follow
- **Ninth Grade Students:** Shabbaton in Austin, Friday, April 13-Saturday, April 14, 2007, details to follow

## **Tot Shabbat**

Usually held on the third Friday of every month, Tot Shabbat offers families with children ages one to five, a Shabbat dinner and a highly interactive worship experience. *Please see your Beth Israel Bulletin or Website for specific dates.*

## **Family Shabbat**

Held on the first Friday night of each month, this “family friendly” Shabbat service is held in the Chapel. Many of the melodies will be recognizable to anyone who attends the Religious School worship services, and will be accompanied with piano and/or guitar. Students and parents are encouraged to join our temple community for worship and dinner following the service. RSVP your family dinner reservations to the temple: 713.771.6221.

## **Holiday Programs**

Throughout the year, the Beth Israel community joins together in worship and observance of Shabbat and the Jewish holidays. These are wonderful opportunities for parents and children to celebrate and to feel a part of the Beth Israel family!

## **Beth Israel Mitzvah Day – April 1, 2007**

Please mark the date! Religious School classes will participate in specially designed, age-appropriate activities.

# **Featured Programs**

## **Worship Services in the Religious School**

Sunday worship services are offered to Pre-K through Third Grade (10:45-11:15am). The services will be led by Sharon Wechter and members of our clergy: these are learning services, where students will learn basic prayers such as the Barchu, the Shema, Mi Chamocho, and be introduced to stories from the Torah. Parents are always welcome to join us during these services in the Chapel – some parents have the opportunity to learn these prayers for the first time, and many others have expressed their appreciation for the chance to gain an understanding of the meaning of the Hebrew words and prayer concepts.

This year, the 4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> Grades will hold their service on Wednesday or Thursday from 5:30-5:55pm. Each class will be assigned specific dates to lead their classmates in prayer (guided by Sharon). These services will be designed to help students gain a comfort level standing on the bimah as well as practice the prayers they are studying in the classrooms. Again, parents are always welcome to join us!

## **The Creative Arts**

Ben Baron will once again teach music to students in Pre-K through Third Grade classes, and enhance our school's worship services. Additionally, both Rabbi Scott and Sharon Wechter will add their voices and guitars to teach students prayer, holiday and contemporary Jewish songs.

Our art teacher, Marla Roberson, leads students in creating ritual objects specially selected for each grade. Our goal is to provide students with the opportunity to perform the mitzvah of *hiddur mitzvah* – the beautification of a mitzvah – by allowing them to work with quality art materials as they develop their own collection of beautiful ritual objects, worthy of being used and saved!

## **Tzedakah**

Giving is an important mitzvah (commandment) of Jewish life. In each class, money for *tzedakah* is collected from the students. *Tzedakah* can be literally translated as “righteousness” – making the giving of *tzedakah* the “right” thing to do! Please take time to discuss with your child the mitzvah of giving *tzedakah*, and encourage your child to give a portion of his/her own money. Each class will determine which cause or organization they wish to contribute their funds.

## **Bar/Bat Mitzvah Preparation**

Our Religious School seeks to provide students with an adequate preparation for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah in both Hebrew and Judaic Studies. This year we have made it possible for students to pursue both areas of study without conflict by separating B'nai Mitzvah tutoring from the Religious School classes. We would also like to impress upon our families that Jewish learning is a life-long process that continues well past the Bar/Bat Mitzvah year and we encourage our students to commit to finishing our high school program.

## **Gift of Israel**

Gift of Israel is a national savings program to help fund a child's Israel experience. It is a three-way partnership involving the individual family, Congregation Beth Israel, and the Jewish Federation. Gift of Israel allows a family to start saving for the child's trip to Israel when she/he is still in elementary school or becomes a bar/bat mitzvah. When your child reaches an eligible age for an Israel trip, the funds saved are applied to the cost of the trip. For more information please call the Temple or the Jewish Federation.

# **School Policies**

## **Academics**

Parents and students should acquaint themselves with the curricular objectives for the appropriate grade; our curriculum will be posted on the Beth Israel website. Twice yearly, your child's teacher(s) will send home a summary of the material covered during the semester and your child's progress. If remediation is necessary, it will be provided during school hours whenever possible.

## **Special Needs**

For confidential referrals and recommendations, teachers and parents are encouraged to contact Diane Brezner, Special Education Consultant for the Bureau of Jewish Education (dbrezner@houstonjewish.org). The BJE sponsors both community-wide classes for children with severe special needs, and the Keshet Parent Support Group, which offers workshops and speakers for families with special needs children.

## **Hebrew**

Our Hebrew Studies program will be led this year by the newest member of our administrative team, Susan Perry, Hebrew Studies Coordinator. Students who need extra help with Hebrew reading skills will receive one-on-one tutoring during class time; if more assistance is needed, private tutor referrals will be made available through the Religious School office.

## **Attendance**

We encourage your child's regular attendance in class; this will not only help him/her to keep up with his/her classmates, but it will also help to build community! As absences may require make up work, please call your child's teacher to find out what he/she has missed. We will contact parents of students who are absent three times in a row to schedule makeup assignments.

Please note: the Confirmation Kallah is mandatory. Extenuating circumstances must be discussed with the Rabbis. Participation in Mitzvah Day for all students in every grade is required as well.

## **Arrivals and Departures**

### **Arrivals:**

Sundays and Wednesdays: School entrance

### **Departures:**

Sunday mornings:

Walk-in pick up and carpool options are available. Details will be sent to parents in a separate letter.

Wednesday and Thursday evenings: School entrance

Please be prompt in dropping off and picking up your child. For the safety of all children, please **do not use a cell phone** in the carpool line!

Children will not be allowed to leave the designated area before their car (or parent) arrives. Teachers and volunteers will be on duty in the parking lot to help keep our children safe.

## **Early Pick-Up**

Your child's safety is our primary concern. Thus, if you need to pick your child up early from school, parents are required to send a note in with their child. No child will be allowed to leave the building or his/her classroom unescorted. **Parents must come into the building and sign their child out in the office; your child will then be escorted to you, so please do not go directly to the classroom.**

## **Cancellation Procedures**

In the event of severe weather or other emergency, school may be cancelled. Cancellations will be announced on radio station **KTRH 740 AM**. If possible, you will receive a call from the school.

## **Visiting the Classroom**

Parents are always welcome to visit the classroom; however, we request that you let us know ahead of time.

## **Guest Policy**

Guests are not allowed in PreK-6<sup>h</sup> Grades or in our High School. Extenuating circumstances must be discussed in advance with the Director of Education.

## **Medication**

We will not administer any medication to a student, including over-the-counter medications, and students should not bring their own medications to Religious School as well. When necessary, we will contact the parent, or others listed on the emergency form, to pick up a student who is not feeling well. **Please inform us of any medications your child is taking should we need to inform emergency personnel.**

## **Proper Attire**

Students are expected to dress in clothing that brings honor and respect to themselves. The Religious School Board has passed the following policy guideline: "If a child's clothing is distracting or disturbing to the class, the teacher is to report it to an administrator, who will assess what actions are necessary (e.g. a phone call to the parents)." We abide by the HISD dress policy.

## **Enrollment Requirements**

Enrollment and good standing in Religious School is required in order to be eligible for Bar/Bat Mitzvah and Confirmation.

## **Questions and Comments**

Your feedback and input are welcome. Please feel free to contact Sharon Wechter, Kitty Kahn, Barbara Garber or your child's teacher to discuss any questions or concerns. Let's keep the lines of communication open!

# Code of Conduct

**PLEASE READ AND DISCUSS WITH YOUR CHILD,  
THEN SIGN AND RETURN THE FORM TO RELIGIOUS SCHOOL OFFICE.**

Students are expected to be courteous and respectful to each other and to their teachers. Students have a right to learn and teachers have a right to teach; anything interfering in this process is a problem.

In all cases of behavioral difficulties, the teacher will keep the Director informed of incidents and action(s) taken. Confidential records will be maintained. The discipline procedure is as follows:

1. First incident of misbehavior: The teacher will discuss the problem with the student, and give a warning (unless misbehavior is so severe that the child must be removed from the classroom immediately).
2. Second incident: If necessary, the student will be removed from the class and escorted to the office (accompanied by an adult or aide). The parent will be called to discuss the situation and possible resolutions.
3. Third incident: The student will be escorted to the office. The parent will be contacted. If circumstances warrant, s/he will be asked to pick up the student. A meeting will be arranged, if appropriate, with the student, parent(s), teacher and Director of Education.

## **Certain offenses will result in immediate removal from the school:**

- ◆ Use or possession of drugs, alcohol, harmful or dangerous objects.
- ◆ Theft
- ◆ Vandalism
- ◆ Smoking
- ◆ Violence or threat of violence to others
- ◆ Placing self and/or other students in danger
- ◆ Extreme disregard of Religious School rules

## **The following items should not be brought to school and are subject to confiscation by teacher or Director:**

Frisbees	skateboards
skates	squirt guns
cards (trading, playing)	walkman/CD players ( <i>except as noted below</i> )
fireworks	radios
weapons	balls

## ***Please note:***

- ◆ Cell phones / beepers must be silent during class sessions.
- ◆ Chewing gum is not allowed on the premises.
- ◆ The sale of any item not for a Jewish school or youth organization is prohibited.
- ◆ Walkman/CD players are allowed only for Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutoring.

# CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL RELIGIOUS SCHOOL 2006-2007

*Parents: Please sign this document and return to the Religious School Office no later than:*

Wednesday, September 6th, 2006

Fax: 713-771-5705

**Our family has read the Religious School Handbook  
and discussed the Code of Conduct together.**

**[Please Print]**

Name of Parent \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) and grade(s) of child(ren)

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Any questions? Contact Sharon L. Wechter, Director of Education  
[swechter@beth-israel.org](mailto:swechter@beth-israel.org) or 713-271-7369, ext 605**