



Congregation B'nai Israel
Religious School
Family Handbook

Rabbi Mona Alfi, Senior Rabbi
Cantor Julie Steinberg
Denise Crevin, Director of Education
Leslie Oberst, Executive Director

Sunday: Pre-K/K - 7th grades 9:30am - 12:30pm
Tuesday: 4th - 6th grades 4pm - 6pm

Congregation B'nai Israel
3600 Riverside Boulevard, Sacramento, CA 95818

Congregation B'nai Israel Religious School

Goals of Our Education Program

Welcome to our school! Our school's lay and professional leadership are excited and honored to have you as part of our learning community.

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



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 miss them if they are absent.
- Students know that they can trust the other individuals in the community.
- Students feel that they have a sense of shared goals and values.
- Students know that they have a role in their own education and decision-making process.
- Students are aware that they are a part of a specifically Reform Jewish community and participate in living Jewish experiences.

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 every family with a child requiring a specialized Jewish Education. We look forward to partnering with families and using our resources in creative ways to meet these needs.

Lastly, we aim to promote Jewish learning and commitment among all ages, including our teens. One of the ways that our post-B'nai Mitzvah students demonstrate their newly adult commitment to Judaism and to their community is through service. We offer all students in grades 8-12 the opportunity to be *madrichim* (teacher's aides) in order to serve as leaders, guides, and role models for our younger children.

*****We at CBI also firmly believe that finances should not be an impediment to Jewish education. If needed, please contact us for scholarship information.****

Congregation B'nai Israel Religious School Curriculum

CBI's Judaica and Hebrew curriculum aim to enrich students' involvement in synagogue and Jewish life. As such, our programs appeal to a wide variety of learning styles and incorporate kinesthetic, active learning alongside textbooks. Every Sunday begins with a participatory *family tefillah* (prayer) service from 9:30-10:00 a.m., with the aim of bonding as a community, practicing the prayers that students learn in class, and deepening a student's personal connection to worship, theological exploration, and historical liturgy. The following are our primary religious school programs:



K'tonton is a family program for children ages 3 to 5 that includes parents and grandparents. This program focuses on Jewish values through PJ Library stories and hands-on learning, and offers library, music, cooking, and art time, as well as parent education.

PreK/Kindergarten is a combined class that runs on a two-year curriculum covering holidays, Hebrew terms, prayers, God, the synagogue and basic Jewish concepts.

1st-7th grade Judaica utilizes the Union of Reform Judaism's *Chai Curriculum*, a spiraling curriculum that builds on itself year by year. It asks the big questions that are relevant to students' lives and explores the richness and depth of Jewish tradition through a core program of Torah, *Avodah*, and *G'milut Chasidim*, covering God, sacred texts, values, holidays, Israel, and more.

Our 1st-3rd grade **Hebrew program** focuses on letter and vowel recognition and basic reading fluency. Our 4th-6th grade students spend 45 minutes every Sunday and 1.5 hours every Tuesday engaged in Hebrew learning to become fluent in and understand the purpose and meaning of liturgical prayers and the order of the service. 6th graders also learn Torah and Haftarah trope with Cantor Steinberg, and our 7th grade focuses on conversational Hebrew, utilizing Behrman House's *Ulpan Alef*.



Our program also offers significant **elective programs**. K'tonton and PreK/K-3rd grade rotate through different sessions of art, library, cooking, and music. Our 4th-7th graders participate in a rotational chugim (elective) program for half an hour every Sunday and Tuesday in which they can choose from a variety of offerings including Jewish yoga, creative writing, art, conversational Hebrew, Israeli dance, cooking, theatre, Hebrew calligraphy, and more. After seven consecutive sessions of the same chug, students then choose a new chug for the next session. Our goal is to offer a wide variety of options to stimulate and engage our children in their Jewish learning.

Congregation B'nai Israel

Family Involvement: A Holy Partnership

“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.”

- Wendy Mogel, *Blessings of a Skinned Knee*

Through consistent communication, parent participation and education, and promotion of observance and learning at home, we hope to develop a true partnership between Religious School and home life. Families will receive a letter of welcome and introduction from teachers at the start of the school year, and teachers will continue to communicate with families throughout the year as well as provide student progress reports. We strongly encourage engaging in discussions, learning experiences and celebration of Jewish life with family and friends, so that together we can fulfill the *mitzvah* of “*v’shinantam l’vanecha*—you shall teach them [the Torah’s teachings] to your children.”

As you think about ways to engage your child, below are some questions that you can ask at the end of the school day:

- What was the funniest thing that happened today?
- Who did you spend time with at recess today?
- What art or cooking project did you do today?
- What question did you ask today?
- What prayer did you discuss today?
- What does that prayer/activity/art piece mean to you?
- What was your favorite part of class today?
- Can you tell me an idea you talked about in class?
- Can we read one of your Hebrew pages together?
- What was one of your favorite things you did today?

You can get also get more involved! Contact our Director of Education to volunteer or to become part of the Education Committee and take part in recommending new policies, volunteering in various capacities, and making the decisions that shape your child’s religious education!



Congregation B'nai Israel

Additional Programs & Activities

Second Shabbes: Tot Shabbat, Dinner, and Service



Our second Shabbat of each month is very family-friendly, helps build a strong community at B'nai Israel, and enhances the joy of Shabbat through *zemirot* (singing) and communal worship. Each month includes two family-friendly services for different age groups. Tot Shabbat at 6pm is intended for children ages 0-7 and their families. Our Second Shabbes service at 7:30pm is filled with music and is appropriate for everyone, children and adults alike. Between services, we host a community dinner with family and kid-friendly menus.

Different grades participate in leading part of both services. We invite families to join us for Shabbat dinner every month (RSVP required) and enjoy dining with their classes, teachers, and families, before or after attending the service(s) of their choice.

Our Friday 2nd Shabbes schedule:

6:00	Tot Shabbat
6:30	2 nd Shabbes Dinner
7:30	2 nd Shabbes Service

Class Family Gatherings

During the school year, parents of students in K'tonton through 7th grade assist in planning a variety of fun informal activities for each grade level. These 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, and also gets a great opportunity to meet more of his/her child's classmates. **(If you would like to serve as a class parent, please let the Director of Education and your child's teacher know).**



To promote parent interaction, **bagels and cream cheese** are offered free of charge every Sunday at 10:00am after *tefillah* in the social hall. Come schmooze and make connections!

Congregation B'nai Israel Policies and Procedures

Derekh Eretz: The Conduct of Our Community

Our religious school is founded on the following values and principles from our Jewish tradition. They are the foundation of the behavioral expectations of all members of our school community.

1. *Talmud Torah (The Study of Torah)*

The school is a place for the pursuit of learning with the goal of personal growth and the development of Jewish identities. To promote this goal we ask that your child:

- Attend all required study times.
- Leave games, toys, and electronic games at home.
- Come to school prepared with the necessary supplies and homework.

2. *V'ahavta l'Re'acha Kamocha (Love Your Neighbor as Yourself)*

Be respectful of the rights and feelings of others.

- Show respect to all teaching faculty, fellow students and other members of Congregation B'nai Israel.
- Eat politely and only in designated areas.
- Clean up after eating or other messy activities.
- Show proper respect to others using proper language, manners, and not touching others' possessions.

3. *Al Tifrosh min haTzibur (Don't Separate Yourself from the Community)*

Be respectful and take responsibility within the community.

- Out of consideration for other students and teachers, maintain a quiet manner in walkways on campus while classes are in session.
- Enter the *Beit K'neset* (sanctuary) quietly and with reverence. While there, keep feet on the ground and regard the *siddurim* (prayerbooks) with respect. Do not eat or drink in the sanctuary.

4. *Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh ba Zeh (All of the People of Israel are Responsible for One Another)*

Take responsibility for the safety of oneself and others.

- Respect the wishes of classmates and talk with one another respectfully in order to resolve differences of opinion.
- Remain on campus at all times from the time of drop-off until pick-up unless alternative plans have been arranged in advance.

5. *Bal Tashchit (Do Not Destroy or Waste)*

Be respectful and take responsibility for the environment and property.

- Keep off the grass—walk only on sidewalks.
- Use bathrooms properly and keep them clean.
- Treat all synagogue property with respect and act in accordance with the sanctity of our synagogue whenever you are on our property.

6. *Im Ein Ani Li, Mi Li? (If I Am Not For Myself, Who Will Be For Me?)*

Take responsibility for your actions.

- Comply with the customs of the school and temple. In the event that this *brit* is violated, take responsibility for your actions.



Congregation B'nai Israel Policies and Procedures

Classroom Visits

1. We are delighted to have parents visit their students' classes during the school year. However, to avoid disruptions of the school routine, we request advance notification of a parent visit. Please arrange your visit by calling the Director of Education to make arrangements.
2. **When you arrive at CBI, please sign in with the office personnel, who will provide you with a written authorization to visit a specific classroom.**
3. A child who is not enrolled in Congregation B'nai Israel Religious School will not be allowed in the classroom without the consent of the visitor's parent and approval of the Director of Education.
4. It is also the expectation of our *madrichim* that as members of our staff, they will not bring friends to join them during their duties. This policy aims to ensure the safety of our students, maintain the accountability of our school to our students and parents, and acknowledge the skill and training that *madrichim* undergo to be part of our professional Religious School staff.

Cell Phones



We ask that all students turn off cell phones during Religious School hours and teachers may collect phones while students are in class. If a student does use his/her phone during school hours, it will be confiscated. In case of an emergency, parents can reach students at (916) 446-4861 during Religious School or can call the Executive Director, Leslie Oberst, on her cell phone at (916) 206-1096

Homework

It is the policy of our school that teachers may assign homework. They will keep such assignments realistic, interesting, and relevant to the curriculum.

Examples of appropriate homework assignments may include: workbook pages, collection of artifacts, interviewing family members, and weekly Hebrew reading and prayer practice.

Parents are asked to support our teachers and students to achieve the educational goals that we set. If there are questions about a particular assignment, please speak to the child's teacher.

Early Release

For your child's security, if he or she needs to leave Religious School early, parents must fill out an early release form in the office and present it to the student's teacher. Written notice ahead of time to the teacher is also appreciated.

The adult should pick up the child at his/her classroom and make sure the teacher is aware of the pickup.

No child will be allowed to leave campus unless written notice is received, the Director of Education (or a designee such as the teacher) gives approval, and an adult is present at the classroom to pick up the child.

This policy will be strictly enforced throughout the school year.

Congregation B'nai Israel Policies and Procedures

Attendance

Religious School students are expected to attend at least 80 percent of class sessions throughout the school year:

- At least 23 of the 28 class sessions for PreK/Kindergarteners, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 7th graders.
- At least 46 of the 58 class sessions for 4th, 5th, and 6th graders.

After two absences, parents will be contacted so we can determine how best to support the student.

Please be one time! T'fillah begins at 9:30 a.m. and is an integral part of our religious school day.

Our goal is that our students be part of a vibrant positive Jewish learning community, which includes regular attendance.

Promotion

Students are promoted upon successfully demonstrating mastery of the required grade level material. This involves regular attendance and family support.

Students who need to do additional work to be at grade level will be provided with appropriate activities or projects. This work should be completed by the beginning of the next school year. We will work with you to support your student!



Bar/Bat Mitzvah

In order to become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah at Congregation B'nai Israel:

- The family must be members in good standing of the congregation and encourage their student to continue his/her religious education through Confirmation and high school.
- The student must have satisfactorily completed a minimum of three years of religious school immediately prior to the anticipated Bar/Bat Mitzvah service.
- The student must regularly attend Shabbat services during the period of training.
- *Please see the B'nai Mitzvah Handbook for further information.*



Congregation B'nai Israel Policies and Procedures

Dress Code

One important aspect of Religious School is to set an appropriate tone and atmosphere for Jewish study and worship. How we dress and present ourselves is a part of the way we demonstrate our serious purpose and show *kavod* (respect) for our synagogue and the activities in which we engage.

With this in mind, we ask that **all students, parents and faculty** dress in an appropriately modest manner for Religious School, and specifically adhere to the following guidelines:

- Wear blouses and tops that cover the midriff, back and shoulders. Choose fabrics that are opaque.
- Wear shorts and skirts at mid-thigh or longer, and no shorter.
- Wear clothing that does not reveal undergarments at the waist or shoulders.
- For girls, wear blouses or tops that do not have spaghetti straps.
- Wear T-shirts devoid of vulgar, obscene, offensive or inappropriate messages.
- Wear shoes without wheels and open-toed shoes that are not “flip-flops” for safety reasons. Wear shoes at all times.
- Sports uniforms are acceptable, assuming they meet these guidelines. However, cleats and other “outdoor” sports accessories should remain outside the temple.

Interfaith Enrollment Expectations

Our congregation strives to provide a welcoming environment and place of belonging for all of our members. We recognize that interfaith families are an integral part of our sacred community, and we appreciate the many parents, brought up in other religions who are raising their children as Jews with pride, love, and open support. A non-Jewish parent should be free to share cultural traditions and not be made to feel invisible in a child’s religious life.

However, participation in cultural and family traditions should be distinguished from formal religious training. As the Union for Reform Judaism has emphasized, enrolling a child in the religious education program of another faith is contrary to theological principles, as a person cannot identify as both Jewish and an adherent of any other faith. Dual enrollment places a child in an untenable position for spiritual development, and is incongruent with the mission of Jewish religious schools to enable students to develop strong Jewish identities.

Therefore, **it is the policy of Congregation B'nai Israel that students registered in our Religious School be raised as Jews and not receive formal religious education in any other religion.**

***** To confirm the understanding of the policies stated in the this Handbook, all parents and students must sign and submit the Family Agreement on the final page of our Registration Packet.*****

Thank you for entrusting CBI with your child’s religious school education!