2022-23/5783-84
PARENT HANDBOOK

The Early Childhood Center of Congregation Beth El
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Ayelet Mittelman, ECC Director
Amy Weinstein, Curriculum & Instructor Director

Like us on Facebook and Instagram, to stay in touch with other parents and find out all you need to know about what’s going on at Beth El Early Childhood Center!
# WELCOME

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Dear Congregation Beth El Early Childhood Center Families,

It is with great pleasure that we welcome our new and returning students and families! “Back to School” is such an exciting time of year for all of us. The 2022-2023 school year promises to be the most incredible year yet! We thank you for choosing Congregation Beth El Early Childhood Center, where all are welcome and everyone is family.

We are thrilled to welcome parents back into the building for “at the classroom door drop off”. We are excited to reintroduce our mid-day specials for our threes and up. We are also thrilled to bring back our daily specials programs, as well as introduce a new music and movement program. Lastly we are very excited to launch our new gardening program as well as introduce even more exciting changes later this year.

Please make sure to download the Tadpoles App in order to learn all about your child’s day!

Having parents as partners is the key to a successful program. There are many ways to become even more involved with your child’s education. Please consider volunteering for our Parent Teacher Group (PTG) who work diligently to provide events throughout the school year.

Congregation Beth El ECC is the best program for young learners and their families due to the quality and flexibility of the teachers, staff, and programs. Please help share your love of our ECC by spreading the word with neighbors and friends. Please also make sure to fill out the Gift Membership Interest form, to take advantage of all Beth El has to offer!

We look forward to an enriching year together! If we can ever be of assistance, please stop in or contact us. Please feel free to bring all forms and school supplies to the Meet-N-Greet on Friday, August 26th at 10:00 a.m.!

B’shalom,

Ayelet Mittelman, ECC Director
Amy Weinstein, Curriculum and Education Director
Established in 1921 in the Parkside section of Camden, New Jersey, Beth El moved to Cherry Hill in 1969. As one of the largest Conservative synagogues in South Jersey, Beth El is dedicated to preserving Jewish traditions and values. With an awareness of present as well as future needs, Beth El provides an outstanding and complete array of services and programs for its members and the community.

In 1998, Beth El opened its Katz-Silver Educational Center on the Appel Family Campus in Voorhees housing the Early Childhood Center and the Religious School. In April 2009 the synagogue joined us when it moved into its beautiful new edifice. For questions about synagogue membership please contact Tracey Weiss, Membership Director at tweiss@bethelsnj.org

Our teachers are professionals whose life’s work is education. They are passionate about their work and delve into the learning alongside children and families. They view themselves as partners in your child’s development and your family’s growth. We are committed to excellence. Our faculty members engage in continuing education through our Professional Development program and must earn a minimum of 12 hours of continuing education annually to be eligible to receive a contract the following school year.
MISSION STATEMENT

The Early Childhood Center of Congregation Beth El is committed to the task of providing a safe, nurturing, and respectful environment where the youngest members of the Jewish community can begin to grow and develop their physical, social, emotional, and educational abilities within the framework of Jewish values and traditions. We strive to create an atmosphere of growth, that empowers each individual to foster their Jewish Identity through creativity and curiosity. Our vision is to provide a quality, developmentally appropriate program, which actively engages and excites young children, while reaching beyond its modern facility to involve the home, the family, the synagogue, and the community. Our learning environment values and promotes kindness, inclusivity, and respect; to inspire the next generation of......

OUR COMMITMENT

At the ECC we are committed to providing our children and families with the best practices in early childhood education and believe that:

- We are all created B’Tzelem Elokim – in the image of Gd – every person is valuable and worthy of respect.

- As the Jewish people we have a covenant with Gd to uphold the teachings of the Torah. As an early childhood center we commit to helping each family deepen their connection to Judaism.

- Children have an inborn sense of wonder. Our early childhood educators honor the children’s curiosity by facilitating and enriching their journey of discovery and learning.

- We support the collaboration of children, families, and educators. Together we recognize how we can contribute to the broader community and world.

- Learning and growing together, celebrating the holidays, and sharing life events, we nourish the bonds of our ECC family.
About Us!
We look forward to greeting each child personally at the start of each school day. Students are welcome any time after **6:45 AM.** Core Program begins at **8:45 AM.** Please be sure the teacher is in the room before giving that “good bye” hug as a child may never be left unattended. **Students must be picked up by 6:00 PM.**

“When I drop our three year old twins off at the ECC, they can’t wait to push me out the door and get their day started.” ECC Dad

Release of Children Policy
Children may be released only to their parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s) to take the child from the center and to assume responsibility for the child in an emergency if the parent(s) cannot be reached. We must have a release signature on file for every person authorized to pick-up your child (must be at least 18 years old). The Emergency Pick-Up form is for this purpose. This is an additional way in which we can ensure the safety of your child. Please update this information as frequently as necessary. Any person authorized to pick-up your child will be asked to show photo identification to ensure your child’s safety. If your child is being picked up early, please notify the class teacher as well as ECC Admin staff, so that we can prepare for your child’s departure. If a non-custodial parent has been denied access, or granted limited access, to a child by a court order, the center shall secure documentation to that effect, maintain a copy on file, and comply with the terms of the court order.

Late Pick-Up
Punctuality is very important to your child having a successful day. Please inform the school office if you will arrive later than normal or if an emergency has arisen. If the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s) fails to pick up the child at the time of the center’s daily closing, the center shall ensure that:

♦ The child is supervised at all times
♦ Staff members attempt to contact the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s)
♦ An hour after closing time and provided that other arrangements for releasing the child to his/her authorized people have failed, the staff member(s) cannot continue to supervise the child at the center.

The staff member shall call the Division of Youth and Family Service’s 24 hour Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-792-8610) to seek assistance in caring for the child until the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the child’s parent(s) is able to pick-up the child.

If the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s) appears to be physically and/or emotionally impaired in the judgment of the director and/or staff member and feel the child would be placed at risk if released to such an individual, the center shall ensure that:

♦ The child may not be released to an impaired individual
♦ Staff members attempt to contact the child’s other parent or alternative person(s) authorized by the parent(s)
♦ If the center is unable to make alternative arrangements, a staff member shall call the Division of Youth and Family Service’s 24-hour Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-792-8610) to seek assistance in caring for the child.

Late Pick-up Fee
There is a late pick-up fee of $20 for every ten minute beginning at 6:01pm. Fee is due within 48 hours. When we are informed of a delay, we can inform your child and plan accordingly. If you are detained and your child’s classroom teacher must leave, your child will be supervised by an adult and will be waiting in the main office.

Days of Attendance
Each child must adhere to their scheduled days of attendance. All changes and additions are subject to availability. Adjustments to the daily schedule will be made, if possible, according to the school policy. Parents must notify us at least 24 hours in advance in writing if they would like to make a change in the schedule. Fee for permanent schedule change is $25 (Please refer to the Optional Services Fee Form).

Please note that if you fall over 30 days behind in your tuition payments, you will be asked to keep your child at home, until your account is current.

Arrival and Dismissal
Extra Day Fee

The family of any child attending an extra day must submit payment to the Early Childhood Center office within 48 hours of attendance.

Day swapping will be considered on a case by case basis; and will be accommodated when possible. Please note that Day Swapping comes with a $40 fee, which must be submitted within 48 hours of service.

Parking

Please park in designated areas only. The police will ticket anyone parked illegally. Please do not park in handicapped or “15 minute parking” spaces if not applicable. In addition, please do not park in the circular driveway even for a few minutes. This is a fire lane and you may be endangering the lives of the children in our school if you do so. Please do not park in any of the clergy or administrative staff’s assigned spots.

For children’s safety, please drive slowly in the parking lot.

School Closing Policy

In case of inclement weather or an unforeseen emergency, it may be necessary for the Early Childhood Center to close. We will post all information about closing or late opening on www.cancellations.com, our Facebook profile and on local television stations under Congregation Beth El ECC. We will also communicate closures and any other announcements through TADPOLES as well.

If, due to inclement weather or emergency, school closes early, you will be notified. If you cannot be reached, we will then contact the person you have authorized on your emergency form. Please be certain that your emergency contact list and cell phone numbers remain current and that any changes are reported to the school office immediately.

There is no refund for absences, holidays, inclement weather, or any other unforeseeable event that necessitates the closing of a class or the school.
Food
As a Conservative synagogue, we abide by the Kosher dietary laws. We ask that you be meticulous in sending only dairy or pareve foods to school with your children. **No meat or poultry products are allowed in the school.** Fish, non-meat pizza, non-meat-based soups and vegetables are permitted. **Shellfish and seafood lacking fins and scales are not kosher and may not be brought to school.**

Breads for sandwiches, cookies and cake may not contain any animal shortening; only those whose labels read: "100% pure vegetable shortening" are permitted. When providing store bought food for a class or group, bring in only certified Kosher foods, prepared in kosher establishments under Rabbinical supervision for consumption. This includes bread, cookies and snacks. **If an unacceptable item is brought to school, the staff will tactfully note the problem and provide the student with a substitute lunch. The unacceptable food will be sent home.**

Please be aware that bakeries must be approved as Kosher. **Foods cooked at home may not be brought in for group consumption.** Classic Cake is a kosher bakery; Entenmann’s is also kosher. Acceptable Kosher symbols are marked below.

Snacks
Healthy snacks of cereal, crackers, pretzels, and water will be available each day for all children.

Student Attire
The Early Childhood Center is a child-centered, child-friendly place. Our activities are active and often messy. Wearing clothes that are washable and are comfortable for your child is strongly recommended. To best accommodate the wide range of activities, we strongly recommend that children, who are old enough to wear shoes, wear sneakers. Please label all clothing. Children are welcome to wear a Kippah while in school.

Lunch
All lunches are to be packed in a paper bag or lunch box and clearly labeled with the child's name. Some foods to consider sending are tuna fish, egg salad, bagel, cheese, cream cheese and jelly, macaroni, plain pasta, pizza. Each classroom has a refrigerator and a microwave, which will be used for your child's lunch. We encourage healthy eating habits and request that lunches reinforce this concept.

Due to the prevalence of peanut allergies, Beth El ECC does not serve anything with peanuts, although children may bring peanut butter from home. We will be extra careful to clean up all residues after lunch. Some classes may be designated as completely peanut free due to highly allergic reactions by students in the class. We ask that you respect this decision. If your child’s lunch requires the use of the microwave, please supply the classroom with a microwave safe dish. In keeping our kosher dietary policy, please be sure to send in a dish that has not previously contained non-kosher foods.

Health
Parents are responsible for providing up-to-date emergency phone numbers, promptly picking up their ill child and when necessary, consulting with their child’s doctor about diagnosis and care. **Parents and caregivers should notify the staff when their child or other family members are ill with a contagious disease.** Please also let us know if your child is on medication. Be sure to ask doctors if the illness has implications for a childcare program.

**No child will be admitted to school if he/she arrives noticeably ill or with a rash or a fever.**

Parents will be informed when a child is found to have a fever or appears to be sick. Regardless of how high a fever is, it is important to pay attention to how sick a child looks or acts.

**Some symptoms to look for are:**
- Unusual drowsiness or extreme fussiness
- Persistent or excessive crying
- Wheezing or severe coughing
- Difficulty or rapid breathing - Unable to play (lethargic)
- Severe pain or discomfort - Acute diarrhea or vomiting
- Underarm temperature of 99.4
- Jaundice skin or eyes (yellow) - Red eyes with discharge
- Infected, untreated skin patches
- Skin lesions / weeping or bleeding
- Skin rash with fever / behavior change
- Mouth sores with drooling
Illness at School

Should a child become ill during the day, he/she will be removed from the classroom and remain under adult supervision until a parent or authorized person arrives to take the child home.

Examples of this would include, but are not limited to: fever of 99.4 degrees or above, as indicated on the school thermometer (OK'd by the School Nursing Services of Camden County), green discharge from the nose, vomiting, or two episodes of diarrhea (loose stool). He/she will be kept at home for at least 1 day (not counting the day sent home) both for his/her sake and for the consideration of others in the school. There will be no exceptions to this policy.

In the event that a child contracts a communicable disease and exposes the other children, it is the responsibility of the parent to inform the school so that notice of exposure can be posted and parents can be notified. Please be sure to inform the Early Childhood Office of a diagnosis of a communicable disease such as: Chicken Pox, Strep Throat, Fifths Disease, Impetigo, Conjunctivitis or Pediculosis (head lice) as soon as possible. The sick child will not be allowed to return to school until the Early Childhood Center receives a note from the child’s physician indicating that the period of contagion has passed. A note from the child’s physician is mandatory.

In the case of fever, children must be fever-free for at least 24 hours in order to return to school. In case of Conjunctivitis children must be on the antibiotic/eye drops for at least 24 hours. In the case of head lice, the parent will be notified to pick up their child. The child may return to school after they are nit-free and must be checked by the director or her designee before being readmitted to class. Children must be symptom free for a minimum 24 hours.

**Please see the 2022-23 Covid Guidelines Letter for additional illness procedures in place during this time**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disease</th>
<th>When to return to ECC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chickenpox</td>
<td>When all of the blisters have dried into scabs, usually about six days after rash onset.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjunctivitis (Pinkeye)</td>
<td>Twenty four hours after treatment begins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diarrhea (Infectious)</td>
<td>When diarrhea has stopped. For some infections, the child must also be treated with antibiotics before returning to ECC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diarrhea (Uncontrolled) – an increase in number of stools, compared with a child’s normal pattern along with watery stools and/or stool that cannot be contained by the diaper or use of toilet.</td>
<td>Until uncontrolled diarrhea stops, or until a medical exam indicates that it is not a communicable disease.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fever – axial temperature of 100.5 degrees Fahrenheit or higher.</td>
<td>When the child has been fever-free for twenty four hours (without the aid of fever reducing medicine).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impetigo</td>
<td>Twenty four hours after antibiotic treatment has begun.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lice (head)</td>
<td>When the first treatment is complete and no eggs (nits) are present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rash with or without fever or behavior change</td>
<td>When a medical exam indicates these symptoms are not that of a communicable disease – a return to school slip signed by a physician must be submitted to administration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ringworm</td>
<td>Twenty four hours after treatment has begun and ringworms must be covered with bandages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scabies</td>
<td>Twenty four hours after treatment has begun.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streptococcal Sore Throat</td>
<td>Twenty four hours after antibiotic treatment has begun. Child must be fever-free for twenty four hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vomiting</td>
<td>Twenty four hours after vomiting has ceased.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Child’s Physician

It is the policy of the Early Childhood Center that all children attending the center have a licensed physician other than a parent, or grandparent, as we feel this could present a conflict of interest. Please see chart on page 7 for a list of the common illnesses you are required to report to the ECC administration and how long a child must remain away from ECC. (This is not an all-inclusive list)

Administering Medication

Medications, whether prescriptive or over-the-counter, will be administered only if the parent and the child’s physician have completed the medication form. Such medication must be sealed in its original container. If this is a prescription, the label must indicate that it is a current prescription for the specific child enrolled. Ointments such as sunscreen and diaper creams may be applied if we have a written permission form filled out and signed by a parent. Forms are available in the ECC offices.

Behavioral Philosophy

The Early Childhood Center of Congregation Beth El honors the right of each person, adult and child, to express him/her self and to be treated with respect and dignity. Through our positive discipline policy, self-esteem is fostered.

Positive Discipline Policy

Techniques adhered to by the staff include:
1. Re-directing a child to a new activity to change the focus of behavior.
2. Providing individualized attention to assist children in dealing with a particular situation.
3. Providing alternative activities and acceptable ways to release feelings.
4. Indicating natural and logical consequences of the child’s behavior.
5. Offering a choice of two options, being certain that the options are realistic.
6. Being certain to make a distinction between the child and the behavior. The behavior may be criticized, not the child.
7. Praising a child when the child is treating others with respect and dignity.
8. If an inappropriate behavior is consistent and disruptive to the entire class, the teacher will consult with the director to review alternative approach. The teacher will inform the parent, either in person or through a telephone conversation, of the behavioral issue and of the approaches being implemented. The parent is welcome to conference with the teacher and director at anytime and has the right to be informed about these issues. The parent and school adhere to a philosophy of cooperation and are always working to create an environment which respects the rights of each person.
9. All students are spoken to directly, in a respectful tone of voice.
10. A child is not to be disciplined for failing to eat, sleep or for soiling him/herself.

The Early Childhood Center staff will speak softly and kindly to all children, expressing a sense of caring. The staff will encourage appropriate, positive behavior.

Managing children’s behavior is a part of our responsibility and part of a child’s learning process. Therefore, physical punishment and degrading language are never used at the Early Childhood Center.

It is important to separate the child from his/her behavior when that behavior is not of a desirable nature as there are no bad children at our center.

“Time out” is a label that is not to be used at The Early Childhood Center. However, if a child needs to calm down, the child may be removed from the group only when supervised by a staff member. It is critical to remember that children will always be supervised. When speaking about an individual child or children in general, staff members are only to speak positively. Children and staff in classes for three-year-olds and older will jointly develop rules that are stated at the children’s developmental level.
Physically Aggressive Behavior

“Physically aggressive” behavior includes, but is not limited to, biting, pushing, kicking, and/or hitting. The determination of what constitutes physically aggressive behavior is at the sole discretion of the classroom lead teacher/director. If a child is physically aggressive toward another child/children or staff, the following procedures will be followed: The classroom lead teacher and/or director will confer with at least one of the child’s parents. It is preferable that such conference be held in person. When this is not possible, the meeting may be held over the telephone. During this conference the parent is to be informed that if another incident occurs, the parent(s) will be immediately contacted and will be required to pick up the child within one hour of this telephone call (or within a reasonable period of time).

After the telephone call is made indicating that a child must be picked up, the child will be removed from the classroom and supervised by an Early Childhood staff member. If the parent does not pick up the child within one hour or a reasonable period of time, the child will not be permitted to return to school for one week.

If three such contacts are necessary, the family is to remove the child from the Early Childhood Center program for a period of time during which an appropriate behavioral specialist must be consulted and recommendations be made for the parents and the school. The child may return as long as a safe and secure environment is ensured for all the children. When the child re-enters the program the parents will continue to be regularly apprised of the child’s behavior.

If the physically aggressive behavior continues which is either harmful to the other children or disrupts the class, the child may be removed from the school permanently.

Biting Policy

This policy is applicable for children ages 3 months through 2 years 6 months. Any biting by children who are older than 2 years 6 months will be treated under the aggressive discipline policy.

Even though biting is considered developmentally normal for a toddler, it is nonetheless of concern to parents and staff. This behavior, which is not appropriate, starts out as exploratory. It is important that any child who bites is told that this behavior is not appropriate.

Following is the procedure that is to be followed when a biting incident occurs:

1. Comfort, console and treat the child who has been bitten. It is important for the children, including the biter, to see this attention being paid to the bitee.
2. Speak to the biter in short, simple phrases to communicate that biting is not acceptable.
3. The child is then to be removed from the situation, not from the classroom, for one minute for each year of age. The biter may also be frightened by the occurrence; if so, console the biter.
4. Complete an incident report. Parents of the bitee and biter are notified immediately. The teaching staff is to maintain a log documenting such biting incidents.
5. If biting incidents do not decrease or stop within two weeks time, a conference with the parent(s) will be required. The purpose of this conference to gain information from the family to help in dealing with the biting, as well as to create an action plan for the future. After the above five-steps have been followed, if another biting incident occurs, which is significant (e.g. breaks the skin, creates welts, leaves marks of any sort on the skin,) this child may be removed from the school for a period of time to be determined by the Early Childhood Director in consultation with the child’s lead teacher. The above procedures will be followed upon the child’s return.

When the child re-enters the program the parents will continue to be regularly apprised of the child’s behavior. If the biting behavior continues, the child may be removed from the school permanently.
Denied Admission

Unfortunately, a child may be denied admission, suspended, or expelled from our program. We want you to know we will do everything possible to work with the family of the children in order to prevent this policy from being enforced. Here are the circumstances:

Parental actions for child’s denied admission
- Failure to pay/habitual lateness in payments
- Failure to complete required forms including the child’s immunization records
- Habitual tardiness when picking up your child
- Physical or verbal abuse to Staff

Child’s actions for suspension or expulsion
- Failure of child to adjust after a reasonable amount of time
- Uncontrollable tantrums angry outbursts
- Ongoing physical or verbal abuse to staff or other children
- Excessive Biting

Proactive actions that will be taken in order to prevent expulsion
- Staff will try to redirect student from negative behavior
- Staff will reassess classroom environment, appropriateness of activities, supervision
- Staff will always use positive methods and language while disciplining children
- Staff will praise appropriate behaviors
- Staff will consistently apply consequences for rules
- Child will be given verbal warnings
- The child will be removed from the situation for a brief time so that he/she can regain control
- Child’s disruptive behavior will be documented and maintained in confidentiality
- Parent/guardian will be notified verbally
- Parent/guardian will be given written copies of disruptive behaviors that might lead to expulsion
- The director, staff and parent/guardian will hold conference to discuss how to promote positive behaviors
- Recommendation of evaluation by professional consultation on premises
- Recommendation of evaluation by local school district child study team

Schedule of Expulsion

If the remedial actions above have not worked, the parent/guardian will be notified verbally and in writing about the child’s behavior warranting an expulsion. An expulsion action is meant to be a period of time during which the parent may work on the child’s behavior or come to an agreement with the center. The parent will be informed regarding the length of the expulsion period. The parent/guardian will be informed about the expected behavioral changes required in order for the child to return to the center. The parent/guardian will be given a specific expulsion date that allows the parent an adequate amount of time to seek alternative child care (approximately one to two weeks depending on the risk to other children’s welfare or safety). Failure of the child/parent to satisfy the terms of the plan may result in permanent expulsion from the center.

Reasons a child will not be Expelled

If a child’s parent(s):
- Made a complaint to the Office of Licensing regarding a center’s alleged violations of the licensing requirements (1-877-667-9845)
- Reported abuse or neglect occurring at the center (1-877-NJ ABUSE)
- Questioned the center regarding policies and procedures without giving the parent an adequate amount of time to make other child care arrangements

Waiver

Should a family engage any Early Childhood Staff member to perform work for that family, it is with the understanding that such private arrangements are solely between the family and the individual they choose to engage. Families and staff members entering into such private arrangements both agree to indemnify, defend, and hold Congregation Beth El and its Early Childhood Center harmless from any and all actions, causes of action, claims, demands, damages and liabilities of whatever kind or nature, in law or in equity, arising out of these private arrangements.
The PTG is the community-building and fundraising division of the Early Childhood Center. PTG coordinates the majority of the fundraising for the ECC and uses the funds for several initiatives such as assemblies, Teacher Appreciation Lunches, food for the Model Seders and Tu B’shevat, and Class Wish Lists. PTG is open to all ECC families and all parents are encouraged to attend PTG meetings and be active participants.

Current Fundraisers
- Bagel Wednesdays and Pizza Fridays
- Shabbat Birthday Celebration
- Purim Carnival
- Food Coupon Book
- Parents’ Night Out
- Hanukah Raffle
- STEAM Room

A few PTG-Sponsored events:
- Thanksgiving Feast
- Passover Seder
- Tu B’shevat Seder
- Family Fun Days & Parent Nights Out
- Teacher Appreciation Week

Parent-Teacher Communication

Communication between parents and teachers is essential in working together for the benefit of your child. If you would like to contact your child’s teacher and/or the Admin office, please leave a message in the school office 856-675-1166. We will get back to you as soon as possible. If it is an emergency, the office will contact the teacher immediately. Parent/Teacher

Conferences are held twice a year beginning with 2 year old class. You will receive information from your child's teacher to determine when and how to schedule this informative meeting. Please feel free to request additional conferences as needed. Our teachers are always willing to discuss your child's progress. Since it is important for the staff to devote the full educational day to the children, please keep arrival and drop-off conversation general in nature. Any discussion specific to the progress of your child should be reserved for a telephone call during a teacher's break, prior to or after the school day, or during a pre-scheduled conference. School notices will be sent home in your child's school bag. Please check daily for information on trips or special events. Monthly calendars and weekly newsletters will provide you with further information. We welcome your insights and feedback. You are your child's first teacher and know more about him/her than anyone. If you should ever have a concern about your child and/or anything happening in the class, please contact your child's teacher first. This person is the staff member who knows your child the best. After speaking with the head teacher, if you have any additional concerns, please feel free to contact the director. We have an open door policy and encourage a two-way conversation when needed or desired. We encourage you to keep us informed. Please also let us know of the birth of a sibling, a new pet, an upcoming vacation, a death in the family, a divorce, a move to a new home, etc. Knowing this information will permit our staff to be responsive to your child's specific needs.

Open Invitation to Visit

We welcome your visit to the school! This is your school and your child’s education. Advance notice is required due to occasional field trips and special activities. All parents are to stop at the Early Childhood office prior to visiting a classroom. Permission is required in advance, when authorizing any other visitors. Please understand that the children come first during class time, therefore, the teachers may not be free to speak at length with you.
Classroom Placement & Transition

Many factors go into placing your child in a classroom that is appropriate for him/her; such as class size, birth dates, girl/boy ratios and teacher recommendations.

Transition into classrooms depends on physical, emotional and developmental readiness of your child and will be determined by the ECC Administrative team, and the teachers.

Infants

Please send in bedding, sheets and blankets for your child’s crib. It is important that we always have an extra set of clean linens in case of an unexpected situation. Due to DYFS regulations, no bumpers, toys, or mobiles are permitted in or on the crib. Bedding will be sent home with you at the end of your child’s week so that you may launder it. We have adequate space to store your diapers and diaper wipes so, please bring us a two week supply, and we will let you know when it is time to replenish. Two labeled changes of clothing are kept at the ECC at all times in case of accidents. We will return any soiled items to you on a daily basis.

Parents must supply all of their infant's food. All bottles are to arrive at school fully prepared for feeding. Please contact us regularly to keep us apprised of changes in feeding habits. We like to know if he/she is solely on bottles, has just begun solids, is mixing solids, is feeding him/herself in any fashion, etc.

It is expected that all children arriving after 8:30am will have had breakfast. This does not include bottles. Please be certain to label all items brought to school, including linens, extra clothing, lids, bottles and all food containers.

Please make sure to check TADPOLES, as many of your child’s activities will be documented there, with wonderful photos, and exciting updates. We enjoy hearing about your child's adventures while at home, so, please...tell and kvell and we will do the same.

Also, we ask that parents with older children at the Center please take the older sibling to their class prior to dropping off your infant. We ask this for the safety of your child, as well as for the safety of the other children in the room. This also allows the parent to speak with the Infant room staff without interruption and without having to worry about supervising the older child.

Toddlers and Two Year Olds

We are delighted that your child will spend the day with us. Please send a two-week supply of labeled diapers and diaper wipes along with a labeled change of clothing. We have adequate space for storage so you can replenish weekly. When you desire to start toilet training with your two-year old, please inform your child's teacher about his/her experience and share your specific concerns. You may also wish to send in a potty ring for your child's comfort. For naptime, please be sure that your child has a labeled small nap mat or sleeping bag, a small sheet, and a cuddly toy, if appropriate. We require an extra labeled set of linens so that we can be prepared in case of an accident. Soiled linens will be sent home for you to launder. Please send fresh linens to school the next day to replace the ones sent home.
Three and Four Year Olds

בני שלוש וארבע

The children will have a state mandated rest time each afternoon of at least thirty minutes. Some children will sleep and others will have a quiet time on their mats. Please ensure that your child has a labeled change of clothing, a small blanket, a small sheet and a cuddly toy and/or a favorite book. At the end of each week the used blanket and sheet will be sent home for you to launder. Please send fresh linens the following Monday.

Kindergarten

גן חובה

Children learn to solve problems, become independent, responsible, and cooperative learners, and develop the skills and confidence needed to excel in first grade. Our certified teachers use learning centers and whole-class activities that teach children to function in structured groups and still preserve a sense of community. Learning is individualized so we can meet the unique needs and learning styles of our children. In addition, they gain a basic knowledge of Hebrew and Judaism and a love of learning to last them a lifetime.

Potty Training

גמילה מחיתולים

We encourage children in classes for three-year-olds to be toilet trained. Toilet training is a very personal and individual process. We suggest that you not broach the subject until you think your child is ready. While he/she is in the process of training, it is recommended that the child wear pull-ups during school hours. Once the transfer to wearing underpants full time (usually after the child has had no accidents in a 2-day period) is made, please make sure to provide us with a few complete changes of clothing, including underpants. We understand that accidents happen and this way, are prepared for them. If your child is not potty trained when the class takes an off-site trip, a parent must accompany the class on the trip.

Throughout the potty (toilet) training process it is beneficial to maintain close communication with the classroom teacher. For children in our two-year old full day classes, please make an appointment with the teacher to discuss your child’s toilet learning process.

Field Trips

טיולי שדה

The three, four and five-year olds will be taking field trips throughout the year. Field trips are a marvelous adjunct to the classroom experience. Information and permission forms will be sent home prior to each trip taken from the Main Street complex. Only children with signed permission forms from a parent or guardian will be permitted to go on a trip. These excursions enhance the learning and offer hands-on experiences.

Parents will be invited to accompany us for some of these outings. Only parents who were assigned by the teachers as chaperones should accompany the children on the trip, unless specified otherwise. A trip fee has been assessed along with your tuition.

Note: If a child is not potty trained, a parent or parent designee must accompany the child on a class trip.

At the beginning of the school year, families with children in the infant and toddler rooms, will receive a permission slip, applicable for the entire year, for “walking trips” in the buggies within the Main Street complex. We are most fortunate to be within close proximity of a beautiful goose pond where we can observe the wonders of nature first hand. Taking advantage of this treasure is part of the magic of our location. A note will be posted on the classroom door when such walking trips are taken.
Birthday Parties

Birthdays are a wonderful time at school and are celebrated on Fridays during the school-wide ECC Shabbat Party with the clergy and Bamba (Beth El’s mascot). We encourage each family to join us for a celebration with their child. Kosher treats from the birthday child, along with the parent visiting to read a story or enjoy an activity with the class, make this time a very special one for all. Donating a book to the Early Childhood Center library or to the child’s classroom is a great way to honor this special occasion. For your convenience, the Parent/Teacher Group is offering a birthday party package (ice cream and a book) for students to help them celebrate in the classroom. If you are interested, please contact the PTG or the school office for information about this opportunity.

Invitations to home parties can be distributed in school only if the entire class is invited and the party is not on Shabbat or a Jewish holiday. In keeping with the religious objectives of our school, we urge parents not to hold out-of-school parties on Shabbat or Holidays. When planning such celebrations, please be aware that many of our students eat only Kosher foods.

Holidays Not Observed at Beth El

Please note that Halloween and St. Valentine's Day are not celebrated at the Early Childhood Center (Please do not send children with cards, candies, or costumes).

Spirit Days

Throughout the school year children will have opportunities to express themselves while having fun in our school-wide spirit days. Examples of some of the our spirit days include: Pajama Day, International Food Day, Earth Day, Crazy Hat Day, Dr. Seuss Day, etc. Parents will get notification in advance on how you can participate in making these days successful.
Why Parents Choose the ECC

WE LOOK FORWARD TO A WONDERFUL YEAR AT THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER.
B’nai Yisrael - The Jewish People
Beit Midrash - House of Study
Boker Tov - Good Morning
Bracha (Brachot - pl) - Blessing(s)
Chag Samayach - customary greeting on or before a holiday (Lit. - Happy Holiday)
Chanukah - Jewish Holiday - marks the miracle of the oil burning for 8 days following the victory of the Jews against the Syrian-Greeks in 165 BCE
Chol HaMoed - intermediary days of Sukkot and Pesach
Cholent - stew-like food customarily eaten for lunch on Shabbat
Chumash - 5 books of Moses
Daven - pray
Fleishik - food with meat ingredients or kitchen utensils/appliances used in preparation of meat
Gemarah - compilation of Jewish laws and traditions
Good Shabbos - customary greeting on the Sabbath
Ivrit - Hebrew
Kashrut - Jewish Dietary Laws
Kipah (Kipot-pl) - Skullcap(s)
Kosher - foods that meet the standards of Jewish Dietary Laws
Mensch - a well-behaved person who acts and speaks in a respectful manner
Middot - positive character traits
Milchik - food with dairy ingredients or kitchen utensils/appliances used in preparation of dairy foods
Minyan - quorum for prayer, consisting of 10 men over the age of 13
Mishna - compilation of Jewish laws and traditions
Mitzvah - Commandment or good deed
Oral Law - Mishna, Gemarah, Talmud
Oy Vey! - Oy Vey!
Pareve - Foods that are neither meat nor dairy (e.g. fish, eggs, fruits, vegetables)
Parsha - weekly portion of the Torah read on Shabbat
Pesach/Passover - Jewish Holiday - commemorating the Exodus from Egypt. No bread or leaven food products are eaten. The holiday lasts for 8 days.

Purim - Jewish Holiday - commemorating the triumph of the Jews over Haman who tried to destroy them

Rosh Chodesh - the beginning of a new month on the Jewish calendar

Rosh Hashana - Jewish New Year Holiday (Lit.-Head of the Year)

Seder - the holiday meal on the first two nights of Passover

Sefer Torah - Torah Scroll

Shabbat - Sabbath

Shabbat Shalom - customary greeting on the Sabbath

Shavuot - Jewish Holiday - commemorating receiving the 10 Commandments on Mt. Sinai

Shul/Beit Haknesset - Synagogue

Siddur (Siddurim-pl.) - prayer book(s)

Simchat Torah - Jewish Holiday - celebrates the annual completion of reading the Torah and beginning again

Sukkah - a temporary booth in which meals are taken for 8 days during the holiday of Sukkot (pl. of Sukkah)

Sukkot - Jewish Holiday - Fall Harvest Holiday - lasts for 8 days

Talmud - compilation of Jewish laws and traditions

Tefillah (Tefillot-pl.) - prayer

Tefillin - ritual item worn over the age of Bar Mitzvah

Torah - 5 books of Moses (the Old Testament; see Chumash), also refers to Torah Scroll

Tu B’Shvat - Jewish Holiday - Jewish Arbor Day

Tzedakah - charity

Yarmulkah - Skullcap

Yom Ha’atzmaut – Israel Independence Day

Yom Ha’Shoah – Holocaust Memorial Day

Yom Hazikaron – Israel Remembrance Day

Yom Kippur - Jewish Holiday - Day of Atonement, where forgiveness is asked for sins committed over the past year - it is a 25 hour fast day
ROSH HASHANAH

“In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a day of rest, a memorial proclaimed with the blast of the horn, a holy convocation. You shall not do any servile work...” (Lev. 23:24-25).

In the Torah and in the prayer book this sacred day is called the Day of Remembrance and the Day of Sounding the Shofar (ram's horn). It marks the start of a ten day period of spiritual self-examination and repentance which culminates with Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. This day became known throughout the Jewish world as Rosh Hashanah, the New Year.

Intensive prayer is the central mood of this day. Acknowledgment of G-d’s sovereignty over the world and His rulership over mankind are the major themes of the prayers. The special Biblical precept that is most identified with Rosh Hashanah is the blowing of the shofar. It is a religious duty on this day to listen to the shofar sounds. The sound of the shofar has been regarded from time immemorial as a call to penitence and as a reminder of the shofar sound at Sinai when the Ten Commandments were given to the Jewish People.

Tradition tells us that the ram’s horn is also used as a reminder of the substitution of the ram for the sacrifice instead of Isaac on Mt. Moriah. Also, the shofar will be sounded to herald the coming of the Messiah.

Rosh Hashanah is celebrated for two days, the first and second of the month of Tishrei. When Rosh Hashanah falls on the Sabbath, the shofar is not sounded.

A number of symbolic customs have evolved concerning the day’s dinner meals. The most widespread is that of dipping a slice of apple into honey in the hope of having a good and sweet year.

A special loaf called challah is also eaten. While challah is eaten at every Shabbat meal, this one is round and also filled with raisins. Again the idea of a sweet year but also the hope for a round, full one.

Another custom is that of Tashlich. On the first day of Rosh Hashanah we walk to a moving body of water and throw bread crumbs from our pockets into the water. This symbolizes our casting away of all of our sins.

The entire period from Rosh Hashanah through Yom Kippur is known as the Ten Days of Repentance. It is marked by special penitential prayers that are recited each day in the synagogue.

Another concept is that of the Book of Life. It is thought that on Rosh Hashanah G-d writes our fate for the coming year into the Book of Life. We have until Yom Kippur to do acts of kindness and charity to ensure a good year. On Yom Kippur, our fate is sealed.
YOM KIPPUR

“On the 10th day of the 7th month it will be a Day of Atonement. A day of holy convocation to you, a day that will afflict your souls.”

Yom Kippur is the 10th day of the Ten Days of Repentance, culminating a period of doing good deeds and asking forgiveness for past transgressions.
The day is spent in prayer in the synagogue. On Yom Kippur we ask G-d for forgiveness for the sins which we have committed against Him. He cannot forgive us for those sins which we have committed against each other.

Yom Kippur begins with a fast at sundown the evening before. We fast until the stars come out the next night (about 25 hours).
This refraining from eating and drinking is two ways in which the Rabbis interpreted the phrase “afflict your souls.” There are three other prohibitions: Bathing, marital relations and the wearing of leather shoes. The wearing of leather was once seen as a great luxury and on this day when we stand to be judged, we come before G-d in complete humility.
Yom Kippur is so important that it is the only fast where it is permitted to fast on the Sabbath should the two coincide.
The service contains many selections of penitential prayers. Oddly enough, these prayers are recited in the plural, “For the sins which we have committed...” While we are individuals, we still accept responsibility for the community.
The Yom Kippur service begins with the Kol Nidre (All Vows). In this prayer we ask forgiveness for our broken promises to G-d. The last service of the day is called Neilah, which means “Closing of the Gates of Prayer.” Until the last moment we have an opportunity to repent and be sealed in the Book of Life.

Yom Kippur is often referred to as the White Fast. One reason is that many people wear white, a symbol of purity on this day. The Fast of the 9th ofAv is called the Black Fast for it commemorates many calamities throughout Jewish history. Yom Kippur, however, reflects a feeling of hope. With the proper prayer and attitude and by doing good deeds, we can be forgiven. One concept of the Jewish religion is that we must not lose confidence in ourselves and believe that we are so far gone that we can no longer obtain mercy from our Father who is in Heaven. We must never lose hope in repentance, as Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai says, “Even if a man who has been wicked all his life, without any good quality at all, is repenting at the end of his life, his wickedness is no longer counted against him.”
SUKKOT
Sukkot means “tabernacles” or “booths” and refers to the temporary dwelling places used by the Israelites during the 40 years of wandering in the desert (one booth is called a Sukkah). Sukkot is one of the three Pilgrimage Festivals when the people would go up to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices of thanksgiving to G-d. During the holiday of Sukkot, one is expected to actually live in the Sukkah. Today, however, most people will at least minimally take all of their meals in the Sukkah. The Sukkah has at least three walls. Its roof is made of branches, wood slats, or anything that grows from the ground. The requirement is that there is more shade than sunlight but you must also be able to see the sky through the roof. Another distinctive observance related to Sukkot is the precept to take four species - a citron, palm branch, myrtle branch and willow branch - and with them to rejoice before the L-rd. When held during special parts of the service, they are waved in all six directions (front, right, back, left, up, down) to show G-d’s dominion over all the Earth. The last day of Sukkot is called Hoshanah Rabbah. On this day there are seven processions around the synagogue holding the citron and branches. The 8th day of the holiday (Sukkot itself lasts for seven) is called Shmini Atzeret. The citron and palm branches are not used and some do not eat in the Sukkah. Yizkor, the memorial prayer for the dead, is also recited on this day. The 9th day is surely the most festive day of the entire year. It is called Simchat Torah, literally, rejoicing of the Torah. On this holiday the yearly reading of the Torah is completed and there are seven processions around the synagogue with the Torah scrolls and much celebration.

CHANUKAH
Chanukah is a celebration of the Jewish people maintaining their identity in the face of pressure to conform to the Hellenistic culture that Greek society sought to impose upon them. Although fewer in number, the army of Judah Macabee overcame the larger Greek forces to reestablish Jewish sovereignty in Jerusalem. Upon entering the Temple mount in order to resume the practice of kindling the seven-branched Menorah in the Temple, only a one day supply of special olive oil was found. Miraculously, the one day supply lasted for eight days until a new supply of oil could be produced. The miracle of the oil along with the miraculous victory over the Greek army strengthened the Jewish people’s resolve to remain true to their faith. The events in the story of Chanukah took place during the era when the Second Temple stood in Jerusalem. The defeat of the Greek army, recapturing of the Temple and miracle of the oil occurred in 165 BCE. The Rabbis of that time established that in remembrance of the miracles that occurred, candles should be lit each of the eight nights of Chanukah. These eight nights correspond to the eight days during which the Menorah in the Temple miraculously continued to burn. In addition to lighting candles, it is customary to eat oily foods and dairy foods as well. Children (and the young at heart) also play games with a four-sided top known as a dreidel.
TU B’SHVAT
The holiday of Tu B’shvat is mentioned in the book of Laws as the New Year of the Trees. It takes its name from the combination of letters that have a numerical value of fifteen (15) since it falls on the 15th day of the Hebrew month of Shevat.
Tu B’shvat is one of the four new years that are mentioned in the Mishnah (Book of Laws): The New Year For Kings and Festivals, the New Year for Tithing of Animals, the New Year for the New Year and the New Year of the Trees.
Tu B’shvat is a happy holiday, though there are no special restrictions, joyful celebrations, or additions to the prayers. There are some minor observances, however. It is forbidden to fast on Tu B’shvat and certain other prayers from the daily service are omitted.
It is customary to eat fruits on this day, especially those for which Israel is famous. We should also make an effort to eat those foods of which the Torah makes a special mention: wheat, barley, figs, olives, dates, grapes and pomegranates.

PURIM
Purim is a one-day celebration observed on the 14th day of Adar, one month before Passover. It commemorates the saving of the Jewish communities living under Persian rule from Haman’s evil designs to exterminate them. The events described in the Book of Esther took place about 450 B.C.E. The word Purim derives from the word “pur” which means “lottery”, the method used by Haman to select the date on which he intended to release his hordes for a general massacre of the Jews.
The most prominent ritual feature of the observance of the holiday is to attend the synagogue to listen to the reading of the Scroll of Esther, more properly called the Megillah. The Megillah is read both at night/eve and the next morning.
There are four commandments associated with Purim:
Both men and women are required to listen to the reading of the Megillah. During the reading, whenever the name of Haman is mentioned, there is screaming, shouting and general noise-making in order to drown out the name of Haman. Some people even write the name of Haman on the soles of their shoes so that they can stamp him out.
A second requirement is to “eat, drink and be merry.” A festive dinner, called a seudah is held on Purim Day.
Each person sends gifts to his friends. These gifts must include at least two, ready-to-eat foods. This is called Mishloach Manote.
One is required to give extra gifts to charity, Matanote L’evyonim, on Purim so that all may enjoy the celebration.
Purim is considered to be the merriest festival of the entire year. That is why we have the saying, “When (the Hebrew month of) Adar comes, our happiness is increased.” In Israel, there is a gigantic parade called Ad Lo Yadah, which literally means, “until one does not know.” This refers to the fact that on Purim we are to drink a little bit more in order to be a little bit happier, until one does not know the difference between “Blessed be Mordechai” and “Cursed by Haman.”
We eat a special food called Hamantashen. These triangular-shaped cakes are filled with fruits or poppy seeds. They come from the fact that Haman wore a triangular-shaped hat. In Israel, they are called, “Haman’s ears.”
There is no prohibition of work on **Purim** but still it is a day of festivity and gaiety. We have carnivals and people dress up in funny costumes.

Some of the **main personalities of Purim**:

**AHASHVEROSH** King of Persia, where the story takes place

**VASHTI** His first queen, until she disobeys him

**ESTHER** The winner of the beauty contest who becomes the new queen

**MORDECHAI** Esther’s cousin who saves the Jews from being killed

**HAMAN** The king’s self-serving prime minister who wants to destroy the Jews

**SHUSHAN** The capital of Persia where the story takes place. The people of this city and other walled cities celebrate Purim the day after.

**PASSOVER**

Passover or Pesach as the holiday is called in Hebrew, commemorates the deliverance of the children of Israel from over two centuries of Egyptian bondage, and recalls their mass exodus from Egypt about 3300 years ago.

Unique to Passover is the eating of unleavened bread (matzah) and the stringent prohibitions forbidding the possession, as well as the eating, of all leavened bread or any food containing leaven (**chametz**).

The holiday of Passover, which takes place in the Spring, is a time of general rejoicing and happiness. At this time, too, there is a thorough housecleaning to rid ourselves of any **chametz** which may be in our possession. **Chametz** refers, too, to the dishes, pots and pans and all utensils that are used throughout the year, so in observant homes there is a complete changeover of all of these. Foods other than meat, fish, fruits, and vegetables must be purchased anew. These foods are also required to have a seal of supervision marked upon the container. There is a ritual search that takes place the night before Passover to check that the home is free from any **chametz** called **Bedikat Chametz**. Some **chametz** is purposely scattered about and then swept up with a feather and wooden spoon. This, in addition to whatever **chametz** that may be found, are burned the next morning.

On the first two nights of Passover a special meal is held. This is called the Seder. It is more than simple a meal but is interwoven with an entire service. At the Seder, the story of the Exodus is retold along with the explanation of various ceremonial objects on the table. In addition to the matzah there are:

- **Roasted shank bone** - the Passover offering
- **Roasted egg** - the Chagigah (holiday) offering
- **Green vegetable & bitter herbs** - the bitterness of slavery
- **Charoset** - a mixture of apples, - the mortar that the Jews
- **Wine, cinnamon and nuts** had to make into bricks
- **Salt water** - the tears that they shed
- **Cup of Elijah** - a cup of wine for Elijah who will announce the Messiah.

At the Seder the youngest child asks four questions as to why we do all of these things. We also recount the 10 plagues that were sent upon Egypt, pouring out a little of our happiness (wine) with each one. There is much singing and discussion and most Sedarim (Seder Pl.) take several hours to complete.
YOM HA’ATZMAUT
Israel’s Independence Day, also called by its Hebrew name, Yom Ha’atzmaut, commemorates the establishment of the Jewish State on May 14, 1948. The holiday is celebrated by the Hebrew calendar on the fifth day of Iyar. During centuries of exile, the Jews have longed to return to the Holy Land; and the dream of return has been a recurrent theme in liturgy and poetry for all that time. In our own century we have been witness to an incredible ingathering as Jews from more than 70 countries “returned” home.
In Israel Yom Ha’atzmaut is celebrated with official and unofficial parades and street parties. On many college campuses in the United States it is quite common for the Israeli students to sponsor an open house, with Israeli food and entertainment. In recent years more American Jewish institutions have been sponsoring Israeli-style activities of various sorts to coincide with Israel Independence Day. These include film festivals, local parades and art shows, as well as family picnics.

SHAVUOT
This festival occurs exactly seven weeks after the second day of Passover, hence, its name Shavuot, which is the Hebrew term for “weeks.” It begins the sixth day of Sivan. Shavuot is observed as a two-day Holiday outside of Israel.
It is customary to stay up an entire night of Shavuot, studying and discussing Torah. At least two reasons are given for all night Torah study:
1) Because the Israelites fell asleep during the night before receiving of the Torah and had to be awakened by Moses. To show eagerness, we stay up all night.
2) As Sinai is the marriage of Israel and G-d, and of heaven and earth, we stay up all night as is the custom for the attendants to a bride before her wedding. The Torah, in this schema, becomes the ketubbah, the wedding contract.
To remind us of the agricultural meaning of Shavuot, it is customary to decorate the home or synagogue with plants, flowers and foliage for the festival. This is an expression of our gratitude for the beauties and bounties of nature.
Honey and milk are also Shavuot symbols. According to the rabbis, the Torah is as sweet as honey and as nourishing as milk to those who study it and live according to its precepts. Dairy foods are therefore characteristic Shavuot dishes. Blintzes, honey, cheesecake and a variety of other dairy foods dominate the Shavuot menu.
Challah Recipe Ingredients

- 1 package dry yeast
- 1 cup warm water
- 1 1/2 tablespoons honey
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 3 eggs plus 1 extra egg yolk
- 3 1/2 cups flour plus some extra

Directions

1. Break three eggs into a small bowl. Beat them slightly with the fork. Set aside.
2. Put the warm water and yeast into the large bowl. Stir with the wooden spoon until the yeast is dissolved. (The yeast is what will make the bread rise.)
3. Add honey and salt to the water and yeast. Stir until dissolved.
4. Add the three beaten eggs to the big bowl mixture. Stir in.
5. Add the 3 1/2 cups of flour, a little at a time, and stir into the liquid. The dough will be very sticky.
6. Sprinkle cutting board with some flour. Place the dough on the board, and knead the dough for five minutes. Since it's so sticky, use just your fingers (not your whole hands).
7. Put the dough back into the large bowl and cover it with the damp cloth. The cloth will keep the dough from drying out as it rises. Leave it alone for two hours.
8. When you look at it again, the dough will have become much bigger! With your fingers, push the dough back down to a smaller size (so it is about the same size as when you made the dough in the first place).
9. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
10. Put the dough back onto the floured cutting board, and divide it into three equal portions.
11. Here's where you braid the dough (this is what makes a challah look like a challah!). Sprinkle some extra flour on each portion of dough to make it a little less sticky. Roll or pull each piece to make a tube of dough about 12” to 15” long. Lay the three tubes next to each other, then braid them. To do this, cross the right one over the middle one (so the tube that WAS the right one is now the middle one). Then cross the left one over the middle one (so the tube that WAS the left one is now the middle one). Keep doing this until it's all braided.
12. Put the braided dough onto the cookie sheet.
13. The last step before cooking is to cover the dough in one egg yolk. To do so, gently crack a fourth egg, and pry apart the two halves with your thumbs, making sure to keep the egg in the two half-shells. Then pour the egg yolk from half to half, letting as much egg white as possible dribble out each time into a small bowl. Eventually, you'll have just the yolk in one shell.
14. When you've done that, put the yolk into a different small bowl. Break the yolk with your fingers, smoosh it around, the finger-paint the top of the dough with the yolk. This will make it brown nicely.
15. Using oven mitts, put the dough into the oven. Cook for 35-45 minutes.
16. At the 35-minute mark, check to see if it's done by looking at it (it should be a nice golden brown) and by tapping it with a spoon (it should be crusty). If it's not quite done, put it back in the oven for five minutes.
17. When it's all ready, use your oven mitts to remove the baking pan and bread from the oven. Clean up the kitchen before you enjoy your food. That way, when you're done, your challah will have cooled off.
“Play is the highest form of research”
~ Albert Einstein