



Monthly Newsletter

October 2010



The leaves are turning color, sukkot are being constructed, and fall is in the air. With the hard work of our Parent Committee; Lori Brockman, Dana Carmel, Jessica Chame, Roxanne Cohen, Robyn Cornyn, and Andrea Potischman, our Welcome Back BBQ was a huge success. The rain held off and the day was perfect. Special thanks to Lori and Ivan Brockman who cooked the delicious chicken and hot dogs! Thank you all for coming to make the day so much fun.

Our Parent Committee meets every six weeks to discuss the happenings at the preschool, spearhead events, and brainstorm future programming. If you are interested in joining the Parent Committee please let me know. All parents are invited to the Committee's meetings; dates are on the school calendar.

I have some wonderful news to share. In the spring we submitted a renewal grant for our Keshet (Special Needs) Program. We heard last week that we have received the grant for the third year. This grant will allow us to continue working with Monika Perez, our Inclusion Specialist, and to offer our Facilitated Playskills Group for children who need extra assistance with social skills. Our \$5,000 grant is from the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties. More information will follow soon.

Beth Jacob's construction project is definitely underway! Our social hall is unrecognizable, and it is all very exciting. We're still getting used to new entrances and exits but all is moving along smoothly. Until our gate-locking mechanism is figured out, either Kristin or I will be at the gate at arrival and dismissal, just to keep our eye on things. We all thank you for your patience while we get all the bugs worked out in the new systems.



Friday, October 8 is our first "Work in the Garden" morning.

We have a wonderful yard that is maintained by the Preschool, and there is always something to do.

Whether dead-heading flowers, picking weeds, turning soil, or planting seeds, we can offer something for everyone. It's also a good time to get to know other Preschool parents, and enjoy some time outdoors. We'd love to have you join us on this day; come for the whole time or just part. Your help is always appreciated.

Last, but certainly not least, you are all invited to join us for services and celebration of Simchat Torah on Thursday, September 30 at 7pm. Children will get the chance to march with the Torah. More information about Simchat Torah can be found on our website.

Until next month,

Ann

Each day of our lives we make deposits in the memory banks of our children.

~ Charles R. Swindoll

CALENDAR

Monday, September 13

First Day of School

Holidays - School Closures

September 30/October 1

Thursday, September 30

Shemini Atzereth & Simchat Torah

Simchat Torah services and celebration beginning at 7pm on October 1; please join us!

Thursday, October 7

Preschool Parent Committee Meeting

9:15am

Friday, October 8

Work in the Garden!

9:15 - 11:45

Thursday, October 14

Moms Night Out - time and place to be announced

Friday, October 15

First Young Family Shabbat of the year

5:00pm dinner/6:15pm child-friendly service

Looking ahead...

Monday, November 8

Preschool Shoe Drive begins

Sunday, November 14

Annual Chanukah Faire; all proceeds benefit the Preschool

Jewish Holidays

Shemini Atzereth and Simchat Torah from the Beth Jacob Website

Shemini Atzereth is mentioned in the Bible, but its exact function is unclear. In Second Temple times, it appears to have been a day devoted to the ritual cleansing of the altar in the Temple. With the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, this function of the day became obsolete. Although it marks the beginning of the rainy season in Israel and, therefore, includes the year's first prayer for rain, its lack of clear definition may have provided the impetus to celebrate it in conjunction with Simchat Torah, a celebration of the conclusion of one and the beginning of another annual cycle of readings from the Torah. This latter holiday probably originated during the medieval period.

Unlike many other holidays, the observance of Shemini Atzereth and Simchat Torah are centered in the synagogue and community. On Shemini Atzereth, some still eat in the sukkah (the traditional hut associated with the festival of Sukkot), but in contrast to Sukkot no blessings are associated with that activity.

Beginning on Shemini Atzereth and lasting until Pesach (Passover), a short prayer for rain is inserted into the second blessing of the Amidah Prayer. It is traditional to include the Yizkor, or memorial service, as part of the liturgy for this day. Simchat Torah is characterized by joyful dancing with the Torah. The final portion of the Book of Deuteronomy is read in the synagogue followed by the beginning of the Book of Genesis. In this manner, the annual cycle of Torah readings continues unbroken.

While Shemini Atzereth's significance is somewhat unclear, Simchat Torah conveys a clear message about the centrality of Torah in Jewish life. It is both a source of Jewish identity and a precious gift from God. Simchat Torah is the day on which the whole community gathers to come into direct contact with the Torah and to express our joy in having received it.



Room Alef

Julia Massa

Shana Tova! I hope everyone had a good New Year. It was quite an exciting first couple of weeks in Room Alef! We had some very happy moments and some "I miss Mommy and Daddy" moments. But, overall, the children did very well. Once your toddler gets used to the routine of the class I'm sure he/she will feel only excitement towards coming to school.

Over the last month we had fun reading books about all kinds of pets (especially puppies), Sukkot, shapes and numbers. We had fun and continue to have fun blowing bubbles outside, playing in the sandbox, racing up the jungle gym, and sliding down the slide. Inside, we are busy playing with all of toys, making lots of noise with our wide range of musical instruments and singing songs. We are a very busy class!

On another note, here are some good reminders, or food for thought, on Developmental Milestones that may interest you:

WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT FROM YOUR CHILD and the "TERRIBLE TWOS:"

Because of your child's growing desire to assert her/his independence, this stage is often called the "terrible twos." However, this can be an exciting time for you and your toddler. He/She will experience huge intellectual, social, and emotional changes that will help him/her to explore his/her new world, and make sense of it.

During this stage, your toddler will be able to follow two- or three-phrase commands, sort objects by shape and color, imitate the actions of adults and playmates, and express a wide range of emotions

HERE ARE SOME "POSITIVE PARENTING" IDEAS:

Set up a special time to read books with your toddler.

Encourage your child to engage in pretend play.

Play parade or follow the leader with your toddler.

Help your child to explore her surroundings by taking her on a walk or wagon ride.

Encourage your child to tell you his name and age.

Teach your child simple songs like Itsy Bitsy Spider, or other cultural childhood rhymes.

Sing some of the songs we sing at school.

Practice Shabbat at home.

Until next time!

Warmly,

Julia



Room Gimmel

Natalya Martyushova

I can not believe it, but we are in the month of October. The beginning of the school year was very smooth. Everyone seems to be enjoying class and we are all getting used to the daily schedule and the routine of the day. The morning drop offs are getting better and I am sure soon there won't be any difficulties.

The children have started to explore the classroom and activities that are set out, and playdough and watercoloring are the most popular activities. The housekeeping corner is also a very busy place in our classroom. Little chefs are making wonderful breakfasts for me!

We are definitely working on our social skills in Room Gimmel. Taking turns and sharing are aspects that we try to reinforce in the classroom and I am hearing a lot of "thank you" and "please" during the day.

The children were introduced to the holiday of Sukkot, and they worked hard painting an etrog and a lulav for our classroom wall. We visited the sukkah in our preschool garden and it was a great feeling to have snack in the sukkah.

You can smell of the fall in the air, and during the month of October we will be talking about and observing the changes in the nature. We will go on a nature walk to pick up some leaves for our art projects. As we look at the leaves and the trees we will be talking about the colors of fall that we discover. The children will also be able to see photos and pictures of nature in the fall.

Room Gimmel loves music and movement. We will have fun dancing and picking up some new moves. It should be lots of fun.

I would like to remind you that the weather will be changing, so please check your cubbies and add some warm clothes and extra diapers.

I am very proud of the children in Room Gimmel and know that we will continue to have a lot of fun moments throughout the year.

I would like to say thank you to all of you for your patience and cooperation making our beginning of the school year so smooth and enjoyable.

Faithfully yours,
Natalya



Room Dalet

Lauri Flaxman

There is lots of activity happening in Room Dalet. The children are busy building with blocks, cooking in the housekeeping corner, playing with play dough, counting the numbers on the calendar, learning the days of the week, signing, and having fun! We've been on scavenger hunts, looking for red, yellow, and blue in our garden. In the midst of all the searching we found a perfect spider web and raccoon footprints! It was very exciting.



The week of October 4 is **ORANGE** week. We will read the **Carrot Seed** and plant carrots in our garden. Orange juice will be made and we will count and plant the orange seeds. Lots of red and yellow paint will be mixed to accompany our discussion of secondary colors.

The week of October 11 is **GREEN** week. We will read **Bartholomew and the Oobleck** and make our very own gooey, green oobleck. There will be an abundance of yellow and blue paint to mix. We will sing, "**The Green Grass Grows All Around**" and conduct an experiment with grass seeds to see how they grow under varying conditions of light and water.

PURPLE week is the week of October 18. We will be reading the story, "**Harold and the Purple Crayon.**" Please have your child look around the house and see how many **purple** crayons they can find. Bring them to school in a Ziploc bag. We will be counting **purple** crayons all week. These crayons will be returned to you on Friday.

During the week of October 25, our letter of the week program begins with the letter "R." Our letter of the week program will focus on the beginning letter sound each week. The letters are not presented in alphabetical order. All of the activities: art, music, dance, science, math, cooking, planting, etc. start with the letter sound. Children are invited to bring something to share on WEDNESDAYS that start with our letter of the week. For "R" week, we will visit the Rabbi in his study and he will talk to us about what a Rabbi does. As a culmination of our six weeks of colors, we will make a rainbow book. It is exciting to see the children signing all of the colors. Be sure to ask your child about primary and secondary colors.

Friend of the week begins the week of October 25. Each child will have the opportunity to be our Chaver Ha'Shavua (friend of the week). Each friend will be the line leader, put the number on our calendar, and lead us in singing our calendar songs, check the weather in Jerusalem (with help from mom or dad on the computer), ring the bell for inside time, water the plants, make challah, be the Shabbat Helper on Friday, and take home the Shabbat Basket. Luc will be our Chaver Ha'Shavua this week.

Fridays are dance days. Every Friday, starting on October 8, we take the children to the social hall and spend about 20-30 minutes doing movement games and Israeli dances before Shabbat. We hope to see you each Friday to celebrate Shabbat with us at 11:45. Bill and/or Rabbi Ezray lead us in prayer and song. We hold a large tallit over the children while reciting a special blessing for the children. It is a wonderful end to the school week as we celebrate Shabbat together.

The year is off to a great start!
Lauri and Ann



Room Hey

Natalya Martyushova

The time goes fast and we turn the page of our calendar to the month of October. During a short period of time in September the children got a chance to explore the classroom and to get to know each other better.

During the morning circle time we are learning a new greeting song *Boker Tov* which means "Good Morning" in Hebrew. We also have lots of little artists in Room Hey who love to watercolor and draw with crayons, and dramatic play is always fun in the housekeeping area...it's very popular. All-in-all there are very busy children exploring all areas of the classroom!

The Room Hey children were enthusiastic when making their sukkahs and decorations for our preschool sukkah in the garden. Shaking the lulav and smelling the etrog were great experiences for everyone as well. The highlight was having snack in the Sukkah, we brought a small table out and we just had enough room for all of us to sit inside and enjoy snack. The children really felt like they were celebrating Sukkot to the fullest. Visiting the sanctuary and touching Torah, while talking about Simchat Torah, is another exciting experience for children and this visit is planned in days to come.

October will have many fun activities. Since a new cycle of Torah reading starts, and the first reading in the Torah is Creation, we will talk about the story of Creation. The children will be able to make their own creation books at the art table. We will read different stories that tell the creation story.

In Room Hey we like music! The children will be introduced to the song *Once Upon a Time* by a wonderful children's singer, Fran Avni, which tells the story of creation. We will accompany the song with a felt board story; it is a great interactive way to engage children and to have them participate in storytelling.

I wish you all a wonderful celebration of all the fall holidays. May your homes will be full of joy, happiness, and love.

Faithfully yours,

Natalya



Renewal of Body and Spirit - Rabbi Ezra's Rosh Ha'Shana Sermon

Shannon Guggenheim writes that her two year old daughter Allyson suffered a brain injury due to lack of oxygen prior to being born. The result is that she suffers from Cerebral Palsy which means she will have difficulty controlling her body. In addition to the brain injury, she was born with Cystic Fibrosis, a genetic condition which afflicts her respiratory system as well as her ability to properly absorb nutrition.

Shannon wrote that caring for Allyson is more than a full time job – patient advocate, scheduler, physical therapist, pharmacist, night nurse – in addition to her job, being mother to her 5 year old Lily Rose and being a wife. As you can imagine, Allyson's care consumes every minute of her time and every ounce of her strength. One day, her mother pointed out a simple truth that reset Shannon's path. She said she was not nearly as worried about what would become of Ally as she was of what would become of Shannon. She knew Ally would be ok and the network of family, friends, doctors and therapists were all dedicated to her wellbeing. But she feared Shannon was getting lost in her quest to "fix" Ally and that if she didn't change, she'd lose herself.

Shannon's mom helped her understand that she was so consumed with her Ally's care that she neglected herself – eating right, sleeping, finding time for self-care. Shannon writes, "Slowly, but surely I put "me" back on the To Do list. I made time to take a shower, put on a little make-up, go to the gym, - all the things I once regarded as luxuries but now see as prescription medicine." And although life did improve something was still missing. She writes, "More important than choosing to eat more healthily and logging an appropriate amount of sleep or hours in the gym was charting a return to joy." Shannon's story points to a truth that is all too familiar for many of us – our physical, emotional and spiritual health gets set aside amidst the seemingly endless tasks we face and habits we have formed. Simply put: **It is a mitzvah to care for our health** – understanding health in the broadest sense of the word – physical, emotional and spiritual.

It's a *mitzvah* to take care of our health and Judaism gives a spiritual framework to support the challenge. The power of Jewish wisdom is when it seeps into your soul and helps you make different decisions. **The core Jewish belief is the centrality of life.** One who saves a life saves a world – because life is so precious. A key commandment in the Torah is "Choose Life! *U'vacharta b'chayim*"

I want you to hold onto a story you can access throughout the year. It is the story of Hillel the Elder, who was followed by his students from the academy after class ended. They asked, "Master, where are you going?"

"To perform a *mitzvah*,"

"Which *mitzvah*?"

"To wash in the bathhouse," said Hillel.

"Is this a *mitzvah*?" they asked.

"Yes," replied Hillel. "If the statues of kings, which are all around the city are scoured and washed by cleaning people; how much more should I take care of myself – for I have been created in the image of God."

"Is it a *mitzvah*?" the students ask – and the response is an emphatic "YES!" Hillel's reasoning connects caring for ourselves with being created in the Divine image. Safeguarding our bodies is the natural conclusion of a belief that our body is intrinsically holy. Synthesize this teaching with the belief that our bodies are merely on loan to us – for God owns everything. It is from God that we come and to God that we will return. Just as we would care for anything that was loaned to us, we care for our bodies. There is an imperative in Judaism to care for ourselves.

This mitzvah needs to be reclaimed. Healthy living is a *mitzvah*! This isn't a new age trend being co-opted – it is deeply rooted in our texts. Maimonides taught that to care for one's health is among the greatest acts of worship, and that the laws regarding good health are just as obligatory as other positive duties like caring for the poor.

So now the most important question – where do *you* need to focus in terms of your own health and well-being? For some – this has to do with what we eat and making time to exercise. For others – this has to do with the stress in our lives and managing it more mindfully. For many – it is tending to health concerns you have been neglecting. For Shannon – it was making time for joy. Where is it that *you* need to focus in order to fulfill the *mitzvah* of choosing life?

As you take on the challenge of self-care, use Jewish tradition to create a spiritual framework that reminds and reinforces your behavior. Begin each morning with the affirmation that Hillel the Elder used to explain by going to the bathhouse was a *mitzvah*: Thank you God for creating me in the Divine Image: *Baruch atah Adonai, She'asani b'tzal'mo*. Meditate on what it will mean each day to care for and cherish the holiness inherent in you. Awareness opens the door to behavioral change.

Understanding the connection between our thoughts and attitudes and our health is another aspect of caring for ourselves that is rooted in our tradition. Modern concepts of integrative care and the mind/body connection is captured in the wisdom King Solomon taught centuries ago: "As a person thinks in his heart, so he becomes." It's true – and too often we are unaware how our attitudes and perceptions impact our health.

Shannon Guggenheim's article captures a moment where she realized the connection between attitude and health. She wrote that every time she took Ally out in public, people would stare and comment about her floppy head, lazy eye and feeding tube. Shannon realized that Ally will go through her entire life being judged; and that epiphany made her realize so many of us judge without benefit of full understanding – and she vowed to live her life without passing negative judgment on others. She writes, "I feel lighter, more at ease and happier...I don't get sick. Coincidence? Perhaps, but what if by removing that negative aspect from my life I freed up that part of my consciousness to focus on other, more positive things?" Health is more than eating right and exercising – it is the attitudes we choose.

If every day is brand new, then past failure is an opportunity not for shame or despair – but to learn. All of us who struggle with health commitments, whatever they may be, know the moments of feeling that it's all futile. A theology of daily renewal gives us the gentle push to try again – but this time armed with new knowledge. We look honestly and assess what didn't work the last time. We learn from failures and frustrations and believe that this time can be different.

We have the tools to succeed and we face the challenge together. The synagogue needs to be a place that promotes health. The snacks we serve our children in Preschool and Religious School will be prepared with fresh and natural ingredients. We're starting with yoga

Bits and Pieces...

Renewal of Body and Spirit continued...

classes which will emphasize Jewish values that the body is holy and to be cared for. We'll continue biking, hiking, exercising and learning how to care for ourselves. We'll talk about this to each other and give loving support. We'll create a culture where caring for ourselves is indeed a mitzvah.

May this be a year where we renew our commitment to our health. May our faith inspire us to eat nutritiously, exercise regularly, gain mastery over negativity and embrace the healing power of community. In the book of Leviticus we read: "These are the things that, if a person does them, he or she will find life therein." (Leviticus 18:5) May we do those things so that we can live a rich, full lives. May this be a sweet year of health, happiness and renewal.

Shana Tovah,

Rabbi Ezra

From "The Jewish Family Fun Book"

by Danielle Dardashti and Roni Sarig...



The holiday of Sukkot, which begins four days after Yom Kippur, is one of the most active holidays around - an excellent chance for shared family experiences. Best of all, it's the time to build a succah, a homemade Jewish hut where families eat and even sleep (weather permitting) for the seven days of this holiday.

The festival of Sukkot has two origins. Historically, it commemorates the Israelites' forty years of wandering in the wilderness, when they built temporary shelters to live in. Agriculturally, Sukkot celebrated the end of the harvest season and recalls the type of temporary dwellings our ancestors built out in the fields, where they'd stay while harvesting.

Once your family has worked together to construct your succah, spend as much valuable family time it it as is practical. This is a great way to emphasize a number of valuable lessons: First, it's not the kind of house we live in that's important but what takes place inside the home. We can take this hut and turn it in to a magical place. For a week, the succah becomes our home.

Second, the succah represents the unpredictability of life. It can be blown away in an instant if a big, unexpected wind comes along. This is a perfect time to discuss the issue of homelessness with the family; what it would be like to live all year round with so little shelter (or none at all).

Succahs come in all shapes and sizes, but there are a few rules about how to construct them. The two main rules are these: 1. A succah has to have at least three walls (one of which can be an existing wall, like the side of the house). 2. the roof needs to provide mostly shade yet leave enough openings so you can see stars through it at night. Most commonly the roof is made out of skhach, tree branches or twigs, which suits both needs perfectly. However, it can be made out of any organic material as long as it's not something permanent, such as bricks or wood boards.

From a Beth Jacob Congregant...

"I thought your preschool parents might be interested in knowing about a wonderful babysitter who is available. Annie Altman-Merino a straight A student who is sophomore at Menlo-Atherton High School. She has great experience with children, is extremely responsible and reliable. Can you please share her contact information with the parents of the preschool?"

Annie Altman-Merino
650-575-0891
aaltmanmerino123@gmail.com

FROM THE PARENT HANDBOOK...

Lunch Bunch

Lunch Bunch is offered Monday through Friday for children in rooms Gimmel, Dalet, and Hey. Lunch Bunch hours are from 12noon to either 1:00pm or 2:00pm, and can be on a contract or drop-in basis. A cold, uncooked, Kosher, [dairy lunch](#) and beverage must be brought from home. Lunches containing cheeses, yogurt, fruits, vegetables, parve crackers, etc. will provide healthful nutrition. The no cooked food provision rules out such things as macaroni salad, pastas, and any other dishes that are cooked outside of Beth Jacob. We ask that you not send candy or sugary desserts as part of your child's lunch and remember that the Preschool is a no nut zone. Be sure to include "blue ice" in your child's lunch box to keep it cool as we have no space for refrigeration of lunch boxes. Please see the Lunch Bunch form for fee information.