



**Keshher @EBJC Family Handbook  
5778/2017–2018**

**Julie Schwarzwald, Education and Youth Director  
Josh Saypol, Board of Education Chair**

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**Why Kesher?**  
“Kesher” means “Connection.”

More than anything, what we really want is for our children to form a lasting connection to Judaism.

To have the knowledge and skills to be adult Jews.

To have the desire to be lifelong learners, continuing to engage with our texts and our traditions.

At Kesher @EBJC, we provide the tools and the motivation to inspire a life led Jewishly.

**Kesher K-7** is the formal Jewish education program at EBJC. The curriculum is enhanced with the use of technology in all grades and subject areas, including SMART Boards in the classrooms and online games and activities for practice at home or on the go. Each Sunday morning, a different activity is offered - Israeli dance, music, art, or sports - to help learners engage with Judaism through different modalities of learning. Each month, a different grade hosts a Friday night Shabbat service and dinner to build community and showcase what they have learned. Once a month, Kesher K-7 will meet on Saturday mornings, instead of Sunday.

- ☆ **Shabbat School** meets once a month on Saturday mornings from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm. There is no Kesher K-7 on Sundays on these weeks. Shabbat School will include youth services and Shabbat-appropriate activities in a fun-filled morning of learning and exploration.
  
- ☆ **Youth Services** are held on all other Shabbat and Yom Tov/holiday mornings. Junior Congregation provides an opportunity for learners in Bet/2nd grade through Vav/6th grade to pray with their peers in a friendly environment. Shabbat/Yom Tov Katan gives Gan/Kindergarten and Alef/1st grade learners a chance to help lead the prayers and songs they know.
  
- ☆ **KINDERGARTEN & FIRST GRADE - Kesher Gan-Alef** meets on Sunday mornings from 9:00 to 11:30 am. Learners in kindergarten and 1st grade in secular school meet weekly to build the foundations of Jewish learning.
  - Hebrew Through Movement is a program that introduces Hebrew in a playful and meaningful way, creating a positive initial connection between children and Hebrew. Learners learn Hebrew by hearing and responding to Hebrew commands in modern, spoken Hebrew with a goal of making the prayers in our siddur, as well as synagogue and Jewish vocabulary, more easily accessible.
  - Gan-Alef learners are introduced to Bible stories and the Jewish values expressed in the Torah.

- Learners explore the meaning of Shabbat and its associated blessings. Each child has the opportunity to bring Shabbat Bear home for several weekends throughout the year.
  - Introductions to Israel as the Jewish homeland and the synagogue as our spiritual home occur through interactive, experiential learning.
- ☆ **SECOND GRADE - Keshet Bet** meets on Sunday mornings from 9:00 to 11:30 am for learners in 2nd grade in secular school.
- Learners become proficient at Hebrew decoding, learning the consonants and vowels and how to sound out multi-syllable words. The class is taught “immersion-style,” with spoken Hebrew used for instructions and questions, building on previous knowledge from Gan-Alef.
  - A formal study of prayer begins this year, with learners learning the melodies and choreography for prayers common to Shabbat and weekday services.
  - Learners discuss the weekly Torah portion and keep journals to share with their families.
  - Shabbat and holidays are a special focus with emphasis on the traditions and ritual objects for each.
- ☆ **THIRD GRADE - Keshet Gimel** for learners in 3rd grade in secular school meets on Sunday mornings from 9:00 to 11:30 am and on Wednesday afternoons from 4:15 to 6:15 pm.
- The Hebrew focus shifts to integration with prayers as learners begin a three-year series that examines the themes of the prayers as well as their links to Jewish values. In addition to learning the melodies and choreography of Shabbat and holiday prayers through the Sulam Tefillah program (see below), learners answer challenging analytical questions to personalize the meaning of each prayer.
  - Bible stories from Creation through Exodus are explored through original text translation as well as midrashim/stories from the ancient rabbis. Learners engage with the text by creating their own stories in written or art form to deepen their understanding.
  - Learners begin to build their Jewish identities and learn what unites Jews as a people throughout the world. The Jewish community shares a common language in Hebrew, a common calendar of holidays, and common life cycle events. Gimel learners examine a Jewish view of time through the lens of Jewish identity - our shared history and stories, language, symbols and rituals, and ethical teachings.
  - Learners learn the major cities of Israel - their geography, history, culture, and personalities.
  - Each Wednesday, learners in Gimel through Zayin (3rd through 7th grades) gather for Tefillah/Prayer with the Rabbi from 5:00 to 5:30 pm.
- ☆ **FOURTH GRADE - Keshet Dalet** for learners in 4th grade in secular school meets on Sunday mornings from 9:00 to 11:30 am and on Wednesday afternoons from 4:15 to 6:15 pm.
- In year two, the Hebrew focus remains on integration with prayers as learners continue a three-year series that examines the themes of the prayers as well as their links to Jewish values. In addition to learning the melodies and choreography of

- Shabbat and holiday prayers through the Sulam Tefillah program (see below), learners answer challenging analytical questions to personalize the meaning of each prayer.
- Building a Jewish identity continues as learners explore how the Torah is our source for wisdom and justice and a guide for living an ethical life. Learners will explore how a Torah is made, meet the rabbis whose commentaries make up the Talmud, and learn how our sacred texts define and enrich Jewish life.
  - Learners learn our shared history and heritage as they examine the influence of Jewish history on North American life today. They will explore the themes of exile and return, and learn how the values and traditions that have defined our people help us to understand our world today.
  - Bible stories from receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai to rebuilding Jerusalem in 400 CE are explored through original text translation as well as midrashim/stories from the ancient rabbis. Learners engage with the text by creating their own stories in written or art form to deepen and personalize their understanding.
  - Each Wednesday, learners in Gimel through Zayin (3rd through 7th grades) gather for Tefillah/Prayer with the Rabbi from 5:00 to 5:30 pm.
- ☆ **FIFTH GRADE - Keshet Hei** for learners in 5th grade in secular school meets on Sunday mornings from 9:00 to 11:30 am and on Wednesday afternoons from 4:15 to 6:15 pm.
- In year three, the Hebrew focus remains on integration with prayers as learners conclude a three-year series that examines the themes of the prayers as well as their links to Jewish values. In addition to learning the melodies and choreography of Shabbat and holiday prayers through the Sulam Tefillah program (see below) , learners answer challenging analytical questions to personalize the meaning of each prayer.
  - Learners study the holidays in depth as they year progresses. Modern customs and celebrations are presented alongside each holiday's history and ancient traditions. Bible stories and midrashim/stories illuminate the meaning and core Jewish values of each holiday.
  - Israel learning expands to cover the regions of Israel. Learners are introduced again to Israel's history and geography, as well as its political, commercial, and cultural life. Israel's struggle to coexist peacefully with its neighbors is presented in a thoughtful and age-appropriate way. Learners learn about Israelis their own age: what they do for fun, their favorite sports and foods, and what their schools are like.
  - Each Wednesday, learners in Gimel through Zayin (3rd through 7th grades) gather for Tefillah/Prayer with the Rabbi from 5:00 to 5:30 pm.
- ☆ **SIXTH GRADE - Keshet Vav** for learners in 6th grade in secular school meets on Sunday mornings from 9:00 to 11:30 am and on Wednesday afternoons from 4:15 to 6:15 pm.
- Learners learn about the Holocaust and Heroism in an age-appropriate curriculum from the stories of young people who survived. Through online discussions and engaging activities, learners gain a personal connection to history and explore issues of ethics and personal responsibility.
  - Learners continue in the Sulam Tefillah program (see below), focusing on prayers beyond Friday night and Saturday morning services.

- Each Wednesday, learners in Gimel through Zayin (3rd through 7th grades) gather for Tefillah/Prayer with the Rabbi from 5:00 to 5:30 pm.
  - Learners can choose from a number of offerings for Wednesday afternoons as part of Chugim/Electives (see below).
- ☆ **SEVENTH GRADE - Keshet Zayin** for learners in 7th grade in secular school meets on Sunday mornings from 9:00 to 11:30 am and on Wednesday afternoons from 4:15 to 6:15 pm.
- In this year of bar/bat mitzvah, learners study what mitzvot are, as well as practical and creative suggestions on how to observe them. Learners explore the wisdom of Jewish sacred texts and examine through a Jewish lens the kind of adults they want to become and how the practice of mitzvot can help them achieve their goals.
  - Jewish rituals for life-cycle events are a core part of the Zayin curriculum. While exploring how Jewish lifecycle events help mark and celebrate the milestones in our lives, young teens will consider how they can each contribute to the modern evolution and enrichment of these celebrations
  - Learners continue in the Sulam Tefillah program (see below), focusing on prayers beyond Friday night and Saturday morning services.
  - Each Wednesday, learners in Gimel through Zayin (3rd through 7th grades) gather for Tefillah/Prayer with the Rabbi from 5:00 to 5:30 pm.
  - Learners can choose from a number of offerings for Wednesday afternoons as part of Chugim/Electives (see below).
- ☆ **Sulam Tefillah**, or Prayer Ladder, consists of small-group instruction in the decoding, chanting, and movements associated with each prayer. Learners will be assessed initially and placed in small, multi-age groups depending on knowledge and reading level. As they demonstrate proficiency at chanting each prayer, they move to the next group. All learners in Gimel through Zayin (3rd through 7th grades) will meet together on Sunday mornings for this subject.
- ☆ **Chugim** are electives for learners in Vav through Zayin (6th through 7th grades). Each semester, learners will choose two classes of interest to them. Sessions meet on Wednesdays from 4:15 to 5:00 pm and from 5:30 to 6:15 pm. Previous Chugim have included:
- Portable Judaism: Investigate various Judaic items that have been transported by the Jewish people for many, many years and create portable Judaic memorabilia that you can bring home and share with your family
  - Jews & Food: Study the laws of kashrut and enjoy cooking foods from Jewish cultures around the world
  - American Jews/Jewish Americans: Learn about historic and contemporary famous Jewish Americans as well as your personal history to find similarities
  - Torah Reading: Learn the ancient trop cantillation and how to chant Torah, then put theory into practice reading Torah during youth services
  - Jews Around the World: Look at the art, music, cuisine, culture, and history of different diaspora Jewish communities from around the world

- Israeli Dancing: Become part of a dance troupe, learn ancient and modern dances, and experience Judaism in a whole new way
- Creative Writing: Through poetry, drama, short stories, memoirs, and so on, create a collection of personal explorations of Judaism in various genres
- Book Club: Read and discuss books with Jewish themes, characters, or topics
- You Be the Judge: Explore and debate ethical issues from a Jewish perspective
- Jewish History: Understand the timeline of Jewish history by placing Torah stories, holidays, and historical events in chronological context
- Beyond the Bible: Learn about the Prophets that make up the Haftarah read each Shabbat and holiday

**Keshet B'Ivrit** is designed to meet the needs of native-speakers from Hatikvah who are looking for Judaics learning. It meets on Wednesday afternoons from 4:15 to 6:15 pm. Keshet B'Ivrit is taught in Hebrew to multi-age learners and is individualized to meet the needs of diverse learners. Students will join Keshet K-7 for Tefillah with the Rabbi from 5:00 to 5:30 pm.

- ☆ Learners are split into three groups based on secular grade:
  - Nitzanim for kindergarten through 2nd grades focuses on learning about holidays, basic Torah stories and prayers, and the daily life in Israel.
  - P'rachim for third through 5th grades studies parashat hashavua, mitzvot and middot from our tradition, the rituals and customs for the holidays, the waves of aliyot to Israel throughout history, and continues learning basic prayers.
  - Shnat Mitzvah for 6th and 7th grades is an in-depth discussion of what it means to become a bar/bat mitzvah. Students will explore their family histories and develop a personal connection to Judaism, Israel, and the age of mitzvot.

**Keshet Bogrim** is the Young Adult Program for learners in 8th through 12th grades in secular school. The program meets each week on Thursdays, from 6:30 to 8:15 pm, and includes dinner, dessert, and time to socialize with friends. There will be a series of modules throughout the year, lasting from one to several weeks. Learners are invited to sign up for each topic that interests them. Sample topics might include:

- Mitzvah Modules: Study the text for mitzvot, then put theory into practice; for example, learn about saving a life, then learn CPR and hear from EMTs as you tour an ambulance
- Step Up for Israel: Jerusalem U's mini-course on understanding the current conflict and learning how to be an effective advocate for Israel
- IAC Eitanim: In partnership with the Israeli American Council, Eitanim is a unique leadership and entrepreneurship project-based program for middle and high school students, allowing them to connect, explore, and experience Israel while preparing for college and developing professional skills.
- Speakers and films on contemporary issues
- Participating in EBJC and community events and mitzvah projects such as the JFS Passover Food Drive
- Visiting assisted living facilities and partnering with the Senior Adult League to celebrate holidays

- 12th graders will meet several times throughout the year with the Rabbi to explore maintaining a Jewish identity beyond high school

**Kesher Madrichim** are 8th through 12th graders who volunteer their time to help with the K-7 Program. Madrichim receive training and are typically assigned to a particular class to serve as leaders, role models, and assistants to the teacher.

## SHABBAT PROGRAMMING

Every student must attend a minimum of **eight** age-appropriate Shabbat morning services each year as part of the Kesher curriculum. Shabbat School counts for this requirement.

- ✧ **Shabbat Katan - Pre-Kindergarten through 1<sup>st</sup> Grade:**  
Every Shabbat morning, from 10:45 am until noon, an age-appropriate service filled with songs and stories introduces young children to prayer. Adults attend with their children to share a Shabbat experience. Students in Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade who are able to stay on their own may do so.
- ✧ **Junior Congregation - 2<sup>nd</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> Grades:**  
Every Shabbat morning, from 10:30 am until noon, an age-appropriate service using a new siddur designed especially for students is combined with fun activities. This program is designed to work together with the Kesher curriculum to teach and reinforce Shabbat morning prayers.
- ✧ **Middle School Minyan - 7<sup>th</sup> Grade:**  
Older students are encouraged to attend regular services in preparation for bar/bat mitzvah and to fulfill the mitzvah of counting in a minyan.

## PROJECT PRAYER

Project Prayer recognizes students who go beyond the minimum requirements for Shabbat/Holiday service attendance.

- ✧ **EMEK (Valley):** Student met the minimum requirement of attending eight age-appropriate Shabbat morning services at EBJC.
- ✧ **GIVA (Hill):** Student reached Emek level and attended a total of at least 12 age-appropriate Shabbat or Yom Tov services (not including Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur) at EBJC, including Friday night, Saturday morning, or Saturday afternoon. Student earns \$100 off tuition for the next year of Kesher.
- ✧ **PISGAH (Summit):** Student reached Giva level and attended a total of at least 18 age-appropriate Shabbat or Yom Tov services (not including Rosh Hashanah or Yom

Kippur) services at EBJC, including Friday night, Saturday morning, or Saturday afternoon. Student earns \$100 off tuition for the next year of Keshet and recognition at Promotion.

## **YOUTH GROUPS**

EBJC has youth groups for grades 4 through 12 to encourage the opportunity to immerse themselves in various Jewish and social activities while forming friendships that will last a lifetime.

☆ Chaverim - 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Grades:

Meets once a month on Wednesdays from 6:15 to 7:30 pm. A pizza dinner is combined with fun activities related to holidays or social fun.

☆ Kadima - 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> Grades:

Meets once a month on Wednesdays from 6:15 to 7:45 pm for Chapter programs, including dinner and fun activities. Kadima is part of the Hagalil Region and there are monthly regional events across New Jersey, providing opportunities to reunite with camp friends and meet new friends from other congregations.

☆ USY - 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> Grades:

Meets once or twice a month for Chapter activities, on various days. Part of Hagalil Region, USYers also participate in regional events each month as well as International Convention each year. Activities are social, religious, social-action, and cultural in nature.

## **POLICIES**

### **Attendance**

Regular attendance is essential to learning. While we recognize that there are many activities in the lives of our youth, we expect Keshet to be a family priority.

### **Carpool**

Students will enter and exit through the Rug Wing door only. For drop-off, cars should pull up close to the building in an orderly line and drop off students no more than 10 minutes before or after the start time of school. If parents/guardians wish to escort their students in, they must park in a parking space in the regular parking lot, away from the building.

At dismissal, cars should line up in two lines, filling the line closest to the building first. Students will exit through the Rug Wing door and walk to their cars at dismissal time, under the supervision of the Director and teachers.

For the safety of all of our children, the EBJC driveway exit will be closed from 5 minutes before dismissal time until the Director signals the police officers on duty that all children are safely in their cars. Please follow the procedure to ensure that everyone is safe.

### **Late Arrival/Early Dismissal Procedures**

The safety and security of all students is of the utmost importance. Please adhere to all procedures. Classes start PROMPTLY at 9:00 am on Sunday and 4:15 pm on Wednesday. The Rug Wing door will open 10 minutes before the start of class to admit students and be locked 10 minutes after the start of school. After this time, parents/guardians will need to escort students into the school and sign in with the Director.

We recognize that occasionally a student may need to leave early due to unusual circumstances. Parents/guardians are encouraged to call/email in advance whenever possible to notify the Director. Parents/guardians will need to park the car and go into the school to sign out the child in the main office. The Director will then bring the student from class to the office. Under no circumstances will students be released without the Director's knowledge. Students will ONLY be dismissed to adults with a written note/email/phone call from the parents/guardians indicating the name of the adult authorized to pick up the student.

### **School Closing**

In the event of inclement weather or emergency, Keshet may need to be closed. PLEASE NOTE: Wednesday afternoon school WILL NOT automatically be cancelled if East Brunswick School District has closed. In the case of closing, an email will be sent to all families, it will be posted on both Facebook pages (*East Brunswick Jewish Center EBJC* and *Keshet @EBJC Jewish Learning Experience*), and it will be sent via Remind.com for all families who have signed up.

### **Student Evaluation and Assessment**

Students are evaluated on an ongoing basis to assess their overall progress. Individual student progress is shared at Conferences, held in November. Mid-year progress reports are sent home in January. Final progress reports are mailed home in June. Regular communication between parent/guardian and teacher is encouraged through email, written notes, and/or phone calls. The parent's/guardian's first contact with any questions or concerns should be the teacher. If further discussion is indicated, then the Director should be contacted.

### **Food**

Students are permitted and encouraged to bring snacks to eat during class. Snacks should be small and easily consumed within five minutes. All food that is brought into EBJC must be NUT-FREE as stated on the package and must meet the standards of kashrut. For kashrut, the solitary letter **K** is not an acceptable hechsher (kosher symbol). Only dairy or pareve snacks are permitted (no meat products). No home-baked or cooked goods may be brought into the synagogue. If you have any questions regarding kashrut, please consult the Rabbi.

We love to celebrate birthdays, either English or Hebrew! Please notify the teacher ahead of time if your child is bringing a birthday snack, and be sure to meet all allergy and kashrut standards.

### **Materials and Supplies**

A list of supplies for each class will be given to parents/guardians when they meet the teachers during the first week of classes. Each student is strongly encouraged to have a separate backpack for Keshet to facilitate the “grab and go” each day. The backpack should contain:

- All books for class
- Folders, binder, notebooks, etc. as required by teacher
- Completed assignments
- Several pens and pencils
- Kippah (Required for boys; optional for girls)
- Tzedakah money (Any amount is fine. We are teaching the mitzvah of giving to those less fortunate. At the end of the year, all money collected will be donated to a charity chosen by Kishit Zayin.)

Parents/guardians should go through the backpack each week to look for information sent home and to ensure that assignments are completed and returned on time. Many books are used from year to year. No books should be thrown away without checking with the teacher or Director.

### **Parent/Guardian Involvement**

Each class has special programming throughout the year to which parents/guardians are invited. Please note these dates on your calendar now and plan to attend. Each class has a scheduled Shabbat dinner when students help lead services.

Parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to spend just five minutes a day listening to your student read Hebrew aloud and to help ensure that assignments are completed and returned on time.

There are many opportunities to volunteer your time to help, as well. The Keshet @EBCJ program is overseen by the Board of Education, made up of synagogue members. If you are interested in becoming involved, please contact Josh Saypol, [jsaypol@gmail.com](mailto:jsaypol@gmail.com) or 732-735-7839. Each class needs a Class Parent to help plan and implement various activities and projects within the class. These Class Parents are part of our Keshet Kehillah which will help with special events, programs, and projects. If you are interested in this position, or in organizing the Keshet Kehillah, please contact the Director.

### **Security/Emergency**

Fire and lockdown drills will be held twice per year to acquaint students with the procedures at EBCJ. In case of the need for an evacuation, students will be escorted to St. Bart’s across the street. Parents/guardians will be notified via email, Facebook, and phone chain as soon as possible. It is essential that Keshet have updated emergency contact information at all times. Be sure to notify the Director of any changes to email or phone numbers.

### **Tuition**

Tuition is set by the Board of Education each year. Online registration occurs in June, with 50% of tuition due by July 1 and the remainder due by September 1. Financial arrangements must be made with Raymond Sasson, Financial Administrator.

Students who withdraw before September 1 will be entitled to a full refund of paid tuition, minus a \$50 administrative fee. Withdrawals between September 1 and December 1 will be entitled to a refund of 50% of the tuition for the year. After that date, refunds are not automatic and are solely at the discretion of the Board of Education. The School reserves the right to dismiss students

for whom the program is not working. In those cases, tuition refunds will be made on a case-by-case basis by the Board of Education.

### QUICK CONTACT LIST

|   |                             |   |
|---|-----------------------------|---|
| Rabbi   |                             | 732-257-7070, x1  |
| Education and Youth Director<br>Julie Schwarzwald | jschwarzwald@ebjc.org       | 732-257-7070, x3  |
| Education Administrator<br>Trudi Teicher          | tteicher@ebjc.org           | 732-257-7070, x1  |
| Board of Education Chair<br>Josh Saypol           | jsaypol@gmail.com           | 732-735-7839  |
| School closing information:                       | email, Remind.com           | Facebook: East Brunswick<br>Jewish Center EBJC,<br>Keshar @EBJC |
| For absence, late arrival, or early dismissal:    | Julie Schwarzwald, Director | 732-257-7070, x3  |
| For kashrut questions:                            | Rabbi                       | 732-257-7070, x1  |