

August 22, 2008
21 Av 5768

Junior Congregation Information

Dear Religious School Parent:

A famous teaching of Shimon HaTzadik in Pirkei Avot (The Ethics of Our Fathers) says, "The world is built on three things – Torah Study, Divine Worship, and Loving Kindness." As we are about to embark on another exciting year of Jewish learning here at TBI, throughout the summer we have been hard at work tweaking our program to fulfill this incredible piece of timeless wisdom. We have continued to rebuild our curriculum from the ground up through our NESS Program, giving our students a more robust entry into Judaism (Torah study). In addition, we have reexamined our Jr. Congregation experience, tweaking our exciting program and requirements (Divine Worship). Finally, we have teamed up with our Hesed Committee to ensure that social action projects are a major part of each student's time at TBI (Loving Kindness).

Throughout the summer, so many of you expressed how wonderful our revitalized Junior Congregation was last year. It brought our 3rd-6th graders into a nurturing environment where they could practice the prayer skills that were learned in the classroom during school hours. We were also delighted to see so many parents join the service to experience the joy of prayer with their children. This is an experience that the leadership at TBI feels is one of the most crucial in a child's connection to Judaism and his/her peers, and we truly look forward to celebrating Shabbat with you and your children.

After reviewing the programs at other synagogues and in consultation with the junior congregation sub-committee, the education committee, and the Board of Directors, we have made the following changes to the junior congregation attendance requirement for 3rd-6th grade students. For all grades the expectation will be for students to attend 10 Shabbat or junior congregation services. Out of those 10 services, we ask that 7 be at our Junior Congregation service so that your son/daughter can be a part of the special Shabbat community we enjoy at TBI – there are 29 of them scheduled throughout the year. The remaining services can be at any Friday evening or Saturday morning Shabbat service that your family might wish to attend whether it is at TBI or another synagogue (we have a form for you to fill out should you attend a service outside of TBI). Don't forget that we have now added the Family Friday night Shabbat service at 7 p.m. on the first Friday of each month and the birthday Shabbat service on the first Saturday of each month.

We realize that there will be occasions when meeting our attendance expectations will be an issue given the many other demands on your time. The entire staff, including our clergy, is here to assist you in meeting these

requirements and will follow-up with families who seem to be having difficulty fulfilling this essential part of our religious education program. We hope that the flexibility we have built into the program after consulting many area synagogues will allow all of our families to meet these new requirements.

We want your family's time here at TBI to be one of creating lasting Jewish memories and we therefore look forward to working in partnership with your family to create such an experience. We look forward to a wonderful year of learning, praying, celebrating, and having fun together.

B'shalom,

Donald Cohen
Education Director

Joshua Kalev
Rabbi

Emily Cutler
Religious School
Chair