



**Hasten Hebrew Academy
of Indianapolis**

Friday, August 13, 2021 Vol. 18 #1

“Shabbat Shalom”

5 Elul 5781

Friday, August 13, 2021

Candle Lighting between 7:20pm - 8:23 pm

Saturday, August 14, 2021

Shabbat ends after 9:32 pm



**A Message from the Principal
Mrs. Miriam Gettinger**

I had a most humbling experience this summer which truly gave me pause for empathetic reflection. Summer is a time for much needed respite and rejuvenation for teachers particularly after an intense school year such as last year. Yet teachers are continuously learning and honing skills in preparation for the upcoming school year and this summer was certainly no exception with ours attending virtual workshops and professional development trainings in deeper math instruction, sensory strategies for student success in the classroom, project based learning integration in the Jewish Day School through the Idea School ‘Summer Sandbox’ as well as The Responsive Classroom socioemotional curriculum. Personally I was invited to participate in an intensive 20-hour course on multiage character development in the Jewish community collaborating schools with synagogues and agencies through the Jewish Moral Education Forum. And it was during this advanced seminar that I found myself feeling inadequate and intellectually inferior to my colleagues as the cohort of 30 were truly amongst the elite level of nationally acclaimed Jewish professionals with doctorate degrees from Ivy League schools and even a Jeopardy contestant! Feeling overwhelmed and completely out of my comfort zone provoked me to empathetically consider what it is like for some students who endure hours of angst in an instructional setting in subject or grade level without sufficient scaffolding.

Importantly, the seminar was heavy on philosophy while I am of a more pragmatic bent professionally. The session entitled ‘Is the Self the Center of Moral Life?’ especially resonated with me as our students grow and grapple with a world which is increasingly self-centered often dubbed the “Selfie” generation. David Brooks, noted New York Times and Atlantic Journal columnist, addressed the issue of the new narcissism in our society expounding on research studies which point to an increased self-confidence and absorption amongst the younger demographic with 51% of 25 year olds listing being famous as a life goal, twice as many as listed being spiritual, as well as contrasting high school seniors whose responses when asked: ‘Do you consider yourself a Very Important Person?’ went from 12% in 1950 to 80% in 2010! Technology /social media contribute to this ‘celebrity culture’ shift as do pop music lyrics which have gone from the 1980’s togetherness theme to all about me in current artists.

In her book *Unselfie*, Dr. Michelle Borba advocates for teaching our children ‘emotional literacy’ developing the art of reading people in touting explicit instruction of kindness and empathy to teach them when others are hurting or anxious. Children often do not see beyond their own toxic self centered behavior especially tween and teenagers obsessed with ‘curating their own brand.’ Practicing empathy begins at toddlerhood and iterates mastery of strong emotions in learning the reality of not always get what we want as the world does not revolve around any one of us individually. To the contrary, *Olam chesed yibanah*/ the world is predicated upon the extension of lovingkindness to others.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS



Homework Club for grades 4-8 will meet Monday-Thursday next week.

Grades 1-3 will meet on Monday & Wednesday



The next scrip order will be placed on August 17. Orders will be here on August 20. Please call Toni at 251-1261 ext. 158 to place an order.



**Labor Day
September 6th
NO SCHOOL**



**Rosh Hashana
September 7 & 8
NO SCHOOL**



**Erev Yom Kippur
September 15
1:00 pm Dismissal
No After School Care**

**Yom Kippur
September 16
NO SCHOOL**

From the sublime to the ridiculous on the topic of weighty head matters... Newly elected Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennet, a religious Zionist, the first such leader to publicly wear a kippa was recently queried as to how he manages to keep it on given his bald-headedness. He humbly admitted that he once stuck a wad of chewing gum to his head before a political forum! His adhesive of choice, however, is a product invented and sold for the last 8 years by Chaim Levin, a 65-year-old Israeli bus driver who noted the need for such while watching fellow congregants prostrate on Yom Kippur with kippot falling to the floor. ‘Kipa Keeper’ made from reusable hypoallergenic double sided medical tape is sold in packs of 40 for about \$12.50 with Bennet’s endorsement obviously boosting worldwide sales for the Israeli entrepreneur. As a school, we ought to buy some in our endeavor to keep the kippot on the students’ heads but more significantly as we reflect upon its symbolism of prioritizing character and *middot*/Jewish values instruction as a “Covid Keeper” across grade levels.



Parshat Shoftim By Rabbi Berel Wein

This week's Torah reading envisions for us an efficient, organized system of law and order, justice, and fairness. The Torah set a very high bar regarding the selection of judges and police. They are to be free of prejudice, bias and personally held agendas and social ideals. They are literally to be blind without knowledge, as to the nature and personalities of the litigants who appear before them and whose cases they must decide. The judges must be free of any form of corruption, from open graft to simple courtesy. The Talmud records for us that the great Mar Shmuel, the head of the Academy of third century, Nehardea in Babylonia, was walking across a narrow bridge when the person coming towards him honorably made way so that the rabbi could pass. Later in the day, this very same person appeared as a litigant before Mar Shmuel in a case before his court. Afraid of being influenced by the courtesy extended to him by this person by allowing him to pass first on the narrow bridge, Mar Shmuel disqualified himself from judging the matter. While such standards of justice that are outlined in this week's reading are almost impossible for human beings to achieve, we all are influenced by great and small things that occurred to us, by previous prejudices that have been instilled into us by events and societies. Though justice may be blind, the justices themselves rarely, if ever, are able to obtain the necessity level of fairness that the Torah seems to demand. Yet, we are aware that the Torah was not granted to angels, but rather, to human beings, and human beings are never perfect and always have, within themselves, prejudices and pre-conceived ideas regarding policies and judgments.

The Torah set standards for us to try and achieve. It never demands the impossible from human beings. So, the requirements set forth in this week's reading are the goals that we must try to achieve. We must pick the best, wisest, least prejudice, most honest people of integrity, that we can find in our midst, and appoint them as judges and police. Yet, the Torah reminds us that ultimate justice belongs to the Lord. Mistakes that we make here on earth, in the long run of time and eternity, are always rectified by heaven. We should be comforted by this. The Talmud teaches that a judge can only judge what he sees and understands, with the human condition appearing before him. Heaven, however, has the ability to see everything, in terms of eternity, in terms of ultimate justice and fairness to all. It is without limited knowledge, therefore, that we are to do our best, and realize that ultimate justice is not done here on earth, but, rather, subject to the guidelines of heaven. We can, therefore, attempt to create the best system of justice that is possible, within the constraints of human behavior and society.

Shabbat shalom

Rabbi Berel Wein Berel Wein



Hasten Hebrew Academy
of Indianapolis

Meet the New Teachers



Rabbi Aryeh Birnhack 2nd & 5th Grade Judaics

Rabbi Aryeh Birnhack joined HHAI this year after serving as Educator at the Columbus Community Kollel from 2018-2021. He was the Director of the Columbus Jewish Children's program 'ChillZone' as well. Rabbi Birnhack returns to Indianapolis after serving as a guest lecturer in Indy for the S.E.E.D program in the summer of 2018.

After studying in Israel at Yeshivat Knesset Chizkiyahu, Rabbi Birnhack graduated from Ner Israel Rabbinical College with a Bachelor in Talmudic Law and Rabbinical Ordination. Rabbi Birnhack has been a staff member at Jewish summer camps for over 10 years. He enjoys music and plays the drums, but most of all greatly enjoys working with children.

Rabbi Birnhack and his wife Adina, are blessed with 3 children, two of whom are excited to attend Giving Tree at HHAI.



Mrs. Julie Vairo 1st Grade General Studies

Julie Vairo will be our first grade co-teacher with Mrs. Zelikovich this year. Julie is a graduate of Carmel H.S. and Ball State University. She taught elementary in Hamilton Southeastern schools for the past 25 years, including a specialty in primary high ability students. Julie enjoys reading, being outside, and time with her family. She currently resides in Carmel with her husband, Joe, and their daughters, Madeline (12) and Eleanor (10).



Ms. Krysti Adams
Katon Co-Lead Teacher

After studying music therapy at Ohio University, I have been fully immersed in the world of early childhood education since 2001. I have played many roles from teacher, to nanny, to honorary aunt, to Gymboree teacher and have also been an administrator. In the classroom, my students and their development are my focus, and I am always eager to learn new ways to help them learn about their world. I earned a bachelor's degree in nutrition science in 2015 and recently earned my Infant/Toddler CDA. I am also working on my Infant/Toddler Mental Health endorsement in order to learn more about trauma-informed teaching. Outside of teaching, I love to cook, read, and spend time with my boyfriend and his daughters. I also produce a podcast about urban legends, their history, and the stories around them with my best friend. I am excited to start this adventure at Giving Tree Early Learning! I can't wait to get to know my students and their families as well as learn more about the Reggio-Emilia approach!



Mrs. Rose Mehall
Katon Co-Lead Teacher

I graduated from Western Michigan University with a degree in Psychology focusing on applied behavioral analysis. After graduating, I moved to Indianapolis to begin a career working with children on the autism spectrum. I met my husband two weeks after moving to Indy and we have two children: Meridian and Samson. I have a passion for working with young children and have spent much of my career working with children with various disabilities. Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with my family. We enjoy hiking and visiting the various museums in town. I look forward to being a part of your child's life and help to spark their life-long love of learning!



Mrs. Sarah Cook
Maon Lead Teacher

My family and friends know me as quiet but silly, with an enormous love for teaching, nature, gardening, and reading. I enjoy spending time with my husband and two kids, and our two tripod dogs. We go hiking, play games, and find lots of ways to be creative together. I am an Indiana Advanced Master Naturalist and love being outdoors learning as much as I can about the natural world. I studied English Literature at Franklin College. When my own children were in a Reggio-inspired co-op preschool, I discovered my passion for teaching and enrolled in Early Childhood Education at Ivy Tech. The Reggio Emilia philosophy has been a foundational part of our family, and my children continue to thrive in their Reggio-inspired elementary and middle school. While I have taught a range of ages over the years, two-year-olds are my absolute favorite humans in the world. Discovering the world and learning alongside them is an amazing privilege. They teach me new things every day! I have a deep respect for children and aim to help foster in them lifelong passions for learning and kindness. I am thrilled to be part of the Giving Tree Early Learning community this year.



Mrs. Rachael Wendling
Peuton Lead Teacher

I started my journey in early childhood education at the age of 19, not knowing the impact it would have on my life and the passion for working with children it would spark. Since then, a job became a career and I have gained years of classroom experience working with young children and their families, always with the goal in mind of supporting the whole child. I studied Wildlife Biology at Purdue University and Early Childhood Education at Ivy Tech, and continue to further my knowledge of play based education, child development and social-emotional learning through professional development courses and workshops any chance I get. I love that every day with a young child is different. Each day comes with lots of laughter and new challenges. Helping a young child grow and discover the world around them is the greatest reward, and I feel very lucky to dedicate my professional life to this task. When I'm not in the classroom, my life is beautifully filled up by my two children, my husband, and our pets. Aside from enjoying quality time at home with a good cup of coffee, reading, and playing games with family, I love spending time outside caring for my chickens, hiking, viewing wildlife, fossil hunting, gardening, and camping. I'm really excited about joining the Giving Tree Early Learning family this year as a Lead Teacher and meeting all the wonderful families in this community!

Bottle Caps for Benches

Monday was the first day back at school for HHA teachers. What better way to mark the occasion than to revisit this symbol of community achievement, dedication, youth empowerment and unity than affix these golden plaques to our rainbow benches?

It took us three years to collect those plastic caps! There was a lot of sorting, cleaning, weighing, educating and tallying topped off with a six hour drive in a single day for retrieval. And as a school, we are grateful for all the time, passion, and resources our students, teachers, and parents put into making this happen. We are happy to be able to make it official with these plaques!

Now, a new generation of middle schoolers are empowered through these benches, and we look forward to seeing what projects their hearts will compel us to follow.



First Day of School

