

Robert J. Wilf

# Preschool & Kindergarten

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A great place to grow

2017 - 2018 • Parent Handbook

# Welcome to our school

Welcome to the Robert J. Wilf Preschool and Kindergarten at the Kaiserman JCC!

We are delighted that you have enrolled your child in our school and look forward to working with your family. We have a lot of fun, exciting activities planned and a terrific staff of teachers to work with your children. We encourage you to read this handbook and keep it handy for your reference. Our school is a wonderful place for children, a place where your child will grow as an individual, experience the true meaning of community and learn about the Jewish heritage. All this is done in a loving, caring way with the best interest of each child in mind. We pride ourselves on our commitment to our children, our high standards of safety and learning and our ability to be flexible to help you meet the developmental goals you have for your child.

Our program is supported by the Kaiserman JCC and its facilities. We have a full size gym, outdoor swimming pool, spacious indoor activity rooms and large outdoor recreational areas. We also have numerous specialty activities to enrich your child's school experience such as Hebrew, music and gym class, Israeli dance, Shabbat, holiday celebrations, school assemblies, and field trips. Most of all, our school's program is built in partnership with you, our students' family. At our preschool, early education is a cooperative effort where we strive to truly get to know one another, maintain open and strong channels of communication and work together to create the best possible environment for learning and growing for our students. Having a child at our preschool is like expanding your family and becoming part of a larger, caring dedicated community.

Again, welcome to our school! All of us look forward to working with you, your child and your whole family in the days and months ahead!

## OUR CURRICULUM

### What is the Creative Curriculum?

- Thematic approach to teaching and learning
- Designed to support children's natural curiosity and stimulate their creativity.
- Based on well known theories of child development.
- Offers children the opportunity to work in depth, giving them the time they need to reflect, consolidate and transfer their learning.
- The Creative Curriculum meets all of the criteria for a developmentally appropriate early childhood curriculum.

### Goals of the Curriculum

The most important goals of our preschool curriculum are for children to get along well with others and become enthusiastic learners. We want children to become independent, self-confident, curious learners who can work well with others. We're teaching them how to learn, not just in preschool, but all through their lives. We do this by creating purposeful and productive play experiences that help children grow in all areas. Through the activities we plan and the way we organize the classroom, select toys and materials, plan the daily schedule, communicate with children and assess progress, we seek to accomplish the goals of our curriculum and give your child a successful start in school.

### Our curriculum identifies goals in four areas of development:

**Social/emotional:** to help children develop independence, self-confidence, and self-control, follow rules and routines, make friends, and learn what it means to be part of a group.

**Physical:** to increase children's large muscle skills – balancing, running, jumping, throwing, and catching – and use the small muscles in their hands to do tasks like buttoning, stringing beads, cutting, drawing, and writing.

**Cognitive:** to acquire thinking skills such as the ability to solve problems, to ask questions, and to think logically – sorting, classifying, comparing, counting, and making patterns – and to use materials and their imagination to show what they have learned.

**Language:** to use words to communicate with others, listen to and participate in conversations with others, understand the purpose of print, recognize letters and words, and begin writing for a purpose.

## ADJUSTMENT FOR 1<sup>ST</sup> TIME STUDENTS/SAYING GOOD-BYE

### When your child goes to preschool, they are taking a "big step" toward independence.

Many children have difficulty separating and feel anxious about their new environment. The separation may well have the same effect on you! It is important to have a positive attitude to convey the expectation that your child will have a wonderful time at preschool. When leaving your child at school, it is helpful to direct him/her to an activity in the room or to a teacher. Give him/her a clear goodbye. The teachers will take over and engage your child and start developing a relationship of trust and comfort. No matter how tempting it might be to slip out unnoticed, you will violate your child's trust if you leave without saying good-bye.

## PARKING LOT SAFETY

Please be mindful of children during preschool arrival and dismissal.

Please drive slowly around the building; do not exceed 10 mph.

Follow directional arrows

Be careful when passing vehicles

Only park in LEGAL parking spots

Only use the designated handicapped spots if you have the appropriate placard.

Do not leave your car motor running and unattended for any reason

When parking, be mindful to only use one spot

## ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

### Arrival

**Early Care ☀ 7:30am**

**Regular day ☀ 9:00am**

Parents must drop children off in either the early care classroom or the regular classroom

### Dismissal

**Half day ☀ 12pm or 1pm**

Children should be picked up in their classrooms.

**Full day ☀ 3:15pm–3:30pm**

Children 3 years old - Kindergarten will be with their class in front of The Conston Fitness Center building for afternoon carpool beginning at 3:15pm. A staff member will bring your child to your car. The carpool line needs to be a single line of cars. No cars should be passing other vehicles while the children are being dismissed, you may not leave your car unattended for any reason. If you would like to pick up your child in their classroom, you need to park your car in a legal parking spot. Children under 3 years old must be picked up in their classrooms.

**Late Care ☀ 3:30pm–6:00pm**

Parents must pick up children in the late care room by 6:00pm

If a substitute is picking up, your child will not be released without notice from a parent. Even with consent, if the Director or teachers are not familiar with that person they will be asked to show I.D. when meeting them for the first time.

## SECURITY

We use a key fob system to gain access to the preschool entrance. The key fob will be given to parents before school starts. All visitors without a key fob are required to check in at the main entrance of the JCC.

## NOTICES HOME

Please be sure to check your child's bag regularly for notices. You will also receive emails from school with important information.

## CONTACTING THE PRESCHOOL

The administration and teaching staff are empathetic to your concerns. However, teachers need to give the children in their care undivided attention; they are not always able to leave the classroom to speak on the telephone.

Please refrain from texting or calling teachers on their cell phones during the school day.

If you need to contact your child's teacher or have a message passed along, please call or email the school directly.

Director, Amy Foster:

☎ 610-896-7770 x 118 ✉ [afoster@phillyjcc.com](mailto:afoster@phillyjcc.com)

Assistant Director, Natalie O'Brien:

☎ 610-896-7770 x 119 ✉ [nobrien@phillyjcc.com](mailto:nobrien@phillyjcc.com).

## CLOTHING

Washable play clothes that can get messy are best! Clothing that is easy to manage in the bathroom makes preschool children more independent. Please label everything your child wears or brings to school especially outerwear.

Please send in a full set of extra clothes to be kept in a labeled box in your child's cubby in school.

## TOYS FROM HOME

Although toys from home are discouraged, we realize some children may need a toy from home to make the entry into the classroom easier at the beginning of the school year.

If your child wants to bring something from home, please suggest a book, doll or stuffed animal. The teachers will, at some point, suggest that your child put the toy in his/her cubby.

Toy weapons and action figures should not be brought to school.

## LUNCHES/SNACKS

There are children in our Preschool who are medically diagnosed with severe food allergies - peanuts and tree nuts. For the safety of these students, it will be necessary that our school be a "nut-free school". When you send lunch or snacks for your child or anything for the class (for your child's birthday, special program, etc.) please avoid all food products that contain any tree-nuts, peanuts and peanut oil as ingredients.

While peanut butter is an obvious food that contains peanuts, you may be surprised at the variety of items that use peanut oil or are prepared in the same facility as other items with peanut products. These too can pose life-threatening situations. Please be aware of labels. When in doubt about a particular product, please ask.

The Preschool follows the Kashrut policy of the Kaiserman JCC. All food brought into the school by parents must be dairy or vegetarian, and all of the food supplied by the school will be strictly kosher. All foods that are shared in class and school activities must have a kosher symbol on them. This policy reflects a sensitivity to and awareness of the diverse practices within the Jewish community.

The health and wellness of children is the most important aspect with regard to nutrition. If you make a mistake and pack the wrong item in your child's lunch, you will be reminded of our Kashrut policy. We will make every attempt to feed your child something else but if we cannot, your child will be given the food you provided. If your child has a dietary issue that requires a specific diet that does not follow our Kashrut policy, please let us know. We will make accommodations for your child.

### Some suggestions for lunches are:

Tuna fish	Veggies & dip
Cream cheese & Jelly	Pasta
French toast	Macaroni & cheese
Egg salad	Cottage cheese
Yogurt	Fish sticks
Whitefish salad	Hummus
Pizza	Grilled cheese
Hard boiled eggs	

Lunch should be brought in a labeled lunch box/bag with a drink, plastic utensils and napkin. Snacks will be provided by the school. Snacks will include fresh fruit. Challah will be provided on Fridays. We strongly suggest keeping sugary foods to the bare minimum. We also ask that you do not pack candy in your child's lunch

## FRIDAY PIZZA AND CHALLAH

On Fridays, we offer a pizza lunch fundraiser. The cost is \$5 per lunch. Children get sliced veggies, a fruit cup or applesauce and pretzels or vanilla wafers. The pizza is kosher and is provided by Shalom Pizza.

For \$5 per challah, every Friday we offer a choice of plain or raisin challah that will be delivered to you in your child's backpack. Fresh baked challah is provided by Best Cake Kosher Bakery.

## NANA'S KITCHEN

Nana's Kitchen offers delicious, healthy, homemade lunches for our preschool children. Your child's lunch will be delivered to the classroom at lunchtime. In the event that your child has a food aversion or allergy to the daily menu item, you can order one of many substitutions. Visit [www.nanask.com](http://www.nanask.com) for more info.



## BIRTHDAYS

Birthdays may be celebrated at school. Please notify the teachers one week in advance so that they may set aside time in their schedules for the celebration. All treats must be Kosher OU and cannot be home baked. Please do not send birthday invitations for distribution by the school unless you are planning to invite the whole class. We do not want anyone's feelings to be hurt. Please be mindful that many families observe the Sabbath, and would not be able to attend a birthday party scheduled on Saturday.

**We offer a Birthday Fund-raiser. Save yourself some time and let us get the goodies for your child's birthday. Order forms are available in the preschool office.**

## FAMILY ATTENDANCE AT CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

During the course of the school year, there will be times when families are invited to share in holiday programs. It is very important to your child that a representative of his/her family be in attendance. However, we all lead active lives and sometimes it may not be possible to be at a program yourself. In that case, please make every effort to designate someone to be a surrogate for you, and alert the teacher to the situation.

## VOLUNTEERS

The Child Protective Services Law requires all volunteers who are “responsible for the welfare of a child or having direct contact with children” to submit 3 background checks before being allowed to volunteer. The law defines direct contact as the “care, supervision, guidance or control of children or routine interaction with children.” The background checks must be reissued every 36 months.

This law applies to anyone spending time in the classroom and responsible for children as a volunteer or on field trips as a chaperone. This law does not apply to parents who are coming in to celebrate birthdays, nurse babies, read a book to the class, drop off or pick up children or bring something like a forgotten lunch box.

Please see the Preschool Office for directions on how to apply for these clearances.

## CLASS TRIPS

Our kindergarten classes will periodically take class trips. We will use the JCC vans whenever possible. Parent chaperones may be needed and will drive separately. We will also take walking trips to explore our own community and have special programs come here to our school.

## MUSIC

Each week the children will have a special music class. Guitar, songs, finger plays, rhythm instruments and active movements are all part of this wonderful class. Most importantly, children will gain an appreciation and love for music.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Every child will have Physical Education once a week. Physical education releases energy, and builds muscle strength, coordination and flexibility. It also helps develop gross motor skills. Please be sure that your child is wearing sneakers and appropriate clothing for active movement.

**Children will not be able to participate without the appropriate clothing and sneakers.**

## SHABBAT

Every Friday the school comes together to create a special “Shabbat Feeling” and welcome the Sabbath. This is a fun weekly program that include singing, music, dancing and blessings. Parents, family and friends are always welcome to join us on Fridays mornings at 9:45 am in Family Hall for our Shabbat celebration.

## HALLOWEEN

Many children celebrate Halloween with costumes, school parades and trick-or-treating. This is a fun holiday for children. However, Halloween is a holiday that we do not celebrate in the preschool at the JCC. That said, of course we understand that children may discuss Halloween and their costumes in school with teachers or friends, which is perfectly fine. Please understand that we will not have any formal parade or celebration for Halloween.

## VALENTINE’S DAY

We know that many children celebrate Valentine’s Day by bringing cards and candy to school. We know this is really fun for children. However, Valentine’s Day is a holiday that we do not celebrate in the preschool at the JCC. That said, of course we understand that children may discuss Valentine’s Day in school with teachers or friends, which is perfectly fine. Please understand that we will not have any formal celebration for Valentine’s Day.

## PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parent/teacher conferences will be held in January. School will be closed on this day. Your child's teacher will assign a mutually acceptable time for your conference during the day.

Please be aware that you don't have to wait for conferences to find out how your child is doing. Your child's teacher will be happy to discuss your child's progress with you at any time during the school year. Please call to set up an appointment or phone conference.

## TOILET TRAINING POLICY

Children are all individuals and will train at their own rate. In the beginning of the school year, please discuss your child's toilet training progress with your child's teachers. It is important that we work together on this matter. **Fully trained children use the toilet for both bowel movements and urination and can verbally state the need to use the bathroom.** If your child has several accidents each day, they are not fully trained. If you have any questions, feel free to talk to your child's teachers.

## BITING AND INJURIES

When a child hurts another child, we will first attend to the child that has been hurt and then speak with the other child. In the case of a bite or an injury where we must apply first aid, we will call the parents of both children. A written incident report will also be sent home.

Should there be a consistent pattern of biting that goes beyond age appropriate behavior, we will meet with the teachers, director and parents in order to create a behavior management plan. In extreme cases, if biting continues after interventions, it may be decided that this is not the appropriate environment.

## EMERGENCY CARE

In case of emergency, the school will call you and the Lower Merion Police. Paramedics will take the child to Bryn Mawr Hospital or Lankenau Hospital. Your signed Emergency Medical Release Form assures that emergency care may be given if needed. We will, of course, call you immediately so you can meet your child and a staff member at the hospital. Please be sure that your telephone numbers are always kept up-to-date in the Preschool Office.

**No child will be allowed to start the school year without returning medical forms and providing us with emergency phone numbers.**

## REMIND TEXT SERVICE

We use a text messaging communication tool called REMIND. This helps us connect instantly with parents through quick, simple text messages. We will use this as a way of communicating anything important. Parents will also get emails.

To sign up for text messages, text @rjw-parent to 81010 and follow the prompts.

## SNOW & EMERGENCY CLOSINGS

If we have a delayed opening, close early, or if we are closed due to dangerous weather conditions, parents will first receive an e-mail and text message through REMIND from me as early as possible with all pertinent information. This information will also be on our web site [www.phillyjcc.com](http://www.phillyjcc.com).

Additionally, I will report our status to KYW News Radio, 6 ABC, FOX 29, CBS Philly, and NBC 10. If you turn your television on to your local morning news show, our name, along with all announcements will scroll at the bottom of the screen. If you prefer the radio, you can turn on KYW 1060 AM and listen for our **school closing number - 404**. You can also sign up to receive e-mail or text alerts on many of these news web sites.

## School Closing #: 404

Our school name is *the Robert J. Wilf Preschool & Kindergarten* and that is the name that will be used to communicate information about our school. Alternately, we may be listed as *Jewish Community Center – Kaiserman* or *Kaiserman JCC*.

**Please note if we have a 2 hour delay, we will not have early care and school will begin at 11:00 am.**

**KYW News Radio** Listen to KYW NEWS RADIO 1060AM School alerts are listed by number.

**6 ABC** Go to [abclocal.go.com/wpvi](http://abclocal.go.com/wpvi) Click "school closing" tab on the left - school alerts are listed by state (PA, NJ and DE) and in alphabetical order.

**FOX 29** Go to [www.myfoxphilly.com](http://www.myfoxphilly.com) Click "Check Reported School Closings, Delayed Openings" - School alerts are listed alphabetically.

**CBS 3** Go to [philadelphia.cbslocal.com](http://philadelphia.cbslocal.com) Click "School Closings" - school alerts are listed by county and name alphabetically or you have the option to view the list by school closing number.

**NBC 10** Go to [www.nbcphiladelphia.com](http://www.nbcphiladelphia.com) Click "Weather" tab, then the "School Closing Alerts" tab - School alerts are listed alphabetically.

## HEALTH

Your child's health is a matter of great importance to all of us. Young children have frequent colds and other viral illnesses. Please keep in mind that the first 24-48 hours of a disease are usually the most infectious. Symptoms may be milder at that time, but contagion is greater. If a communicable illness or disease should arise in our school, we will let the families know via e-mail, but we will maintain the privacy of any family involved. Please notify your child's teacher whenever there is a diagnosis of a communicable illness. We have a better chance of controlling the spread of an illness if we are alerted to its presence in the school.

### WHEN CHILDREN BECOME SICK AT SCHOOL

If your child should become ill at school, a staff member will call you to assess the situation and inform you of your child's current condition. If it is decided that your child is too sick to stay in school, you will be expected to pick him/her up as soon as possible. Please be sure that all telephone numbers are updated.

### WHEN TO SEND YOUR CHILD BACK TO SCHOOL

For the protection of the health and well being of all children and staff at the Preschool, the following rules must be adhered to in regard to sick children. ↓

**FEVER:** A child with a fever should stay home until fever-free (without the use of fever reducing medicine) for 24 hours. A fever is defined as a temperature greater than 100 degrees. Children who are sent home with a fever may not return to school the following day.

**STREP THROAT:** A child may return to school 24 hours after antibiotics have been started.

**VOMITING:** A child may return to school 24 hours after the last episode.

**COLDS:** Cold symptoms are described as an irritated throat, watery discharge from the nose and eyes, sneezing or coughing. A cold may or may not include a fever.

- Children are often most contagious in the early, runny stage of a cold.
- Children should not be in school if they show any of these symptoms:

- Pain, including pain from a sore throat or congested ear, which makes it hard for the child to play, eat, or rest normally at nap time.
- A cough that interrupts normal play or sleep.
- Difficulty breathing during normal activities.
- Anything else that makes the child feel too tired or sick to participate in normal activities.

**DIARRHEA:** A child may return to school 24 hours after the last episode.

**CONJUNCTIVITIS (PINK EYE):** A child may return to school 24 hours after antibiotic treatment or topical therapy has begun and eye ooze has stopped.

**EAR INFECTIONS:** Whether or not your child's pediatrician has prescribed antibiotics to treat an ear infection, children should be fever-free for 24 hours before returning to school and not experiencing too much ear pain associated with the infection.

**RASHES:** Child should stay home until diagnosed or symptoms are gone for 24 hours. If you have seen a doctor & the rash is not contagious, please bring a note from your child's doctor.

**HEAD LICE:** We have a strict no-nit policy. No child may be in school while there are any nits present in his or her hair. While every effort will be made to maintain the health of each child, our school, like others, may be subject to pediculosis (head lice). Here are some tips to keep such a situation under control:

- Students are not allowed to share combs, brushes, hats or other grooming aids with non-family members.
- Discovery of lice requires that the child be sent home and treated. All nits must be removed before the child can return to school. Upon their return, the child's scalp will be inspected by a staff member.
- If a case of lice is discovered at home, please report it to the school. We keep details of reports and incidents confidential, but we do need to alert parents about them.

## IMMUNIZATION POLICY

All children entering the Robert J. Wilf Preschool and Kindergarten must have an immunization record on file prior to admission. We will accept the Department of Public Welfare Child Health Report form given to all parents, signed and dated by the physician or a copy from the physician's office. Parents are required to provide an updated health report in accordance with the following schedules:

- At least every 6 months for child under 12 months of age.
- At least every 12 months for a child older 12 months of age.

A health report must be written and signed by a physician, physician's assistant or a CRNP. The signature must include the individual's professional title. The health report must include the following information:

- Name of child
- Child's birth date
- A review of the child's health history.
- A list of the child's allergies.
- A list of the child's current medication and the reason for the medication.
- An assessment of an acute or chronic health problem or special need and recommendations for treatment or services, including information regarding abnormal results of screening tests for vision, hearing or lead poisoning.
- A review of the child's immunized status according to recommendations of the ACIP.
- A statement of the child's medical information pertinent to diagnosis and treatment in case of emergency.
- A statement that the child is able to participate in child care and appears to be free from contagious or communicable disease.
- A statement that age-appropriate screenings recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics were conducted since the time of the previous health report required by this section.

Parents are required to provide updated immunization records each time their child receives a vaccination.

If a licensed physician, physician assistant, or nurse practitioner certifies in writing that the

child has a health condition which is a valid contraindication to receiving a specific vaccine, then a permanent or temporary exemption may be granted. This statement must specify those immunizations which may be detrimental and the length of time they may be detrimental. In the event of an outbreak, medically exempt children will be excluded from care to avoid potential complications of the disease. The length of exclusion will depend upon the incubation period of the particular disease. The Department of Health will be consulted if an outbreak does occur.

We will maintain a current and complete list of children who are susceptible to vaccine preventable disease(s) so they may be rapidly identified in the event of an outbreak. Susceptible children are those that:

- Have been granted a medical exemption
- Are "in process" of being immunized
- Have not received adequate or valid doses of the required vaccines
- Have not provided an "acceptable proof of immunity"

## Tips to help your child the school year.

### **Plan Ahead:**

Get things ready for school the night before, see that your child gets to bed early, and take time for a nutritious breakfast. Sleepy, hungry, or rushed children can't function happily in a setting that requires a great deal of energy!

### **Learn the Curriculum:**

Find out what's happening in the classroom and supplement it with family experiences. Be sure to read the weekly newsletters and flyers that come home. Your child's teacher will be happy to give you ideas to support your child's learning at home.

### **Encourage Risk-Taking, Expect Mistakes:**

It takes immense patience to allow children to learn at their own pace and through their own mistakes. Studies show that healthy families tend to support their children without removing obstacles from their lives that foster growth. We seek to find a balance between offering children challenging experiences and opportunities to gain confidence in mastering skills with a respect for their individual rate of development.

### **Take Time to Talk to Your Child About His or Her Day:**

Create a special display area in your home for school work and projects to emphasize the value you place on your child's creations. But remember, some of the best experiences your child has at school may not take place on paper. Listen well.

### **Participate in Parent Activities:**

The Robert J. Wilf Preschool and Kindergarten PTO can suggest many ways you can get involved in preschool events. This involvement will help you build a supportive network of friends!

### **Read to Your Child:**

Reading to your child improves language skills, awakens the imagination as no television show or video game can, and prepares your child to become an enthusiastic reader. Ask your child's teacher for suggestions of age appropriate books.

### **Keep Communication Lines Open:**

Communicate calmly and clearly with your child's teacher when problems regarding your child or other children arise. It is important to model appropriate conflict resolution and communication skills for children, but is best to ask for an appointment to discuss difficult issues when children are not present. If matters are not resolved after speaking to the teacher, you are encouraged to speak with the preschool director.

### **Give Your Child Time to Play:**

So often we rush children through childhood with little time for play or quiet thought. Allow unstructured play in those busy schedules and encourage quiet reflective times. And, because parenting is such a stressful job, take a break once in a while yourself and join right in on the fun!

# The holidays.

The Kaiserman JCC is a place for the Jewish community to gather and celebrate Jewish festivals and holidays. An elementary introduction to the history of the holidays and their traditional rituals will be explored in the preschool. Concern for Jewish culture will be an ongoing part of the educational program. Throughout the year we will send home further explanation of the holidays. The following is a brief overview:

## Sabbath

Although the Sabbath lasts from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday, we celebrate the Sabbath at school during our “snack time” every Friday. All classes get together for a Shabbat Sing-a-Long. In each classroom the teacher lights the candles and the children recite the traditional blessings.

On Shabbat the children enjoy challah (twisted egg bread) and juice.

## Rosh Hashanah

The Jewish year begins with Rosh Hashanah on the first day of Tishri in the Jewish calendar. The children enjoy apples and honey, which are symbolic of hope for a sweet year.

## Yom Kippur

This is the most solemn holiday of the year, the Day of Atonement. At this time, we discuss the nice things we can do for others during the New Year.

## Sukkot

The Feast of Tabernacles recalls the journey of the Jews from Egypt to the Promised Land when they lived in tents and booths. The harvest season is symbolized by the Lulav (palm branch) and Etrog (citrus). During this week at school, we decorate our Sukkah with fruit and greenery and enjoy our snacks outdoors.

## Simchat Torah

This holiday is associated with Sukkot. Throughout the year, passages of the Torah are read aloud in the synagogue. On Simchat Torah the reading of the Torah is completed and immediately begun again. This symbolizes the fact that study of the Torah has no beginning and no end. Children are given the honor of being called to read the Torah along side adults. Children also join adults in carrying Israeli flags in a series of seven processions. The seven

processions are in honor of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph and David.

## Hanukkah (also spelled Chanukah)

The Festival of Lights celebrates the Maccabean victory when Judah Maccabee and his small band of followers saved the Jewish nation from the Syrians. For eight days each year, the Hanukkah menorah, or eight-branched candelabra, is lit to recall the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem and to give thanks for the great miracle of the survival of the Jewish people.

## Tu B'Shevat

(Israeli Arbor Day) On Tu B'Shevat we celebrate the New Year of the Trees and our own belief in the future of the world. As Jews, we have a kinship with trees. Trees are a symbol of life and a symbol of the Jewish people.

## Purim

Purim is the most joyous of all holidays, commemorating how Queen Esther and her Uncle Mordecai saved the Jews of Persia from a plot by the Prime Minister, Haman, to destroy them. On this day, we eat Hamantashen, which the children enjoy making at school. The children are encouraged to come to school in costume for this happy holiday.

## Passover

Passover (Pesach) commemorates the experiences and ordeals of slavery in Egypt and the Exodus following them. The Seder is a special family meal. Prayers and songs from the Haggadah are read and certain foods are eaten. The best known of these is matzah or unleavened bread. Your child and his/her classmates will prepare their own Seders.

## Shavuot

Shavuot, a thanksgiving and harvest feast, also commemorates the giving of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. Known as the Feast of Weeks, Shavuot is celebrated seven weeks after Passover. It is customary to decorate the house with plants and flowers.