

SCHOOL NEWS
March 2010
by Rachel Ginsburg, Principal

Rosh Chodesh for the month of Adar will fall on February 14, in the middle of Presidents' Week vacation. This is when we usually change our Monthly Mitzvah Project. Because of the special circumstances, our Adar Mitzvah will start on Monday, February 22. By that time, I should have received all notes concerning our "Bal Tashchit" (Don't Destroy the Environment) Mitzvah for the previous month. The new Mitzvah is "Resting from Creating or Destroying on Shabbat".

As you know, Shabbat is our holy day. God rested on that day and ordered the Jewish people to copy him by resting on the seventh day. However, on Shabbat the word "rest" does not mean avoiding physical exertion or exercise; it is a rest only from creating or destroying something in the environment. For example, we are forbidden from writing and creating music (both involve creating something – visual words or sound waves). We are also forbidden from pulling a leaf from a tree or cutting a flower from the garden, because that destroys something. In contrast, we are allowed to do things like take walks or move a chair, because these activities do not create or destroy. Yet we would not drive a car (because the ignition creates a firing response inside the car).

If we understand this principle, things that we are not allowed to do on Shabbat will make more sense. On the other hand, we have many positive mitzvot (rituals) that we can do to enhance the special day. We have time to study Torah, and enjoy good food and wine (the food must be prepared before Shabbat). We stay away from phones, computers and put our energy into spending time communing with family and friends, reading or even taking a nap in the afternoon.

Here is the list of activities that children can do to get credit for this Mitzvah:

- 1) Decide to have a special Shabbat dinner with Kiddush and chalot (with Ha Motzi) with a guest.
- 2) Decide one Shabbat not to use television or any kind of phone or computer.
- 3) If you do have Shabbat dinners on Friday, try once to have a Shabbat lunch with Kiddush and chalot.
- 4) Do a Havdalah service once at home, or come the Mincha Maariv service at PJC.
- 5) Light Shabbat candles and recite the blessings if it is not being done in your home.
- 6) Go to any of the Shabbat services as a whole family dressed in holiday clothes.
- 7) Read the Torah portion of the week (what will be read on that Shabbat) on the internet on the day before Shabbat (Thursday) and write about what was written there. Then discuss it at a Shabbat meal with your family.

*Each child needs to bring a written note from their parents describing what he/she has done. All children who perform the mitzvah will have a leaf showing their name on our "**Mitzvah Tree**" (on the bulletin board in the school hallway) to recognize their participation. And children who perform at least 3 monthly mitzvahs will be invited to an ice cream party at the end of the year.

Sunday, March 29 is Pesach. All through March we will work on preparing children for the Seder and observing Pesach.

I want to wish all of you “Pesach Sameach V’Kasher.”

Rachel Ginsburg