

THE CENTER VIEW

TEVET – TAMUZ

JANUARY – JUNE



**Center for
Jewish Life**
at Beth David

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SPRING 2026

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RABBI JULIE JACOBS

Dear Friends,

As I look around our campus these days, I find myself noticing the small signs of change everywhere.

Conversations happening. New faces showing up. Spaces beginning to transform.

And it has made me think a lot about what it really means to grow.

For years, we have been imagining how The Center of Jewish Life at Beth David could evolve into something that honors where we come from and speaks powerfully to the next generation. Our board and our members have been brave enough to ask big questions. Who are we becoming? What does Jewish life really need to look like in this moment? How do we make sure that we are not just relevant, but absolutely necessary.

And yes. Sometimes it feels slow. I feel it too. I am right there with you.

But time, used well, is a gift. When we listen, plan thoughtfully, rethink, collaborate, and stretch ourselves, we end up building something that lasts. Something we can be proud to hand over to our children and grandchildren.

This year, we have begun to see that care turning into reality.

The roof and air conditioning are complete, thanks to the partnership and support of Skyline Management. Our offices were renovated into clean, modern, welcoming spaces. Enormous thanks to Michael and Benay Olkes, and Francisco Geller for their generosity, dedication, and countless hours helping make it happen.

Our school continues to grow, and every day our students bring joy, curiosity, and life into the building. When I hear their voices echoing through the halls, it reminds me why this work matters so deeply. We are building not only for today, but for the future.

And we are moving forward. Planning continues for our new school building. At the same time, the next exciting chapter of transformation will begin with Spector Ballroom, Traurig Hall, and the kitchen. These are the spaces where we gather, celebrate, learn, and live Jewish life together. They should feel inspiring. They should feel like possibility. They should feel like us.

Our staff works as a true team. Our volunteer base keeps growing. The Center feels alive, hopeful, and full of momentum. There are moments when I walk through the building and think, Yes. This is what growth looks like.

In the weeks and months ahead, we will be sharing important announcements, project updates, and opportunities to learn more through info sessions and gatherings. Stay tuned, keep an eye on your inbox, and be sure to follow us on social media so you do not miss what is coming.

So here is my invitation. Come by. Show up. Be part of it. Take a class. Join a program. Pray. Schmooze. Ask questions. Reconnect. Bring someone with you. There is room for you here.

This is your Center. Your community. Your journey too.

And if it sometimes feels like it takes time, that simply means we are doing it thoughtfully and doing it right.

I cannot wait to see you here.

**B'AHAVAH,
RABBI JULIE JACOBS**



IT'S TIME TO BUILD WHAT COMES NEXT.

This is more than a gift. **It's a generational legacy.**

We invite you to consider a **Capital Campaign Pledge** to catalyze this next chapter. Your leadership in Jewish renewal can inspire the next generation and help build a space that expands access and leaves a lasting legacy. **With your support, we could break ground by early 2026 and by 2028, welcome over 300 students into a campus.**

Contact us at:

✉ Ichavez@centerbd.org

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WORK WITH ME



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IRIS DESTEPHEN

Dear Friends,

As I reflect on my first six months serving as President of the Center for Jewish Life at Beth David, I feel both deeply grateful and incredibly inspired by the strength of this community. These months have been filled with meaningful milestones – from the joy of seeing families engage in new and expanding programs, to the incredible energy and generosity around High Holidays and Give Miami Day, to the excitement building around improvements to our spaces that will allow us to better serve our growing community.



What has touched me most is how consistently people show up for one another. Parents supporting our school, volunteers giving their time, donors investing in our future, and Board members stepping forward to lead – all of this reflects a community that truly cares and believes in the mission of our Center.

I have spent much of this time listening and learning, and those conversations have been invaluable. Hearing your hopes and ideas has helped guide our priorities and reaffirmed how important it is that we grow thoughtfully, while staying true to the values that make our center such a special place.

I am especially thankful for the partnership of Rabbi Jacobs and our dedicated professional team, whose passion, creativity, and commitment make everything we do possible. It is an honor to work alongside such inspiring leaders and to serve a community so full of heart.

Thank you for the trust you have placed in me during this first year. I look forward to continuing this journey together – strengthening our programs, improving our facilities, and deepening the connections that make our Center feel like home for so many families.

With gratitude,

Iris Destephen

President, Center for Jewish Life at Beth David

UPCOMING

5786 | 2026

January

1/10 Paz Carter Bat Mitzvah
1/16 Shabbat Pasi3n
1/17 Olivia Oklan Bat Mitzvah
1/24 Bella Grace Bat Mitzvah
1/30 Pet Shabbat (Family Shabbat)

February

02/13 Day in the Life of a Kindergartener
02/20 Shabbat Pasi3n
02/22 Gordon School Spring
Open House
02/27 Disney Shabbat
02/28 Daniella Lustig Bat Mitzvah

March

03/01 Purim Carnival
03/05 Alumni Event
03/20 Shabbat Pasi3n
03/28 Movie Havdalah Night

April

04/02 Passover Seder Second Night
04/09 Yizkor Services
04/12 Spring Concert
04/14 Yom HaShoah
04/17 Shabbat Pasi3n
04/21 Yom Hazikaron
04/22 Yom Ha'atzmaut

May

05/02 Alana Berkovits Bat Mitzvah
05/02 Liam Waas Bar Mitzvah
05/09 The Big Event Gala
05/15 Chai School Shabbat
(Family Shabbat)
05/16 Lucca Farberoff Bar Mitzvah
05/21 - 05/23 Shavuot
05/31 Center Musical - Aladdin

June

06/15 Camp Shemesh Begins
06/19 End of the Year Tot Shabbat

Dates are subject to change.
Please check the online calendar
for up-to-date information:
centerbd.org/calendar



**SCAN HERE
FOR CALENDAR**

One of the greatest privileges of being a community rabbi is meeting people who want to join the Jewish people. In my welcoming talk, I often share with people that there are two ways of becoming Jewish.

One way is to be born into a Jewish family. The Jewish people are an extended family, a story that begins in the Book of Genesis. We trace ourselves back to Abraham and Sarah and their children. From the very beginning, Jewish identity has been rooted in family, memory, and covenant.



The other way of becoming Jewish is by choice: by accepting the covenant we received at Sinai and affirming the words *Na'aseh v'nishmah* – “We will do, and we will come to understand.” This path emphasizes commitment before comprehension, action before certainty.

When a person chooses to join the Jewish people, they embrace a commitment to a Jewish way of living. I like to summarize that way of living using three B's:

Belonging, Behaving, and Believing

The conversion process begins by welcoming the new Jew into the Jewish family. Symbolically, they receive new spiritual parents—Abraham and Sarah—choose a Hebrew name, and are reborn through immersion in a mikvah, a ritual bath. These rituals mark not only a change in status, but the beginning of a lifelong journey.

For those who wish to raise Jewish children, the most important thing you can do is model active engagement. Jewish identity is formed not only through what we say, but through what we do. Learning as a family is essential to Jewish formation, and learning alongside other committed Jewish adults is vital as well. It allows us to “upgrade our Jewish operating system,” bringing our Jewish lives into alignment with the sophistication, curiosity, and depth we cultivate in other areas of our lives.

Judaism is not inherited fully formed. It is chosen, practiced, studied, and lived—again and again, across a lifetime.

For those of you who have been considering a path of becoming Jewish, come talk to me. For those of you who have been contemplating broadening your Jewish practice or deepening your personal theology, come talk to me.

B'vracha

With Blessings

Rabbi Carmi

Artists in Residence

March
6-8



Rabbi Mark Novak and Renee Brachfeld

Master Storytellers Bringing Learning to Life

Rabbi Mark and Renee Brachfeld have captivated communities at **140+ synagogues**, blending storytelling, creativity, and joyful Jewish learning into unforgettable, all-ages experiences.

Yoel Sykes

Sacred Sound. Creative Connection

We are thrilled to welcome Yoel, a **nationally and internationally** recognized guide in musical prayer, known for creating deeply meaningful, embodied, and spiritually nourishing Shabbaton experiences for communities around the world.

March
20 -21



April
23-26



Shoshana Gugenheim Kedem

Scribal Art in Contemporary Jewish Life

Experience art as a spiritual practice in **immersive, participatory workshops** with **Shoshana Gugenheim Kedem**, where tradition and art meet, and creativity becomes a path to reflection, memory, and connection—offered in collaboration with the **Jewish Museum of Florida**.

Learn more:

[Centerbd.org/programs-events](https://centerbd.org/programs-events)



**Center for
Jewish Life**
at Beth David

SOUL SEARCHING | LIFE ENRICHING | LEGACY BUILDING

The past few months have been a whirlwind of activity, growth, and community building at the Center for Jewish Life at Beth David. We've seen incredible events, meaningful programs, and inspiring moments that have brought our community closer together. Here are some **highlights**:



Schvitz and Schmooze



Snow Much Fun Camp



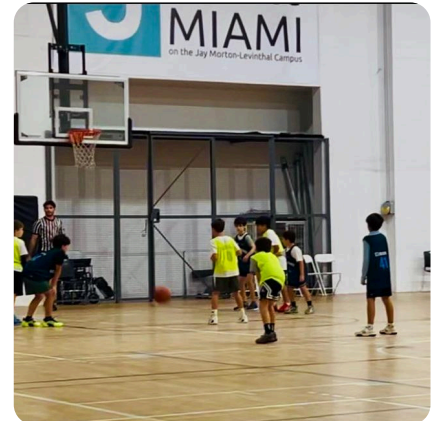
Shabbat Pasi3n



Simchat Torah



Mahjong



Rams Basketball



Mom Collective Event



Sukkot



Garden Patch Enrichment

PROGRAMMING UPDATE

Spring at the Center is shaping up to be vibrant, joyful, and deeply connected with opportunities for every age and stage to learn, celebrate, and come together.

Our **Family Shabbat Series** continues to anchor community life, with beloved monthly **Shabbat Pasi3n** evenings and themed Shabbats that add extra creativity and fun. From **Pet Shabbat** and **Disney Shabbat** to a sports-themed **Coach Mike's Birthday Bash**, each gathering is designed to be welcoming, interactive, and memorable. We'll also mark meaningful moments with **Movie Havdalah**, a **Chai School-led Shabbat**, and an **End-of-Year Tot Shabbat** as we celebrate another incredible year together.

This spring also brings excitement around our **Scholar-in-Residence Series**, welcoming inspiring voices who will engage our community through learning, conversation, and connection. These scholars will enrich our Shabbat experiences, adult learning offerings, and community dialogue, creating moments of reflection and inspiration that deepen our shared Jewish journey.

Adult learning and community groups continue strong through the end of May, including **Foundations of Judaism**, **Parsha Unplugged**, **Sanctified 365**, and **Torah Chanting**, alongside vibrant social groups such as **Mahjong**, **Book Club**, **Vamos**, **Shvitz n' Schmooze**, and **Adult Soccer**. Our **Social Justice Committee** remains an essential part of our communal fabric, offering opportunities for learning, service, and meaningful impact beyond our walls.

Sundays at the Center are filled with energy and purpose through **Chai School**, the return of **Chai Five Youth Group**, and **Mighty Maccabees**, nurturing Jewish learning, leadership, and friendships week after week.

Spring is also packed with signature community events, including the **Purim Carnival**, a **Spring Concert** led by Rabbi Julie and Stephanie Newman featuring our Gordon and Chai students, the **Center Musical**, our **Passover Seder** and **Matzah Bake**, and **The Big Event Gala**, which will also kick off our **Capital Campaign**.

Looking ahead, we'll offer mini-camps during school breaks, prepare for an exciting **seven-week** Summer Camp open to the wider community, and continue expanding our youth sports programs, including Flag Football.

Spring at the Center is about learning that inspires, celebrations that connect, and a community that grows stronger together and we can't wait to experience it with you.

Noah Schalit, Director of Programming





Adult learning



Voices of Torah with Rabbi Julie Jacobs

Mondays
6:00 – 7:00 PM



Parsha Unplugged

Wednesdays
7:45 – 8:45 PM



Yesodot: Foundations of Judaism

Thursdays
6:00 – 7:00 PM



Social Justice Committee (SJC)

Thursdays

Meets Monthly



Adult Soccer

Tuesdays | 6:00 PM



Book Club

Tuesdays

Meets
Monthly



Vamos Spanish

Tuesdays & 5:00-
Thursdays 6:00PM



Mahjong

Wednesdays | 6:00 PM



Check our website for dates and registration details:

centerbd.org/programs-events



Center for
Jewish Life
at Beth David

ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNITY OUTREACH: A SEMESTER FULL OF SMILES, PARTNERSHIPS, AND FUN!

This past semester, Engagement and Community Outreach has been in full speed mode—and what a joy it's been! Our team has been out and about, proudly representing our incredible school and the Center for Jewish Life all across Miami. From festivals to family programs, community partnerships to creative learning, we've been **making connections** everywhere we go.

Showing Up, Joining In, and Shining Bright

Our growing partnerships with amazing community organizations opened the door for us to join some fantastic events this fall. We loved meeting new families at the Miami Mom Collective Playdate at the Bayshore Club and celebrating autumn at the Miami Kids Magazine Fall Festival at Douglas Park.

We also launched a meaningful **collaboration** with the **Key Biscayne Community Center**, where one of our very own Gordon parents took the spotlight as their weekly Lunch & Learn Author. We love seeing our families share their talents with the broader community!

Spotlights, Smiles, and Community Pride

One of our favorite moments this semester was taking part in **Coral Gables Adventure Day**—especially watching our Gordon Teacher bring breakdancing to the main stage alongside our energetic Gordon kids. Talk about school spirit!

Our MazelTot Mommy & Me at 1010 Brickell brought even more joy as little ones explored light, shadows, and movement, with special thanks to Coach Mark from Prostogo for setting up exciting obstacle courses.

B'Shalom,
Nicole Sperling



We were also honored to join in **Hanukkah celebrations across the city**. From lighting up events with the Brickell Homeowners Association and Mercy Hospital to sharing delicious moments at a community Holiday Potluck with the Shenandoah Homeowners Association, this season was filled with **warmth and light**.

More to Come—See You Out There!

And we're just getting started! You'll find us next at the **Beaux Arts Festival** in January, the **Coconut Grove Arts Festival** in February, and at more MazelTot programs, plus **ongoing collaborations** with Miami Mom Collective, Miami Kids Magazine, and the Key Biscayne Community Center.

We can't wait to keep connecting, celebrating, and creating meaningful moments with our community. See you soon—and thank you for being part of the magic!

Social Justice Committee

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR. NO EXCEPTIONS. **ואהבת לרעך כמוך**

Mission

Social Justice is Judaism’s unifying mandate, central to who we are as Jews and what we do in contributing to Tikkun Olam, repairing the world – through direct service, Tzedakah (Righteous Giving), and advocacy.

Social Justice Is a Mitzvah

Our society is not just. We live amid competing values and persistent injustices—some painfully visible in the suffering of individuals, others more subtle, systemic, and harder to name.

Jewish tradition is deeply troubled by injustice. It does not allow us the comfort of indifference. Instead, it commands each of us to do what we can to move our society from the way it is toward the way it ought to be.

When we engage in this work, we are walking in God’s ways, as the Talmud teaches: “Just as God is compassionate, so too must you be compassionate” (Sotah 14a).

Justice work can be demanding and, at times, exhausting. That is precisely why doing it together—within our Center community—matters so much. Shared commitment sustains us and reminds us that we are not alone in this sacred task.

Please find your own way to make a difference in the world today—and then commit to doing it again tomorrow, and the day after that.

Rabbi Nachshon Carmi

Food Drives

We will continue to fight **HUNGER!** by collecting non-perishable items for our neighboring food pantries on a continuous basis because the need critical and urgent as 15% of Miami-Dade suffers from food insecurity and 1 of 5 children go to bed hungry! Look for the **Food Drive Bin** with the list of what is needed and PLEASE be generous — someone out there is depending on you!

What to Donate:

Rice

Beans

Pasta

Canned goods

Cereal

Loving our neighbors by being good neighbors is the basis of our ongoing Overtown programs – JOIN US!

Every month, the Social Justice Committee volunteers at community shelters, supporting their kitchen staff + serving meals to those in need. Want to make a difference with this team?

Email: paula@withoutboundaries.com

Lotus House: Every 1st and 3rd Thursday (11 AM - 2 PM)

Chapman: Every 4th Monday (5 - 7 PM)

Optimist Club: STAY TUNED!

“Acts of kindness never die. They linger in the memory, giving life to other acts in return.”

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks Z”L (Optimism to Hope)



PACT

People Acting for Community (PACT) is a highly organized alliance of 40+ churches, synagogues and mosques working to make systemic change in Miami-Dade County by holding our elected officials accountable on key issues effecting our lives like housing. And we are more involved than ever! Look for updated information in our monthly Tikkun newsletters, but in the meantime please save the following dates:

South Rally: March 17th at 7PM

Nehemiah Action: April 13th at 7 PM

Announcements:

The SJ Committee is gifting **Tzedakah Boxes** to all B'nai Mitzvah, representing Social Justice obligations as members of the Jewish Community and reminding all of us of the journey that we are on together: Tzedek, Tzedek Tirdoff/Justice, Justice You Shall Pursue (Deuteronomy 16:20).

Upcoming Social Justice Committee Meeting Dates:

Feb 12 | Mar 12 | Apr 9 | May 14 | June 11

7:00PM via Zoom



THE BIG EVENT

SAVE
the date

May 9th



**Center for
Jewish Life
at Beth David**

GORDON SCHOOL



As we approach the middle of the academic year at the Gordon School, I am happy to be able to share with you that our school has grown to almost 180 students, which is a 25% increase over the last two years. We have seen growth in our Early Childhood Center (3 months through 4 years of age) and our Day School (Kindergarten through 7th Grade). The Day School has grown by 20% since last year. We now have wait lists for many of our classes in the school as word of mouth and an increase in our social media presence has helped to spread the word of what a wonderful school we have. Please help us to continue to share the news about our warm, welcoming, and inspiring Gordon school!

We are now in the midst of re-enrollment for next year, and in just a few short weeks we will be sending out admission offers to new families looking to secure a spot in our school for the coming 2026-2027 school year. We anticipate adding additional classes in both the Day School and the Tikvah Center in the new school year. This year all of our families in the school have their Center membership included with their tuition, and we have seen an increase in the number of School families that are taking advantage of all the exciting programs that are offered to our community at-large in the Center.

**B'Shalom,
Bini W. Silver,
Head of School**

One of the areas that sets the Gordon School apart from other schools, both public and private, is our focus on providing differentiated instruction for our students. This year we have added an Academic Coaches program in the Day School to be able to further enhance this differentiated instruction. Our coaches work with individual and small groups of students that are able to work at an even more enhanced, accelerated level as well as students that might need some additional instruction at a slightly slower pace. Offering individualized-differentiated instruction is part of our core missions at Gordon.

This year, we also now have five students that are part of our Day School Plus program. This program is one in which Tikvah students are fully integrated into the Day School classes with their peers for the entire school day. Tikvah Coaches help support these students in the core academic areas as needed throughout the day. Further, all of our Tikvah students come to the Day School to be integrated in the neuro-typical classes for the Specials, which includes: P.E., Art, STEM, and Music. This integration throughout the week helps to build the strong relationship between the Day School and Tikvah students.

It is truly such a pleasure and honor for me to be the Head of School at Gordon, and I am so happy to be part of our warm and inclusive community at the Center for Jewish Life at Beth David. I hope that all of you will join us on Friday mornings, at 8:45 AM, in the Sanctuary, as we celebrate Shabbat as a school community, with spirited singing with Rabbi Julie, storytelling with Shlomo-ben-Shlomo (aka Mr. Bini), monthly class shows, and much joy and Shabbat spirituality!

INSIDE OUR PEAK ADMISSIONS SEASON

with Emily Moloney, Director of Gordon's Admissions



Spring marks the heart of admissions season at our school, and it's one of the most energizing times of the year. Our days are filled with prospective students visiting classrooms, parents touring campus, and families getting to know the vibrant, values-based community that makes our school so special.

This year, we have seen a **marked increase** of inquiries about Gordon than ever before from families seeking a warm, nurturing environment with **strong academics** and a deep sense of **belonging**. Many parents share that they are looking for a school where their children are known, supported, and challenged—and they consistently remark on the joyful, calm, and engaged learning they witness in our classrooms.

This season, we've also hosted a full slate of admissions events designed to give families an authentic glimpse into life at our school. Our two **Open Houses** welcome dozens of parents to campus. We held a Pre-K/Kindergarten Playdate and two Day in the Life of a Kindergartener programs to encourage the transition from ECC to Day School. In addition, we are planning a dedicated **Counselor Open House**, giving other school administrators the opportunity to learn more about how their students may be a good fit at our school.

What truly sets our school apart, and what families continue to notice, is our **balance** of academic rigor and whole-child development. From differentiated instruction and small-group learning to rich Judaic studies, project-based exploration, and a strong **emphasis on** social-emotional growth, our programs reflect a deep commitment to helping each child thrive.

As we move through the remainder of the season, we'll continue welcoming applicants to thoughtfully build next year's classes. We're grateful to our community for spreading the word and sharing their experiences—your partnership plays an essential role in helping new families find their way here.

Admissions season is always a time of hope, possibility, and growth, and we're excited for what's ahead. We look forward to meeting many more wonderful families and to welcoming the next generation of students into our warm, supportive, and spirited school community.

A GLIMPSE INTO GORDON

At Gordon, our classrooms are alive with curiosity, creativity, and joyful learning as students deepen friendships, dive into new ideas, and continue to grow with confidence. From engaging academics to meaningful Jewish learning, every day brings fresh opportunities to explore, connect, and shine. As the season of renewal unfolds, we're excited for all the discovery, growth, and special moments still ahead this spring at Gordon School



Ariyot (Pre-K)



7th grade



4th Grade



Tikvah 1st Grade



Dagim (infants)



Reading Buddies

How Jewish Day School Changed Our Family's Life



Three years ago, when our family moved from New York to Miami, we arrived with suitcases, a toddler, and a very fragile sense of stability. I was seven months pregnant, trying to hold everything together in the middle of a major life transition. Our oldest daughter, Nes, was two, all energy and presence, already filling every room she entered.

We enrolled her in a Montessori program that was bright, beautiful, and everything you hope for in an early childhood classroom. She was the youngest in a group of nineteen students, the baby of the class, but she walked in bravely anyway, her backpack practically swallowing her whole.

On her first day of school, our second daughter, Raz, came into the world unexpectedly early. Suddenly we were balancing NICU life, toddler transitions, and an out-of-state move. No friends yet. No community to soften the edges. We were doing the best we could, as new parents often do, with more love than sleep and more questions than answers.

A few months later, Nes came home, dropped her little shoes by the door, and said the words that pierced me straight through: "Mommy, I'm the only Jewish kid in my class." She said it with curiosity, not sadness. But something shifted inside me. Identity had surfaced early, unexpectedly, and without context.

As a psychotherapist, I understand how essential age-appropriate language is. But **how do you explain identity, belonging, and difference** to a two (almost three) year old? **How do you help a child feel proud and rooted** when she is **the only one**?

I gave her the best language I could. Still, I knew something had already taken shape. An awareness of being "other." An awareness she should not have to carry at that age. Childhood is meant to unfold slowly. Before labels. Before fear. Before the quiet calculations children learn to make about whether they belong. Identity at that age should feel like warmth, not weight. Like curiosity, not caution. I knew instinctively that something sacred was asking to be protected.

And then October 7 happened. My world, like the world of every Jewish person I know, cracked open.

I grew up Reform Jewish in New York and Connecticut. My high school graduating class had four hundred students. Only eight of us were Jewish. I later attended Columbia University for twelve years, first studying, and many years later, teaching. Columbia shaped my academic life, my professional identity, and many of my closest friendships.

A story about identity, belonging, resilience, and finding home again



Yet on October 7, the same campus that had nurtured my intellect became the epicenter of something I never imagined I would witness in my lifetime: open, unapologetic Jew hatred. Friends I had grown with. Colleagues I had mentored. Women who stood beside me at my wedding as bridesmaids are, devastatingly, no longer my friends. They were reposting Hamas propaganda just hours after Jewish families had been massacred, kidnapped, and terrorized.

To say I was shaken would be an understatement. I struggled to understand why I was having a seemingly harder time with seeing what they were saying than my husband was. And the reality was simple: my husband grew up in a predominantly Jewish community in every term of life. So yes, he was coping with the devastation of October 7th, but not wrestling with nearly everyone he knew aligning with Hamas.

I tried to speak gently and thoughtfully to my friends. I sent sources. I offered context. I explained history. I thought I could beat the algorithm. That our relationships were stronger than the power of social media. It was fruitless. It did not matter. I lost the support system I had spent a lifetime building. And suddenly I could not see the parallel between my own experience and the world my daughters were stepping into. If I, as an adult, felt this shaken and alone, what would it mean for my girls to feel culturally or spiritually isolated at age two, three, four and beyond?

At the same time, I noticed what some parents in Nes's preschool class were posting online. They too were sharing anti-Israel propaganda, amplifying messaging that erased Jewish suffering and justified terrorism. I realized how little control we had over what our daughter might hear from classmates repeating what they heard at home. No control over the values being shaped around her. No control over the lens through which she would be seen. And I knew with absolute clarity that I could not let my daughters learn to feel unsafe in the world before they even learn to write their names.

I wanted them to learn their letters before their defenses. To learn how to ask questions before learning how to brace themselves. To know, in their bones, that who they are is something to be celebrated, not explained away. This was not about observance. It was about **belonging**. About whether a child grows up knowing she is held by a story larger than herself. Whether values are memorized or lived. Whether identity is shaped by fear and defense, or by confidence, joy, and connection.

Finding The Gordon School: Where Our Hearts Finally Exhaled

It was around that time that we decided to visit The Gordon School at the Center for Jewish Life at Beth David. **We expected a tour. What we found was a home:** Not a home defined by how religious one is, but by how deeply one cares. A place where tradition and inquiry coexist. Where children are encouraged to think, feel, question, and belong.

From the moment we walked through the doors, the warmth was **unmistakable**. Teachers greeted us like family. Classrooms buzzed with curiosity. Hebrew, Spanish, and English intertwined seamlessly. Children sang, built, questioned, ran and created. The school felt **alive**.

What moved us most were the parents. As we were leaving, I stopped a mother whose children had been at the school for years and asked what she thought of it. She smiled, not with polite enthusiasm but with lived conviction, and said one sentence: **"If you want to raise kind, thoughtful children, send them here."** That was it. We enrolled Nes immediately.

Within months, the school became far more than an educational choice. It became the support system we never had. The community we did not know we were missing. The anchor that restored a sense of home we thought we had lost.

A School That Teaches Academics and How to Be Human

At The Gordon School, our daughters receive an early childhood education that rivals the best in the world. It is built on **curiosity, language development, mathematics, science, and a deep sense of cultural identity**. They come home singing songs I grew up with, asking questions about holidays, lighting candles, mitzvot, and meaning. They talk about Israel not with fear or confusion, but with curiosity and pride.

Yet the academics, as exceptional as they are, tell only part of the story. What sets this school apart is not only what children learn, but **who they are becoming as they learn** it. Education here is not transactional. It is relational. It teaches children not just how to succeed, but how to be in the world with integrity, empathy, and courage. They teach what I consider **the true foundations** of a Jewish education: Tikkun Olam, Chesed, Kehillah, and an identity that is not something you defend, but something you live. These values are woven into the rhythm of the school day, shaping how children treat one another, how they understand responsibility, and how they see themselves in the world.

This past Thanksgiving, the school encouraged families to participate in a food drive. Instead of simply donating, we took our girls to deliver cooked meals directly to families in need. They asked the kinds of questions children should ask, such as why some families do not have enough food. Rather than explaining inequality in theory, we showed them in action. That moment became the first of many monthly acts of service we now do as a family, inspired entirely by the school's values.

A Community That Shows Up Every Single Time

What stunned us more than anything was how deeply integrated the families are, fostered by both the school and the Center. We know each other. We show up for one another. We celebrate together. We check in. We help each other with forgotten snacks, pickups, playdates, and emotional support.

Programming is constant, creative, and genuinely intergenerational. From Shabbat experiences and challah bakes to parent-child yoga, karate, dance, arts nights, dodgeball, outdoor barbecues, and holiday celebrations, toddlers, teens, parents, and grandparents all mingle and belong.

Both my parents and my husband's parents have joined us for Shabbat morning services when they are in town, sometimes for special occasions, sometimes simply because they can. **The services are multigenerational**, a little chaotic, and deeply beautiful, exactly what you would expect from a room that spans infants in arms to grandparents in their nineties. Families introduce themselves. Children wander and sing. Our daughters **stand a little taller, glowing with pride** as they bring their grandparents into their world. It is belonging made visible, across generations.

It is the Jewish village I did not grow up with, and the Jewish village **I did not realize I needed**. We have made friends we trust with our lives. Friends we could call at two in the morning. Friends our daughters adore like extended family. The Center does not just educate children. It weaves families together.

In a world that feels increasingly unpredictable and frightening for Jewish people, this sense of belonging is priceless.

Reclaiming Our Jewish Identity as a Family

Before our daughters were born, we were not consistent about Shabbat. We lit candles occasionally, but without rhythm or ritual. Life was busy. New York was fast. We always meant to be more intentional, but meaning has a way of slipping through the cracks of a hectic life. Now, every Friday evening, without fail, we pause. We light the candles. We say the blessings. We breathe. We remember who we are. It is rarely fancy. Often it is messy. But the pause itself is transformative.





Our daughters ask questions about why the candles matter. About why we rest. About ancestors, and stories that shaped us long before they were born. This is identity-building. This is resilience-building. This is the **gift of Jewish education** extending into the walls of our home.

Jewish day school did not just change our daughters' lives. **It changed ours.**

It gave us *community* when we felt most alone.
It gave our daughters *confidence* in who they are.
It gave us *friendships* that feel like *family*.
It gave us *grounding* during a global surge of antisemitism.
It gave us *connection* to our heritage, our values, and our people.
It gave us *purpose* on Friday nights and meaning throughout the week.

It made our children feel *safe*, not in spite of being Jewish, but *because* of it.

Most importantly, it gave us *hope*.

Hope that our daughters will grow up proud, protected, and connected. Hope that they will become kind, thoughtful, resilient human beings. Hope that community, identity, and tradition can be threads strong enough to hold a family together.

Choosing a school is one of the **earliest and most consequential decisions we make as parents**. We are not just choosing a curriculum. We are choosing a worldview. A community. A set of values that will quietly shape our children long after they leave the classroom.

For us, choosing Jewish day school did not narrow our daughters' world. **It expanded it.**
We did not just find a school.
We found a *home*.
We found *our people*.
We found *ourselves* again.
And for that, I am *endlessly grateful*.

Bri Kalikow





Gordon School



Center for Jewish Life at Beth David

Belonging Isn't a Privilege. It's a Promise.

This year, our Give Miami Day campaign centered on one truth: **belonging begins here** - and it stays here because of you.

Your generosity to the **Gordon School Scholarship Fund** ensures that every child can remain in the community where they learn, grow, and feel deeply connected.

A Record-Breaking Week of Belonging

- **#1 on the 2025 "Miami's Biggest Champions" leaderboard**
- **669 donations**, our highest participation ever
- **\$314,858 raised**
- Powered by **58 peer-to-peer campaigns**, doubling last year's engagement

Why It Matters

Every dollar you gave didn't just "cover a cost." It kept a child in the place they finally felt they belonged - in their classroom, with their friends, and within a community that knows their name.

Thanks to you, the Gordon School Scholarship Fund continues to close tuition gaps at enrollment and mid-year, ensuring stability and belonging for families across generations.

Thank You for Keeping the Promise



Give Miami Day Thank You

Lewis Abramson
Susan Abramson
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Veit Albert
Juan Albors
Nuria Alloza Sanchez
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Sprinkles Alter
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57 anonymous donors



Sundays at the Center



Chai School

*Kindergarten
through 4th grade*
10:00 AM – 12:00 PM
5th–8th grade
09:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Join us in our engaging and joyful Sunday religious school experience. Through a balance of Hebrew, Judaics, prayer, and movement, students build a strong Jewish foundation while forming meaningful connections with their peers and teachers.



Chai Five Youth Group

Meets Monthly &
One Community
Project a Month

The Chai Five Sunday Leaders Program is an exciting leadership opportunity for Jewish teens to stay connected, engaged, and inspired after their B'nai Mitzvah. As part of our Youth Group, teens take on meaningful leadership roles within our Hebrew School while building skills that last a lifetime. Earn community service hours. Develop leadership, responsibility, and public-speaking skills. Participate in Tikkun Olam mitzvah projects. Receive mentorship from our Rabbis and Hebrew School staff.



Mighty Maccabees

10:00 – 11:00 AM

All-level karate class for students
in kindergarten through 5th grade.

\$36 per class



Check our website for dates and
registration details:
centerbd.org/programs-events



**Center for
Jewish Life**
at Beth David



**Center for
Jewish Life**
at Beth David

2026 Enrichment Programs

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<p>All Sports</p> <p>Karate</p> <p>Sí to Spanish</p> <p>Tennis - Pros2Go</p> <p>Sí to Spanish</p> <p>L'Atelier</p> <p>Karate</p> <p>Little Yogis</p>	<p>Center Musical-Aladdin</p> <p>Crafty Creations</p> <p>Obstacle Course - Get Moving</p> <p>Crafty Creations</p> <p>Obstacle Course - Get Moving</p> <p>The Yum Club</p> <p>Tiny Tales & Big Words</p> <p>Little Groovers</p>	<p>Inventors' Lab</p> <p>Violin Vibes</p> <p>Mad Science</p> <p>Soccer - Pros2Go</p> <p>Torah Tots</p> <p>Tiny Stars Theater</p> <p>Sensory Exploration</p>	<p>Basketball</p> <p>Spin & Sculpt</p> <p>Ballet Blossoms - Pros2Go</p> <p>Little Hands Pottery</p> <p>Garden Patch Kids</p> <p>Little Yogis</p> <p>Tiny Stars Theater</p> <p>Mini Makers</p>	<p>Chess Mates</p> <p>Yum Club</p> <p>Pickleballers - Pros2Go</p> <p>Break Dancing</p> <p>Chocolate Creations</p> <p>Gymnastics</p> <p>Tiny Tales & Big Words</p>

Guide

Day School & Tikvah
 ECC
 ECC 2's

For more information contact:
vwalker@centerbd.org
 (305) 854-3911 EXT 271

ENJOY OUR Camps

Open to the Community

April 2 – 3, 6 – 8th

SPRING BREAK Camp

Our camps offer exciting activities like **arts and crafts, science experiments, outdoor adventures, and special themed days** ensuring your children entertained and engaged throughout their breaks.

June 15 – July 31st

CAMP SHEMESH Center for Jewish Life

Enjoy: Sports, Splash Days, Field Trips, Arts, Gardening, Cooking and more!

In-House Field Trips: Discover, learn, and have a blast without leaving the comfort of our campus!

Traveling Field Trip: Weekly field trips for rising 1st-6th grade campers, themed days and field trips ensuring your children will be engaged.



For more information contact:
Ginny Walker

✉ wwalker@centerbd.org ☎ (305) 854-3911 EXT 266

Check our website for dates and registration details:
centerbd.org/children-youth



**Center for
Jewish Life**
at Beth David

A NOTE FROM OUR **DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS**

Dear Friends,

I can't believe it has already been six months! I truly believe that when you love what you do, it no longer feels like a job.

Security

This past December, we began the first phase of our security upgrades. We transitioned our security cameras to a digital system, installed ballistic-protected doors in the Cafeteria, and added door-access controls to key entry points around our campus.

We continue conducting on-site tactical training to simulate and identify potential threats within our buildings, helping us strengthen our response and improve reaction times in any situation.

We are building a stronger relationship and communication with The Miami Dade Police Department. MDPD keeps showing their support for our Community's Safety.

Maintenance

Over the past few months, our team has focused on **refreshing our buildings** and common areas. We are working hard to keep our Center clean, bright, and welcoming for all of us to enjoy.

We completed our **office renovations** and upgrades, thanks to Francisco Geller's flooring expertise and Michael Oaks's beautiful office furniture.

Two more Day School rooms now have **brand-new floors** as well!



HVAC

We are becoming cooler and cooler every day! Our offices, Day School, and Ballroom now have **new HVAC units** running at full power, and we are now entering the final steps to activate the new systems for the Sanctuary and the Cafeteria.

This amazing group of people is what makes our Center what it is.

I want to personally thank Carlos, Yohamee, Tomasa, and Gilberto from Maintenance, as well as Emilio, Roly, Ducles, David, and Gabriel from Security.

May 2026 make us stronger and bring us even closer together.

With warmth and gratitude,
MAURO FLAM



Celebrate
SHABBAT
At the Center for Jewish
Life at Beth David



Pet Shabbat
January 30

“Sit. Stay. Shabbat! Bring your furry friends for blessings and fun.”



Disney Shabbat
February 27

“Where Shabbat magic comes to life—sing, play, and celebrate together!”



Havdalah Movie Night
March 28

“End Shabbat with a special feature movie night and get ready for Passover!”



Chai School–Led Shabbat | May 15

“Little voices, big blessings: see our students lead the service this week.”



End-of-Year Tot Shabbat | June 19

Tot Shabbat is a joyful, music-filled Shabbat experience designed especially for our youngest children and their families.



Shabbat Pasi3n
Jan 16– February 20–
March 20– April 17

Experience Shabbat with Latin-inspired music and prayer—vibrant, inclusive, and unforgettable!

Check our website for dates and registration details:

centerbd.org/programs-events



Donations from 8/15/25 – 12/15/25

General Fund

Supports a variety of The Center's initiatives depending on the most pressing current needs:

Samantha Alman	Bruce Litwer
Juan Alonso	Carla Neufeld
The Ansin Foundation	Laurence Parnes
Aaron Becker	Craig Robins
Mick Beekhuizen	Julie Rosenfeld
Oliver Bernstein	Yvonne Shashaty
Edward Blasser	Ruth Solly
Sanford Charapp	Uriel Spak
Adriana Dejman Valdez	Lucie Spieler
Roberto Elovic	Sandra Sussman
Lauren Goodlev	Stanley Sweeney
Diane King	Jennifer Urizar
Faith Krause	

Programming Donations

We're so grateful for our community's donations to the Center's programming. Your contributions empower investment in events, courses, and activities that spark exploration of a thriving Jewish life:

Charlotte Kofler
Hannah Lozman
Christina Matthew
Brad Rosenblatt

Women's League

Supports the many activities of Women's League:

Paula Arias Dorado

Merlin Educational Fund

Provides scholarships for members' children to attend Day School or Religious School at The Center, or for High School in Israel.

Jolie Cummings	Robert and Michelle Merlin
Ivy Goldstein	Judy Neufeld
Elizabeth Janowitz	Bonnie Webman

Brotherhood Fund

Support the many activities of Brotherhood including Shabbat Passion & Soccer & Cervezas:

Juan Alonso
Moshe Etzioni
Charlotte Kofler

Chapman & Chesed Fund

Provides support for feeding the homeless through a relationship with Chapman Partnership for the Homeless:

Edward Boshnick
Rabbi Nachshon Carmi
Joel Cohen
Hillel Gray
Iris Medvin
Sandra Ivonne Murado

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

Provides tzedakah and for a variety of programs and projects at the discretion of Rabbi Jacobs:

Jolie Cummings	Paula Saltzman
Jerrie Feinstein	Joan Schaeffer
Harriett Fox	Gail Silver
Steven Gissin	Judith Stopek
Rabbi Hazzan Howard K. Glantz	Melody Torrens
Robin Klein	Jacqueline Traurig
Monte Lichtiger	Wendy Traurig
Bruce Litwer	Cheryl Weiner
Michael Newman	Dr. Jack Wolfsdorf
Rosa Polatnick	Angela Yorio
Laura Reich	Ira Zager
Suzy Robinson	
Julie Rosenfeld	

Sam & Clarice Badanes G'Milut Hasadim Fund

Deeds of Loving Kindness - Provides aid to our members to cover unforeseen costs such as funerals, medical bills, and emergency travel. May also support education and training for facilitating the shift from tenancy to home and small business ownership:

Martha Cohen
Arlene Zakarin
Stanley Zakarin



If you're interested in making a donation to support our funds and initiatives, please visit:
<https://operations.daxko.com/online/5376/OnlineGiving/Donation.mvc>

Donations from 8/15/25 - 12/15/25

Gordon School Annual Fund

Support the education of children in the Gordon School (ECC, Tikvah Center & Day School):

Ross Federgreen
Faith Krause
Alisa Savitz
Jose Siman
Judith Stopek
Judith Weisenfeld

Gussie Fund

Help Center members connect to special Jewish education, culture, and ritual experiences with tuition assistance for schools, camps, and travel programs in the US, Israel or globally:

Wendy Abel
Sharon Leblang
Bruce Litwer
Marcia B. Steinhauer
Janet Zimmern

Waas Preservation Fund

Maintain and improve Center facilities:

Robert Krawcheck
Ann Merlin
Margaret Olkes
Lucie Spieler
Barbara Tensi

Social Justice

Support work being done for Social Justice along with our partners throughout the Greater Miami-Dade Community in the timeless spirit of Tikkun Olam. Tzedek Tzedek Tirdof!

Dorothy Raskin
Melody Torrens

Religious School

Ignite students' soul-searching journey as they connect to Jewish traditions and rituals.

Abdias Montelus

5786 HHD dinners & Break the Fast sponsorship:

Paula Saltzman
Melody Torrens

Yahrzeit Fund

Donations in memory of loved ones help to maintain yahrzeit records and memorial plaques

Denise Amini	Miriam Futernick	Carolyn Lamb	Paula Saltzman
Jay Aronson	Steven Garron	Chaya Lerner	David Scharlin
Wayne Balkan	Steven Gissin	Pedro Martin	Shirlee Schiller
Nancy Berger	Jacobo Gold	Iris Medvin	Ira Silver
Edith Brilliant	Barry Goldmeier	Jane Meyer	Roberta Silver
Robert Burke	Joanne Goldmeier	Ari Oberstein	Ruth Solly
Steven Caller	Jill Hershbein	Margaret Olkes	Nicole Sperling
Sanford Charapp	Diane Klein	Jeffrey Perl	Marilyn Tendrich
Jerold Coburn	Linda Koenigsberg	Donna Phillips	Lisa Treister
Herbert Cohen	Marlene Krantz	Judith Richard	Lisa Ann Ware
Joel Cohen	Faith Krause	James Ripka	Robert Waterstone
Carlos Don	Ben Kuehne	Bruce Rodin	Dr. Jack Wolfsdorf
Rona Edelman	Ira Kurzban	Eileen Rosenblatt	Daryl Zimmerman

Donations from 8/15/25 - 12/15/25

5786 High Holy Days Pledge

Judith Adler	Abigail Hackam	Joshua Medvin	Russell Semmel
Stewart Appelrouth	Jill Hershbein	Hillah Mendez	Daniel Shoer
Sharon Ayalon	Martin Hershbein	Jane Meyer	Ira Silver
Wayne Balkan	Stephanie Herz	Bronwyn Miller	Michael Silver
Raquel Baum	Zev Jacobs	Craig Moskowitz	Valerie Silver Rosen
Scott Becher	Brett Kalikow	David Newman	Eduardo Siman
Michelle Berkovits	Randy Kiviat	Todd Oretsky	Eric Singer
Roger Bernstein	Robin Klein	Maria Perez	Jacob Slosbergas
Miriam Brejt	Charlotte Kofler	Donna Phillips	Nelson Slosbergas
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