

Dear Parents,

October 23, 2014

This letter is sent to you to explain why our school and all other Jewish schools do not celebrate and do not observe Halloween, and what do we do instead. It's hard not to get caught up in the spirit of Halloween, which is all around us. For the last 2 weeks of October, business offices hold rounds of parties, employees begin dressing in strange costumes, radio and television begin playing Halloween related songs and shows. It is because of this social pressure that scores of Jewish children and their parents find themselves celebrating Halloween.

Halloween is not merely a neutral holidays, such as Thanksgiving, Memorial Day, Labor Day where we would find no conflict with our Jewish belief.

As Jews living outside of Israel, we are constantly surrounded by non-Jewish values and observances. Jewish schools believe that Halloween represents ideas and morals that are not always inline with our own Jewish beliefs.

Halloween Oct. 31, *the eve of All Saints' Day*, is a combination of Pagan and Christian celebration. It is a day that glorifies death, macabre forms of heroes and a very non-Jewish attitude. The word comes from medieval England's All Hallows' Eve. However, many of these customs predate Christianity, going back to Celtic practices associated with Nov. 1, the beginning of winter and the Celtic new year.

Witches, ghosts and other evil spirits were believed to roam the earth on this evening, playing tricks on human beings to mark the season of diminishing sunlight. Bonfires were lit, offerings were made of dainty foods and sweets, and people would disguise themselves as one of the roaming spirits, to avoid demonic persecution. These early practices can be found in countries of Celtic influence today, such as the United States, where children go from door to door in costumes demanding trick or treat.

In addition, for Jews, historically, this day has been a most horrific day. It was a day, that under cover of a mask, Jewish life was threatened and Jewish property was destroyed in many European cities. It was not long ago in Europe, where Jewish people were executed on *All Saints' Day*, synagogues were violated, and Torah books were burnt.

Our Jewish belief supports the **spiritual joy of happy festivals**. We have a holiday in the spring, **Purim**, where children wear costumes and play games, read the Megila and exchange yummy treats and good food. On Halloween, our children have a full basket of candies at home, they open the door to greet the visitors and those who celebrate the holiday, give candies away and pay respect to our neighbors. We save our customs wearing for Purim.

Alef Bet Montessori Staff