



**Congregation Kol Ami  
Religious School  
CHAI TIMES**

Sunday, October 7, 2007

It has been a busy weekend again for Kol Ami and Religious School. Friday night we recognized four new students for the Consecration ceremony. Mazel Tov! to Ashlyn Bielsker, Sammy Fine, Micah Jacobson, and Jonathan Greenwald. Then we unrolled the Torah, sang wonderful songs with Yachad, and marched around the sanctuary waving our flags in celebration of Simhat Torah. The Torah stretched all around the sanctuary as we carefully rerolled it back to the beginning. Saturday was Timmy Fine's Bar Mitzvah, and it was wonderful. Timmy did an amazing job. The sanctuary was filled with awe and pride. Congratulations to Timmy and Cantor Silbersher on a job well done. Finally, we had Religious School on Sunday, and Chai Family Time.

Hopefully, you enjoyed the 'Mah La'asot' ("What should I do?") portion. The story of 'The Drowning Person' helped us to apply the principal of 'pikuah nefesh' which means the saving of life. We learned that Halakhah (Jewish Law) and Talmudic Reasoning will show us the Jewish answer for ethical dilemmas. In this case, we learned that life should be preserved. If saving another person's life means that you could possibly lose your own life then you should not follow that path, but find another way to try to help that doesn't put your own life at risk. We heard from Barry Speert and his Rabbinic Views On the News class, Desiree Greene and the 4/5 class, and Steve Sackin and the 6/7 class that this topic during Chai Family Time was a great introduction to the lessons they were teaching, too.

Next week, Sunday, October 14, Cantor Silbersher is going to introduce the concept of Family Meeting, their purpose, and how to facilitate them. Diane Wubbenhorst is coming to teach us a few easy, repetitive steps to practice our Israeli dancing, and we will do another 'Mah La'asot' story. It is also going to be PEANUT BUTTER SUNDAY! We are asking that everyone bring a jar of peanut butter to start our collection of food for COPP. Additionally, all the tzedakah that we collect on this particular Sunday we will give to Mike Boresow to donate to Abby's Run. The Rosin-Kenneally family and the Chase family are generously providing the breakfast for this Sunday! ☺ What mensches! We also want to thank Madricha Natalie Strauss for taking all the photographs for the 'Chai Times' this week. ☺

Parents, remember that after Chai Family Time you are welcome to stay and help with gardening, and Barry Speert would love to have you join his adult class. Finally, if anyone has suggestions, comments, or ideas for Chai Family Time activities please remember that we are happy to talk to you. Is anyone ready to present something themselves? Think about it. That's what this hour is for - learning together as a congregational family. Thanks for your support.

## ***K/1 with Stan Strauss***

Today we had a great day, but we missed having Sammy with us. We figured he was spending time with his brother, Timmy, who became a Bar Mitzvah yesterday, and with the rest of his family. We look forward to having him with us next week. We started class by remembering Friday's Simhat Torah celebration and the Consecration ceremony. Ashlyn, Sammy, Jonathan, and Micah were consecrated and received certificates and personal Torah scrolls. We talked about how cool it was when the Torah was unrolled and why we had to unroll it. We had to do it so we could reroll (rewind) it to the beginning and start again.

Stan shared the Bible he received when he was confirmed a "few years ago." We learned that the Bible is divided into three parts: Torah, Prophets, and Writings. Hey, the Torah is the same as the first five books of the Bible! We then took an indoor field trip to the sanctuary to look at the Torah close up. We learned that the Torah is for all of us and all of us can get close to it and touch it, which we did. We took the Torah out of the ark and opened it up to the beginning. We discovered the Torah is hand written on sheep skin and is written in Hebrew. Yitz Sokol, a madrich, read to us the first few verses. We were all very impressed.

Patrick and Sophia joined us to see the Torah, and then taught us two songs about Torah. We sang 'Torahli' and 'Tree of Life'. After singing we came back to the room and made torn paper mosaics of our own vision of the tree of life. Ashlyn, Talia, Jonathan, and Micah each had their own vision and created beautiful mosaics. Stan wanted to put them on the wall, but all the kids wanted to take them home. I hope they are hanging up somewhere special.

We learned the first book of the Torah and in the Bible is called Genesis, the beginning. We also learned the Hebrew name B'reshit. We then told the story of creation; how God created the world in six days and then rested on Shabbat, the seventh day. The children took home a book of creation. On the back, they are to remember that we are all made in God's image and we can be like God.

Today, we reviewed the 'Shehecheyanu' as part of our Hebrew study. The K-1 class will learn Hebrew by hearing the sounds of language; much like we learned how to speak English before we learned how to read it. Just as the 'Shehecheyanu' starts with "Baruch ata", the kids told about many prayers they had heard that start the same way. They decided "Baruch ata" must be important and words we should learn. We learned the first five letters of the alef bet: alef, bet, vet, gimmel, and dalet. We shall add more letters each week. We learned the words 'ima' and 'abba'. Parents, if you don't know these words, ask your child. Please review these letters and words throughout the week.

I can't wait for all of us to be together again. Shalom.



## ***2nd/3rd with Julie Hirsch-Bohs***

Following the family time, we started out together with the 1st/2nd grade class. All of us visited the sanctuary, with Stan Strauss showing the Torah to all. He gave a brief overview of the Torah, and then Yitz read a paragraph to us. The kids seemed in awe of his Hebrew reading skills. Then, Patrick and Sophia came into the sanctuary and taught us some new songs. The kids got up and grooved to the music, too. Everyone seemed to have fun doing it. Our class then divided from the younger group. We quickly finished our craft project from the first day, and now have all of our pictures hanging in our room. Make sure to check them out when you come to visit the room. We chose to go outside for our classroom learning time. Everyone was so well behaved and the weather was great. We briefly spent some time climbing a tree, then we sat in it to do our lessons: Feeding the Hungry packet and God Creates Everything packet (both sent home with the kids). Everyone participated and had good insight. These two packets began our discussions of mitzvot ('feeding the hungry' is one of eight) and the bible. We voted, as a class, to collect tzedakah, deciding at the end of the year how to spend it. Thanks to the Chases for being good sports about the sap in Oscar's hair!! Finally, we made sure to let Camille know that we will miss her next week.



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## ***4/5 with Desiree Atherton-Greene***

Mr. Wheaton happened to be gone, as well as several students--but we're looking forward to seeing everybody next Sunday!

Today we spent some time talking about the concept of "gates" in Judaism--how it appears in a literal and poetic sense in so many places. For example, prayer books are called things like "Gates of Prayer," "Gates of Repentance," etc. The psalms talk about the "Gates of Righteousness" ("Sha-a-rei Tzedek.") In the "V'ahavta," we're told to take the words we're commanded and write them on the doorposts of our homes and gates. It's a modern metaphor as well--the motivational speaker Keith Harrell talks about "guarding your ear gate and your mouth gate,"--i.e., guard what goes into your thinking and what comes out in your speech. We talked about how a "gate" can be an entrance, something that opens to welcome you in--or it can be something that protects you when it's closed. Passing a mezuzah on a gate or doorpost as we leave to go out into the world reminds us that G-d's word can help protect us from the temptations or peer pressures that we might encounter out there. We learned a Hebrew song (Psalm 118:19 set to music); the lyrics say, "Open for me the gates of righteousness; I will enter and thank G-d." We decided that the Gates of Righteousness are always open, but we must walk in--kind of like the people who had to step into the Sea of Reeds before it would

part (like a gate!) to let them cross to escape from Egypt. We have to meet G-d halfway with our actions. Our "mensch in training" doorhangers went home today; they are kind of like a mezuzah--something placed on our door or gate to remind us to do the right thing wherever we may go.

Patrick and Sophia came in and taught us a lovely Ladino song; we had a great conversation about the Ladino language (how it is a combination of Spanish and Hebrew, and how it is similar to Yiddish, etc.) It was strange but beautiful to see phrases like "mi neshoma" in the lyrics ("my"--in Spanish plus "soul"--in Hebrew!) Desiree also taught the class the "Sh'ma" in sign language and a new melody for it as well, that goes with a set of "good morning" songs we're learning.

We went over the Torah stories that had been sent home as homework, the stories of Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel. [GREAT JOB BRINGING THE BOOKS BACK! If you didn't, please do so next week.] Wow--another awesome discussion! These kids are really deep thinkers--I am continually impressed by their insights. They talked about how it must have hurt Adam and Eve when Cain killed Abel; how leaving the Garden meant they were no longer under G-d's protection, so they should have been trying to protect each other--we tied that into the "Pikuach Nefesh" discussion from family time; how we shouldn't take things out on other people just because we're angry or hurt; how Cain was warned by G-d to make the right choice, but he didn't--we always can choose to do the right thing . . . and more! Mr. Wheaton and I will go over the notebooks that came back this time and then next time we'll talk about Noah.

Cantor then came in and we started Hebrew. The Hebrew book and workbook were sent home--PLEASE MAKE SURE THEY COME BACK NEXT WEEK! Cantor will not be here next week, but, at his request, Desiree will continue & finish Lesson One in class. Cantor also encourages students to work ahead at home! ALSO--DESIREE SENT HOME A "MENSCH" ACTIVITY TO DO AT HOME--PLEASE BRING THAT BACK NEXT WEEK AS WELL.

Thank you so much--it's a joy to work with all of you wonderful kids & parents! Shavua Tov! (Have a good week!)



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### ***6/7 with Steve and Linda Sackin***

The first period of class we inspected and added to our compost pile. All the melons, pears, coffee grounds and tomatoes are gone, replaced by soil. Cantor Silbersher then taught the next section, introducing his B'nai Mitzvah program. Next was a 60 minute session on anger. We discussed how and why it manifests, various ways to express it, what happens when it is not expressed or when it is held inside too long. We presented the Talmudic point of view that anger can be a dangerous emotion and discussed their summarizing statement, "Even if one is wise, if he becomes enraged, his wisdom deserts



