



Congregation Kol Ami
Religious School
CHAI TIMES

Sunday, October 21, 2007

First of all, I really need to apologize for the inconvenience to Cantor in regards to having enough time to fully present his Family Meeting. It was an unexpected treat for Diane to show up again for dance as it is always fun to watch us move and groove. Since this wasn't planned, it started everything out a little behind. Then we had the absolutely wonderful opportunity to hear Hannah Cantrell play her violin. WOW! What a treat. She is a truly gifted young lady! We will always make time for these types of things, even at the last minute. We believe that anything that involves us getting to know each other better, highlighting our talents and interests, and celebrating our accomplishments is what we are all about! If you want to use our family hour to highlight something, let us know. The sooner we know, the better it obviously is. Cantor will be presenting the idea of family meetings for the next several Sundays so that we can have a good idea how to incorporate them into our own individual families.

This week the Chase family is providing the bagels and spread, again! Since we have had lots of inquiries about sponsoring, or providing a breakfast for Sunday mornings, we are going to put up a sign-up sheet. It will have dates for religious school. You can volunteer to do the whole thing, do it with another family, bring just the bagels, etc. Whatever you are interested in doing is greatly appreciated.

Our congregation participates in **COPP**, Care of Poor People, as a mitzvah project every year. It is always held on the **Saturday after Thanksgiving** at the old Levitz warehouse downtown on Central. With winter approaching, homeless people need coats. Please go through your closets at home and bring in any coats that your family has outgrown. As long as they are clean and functional, they will be greatly appreciated by the men, women, and children who are worried about being cold in the upcoming months. Soon you will be getting more specific information on this event, but please, please, please mark your calendars and plan to attend-even if only for an hour. It will truly be an experience that you and your family will never forget.





People showed up for Gardening last Sunday and this Sunday, too!



Music with Patrick Buckley

During Family Learning Time everyone stood and sang *Heiveinu Shalom Aleichem* and added clapping. Then everyone discussed the text of *Tree of Life* and the Hebrew text, *Eitz Chayim*. After talking about which comes first - words or melody - we learned and sang the traditional *Eitz Chayim* which is sung in services.

Patrick asked Hannah to play her violin for the K-3 students, but before she played she showed her violin to the class and talked about the names of the different parts of the violin. Hannah played beautifully! Afterwards we talked about how the violin looks a lot like a guitar but sounds very different and why. We then learned the words to, and sang the first part of the blessing that occurs in services before the Torah is read. Next we sang *Good Morning, Boker Tov!*, and I found out that, for most of the students, *Tree of Life* is the favorite song we have learned so far.

Then I went in to the 4/5 class and reviewed the text for *Eitz Chayim* before we sang the traditional version of the song and talked about where the text comes from and what it means. Next we talked about the blessings we sing in services before and after reading the Torah. We learned the words to the blessings, sang them, and then talked about how there may be some differences in services in different synagogues, but that there will definitely be many similarities. By learning songs sung during services the students can feel confident and comfortable attending Jewish services anywhere.

We missed Sophia, and will be glad to see her next Sunday!

Busy Buddies with Megan Kraus

Busy Buddies started our class time off with a mitzvah project; we helped to remove begonias from the path that leads to the sanctuary. We then released a butterfly with hopes that she or he will, like us and like our patriarch Abraham in last week's Torah portion, go out to be a blessing in the world. Back in our classroom we made (with paper and popsicle sticks) torahs and a set of candlesticks with candles (popsicle sticks again) for us to light on Friday nights. Patrick came to sing the Shabbat morning Kiddush with us and we drank some grape juice to celebrate. Then we went on our field trip to see the Torah. At first we thought the Torah might be in the closet or maybe the kitchen but then Liza led us to the Aron HaKodesh and we took the Torah out, looked at the letters and touched the paper, examined the yad and noticed the Ner Tamid. (Thanks to Aurora and Aaron's parents, Ellen Griffith and David Nichols, for their help with the field trip. Who knew it would take 3 adults to corral 3 preschoolers in the sanctuary?)

Please join us November 18th to learn and practice blessings (berachot) and to make a Thanksgiving craft.



K-1 with Stan Strauss

Today, we had a very full morning of learning. It just wasn't the same without Micah and Jonathan, however. We really missed them. After Chai Family time, Patrick joined us for some singing. He brought Hannah Cantrell with him to talk about her violin and then she play beautifully for us. What a talent! We began learning the blessing before reading the Torah and sang one of our favorites: *Tree of Life*. We also sang *Good Morning, Boker Tov*. After music, we were invited to Busy Buddies to see a butterfly that Megan Kraus had brought. She made a connection to the story of Abraham when God told him to leave his home. After looking at the butterfly, Megan released it.

For Hebrew, we reviewed the first 10 letters of the Alef-bet: alef, bet, vet, gimmel, dalet, hay, vav, zayin, het, tet. We then recited the Shema. I want them all to be able to say the Shema without any assistance. Talia, you are almost there. ☺ We started learning the blessing over the candles. We are starting with the first half. This part we have heard several times in different prayers. We started with ***Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu Melech haolam***. Parents, please repeat these prayers with your child during the week.

Learning the Kiddish blessings was a natural lead into talking about Shabbat. We reviewed the story of creation. We talked about how at first everything was dark before God said, "Let there be light!" That is why Shabbat and all Jewish holidays start at sundown. On the seventh day, God rested and made Shabbat. We will continue talking about Shabbat and learning the prayers until our students know the prayers well enough to say the prayers on Shabbat at services on a special Friday night. ☺

Last week we started talking about what being considerate means and looks like. We shared some ways we had been considerate and lived by "The Golden Rule" during the past week. We continued this line of thought and talked about respect for others who are different. We concluded by realizing even though we may look different from each other in this world, each person deserves respect.

Consideration and respect lead us to our Torah story: Cain and Abel. I had the children try to explain what God meant when it was said, "When you do your best, it is good. When you do a sin, it can haunt you like a ghost." The children did quite well with this tremendous concept. They connected this to The Golden Rule by saying if you treat people nice, they will treat you nice, but if you are not very nice to someone, then they may not be nice to you. I have some really good thinkers!

Have a good week. Practice your prayers and live by The Golden Rule. Shalom.

2-3 with Julie Hirsch-Bohs

We were so excited to have two visitors today: Seth and Ethan, who both jumped right in and did a great job! Once again, we started off our day singing with Patrick. We learned a new song and then discussed which one was our favorite song thus far. Overwhelmingly, the kids chose "Tree of Life." We also had the pleasure of listening to Hannah play her violin. She was very patient as we asked and answered many questions.

We moved on to reading our third story from Let's Learn Bible: God Begins Again-Noah's Ark. Everyone was so imaginative in designing his/her own 2007 version of what Noah's Ark might be! Oscar's theme was CHOCOLATE... every ark should have this on heavy supply. Julia designed her ark customized for the very TALL animals; Camille had a very large plane to fit everyone (and I think she knows a good pilot for the task at hand!). We hung everyone's pictures on the wall, so make sure to check them out in our room.

We also reviewed the two previous Hebrew letters we learned, and moved on to a third: Tav. The kids needed to get their feet moving 🤸 so we created our own version of "Red Light, Green Light" using the three Hebrew letters we have worked on. Finally, I asked all the kids to write their favorite part of religious school thus far, and then to write ideas of what they would like to do in the future. I have not reviewed this yet, but they seemed to give deep thought to it.

Don't forget that Camille has some homework to do (from last week)! We missed Sarah, too, and hope she is feeling better very soon!

Finally, I have a request for parents: Please start saving empty toilet paper rolls and paper towel rolls. You can give them to me at any time over the next couple of months.

4-5 with David Wheaton and Desiree Atherton-Greene

The 4th/5th grade class was delighted to welcome back Marie, Marley and Nathan--we had everyone in class--it was great! We discussed the Torah portions the class had read at home: the stories of Noah and the Tower of Babel. There were so MANY things to talk about in these readings! Our conversation included: the idea that many people were considered righteous by G-d but were clearly not "perfect;" how Noah seemed indifferent to the idea that others around him would perish in the flood--unlike Abraham later, who cared enough to speak up for his (sadly undeserving) neighbors; how people seemed to live a lot longer back then; what was bad about idol worship . . . and much more. David told the class a midrash about the Tower of Babel: It is said that a brick became more valuable than a human life to the builders--the tower was so high it was truly a terrible loss if a brick fell to the ground (because of the effort it took to get bricks up to the level of new construction); but if a person fell, nobody cared. In that sense, the tower became like an idol, and that explains why G-d would want to stop the project. We all found that to be very interesting. The class learned about the Noahide laws, what a "covenant" means, and why the rainbow is the symbol for G-d's promise to not flood the world again. We each then came up with our own sets of laws that (if it were up to us!) we believe everyone should follow; we wrote them on "rainbows;" shared them with the class, and posted them in our room. Music with Patrick and Hebrew with Cantor made it a full day! Be sure to bring all books back to class next week--see you then!!

4-5 Hebrew with Cantor Silbersher

Hebrew is the ancient and modern universal language of the Jewish People. The Torah is always written in Hebrew in every part of the world and in every Jewish Denomination from Reform to Orthodox.

Hebrew also is found in almost all prayer books.

In the early grades prior to 4th and 5th, Hebrew Readiness is offered. That means, letters and sounds are introduced as a means of getting students familiarized with the Hebrew Alphabet (consonants and vowels).

In the 4th and 5th grade class, students are taught not only the names of the consonants, but also the vowels. They are taught how to decode syllables and to merge them into words. Key concepts words like Emet (truth), Tzedakah (justice), Rachmanut (mercy) etc. are introduced which lead up to greater ability--not only to read fluently, but to translate and have a sense of what the prayers or Torah Portion mean.

Students are introduced to looking up words in the dictionary and are given examples of readings from the Torah (that is, without the vowels) in preparation for becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Individual (one-on-one tutoring) will be available for those students who may need additional assistance.

Parents are encouraged to sit in on those sessions and to learn along with their son/daughter.

6-7 with Steve and Linda Sackin

Cantor Silbersher spent the first 30 minutes with the students speaking of the significance of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah. He explained how it served as the starting point for accepting responsibilities of adult life. Next we presented a Jewish perspective on our responsibility toward caring for the environment. We discussed possible interpretations of passages from Genesis as well as Talmudic and biblical sources. This is something we will review again. As our garden project was accepted by the Board, we began work in earnest. Our first task was to learn how easily we could get the asphalt up. Also, we needed to find out the quality of the earth beneath it. Students involved in demolition showed that we could take up the asphalt ourselves. The soil beneath was a dense clay. We will have to do extensive composting to improve the soil.

Rose and Madison made progress developing an overall design scheme. Four parents assisted us.

B'nai Mitzvah with Cantor Silbersher

The 6-7 grade class contains an introduction to B'nai Mitzvah preparation. Definitions of concepts like Ben/Bat Brit=Jewish by Chance (the accident of birth), and Bar/Bat Mitzvah=Jewish by Choice (the process of choosing one's identity after learning and living the fundamentals of one's Master Story).

All of the requirements for Bar/Bat Mitzvah are introduced and explained. These are: How to conduct Shabbat Service, Read from the Torah, Chant the Haftarah, Write a Personal Prayer, and a Sermon.

Weekly essays are designed to encourage students to "think for themselves" after having considered all sides of an issue, and then making their own decisions and coming to their own conclusions.

Students needing additional assistance for Hebrew Reading/Literacy are given one-on-one help.

Parents are invited to discuss weekly "Essay Themes" at home, and to "sit in" (one or more times) on the class which meets in the Youth Lounge.

Please make certain that if you are planning for a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, you first have a 'Family Meeting' with the Cantor.

Kollel Ami with Barry Speert

Individuals attending Rabbinic Views on the News found this a good week to re-examine their **biases** given the fact that **bayis** is the Hebrew word for home (askenazic pronunciation) such as the familial one that Abraham is told by G-d to leave at the beginning of this week's Torah portion. Judaism is full of "bayises" from bayis hamikdash (the holy temple) to bayis medresh (house of learning) and bayis kneset (house of assembly). The word **bias** which has been associated with having a particular point of view can also be applied to the differences in the philosophies of bayis Hillel and bayis Shamai, two leading rabbis of the Talmudic era.

Participants agreed that it is important to reflect on the cumulative effect certain biases have on our lives and the lives of our families. Are we heeding the best messages that Judaism and academia have to offer, or are we sitting back and allowing other factors to overly influence us as might have happened to Abraham if he had not been instructed by G-d to depart from the contemporary culture of his day that worshiped idols and strange gods? Just as in Abraham's life, shalom bayis is something not to be underestimated. Without good values it is impossible to be at peace in one's bayis or biases.

Biases were also examined as to how they relate to the American Jewish community's involvement in politics and how it is that a Democratic presidential candidate (who currently chairs the US senate foreign relations committee) could make an anti-semitic remark on national television recently and not have any Jewish organization request an apology or a retraction. Next week the group will focus on Abraham's acts of kindness as a model for interpersonal relations in today's synagogues and in contemporary society.

Dates to Remember

Sunday, October 28.....8+Madrichim Book Study with Megan Kraus at 10:00am

Friday, November 2..... 6:00 Family Shabbat, 6:30 Potluck Dinner

Sunday, November 4.....8+Students meet at 9:30 with John Shuchart for a field trip to The Liberty Memorial and Museum. Bring \$8. They will be back by 12:30.

Saturday, November 24.....COPP