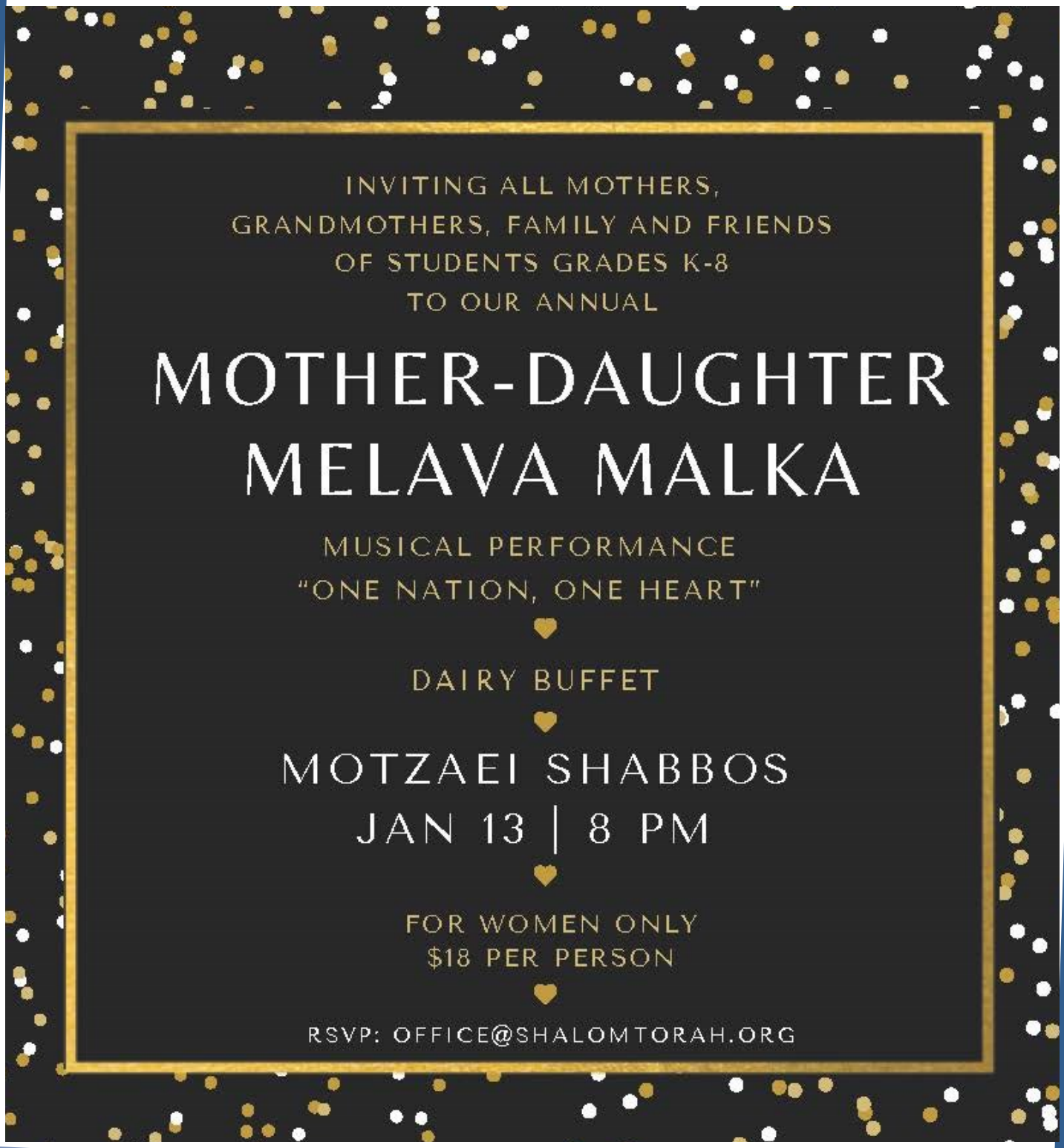
December 22, 2023
10th of Teves, 5784

Shalom Torah Academy
OF CENTRAL NEW JERSEY

Candle lighting: **4:17 pm** (Morganville)
Havdalah at **5:25 pm**

Ma Chadash?

A WEEKLY NEWSLETTER FOR SHALOM TORAH ACADEMY OF CENTRAL NEW JERSEY



Parsha Lesson

Rabbi Eli Meir Kramer

Vayigash- *Stop disrespecting me*

This Friday is a fast day, the 10th day of Teves. As such, I will be applying the Parsha lesson in a way which is geared towards self-reflection and thinking about one's own growth- as is appropriate for a fast day.

Background

At the beginning of this week's Parsha, the story picks up in the middle of the final scene in the drama of the brothers of Yosef going to Egypt to procure provisions for their family and having to grapple with the mysterious and brilliant ruler of Egypt (Yosef). At first Yosef accused the brothers of being spies. Then, as proof of their not being spies, Yosef kept Shimon as a hostage in order that the brothers would prove their innocence by bringing their 11th brother, Binyamin, down to Egypt for Yosef to meet him.

Yakov refused. Reuven, and then Yehuda, tried to convince Yakov that they absolutely needed to bring Binyamin with them and only upon receiving a guarantee from Yehuda, and their food being very close to running out, did Yakov agree for Binyamin to leave.

When the brothers returned to Egypt, at first it seemed that everything was going well- this ruler seemed to have been favorably inclined to the brothers upon meeting Binyamin. Their brother Shimon was reunited with them, they dined with the ruler in his private palace and finally they were headed back to Eretz Yisroel, all together, with all of the necessary provisions. And then, on the road, a platoon of Egyptian soldiers caught up with them, led by the head of household of this mysterious ruler who accused the brothers of stealing the ruler's magical cup. After professing their innocence, they opened up their sacks of provisions and found that Binyamin had been framed with stealing Yosef's cup.

At this point the brothers were quite upset. This whole charade had felt like a setup and a contrived plot from the very beginning and now this was the final straw. The plot seemed to all come together- this was all a big ruse and farce in order for Binyamin to be forced out of his father's home and to then be pressed into slavery in Egypt. This was too much for the brothers to bear and the leader of the brothers, Yehuda, stepped forward to face-off against Yosef. And this is where our parsha picks up.

Yehuda approaches Yosef and tells him to not become angry with him, for he, Yosef, is like Pharoah. What do these cryptic words mean? The Seforno explains that Yehuda was telling Yosef- even though I am about to accuse you of having been responsible for the course of events, that this whole episode is your fault, nonetheless you should not become angry with me. Why? Because the reason why I am accusing you of being responsible for this sequence of events is not because I don't respect you. To the contrary- I respect you greatly, just as I respect Pharoah himself.

Question

Why would Yosef think that Yehuda is accusing him of being responsible because he does not respect him? And why would Yosef, having been accorded respect by Yehuda, now not become angry!?

Yehuda's accusations would seem to make Yosef angry because Yehuda was accusing Yosef of doing something wrong! Not because he doesn't respect him. The only thing which is clear, and is not being addressed or mitigated by Yehuda at all, is the fact that Yehuda is accusing Yosef of doing something wrong which Yehuda does nothing to soften or explain otherwise.

Yehuda is essentially saying to Yosef- 'with all due respect, you have caused this whole unfortunate situation and this is all your fault!' How does assuring Yosef of the tremendous respect that Yehuda has for him make it that Yosef will now not get angry at him? Yosef is still being accused of doing something wrong! That should appear to make Yosef angry by itself- even if it is accompanied by the highest level of respect and honor.

Answer

The Seforno is teaching us, by way of learning from Yehuda's insight into human dynamics, that THE reason why someone gets upset at being accused of having done something wrong is because the person feels disrespected. There is no other inherent reason for arousal to anger at the prospect of having done something wrong.

A reasonable, rational person realizes that they make mistakes, that they do things wrong and that they can be responsible for unfortunate events and happenstances. In fact, this is the purpose of our having been placed in this world- to grapple with the challenges here and to become better. Such a mission clearly indicates that mistakes and 'doing things wrong' will be 'par for the course.' Man is imperfect and quite fallible. So why is it that people become so angry and indignant at being accused of doing things wrong? Because they feel disrespected and insulted by the thought of them having done something wrong.

Lesson

Why is it so important to a person to be properly respected by those around them? Why do people become so angry and indignant and defensive when accused of, or even insinuated, to having done something wrong- at being disrespected?

Rabbeinu Yonah (at the beginning of sefer Vayikra) explains that a person's soul, their neshama, is very lofty and 'great', and comes from a 'high' place in Heaven. The neshama senses the lowliness of the state that they are in in this physical world and this lowliness provokes tremendous pain for the soul. A way to assuage this pain is to 'propagandize' to one's self by saying everything is fine, I am good. Even though I am sensing tremendous lowliness and 'crudeness', the person tries to deny reality and pretend as if everything is fine and 'proves' it to themselves by their being the object of great honor and prestige from those around them. Thus, the person needs this speech of their own greatness and goodness to be reinforced and 'validated' by those around them.

When someone then accuses them of having done something wrong- this resonates with their soul deep inside, and their fragile honor, which is a protective armor and a balm for the deep and abiding pain that they feel, is now shattered and they feel disrespected, i.e.- low and unworthy. This lowliness and unworthiness is what they sense from their soul being in a low place.

So what is the solution? What is the alternative? If a person recognizes that this world is a 'tough' place in which the soul was placed to toil, to work and develop one's self; if a person is on the track of self-development and improvement- then a person will find happiness and satisfaction from the challenges and lowliness of this world. The person will be growing and developing and becoming better. If someone is able to accept and recognize that mistakes and imperfection are not an indictment of one's unworthiness but rather part of the mission at hand- then the person will accept direction and rebuke properly, as assistance in perfecting one's self and becoming a better person.

The first step is to act in this way. To respond to accusations of mistakes by being quiet and reflective of what the other person is saying. Perhaps they are right, and perhaps this should be explored more to see where one can improve.

As Chazal say- there is no pleasure like the pleasures of the world to come. But all of the pleasures of the world to come do not equal the satisfaction and enjoyment of a person who while on this world is engaged in growing and improving themselves. If a person recognizes and makes proper use of this world as a place for growing and improving- then the lowliness and crudeness of this world will be a source of tremendous pleasure and enjoyment for the soul as it senses satisfaction at having been placed into such a place and through its hard work and toil- transformed it into being a place of uplifted spirituality and goodness.

A Highlight from our Preschool Department

Morah Shuly Amsel and the Torah Tots Class

It's Chanukah in Torah Tots and boy did we have fun! We spent the week playing dreidel, building menorahs, hopping around like latkas and let's not forget our exciting Chanukah extravaganza. Our Mommies and Tatti came to our classroom on Wednesday for a very special party. We made dreidel snow globes, sang songs, and decorated donuts with frosting, sprinkles, and mini colored chocolate chips, which we ate along with latkas and applesauce. Everyone had such a good time, we can't wait to see what's in store!






A Highlight from our General Studies Department

Miss Littman and the 4th Grade Class

Congratulations to the newly minted published authors of Fourth Grade!
We recently celebrated our finished biographies with a publishing picnic. We enjoyed decorating colorful hats at the party. Each student had a chance to present their own beautiful work, and to give a summary of the life of their subject. We are all walking away not only with improved writing skills, but with many life lessons of inspiring people from our history. We are looking forward to our next writing unit!

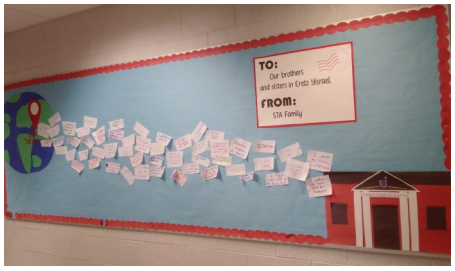




A Highlight from our Judaic Department

Morah Lapan and the 7/8 Grade Class

In the 7th and 8th grade girls' class, because of the current situation in Eretz Yisrael, we have all been thinking of ways that we can help our brothers and sisters there from so far away. We learned about how we can focus on all the good we *already* do every single day - even the small things - and how that can be such a tremendous merit for all of the Jewish people who are suffering and in danger. We made a bulletin board in which the girls wrote notes of different positive actions that they did and we "sent" them over the ocean, across the globe to Eretz Yisrael! May they be a merit for all of the Jewish people!



A Highlight from our Preschool Department

Morah Baila Liberman and the Pre-K Class





It is so exciting to learn the alphabet in Pre-K! We are already up to the letter H. Every Monday we introduce the letter of the week. The children pick out different objects from the ABC surprise box beginning with the letter of the week. We discuss different things that start with the letter we are learning and the children give great examples of objects beginning with the letter. Everyone does a great job writing the letters in the air, and tracing them in their handwriting books. We also form all the letters with play dough and magnets on the board. We always do many exciting activities beginning with the letter of the week. For the letter C everyone made their very own Corduroys and designed their own pockets. For the letter E we made a very exciting egg carton review game. For the letter G we had a gold coin hunt race and found all the gold coins hidden in the sand and read the letters on them. Every week also includes a related science lesson. We experimented to find out which objects sink and float. We learned about color blending and tried it out with colored clay. We learned how grape juice is made and had a chance to squeeze our own grape juice! Learning in Pre-K is fun!

Monday, December 25	Report Cards Available
Mon.-Mon., Dec. 25 - Jan.1	Mid-Winter Vacation - **No Sessions**
Tuesday, January 2	Classes Resume
Saturday Night, January 13	Mother - Daughter Melava Malka Grades K - 8
Monday, January 15	Martin Luther King Day - PD Day for Staff - **No Sessions for Students**
Saturday Night, January 20	Father - Son Melava Malka Grades K - 8
Tuesday, January 23	Picture Make Up Day

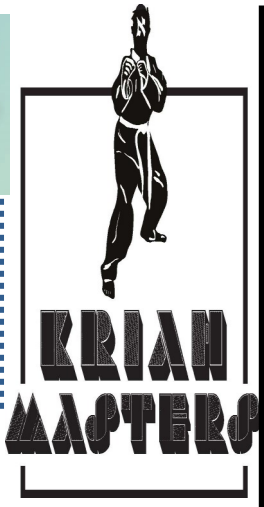


Passed Level 1

Ariella Nektalov
Ginny B. Persky
Ruby Rozenberg
Menachem Dembitzer
Yosef Shalom Halton

Passed Level 2

Noah Weissman



Mazel Tov!

Kriah Masters Chanukah Bonus Round!

The following students passed the bonus round for Haneiros Halalu:

Yehuda Berger
Moshe Dovid Stamler
Yaakov Stamler
Elior Levi
Elnatan Itzhaki
Daniel Khaimov
Ari Klugman
Rosie Rosenfeld
Kaila Tiner
Aaron Baruchov

The following students passed the bonus round for Biymei Matisyahu:

Daniel Khaimov
Ari Klugman
Yaakov Stamler
Elior Levi
Moshe Dovid Stamler

Hanairos Hallalu:

Adi Klugman
Chaim Maksimov
Netanel Ilizirov
Mimi Rosenfeld
Melanie Maksimov

Maoz Tzur:

Ari Klugman
Daniel Khaimov
Mimi Rosenfeld

Biymai Matisyahu:

Mimi Rosenfeld



Sharona Alayev - December 20
Philip Kravchenko - December 23
Zoey Kravchenko - December 24
David Ades - December 26
Rebecca Feit - December 26
Michael Baruchov - December 31
Levi Pewzner - January 1
Avital Benseev - January 3
Chana Galperin - January 3
Rivka Galperin - January 3
Raphael Fried - January 4
Kaila Timer - January 4



Mazel Tov to Mr. and Mrs. Rifkin and on the birth of grandson.

January School Lunch Menu

Monday, 1/1	Tuesday, 1/2	Wednesday, 1/3	Thursday, 1/4	Friday, 1/5
Mid Winter Vacation No School	**Welcome Back** Mac & Cheese Sliced Vegetables	Scrambled Eggs, Garlic Knots, Vegetables Soup, Israeli Salad	Grilled Cheese Sandwich, French Fries, Sliced Vegetables	1 Pizza Slice
Monday, 1/8	**Tuesday, 1/9**	**Wednesday, 1/10**	**Thursday, 1/11**	**Friday, 1/12**
Baked Ziti, Sliced Vegetables	Bagel (choice of Egg Salad, Tune or Cream Cheese), Veg. Soup, Israeli Salad	Fish Sticks with Rice, Vegetables	Falafel Snadwich, Israeli Salad, Veg. Soup	1 Pizza Slice
Monday, 1/15	**Tuesday, 1/16**	**Wednesday, 1/17**	**Thursday, 1/18**	**Friday, 1/19**
Martin Luther King Day In - Service Day for Staff Only	Rotini in Alfredo Sauce, Vegetables	Cheese Quesadilla, French Fries, Sliced Veg.	**Potato Knish, Boiled Egg, Split Pea Soup, Israeli Salad**	1 Pizza Slice