November 10, 2023
26th of Cheshvan, 5784

Shalom Torah Academy
OF CENTRAL NEW JERSEY

Candle lighting: **4:27 pm** (Morganville)
Havdalah at **5:34 pm**

Ma Chadash?

A WEEKLY NEWSLETTER FOR SHALOM TORAH ACADEMY OF CENTRAL NEW JERSEY

A Message from Our Principal

Dear Shalom Families,

What a packed week we had! On Tuesday while our students enjoyed a day off, our staff was quite busy here in school, maximizing every minute of our Professional Development Day.
With time for collaborative meetings, workshops from Sunshine Advantage and Motion Spot, and training in new digital programs for both Judaic and General Studies, our teachers relished the opportunity to gain new skills.





On Wednesday, our schoolwide Kriah contest got off to an amazing start! Our students gathered for a short assembly, where our Kriah heads, Melanie Maksumov and Rebecca Estupinan, put on a hilarious skit that showed us all the value of hard work and perseverance! That is the key to success in our Kriah program, a major initiative we are continuing this year to boost our students' Hebrew reading skills and ensure proficiency. Reading Hebrew fluently is the gateway to all Torah learning and davening, and the importance of reading accurately and fluently cannot be overstated. With that in mind, a multi-faceted program was launched this week at a fun assembly.

Students are encouraged to work their way through all the belt levels, with points and prizes for each level. The program has so many fun components and incentives that it is hard not to get swept up in the excitement. **At Shalom our goal is for each student to become a black belt reader!** You can help your child by encouraging them to practice for the next level regularly, and not only complete their kriah homework, but read extra every day to gain fluency.

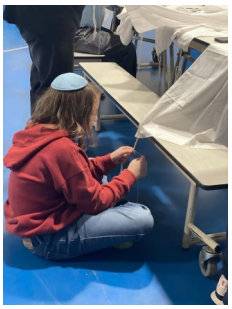
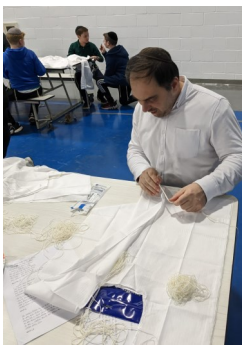






Father and sons joined together this Thursday evening for a schoolwide effort to support Israel. Wearing tzitzis is an important mitzva and serves as a reminder of all 613 mitzvos and is a tangible connection to Hashem. Many soldiers in the IDF are eager for their own pair of tzitzis, and so our school got together to help out. Creating the tzitzis by hand was quite a project, and the uplifted mood was enhanced by a beautiful kumzitz. Thank you to all who joined!



Wishing you all a wonderful Shabbos,
Mrs. Hoberman

Parsha Lesson By *Rabbi Eli Meir Kramer*

Chayei Sarah- *Grappling with Sadness*

For this year's Parsha Lesson I will be applying the lesson that can be derived from the Dvar Torah to the world as we know it today.

Background

At the beginning of this week's Parsha, the Torah tells us that Sarah, Avraham's wife, one of the matriarchs of the Jewish people, passed away. Avraham mourned greatly over Sarah's passing. The love and attachment that Avraham and Sarah had for one another was so great that Hashem's shechina (*presence) hovered over their tent. Avraham was understandably very saddened to lose his dear wife.*

It says in the Torah that Avraham 'got up' from mourning Sarah. The Midrash explains that Avraham prematurely ended his mourning period. The Midrash explains that Avraham did this because he felt that while his mourning for his wife was certainly a mitzvah, and especially so being that Sarah was such a righteous woman, nevertheless Avraham felt himself beginning to become too sad. At that point, Avraham felt that he needed to end his mourning.

Question

How could this be!? Mourning a righteous person is a very important mitzvah. Mourning one's close relative is also an important mitzvah. If so, shouldn't Avraham continue to mourn Sarah, as he felt was appropriate before sensing his extreme sadness, and be confident that no harm will come to him? As someone who is doing the right thing should be confident!?

Answer

Undoubtedly, the Torah prescribed mourning period for the deceased, Avraham fulfilled completely. However, Avraham felt that in this situation it was appropriate to mourn even more- due to his close relationship with Sarah and her greatness as one of the most righteous people ever. Avraham was unquestionably doing a Mitzvah by mourning the holy Sarah even more, however he began to sense an excessive amount of sadness that was now creeping in. When it comes to extra, 'voluntary' mitzvos, one must take into account the effects of this 'extra credit' piety and determine whether or not one should proceed or desist.

Why is this so? One reason is that even if someone were to be doing the 'right' thing, if this will lead them to do more things 'wrongly' in the future- and the 'right' thing that they're doing now is not the letter of the law but is extra credit, that would not be worth it in the long run and it is therefore improper to do.

The Rambam in his introduction to Pirkei Avos discusses at length what is known as the "golden medium," or the "middle way." The Rambam explains that all of the various "good" attributes and "bad" attributes, in truth, need to be practiced in moderation. There is no such thing as something which is unlimitedly good or unquestionably bad, rather, all character traits need to be exercised with balance and in the right dosage. If a person is too haughty, he won't fulfill his responsibilities properly or respect others. On the other hand, if a person practices excessive humility he can come to degrade themselves and not accomplish what they should. A person needs to take responsibility for their moods and temperament. A person needs to be constantly checking themselves to ensure they are in a balanced frame of mind, neither becoming overly upset or sad, nor overly excited and lightheaded.

Why is this so? Being that a person's mood and temperament, and a person's middos or character traits, have an outsized effect on the person's behavior, it is therefore extremely important for a person to make sure that these are in line. A person may be off in only one area of a character defect, a person may only have a little problem with their temperment, but these can have outsized ramifications on their behavior and ability to function overall. If a person is more 'balanced' they will be able to more consistently make proper decisions. By following the "golden medium" a person will come out ahead in the long term.

Although Avraham was no longer obligated by Torah law to mourn any longer, Avraham was unquestionably doing a Mitzvah and a very good thing by mourning his righteous wife Sarah. Avraham, however, sensed that an excessive amount of sadness was now creeping in. Therefore, to remain on the "middle road" and protect himself, Avraham felt it necessary to abort the mission and move on.

Lesson for our world

What an eye-opening lesson this is for us, especially in today's day and age!

For starters, many recent great baalei Mussar (*master of ethical and character development) have observed that falling into 'atzvus' or sadness is of the most profound challenges of this generation. When people fall into sadness they cannot behave properly and at an extreme, they cannot function. Many people feel that either it's not their fault, it's somewhat comforting to feel sad for yourself, it's not such a big deal, etc. Avraham aborting his mourning for his holy wife Sarah, even though he was such a great person and not someone who ever shied away from a challenge, he shows us that sadness is a big problem. Because of his greatness, Avraham was able to take responsibility for himself and realize how important his 'mood' and 'frame of mind' are.*

And how does one deal with such a problem? Sometimes the only way is to 'get up' and stop one's 'mourning.'

More specifically, in light of the recent tragedies that have befallen our people, it is encouraging and heartening to see those that are able to, lifting up the spirits of those around them. From the singers who are circulating throughout the land of Israel to lift the spirits of those suffering from the tragedy; the chessed (*acts of loving kindness) organizations which are staging various shows, entertainment events, etc. for people suffering from the recent tragedies; these people are doing a great service for our people at this time. This is not a small matter and continuing to be on 'war footing' is not the answer for people that are getting down and sad about the current events.*

Happiness, being uplifted, being positive, having an expansive spirit- these are all vitally important and necessary in our service of Hashem. We have a responsibility to ourselves and those around us to lift ourselves up and be happy. 'For if we are not for ourselves, who will be for us?'

A Highlight from our STEM Department

Morah Rebecca Ertel

Excitement is in the air as our STEM classes are in full swing for the Preschoolers and 1st and 2nd graders. We have been engaging in hands-on exploration and investigation, as well as practicing critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Our youngest students in Torah Tots have explored fall-themed Playdough sensory trays, built beds for counting bears and were mesmerized by our Dancing Raisin experiment. Students in the Nursery and Pre-K classes also enjoyed the Dancing Raisins and have been learning that we shouldn't give up when we make mistakes and that sometimes mistakes can turn into things that are beautiful. The Kindergartners have participated in STEM building challenges, such as a 10 Apples Up on Top apple-stacking challenge with mini apples and Playdough, as well a cup-stacking challenge that involved moving the cups without directly touching them, but instead moving them with popsicle sticks. The 1st and 2nd graders practiced hypothesizing, experimenting and observing changes that occurred when raisins were placed in cups of water and Sprite, and then recorded their observations on a graphic organizer.









A Highlight from our Judaic Department

Rabbi Yakov Friedman and the 5/6 Grade Boy's Class

It was a very intense week at the STVL - Shalom Torah Vocabulary League. It was the matchup we were all waiting for with the two undefeated teams facing off. It ended up not even being close with a dominating performance from Benny Faber, Mendel Crayk and Aaron Baruchov with a perfect score of 120! In Mishnayos, we are already most of the way through memorizing Perek Aleph, and we're all looking forward to preparing our videos for Mishna in the not so distant future!

Monday, November 13	Interim Reports Sent Home
Wednesday, November 22	Preschool Thanksgiving Parade & Street Fair
Thurs.– Fri., November 23,24	Thanksgiving Vacation - **No Sessions**
Wednesday, November 29	Parent Teacher Conferences - **Early Dismissal at 2:45p.m.**
Fri. - Mon., December 8-11	Chanukah Vacation - **No Sessions**
Wednesday, December 13	Chanukah Mommy and Me: Early Childhood Classes

Attendance Policy:

Reporting Student Absences: *If your child will be absent from school, please email attendance by 10:00 am. Include the reason for the absence.*

Dismissal Changes: *To make a change for dismissal, emails must be sent to attendance before 3:00 pm (12:00 pm on Fridays)*

attendance@shalomtorah.org



Simon Abragamov - November 11

Gabriel Muller - November 13

Solomon Lustgarten - November 17

Birthday Parties/Class Celebrations

Small, in-class birthday parties are permitted for students UP TO AND INCLUDING GRADE TWO provided that the classroom teacher is consulted at least *five days* in advance. Any food item brought into the school for a party must be certified as kosher by the symbols below. These items must be in their original sealed package. Please do not send in any items marked "Dairy". Siblings from other classes are not permitted to join the party as it is disruptive and takes away from the sibling's learning.

Invitations to birthday parties held outside of the school must be sent through regular mail and may not be distributed in Shalom Torah Academy. Please take into consideration the Kashruth and Shabbat convictions of classmates when planning your party as it is very painful for a child to have to be left out. (**Leaving out one or a few individual children from the invitation list is a form of bullying**.) Please keep parties small or include all of your child's classmates. It is strongly suggested that parties not be held on the Sabbath or Jewish holidays.

All foods brought into the school must be PEANUT, TREE-NUT AND SESAME FREE. The only acceptable Kosher symbols are:

November School Lunch Menu

Monday, 11/13	Tuesday, 11/14	Wednesday, 11/15	Thursday, 11/16	Friday, 11/17
Penne ala Vodka (contains no alcohol), Sliced Vegetables	Sicilian Pizza Sliced Vegetables	Falafel Sandwich, Israeli Salad, Veg. Soup	Bagel (choice of Egg Salad, Tuna or Cream Cheese), Veg. Soup, Israeli Salad	1 Pizza Slice
Monday, 11/20	**Tuesday, 11/21**	**Wednesday, 11/22**	**Thursday, 11/23**	**Friday, 11/24**
Mac & Cheese Sliced Veg.	Grilled Cheese Sandwich, French Fries, Sliced Veg.	**Thanksgiving Feast** 	**Thanksgiving No School**	**Thanksgiving No School**
Monday, 11/27	**Tuesday, 11/28**	**Wednesday, 11/29**	**Thursday, 11/30**	**Friday, 12/1**
Rotini in Alfredo Sauce, Vegetables	Sicilian Pizza Sliced Vegetables	Fish Sticks with Rice, Vegetables	Potato Knish, Boiled Egg, Split Pea Soup, Israel Salad	1 Pizza Slice