September 15, 2023
29 of Elul, 5783

Shalom Torah Academy
OF CENTRAL NEW JERSEY

Candle lighting: **6:48 pm** (Morganville)
Havdalah at **8:15 pm**

# Ma Chadash?

A WEEKLY NEWSLETTER FOR SHALOM TORAH ACADEMY OF CENTRAL NEW JERSEY






## A Message from Our Principal

Dear Shalom Families,

I want to warmly welcome you all back to school! We are off to a great start to what promises to be an exceptional school year. We are grateful for the opportunity to partner with you in the education and growth of your children, and it is our unwavering commitment to ensure that every child has a happy and productive school experience.

A special "Bruchim Habaim" to the many new students that joined our Shalom family this year!

The hallways are filled with the joyous sounds of learning, and shining faces are smiling in every classroom. I am looking forward to seeing you all next week at our "Back to School" Night, so that we can share some of the new and exciting initiatives with you.

Wishing all of you my warmest wishes for a Shana Tova! May it be a year of joy, good health, and blessing for every-one.

K'siva Vachasima Tova– May we be inscribed and sealed with a good year,

Mrs. Hoberman












## Parsha Lesson

# Rosh Hashana Message- *Return Again*

*Rabbi Eli Meir Kramer*

### Background

Rosh Hashana. We are here again. At the mere mention of this awesome holiday, many are hit by a powerful wave of nostalgia. The synagogue, the Chazzan (*Cantor), dipping the apple in the honey, honey cake, the familiar songs and tunes, the blowing of the shofar, the familiar machzorim (prayer books- for Rosh Hashana) and on and on.*

And inevitably, for those that have gone through the intense emotion of the day, for those that have really pushed themselves to do 'teshuva' (repentance), committing themselves to becoming new people for the new year, there are other familiar feelings that also come along: fatigue and failure. A feeling of having to get themselves started up again for the process of trying to improve and become better. A process which they may have gone through a number of times before, and each and every time they fell short of the lofty goals and expectations that they had set out for themselves.

For such people, Rosh Hashana is bittersweet (*pun intended). Rosh Hashana is a reminder of times where they felt so close to Hashem, when they felt really really 'good', but were then hit by the stark and difficult reality of having to leave the cocoon of the High Holy Days and face regular life. A regular life that had the same struggles and challenges as before, for which their spiritually 'high' self did not prepare them for, and which beat them down. Again. In short, Rosh Hashana, for many, is the beginning of the process of feeling like an abject failure*.

### Question

What can be said to such a person who has experienced this? They tried, they did their best, and they were crushed by the magnitude of the task and they can't try again. Can we blame them? What are they to do?

### Answer

Of the most classic pesukim on teshuva, which Rabbeinu Yonah quotes in the first paragraph of his magnum opus, Shaarei Teshuva, from Yermiyah (3:22), says ' שׁוּבוּ בָנִים שׁוֹבָבִים אֶרְפֶּה מְשׁוּבֹתֵיכֶם,' ' return, my sons who are rebellious, I will heal you from your rebelliousness.'

If you analyze these terms for 'rebellious' you see something very interesting. They are called 'shovavim' which literally means those who are 'returners.'

What does this mean- 'return my sons who are shovavim, who are returners'? Yirmiyahu is addressing people who have done teshuva previously, in fact they have done teshuva so many times previously that they are called 'shovavim'! People who return! And what is Yirmiyahu telling them, in his prophesy from Hashem? You, returners, who have constantly done teshuva, but who continue to slide back into your old ways- do teshuva again! Don't give up!

Why? Why should I not give up? The path seems hopeless!

The answer is- '' ,אֶרְפֶּה מְשׁוּבֹתֵיכֶם' I will heal your rebelliousness, I will heal your *backsliding.' I will heal the source, the pain, the emptiness, the sorrow, for which you seek a balm and which is why you keep backsliding and returning to your aveiros.*

In this passuk, Yirmiyahu is sharing with us an amazing insight- keep returning! Keep doing teshuva! Even though it didn't work last time and even though it may not have worked the previous 100 times! Do teshuva again! And if you do, if you gather your strength for yet another time, if you gird yourself for another maximum effort at returning to Hashem with all your might- then Hashem will heal the underlying issues and problems that keep dogging you, keep pulling you back down to your ways of aveirah. Don't give up! Keep plugging away!

How does this work? Is it magic?

I think that this is to be understood on 2 levels- one I will call 'seguli' (*good luck charm) and the other I will call 'sichli' (logical):*

1. **Seguli-** it is magic. Hashem can do emotional surgery, psychological surgery, on a person so that whatever it is that they were missing, whatever was driving them towards doing aveiros (sin) will no longer afflict them. Hashem guarantees, Yirmiyahu tells us, that if you gather your strength again, when you are feeling like giving up, like you can't do this anymore, and you go through the entire teshuva process with all of your effort, Hashem says- I will fix you in a way that you don't keep backsliding into your aveiros. I will 'sprinkle you with pure, holy waters' which will bring back to life the dead spirit you feel inside.

2. **Sichli-** it is logical. When someone does teshuva again and again and again and keeps falling back into the same aveiros, they think nothing has changed. They think that they are just as messed up and just as 'bad' as they were before, if not worse. But nothing could be further from the truth. The yetzer hara (*Satan, evil inclination) wants you to think you are doing nothing, in order that he can lull you into despair and giving up hope. But in truth, when you do teshuva and then fall back into the same actions, you are a completely different person who is falling back into those same actions.*

   Inside, under the hood, the impressions and marks on your soul which were etched by the teshuva you had done, are not gone. Those impressions are still there. Perhaps they are not significant enough to completely change the way you behave, yet. But with time and with repeatedly doing teshuvah, they will. You will change, completely, from where you were to become a whole new person.

Famously, Rebbi Akiva, at the age of 40 years old, was an ignoramus. He had attended yeshiva when he was younger, but he found his heart to be closed, dense and unaffected by Torah. He had given up on ever becoming a Torah scholar. But then, one day, he was walking along the river and saw an amazing sight- he saw a great big rock that had had a hole bored straight through it!

What was clear, upon further investigation, was that this rock had been bored through by a single, steady, drip of water which was going straight through the now clear hole in the rock. Rebbi Akiva was astounded by what he saw and took to heart the powerful lesson that consistent, steady, repeated effort, will make an impact! With that inspiration, Rebbi Akiva set his efforts on learning Torah again and in short order became one of the greatest Torah scholars, in history.

Does the drip of water give up hope!? Does the drip of water cease pounding against the rock because it isn't satisfied with its progress and feels dejected at seemingly accomplishing nothing?

As you do teshuva again, and again and again, with as much energy and emotion as you can muster, you will change. You will become new. You will become healed from your scars and wounds and anxieties and fears and insecurities, and low self-esteem and whatever else it is that is wearing you down- and you will become a good person who does the will of Hashem b'lev Shaleim (with a complete heart). You will transform into someone who is so proud of their doggedness and accomplishments, that you stuck to the program of life and pulled yourself out of the rut of the pit of whatever it was you were grappling with, and you emerged to be victorious. This confidence, this newfound source of self-esteem and belief in yourself will power you to ever greater heights.

This is just one of the reasons why growth and accomplishment is not nearly as far as it seems. Growth is not linear, it is compounded. Just like when someone takes a step up a mountain their perspective changes dramatically and suddenly, so too, the possibilities in life change dramatically as one makes a concrete step or two in the direction of growth and becoming a better person. As they accomplish and are out of being stuck, and as their happiness, excitement and confidence grows, they will pick up speed and quickly come to a place which seemed too infinitely far from where they just were.

Wishing everyone a 'ksiva v'chasima tova', a sweet and happy year.

## A Highlight from our Judaic Studies Department

Morah Chaya Leiter and 5/6 Grade Girls

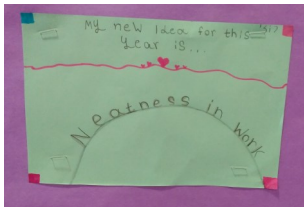
With the holidays of Tishrei upon us, the 5/6 grade girls are inculcating the valuable lessons and exercises of introspection and self-improvement. We began with discussing our strengths. We are each unique and talented at different things. **Are we everything we can be?** We studied this question with Rabbi Yisroel Salanter, who taught, "On the day of judgment, I will not be afraid of the questions why I was not like Moshe Rabbainu. The question I have to keep in mind is why I was not everything that Yisroel Salanter could have been..."

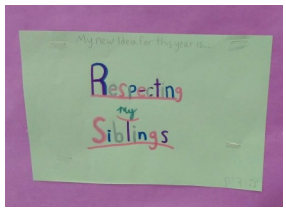
We listed our "good middos" - character traits, and also reflected on which areas we need to work on. The first step to self-improvement is identifying the area that needs growth. This was the springboard to our bulletin board "New Year....Our New Ideas" where we each wrote about which character trait we want to work on improving this year. Some of our ideas include: neatness, becoming more organized, responsibility, kindness towards others etc...

Additionally, we gained a deeper understanding about why the days of Elul are so special and how we can utilize them to their maximum. We learned a song with the steps of Teshuva (repentance) to help us remember how to do complete Teshuva.

We hope and pray that this year will be a successful year for us as we strive for these goals!







## A Highlight from our General Studies Department

Ms. Shulamis Shereshevsky and the 6th Grade

Our Sixth Graders are off to a great start as they sharpen their critical thinking skills. In reading class, we challenged ourselves with riddle poetry by Emily Dickinson. While trying to unravel the clues, we developed the skills of asking questions to monitor comprehension and changing our inferences, as we read. It was so wonderful to watch the students come up with possible ideas and explain their answers while they debated it. Finally we got it! We now feel confident to tackle high-level text because we saw how asking questions, rereading, guessing possible inferences, and discussing it with classmates helped us comprehend puzzling poems and literature. In fact, just the next day we approached nonfiction articles about September 11th and underwater exploration of a shipwreck with the same technique, this time, independently. Now, if you are curious about the answer to this mysterious poem.... (Was it about a deer? A motor vehicle? A train? A strange creature? Something else?...) ask a Sixth Grader to show you how to use their reading tools to figure it out-without hints!
Looking forward to an amazing year!











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|---|---|
| Friday, September 15 | Rosh Hashana - **No Sessions** |
| Wednesday, September 20 | Back to School Night at 7:00 p.m. - **2:45p.m. Dismissal** |
| Monday, September 25 | Erev Yom Kippur/Yom Kippur - **No Sessions** |
| Fri. - Fri, Sept.29 - Oct. 5 | Succos - **No Sessions** |
| Monday, October 9 | Classes resume - **Delayed Opening at 10:30 am** |
| Fri.– Sat., October 13—14 | Parent/Student Shabbaton |




Sophia Cohen - September 15

Zechariah Stamler - September 16

Yaakov Stamler - September 20

## 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***

# September School Lunch Menu

| Monday, 9/18 | Tuesday, 9/19 | Wednesday, 9/20 | Thursday, 9/21 | Friday, 9/22 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Penne ale Vodka (contains no alcohol) & Garden Salad | Sicilian Pizza and Sliced Veg. | Scrambled Eggs, Sweet Potato Soup, Garlic Knots, Israeli Salad | Fish Sticks with Rice, Vegetables | 1 Pizza Slice |
| **Monday, 9/25** | **Tuesday, 9/26** | **Wednesday, 9/27** | **Thursday, 9/28** | **Friday, 9/29** |
| **Yom Kippur No Sessions** | Rotini in Alfredo Sauce, Split Pea Soup & Veg. | French Toast & Scrambled Eggs, Sliced Veg. | Sicilian Pizza and Sliced Veg. | Erev Succos |