February 2, 2024
23rd of Sh'vat, 5784

Shalom Torah Academy
OF CENTRAL NEW JERSEY

Candle lighting: **4:59 pm** (Morganville)
Havdalah at **6:08 pm**

MA CHADASH?

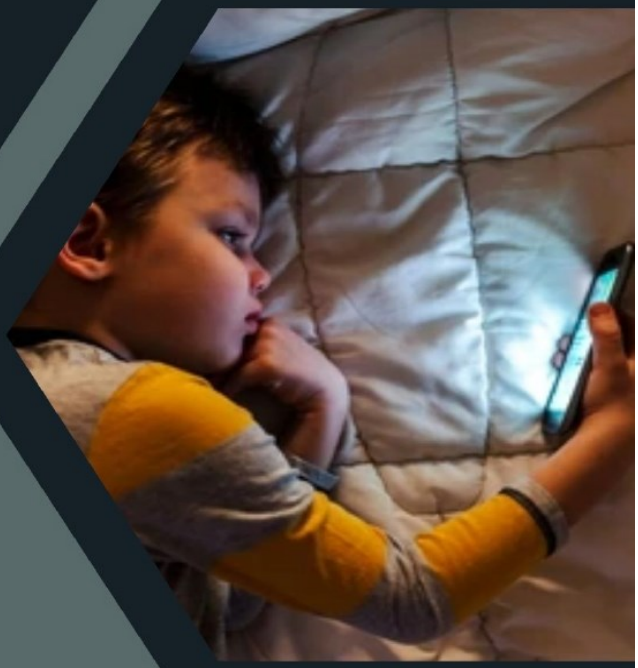
A WEEKLY NEWSLETTER FOR SHALOM TORAH ACADEMY OF CENTRAL NEW JERSEY

THE DANGERS OF DEVICE ADDICTION, AND HOW TO PROTECT OUR FAMILIES



Tom Kersting is a nationally renowned psychotherapist, author and television contributor. He has appeared on the Today Show, Good Morning America, Fox News, and more.

with psychotherapist and TV personality, Dr. Tom Kersting



- Tuesday, February 13th at 7:30 PM
- Shalom Torah Academy
  70 Amboy Road
  Marlboro, NJ
- Refreshments will be served
- FREE book for Shalom Torah parents

FOR MORE INFORMATION
908-692-9733

Congregation B'nai Israel · Manalapan Jewish Congregation · Monmouth Torah Links · Shalom Torah Academy of Central New Jersey · Chabad of Western Monmouth County

Yisro- *Do WE accept the Torah?*

Background

In this week's parsha we learn of THE seminal moment in the history of the world: Hashem giving the Torah to the Jewish people.

The importance and magnitude of this moment cannot be overstated. Chazal tell us that the entire world was created for this moment: if the Jewish nation, as the representatives of mankind would accept the Torah, the world would be able to continue. If the Jewish people would reject the Torah, it would be destroyed. The values and precepts of the Torah, the 'instruction manual' for how to live a proper life, was absolutely necessary in order for humanity to be able to pull itself out of the degenerate pit of paganism and the amorality, cruelty and sad state of affairs that came along with it.

Human sacrifice, unchecked immorality and decadent pleasure seeking without boundaries or guidelines as to who or what man mates with- close relatives, animals, same-gender, etc. were the rule of the day in a world without the word of Hashem. In fact, as the Gemara tells us, murder was cheap and commonplace. It was forbidden to go to a pagan barber for the fear that they would thrust their razor into a person and murder them, if the whim of the moment aroused them to do so. Humans, without the direction of the Torah, and word and will of Hashem, are capable of untold depravity and cruelty.

Therefore, a world unmoored and disconnected from the precepts of the Torah would not be worthwhile to keep in existence. With the acceptance of the Torah, with the Jewish nation as the leaders and 'Ambassadors' of humanity, humanity has been able to develop and thrive. Humanity has been able to progress to a place which is a far cry from the world into which the Torah was first given.

There is an interesting Midrashic account (Sifri, Devarim 343) which recounts how before offering the Torah to the Jewish people, Hashem first offered the Torah to the other nations of the world. As Hashem went from nation to nation, each nation asked, prudently, what are the laws of the Torah? When hearing that there were laws which ran counter to their values, each nation declined the offer of the Torah. When Hashem offered the Torah to the Jewish nation, as is recounted in the Torah itself, the Jewish people responded by saying- 'naaseh v'nishma', we will do and we will listen. Meaning, they unconditionally accepted the Torah without inquiring as to what was written in it.

This acceptance of the Torah by the Jewish people was an amazing act which vaulted the Jewish people into the status of being the 'Chosen people' and earning them an extra endearment and love from Hashem.

Rava (of the foremost Amoraim, great Rabbis of the Gemara) explained (Gemara in Shabbos 88a) that the difference between the Jewish nation and the other nations of the world was that the Jewish people had full faith and security (bitachon) in Hashem. The Jewish people trusted Hashem and knew that if He was offering them the Torah and if he was giving them an instruction manual as to how to live life, if they had the opportunity to sign up for 'Hashem's program', then they can be assured of its unquestionable goodness and that it would be for their benefit.

Question

Their difference in attitude, no doubt, came from their different past experiences with Hashem. The other nations of the world did not 'know' Hashem and did not have a basis from which to put their faith in Him. They looked upon the offer of the Torah suspiciously and questioningly, like someone considering the 'sales pitch' of someone who is looking to sign up customers. On the other hand, the Jewish people, the descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yakov did have a context from which to understand Hashem, know His goodness and kindness and to therefore accept the Torah unquestionably.

Seen in this context, what was so wrong about the response of the other nations of the world? It is quite reasonable to ask what is written in the Torah before accepting it- when the giver of this 'gift' is not well known to the receivers of it! On the other hand, the Jewish people- who knew of Hashem and had the necessary context to relate to such an offer of the Torah, affirmatively- they could be expected to accept this offer unquestionably, knowing and being secure in Hashem's kindness and goodness to them. If so, isn't this still unfair? Isn't it still 'imbalanced' and skewed, their different 'opportunities' and chances at receiving the Torah?

Answer

Avraham, Yitzchak and Yakov's choices as to how to live life had a positive impact on their children. Their choices to discover and develop a relationship with Hashem is what put their progeny in a ripe position to accept the Torah when the time came. The other nations of the world were not as well positioned. This was because of the choices of their ancestors- to reject Hashem and to not develop a relationship with Him.

This is part of the reward and benefit of doing goodness and becoming a better person- one not only improves their own lot on this world, but one improves the lot of their children, grandchildren and descendants for all time. While it is true that all people have free choice, the difficulty of making those choices properly, however, is greatly influenced by one's lineage. This is part of the way that Hashem created the world and how He, in His infinite wisdom deemed most appropriate.

In order to understand this properly, one must understand that people are a continuation of their ancestors. The Torah view, Hashem's view, is that parents and children, grandparents and grandchildren, etc. are not autonomous beings who just so happened to be related. Rather, every child is literally, not only figuratively, the 'knees' of their parents- a continuation of them. Understood in this light, one can see the justice and fairness of what scientists have discovered, which is that one's behavior, in a very real and practical and observable way, impacts one's DNA which they then pass down to their children. This 'DNA' heritage is not only physical DNA, but rather it is also spiritual and cultural.

Lesson for Us

There are so many different ways to analyze the above sources from the Torah and these very foundational ideas. When I sat down to write this essay I had one idea in mind. In saying this over to the middle school boys at the Friday shmuz, a completely different, and very powerful, lesson came to the fore. And that is that as silly as it sounds, when we hear of the nations of the world not accepting the Torah because of the rules of the Torah not fitting into their lifestyle, the truth is- we are guilty of that exact 'silliness' every day.

How many times do the precepts and commands of the Torah collide with what we think is best for us? How many times are we tested to either accept unquestioningly the commands of Hashem, in the confidence that He really knows what's best for us, or to reject it in the face of what we think is best.

At those times, we need to realize that Hashem is offering us the Torah. Hashem is asking us if we want to accept His Torah. And then the choice is ours: do we accept it or do we analyze and ask- does this fit in with our lifestyle?

A Highlight from our Pre-School Department

Morah Nechama Greenwald and the Pre-K Class

Pre-K is always exciting. There is always something going on in Pre-K. In honor of Tu B'Shevat, each student brought in a fruit to share with the class. Morah cut up each fruit. The students chose which fruit to take. They then created their own fruit person. They were so imaginative. Best of all, they enjoyed the 'fruits' of their labor. Enjoy the pictures of their creativity!






A Highlight from our Art Department

Mrs. Samantha Faber

Our year in art class has been progressing beautifully. Students in grades K-8 have been working hard and learning so much. We've worked on advancing our coloring skills, shading, shapes and utilizing them in our art. We've spent a good amount of time learning to draw step by step with physical examples as well as oral direction. The students have created beautiful mosaics, self portraits, landscapes and candles. I look forward to all the amazing artwork that is yet to come from these young artists.







Monday, February 19	Presidents' Day - **No Sessions**
Tuesday, February 20	First Grade Chumash Celebration at 9:30 am * **Please Note the Change of Date**
Tuesday, February 27	Kindergarten Siddur Play
Friday, March 8	Second Marking Period Ends
Friday, March 15	Report Cards Send Home
Tuesday, March 19	Parent Teacher Conferences - **Early Dismissal at 2:45 p.m.**
Friday, March 22	Purim Carnival



Miriam Rosenfeld - February 3
Refael Gilad - February 7
Elnatan Itzhaky - February 8
Daniel Khaimov - February 8
Jake Terzo - February 8



Passed Level 1	Passed Level 2
Elora Maksumov	DovBer Lustgarten
Eitan Mistriel	Sammy Nemirovsky
Nathan Fried	Hannah Estupinan
	Michael Baruchov



Mazel Tou to Mr. and Mrs. Braude and big brother Jonathan (Pre-K) and big sister Lily (Torah Tots) on the birth of baby boy.

Mazel Tou to Mr. and Mrs. Stein and big brothers Dovid (Pre-K) and Chaim (Torah Tots) on the birth of baby sister.

Mazel Tou to Ms. Mollie Katzenstein Stein on the birth of a granddaughter.

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

We rely on your cooperation to have smooth and safe dismissals.

February School Lunch Menu

Monday, 2/5	Tuesday, 2/6	Wednesday, 2/7	Thursday, 2/8	Friday, 2/2
Baked Ziti, Sliced Veg.	Scrambled Eggs, Garlic Knots, Vegetable Soup, Israeli Salad	Grilled Cheese Sandwich, French Fries, Sliced Vegetables	Potato Knish, Boiled Egg, Split Pea Soup, Israeli Salad	1 Pizza Slice
Monday, 2/12	**Tuesday, 2/13**	**Wednesday, 2/14**	**Thursday, 2/15**	**Friday, 2/9**
Mac & Cheese, Sliced Vegetables	Bagel (choice of Egg Salad, Tuna or Cream Cheese), Vegetable Soup, Israeli Salad	Sicilian Pizza, Sliced Vegetables	Hash Brown Potatoes, Scrambled Eggs, Vegetable Soup, Sliced Vegetables	1 Pizza Slice
Monday, 2/19	**Tuesday, 2/20**	**Wednesday, 2/21**	**Thursday, 2/22**	**Friday, 2/23**
Presidents' Day No Sessions	Penne ala Vodka (contains no alcohol), Sliced Vegetables	Pizza Bagel, Sliced Vegetables	Fish Sticks, Rice, Vegetables	1 Pizza Slice