



Bet Shraga
Hebrew Academy
of the Capital District



December 18, 2009
1 Tevet 5770

SHABBATON

Issue Number 14
Volume Number II

CALENDAR

Monday, December 21

Tuesday, December 22
3:15 PM Drama Kids

Wednesday, December 23
3:15 PM Band
3:15 PM OVA

Thursday, December 24
NO SCHOOL-WINTER BREAK

Friday, December 25
NO SCHOOL-WINTER BREAK

Candle Lighting times for December/January 2009-2010

Friday, Dec. 18th—Light 4:05pm	Saturday, Dec. 19th—End 5:11pm
Friday, Dec. 25th—Light 4:08pm	Saturday, Dec. 26th—End 5:14pm
Friday, Jan. 1st—Light 4:14pm	Saturday, Jan. 2nd—End 5:20pm
Friday, Jan. 8th—Light 4:20pm	Saturday, Jan. 9th—End 5:26pm

DVAR TORAH BY RACHEL ANISFELD

The dreidl spins and spins, like the world around us. Sometimes we land on a “gimmel” or a “heh,” and sometimes we land on a “nun” or a “shin.” Sometimes we win and sometimes we lose.

The funny thing about the dreidl is that, like the lots of Purim, it makes it seem like everything has to do with luck. But at the same time, the message of its letters is otherwise: *Nes Gadol Hayah Sham*. “A great miracle happened there.” Miracles imply divine control, that there is some order or purpose in the

universe, not just dumb luck. Yosef’s story is similar. He starts out on top, a beloved son, adored by his father, with dreams of grandeur. But then he is thrown down into a pit, “brought down” to Egypt as a slave, and sent further down into the “pit” of jail. Finally, in this week’s parsha, his “luck” turns again, and he rises quickly to the position of second to the king, riding high through the streets in a chariot.

Is that all Yosef’s story is? A story of good and bad luck, like the randomly spinning dreidl?

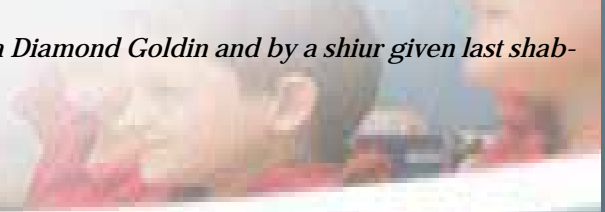
Yosef himself thinks not. His skill is to interpret dreams and also to interpret life. What he sees in these dreams is always a plan. At first, in his own dream, he imagines that he himself is the mover of this plan, the center of the universe. As a slave in Egypt, he learns otherwise, so that when he comes to interpret the baker and the cup-bearer’s dreams, he sees king Pharaoh as the planner, the one who has the power to either impale or re-instate his servants. Finally, in this week’s parsha, Yosef comes to terms with the true Planner, the real King, the Master of the Universe. What do Pharaoh’s dreams of fat and skinny cows and grain mean, according to Yosef? They mean that God has a plan and that God has revealed this plan to Pharaoh. And what do Yosef’s own ups and downs mean? Yes, he tells his brothers, you meant evil when you sold me, but see, it was all part of a divine plan to feed people.

Yosef lives in the same kind of world we do. Bad things happen, good things happen, and it all seems random. God no longer speaks directly to Yosef as he did to his ancestors, and there are no clear miracles. Yosef is the first of the patriarchs to have children without divine intervention.

In such a world, to be great is not to converse with God or to hear His voice, but to be able to read God’s presence in the world as it is, to be a *Tzafnat Paneah*, “an interpreter of hidden things,” as Yosef is called in Egypt. Yosef’s ability to do this -- his ability to see in Pharaoh’s dream the marks of a divine plan -- is the key to his success. It is only when Yosef learns to speak, not of his own dreams of greatness, but of God’s plan, that he *can* become great. Being great in this kind of seemingly random world involves the ability to read the words: *Nes Gadol Hayah Sham* on the swirling dreidl of life.

This dvar torah was inspired by the story “Right Side Up” by Barbara Diamond Goldin and by a shiur given last shabbat by Joel Linsider at Congregation Beth Abraham-Jacob.

Bet Shraga Hebrew Academy Of The
Capital District Receives Substantial
Support From



Principal's Board



2nd Grader, Aviva Schwartz is nominated for the Principal's Board because she is consistently kind to her classmates and to her teachers. She always has a smile on her face and a positive attitude, and she helps to keep the classroom a happy place!

2nd Grader, Rianna Young is nominated to the Principal's Board because she is very helpful to her classmates and to her teachers. She often helps classmates who have questions about their work, and is a supportive study partner.



Physical Education

The PE Department recently ran a very successful fundraiser called the Hula for Hoops. The students were asked to help raise money so we could purchase new glass backboards and hoops for the gymnasium. They rose to the occasion and helped generate over \$1200 in just a three week period.

Alex Koppel received a \$200 gift card to Dicks Sporting Goods for raising the most money of any student.

- Ryan Miller



Dvar Torah Volunteers Needed!

We want to hear your words of Torah!
If you would like to write a dvar torah for the Shabbaton, please contact
Rachel Anisfeld to arrange a week. ranisfeld@nycap.rr.com



1st Grade Chanukah Play





Very Special Hallel Sponsor

The children enjoyed a very special treat after our Hallel service on Thursday, December 16th. Hanukkah "Gelt" was proudly donated by Barbara and Eugene Berkun, and this is why:

Ben Berkun was born in 1899 in a small village in a section of Russia called the Ukraine. He was the oldest boy of eight surviving children, in a family that was ultra orthodox. The children were all educated in a local Hebrew School because the public schools would not accept them. In this way, he had a very good education in Hebrew and some other subjects, such as math.

After the horrors of Pogroms in his village, and being shot and gravely injured by Cossacks, he emigrated. He was just over the age cutoff for immigrants, and could not get into the United States with the rest of his family. Instead he went to Canada to wait for permission to enter the US. There he was a peddler and he taught Hebrew in small villages near Niagara Falls. When he visited there 50 years later, people in those towns remembered him as their Hebrew Teacher.

When he moved to Albany, he was active in starting a Hebrew School at Tifereth Israel on Partridge Street which later became Temple Israel. At one point, the Temple Israel School had over 600 students, and some graduates were going into Jewish professions, such as teaching and becoming rabbis. Later, he was one of the founders of the Hebrew Academy. Six of his grandchildren and 3 of his great grandchildren have attended the Hebrew Academy. Erez and Barak Binyamin are still here. Some day, as you tour the school, see if you can find a plaque with Ben and Ruth Berkun's name on it!

A regular visitor to the school and morning T'fillot, Ben Berkun was very proud of what the school was accomplishing. To encourage participation in school T'fillot, he offered Gelt to any student who could lead the shacharit service or read Torah. There are many people still living in Albany, who remember getting those coins and keeping them. We give the students these coins in Honor of Hallel, and in recognition of the good work the students are doing, here at the Hebrew Academy.





SAVE THE DATE!!!

HACD's Festival of Israeli Song and Dance

**January 24, 2010 at 10:30 AM
Temple Israel**

Shabbat Sponsor—December 18th

**Sponsored by Paul Koppel in honor of Alex Koppel
raising the most money for Hula for Hoops.**



NEWS FROM PARENT ORG

HACD HANUKAH DINNER:

I think we can sum it all up as “We came, we socialized, we ate fried foods”.

What a blast! Temple Israel’s Klezmer band, led by Cantor Rogerio Marx, “Sheine Meidl un di Schmendricks” kicked off our evenings ruach with great Klezmer tunes and later in the evening played some classic Hanukah melodies. Many thanks to all of our special guest singers!

Rabbi Rami led us in the evening candle lighting blessings. Dan Sher performed a magic act for the kids and his balloon animals were in high demand throughout the night.



Magician Dan Sher entertains the children



Temple Israel’s Klezmer band led by Cantor Rogerio Marx “Sheine Meidl un di Schmendricks”

The kids really seemed to enjoy their Chanukah Gelt (donated by the Adler family) and playing with their new dreydels! Essen Koshher Catering did a great job on the buffet - preparing latkes, falafel, lasagna, sufganyot, Hanukah themed cookies and more!

Best of all – we got to see friends we have not seen in weeks or months, we met a lot of new members and some people who are thinking of joining the school. We schmoozed, sang and danced into the evening. Well, not too late – it was a school night!

Thank you to everyone who helped make our Hanukah party a fun social event - Our dedicated Committee members who pulled it all together, parents who arrived early to set-up and *especially* those who stayed late to clean up.

Wishing you all a “Chag Sameach!” From your dedicated Parent Org Volunteers.

Great News from the Admissions Office!

We would like to announce our new “Refer a Friend Program”

1. Refer a friend to Bet Shraga & receive a \$500 tuition discount.
2. Refer another, receive another \$500 discount.

Our greatest ambassadors are YOU our parents! To thank you for helping us grow, we will give you a \$500 tuition discount for every family you refer who applies and enrolls.



Why are we doing this?

- ◆ To create a shared communal responsibility in spreading our school's outstanding program in General and Judaic studies to our larger Jewish community.
- ◆ To help our school grow.
- ◆ We value the contribution of our volunteers and want to thank them for their efforts.

How does this work?

- ◆ When a new potential parent, someone not already on our list, contacts the school, they are asked to indicate on the enrollment form who recommended HACD to them.
- ◆ Current families may call the school to give names and contact information of their friends who are currently not at another local Jewish day school.
- ◆ The \$500 tuition reduction will be applied to the following year's tuition.

***Please contact: Lorraine Arcus
Director of Admissions and Community Outreach***

Larcus@hacdalbany.com



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

December 19

Post-Chanukah Comedy of Lew Gray, at the Israel Center Café. Saturday night December 19, the Israel Center Café will welcome the return of the stand up comedy of Lewis Gray. Lew performed stand up comedy at the Stand-Up NY Comedy Club in New York City and won "the Funniest Person in Queens" amateur comedy contest in 1999 and "the Funniest Person in New York" in 2000. He has also performed at restaurants and benefits in the New York area. The Cafe is open from 8:30 - 11:30pm, and guests are welcome to come for all or part of the evening. A \$10 minimum donation is requested per person. More information, including travel directions, can be found at JERNY's new and innovative web site, www.JERNY.org.

December 24-27

Jewish Girls Retreat for girls ages 8-15. Join us for our fourth annual Winter Retreat! Get ready for a fun weekend of excitement, friendships, and tradition. This year's theme "GET GLOWING" explores Girls Lighting up Our World! Register online at www.jewishgirlsretreat.net. A project of the Bat Mitzvah Club. Registration closes December 14th. For more information contact Nechama Laber at 518-833-0704 or nechama@jewishgirlsretreat.net.

December 25

Areyvut's Annual Bnai Mitzvah Video Essay Contest! for Students in the 5th -10th grades who are constantly inspiring us with their acts of chesed (kindness) and giving back to the community- this is for you. To enter, student(s) should send a video describing their mitzvah project, the impact it's had on them and others! All submissions must be received by Friday, December 25th, and must be 7 minutes or less. Please send your video (DVD or VHS tape) to: Sharon Stahl c/o Areyvut Bnai Mitzvah Video Essay Contest 147 South Washington Avenue, Bergenfield, NJ 07621 or email the video or webpage link with video (i.e. You Tube) to sharon@areyvut.org.

For more information and for official rules, please visit: www.areyvut.org or contact Sharon Stahl at (201) 244-6702 or sharon@areyvut.org.

January 24

Save the Date!!. Sunday, January 24th at 10:30 am for HACD's Festival of Israeli Song and Dance at Temple Israel. More details coming soon.

January 31

Tu B'Shvat Together, an interactive program for students in Grade 3. Sunday, January 31st 10:00-11:30 am. at The Golub Center, 184 Washington Ave. Extension, Albany. R.S.V.P. to your Education Director. Contact Marci Galinkin, Director of CCJE, 518-783-7800 ext. 239 with any questions.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE ROOTED IN TRADITION

54 Sand Creek Road Albany, NY 12205
Phone: 518-482-0464 Fax: 518-482-0129
www.hacdalbany.org hacd@hacdalbany.com

