

Chavurah Guidebook



Congregation Har HaShem
2017

Introduction

Welcome to the Chavurah Program at Congregation Har HaShem!

Judaism teaches that life's meaning and purpose is found in relationship to other people. One of the purposes of Har HaShem is to foster Jewish community among our members.

Many members at Har HaShem seek an intimate connection with others in their synagogue community. A chavurah enables people to find connections with others like them, to learn about and celebrate Jewish life together, to connect with people who can support us, and even challenge us.

A chavurah is a small group of congregants who meet in each other's homes or other venues on a regular basis to socialize, learn, engage in cultural activities or in *tikkun olam* (actions to heal a broken world), and celebrate Jewish life together. Chavurah has as its root the Hebrew word *chaver*, which means friend. A *chavurah* (plural *chavurot*) is a group of synagogue members who join together to enrich their lives and reinforce the spirit of Judaism in themselves and in their children. The Chavurot do not replace other events at our congregations. On the contrary, they supplement and support the congregation's social, religious, and intellectual activities.

Each chavurah is completely autonomous as to its practices and principles. They are the sum of the whole group. They are not led by our staff. They are friendships. Chavurot are joys in and of themselves. In addition, successful chavurot help us all develop a stronger sense of community, even as our congregation grows larger.

We are here to help bring members together in order to form new chavurot and to assist as needed. We hope you will become a strong and vibrant part of Congregation Har HaShem.

- *Rabbi Fred Greene*

Getting Started

1. Begin by choosing a home/venue and a time for your launch that works for all of the households. Coordinate with the Chavurah Liaison so that he/she can attend the first gathering.
2. Get to know each other and share your interests. Determine what your chavurah will do when you get together.
3. Your chavurah should satisfy an authentic Jewish need. Set a calendar around Shabbat, Jewish holidays, and lifecycle events.
4. Create a 6-12 month calendar for your chavurah gatherings with each family taking at least one month during the year. Those who don't set their calendar from the start struggle with attendance. Members should take turns planning events and playing host. Check the Har HaShem calendar to ensure there are no major competing activities. By planning ahead, decide which Shabbats or holidays you want to celebrate together, and how much variety you want in your programs.
5. Communication is important. Make sure all members of your Chavurah are aware of what's going on. Establish a phone tree, email list or Facebook group that will work best for everyone.
6. Select a coordinator who will serve as a point person between members of the chavurah and the chavurah liaison. The coordinator should maintain the calendar and communicate reminders on upcoming events.
7. Pick a name for the chavurah. It can be Jewish in nature, perhaps a Yiddish or Hebrew word or phrase, or something that embodies the households involved.
8. Compile and maintain a roster of your members. Determine if the chavurah is open to additional households. Notify the Chavurah Liaison with changes to the membership roster.

Involvement with Har HaShem

Like chavurot at other congregations, Har HaShem's chavurot both support and are supported by the synagogue. Har HaShem will help with launching new groups, providing training and facilitation and serving as a communication liaison. Each chavurah will plan and hold its own events year-round.

We ask each chavurah to engage in at least one project each year that furthers the life of the synagogue. Examples include hosting an oneg, sponsoring a social action project, or participating as a chavurah in a fundraiser. We ask chavurot to not plan events that conflict with synagogue programs or services.

Har HaShem resources are available to chavurot. These may include periodic assistance from the rabbi and other members of our staff. Members of established chavurot may be sought out for guidance. We will also support you with books, tapes, and other educational materials. Check with someone in the office to coordinate the borrowing of such materials.

If you have any questions, contact Lisa Webber, Director of Communications and Membership Engagement.

lw@harhashem.org – (303) 499-7077

“Being part of a chavurah for the past 15 years has been a terrific experience for my family. It's one of the many ways we've been able to feel connected and have intimate relationships in this large congregation” - Becky O'Brien

Suggested Activities

Holiday/Shabbat

Potluck Shabbat dinner
Havdallah Wine and Dessert
Rosh Hashanah Lunch
Yom Kippur Break-the-fast
Build a Sukkot Decorating Party
Celebrate Chanukah together
Passover Seder
Plant trees for Tu B'Shevat
Purim Dress up dinner party
Simchat Torah festivities
Purim Hamentaschen Baking
Challah Baking
Kids Art Project
 Candlesticks
 Menorahs
 Seder Plates
 Kiddush cups

Recreational/Athletic

Picnic
Bike Ride
Hiking, skiing, rafting
Camping trip
Chavurah Retreat
Pro Sports Game
Theater or concerts
Challenge another Chavurah to softball, or bowling
Meals at Restaurants (Dave N' Busters, Dim Sum, Jewish Deli)
Museum or Attractions
 Boondocks, Water World, Elitches
 Zoo, Museum of Nature & Science, Butterfly Pavilion
 Boulder Jewish Festival, Mizel Jewish Museum in Denver

Additional Suggested Activities

Social Action

Volunteer at Har HaShem in some capacity

 Sponsor an oneg Shabbat

 Friday Night Greeter

 End of Summer BBQ

 Purim Carnival

 HHS Mitzvah Day

 BOHO

Cook a meal at the Boulder Shelter for the Homeless

Provide December 24-25th coverage for a non-Jewish organization

Provide food for Har HaShem families coping with illness or loss

Study

Read and discuss Jewish books

Invite guest speakers

Watch a Jewish film

Learn about the history and meaning of various Jewish practices and rituals

Discuss contemporary Jewish issues

Share slide shows on Jewish trips

Resources

Boulder JCC - www.boulderjcc.org

Boulder Jewish News – www.boulderjewishnews.org

Mazeltogether - www.mazeltogether.org

Mizel Arts & Culture - <http://maccjcc.org/>

The Seven C's of Chavurah

Commitment

Involves each group member taking time, energy and responsibility in planning, execution, and participation in group activities.

Cooperation

Groups become cohesive through interaction of all members. Decisions should be reached through consensus, not by default. All participants should be encouraged to voice opinions without giving long speeches or monopolizing time.

Communication

It is important that each member becomes an effective communicator by developing both active listening and speaking skills.

Conflict

Conflict is a necessary part of group process and the working out of differences leads to a more cohesive group. Differences in both personality and in needs are inevitable and are a challenge to increase one's tolerance and flexibility. One cannot expect either to like everybody or have one's needs met all the time. However, differences that are causing resentment and dissatisfaction should be both articulated and worked out.

Confrontation

When there is a conflict, it is important to confront the situation before it saps energy from the group. Here are some "rules" to follow:

- Confront directly; do not gossip, complain, or talk about the person outside the group
- Confront with care, concern, honesty and directness
- Confront the behavior of the person and be concrete and specific when describing what is bothering you.
- Confront during the appropriate time at a group meeting
- Confront with receptivity and be open to feedback

Companionship

If you know your own needs and those of the other members, you can derive the kind of companionship and degree of intimacy that you desire from the group.

Change

The group should set aside time periodically to review its goals and expectations, to see if they are current and meeting the needs of all of its members most of the time.

“We joined Har HaShem when we moved to Boulder nine years ago, and we are delighted to be matched up with a chavurah right away that had couples with young kids the same age as ours. Not only are we sharing holidays and milestones, but our friendships have deepened, and our kids are growing up together.” - Julie and Dan Cohen



Congregation
Har HaShem הר השם

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