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ROSH HASHANA EDITION

KESHET
קהילת שערי תפילה
CONGREGATION SHAARE TEFILLAH

FROM THE RABBI'S STUDY

RABBI KENNETH A. SCHIOWITZ

Is it the thought that counts? This fundamental question has been pondered in countless cases. Is it your husband's thought that counts when he intended to buy you flowers but did not? Or the countless other things that he meant to do? Is it the thought of your children that counts when they planned to clean their rooms but did not? Or does it really count when someone cares enough to actually come through and do it?

The same question can be asked of the *mitzvot*—even of those that we actually do: is it the inner mental and emotional experience that is most important, or is it the fact that we do it?

This seems to be the question that the Talmud explores in relation to *mitzvot* in general: do *mitzvot* require *kavana* (focus and intent) in order to be fulfilled, or is the *mitzvah* fulfilled even through a thoughtless action?

While the Talmud discusses this question in relation to many different *mitzvot*, there is no unified conclusion. In fact, there seem to be two contradictory conclusions. In relation to the *mitzvah* of eating *matza*, the Talmud seems to conclude that intent is not required, while in relation to the *mitzvot* of *tefillah* and *shofar*, the conclusion seems to be that intent is required.

Some commentators see this as an absolute contradiction, and one of these conclusions must be accepted and one must be rejected.

However, Rambam (*Laws of Chametz* 6:3 and *Laws of Shofar* 2:4) and Tosfot (*Pesachim* 115a) consider these to be reconcilable. Simply, not all *mitzvot* are the same and some require more mental focus than others. In respect to eating *matza*, the focus is the physical experience, and the mental awareness is less fundamental. However, *tefillah* and *shofar* are

fundamentally mental experiences and *kavana* is crucial.

Similarly, there are some times that it is the thought that really counts. However, in other cases, what really matters is that a person does what he needs to do. Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur are dedicated to *tefillah*, *shofar* and *teshuva*. It is a time of year when it is the thought that really does matter most. Let's all strive for a meaningful, *kavana*-filled period of *Yamim Noraim* and pray for peace, health and happiness for our families and for the entire world.

Shana Tova!

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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK MICHAEL CANTOR

As we head into the High Holiday season, we become absorbed in the hustle-and-bustle of preparations. Where we will spend the *yomim tovim*, what to cook, how many vacation days do we have left, do the kids have enough (clean?) clothing for three 3-day extravaganzas—the details all blur together until the day arrives, the *shofar* sounds and we can focus on the meaning and message of the new year. This seems to be an all-too-accurate depiction of the fast-paced, instant-gratification times we live in.

Ideally, the entire month of *Elul* would be one of not just logistical preparation but spiritual preparation as well; one where we look back at the year that was and measure ourselves against what our

hopes and aspirations had been the High Holidays prior. How good were we about keeping the “resolutions” we made in our moments of introspective prayer during the *Neilah* service? If we failed, why did we fail? What can we do differently this coming year to not fall into that trap again?

To attempt to achieve this level of spiritual preparation, this year I am making one of my personal resolutions early; I intend to find a few “free” hours this month to select one aspect of the *Rosh Hashanah* / *Yom Kippur* davening to review, personalize and internalize. I am choosing *u'netaneh tokef* because it is a pivotal component of the service and one that always weighs heavily on me in

(Cont. on pg 5)

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KeSHeT

The Newsletter of Congregation Shaare Tefillah

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KeSHeT is published seasonally to announce news, activities, davening times, and other important information to the Shaare Tefillah congregation and the neighboring community.



Sisterhood Update

BY AUDRA LICHTER

The Sisterhood of Shaare Tefillah has presented several programs and *shiurim* over the past few months.

In April, a *shiur* was given by Dani Bieler about "*Kedushim Tebiyu*," and in May, CB Neugroschl gave a *shiur* -- "Religious Zionism: Recognizing the Challenge of the Dream"-- sponsored by the Sisterhood and Teri Normand in memory of Teri's father.

In May, over 30 women gathered in the Shaare Tefillah social hall for an evening of Speed Meeting and a book swap. The women sat across from each other and had 2 minutes to learn about each other before the buzzer went off and they had to move on to the next person. After learning fun facts about our new and old friends, we split into teams and competed to find out who learned the most about each other.

In June, we held a Zumba class where we learned how to do some great Latin dance moves. In the future, we hope to have different types of exercise and dance classes.

July was a very exciting month with the first (of hopefully many) Shaare Tefillah BBQ/Cook-off competition. Benjy Burnat, Michael Cantor, Steven Eagle and Adam Gussen

chopped, mixed, sautéed, fried and grilled their secret recipe burgers to perfection to find out who makes the best

burgers. To answer this question we had three judges: Yossi Muszkat, Mendy Schwartz and, the toughest critic of all, Devorah Eagle (don't let the cuteness fool you) taste, discuss and rate these burgers on presentation, originality and flavor. After stuffing their faces with these burger creations the judges were unanimous in their vote for the winner:

Adam Gussen scored above and beyond in all categories. The minute the contestants were allowed to start their burger creations, Adam ran to the grill with his specially hand-picked tomatoes to start them roasting to perfection. To top off his original burger, he fried an egg, sunny side up! Adam won a gift card to Chef Central so he can continue to grill and create new burgers, as well as bragging rights...at

least until next year when he is challenged in the next Shaare Tefillah BBQ/Cook-off. Who is up for the challenge?



(Cont. on pg 4)

(Cont. from pg 3) *Sisterhood Update*

In August, the Sisterhood gathered at Sunshine Gift Shop and Ceramic Art Studio in Englewood to paint their own pottery pieces. Next time you eat out for Shabbat lunch, one of these great pieces may be sitting right in front of you on the table. Among the pottery that was painted were platters, mugs, bowls, mezzuzahs and cute little animal figurines. If you are ever looking to paint pottery or to buy gifts for a special occasion, Sunshine is the place to go.

August 24 was our annual Meet and Greet Pot Luck Seudah Shlishit in Phelps Park. Families ate and mingled with each other and met new families who moved into the community while the children played in the playground. Luckily, there was no tornado warning this time around!



If you are interested in being involved in planning future Sisterhood programs, please contact Audra Lichter or Dena Cohen (listed in the contacts page of this newsletter).

Book Club Update

BY NINA BIELER AND
STACY KAPLAN

The Shaare Tefillah Jewish Book Club is on a roll with book selections that have prompted meaningful discussions at recent meetings. Over the past few months, we have read works of both fiction and non-fiction, including *Doublelife: One Family, Two Faiths and a Journey of Hope* by Harold Berman and Gayle Redlingshafer Berman, *Disobedience* by Naomi Alderman, and *The Dovekeepers* by Alice Hoffman. While the books are interesting reads, the most meaningful part of Book Club for many participants is the discussion that takes place at the meetings. Discussion topics include dialogues about family choices, personal values, Zionism, suffering, and belief in God. For our next selection, we will read *You Saved Me, Too: What a Holocaust Survivor Taught Me about Living, Dying, Fighting, Loving, and Swearing in Yiddish* by Susan Kushner Resnick, and plan to have the meeting on Monday 9/23 at 8:30PM in the Bieler's Sukkah. New members are always welcome (even if they haven't read the book)! Be in touch if you have suggestions for new books or questions about the Book Club.

MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS

Baruchim Haba'im:

Avi and Rachel Berliner
Daniel and Pearl Magence
Corey and Dina Reichardt
Shai and Tamar Shicly
Yossi and Steffie Sipzner

Condolences:

To Shelley Fisher on the passing of her sister, Rosalynne Lemont
To Chaim Szafranski on the passing of his father, Morris

Mazal Tov:

To Zev and Laurie Beckerman on the birth of a daughter, Emma Lily (Esther Tzipporah)
To Fred and Lynn Cohen on the birth of a granddaughter to Aviva and Chaim Cohen
To Mazi and Eli Ehrenfeld on the birth of a granddaughter to their children, Etan and Tamar
To Mazi and Eli Ehrenfeld on the engagement of their daughter, Michelle, to Daniel Resnick
To Jeff and Aliza Engel on the Bar Mitzvah of their son, Gershon, and to brother Ori and grandparents Shoshana & Moshe Neuer and Raymond & Elaine Engel
To Kelly Finkelstein on her engagement to Daniel Swartz, and to Kelly's parents, Motti and Zina Finkelstein
To Gila and Moshe Kelsen on the birth of a son, Jacob Ethan (Yaakov Ephraim)
To Jerry and Sandra Leshaw on the marriage of their son, David, to Rachel Weber
To Ari Manas on his engagement to Aviva Woolf, and to Ari's parents, Marcy and Jeff Manas
To Ann and Meir Shinnar upon the engagement of their son, Eliezer, to Sasha Parets
To Aggie and Mark Siletski on the marriage of their son, Ari, to Erica Smuckler
To David and Rachel Yolkut on the birth of a daughter, Rebecca Adele (Rivka Adira)
To Larry and Tikva Yudkowitz on the marriage of their daughter, Efrat, to Avi Kemp

(Cont. from pg 1) *From the President's Desk*

its message regarding the severity of the day.

One question I have always had on the second paragraph of *u'netaneh tokef* is the inclusion of "*mi yeyoni umi yeyosher*"—"who will be impoverished and who will be enriched"—near the end of the paragraph. It seems that the other judgments included are more severe: "who will live and who will die, who at their predestined time and who prematurely, who will enjoy tranquility and who will suffer." Surely, wealth is a blessing and poverty is challenging, but there are many impoverished people who are *sameach b'chelkum* and many rich people who live empty lives. What *kavana* or thoughts are we to have as we conclude this paragraph and lead into the pinnacle expression of "*u'teshuva u'tefilah u'tzedakah*"?

I am reminded of a story from my post-high school year in Israel, which was an undisclosed number of years ago. I was spending Shabbos at my rabbi's home, and his wife was serving lunch. She was reaching up to the top shelf of her kitchen cabinet to get down the large serving platter from her china set, a wedding gift which she had cherished for many years. The platter unfortunately slipped from her hands and shattered into pieces on the floor. Her instantaneous, knee-jerk reaction was not profane, nor tears, rather a slight shrug of the shoulders followed by "*nu, gashmius*," which can be roughly translated as, "oh well, it's only a possession."

The *Meshech Chochmah*, in commenting on *Vayikra* 25: 18-19, indicates that in addition to the literal translation of the verses "if you keep the commandments you will dwell securely and consume to fulfillment" there is also a second, deeper *psbat*: It is only if your dwelling and consumption is done in a manner that is consistent with the Torah and its commandments that *Hashem* will fulfill His promise of blessings. This message is critical, and it is one that our Rabbi and Rabbinic intern have both focused on because of its importance.

Perhaps this is the judgment, or scale, that we should be focused on as we are engrossed in the conclusion of *u'netaneh tokef*; will we be cast into the lot of those who chase worldly possessions with an insatiable hunger, and as such are always lacking or poor, OR will we use our possessions as a means to a greater end, one that brings us and our families closer to *Hashem* and *yiddishkeit*, and as such are truly enriched? In this sense, this judgment is on the same level as its predecessor, "who will enjoy tranquility and who will suffer."

Wishing everyone within the immediate and extended Shaare Tefillah family a year of health, happiness and peace!

Ordering Lulavim and Etrogim

This year we will be working with Bnei Akiva of NY & NJ to provide Lulavim & Etrogim for our members, associate members and their respective families. Through this arrangement 10% of the proceeds will be donated back to shul by Bnei Akiva. The rest of the money will be used to support fabulous programs for Jewish Youth of NY & NJ.

We are pleased to offer more selection this year so please read the choices below carefully before you select. As in the past, Lulavim will be checked in order to make sure they are Kosher.

Lulav:

Muvchar set \$ 75

Mehudar set \$ 65

Standard set \$ 55

Lulav case (plastic cover with zipper) \$ 10

Etrog:

Pitom or No Pitom

We will be taking orders through **Friday September 13th** and the orders will be available for pickup at the shul on **Monday night September 16th**.

To place orders please fill out a separate form for each set you'd like to order. Please fill out all the required fields as we cannot process incomplete forms.

<http://tinyurl.com/lk29v7e>

Payment must be received by Friday, September 13th or your order will not be processed. Payment can be made via PayPal to bneiakivaofnynj@gmail.com or via check. Please make checks payable to Bnei Akiva of NY & NJ.



Security Reminder

With the upcoming *chaggim*, the Security Committee of Shaare Tefillah reminds everyone that security is everyone's responsibility. As such, If You See Something, Say Something.

If something appears out of place, it probably is. Please alert a board member right away.

Wishing everyone a safe year, filled with health and happiness!

Member Spotlight: The Fisch Family

Where are you guys from?

Tzivie is from the Bronx and Fred is from Brooklyn. Fred said he would not date a girl from the Bronx. Two years later, guess who he takes home from ice skating and asks out?

Where did you meet?

We met at a Young Israel Intercollegiate weekend. It was a college-age social group where young people would be able to meet and socialize in an Orthodox setting.

When dating, what was your best date?

For our second date we went to see the movie "The Russians are Coming"—it was a funny movie! We realized after seeing this movie how much we have in common.

If your spouse were to win an award, what would it be for?

Fred would win an award for his volunteering. He has been volunteering for many years in his local shuls. It seems to be in his blood.

What are your favorite Sunday activities?

In the summer, we enjoy gardening, harvesting our vegetables, nature walks and some hiking. We also visit friends and family. In the winter, Fred watches the Giants on any given Sunday with our sons or with friends.

If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go?

Hawaii! We were on the island of O'ahu, which was beautiful and very historic. We would love to see some of the other islands.

What was the most exciting experience you have ever had?

When we saw the Kotel for the first time. It was my first trip to Israel in 1968 and the year after the '67 war. The Kotel was cleared of all debris and it looked like one would imagine that it looked like thousands of years ago.

If you could be any age, what age would you be?

In our early 20s. We were starting out as a married couple and looking forward to all that life had in store for us. Four children later, we are blessed and looking forward to many healthy years ahead.

If you were stranded on a deserted island and could only have three things, what would they be?

Water, food and a cell phone! Obviously water and food to survive, and a cell phone, fully charged, to call for help.

Anything else you would like the community to know about you and your family?

We are the proud parents of four grown married sons and between them we have six grandchildren—four boys and two girls. We visit two of our sons and three grandchildren in Florida on an 8-10 week basis. Our other two sons and three grandsons are in New Jersey.



Member Spotlight: The Kagedan Family

Where are you guys from?

Heather: I am from Plainview, Long Island and Chaim grew up in Teaneck, a mere one block away from our house.

Chaim: It's a little strange living so close to where I spent my formative years, but it does keep me feeling young (ie, about 8 years old).

How did you meet?

HK: We were both freshmen at college—I was at Barnard and Chaim was at Columbia. We went out one night with mutual friends and both commented on the same poster for “Seinfeld”. I wowed Chaim with my Seinfeld knowledge. Chaim casually mentioned his SAT score. We were both smitten.

CK: The poster was advertising the fact that Seinfeld would be on TV twice every night. When I saw it, I remarked to no one in particular that I was very excited at the prospect (bear in mind that this was pre-DVR, YouTube, Netflix, etc), and then I heard a little voice in back of me quote a line from an episode. I turned around, and that's the first time I saw Heather. I'm sure she looked great, but I was most impressed by her Seinfeld chops.

Tell us about your kids.

CK: Atara is 4. She goes to Temple Emeth and has been known to wear fairy wings to shul. Dahlia is 1. She smiles like a maniac at complete strangers.

HK: I have also been told that one (or both) of my daughters look pretty much identical to Chaim.

What do you do?

CK: I'm a lawyer. Do you really want to know more? Right, I didn't think so.

HK: I previously worked as a high school math teacher and later, as a school social worker. I currently cater to the needs of a 4- and 1-year-old...but hope to one day do some form of “leaning in” again.

What are three things people don't know about you:

CK: 1) During college, I seriously considered playing poker professionally. 2) I am embarrassingly bad at telling time on clocks with no numbers. 3) I have an unhealthy love of ketchup.

HK: I am very boring and have no remotely interesting facts about myself to share. Chaim just suggested I say that I love q-tipping my ears. I think I'd better keep it to that.

What are your favorite Sunday activities?

HK: Here is what typically happens on a Sunday: One of us wakes up at the crack of dawn with the kids. Then that one goes back to sleep and forces the other one to wake up. Then that one goes back to sleep and forces the other one to wake up. Eventually one of us gets mad that his/her sleeping break wasn't long enough and then we are both up. It's pretty great every time.

CK: Once we're up, we complain about the Blue Laws for a while, tell the kids for the 700th time that the carousel at the mall isn't open, and then finally figure out what to do.

What is your favorite Jewish holiday?

HK: I have always loved Pesach. This past year I had to “make Pesach” for the first time, which

made it considerably less enjoyable, but I still kinda love it.

CK: I would have to say Sukkot. A cool night's breeze, plastic fruit overhead --- what's not to like?

Why did you choose to become members of Shaare Tefillah?

CK: I was very enamored by the lack of native Teaneckers in the membership (I'm allowed to say that because I grew up here), and also love the fact that the congregation as a whole is so young.

HK: I resisted the move to Teaneck for quite a while, but eventually realized it made the most sense for us. When it came time to choose a shul, we visited several and Shaare Tefillah was far and away the winner (even with the congregation davening in a living room/dining room at the time). I loved that it was small and super friendly. (Special shout-out to the Schnecks who helped seal the deal by hosting us for Shabbat lunch and introducing us to many other Shaare families.) We are coming up on our 1-year anniversary of moving in and we really want to thank everyone for being so hospitable and kind.



What Parents Can Do to Help Their Kids Succeed Academically in School This Fall

BY JENNI LEVY

As the summer draws to a close and we start getting our children ready for school this fall, I thought it would be nice to reflect on what role parents can play in ensuring their children have a successful and meaningful school year on the academic front. Whether your child is getting on the bus for the first time, entering middle school, or moving on to a new school for high school, there are plenty of steps parents can take to assist in their child's academic growth in this coming year. There are some basic rules and approaches we, as parents, can take to help our children in the best possible way. While our children will spend the majority of their time—roughly 180 days—in school, parents can also play a large role in helping their children grow academically and be “the best they can be” this year and throughout their formal schooling.

Over the course of the school year, we expect our children will learn a great deal. It is the primary reason we choose to send our children to school. This encompasses both the acquisition of skills and the concrete core knowledge our children amass. While much of their development will occur in this area during the school day, older children will have homework to reinforce their new skills and content or to take their learning to a new level. Asking your child's teacher how much time per day should be set aside to do homework will help you. Getting a planner for each child is key for creating a method for

younger children to stay on top of their homework responsibilities by knowing what homework is assigned and when it is due.

Communication is also key.

Communicating with the teacher about detailed assignments or clarifying responsibilities and upcoming projects is vital, especially for working parents who might not be home to grab supplies on a whim. Reach out to the teacher early on in the year for a syllabus, e-mail address, and expectations. Ask the teacher(s) what the major objectives are for each student. This will really help you gauge how much your child is learning and what you can do to help accent that growth. It is important to create an amicable relationship with the teacher(s) who teach your child and to be supportive of your child's teacher(s). One way early on to do this is to volunteer to chaperone field trips, offer to buy extras for the class (eg, nicer markers, dress up clothes, fifteen \$1 personal whiteboards; I usually ask the teacher if there are any extras for the class she/he needs), or offer to coordinate gift giving around the holidays. Regardless of whether you work full time or not, all parents can do something to help their child's educational experience and support their child's teacher. This is both a good way to establish a relationship with the teacher (which makes it easier when, say, your kid hits someone on the playground, gets hurt, or is struggling) as well as a demonstration to your child of how important her/his education is to

you. You do not need to spend a lot of money or time to do this; a little goes a long way.

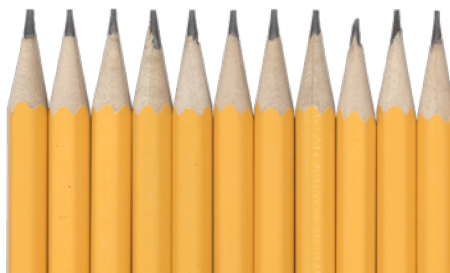
Location, location, location.

Parents can help their children by establishing designated “homework times” and a “homework zone” in the house where children will be uninterrupted, free from distractions like TV, music, other non-school-age siblings, or other loud noises. If you have a basement or a dining room table in a room that is close by, this might be ideal for you. Even a child's room with a small desk might work if you (or a nanny, grandparent, etc) are able to circulate during that time among your children and make sure they are staying on task. If your children are all of school age and able to sit in one room together, creating a uniform space might be ideal. Growing up, my family had a butcher block table in our kitchen that was out of the line of sight of any TV and yet still in an area where my mom could be making dinner and supervise my homework time. My brother went to sleep right around my homework time. If it helps, you may want to rearrange bed times of younger children to make sure you are able to give your older child time with you to review the assignments for the day. Consider investing in a small desk if you have space in a room for it. If your child has homework or projects to do on a computer, you may consider placing the computer (or laptop) in a place where you can consistently supervise the use of such a technology while reminding your child subtly, with

your presence, to stay on task and off social media, web surfing, and gaming. Instead, create times for such activity as rewards for completion of homework. You may also look into creating security functions on your computer/laptop to prevent children from browsing certain websites or even signing on to the computer without your password and your presence.

A key rule is that you work with your children, but do not do their work for them. As a teacher, I can always tell when a child's assignment is not completed by them. Many people, as former students, can remember instances like when, for a science fair, a friend brought in a killer science project that was flawlessly designed and definitely not something a 4th grader could do, or when a 2nd grader brought in that beautiful art project, with no markings outside the lines. Not only does it defeat the point of the assignment and fail to enable the child to learn how to accomplish the lesson the homework was trying to reinforce, but it also teaches your child that they can't do it on their own and that you believe they are not capable of doing it—that if a child does not feel like doing work, well, mom or dad will bail them out. Not a great lesson. We want to teach our children to be independent learners who are self-sufficient and who know when to ask for help but do not rely on others to do their work. Instead, be available to help organize how your child approaches homework so that they are able to finish everything assigned. Give your children tangible goals, such as if they finish their multiplication assignment by dinner, they can watch one episode of a TV show. Be available to help re-explain something if a child is stuck.

Do you want your children to be lifelong learners who are inquisitive? Then you need to be one too. I recently saw a mother walking with a few young children in the mall. She was wearing a t-shirt that said favorite subjects: Shopping, music, art. "Math," not checked off on the list, was followed by a statement: "Hey, nobody is perfect." I had to contain myself from verbally addressing this person. While I am sure you probably do not own this shirt, we often complain about subjects we disliked in school or that we were "bad at." We often brag about not reading or complain when something is "too intellectual," but we do not notice the effect it has on our children. They mimic our every move. If we complain we hated science in school, they will hate it to. If they do not see us reading, they will wonder why they have to. If they hear you found *Navi* boring, they will wonder why you are sending them to school to learn it. Be careful not to push your own negative experiences in school onto your kids or they may not be open to something they could really enjoy and be good at. It is important for kids that the school, community, and family all support their endeavors and complement each other whenever possible in reinforcing a passion for learning. The biggest role models in a child's life are their parents. You must model the behavior you want your children to possess. Push yourself this year to learn something new and your whole family will benefit.



Favorite, Easy, "Melt in Your Mouth" Apple Cake

BY PEARL COHEN

Ingredients:

2 cups flour
1 tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp baking soda
1/4 tsp salt
1 cup sugar
1/2 cup + 1 tbsp applesauce
1/2 cup + 1 tbsp rice or soy milk
2 large eggs
2-3 large apples peeled and roughly chopped (If using a food processor take care not to mush them)
1/4 cup sugar blended with 1 tsp cinnamon for topping



Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees

Coat a 9" springform pan (or other rounded pan) with cooking spray

Mix flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt in bottom of mixing bowl

Blend in sugar, apple sauce, rice/soy milk and eggs

Stir in chopped apples

Spread in prepared pan

Sprinkle sugar cinnamon mixture over top

Bake 55-65 minutes until toothpick comes out clean

Cool in pan, then remove sides if using spring form pan



Fun Frugal Family Friendly Fare

BY YOSHI SHAPIRO

This past summer, Malka and I wanted to take an overnight trip to somewhere not too far from Teaneck. Malka and Kineret had just finished school for the year and they had a couple free days before their “grueling” summer at Camp Hillel. I decided to look into planning a 2-day/1-night child-friendly adventure that was within 2 hours driving of the Teaneck area.

We came up with the following itinerary:

Day 1 – Sesame Place in Langhorne, PA

Night 1 – Hotel Near Sesame Place

Day 2 – Please Touch Museum in Philadelphia, PA

The retail cost of our itinerary for 3 people was a little over \$500, broken down as follows:

Sesame Place Admission - \$65/ticket for 3 people - \$195

Sesame Place Parking - \$17/car

Hotel Near Sesame Place – Avg. Cost \$250 in summer (Peak Season)

Please Touch Museum Admission - \$16/ticket for 3 people - \$48

Please Touch Museum Parking - \$8/car

Total = \$518

This estimate does not include gas, tolls, or food, which can put the total price of this 2-day excursion to almost \$600.

However, me being me, I was determined to spend as little as possible on our little adventure. Here is how I went about it.

Day 1 –

Sesame Place Admission - With a little planning, Sesame Place can be very affordable for families. They offer various promotions throughout the summer including 2 days for the price of 1, \$20 off admission after 3pm, and discounted season passes. However, as we only wanted to go one time during the 2013 season, our best bet was finding a group of people (15 minimum) who wanted to go on the same day. The price of tickets is heavily discounted when you find a group rate. In addition, if you go earlier in the summer (generally before public schools let out for the summer), you can get tickets for as low as \$25 per person including weekends. Luckily for us, Jewish schools generally let out a

week before public schools, so the second to last Sunday in June worked out perfectly once we found a group (shout out to Keith Kaplan for his Teaneck Shuls post and Kate Davis for organizing 😊), and only cost us \$25 per person, plus \$2 shipping.

Total cost for Sesame Place admission: \$77

Sesame Place Parking – Parking doesn’t come cheap at most amusement parks and Sesame Place is no exception. General Parking costs \$17/day, and Preferred Parking is \$20/day. However, within 1 mile of the park are three Marriott properties, all of which offer free parking and shuttles. The closest and newest property, the Springhill Suites Philadelphia Langhorne, is adjacent to the parking lot, and is less than a 5-minute walk to the front gate. So one might ask, why would I want to spend \$250 to stay at one of these properties, when I could just pay the \$17 parking, and stay at a property a little farther away from Langhorne for half the price. This brings me to my next topic.

Total cost for Sesame Place parking: \$0

Hotel Near Sesame Place – There are three Marriott properties extremely close to Sesame Place: Residence Inn Philadelphia Langhorne, Courtyard by Marriott Philadelphia Langhorne, and Springhill Suites Philadelphia Langhorne. Each property has an average cost of \$200-\$300 in the summer, due to the spaciousness of their rooms (many rooms are all-suite), free breakfast, and their proximity to the park. However, there is a way to stay at any of these properties for free.

The Marriott Rewards Visa credit card, offered by Chase, has a regular offer of 50,000 points with \$1,000 spending within 3 months. However, there are “specialized links” (easily Googled) which have the same offer, but with 70,000 points after \$1,000 spending within 3 months. The card is fee-free the first year, and also comes with a free stay at a Category 1-4 Marriott hotel once you’re approved, and an anniversary bonus of 1 free night stay at a Category 1-5 hotel every year.

The Springhill Suites Philadelphia Langhorne, the newest of Marriott’s Langhorne hotels and easily walkable to the park, is only a category 3 hotel, meaning as soon as you’re approved for the card, you can use it to stay at this hotel 1 night for free. If you wanted to stay more than 1 night, you

could use your 70,000 points to stay for up to 5 nights more (a category 3 only costs 15,000 points per night, with every fifth night free), and still have 10,000 points left over for an additional vacation.

The following year, you would have a free night at a category 1-5 hotel, which would include all three hotels, as the Residence Inn Philadelphia Langhorne and the Courtyard by Marriott Philadelphia Langhorne are both category 5 hotels. The credit card does come with an \$85 annual fee after the first year, but the second year free night certificate hits your account before the annual fee hits, meaning even if you canceled the card after the first year, you'd still get a second free night. We signed up for the card in June 2012, used it to stay in Sesame for one night that year, used our second free night to stay in Sesame this year, and then canceled the card. We received free parking, free breakfast, and a free suite.

Total cost for hotel near Sesame Place: \$0

Day 2 –

Please Touch Museum Admission – The Please Touch Museum, one of the nation's premier children's museums with fun for adults and kids alike, is located in Philadelphia, PA. Regular tickets cost \$16, and group tickets for groups of 15 or more cost \$13. In addition, the carousel inside the museum is not included in the admission price and costs \$3 per ride. A couple times a year they sell discount tickets for half price on LivingSocial.com (\$9 for museum admission and a carousel ride), but, unfortunately, I had missed out on this deal, so I went searching elsewhere. I saw that some people were selling tickets to the museum on Ebay, and was able to get one ticket for \$8. When I received the ticket, I saw that it was a free ticket given out by Recyclebank (at the time I had no idea what this was). I Googled Recyclebank, and was taken to the website Recyclebank.com. With a little investigating, I realized that getting free tickets to the museum was fairly easy.

Recyclebank is a company that rewards people for taking everyday green actions with discounts and deals from thousands of local and national businesses. Once you sign up for an account on their website, there are many easy ways to earn points by learning about ways to make the environment more green. You can fill out surveys, take pledges, and a variety of other activities on the site. Some of these activities will give you as much as 150 points for less than 2 minutes of work. Two hundred points on their site lets you redeem for an instant printable ticket to the Please Touch Museum. All I did was create an account for Malka, Kineret and me, and 15 minutes later, I had three printed tickets to the museum. Since Kineret doesn't like carousels,

the entire museum was free for us. I then resold the original ticket that I bought on Ebay, and actually made \$2 profit.

Total cost for Please Touch Museum admission: \$-2

Please Touch Museum Parking – On-site parking is available in the Please Touch Museum's parking lot directly next to the Museum, and is \$8 per car. However, the entire street that the museum is located on has free street parking, and is about the same distance from the car as the museum's parking lot. No special tricks here, but no reason to pay an extra \$8 when the street parking was safe and the same distance.

Total cost for Please Touch Museum parking: \$0

Total cost for entire trip (excluding gas, tolls and food): \$75

The same practices applied to our trip above can be applied to any trip: create an itinerary, do some research, have fun with it, and make some memories. I wish the entire Shaare Tefillah congregation a *Shana Tova Umetukah*, a year filled with health, happiness, laughter, and love.



Simcha Gedolah, Indeed!:

Lessons learned and tips on how to get there yourself

BY ALIZA NEUER

There is a club that many of us in our community don't even realize exists. Initiation is one's own personal journey, but it is long, arduous and challenging none the less. To those who are still unaware and have yet to begin the process, I am referring to members like our family and anyone else, who has experienced the joy of planning a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* in North America. To the initiated, we understand the lingo of all logistics involved, the physical and emotional toll, and the entire world of "crazy" that accompanied marking our *smachot*. Now that our family has taken part in this process ourselves, I am resolved to share what I've learned along the way, with the hopes that this knowledge will ensure peaceful planning and a truly meaningful occasion for your family.

Ahhh, a simcha. The joy! What do the uninitiated and naïve know from? We know what we know, and we reference the past – notably, making a *Brit* or a *Simchat Bat*. It was stressful, certainly, to a degree. Researching and delivering meaningful *divrei Torah* to explain our choice of names, deciding between cold bagels and lox or hot omelets, what soft cotton (pre-laundered) our babies would wear—all these things definitely required attention, some planning, and, undeniably, pressure.

But, it's just so different with a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. For one, in our first instance, your infant just shows up. And that commitment level *alone* is significant enough to elicit comments

of marvel and awe from all your guests! "*Mazal tov!* She's/he's beautiful." You and your families are just gushing with *nachat*. The happiness is effusive and palpable. Everyone seems to be having a great time (parents' exhaustion aside) and expectations are pretty low, for the most part. There are no weeks of planning what the family will wear (wait, the ties shouldn't match?), when you'll fit in formal photographs, editing language for your invitation, reserving venues and caterers months (years) in advance, elaborate flower arrangements, tremendous expectations, etc—nothing like this. And yet, are these not some of the sweetest and most significant moments of our lives? Were these far smaller, inordinately more modest events any less joyous as a result of their more casual trappings? (Even if about half of your 15 or 16 pictures have someone's thumb blocking the baby's face?)

Though it has been said before, it must be re-iterated and deeply absorbed by those planning to mark their child's upcoming milestone in life—make it *meaningful*. One family may have a very different vision than yours of what "meaningful" entails for them, and that's the point. Luckily, it matters not what is specific to your family that resonates, and the choices will be easy once you decide that control is personally motivated and not external. Although you wouldn't know it much from what you see, and admittedly it can be hard to embrace at first, there still exists a freedom to create a unique template that is yours alone. Instead of

succumbing to the pressure and attempting, beyond our means, so often, to mimic every detail of the *simcha* model around us, relax and plan something special for your family. Guaranteed 100% to be effective in reducing almost all stress! Really. Think about it. Once you accept that expectations are personal and familial, your determined focus on infusing significance into your *simcha* will guide every choice and decision you make.

I do not deny that logistical planning will often be stressful regardless, and that I may have been quite disappointed when my skirt for Friday night was mistakenly lost forever to the garbage, but if every family outing only becomes worth the value of what the photo will produce for the video montage, folly has taken over. (Spoiler Alert! You *can* pull off a terrific *simcha* without a baby picture compilation.) While this milestone certainly marks their age, we must be mindful that this is not just an elaborate birthday party, rather a religious marking of our child's entry into the *halachic* world.

We make a celebration of hope, essentially. We invite many to join us as we proclaim our many blessings as these *bnei/bnot mitzvot* join the life of a committed Jew. To be clear, I am not advising against planning for lovely aesthetics and delicious food, ("what, no *chulent*?") or things that you believe will enhance the feeling of your *simcha*—but rather to make this event about what *it really stands for and for your family*, rather than feeling the need to replicate what others have done or are doing as your standard.

It is the personalization of the event that truly makes it significant to you and the attendees. Personalization doesn't translate to an over-abundant display of your child's interests as themes, centerpieces, and dance-floor choices. It is more of a rare and wonderful opportunity to share your child with your community, a moment that can get easily overshadowed by contrived expectations. Reaching the age of *mitzvah* is really all that is required of a child. The manner and approach in which you choose to celebrate is completely yours to shape.

While every parent would publicly proclaim that it was "all about my child," too often unrealistic pressure is placed on the children to perform beyond their capacity. I will never forget our first meeting with the *Bar Mitzvah* instructor, (the wonderful) Eli Ehrenfeld. As the four of us sat at our dining room table, he began with his most pressing question, directed solely at our son: "Do *you* want to do this?" Not yet familiar with the admirable, über-mentschy and whole-Torah approach that Eli takes, we all paused, as Eli explained to us further. He told us that this was a great commitment, one requiring maturity and diligence, and most especially the will of the child. While it is certainly sweet for a child to *lain/learn/prepare* a *mitzvah* project and share with the community, these are all but extras. There were many times during the process that we had to take a step back and ask our son if he wanted to continue. Outside of the so-called Modern Orthodox world, when it comes to the celebration standards and to the expectation of the *Bnei/Bnot Mitzvah*, for the most part it's reminiscent of those long-ago parties, held when they were infants—way more subdued and mostly just wonderful if they show up!

While most people will tell you that it's all about the planning, I would agree on a certain level. Planning should entail speaking with as many people you feel close to about their experiences, and certainly getting an idea of what logistics might be involved that you never even thought about. You may also want to glean some nice ideas of what to incorporate into your *simcha* as well as great cost-saving tips. (There is a world of *gemachs* that is both vast and impressive.) Personally, we hosted a tremendous amount of family for Shabbat and had no idea until the last minute that there was a code of etiquette attached to this situation. So, if you're lucky enough to not be like us, who changed our *Bar Mitzvah* plans 6 weeks before the event (!), discuss with anyone you know who has planned something similar and ask for advice. Don't be shy. Surprisingly, when prompted, people love to tell you about what worked and what didn't. But do this in moderation. Don't commit a year or years of your life planning on superfluous details, over-lamenting on Facebook about finding the perfect sparkly shoe or securing the best "motivators" in the multiverse, or reacting in aghast when someone reveals that, no it's 6 months in advance of their *simcha* and they're still murky on the details. The horror! While this PhD in planning, may certainly make for a fabulous show of a party, it will be one that comes at cost to you and your family that is never, ever, worth the investment.

Lastly, one of the most critical aspects is the support from family and friends. You will need help, period. Having financial ability to hire more people in the delegation of tasks is huge, but don't discount the necessary contribution of family and friends. It could be anything from an errand to

the store, listening to your child's speech, baking an extra batch of brownies, etc. When someone volunteers to help, as hard as it may be for some, accept! Mostly it's the initiated who will reach out, knowing what you're going through (and taking pity), but some other people may surprise you. Don't worry, you will return the favor as opportunity arises, and it truly enjoins the "helpers" in contributing to your *simcha*.

It's true when people say that experiences afford us a certain wisdom we lacked prior. While we set about marking wonderful milestones in our lives, often we need to yield to uncontrollable and unexpected circumstances. Plan as we may, life has a funny way of intervening! The club, that I now am a part of, has taught me much. Through the process, our family faced many unexpected challenges, eventually easing us in the appropriate direction we should have been on to begin with. This knowledge may have been earned with some slight scarring, but I happily share it, with the hopes that it will help you in planning some of the most memorable events in your lives. We celebrated with the community, but it was the intimate and warm home family celebration that lent greatest significance, as we recalled that once (beautiful) infant and marveled with *nachat* at the *Bar Mitzvah* that he had become. *Amen!*



Meet Two of Our Amazing Group Leaders!

Naomi Manas



- School: I am in 11th grade at Frisch
- Summer: I worked at a backyard camp
- Favorite food: Cereal
- My favorite part of Groups: Free play
- Hobbies: sports and reading

Yaeli Rothschild



- School: I am an 8th grade student at the Rosenbaum Yeshiva of North Jersey (RYNJ)
- Summer: This past summer I babysat and walked dogs
- Favorite food: I've always loved my mother's homemade spaghetti and meatballs
- Favorite part of Groups: Getting to know the kids by talking and playing with them
- Hobbies: Skiing, swimming, art, babysitting, and dog walking

The time has come!
For many of us, it may feel as if *Elul* has snuck up upon us. Rosh Hashana hasn't been this early in over 90 years. We are barely finished with camp and our Rosh Hashana plans need to be underway. Our children are starting school in August and it still may feel like summer.

Where in all this hustle and bustle is anyone, especially a working mother, supposed to find time to reflect on the year? Areas to improve? Accomplishments to be proud of? Hopes and goals for the upcoming year? Areas to do *teshuva*? People from whom to ask for forgiveness? And the list goes on.

The challenge is not only finding this time to reflect but also to channel this concentration during *davening* (and not be worrying about whether the food on the hot plate will be burnt before your company arrives for lunch).

You don't have to look far for female role models who are highlighted in Rosh Hashana *davening*. Take Chana, the

D'var Torah

BY TERI NORMAND

*"Ata Takum TeRachem Zion, Ki Es
L'Chenena, Ki Va Moed,"
"Arise and have mercy on Zion, for
her time for Divine grace has come,
for the appointed season has arrived."
- Tehillim 102:14*

wife of Elkanah, and mother of *Shmuel Hanavi*. As seen in the *haftorah*, which is read on the first day of Rosh Hashana (*Shmuel Aleph, perek aleph*), the *pesukim* describe in detail the way Chana *davened* to *Hashem* and poured her heart out. She knew very clearly what she was *davening* for. She knew what her dream, which had not yet been fulfilled, was. Despite being accused by the *Kobain Hagadol*, Eli, of being drunk for *davening* silently with her lips moving but not making a sound, she explained her purpose of what she was doing and how she poured out her soul to *Hashem*.

But how does one go about doing that? Perhaps it was the awareness that it was up to her to reflect on her relationship with *Hashem*. She allowed herself to be transformed by the experience of praying itself.

May we all strive to be inspired and transformed by the *Yamim Noraim tefillot* and be marked in the *Book of Life*.

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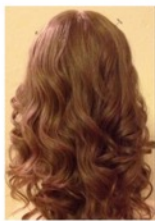
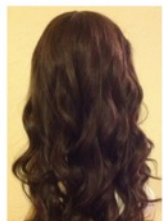


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| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | | | | | 8/31 Slichot: 12:55 |
| 9/1 Shacharit: 8:30 Mincha: 7:10 | 9/2 Shacharit: 8:15 Mincha: 7:10 | 9/3 Shacharit: TBD Mincha: 7:10 | Erev R"H 9/4 Shacharit: TBD Remember Eruv Tavshilin Candles: 7:05 Mincha: 7:05 | R"H 1 9/6 Shacharit: 8:30 Mincha #1: 1:26 Mincha #2: 7:05 Maariv: 7:46 Candles/Preparations After: 8:08 | R"H 2 9/6 Shacharit: 8:30 Mincha #1: 1:26 Mincha #2: 7:05 Maariv: 7:20 Candles Before: 7:01 | 9/7 Haazinu Shabbat Shuva Shacharit: 7:15/9:00 Drasha: 10:45* Mincha 6:55 Maariv: 8:01 Shabbat Ends: 8:07 |
| Tzom Gedalia 9/8 Fast Starts: 5:05 Shacharit: 8:00 Mincha #1: 1:25 Mincha #2: 6:45 Maariv: 7:16 Fast Ends: 7:46 | 9/9 Shacharit: TBD Mincha: 6:55 | 9/10 Shacharit: TBD Mincha: 6:55 | 9/11 Shacharit: TBD Mincha: 6:55 | 9/12 Shacharit: TBD Mincha: 6:55 | Erev Y"K 9/13 Shacharit: TBD Mincha: 4:00 Candles: 6:50 Kol Nidre: 6:55 | Yom Kippur 9/14 Shacharit: 8:45 Yizkor Not Before: 11:15 Mincha & Neilah: 5:25 Fast Ends: 7:53 |
| 9/15 Shacharit: 8:30 Mincha: 6:50 | 9/16 Shacharit: 8:30 Mincha: 6:50 | 9/17 Shacharit: 8:30 Mincha: 6:50 | Erev Sukkot 9/18 Shacharit: 6:15 Remember Eruv Tavshilin Candles: 6:41 Mincha: 6:45 | Sukkot 1 9/19 Shacharit: 7:15/9:00 Mincha: 6:45 Candles/Preparations After: 7:44 | Sukkot 2 9/20 Shacharit: 7:15/9:00 Candles Before: 6:38 Mincha: 6:45 | Shabbat C"H 9/21 Shacharit: 7:15/9:00 Mincha: 6:30 Maariv: 7:38 Shabbat Ends: 7:44 |
| 9/22 Shacharit: 8:30 Mincha: 6:35 | 9/23 Shacharit: TBD Mincha: 6:35 | 9/24 Shacharit: TBD Mincha: 6:35 | Hoshana Rabba 9/25 Shacharit: TBD Remember Eruv Tavshilin Candles: 6:29 Mincha: 6:30 | Shmini Atzeret 9/26 Shacharit: 7:15/9:00 Yizkor Not Before: 10:15 Mincha followed by Simchat Torah Auction & Maariv: 6:30 Candles and Preparation after: 7:33 | Simchat Torah 9/27 Shacharit: 7:15/9:00 Candles: 6:26 Mincha: 6:30 | Breishit 9/28 Shacharit: 7:15/9:00 Mincha: 6:15 Maariv: 7:26 Shabbat Ends: 7:32 |

* Following Shacharit, at 10:45, Rabbi Schiowitz will be giving his Shabbat Shuva Drasha on "Our Happiest Day"

Shana Tova u'Metuka!