

News from Beit Lev

September 18, 2011

New Beginnings

We are thrilled that you have joined us to take part in this inaugural year of the Kol HaLev's *Beit Lev*, House of Heart. It is with great excitement that our education committee has been meeting for almost a full year to plan the future of our "unschool" approach to Jewish learning. Many members of our community have taken part in the discussions of how we want to educate both ourselves and our children and we are all thrilled to see our plans come to fruition.

Our first session was so much fun. I had goose bumps as I walked the halls. I listened to the youngest group sing, observed as the older children created tzedakah boxes, and listened to truly inspiring conversations with parents and Rabbi Geoff.

Our first Community Gathering was also a success. We were joined by Cantor George who impressed us all with his Shofar skills and Mr. Doug, our song leader, who led children and parents in song.

For questions, comments or to volunteer to help, please contact Liz Baker (lizb1125@mac.com) or Susannah Wolf (susannah@gauck.com)



Cantor George sharing the sounds of the Shofar

Meet Our Teachers

Sarena Loya is a graduate student in Clinical Psychology at Loyola University and has spent several years working at both religious schools and Jewish camps. She is engaging, dynamic, smart and eager to be working with our kids. Some of you were lucky enough to meet Sarena at our first Family Shabbat; in addition to teaching our children Sarena is looking forward to getting to know our families.

We are also thrilled to introduce Doug Putchat as our song leader. Doug is a Special Education Teacher at Maiden Choice School in Arbutus. He has spent several years working with children as a song leader and summer camp counselor.

Doug comes to us with vast expertise in the field of Jewish Studies. He has a BA in Jewish Studies from Penn State University and MA from Baltimore Hebrew University in Jewish Education. It was clear on Sunday that Doug is a great fit. He connects with children through song and is a dynamic and engaging song leader.

We are thrilled to welcome Sarena and Doug to Kol HaLev!

From Morah Sarena

Group 1 (5-6 year olds): This week we discussed the importance of names and how every person's name makes them unique. The children each had the opportunity to see and learn the first letter of their names in Hebrew. We decorated puzzle pieces with the Hebrew letters and then put them all together in one big puzzle.

Questions you might ask you child: Do you remember the first letter of your name in Hebrew? What does it sound like? What does it look like?

Group 2 (7-8 year olds): This week we discussed the significance of new beginnings in the context of the *Shehecheyanu*, a prayer that is recited at the beginning of many major Jewish holidays and also in acknowledgement and appreciation of any new events, accomplishments, or milestones that we have reached. With Mr. Doug's help we learned how to sing the *Shehecheyanu* and practiced it together.

Questions you might ask you child: What is the *Shehecheyanu* about? When would be a time that we recite the *Shehecheyanu*? What is something new that you are looking forward to this year?

I encourage you to check out this article, which does a great job of illustrating the relevance of the *Shehecheyanu* and appreciating "firsts" in our daily lives.

http://www.thejewishweek.com/features/success_without_tsuris/beyond_shehecheyanu_innovative_firsts_deserve_be_observed

Thanks to all of the families and children for making the first day so special! I look forward to getting to know each of you and your children in the coming year.

Shannah Tova! Sarena



Hebrew Letter Name Puzzle

Tikkun Olam

Below is a brief overview of what the children discussed during the tikkun olam project, decorating tzedakah boxes. During Rosh Hashanah, these boxes will be available for members of the Kol HaLev community to take home with them, and we will ask them to report back to the children later this year where they donated money.

What is Tzedakah?

1. It's a mitzvah, which means it is not only a good thing to do, it's an important thing to do.
2. In part, it means to make things "more fair."
3. What are some things that are not fair or that people need help with? Can we help them by putting money in these boxes to give them?
 - a. Examples: Some people don't have enough money for food, books for school, or clothes.
 - b. Sometimes it's hard for people to ask for or accept help, even if they need it.
4. How can we give tzedakah? How will I know that the people who need it will get it?
 - a. One of the best ways to help others is to give people the ability to help themselves. They get what they need, and they don't have to feel bad about it. It's a double-mitzvah!
 - b. There are organizations we can give the money to that will get people the help they need.

Points of Discussion:

- How did you feel about decorating the tzedakah box?
- What did you learn about tzedakah?
- What can you tell your family about what we did today in Beit Lev?



Tzedakah Boxes created by Beit Lev students

From Rabbi Geoff

Parent Session

The parents and I explored a basic building block of Judaism and Jewish life...the blessing formula. This included a fantastic unpacking of each of the elements (the first six words), and possible alternatives or departures once we understand the original insights and intents. Options included in the Reconstructionist prayer book (siddur). I thought it was really helpful and informative to both Jews and those without a Jewish background. This "formula" was crafted to include both praise and petition. We also discussed the relationship between "bracha" (the noun, "blessing"), "berech" ("knee") and "b'reychah" ("pool")?

Praise + Petition/request = Prayer

Prayer arose from "Rabbinic Judaism"; prayer in lieu of ritual sacrifice.

Baruch (blessed) is composed of the phonemes (sounds) B R and Ch. These phonemes are related to:

Berech (knee) → bending knees and ceding authority

B'reycha (pool) → immersion into a different (refreshing?) environment

Attah (you)

Adonai (the word used in lieu of G-d's true name) → How do you refer to that which is holy? Sacred? Distinct? Worthy?

Eloheinu (out G-d) → the Jewish G-d? Does each individual have his or her own G-d? Is this the G-d of some but not all?

Melech (king) → We pray not to a king, but to that which/whom is greater than sovereign.

Ha'olam (olam=time) → Time is not fixed.

Parents discussed prayers' components and their relevance for individuals and the Jewish People.

Group 3 (ages 9-11 years old and parents this week)

We started our first gathering with the older kids and their parents by discussing the interaction between American Culture and Jewish Culture. As language is a crucial component of any culture, we explored Hebrew words that we know. Kids and their parents offered Hebrew words including commonly known words such as challah as well as less-known vocabulary like zucchini. The purpose for this activity is so that we can have a base of Hebrew vocabulary -- key words, objects, and ideas. We concluded the conversation with a discussion about what we want to achieve, learn and encounter this year. It is truly important that both kids and their abbas ("fathers") and eemas (mothers) participate in defining and designing our "curriculum."

Thank you to Christine Layton for her notes. Parents, please contribute to this section. Your thoughts and input are most welcome!

Our Wish List

- **SNACKS!** Parents, please respond to an email from Liz Baker for a snack schedule. We currently have 35 children enrolled in Beit Lev and it is our goal to provide a simple, yet, healthy snack during our Community Gathering Time.
- We are currently seeking donations of craft and school supplies. Pencils, pens, paper, construction paper, markers, craft supplies...you name it!

Reminders...

Daily Schedule

** Please note that slight adjustments have been made to the age groupings based on feedback from our 1st class*

	Ages 5-6	Ages 7-8	Ages 9-11	Adults
10 am to 11 am	Lesson with Teacher	Tikkun Olam Projects		Coffee, bagels and Conversation with Rabbi Geoff
11 am to 11:30 am	Community Gathering for snack, songs, prayer and celebration			
11:30 am to 12:30 pm	Dismissed	Lesson with Teacher	'Seminar' with Rabbi Geoff	

Beit Lev 's Schedule Dates

September 18, 2011	December 4, 2011	March 4, 2012
October 2, 2011	December 18, 2011	March 18, 2012
October 16, 2011	January 15, 2012	April 1, 2012
November 6, 2011	February 5, 2012	April 15, 2012
November 20, 2011	February 19, 2012	May 6, 2012