



### Happy Purim

#### Schedule of Events

March 30<sup>th</sup>: 11:00–12:30 Keshet-Konnections Session 5. This time the teens will join a live videoconference with teens from Sderot, Israel who are under daily missile attacks.

#### Past week's events

March 20<sup>th</sup>: We had Faryn Bierman speak with our students about her experience with school clubs. She gave some ideas of different clubs students could be involved in, how to start a club and how the system actually works. It was inspiring.

March 21st: End of our Purim Fundraiser for 'Ezer Mitzion' organization. The final amount collected is \$540. This money will go towards making an ill child and his family happy on Purim.

#### Kol Hakavod

- To the students who took the fundraiser seriously and to all the donors.
- To Logan Belz who sold the most cards for the Purim fundraiser!!!

#### Unmasking thoughts on Purim

Based on an article By Michael Gourarie

The festival of Purim is the happiest day in the Jewish calendar. One of the traditions of Purim is dressing up in fancy dress and wearing masks. What is the reason for this custom and how does it connect to the celebration of the day?

Our sages tell us that "Happiness breaks boundaries." When people are truly happy they loosen up and do things that are beyond the norm. But there are two types of happiness. The first is egocentric and hedonistic, seeking pleasure and a good feeling. This is the festivity that we often witness in pubs or wild parties where there is little purpose or focus. Here the boundaries that are

broken are those of self-discipline and self-respect. This is when people curse, insult and often become violent. It is not true happiness.

The second form of happiness is one with purpose and meaning. The goal of this joy is not external pleasure but rather the celebration of meaningful milestones, spiritual growth or major accomplishments. This happiness is a true and lasting one.

The boundaries that are broken with real joy are the barriers and fences that separate us from each other. The happiness allows us to develop a different perspective on ourselves and other people. We stop judging others by their external behavior and things they say and do, and we begin to appreciate their inner soul. We begin to understand that the annoying actions, feelings and personality traits that separate us from others are only external masks that conceal the true human being. Beneath the mask there is a pristine soul that makes him/her a special human being. The energy of the happiness allows us to break through the mask and see what is beneath.

On Purim we dress up, reminding ourselves and others that our outward appearance and behavior is always a mask. We realize that all those things that separate us from each other have nothing to do with our real identity. The celebration of Purim gives us the ability to look behind the mask and discover the real person.

#### Educational corner – Ms. Hudson – Hebrew

Our project is driven by the belief that mastery of Hebrew will promote students' understanding of their history, culture, and tradition. Fostering a sense of belonging to the Jewish people, cultivating strong ties with Medinat Yisrael and Am Yisrael, and igniting a commitment to lifelong Jewish learning.

The materials we use are filled with challenging, relevant content. During each class we integrate the four major language-acquisition skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Our students learn

Hebrew by using a wide range of sources, including classical Hebrew texts, Israeli music, historical documents, poetry and drama. The materials and exercises our students encounter increase in complexity as they progress toward proficiency in Hebrew.

In the alpha level class we are finishing the second book. Some of the themes of the last chapter include letters from Israel, our likes and dislikes, a weekly calendar and schedule, the creation (Sefer Bereshit first chapter), pros and cons about the internet, and a poem about a grandfather and a child.

In the mid level class we started a new book that focuses on colors and shapes. Some of the themes include putting a wardrobe together, Kandinsky's ideas about colors, a scientific article about Zebras, comparing a specific Persian tale to the Megilat Ester, the history of the Star of David and the Israeli flag, and the origin of writing from right to left and from left to right.

In the more advanced class we are finishing a book about dreams and dreamers. Some of the themes include Joseph and Jacob's dreams, facts about sleep and dreams, fairy tales as dreams, brain research concerning the sleep of birds and cats, and the connection between art and dreams.

By participating in each lesson students at all levels are able to increase their Hebrew proficiency by reading and writing more complicated texts, and by speaking and listening to songs and dialogues with increased complexity.

### **An insight on the Massacre in Jerusalem**

*The famous story about the great sage Hillel the Elder:*

Hillel used to earn a *Trepik* a day, half of which he gave to the guard at the house of study and half he used to support himself and his family. One day he earned nothing and the guard would not let him in. He climbed up and sat on the skylight so that he could hear the words of the living God from Shemayah and Avtalyon. It happened that it was a Friday in the winter and the snow from the sky fell upon him. At the break of dawn, Shemaya said to Avtalyon: "My brother. Usually it is light but today it is dark. Perhaps the day is cloudy." They looked up and saw the shape of a man against the window, and they found three cubits of snow upon him. They took off the snow, washed him, anointed him and put him by the fire. They said: "He is worthy for Shabbat to be profaned for his sake." (Yoma 35b)

This is an unbelievable story:

Doron Mahareta of blessed and saintly memory HY"D was one of the eight Yeshiva students that were massacred last week in Yeshivat Mercaz HaRav in Jerusalem.

Last night, I paid a Shiva (condolence) call to Doron's family. Every single type of Jew was sitting together, from Ethiopians to Polish Chassidim, from knit kippot to Yerushalmi white kippot, from jeans and sandals to long black frocks. Too bad that it takes a martyr of Doron's magnitude to unite everyone.

One of the rabbis from Mercaz HaRav told me the most amazing story you'll ever hear about Doron's dedication to learning Torah, a story that competes with the Talmud's account of Hillel's near freezing on the roof of Shmaya and Avtalion's Yeshiva.

Doron wanted to learn Torah in Mercaz HaRav, one of the best of Israel's yeshivas. But, since his early schooling was in Ethiopia, he lacked a strong background in Talmud. The Yeshiva rejected him. He wasn't discouraged. He asked, "If you won't let me learn Torah, will you let me wash the dishes in the mess hall?" For a year and a half, Doron washed dishes. But, he spent every spare minute in the study hall. He inquired what the yeshiva boys were learning, and spent most of the nights and all of his Shabbatot with his head in the Gemara learning what they learned. One day, the "dish washer" asked the Rosh Yeshiva to test him. The Rosh Yeshiva politely smiled and tried to gently dismiss Doron, but Doron wouldn't budge. He forced the Rosh Yeshiva into a Torah discussion; the next day, he was no longer a dish washer but a full-fledged "yeshiva student".

On weekends, when Doron would come home to visit his family in Ashdod, he'd spend the entire Shabbat either in the Melitzer Shul or the neighboring Gerrer Shul learning Shulchan Aruch (Code of Jewish Law) and its commentaries. Three weeks ago, he finished the entire Shulchan Aruch and principal commentaries. Doron achieved in his tender 26 years what others don't attain in 88 years. He truly was an unblemished sacrifice, who gave his life for all of us.

**Shabbat Shalom**