

*So last Sunday. Benjamin Roberts (aged 12) suggests that **The New School for All Things Jewish** ought to celebrate Annual Pickle Day.*

*Faculty member Jody Mace points out that 'the reason so many Hebrew/religious schools fail at reaching kids is because they don't have Pickle Day.' 'Let's not make the same mistake!'*

*We wouldn't dream of it. Pickle Day is already on our schedule...*

## ***The Havurat Olam Shmoozeletter***

**February 02, 2008 - 26 Shevat 5767  
Volume V, Issue 5**

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### **Update on the New School for All Things Jewish**

#### ***Congregation Havurat Olam - Where Learning Tastes Great!***

**By Jody Mace**

Congregation Havurat Olam believes that when kids are learning about Judaism, they should be active, joyful, and excited.

Our lively religious school, **The New School for All Things Jewish**, proves that it's possible. At the beginning of each session, kids crowd around student rabbi Dr. Barbara Thiede, jockeying for position to show her what they learned over the last week. Learning blessings, attending services, performing mitzvot, translating Hebrew words, and completing chapters in their workbooks or accompanying CDs all earn them "Kitah Credits," which can be redeemed for prizes later in the year.

Once a month, students take a break from classroom work for a "flex day" and spend the morning doing something special – maybe a field trip, preparing a skit for a service, or a craft project. January's flex day focused on Tu B'shevat and it was, in a word, delicious.

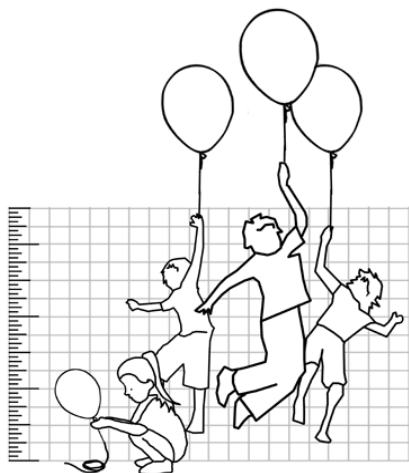
Each kid created his or her own fruit pizza as a way to enjoy a variety of fruits. The creations were as unique as the kids themselves. Some were geometric masterpieces of cherries and blueberries, while others were piled high with banana slices. A couple of kids selflessly put aside their pizzas to share with parents, but most couldn't resist the big sugar cookie, cream cheese frosting, and the best fruit the earth (and grocery store) had to offer.

Below-freezing temperatures did not deter the kids from taking their Tu B'shevat learning outside. They took an environmental survey of the grounds and learned that even in January, when nothing seems to be growing, there's a lot of "behind-the-scenes" action. They pondered questions such as these: What was different from last month? What happened to



the orange berries on the cotoneaster? What do gardeners do in January to help plants and to conserve water? And why was this bush blooming in mid-winter?

Flex day was rounded out, as always, with prayer and song. The kids joined together to practice the *Barchu*, which they will be leading at the next family service. Just as with all the learning at **The New School for All Things Jewish**, they didn't learn just by rote. They learned the meaning of each of the words, and the purpose and importance of the call to prayer. All the kids, from five on up, lead prayers as soon as they've mastered them, so the congregation can enjoy a Friday night service which is not only child-friendly, but child-led. It's a safe bet that there isn't a Shabbat service around led with more enthusiasm than the family service at Havurat Olam.



## Growing Again

### *We Welcome*

In our last *Shmoozeletter*, we admitted that one of our aims is to grow with people who, frankly, agree with us. We like hanging out with people who would rather forget those long hours of responsive reading and droning liturgy, who will enjoy actively engaging in a Torah discussion or, perhaps, contributing a story to a get-together. So how cool is it for us to welcome doctoral student Irene Van Riper (Irene obviously likes thinking and engaging....) and voiceover professional and master story-teller Joe Van Riper?

Very, very cool. (We remember that story the Van Ripers provided about the people of Chelm, after all.)

So it's about this: building a comfortable Jewish community that welcomes interfaith couples and all-Jewish families alike, that creates opportunities for relaxing together or studying together, that makes learning fun and services something to look forward to. **Welcome, Joe and Irene!**

## Second Friday Erev Shabbat Service

*February 08, 2008*

### *Parsha T'rumah*

The last third of the Book of Exodus is all about *stuff*: God gives directions on how to build the Tabernacle and everything that goes into it. The people Israel are confronted with tasks ranging from fine embroidery to goldsmithing as they fashion a menorah and the cherubim and sew cloth hangings and screens. Acacia wood poles are to be hollow, thank you very much, and the tent requires a covering of (yes, it's true) dolphin skins. You just don't know what you might find around Mt. Sinai and environs, do you?

We'd like to ask our kids to bring something to services to share with us – some thing that is absolutely and quintessentially Jewish. What is the importance of our Jewish stuff, from menorahs to havdalah sets, from mezuzahs to dreidels. Do we need stuff to know we are Jewish? Do we need stuff to act Jewishly?

**Event:** Second Friday Family Service

**Date:** January 08, 2008

**Time:** 7:00 p.m.  
**Location:** McGill Baptist Church  
 5300 Poplar Tent Rd.  
 Concord NC 28027 -9757 [map](#) [directions](#)



## Fifth Friday Family Erev Shabbat Service

*February 29, 2008*

*Parsha Vayakhei*

It's still about stuff. But it's pretty interesting to find out who gets what task in this section of Torah. Who has the skills needed? Who has the materials? Who has the spirit? What does this parsha tell us about what it takes to get folks with a reputation for stubbornness to cooperate?

Please join us for a service that will allow adults and children to engage in important Torah study. Because it's fun, actually.

**Event:** Fourth Friday Service  
**Date:** February 29, 2008  
**Time:** 7:00 p.m.  
**Location:** McGill Baptist Church  
 5300 Poplar Tent Rd.  
 Concord NC 28027 -9757 [map](#)  
[directions](#)

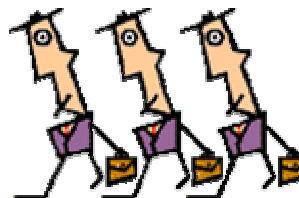


## Congregational Meeting

**February 24, 2008**

It's clear that with this sort of ongoing growth, we need to reassess where we are and where we are going. We're asking that our members send at least one person from their family to our congregational meeting on Sunday, February 24. Space, identity, future plans – they are all in deep need of focused attention. Bring something to nosh for our potluck dinner and mark those calendars in deep, dark, dramatic colors, please.

**Event:** Congregational Meeting  
**Date:** February 24, 2008  
**Time:** **Potluck Dinner:** 6:00 p.m.  
**Meeting:** promptly at 6:30  
**Location:** McGill Baptist Church  
 5300 Poplar Tent Rd.  
 Concord NC 28027 -9757 [map](#) [directions](#)



## Congregation Havurat Olam (and the Student Rabbi) Around Town

### *Exhibits, Lectures, and Presentations*

#### **Exhibit A: Discarding Sins**

Remember the nice guy who snapped a bunch of pictures at tashlich (we were throwing away our sins in the nearest body of water with, well, water still in it)?

Sean Meyers' photography exhibit entitled "The Faith Experience" will open at Waterworks Visual Arts Center in Salisbury on Friday, Feb 15th with a free reception from 6-8pm. The exhibit lasts about a month and will feature photos of Congregation Havurat Olam throwing away anxiety and stress and other things none of us need.... Go, folks, and remember what you threw away on Rosh Hashanah!

#### **Temple Beth El's Comparative Religion Program**

Can anyone actually lecture on the great minds of Jewish religion in thirty minutes? Barbara Thiede was asked to, so she tried, focusing on the contributions of Moses Mendelssohn, Hannah Arendt, and Emanuel Levinas. Temple Beth El asked us to post the lecture. Ethics to ethos - that's what it's all about.

#### **Congregation Havurat Olam Represented at the Cabarrus County MLK Breakfast**



We're a staple now. For the third year, Reb Barbara gave the blessing for youth at Cabarrus County's Dr. Martin Luther King Breakfast Celebration. It's an important annual event for our congregation, and we are committed to being part of the celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s dream. We share it.

### **Upcoming Events**

#### **Rosh Chodesh and Purim**

Let us know if you want to be added to our Rosh Chodesh list (monthly women's meeting). And expect announcements soon for our upcoming Purim Party featuring outrageous funny moments in skits and songs, costumes of original and amazing variety, and, of course, the chocolate fountain...

Did we miss any news from Congregation Havurat Olam? Let us know!

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