

## The Important Role of Gabbai at Or Olam

Most visitors to synagogues are familiar with the role of the rabbi and cantor. Another important, but often overlooked, role is that of the gabbai.

Originally, the gabbai was responsible for ensuring that the synagogue operated smoothly. He might collect and distribute tzedakah, make sure that congregants know what page to read from, and even maintain the cemetery.

Today, the gabbai's role centers mostly around the Torah service. Gabbais make sure that the service proceeds correctly, call congregants up for aliyahs, and, most importantly, guarantees that the Torah *leyner* pronounces all the words correctly.

The gabbai stands next to the person chanting from the Torah, and follows along with a printed document that contains the Torah portion, including vowels and trope marks. If the *leyner* mispronounces a word or forgets a vowel,

the gabbai says it correctly. It's not enough to know how to read Torah, however. The gabbai must also know the trope. If the *leyner*, who has no vowels or trope marks to refer to, gets stuck, the gabbai must be able to sing the word back with the correct trope, and get the *leyner* started again.

Why is it so important to get every word right? The text of the Torah has sacred integrity. If you change a vowel, the meaning of the word, sentence, or whole passage, might change. Even if nobody in the congregation will know the difference, those who chant from the Torah still have an obligation to deliver the message of Torah correctly.

The responsibility is so great that it is more than one person should have – thus the gabbai.

However, the Gabbai should make corrections as gently as possible. Just as important as making

sure the words of the Torah are delivered correctly is the responsibility to avoid publically humiliating someone, which our tradition tells us is akin to bloodshed.

At Torah Or Olam, the person chanting Torah is usually a lay person. Our rabbinic intern, Dr. Barbara Thiede, is studying for ordination at ALEPH, but the other people who *leyn* Torah are just regular folks – accountants, professors, and high school students. (We believe that our small congregation might have the highest per capita number of Torah chanters in the Southeast!) So our gabbais need to show sensitivity and understanding of the hard work required of *leyners*.

And who are Temple Or Olam's gabbais? Well, like our Torah *leyners*, they are regular folks...but their number is growing. Dr. Thiede is preparing to train several more congregants, both adults and

teenagers, to perform the important role of Torah service gabbai.

If you'd like a chance to learn more about *leyning* or "Gabbai-ing," please visit one of our Friday night services. The 2nd Friday of the month is a family service, and

the 4th Friday includes a Torah service. For more information, please visit our website, [www.or-olam.org](http://www.or-olam.org), email us at [info@or-olam.org](mailto:info@or-olam.org), or call us at 704-720-7577. ☆

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## Friendship Circle Launches Friends @ Home

Have you ever spent time with a child with special needs? Have you ever looked into their eyes and felt for the first time that you are being understood? Not judged by how you look and speak? For those who have, this is no revelation. Children with special needs are the sweetest, happiest, and most nonjudgmental people we've ever met. They are truly special, not for their disability, but rather for their gratefulness and positive attitude that so many of us desperately need.

This is the message we want the community to know and appreciate, and we have found the perfect advocates—teenage volunteers.

It's called Friends @ Home.

Once a week, one or two teen volunteers will spend an hour or two of their quality time with a special child in his or her home where they will hang out together. The child benefits because loneliness and isolation are all too common for children with special needs. The volunteer learns the important value of giving as well as acquiring a true and understanding friend who will impatiently await their visit every week without fail. The parents enjoy the much needed respite every week when the volunteer pays a visit.

You can play an important part of our community's Friendship Circle.

\* Do you know a teen who

would like to volunteer?

\* Do you know a family who has a child with special needs and would appreciate a weekly visit from a volunteer?

\* Would you like to drive a volunteer to their destination?

Call us today at 704-366-3984 or email us at [info@friendshipcircle.org](mailto:info@friendshipcircle.org) or check us out on the web [www.friendshipcircle.org](http://www.friendshipcircle.org).

Friendship Circle of North Carolina was founded by Lubavitch of North Carolina and serves children with special needs throughout the Charlotte community. ☆

## Talmud Torah Students Discover Judaism

Talmud Torah, which is part of Congregation Ohr HaTorah, has recently launched a "Discover Judaism" contest for its students who attend this Hebrew school on Sundays and Tuesdays. This highly successful project has set off a new wave of learning at the Talmud Torah of Charlotte. Each student received a personal Discover card with their name imprinted on the card along with their personal Discover status. Each of the Talmud Torah students has a variety of opportunities to earn valuable points that can buy a range of different great prizes.

From prompt attendance to attending synagogue services or participating in holiday programs like the recent Shofar factory, students can accumulate points rather quickly. Once a student reaches a mile-marking number of points, their status is elevated to a new level of membership. Students can track their points, add activities, and even download their homework by logging on to the Talmud

Torah's website [www.talmud-torah.net](http://www.talmud-torah.net).

One of the many programs that students can earn many points with is our amazing Aleph Champ Hebrew reading karate program. Similar to karate, everyone starts off with a white belt; as they advance in their Hebrew reading skills, so do their belt colors and their Discover points.

Due to Talmud Torah's popularity, we launched Talmud Torah 24/6! This an awesome website full of exciting activities, games, videos, and upcoming holiday information, guaranteeing that Talmud Torah students never get bored. You can explore this site by clicking on to: [www.TalmudTorah.net/kids](http://www.TalmudTorah.net/kids).

The Ohr HaTorah Talmud Torah meets every Sunday for grades 1-3, and every Sunday and Tuesday for grades 4-7. For complete scheduling information, visit [TalmudTorah.net/calendar](http://TalmudTorah.net/calendar).

We can be reached at 704-366-3984, by email at [info@TalmudTorah.net](mailto:info@TalmudTorah.net), or on the web at [www.TalmudTorah.net](http://www.TalmudTorah.net). ☆



are you prepared for long term care?

What plan do I have to help my family prepare for the emotional and financial effect of long term care?

If I have long term care insurance, do I have the right coverage?

If I do not have long term care insurance, do I need coverage?



I am a Certified Long Term Care specialist and I can help answer your questions.

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