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In-Service Teacher-Training Mini-Courses

We are very proud of our selection over the years of Mini-Courses and the faculty who teach them! The faculty includes rabbis, cantors, authors, lecturers, and consultants—sometimes in combination! All are experts in their fields and all are charismatic and dynamic presenters. Our courses are topics that have been requested by YOU, the teachers, principals and preschool directors of the 80 + religious schools and preschools of this vibrant region of United Synagogue.

This semester we are honored to welcome *Susan Wyner*, the new USCJ National Consultant for Synagogue Education. This is her first year with USCJ and we are privileged to be able to have her come to our region to facilitate a workshop for religious school principals on the topic of *Assessment and Evaluation* (see our list of courses). Susan, who earned a Master's degree in Judaic Studies in Education from the Siegal College of Judaic Studies in Cleveland and graduated from the Mandel Teacher Education Institute, serves as a mentor to graduates of JTS's Davidson School of Education, has taught Melton Adult Education classes, and served as an educational director for 20 years. As part of her position for USCJ, she runs the New Director's Institute and travels around the country consulting with participants in the NDI and other principals and education directors. If you aren't familiar with her yet, you will be soon! Susan sends out articles and information through *Ed Notes*, an email service of USCJ, and which we forward to principals and directors regularly through the *Electronic Educator*.

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NJ REGION USCJ

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A Craft project takes planning—and time in class to do !

I admit it: I'm a crafter! Show me a craft book or an interesting project and my heart goes pitter-patter. When I go into a crafts store, I have to hold onto my pocketbook for dear life; I've known myself to go in for a specialized glue and come out with \$75 worth of products! On top of my own personal interest, I have spent 15 summers on the crafts staff of summer camp, including 7 as head of the program, and I spent 8 years teaching art in a Schechter school. I love sharing my love of crafting with children and especially finding ways to transpose ideas to Jewish projects.

So, far be it for me to even *suggest* to teachers that they NOT use crafts in religious school! I would never. I am a visual learner, so I know how effective creating a project would be on a lesson. But we do have to take precautions.

It is very important to have a clear educational objective when planning to add a project to your lesson (Of course, this is also true of playing a game). Laurie Bellet, who is an art teacher and author of *The Reluctant Artist*, published by Torah Aura, and who writes regularly in their Products Bulletin Board, reminds us that "doing an art project just for fun is fine for camp. Our religious school learning agenda is too full and our sessions too short to spend even an hour on a project without a clear learning objective." Indeed, with many religious schools cutting back on their hours, this rings even more crucial.

So, before we hand out a xeroxed picture for them to color, we should ask ourselves what the educational value is of spending time doing this. The answer might be: because you want to re-enforce an image in their heads (after all, different children learn in different ways)—and that is a legitimate answer. But don't make it "busy work;" there's no educational value to that. Before we make a paper chain for the sukkah, ask what objective there is in it. Your answer may be: *Hiddur Mitzvah*, beautifying a mitzvah—in this case, decorating the sukkah. Good answer. But how much more would the students get out of a project they spend a little time doing a little research on the *ush-pizin*—or other Jewish heroes—and create a decoupaged glass plate (it's easy! I can tell you how!) or a mural that represented that person? By the same token, if a student is sick, or has experienced a death in the family, think carefully before you schedule to spend even 15 minutes having the students make cards. Yes, *bikur cholim* is a mitzvah and it is very tempting to make cards as a way to express this, but some kids will scribble something off and others will want to spend an hour on it. Consider, instead, having them write short letters or you could buy or make a card yourself and having all the kids write a few words. This completes the mitzvah as well and doesn't take as much time from class.

This doesn't mean that you have to scrap the idea of making craft projects. Some don't take much time and are great re-enforcers. For instance, in a lesson I was planning once on how God created each person to be unique, based on the book *Partners with God* (Behrman House), I handed out scissors and colored paper and had the students make "paper snowflakes." It only took a few minutes. We saw how unique each was and then I was able to make a transition into the lesson.

On the other hand, you may deem it to be of import to spend considerable time—and even money—on a project. Having your 5th or 6th graders make a tallit and teaching them how to tie tzitzit may fit nicely into your curriculum on life cycle, *Hiddur mitzvah*, and other values.

Keep in mind that a good craft project takes a lot of planning. Make a sample of the project. This will help students visualize what they are going to do, gives you an idea of how much time it will take

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In addition to Susan, we are fortunate to welcome back *Dr. Shoshana Silberman*, a constant among our instructors, who will lead a new workshop (new for us, anyway!). As you will see from the course description, Shoshana will apply the techniques of Active Learning to presenting *parshat hashavuah*. These activities can be used whether you teach a year's course or just want to spend 5 minutes on each week's *parsha*. In addition, Shoshana will teach a course in Brick on the topic of different learning styles and multiple intelligences.

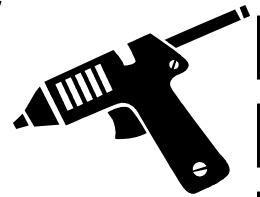
We again welcome *Caryn Bruckheimer*, a repeat favorite preschool expert and consultant. This time, she will facilitate a discussion for preschool directors on how we can help our preschool families find a warm welcome in our synagogue communities.

Linda Ripps, a veteran religious school and nursery school teacher as well as principal, is well-versed in keeping kids connected to Israel. She has run Mini-Courses for us in which she gives teachers activities and websites, etc., to teach about Israel. Last semester, we asked her to develop a similar course for preschool teachers on ways to introduce preschoolers to the concept of the land of Israel. It was not only well-received, but other preschool directors requested it to be reprised in their neck of the woods. Checking out our course descriptions, you will notice that it is being offered twice this semester—once in Glen Rock and once in Rumson.

All of our Mini-Courses are *free of charge*, a benefit of your synagogue's membership in USCJ. In addition, they are all recognized by the NJ State Dept. of Education and, especially for preschool teachers and directors, *count towards annual hours* that must be accrued. To register for a course (no limit!), contact Michelle Rich, Director of Education and Youth Activities, at Rich@USCJ.org or by phone: (732) 738 – 4301

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Craft Projects for the Rest of the Year



1. Tu Bishvat à Pesach: decorate a planter (get them from your local garden supply center, a craft store, hardware store, etc., or, order them from Just For the Mitzvah (1-888-484-3648), @ \$1.49. After decorating them (contact Nita for suggestions), fill them with soil and plant parsley seeds. By Pesach, the parsley will be ready for your seder!

2. How do trees grow? Give everyone a piece of blank white paper and a straw. Put a blob of India ink at the bottom and have the students stoop down so that the straw is at the level of the paper & then they blow the ink through the straw. A tree will appear on the paper. What we learn from this is that trees grow from the bottom up, branching out, and "branches" will branch out from the branches, pointing upward.

3. Purim crafts:

Quicky groggers:

- a. Each student gets 2 stones. With chalk, write Haman's name on them. Banging them together will literally blot out his name!
- b. Each student gets a toilet paper tube. Squeeze one end and tape it shut. Fill with a noisy substance (beans, pebbles, rice, etc.) and then squeeze and tape the other end shut. If you want to decorate them, do so before filling them and come up with a quick method: paint them a solid color, decorate with stickers, or cover with colored construction paper, crepe paper streamers, or tissue paper. OR, tape/glue tissue paper, wider than the tube, on it and twist the ends, Tootsie-roll wrapper style. Tie colored yarn or raffia around the twists. (HINT: if you use M & M's, they will self-destruct immediately after Megillah reading!)

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NJ REGION USCJ TEACHERS' MINI-COURSES SPRING '09

Open to all teachers and directors/principals in the region at no cost. You may take any of the courses listed below. To register, please complete and return the attached form, or, email Michelle Rich at Rich@USCJ.org.

COURSE # 1: PRESCHOOLERS AND ISRAEL: PERFECT TOGETHER!

INSTRUCTOR: LINDA RIPPS, Veteran teacher

Young children are not developmentally capable of conceptualizing the global map or of a "place" that is not in their daily lives. This would make it seemingly useless to teach them about another country far away, and yet, it is never too early to introduce a love for Israel as a special place for the Jewish People. This is different from learning about other cultures and countries, because it is *ours*. By using some Hebrew, an Israeli flag, videos & story books about Israel, we begin to plant the seeds that will bloom as they get older. Linda, who has taught preschool and is an expert in resources about Israel, will show you how to introduce the concept of kibbutz and other aspects of the country to young children.

DATE: January 19, 10 – 11:30 a.m.

LOCATION: Glen Rock Jewish Center

COURSE # 2: PRESCHOOLERS AND ISRAEL: PERFECT TOGETHER!

INSTRUCTOR: LINDA RIPPS, Veteran teacher

See above for course description

DATE: Thursday, February 5, 1 – 2:30 p.m.

LOCATION: Cong. B'nai Israel, Rumson

COURSE # 3: BUILDING BRIDGES: MAKING OUR SYNAGOGUE COMMUNITY A WARM AND WELCOMING PLACE FOR OUR PRESCHOOL FAMILIES (FOR PRESCHOOL DIRECTORS ONLY)

INSTRUCTOR: CARYN BRUCKHEIMER, Preschool consultant and trainer

Preschool directors will explore and discuss the various ways in which their schools, along with the synagogue professional team, offer unique opportunities for establishing long-term connections with all families, including unaffiliated and inter-faith.

DATE: Monday, February 9, 7 – 8:30 p.m.

LOCATION: NJ Region USCJ office, Raritan Center, Edison

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COURSE # 4: THE ACTIVE PARSHAH
INSTRUCTOR: DR. SHOSHANA SILBERMAN, Jewish Education Consultant

Religious school teachers will leave this workshop with techniques to teach *parshat ha-shavu'ah*. Whether you wish to begin a whole unit or lesson, or just spend a few minutes on the *parsha*, Active Learning techniques will connect Torah to the lives of your students. They can also be used to reinforce learning and engage students with text, and the activities demonstrated would also be appropriate for teaching prophets or the megillot. Hand-outs will help teachers replicate techniques in their classrooms.

DATE: Wednesday, March 4, 7 – 8:30 p.m.
LOCATION: Morristown Jewish Center

COURSE # 5: ASSESSING AND EVALUATING STUDENT LEARNING IN THE RELIGIOUS SCHOOL: FOR PRINCIPALS ONLY
INSTRUCTOR: SUSAN WYNER, North American Consultant for Synagogue Education for USCJ

Thanks to the national USCJ Commission on Jewish Education, the NJ Region is pleased to welcome, for the first time, Susan Wyner, the new USCJ national consultant for Synagogue Education. This workshop will broaden your thinking about student assessment and how it can be used to promote maximum learning in the classroom. We will examine ways to communicate teacher observations both to the students and parents, so that progress is reported, and challenges are addressed. Traditional Jewish texts, the latest research, video observation and your own skills and ideas will be critical tools in our study.

DATE: Tuesday, March 17, 10 a.m. – 12 noon

Unless otherwise noted, these courses are for religious school teachers and directors.

MINI-COURSE REGISTRATION

To register for courses please fill in this form and mail it to us so that and there will be adequate seating and materials. Sign up for as many courses as you want. They are free of charge to teachers of USCJ synagogue schools. Please mail to : Nita Polay Levin, USCJ, 1090 King Georges Post Rd., Suite 1003, Edison, NJ 08837—or e-mail your registration to Rich@uscj.org.

Name: _____ phone: _____

Email: _____

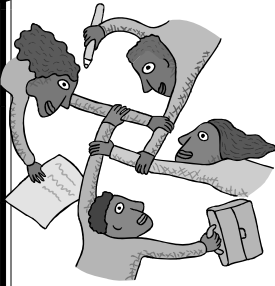
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COURSE # _____ TITLE: _____ DATE: _____

MIT-CHALEKET

Creative ideas from Around our region



At **Temple Beth El in Oakhurst**, the theme for the year is "Flying 'Chai' on Judaism." Throughout the school year, students will be sharing their answers to some of the following questions: *What makes you happy to be Jewish? Did you do something last summer that make you proud to be Jewish?* They have been learning about doing mitzvot, another expression of Jewish pride, and decorated the education wing with all their proud moments and ideas.

Also at TBE, a new program was initiated called "Reading is Rewarding." Students practice prayers from their curriculum at home and earn points. 8 points earns a student a "mitzvah dollars," play money, which they accumulate, and can be exchanged for prizes.

At **Temple Beth El-Mekor Chayim in Cranford**, the bet through daled (4 – 6th grades) classes are studying Israel in a variety of ways, including: a) A guest speaker—a young woman from a kibbutz in Israel who just got out of the army—came in to speak to the kids; b) they wrote articles that could appear in an introduction of an Israeli travel brochure about various aspects of the land (money system, water issues, geography, etc.); c) the students were assigned an ethnic group to study. They wrote questions that could be used in an interview and, taking on that group's identity, they wrote the answers—and then they interviewed each other; d) the students created a "Jewpardy" board game as they studied various cities in the country.

Students at **The Summit Jewish Center** participated in the JEA annual *Yom Tarbut* in which they re-enacted a day at a Jewish camp: students learned Israeli dances, sang Hebrew songs, played a game of Ga-Ga, and were given a "tour" of Israel with a walk on the Big Israeli Map.

Temple Beth Ahm Yisrael in Springfield began a new program this year that they call "Jr. Executive Board." Kita Zayin students learn why people become involved in the synagogue and the issues that confront them. Each week the students meet a member of the synagogue family—board members, staff, clergy, volunteers—who share how they became involved. Then they describe a problem they face in their position (whether real or hypothetical). The students ask clarifying questions about problem, then break into groups to discuss and perhaps come up with solutions which can be passed on to the Board.

Every Friday, the preschool at **Beth El Synagogue in E. Windsor** runs their program, *Beyond the Classroom*. Families sign up to come into school to share their family history with the class. They bring artifacts, pictures, clothing, anecdotal stories, etc. They are invited to sing with the class, do an art activity, or read a story. A special chair is set up, called The Family Chair. Participants spend about a half hour and then lead the Shabbat service with the cantor and rabbi. The families receive a certificate and at the end of the year they share in a huge culminating celebration, which is a good way to foster family involvement.

Meanwhile, in the religious school, the Vav (6th grade) class is studying about Israel in an interesting way: they explore "virtual Israel." At the beginning of the year, the students arrive with their parents at the "airport" and take off on a "plane." The students use the internet to explore areas in Israel. They then make post cards to send home to their parents and posters about the places they "visit." Email reports get sent to the parents to let them know what is happening in class, but they never leave character! The emails begin, "this is being sent to you from Tel Aviv," etc.

The whole congregation was invited to a mock wedding ceremony at **Cong. Shomrei Emunah in Montclair!** The "marriage" was between 2 students chosen from the Hey or Vav (5th & 6th grade) classes, which have been studying life-cycle events this year. This was the culmination of the unit on customs and rituals of the Jewish wedding. Invitations were sent out to the entire congregation and the aufruf was held during Junior Congregation.

DON'T SEE YOUR SCHOOL LISTED? SEND US AN UPDATE ON WHAT IS GOING ON IN YOUR SCHOOL!

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"Know the budget and reimbursement policies of your institution," Laurie tells us, and "abide by them." Never automatically assume you will be reimbursed. Some schools, for instance, will expect you to use a tax exempt form, and may have a policy of not reimbursing you for tax even if you did pay it.

Please don't be intimidated because you "can't even draw a straight line." There's a tool for that—a ruler! And don't worry about making a perfect circle. Find something manufactured that is the size you want—a roll of masking tape (which has two sizes: the inside *and* the outside!), a jar lid, a quarter—you get the idea!--that students can trace.

Finally, don't give up if you think you can't do an art project; there are some that are so easy to do and yet so meaningful (like the paper snowflakes), even for those of us who ball up in knots from the thought. Elsewhere in this issue you will find a list of projects and another of books and catalogs that will help you with some dynamite projects, most of which cost little money and many of which are so simple that "an artist you don't have to be." Also, we here in the Education Department have plenty of experience in this area. Just phone or email me (Levin@USCJ.org) and I will be happy to help you! Happy crafting!

Nita Polay Levin, Editor and Education Field Worker

Terrific Teaching Tips

From *The Big Book of Terrific Teaching Ideas* by Shirley Barish; URJ Press:

1. What We Can Learn From our Elders: Encourage students to question their grandparents or the elderly members of their families or the congregation to find out how they celebrated the holiday that is coming up. With the students, develop a questionnaire they can use for their interviews. Here are some sample questions:

**When and where did the celebration take place?*

**Who came to the celebration?*

**What did you eat? Were any special foods served?*

**What did you do? Did you play any games related to this holiday?*

**What kind of clothes did people wear?*

Give the students a few weeks to gather their information, and then have them prepare a report. The report can be a combination of words and drawings, or can include photos. After all the reports are given, compare the similarities and differences among the different families.

In addition, the students can write about how *they* celebrate this holiday and how it is different from their older relatives.

2. Hurtful Words: If you are having a problem with students saying nasty things to or about each other, or you are teaching a lesson about *Lashon HaRah*, here's a very cool project that doesn't take a lot of time: Bring in a tube of toothpaste (travel size is best) and a substantial paper plate. Have the students watch as you squeeze out all of the toothpaste into the plate. Then ask students to put the toothpaste back in the tube. Naturally, this can't be done, at least not easily and not completely. Next tell them the story of the man (or woman) who, upon discovering that he has no more friends because he is always spreading rumors, goes to his rabbi to find a cure. The rabbi tells him to get a bag of goose feathers and bring it to the rabbi. The man does, and is now told to spread the feathers in a path to his house and, in the morning, to gather them back up into the bag. Of course, when he reappears at the rabbi's the next day, he is distraught because the feathers all blew away. The rabbi then compares this to saying hurtful words and gossip: they can't be taken back.

3. What Would You Do If...? We often overlook opportunities for children to think about how to reach/ behave in certain ethical dilemmas. If we present various situations to them, it gives them an opportunity to rehearse their choices. Allow some student (it doesn't have to be all of them for each situation!) to say what they would

Craft books and catalogues you can use

CATALOGS: Judaic

1. *Just For the Mitzvah* (www.Jewishcrafts.com). Good quality, inexpensive craft projects for all the holidays and then some.
2. *Benny's Educational Toys* (www.BennysEducationalToys.com).
3. *The Dreidel Maker* (www.DreidelMaker.com). High quality wooden crafts. They have a beautiful kiddush cup that they have!!

Judaic Art Kits (www.JudaicArtKits.com) for high quality (not cheap, but excellent!) fabric art kits. We can provide you with patterns! Contact us at Levin@USCJ.org.

CATALOGS: secular (adapt projects)

1. *Dick Blick* (DickBlick.com). Check out their special premium tempera paint which can be used to simulate batik on material
2. *NASCO* (eNASCO.com)

JUDAIC CRAFT BOOKS

1. *An Artist You Don't Have to Be*, by Joann Magnus with Howard I. Bogot (URJ Press)
 2. *The Reluctant Artist*, by Laurie Bellet (Torah Aura Products: www.Torahaura.com)
 3. *The Magic Box*, by Helena Miller (Torah Aura Products)
 4. *Jewish Holiday Crafts*, by Joyce Becker (Bonim Books)
 5. *Fast, Clean and Cheap*, by Simon Kops (Torah Aura)
 6. *Jewish Holiday Crafts for Little Hands*, by Ruth Esrig Brinn (Kar Ben: WWW.KarBen.com)
 7. *Celebrating Israel Through the Arts: Classroom Activities and Art Projects for fourth grade and up (The Best of the Marshall Center)*, by Linda Carol Sonin (the BJE of Metropolitan Chicago: the Marshall Jewish Learning Center in N Northbrook: marshallcenter@bjechicago.org; (847) 291 – 7788)
- 100 + Jewish Art Projects for Children*, by Nina Streisand Sher & Margaret A. Feldman: An ARE Publication (Behrman House)

TERRIFIC TEACHING TIPS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

do in a given dilemma, and let them respond without your judgment. Then tell them what you would do. This gives you an opportunity to role model a positive behavior without telling them they are wrong in their choices. You can give multiple choice answers for them to choose from, or just give it as an open-ended question. Here are some examples:

A. Some of your friends are always gossiping about another friend of yours. Do you: a. join in with some really juicy gossip, b. stay quiet because you are trying to stay friends with everyone, c. tell them to stop because it's unethical, or d. change friends because these are too mean? What if, in this situation, it was not a friend they were gossiping about, but another student?

B. Your best friend wants to tell you a secret. Do you: a. promise not to tell anyone—but then blurt it out anyway as soon as you see another friend, b. tell your friend that secrets are stupid and be honest that you will tell everyone, c. promise not to say a word—and then don't or, d. tell your friend you don't want to hear it.

4. Introducing a new Unit or Lesson: 1. Use a treasure hunt or a rebus to introduce a lesson or unit. 2. Using a white crayon or a candle, write a message on a piece of paper or a poster board. Using water color paints, have a student (or, yourself) paint over the word/s to reveal a message that introduces the lesson. 3. Use a number code by assigning a number, 1 – 26, to each letter of the alphabet and then write your clues using numbers. Or, write the message by using one letter earlier in the alphabet (e.g., an "a" would represent a "b", a "c" would represent a "d," etc.). This can be xeroxed and handed out to all the students at the same time. 4. Try writing short rhyming riddles that students have to solve to find the clue for the lesson they will be learning.

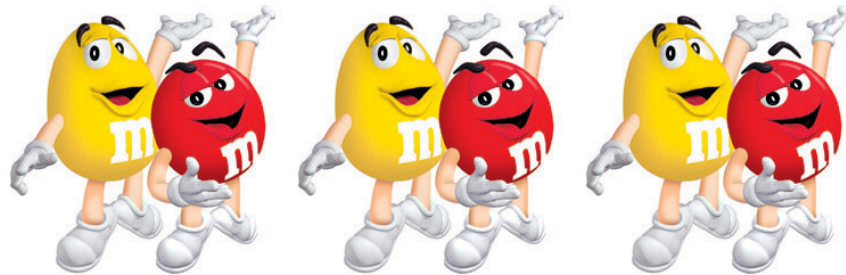


Reeling 'em In

Here are some ideas to help attain classroom management. Really, they will revolutionize your students! Even your sixth and seventh graders!

1. **Donuts:** If you are having difficulty getting kids to come to school on time, make a secret pact with them: *If you come to class on time, I will have donuts (or, Hershey's Kisses, etc.) to give you! But, if you tell anyone, I will stop bringing them!*
2. **The Raffle System:** Prepare 2 matching sets of raffle tickets—one to give out and one for drawing from.** Give each student an envelope with their name on it, handing them out at the beginning of class and collecting them at the end. Freely give out the tickets for good behavior, work done well, attentiveness, great question or answer, coming to school, coming to school on time—etc. You get the picture! Once a week, have a raffle drawing. The prizes could even come from the dollar store (but tell them this in advance). The student with the winning ticket gets to make his/her choice from a bag of goodies.

** Contact Nita at Levin@USCJ.org for a copy. We have them already made up and can even send them to you with one set laminated. Give these out to the students and use the unlaminated set (which gets handled much less often) for the "draw from" bag.



3. **The M & M Jar:** Instead of raffles, you may want to keep an "M & M" jar. Each time a student does something worth rewarding, declare it to be an "M & M Moment" and put an M & M in the jar. At the end of class, have the class count them out—in Hebrew! Then split them evenly amongst the students (don't forget to say the correct *bracha!* Whoops—another *TWO* educational moments!). **OR,**

4. **An M & M Moment:** When a student has a good question or answer, does their work well, etc., give them an M & M and declare it "an M & M Moment."

Considerations: You should think about whether you want to take away any raffle tickets/M & M's for negative behavior or whether, once earned, they stay put.

Some of you may be against bribing, and I admit to having mixed feelings. But consider the great rewards if you **do** bribe! The first day I tried it, my class turned a 360 degree angle! I found myself slapping my head, in "I could have had a V-8" fashion!

Craft Projects for the Rest of the Year– continued from page 3

- c. Collect different sizes of plastic bottles and fill with something noisy. Or, leave them empty and make a gragger jug band.
- d. Take a paper bag (lunch-sized). Lay it flat on the table with the bottom away from the body. Decorate with a Haman face using markers or crayons. Place beans inside and tie tightly with colored yarn.
- e. Take 2 paper plates, staple them almost all the way around, place some beans inside and staple the rest of it shut. You could add some crepe paper streamers.
- f. Fill a small metal box or tin with beans and tape it shut. Decorate by wrapping it in heavy duty aluminum foil.
- g. Have everyone bring in a small box of rice or pasta. After megillah reading, donate them to a food pantry.
- h. This one calls for match boxes, big or small: take out the matches, fill with beans, tape the box shut and cover it with heavy duty aluminum foil or construction, wrapping, or Contact paper.

Masks and Hidden Agendas

Think of all the hidden agendas involved in the story of Purim: Esther hides her Jewishness from the king; Haman hides his intentions from the king; Esther hides her real reason for the parties she throws for Haman and the king; guards secretly plot to overthrow the king; even God seems to be hidden, as there is no mention of God in the megillah.

Have your students make simple masks (contact us if you need ideas). Talk about how we hide our identity by dressing up and wearing masks at Purim. Let them come up with all the hidden agendas they can think of in the Purim story.

An easy *shlach manot* basket: Take a paper plate and make a triangle of equal sides in the center by folding the plate's edges up in 3 equal parts. Staple the corners together and fill the center with the goods. Then cover the center with tissue paper. It will look like a hamantash!

4. Passover:

- a. To make an origami frog that can actually leap, contact Nita for directions.
- b. Paint a glass Elijah's cup or Miriam's bowl with glass paints.
- c. Matza plate: use a piece of 12" X 9" colored construction paper, or use heavy duty wrapping paper, wallpaper, etc. Cut to a 9" square. Fold the sides up evenly, leaving enough space in the middle for the size of matzah. Tape or staple the corners together.
- d. There are many, many ways to make an afikomen bag. The simplest is to start with a muslin drawstring bag and decorate it with fabric markers or paints.

5. Shavuot: The edible Torah: On a plate, put 2 cooked blintzes of any kind. Space them apart and put a rectangular slice of cheese between them.

6. Shabbat: See the Elijah cup (4.b.) above and use it for a kiddush cup.

Challah cover: Purchase dinner napkins (Bed, Bath, & Beyond sells them by the dozen for less than a dollar a piece) and decorate them with fabric paints or markers.

For more quicky crafts projects, stencils and patterns to use on the above, contact Nita at (732) 738 – 4301 or Levin@USCJ.org.



Books: Take a Look!

From Torah Aura:

1. **Artzeinu: An Israel Encounter** (grades 4 – 6) A wonderful new book! This book brings your students face-to-face with the real Israel with historical, cultural, and biblical information, but what makes this book really different is the *Challenges* presented that face the Jewish state, such as Israel's relationships with its neighbors, the Palestinian conflict, water issues and environmental concerns. It also does an excellent job of explaining exactly how the government works so that your students will gain an understanding that would otherwise be confusing to them. Now, take the descriptions of the various political parties and put them against the challenges offered—have your student adopt a party and argue as a Knesset about how to solve the issues!
2. **Active Jewish Learning: 57 Strategies to Enliven Your Class**, by our own Dr. Shoshana Silberman and Dr. Mel Silberman. Activities and strategies designed to enliven learning, deepen understanding, and promote retention, based on the teaching methodology of Active Learning. Although the catalog boasts that it will be available "late fall 2008," it is not yet available. However, we have seen samples of the book and it is indeed worth waiting for. In fact, call them often and ask for it!
3. **Hadrahkah (leadership lessons):** A new series of Instant Lessons designed to work with teaching assistants/ madrichim, camp counselors, Jr. Congregation leaders, etc. The first 4 are written by either Joel Grishaver or Robin Faintich.
4. **The Matzav**, a series of Instant Lessons designed for grades 5 – 7 that deals with the present political situation in Israel between the Palestinians and Israelis.
5. **Mahir Judaica:** A new service through Torah Aura, educational toys, games, musical instruments, and craft projects. For instance, many of you would be interested in dreidels to decorate; they sell them for @ 95 cents. Decorate your own tzedakah boxes are @ \$1.55.

From URJ:

1. **CHAI: Learning for Jewish Life:** A flexible educational system based on the foundation values of Torah, avodah, and g'milut chasadim, each level in the CHAI Curriculum Core contains 27 complete lessons that combine these three subjects around a single topic of Judaic interest, grade appropriate.
2. **Mitkadem: Hebrew for Youth.** An innovative, self-paced program to help every child learn Hebrew, this system enables students to work at their own pace, alone or with another student. It comes with an audio CD, learning tools, a teacher's guide and professional support. As students go through the 23 levels, they learn the letters & vowels, prayers, Jewish concepts, basic grammar, and vocabulary. ***This is an excellent system for multi-level classes and affords small schools with few students per grade the possibility to combine grades into fewer classes.***
3. **Torah Alive! An Early Childhood Torah Curriculum**, by Lorraine Posner Arcus, provides an age-appropriate approach to teaching Torah to young children by using the latest early childhood teaching techniques to present our ancient Jewish text.

The Great Balancing Act: A High School Ethics Curriculum, by Michelle Shapiro Abraham. This book uses texts from the Torah and Talmud to present issues that relate to adolescents, like those having to do with parents, school, and friendship. Brimming with ideas, activities, questionnaires, and resources, all of it designed to help teenagers explore where they stand in terms of living ethically. Includes interactive activities and provocative discussions.

From Behrman House:

Manga Midrash, by Gila Gevirtz. *Manga* is a graphic novel technique from Japan, popular among today's pre-teens and teens, worldwide. These 16 page booklets teach Torah and Jewish values to 4th – 7th graders. This colorful, illustrated comic book format presents key Bible stories, rabbinic midrash, and Jewish values such as leadership and the value of life. There are now 4 titles: *Compassion: Eliezer and Rebecca at the Well*; *Courage: Moses, the Israelites, and the Golden Calf*; *Leadership: Jacob and Esau*; and *The Value of Life: Pharaoh's Daughter and Miriam*. Also, the Manga Pocket Folders are available @ \$1.45 if you