



THE ELECTRONIC EDUCATOR-
 A weekly update of information for you and your school!
 A service of the NJ Region USCJ Dept. of Education
 Michelle Rich, Director of Education and Youth Activities
 Nita Polay Levin, Field Worker
 Lisa Harris Glass, Executive Director

Up-Coming Mini-Courses

Please share this list with your faculties and encourage them to attend an courses that would be of benefit to them

**COURSE # 5: WHAT'S YOUR S.Q.? (SUPERVISORY QUOTIENT)
 FOR PRESCHOOL DIRECTORS ONLY**
INSTRUCTOR: CARYN BRUCKHEIMER
DATE: Monday, Feb. 25, 7 - 9 p.m.
LOCATION: NJ Regional USCJ office, Edison

COURSE # 6: HELPING NON-CONSERVATIVE TEACHERS TEACH
INSTRUCTOR: RABBI RON ISAACS
DATE: Mon., March 3, 6 – 7:30 p.m.
LOCATION: Cong. Beth Israel, Scotch Plains

COURSE # 4: COOPERATIVE LEARNING TECHNIQUES
INSTRUCTOR: DR. SHOSHANA SILBERMAN
DATE: Wed., March 12, 7 – 8:30 p.m.
LOCATION: Beth El Synagogue, E. Windsor

CONFERENCE CALL*: ISRAEL AT 60
INSTRUCTOR: LISA MICLEY, Education Director, BABAGANEWZ Magazine
DATE: Mon., March 17, 10 a.m.

COURSE: 7: INFUSING PRESCHOOL CLASSROOMS WITH JEWISH VALUES
INSTRUCTOR: JANICE JUMBO
DATE: Friday, March 21, 10 – 11:30 a.m.
LOCATION: Cong. Beth Shalom, Livingston

**Be on the look out for another conference call on a different topic and with a different instructor!*

Hi Everyone,

I just had an opportunity to watch a DVD Demo of Seven Purim Musicals ... easy to enact, good for adults and teens. The playwite and creative director also has a collection of mini

plays for assemblies, junior congregation, family programs, and classrooms. And one of the best parts of this is they are written and produced by one of our own, Marci Brumberg, a wonderful Jewish educator in a wonderful small Jewish community in Roanoke, VA that I had the privilege to visit in January. Check out her website at www.sayitwithplays.com .

B'shalom,
Serene

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This month's issue of HADASH is titled "Israeli Games: A Family Community Event To Use Hebrew And To Honor Israel's 60th Anniversary." Synagogue program directors, educators, and youth advisors in particular should take a look at this HADASH, with an eye toward the upcoming celebration of Israel's 60th Birthday later this Spring.

And, as today is the first day of Adar – Purim is likely on your radar too! Even though we have to wait an 'extra' month for Purim to arrive this year, this month's issue of COMPACT can help to get you in the mood. This is a great resource for educators and families alike.

Enjoy!

Mourning and Rebuilding Temple Ahavat Achim

We are deeply saddened by news of the fire that demolished [Temple Ahavat Achim's](#) 180-year-old [building](#) as it tore through Gloucester, Massachusetts, on December 15, killing a man who lived in a nearby apartment house. The synagogue was a beautiful building, the center of local Jewish life, and the congregation already has begun to regroup and rebuild. You can make a [secure donation](#) or send a check to Temple Ahavat Achim, 86 Middle Street, Gloucester, MA 01930.

Celebrating Israel at 60

The Conservative movement is celebrating Israel's 60th birthday in 2008, offering a [movement-wide calendar](#) that includes information about commemorations and trips to Israel and downloadable PDFs of program materials. [The Road to Sixty](#) is a program of study and celebration.

Today's Israel

Because United Synagogue's Israel Commission wants all of us to know what the real Israel, the country where real people live, actually looks like, it offers [Today's Israel](#). Click on the link to read news of the Conservative/Masorti movement and learn more about Israel.

Project Etgar

[Project Etgar](#), a middle school curriculum designed for sixth, seventh, and eight graders in synagogue schools, is accepting [applications](#) for the 2008/2009 academic year. The program, a joint project developed by United Synagogue and the Jewish Theological Seminary, helps students make meaning out of their Jewish education.

Walking With God

United Synagogue has partnered with the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies and the Rabbinical Assembly to provide rabbis with a book that contains 12 units of an adult education course called "[Walking With God](#)". Each unit includes a background essay by a well-known scholar, primary texts, a bibliography, and lesson plans and suggestions for facilitators. [Click here](#) to begin.

Ask a Conservative Rabbi

Have you been wondering about some fine point of Jewish law? Do you want to know why you do something, or how you should do something, or whether you should do something? A group of Conservative rabbis, each a specialist in some aspect of halakha, can answer your emailed question. These rabbis should not be seen as replacements for your own rabbi, whose opinion is definitive in his or her own synagogue, but they can provide in-depth explanations to a whole range of questions. To ask a question, email askarabbi@uscj.org.

Hekhsher Tzedek

The United Synagogue and the Rabbinical Assembly are considering the possibility of establishing the hekhsher tzedek, which would certify kosher products as being consistent with Jewish social values. We are beginning by looking at the conditions for workers at meat-packing plants.

[Press release](#)

[In-depth report](#)

Your Child

Read [Your Child](#), the education department's online newsletter for parents of young Jewish children. The winter 08 issue is now up.

PURIM CENTRAL

Dear Colleagues,

"By three things may a person's character be determined: *Koso, kiso, v'ka-aso* (by his cup, by his purse and by his anger); and some say: By his laughter [or by the way he plays] also."

(Eruvim 65b, written under the name of Rabbi Ila'i)

While in its original context this maxim does not refer to Purim, perhaps it is through these four things that the spirit of our people is expressed in the very particular character

morim.org

Click below to see all:

[Purim Materials](#) ➔

[International Women's Day Materials](#) ➔

madrichim.org

of that festivity where nothing is as it seems, and in which games involving masks and mirrors proliferate.

madrichim.org

Let's have a drink! Alcohol is not the perfume with which we might most efficaciously identify with the Jewish mode of celebrating, yet Purim exhorts us to drink to the point where our understanding becomes hazy, and we confuse the phrases *arur Haman* and *baruch Mordecai* (Megilla 7b). If the *koso* (wine/drinking) is viewed as an extension of everything that deprives us of the feeling of control over our lives, perhaps this is just another way of confronting ourselves with "what lies behind the mask" of the habitual. *Koso* as a disguise: Exactly what in our identity is revealed? What lies hidden in the perfume?

[Purim Materials](#) ➡

[International Women's Day Materials](#) ➡

From mouth to money: Purim questions our personal relationships with others in terms of the intimate bond we maintain with money as a synonym for the material, and as expressed in

our capacity to give and give away.

This sharing, as is majestically customary in our tradition, takes on a double dimension: that of being generous with those with whom it is easy for us to do so, i.e. with our close friends and relatives (*mishloach manot*), while not forgetting that giving is fundamentally to do so to those in need (*matanot la'evyionin*).

Ka-aso (Ka-asenu) or anger-historical in this case: In the Torah we are told explicitly to "blot out the remembrance of Amalek" (Exodus 17 and Deuteronomy 25:17-19), and we know that Haman was a descendent of Agag the Amalekite (Ester 3:1 and Samuel I 15:8). What a magnificent lesson in sublimation (and one ahead of its time) our tradition offers us, when it enables us to adhere to the precept of erasing the memory of Amalek at Purim, when, during the reading of the Book of Ester in the synagogue, we make great noise every time Haman is named! Is this not a marvelous way of sublimating feelings of anger and aggression?

As educators, it will surely come as a fundamental challenge to encourage each being to individually find such creative outlets with which to combat frustration and rage.

And finally, although they definitely need to come first: play, laughter, and joy.

Purim is undoubtedly a party in celebration of the joy that already comes as a foretaste with the arrival of *Adar*. And this "*Mishenichnas Adar marbin b'simcha*" (With the beginning of the month of Adar, joy increases) might be understood as being the genuine and profound feeling experienced by those who, in the presence of the moment in which, in the very bosom of the dark of a winter seemingly without end, discover the 'miracle' that spring is already gestating. So for joy to be born of itself, what will be needed is a sensitive heart that pauses to observe a reality barking out meaning in its every gesture. As the Rabbi A. J. Heschel said "Remember that life can be a celebration."

In the hope that the materials we have prepared for Purim accompany you efficaciously on this road of unveiled identities, we wish you

Ora ve Simcha!!!

Morim.org & Madrichim.org

Vashti and Esther - The Whole Megilla for Young Children

By Maxine Segal Handelman

Most preschool aged children are quite adept at saying no. So what might these children have to learn from Vashti, who said "no" to dancing at the king's party? Should young children only learn from "brave little Esther," or are there valuable lessons to be learned from both these women of Purim?

The article suggests addressing a few valuable lessons that these two women, the Purim heroines, incarnate.

Purim and Choices

By Alice Langholt

This four-encounter program explores themes of Purim through the ideas of choices and reasons that motivate them. Exploring the power of community, faith and prayer it culminates in the artistic activity of designing of a *mishloach manot* box containing various quotes from *Megillat Esther*.

Other activities include drama, discussion, writing, and art.

[Read on Morim.org >](http://Read on Morim.org)

[Read on Madrichim.org >](http://Read on Madrichim.org)

that these two women, the Purim heroines, incarnate.

[Read on Morim.org >](#)

[Read on Madrichim.org >](#)

The Four Mitzvot of Purim

By Cheryl Wise

This program explores 4 key *mitzvot* of Purim - *Mishloach Manot*, *Matanot Laevyonim*, *Lishmoah Megillah* and *Seudat Mitzvah*. Each of the four *mitzvot* is taught via two learning stations. As an introduction a text study guide uses various sources and Talmudic citations that allude to the central motives surrounding these rules. This program can be adapted to fit different learning structures. For example: as a family program for parents with kids pre K-6th grade outside of the formal classroom setting, as a grade level holiday program for students only or as a rotation program.

[Read on Morim.org >](#)

[Read on Madrichim.org >](#)

Ve Nehfoch Hoo: Change and Human Action in the Megillat Esther

By O. Lev and S. Schurmann

This project aims at a deep and systematic approach to the *Megillat* in terms of the concepts of change, causality, and action. What models of causality does the *Megillat* Esther suggest? What room is there for alternative interpretation? These are some of the questions (among others) participants will be working with throughout the different activities in the program, as they delve progressively deeper, while at the same broadening the scope of the text under study (from assorted *psukim*, to whole chapters, to the complete *Megillat*), all with a view to applying the concepts covered to their own lives. Participants will be exercising their comprehension, interpretation, and argumentation skills through resources like reading and writing, arts and crafts, and live performances.

[Read on Morim.org >](#)

[Read on Madrichim.org >](#)

Purim, "That All Should Know"

By Laura Dugatkin Roszkin

This program analyzes the Purim celebration as it occurs in a Jewish leap year, such as 2008. The differences between the solar and lunar calendars are identified, as are the dynamics of the extra month (*Adar 2*), along with its impact on Purim celebrations (*Purim Katan* and *Purim*). The five *Megillot* are introduced, along with the religious holidays on which these are read. The opportunity is seized to point out the different shapes of the Torah and the *Megilla* scrolls.

[Read on Morim.org >](#)

[Read on Madrichim.org >](#)

My Purim Set - A Different Way of Experiencing the Holiday

By Cynthia Gurfinkel

The project consists of four activities aimed at acquainting the children with the story and customs of Purim. In each activity, the children themselves create an item which will form part of a "Purim Set", which they all take home with them once the project has concluded. The closing lesson includes an activity for experiencing the celebration with their families.

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TORAH AURA PRODUCTS BULLETIN BOARD

»Now Available! *God: Jewish Choices for Struggling With the Ultimate*

It's a topic that's so scary it's hard to write on your curriculum. It has teachers shaking in their boots. Teaching about God. To teenagers.

And though it might be scary for us to teach, it's also an important part of any young adult's Jewish education.

That's why we're pleased to announce the release of [God: Jewish Choices for Struggling With the Ultimate](#).

It's the perfect text for confirmation classes, theology electives, or for teenagers who ask big questions.

In This Issue:

- »[Adar is here. Sort of. Welcome to the TAPBB.](#)
- »[Making Meaningful Connections](#)
- »[Jewish Dollhouses Bring Learning Alive](#)

»Making Meaningful Connections

In our last issue, Idie Benjamin wrote about report cards and progress reports. Soon after, we got this note from Louis Nagel, Education Director at Congregation Beth El in Bethesda, Maryland:

Here is a comment one of my teachers wrote in a progress report:

"In a Chanukkah lesson on feeling Jewish, he wrote that a time he was proud to be Jewish was when he made his 'mom feel better when my Aunt Mary died.' He has demonstrated that he's learned the meaning of comforting the bereaved, a concept covered in a [S'fatai Tiftah](#) story. It was a very meaningful connection for Zachary to make."

I hope all is well with you.

Louis

Interested in exploring Hebrew/prayer materials that do so much more than prepare your students for b'nai mitzvah?

Sample packs of [S'fatai Tiftah](#), [Journeys Through the Siddur](#), and [Pirkei T'fillah](#) are now available. Contact Josh Barkin (josh@torahaura.com or 323-923-6026) for more info. preoccupied. If you sent any of us an email on Thursday evening or Friday morning, it took awhile for us to get it. We apologize, and so does our internet provider.

So, thanks to someone pushing the right buttons over at AT&T headquarters, we're back up now. It was a little internet miracle in honor of Adar. Okay... It's only Adar Aleph. But Happy Adar anyway!

4. Do we have free will?
5. Does prayer work?
6. Are Jews the "Chosen People"?
7. Is the Bible true?
8. Does God speak to people? or Why did God stop talking to people?
9. Does God make miracles?
10. How can a good God let bad things happen?
11. Does God care about my behavior?
12. Where do people go when they die?
13. How do I get close to God?

Also, [God: Jewish Choices for Struggling With the Ultimate](#) comes with a free Teacher's Guide. To download, [click here](#).

[Order Now! >](#)

»Jewish Dollhouses Bring Learning Alive

by [Laurie Bellet](#)

What makes a house a Jewish home?

This question is frequently posed to children in religious school settings. What follows, generally, is a list that includes stuff like Shabbat candlesticks, a hanukkiyah, a mezuzah, a Seder plate. Usually, the longer the list, the more satisfied are the students and teacher. Yet, I would argue that these implements, used in the course of Jewish living, do not constitute the essence of a Jewish home, any more than a Star of David constitutes Jewish art.

My intuition in this regard was bolstered last week while I watched my students play in our dollhouse. Yes, our art studio has a dollhouse! No small shelf item, our dollhouse is about 3½ feet tall and catches the eye of everyone who enters the room.

The dollhouse started life as a white bookshelf with a peaked pink roof that I picked up on sale at Target. Since then, the original bookshelf has undergone a remarkable transformation. After first re-roofing, various groups of children and individuals have undertaken to paint and wallpaper rooms, fashion furniture, and give birth to doll families. Two weeks ago, the "dinner table" was set with diminutive bowls of soup and Shabbat candlesticks. A doll family was placed around the table.

[Read the rest of this article. >](#)

BEHRMAN HOUSE LAUNCHES NEW FAMILY SITE

Now families can learn to read Hebrew at home, practice the Torah blessings, play Israel Text Twist, and refer to a Jewish holiday calendar.

They can even learn a few words of conversational Hebrew!

HOW?? Click on the 'Family Page" tab at www.behrmanhouse.com! Or go directly to www.behrmanhouse.com/family.

Also, Interactive Family Education offers you games and demos (including a Hebrew Concentration game for children of all ages), the Behrman House e-shop (purchase Judaic resources!)

**

Now might be the time to begin thinking about how you want to do report cards! If this sounds like you, please contact Nita at Levin@USCJ.org and we will send you some hardcopy articles on writing report cards.

Still time to get games, carnival ideas, whole school programs, puzzles, craft ideas, etc. for PURIM. Contact Nita at Levin@USCJ.ORG. How about shlach manot baskets? Shpiels? Music, activities, food, board games?

AND IF PURIM IS AT HAND, THAT MEANS THAT (GASP!) *Pesach* IS NOT FAR OFF. IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO BEGIN THINKING ABOUT SEDERS/WHOLE-SCHOOL PROGRAMS WITH STATIONS, CRAFT IDEAS, GAMES, PUZZLES, ETC. NITA HAS THOSE, TOO!

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