



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

In this Week's Issue:

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TEACHER TRAINING MINI-COURSES

Winter/Spring Semester

The "almost last chance" to register for this course:

COURSE # 2: 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 the special place of the Jewish People, which is different from learning about other cultures and countries. By using some Hebrew, the Israeli flag, videos and 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.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2009, 1 - 2:30 PM

LOCATION: CONGREGATION B'NAI ISRAEL, RUMSON

COURSE # 3: For PRESCHOOL DIRECTORS, ONLY:
Our Congregational Nursery Schools: The Gateway to a Jewish Experience
INSTRUCTOR: CARYN BRUCKHEIMER, CONSULTANT AND TRAINER

Explore and discuss the various ways in which nursery schools, along with the synagogue team, offer unique opportunities for establishing long-term connections with all families, including unaffiliated and inter-faith.

Date : Monday, February 9, 7 - 8:30 PM

LOCATION: NJ USCJ REGIONAL OFFICE, EDISON, RARITAN CENTER

Course #4: USING KNOWLEDGE OF LEARNING STYLES AND MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES TO TEACH ALL OF OUR CHILDREN

Instructor: DR. SHOSHANA SILBERMAN, EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANT, PHILADELPHIA & NEW JERSEY, AUTHOR AND LECTURER

Since the monumental writings of Howard Gardner introduced educators to the fact that there are, in fact, 7 or 8 *different ways* in which students learn (of which MATH AND SCIENCE MAKE UP ONLY ONE OF THOSE!), educators have been designing methods for teaching all types of learners. Dr. Silberman will teach us how to be able to reach ALL of our children, no matter what type of learning style suits their needs.

DATE: Wednesday, February 18, 6:45 – 8:15 PM

LOCATION: Temple Beth Or, Brick

COURSE # 5:TEACHING THE PARSHA THE ACTIVE WAY IN RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

INSTRUCTOR: DR. SHOSHANA SILBERMAN, CONSULTANT, AUTHOR & LECTURER

Author of the up-coming book on Active Learning Techniques as applied to the religious school classroom, Dr. Silberman will share Active Learning techniques that you can apply to any parsha in 5 - 15 minutes.

DATE: Wednesday, March 4, 7 - 8:30 PM

LOCATION: Morristown Jewish Center

COURSE # 6: FOR RELIGIOUS SCHOOL PRINCIPALS ONLY

ASSESSING AND EVALUATING STUDENT LEARNING IN THE RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

INSTRUCTOR: SUSAN WYNER, No. American Consultant for Synagogue EDUCATION, USCJ

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 to the 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 am - 12 N

LOCATION: NJ Region USCJ office, Raritan Center, Edison

If you are interested in attending any of these courses, contact Michelle Rich at Rich@USCJ.org. As a benefit of your synagogue's membership in United Synagogue, all courses are free for teachers affiliated with a USCJ school or anyone who is a member of a USCJ congregation.

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MERCAZ USA
January 2009

Mercanz USA E-Letter

MERCAZ USA Winter E-Letter

Tevet 5769

WELCOME to the new MERCAZ USA E-Letter being sent to MERCAZ members and supporters from the 2006 World Zionist Congress elections. Information to Unsubscribe is available below.

MERCAZ USA is the Zionist membership organization of the Conservative Movement, the voice of Conservative Jewry within the World Zionist Organization, the Jewish Agency for Israel, the American Zionist Movement and the Jewish National Fund to support religious pluralism in Israel and strengthen the connection between Israel and the Diaspora. [Click here](#) for our mission statement. [Click here](#) to (re)join for the current 2008-2009 fiscal year.

CONSERVATIVE YESHIVA ONLINE LEARNING

Register now for Conservative Yeshiva Online Learning beginning the week of January 25, 2009. Students of all Hebrew levels and Jewish learning backgrounds are welcome. Hevruta — study with a partner — is strongly encouraged for all students including those with no prior experience in hevruta study.

Two ten-week courses will be offered: *"Ten Biblical Stories You Thought You Knew: An Introduction to Rabbinic Midrash"* with Rabbi Mordechai Silverstein and *"Psalms of Pesukei DeZimra of Shabbat"* with Rabbi Gail Diamond.

To register for the class, please email yeshiva@uscj.org. There is a \$200 tuition fee for each 10-week course.

ENGLISH TEACHERS NEEDED FOR ISRAEL

There is a growing demand for qualified English teachers in Israel at the elementary and high school level. This need provides a golden opportunity to aliyah candidates from English-speaking countries to fill these positions. No previous teaching license or experience is necessary.

The Ministry of Education, the Jewish Agency for Israel, the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, and Nefesh B'Nefesh have partnered to launch an English Teachers Project for new olim. The program, which starts in July 2009, provides a supportive framework for new immigrants to acquire a profession and to help meet the growing demand for qualified English teachers in Israel.

Those accepted into the three-year program will receive financial subsidy during the training year and enhanced salary during the first two years of teaching.

Applications must be submitted by February 15, 2009.

For further information please contact Naomi Freedman, naomif@jafi.org or [click here](#).

BE PART OF THE NEW KIBBUTZ HANNATON

Founded 25 years ago by Conservative olim, Kibbutz Hannaton is going through an exciting process of renewal. Twenty young Israeli families, products of our Conservative/Masorti institutions around the world, are moving to the settlement. They need our assistance as they set out to revitalize the kibbutz.

By making an open booking now for a room in the newly renovated Hannaton B&B, you can become a partner in this exciting venture and begin anticipating your stay at this scenic gateway to Israel's north.

[Click here](#) for more information.

FLEECE HATS FOR SOLDIERS "WITH LOVE FROM THE MASORTI MOVEMENT"

In a visible gesture of support, Masorti rabbis, staff members from the NOAM youth organization, and NOAM graduates serving in Nahal Garin, have been distributing fleece hats emblazoned with the words *"with love from the Masorti Movement"* to IDF soldiers and army reservists at the central bus station in Beer Sheva as they leave to join their units. [Click here](#) for photos.

ASHKELON MASORTI LEADERS HOST NY MAYOR MICHAEL BLOOMBERG

During his recent solidarity trip to Israel, New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, accompanied by Congressman Gary Ackerman and NYC Police Chief Ray Kelly and Michael Miller from the New York JCRC, visited Ashkelon and received a briefing about life under fire from former New Yorkers Marty and Terri Davis, Phil and Billie Saltzberg, Elana Davis Sezana and Alon Futterman, who are all members of Netzach Yisrael, the Masorti congregation in Ashkelon.

BabagaNewz

Celebrating Tu B'Shevat with BabagaNewz

In This Issue

[Tu B'Shevat Activities](#)

[Win a Trip to Israel!](#)

Free Conference Call

Join our Director of Education, Lisa Micley, to learn more about our web site, get fresh teaching ideas, ask questions, and plan classroom time.

Choose one of the following times:

**Thursday, January 29 at
4:00 PM EST**

or

**Thursday, February 5 at
1:00 PM EST**

Contact us at educator@babaganewz.com to register, or just dial 1-888-247-2572 and enter 9607# when prompted.

January 20, 2009 / 24 Tevet 5769

The holiday of [Tu B'Shevat](#) (the 15th day of the month of Shevat) falls on February 9, 2009. This day marks the New Year for the Trees. One valuable and ever-popular resource is [Seeds of Hope: A BabagaNewz Seder for Tu B'Shevat](#). It was designed for use in the classroom or in the home, as a means of celebrating the holiday and exploring the concept of hope. The corresponding [lesson plan](#) provides you with suggestions for implementing the Tu B'Shevat Seder and for enriching the Seder experience.

Additionally, as **the U.S. inaugurates its new president today**, here are two lesson plans on the value of ***manhigut* (leadership)**.

- What Is Your Leadership Style? [personality quiz](#) and [lesson plan](#)
- Legendary Leaders [article](#) and [lesson plan](#)

Keep reading for [more activities](#) and a reminder about an amazing [contest opportunity](#) for your students.

B'Shalom,
Sara Marx
Web Editor

[Tu B'Shevat Activities](#)

9607# when prompted.

Gaza Resources

Looking for classroom resources on how to address the current situation in Gaza? Click [here](#) to access pertinent psalms, *tefillot* (prayers), background information, and ways to help.

Purim Preview

In 2009, **Purim** falls on Tuesday, March 10. View resources for teaching Purim [here](#). Watch your email inbox in the next few weeks for much more on this topic!

Quick Links

[BabagaNewz.com](#)

[Check out games](#)
[Send an e-card](#)

Join our list

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Tu B'Shevat Activities

For Teachers

- [10 Ways to Teach Tu B'Shevat](#)
- [Tu B'Shevat vocabulary](#)
- [Edible centerpiece craft](#)
- [Treevial Pursuit: A Tu B'Shevat Game](#)
- [Writing Tu B'Shevat poetry](#)

Click [here](#) for the complete set of teacher resources for Tu B'Shevat.

For Students

- [Send a Tu B'Shevat e-card](#)
- [JEWPARDY!: Holiday Edition](#)
- [Totally Wacky Trees Slideshow](#)
- [Holli Day's Putt-Putt World game](#)

All of this and more can be found at [Tu B'Shevat Central!](#)

Win a Free Trip to Israel!

Invite your students to explain what being in Israel would mean to them by creating an original logo design. The winning design will be made into a decal for a **Nefesh B'Nefesh *aliyah* plane** and the winner will receive a **free trip to Israel!**

For the rules and entry form, click [here](#). Visit [Israel Central](#) for inspiration! Have each student enter and before mailing in the designs, make color copies to showcase in the entrance to your school.

Entries must be received by 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, February 5, 2009.

TU B'SHEVAT: CELEBRATING NATURE'S BOUNTY
February 9, 2009

The *Mishnah* identifies four different "New Years". One of these is *Tu B'Shevat*, the New Year for Trees, which

(according to *Bet Hillel*) occurs on the 15th day of the Hebrew month of *Shevat*. The significance of the holiday, and the ways in which it is celebrated, have differed from place to place and from one generation to another. Today, the holiday is widely viewed as an opportunity to enhance environmental awareness.

In Israel, *Tu B'Shevat* is an agricultural festival, originally bound up with the practice of "tithing," or "taxing," the produce of the land. Under this system, farmers were expected to contribute one tenth of the fruit their trees produced each year, for the benefit of the Temple in Jerusalem. Since most of the seasonal rainfall has occurred by this date, it was determined that any fruit blossoms appearing after the cut-off date would be counted against the next growing season for purposes of tithing.

With the destruction of the Temple came new ways to observe this special day. The Middle Ages saw the creation of the *Tu B'Shevat Seder*, a somewhat mystical event in which the seven main crops mentioned in the Torah (grapes, barley, figs, dates, wheat, olives, and pomegranates) were consumed by participants. The first such *Seder* was held in Tzfat/Safed in the sixteenth century. Today, non-mystical versions of the ceremony emphasize our relationship to the environment.

Planting trees has been another way in which those living in Israel observe the holiday of *Tu B'Shevat*. Indeed schoolchildren in Israel celebrate the holiday with festive singing and tree planting ceremonies. The holiday took on added significance with the founding of the modern state, signifying the revival and redemption of the land through conquest of the desert.

The Tradition Continues

While Jews living in North America may have some trouble relating to the agricultural aspect of the holiday – since *Tu B'Shevat* falls during our coldest, rainiest season – we can still mark the day by consuming fruit and other products (e.g., wine) made in Israel. *Tu B'Shevat Sedarim* are increasingly popular. How much fruit to eat – and which varieties to include – vary widely. Some people eat three types of fruit – fruit with an inedible outer peel, fruit with a pit, and fruit which is edible inside and out. This reflects a mystical tradition in which each type of fruit represents a particular level of creation.

Some people use the opportunity to eat a new fruit, in order to include the *shehecheyanu* blessing in the ceremony. Many also drink four cups of wine, ranging in color from light to dark. In Ashkenazic communities in Europe, it was customary to eat fifteen different types of fruit, reflecting the fact that the *Seder* was held on the fifteenth of the month. In Sephardic communities, the holiday took on greater significance, generating additional liturgy as well as new customs.

A variety of *Haggadot* have been created for the occasion, including appropriate verses from the Bible or Talmud about each fruit eaten as well as reading on *bal tash'hit*, our obligation not to be unnecessarily wasteful or to needlessly destroy natural resources.

Celebrating the Environment

Tu B'Shevat provides a wonderful opportunity to reflect on and teach others about our responsibility to the environment. Some communities have used the occasion of *Tu B'Shevat* to organize local park clearings and tree plantings. While Jews living in the Diaspora can certainly plant trees in their own neighborhood, they can also use this opportunity to plant trees in Israel through the Jewish National Fund. Communities have used the holiday to launch letter-writing campaigns to protect forests and oppose pollution.

Protecting the Environment

For a listing of Jewish sources on this topic, see “Judaism and the Environment,” a publication of the United Synagogue/Rabbinical Assembly Joint Commission on Social Action.

An environmental handbook published by the United Synagogue Department of Youth Activities lists 130 things one can do to help the environment. Let Tu B'Shevat inspire you to put these ideas into practice.

Written by Lois Goldrich, Former Director, USCJ Department of Public Affairs

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CLASSES FOR KIDS

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CONTACT INFO:

(212) 423 – 3200

www.thejewishmuseum.org

COMBING THROUGH MY FILES:

Organ Donation and Halacha (article, not lesson)

FOR TU BISHVAT:

Tree quotes from the Bible & what your students can do with them

Tu Bishvat Seders

Using the film or book, *The Lorax*, by Dr. Seuss, to teach about Tu Bishvat

Games and Puzzles

Tu Bishvat for Preschoolers

*Activities * Crafts * Stories*

For these, or other ideas, contact Nita at Levin@USCJ.org