



**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**

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**Dear Colleagues,**

**Pesach, when tradition is innovation.**

[morim.org](http://morim.org)

The precept in Exodus 13:8 begins by saying “And you shall tell your son on that day...” The exact words in Hebrew are “*V'higad'ta l'vincha...*” The book that relates the history of Pesach—literally “The Story”—is the *Haggadah*. Clearly, this festival confronts us with the central motive for its celebration being the telling of the story.

Click bellow to see all:

[Pesach Materials](#) ➔

[madrichim.org](http://madrichim.org)

[Pesach Materials](#) ➔

The Jewish book that has been the object of the greatest number of editions, and subject to the greatest number of commentaries and interpretations, is, perhaps surprisingly, neither the Torah nor the Siddur (our book of daily *tefillot*) but the *Haggadah of Pesach*. The basic tale of the *Haggadah* incorporates selections of texts from very different periods of Jewish history, starting with the Bible but essentially revolving around the commentary of rabbinical literature. The songs included towards the end of the Seder belong fundamentally to the medieval age. Every year, new commentaries are written and new editions make an appearance.

Contemporary *Haggadot* reflect very different ideological conceptions as regards Jewish life and practice, among which productions we find

modern Zionism, feminism, socialism, single-parent families, along with some reflecting the need of certain Jews to support the emancipation movements of other subjugated peoples.

The need to make the Seder into a relevant experience for the different people who partake in it is not some luxurious conquest of modernity or of tolerance, a contemporary value. It derives from the precept itself “In each generation every man is to look upon himself as if he, personally, had left Egypt.” And it is the *Haggadah* itself that invites us to recreate and re-elaborate: “all that extends from the story of the Exodus from Egypt is blessed.” It is clear then, that in telling the Pesach story in this fashion, whereby each person finds within the narration elements of intimate signification and relevance, we are not merely making use of good educational strategy; we are first and foremost observing the *mitzvah*, and, in the deepest sense, we are being very traditionalist. The fact that it is an innovative story, and hence relevant to every contemporary Jew, is (and has for centuries been) our tradition.

In words of Elie Wiesel “...week after week, while we were blessing the wine during the Shabbat dinner, I

accompanied the Jews who left Egypt—yes, **I was always leaving Egypt, liberating myself from slavery.** Being Jewish meant creating bonds, a network of continuity” and signification, we might add.

Let us be capable of being true to our most ancient tradition: to innovate in the transmission; in this way let us educate beings to find the most contemporary expressions in the oldest of stories.

Pesach

sameach!

[Morim.org](http://Morim.org) & [Madrachim.org](http://Madrachim.org)

### From Shirat Ha Yam to Shir Ha Shirim

*By Rabbi Joshua Kullock*

When we think about the Pesach festival, we can trace a trajectory stretching from *Shirat Ha Yam*, the song of the People of Israel sung upon their crossing the Sea of Reeds, all the way to *Shir Ha Shirim*, the Song of Songs, which is nothing less than the text chosen by our tradition to be read in mid festival. Departing from the dichotomy both poems represent, the author attempts to show how music has played a fundamental role in Judaism for many years, while taking an in-depth look at the various paradigms that can be gleaned from analyzing the texts. This being the case, models are constructed among lyrics and melodies, which govern man’s relationship to people and the people’s to G-d.

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

### Slavery: Beyond the Seder Plate

*By Marji Gold-Vukson*

Enslavement and freedom are themes central to our Passover Seder. Yet the topics themselves transcend our own communal slavery experience. Punctuated with the symbols on the traditional Seder plate, this program delves into the bitterness of our enslavement in Egypt; the institution of slavery throughout history, including the modern day; enslavement of our self-esteem and self-worth to simple opinions and pressures; enslavement to materialism over generosity; and enslavement to addictive behaviors ... plus issues concerning the freedom from each!

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

### The Visitor

*By Guido Cohen*

Then Eliahu remembered the words that a prophet, called Malachi, had said about him some years back: “Look! The prophet Eliahu is before you....” Apparently, some could not see him. As legend has it, he simply gave the impression of being like any other person and allowed himself to be invited. Thus, those who opened their doors to receive him, without knowing it, were opening the doors of the transcendental. Focusing on the custom of receiving guests at the Seder table, the author proposes accompanying a very special personage as he stops by at three Sedarim in three different ages. Let’s pull up a chair and see how this mysterious visitor is received!

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

### The Theme of the Number Four As It Weaves Itself Through the Seder

*By Cheryl Wise*

This program explores the number four as it weaves itself through the Seder. The program focuses on the four children, the four questions, and the four cups of wine. Each section has 3 subsections (activities) that help breakdown each of these major aspects of the Seder. Each section is made up of 3 activities that reinforce understanding of each of these major elements of the Seder through participative and dynamic activities as well as through readings from the midrashim, the haggadah, the Bible and contemporary texts. This program can be done either as a family program outside of the formal classroom setting or within the classroom. It can also be implemented as a rotation program or each station can be its own lesson.

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

### Pesach: Four Names, Four Aspects of the Festival

*By Orly Lev & Sebastian Schurmann*

The objective of this project is to provide an introduction to the festival of Pesach in terms of four different aspects, each related to one of its four names: *Chag Ha Pesach*, *Chag Ha Matzot*, *Chag Aviv*, and *Ha Zman Cheiruteinu*. The participants touch on themes and values that enable them to analyze the following: the Biblical story and the reasoning by which our tradition explains the predominance of Pesach as the most popular name for the festival; the song “*Ha Lachma Anya*” and the concept of matzah as being the bread of poverty and humility; the spring and how it relates to the Exodus from Egypt; the idea of “*B’chol Dor Vador*” and how it relates to the concepts of liberty and slavery.

Various aptitudes are exercised in the course of the activities, such as reading, text comprehension, writing, debate, and argumentation. Furthermore, each proposal ends with a different artistic project, exhibiting the participants’ studies and affording a summary of the various contents.

March 28, 2008

Volume 15, Issue 11

## Purim & Everything After

Hello there, and welcome to the latest edition of the TAPBB.

Purim has passed, and your TAPBB editor is hangin' out, listening to the [new Counting Crows album](#) (which is mostly fantastic, if you were wondering), and getting ready for Pesah.

Of course, Passover is your TAPBB editor's fourth favorite holiday (after Lag Ba-Omer, Yom HaAtzma'ut, and Opening Day at Dodger Stadium), mostly because he really loves lox and cream cheese on matzoh. Also, he gets very excited for Let My People Go.

Anyway, we've got a great TAPBB this week, including the first in a series of essays about Israel and Israel education.

As always, you can find all this and more at the [TAPBB Blog](#), and you can share you comments, suggestions, fears, and frustrations by dropping us an email: [tapbb@torahaura.com](mailto:tapbb@torahaura.com).

## When We Teach Israel, There's Often a Gap

*In honor of Israel's 60th birthday, we're going to be taking some space in the TAPBB to talk about some real Israel issues. This is the first in a series of essays about how Israel fits into the school curriculum.*

by [Joel Lurie Grishaver](#)

For the past couple of years, we've been thinking a lot at Torah Aura about Israel curriculum. In a number of our discussions and brainstorming sessions, we've come up against something that we like to call The Gap.

The Gap doesn't sell jeans. (That's a [different Gap](#).) Our Gap is about how American Jews think about Israel.

## Now Available: Free Teacher Resources

Are you thinking of using [God: Jewish Choices for Struggling with the Ultimate](#) in your school?

We now have resources for teachers and educators - including a **free** teacher's guide - available on our website,

### In This Issue

[The Israel Gap](#)

[Download Free Teacher Resources](#)

[Great Passover Art: Seder Plates and Beyond!](#)

### Get Ready for Pesah with **JOURNEYS THROUGH THE HAGGADAH**

Are your students ready to lead the family seder?

Pesah is around the corner. Prepare them for the holiday -- and make sure that they impress their families with their seder skills -- by making **Journeys Through the Haggadah** a part of their holiday prep.

**Journeys Through the Haggadah** is based on the same pedagogical technology as our Journeys Through the Siddur series, but is designed to provide students with a quick pre-Pesah clinic. It's the perfect addition to your 5th-7th grade curriculum, and it makes a great enrichment project for students who need a bit more beyond the Journeys curriculum.

Order now, and get a special 10% pre-Pesah discount.

State.

The Other Opinion (The There is more than Enough Blame to Go Around Position) is that Israel exasperates the possibilities for peace as badly or almost as badly as the Palestinians.

The problem has been that people who believe that they need to support Opinion One have been writing curriculum and teaching Israel to students whose families mainly hold Opinion Two.

The upshot of this gap is that we often teach a "perfect" Israel (that one must love) to students who later (a) watch the news, or (b) talk to other kids and wind up saying, "In Hebrew School I was lied to about Israel."

[Read the rest »](#)

## Now Available: Free Teacher Resources

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We now have resources for teachers and educators - including a **free** teacher's guide - available on our website, [www.torahaura.com](http://www.torahaura.com). Keep your eyes peeled for more teacher resources that we're adding every day. To find them simply go to the website, click on a product, and select the resource (located below the product description) that you want to download.

Also, remember that all Torah Aura products come with free teacher training. We'll send our curriculum experts to your school to help your teachers use [The Circle of Jewish Life](#), any part of the [Torah Aura Hebrew/Prayer Program](#), [Being Torah](#), or any of our other products. To get free staff development for your school, contact [Josh Barkin](#), Director of School Services at (323) 923-6026 or [josh@torahaura.com](mailto:josh@torahaura.com).

Stuff from Laurie:

## Pesach Art That Goes Beyond Seder Plates

by [Laurie Bellet](#)

The other day, I gave a group of early childhood teachers a wonderful way to make charoset dishes for Pesach. It involves using clay flower pots. The artist turns the pot upside down and designs the surface with tiles. Since it is upside down, the lip of the rim catches any tiles that might slip. When dry, you place a plastic drinking cup as an insert to hold the charoset so the clay mosaic, itself, never will need washing. It's a format I have used for years, in many age ranges, and it always results in a happy ending. Nevertheless, the charoset dish was not what I was really teaching. The true lesson came before.

## WHOLE SCHOOL PASSOVER Makes the Holiday Interesting for Everyone!

Each lesson in the Whole-School Holiday Curriculum focuses on a different aspect of the holiday, so students will never complain again that they learned the same thing last year.

With **Whole-School Passover**, students will learn about Passover symbols, how to chant the Four Questions, and how to make matzoh. And they'll learn new things every year.

Order **Whole School Passover** now, and get a 10% pre-Pesach discount!

## Empower Your Students to Use the Real Text with *Being Torah*.

In honor of its twentieth anniversary, *Being Torah* has been recreated in stunning color in a simplified

My puppets, so recently the residents of Shushan, were transformed into the Israelites in Egypt. As difficult it was for them, the puppets had to move bricks, one by one, to another site in the classroom while another puppet demanded that they move more quickly so that the structure they were building would get finished. Sadly, the puppets had a problem; the bricks would not stay firmly atop one another. This is where the charoset came into play.

In the classroom, following the drama and every child having a desired role (Our bricks always get moved to many construction sites!), each child receives a "building" in the form of a clay flower pot and with the tiles, or other desired mosaic materials builds a unique charoset dish.

There are so many things students can make for Pesach that it is too easy to get caught up in making the things as the goals, without a solid learning foundation for support. I am frequently asked for ideas that go beyond a Seder plate. Here are some ideas:

[Keep reading »](#)

crafted specifically for 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> graders, students are drawn into the words of Torah. This is not a book about Torah. It is actual Torah study made accessible and age appropriate.

**To order now, click on the cover above.**

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10%**

What makes this TAPBB different?  
Well, It's time for the Pesah Sale!

Passover is right around the corner. Are you and your students ready? We've got all sorts of Pesah products ready to ship to your school, and if you order today, we can make sure you get it in plenty of time. Between now and Pesah, order any Passover materials and a 10% discount will be automatically applied to the regular price. To get started, check out [www.torahaura.com](http://www.torahaura.com) or call our order desk at (800) 689-0793.

**Offer Expires: April 18, 2008**

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Dear Educator,

Pesach is around the corner! Click on the [podcast](#) from [Teach Them Diligently: A Midrash on the Jewish Educator's Year](#) to hear an excerpt from the Passover chapter. In it Bonnie Stevens, the author, uses Passover as a symbol of the home as the center of Jewish education.

And, you can help *families* practice reading and singing the [Four Questions \(Mah Nishtanah\)](#) together. Send home the link to the "Click and Learn Prayer" feature on our [Family Site](#) or send families directly to [Mah Nishtanah](#) by forwarding to this link: <http://www.behrmanhouse.com/family/welcome.shtml>

Hag sameah,  
Terry Kaye  
[terry@behrmanhouse.com](mailto:terry@behrmanhouse.com)

=====  
Hello Everyone,

Below is a list of questions developed by Rabbi Stuart Seltzer to use at a teacher's

meeting to help teachers reflect on honoring all of their students: the wise, the wicked, the simple, and the one who does not know how to ask. It is sure to generate important conversations.

B'shalom,  
Serene

Serene Victor  
USCJ National Consultant for Synagogue Education

## The Four Students *Prepared by Rabbi Stuart Seltzer*

### The Wise Student

What kinds of questions do we want our students to ask?

What is a good question?

In this passage, the wise child is well educated in the tradition. What other kinds of wisdom might students bring to the classroom?

What are the best kinds of questions that we can ask our students?

How do we encourage our students to ask questions?

How do we encourage our students to be curious?

How do we encourage our students to be respectful?

How do we create a classroom environment that fosters serious engaged dialogue?

How can we encourage the very knowledgeable student to learn in less intellectual/cerebral ways.

How can we make sure that the wise child doesn't dominate discussions because the other students are going to be like them?

### The Wicked Student

Who are our wicked students?

In this passage, the wicked child is provocative. Do we ignore the feeling of provocation? Do we acknowledge the feeling of provocation?

How do we interpret this provocative behavior?

Why do some students not feel part of the community?

How can we encourage our students to feel less alienated?

When is shame a good technique in education or in the classroom?

When is it good for the teacher to mirror the wicked student's behavior?

How does the student become wicked?

### The Simple Student

Who are our simple students?

What does the simple student's question tell us about this student?

How do we understand the simple student's question?

Why is the simple student good for the teacher?

How personal should we be with our student's about the subject matter?

What are some of the ways we can make the simple student feel part of our community?

How do we help the simple student grow?

### The Student Who Does Not Know How to Ask

Who are our students who do not know how to ask?

What do we do with the quiet kid in the back of the room who never speaks?

How do we open conversations with students who never speak?

When is it appropriate for a teacher to talk personally in a classroom?

What are the pitfalls in talking personally?  
What are the pitfalls in not talking personally?

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Hi Folks,

I was very happy to finally receive information about the Emory University Avichai sponsored workshop on teaching Israel that has received rave reviews over the last couple of years.

[http://www.ismi.emory.edu/TeacherWorkshop/ISMI%20one%20week%20workshop information%20and%20application%202008.pdf](http://www.ismi.emory.edu/TeacherWorkshop/ISMI%20one%20week%20workshop%20information%20and%20application%202008.pdf)

This is a great opportunity for your teachers.

B'shalom,  
Serene

Serene Victor  
USCJ National Consultant for Synagogue Education

## PRESCHOOL CORNER

In Case you missed the Early Childhood Directors, here are notes from that chat.

Be sure to join them next time! Contact Maxine at [Handelman@USCJ.org](mailto:Handelman@USCJ.org)

Thanks to everyone who joined the call yesterday. It was great to get new ideas, make connections and especially exciting to hear how ideas from last month's call sparked new programming for Pesach! Theoretically this list no supports attachments, so I am attaching and pasting the notes below.

**Our next call is Wednesday, May 7, 4:15 NY time (3:15 Central, 2:15 Mountain, 1:15 Pacific). Call in number to follow.**

**Hag Pesach kasher v'sameach! May all your chametz be found and disposed of, and may all your matza have the appropriate CRUNCH!**

**Max**

EC Director's chat April 2, 2008

On the agenda this month:

- Finish the Pesach conversation
- Israel at 60
- Next Call – May 7 – 4:15 NY time (3:15 Central, 2:15 Mountain, 1:15 Pacific)

On the agenda for next month:

- Staff retention - Moral builders for staff - team building ideas, incentives and staff appreciation ideas

On today's call:

Max Handelman – USCJ, Chicago, IL

Marilyn Richter - B'nai Emet, St. Louis Park, MN

Idie Benjamin – Temple Israel Center, White Plains, NY

Tammie Roth – Beth El, HP, IL

Shereen Canady - Jacksonville Jewish Center, FL

Judy Jacks Berman – Beth Shalom, Overland Park, KS

Linda Weiss - Temple Beth Shalom, Livingston NJ

Jennifer Zukowski and Naomi Sutherland – Temple Beth Shalom, Las Vegas

Debbie Kinman-Ford – Cong. B'nai Israel, Gainesville, FL

Amy Naphtali – Temple Beth Ahm, Aberdeen, NJ

**Call notes:**

Debbie kicked off the call with the question of the worthiness of sending teachers to CAJE and do they come back with good stuff. The response was that while it depends, CAJE is designed for teachers, although the sharing of gained knowledge with other teachers back at school is iffy, and must be carefully elicited.

### Pesach

Our goals for our children include familiarity with Pesach concepts and stories, being able to recite the four questions, etc. Considering the overemphasis on projects related to this holiday, sometimes we grit our teeth, but the parents love them. We need to consider that many parents are returning to Judaism through their child's experience.

A goal of the model seder is for children to show parents what they have learned, and to enable parents to incorporate what the children have learned into their home seder.

One suggestion was to collect all the Pesach projects and compile them into the Haggadah.

Based on suggestions from our call last month, Debbie has created a How-To seder experience – a handbook and workshop for parents that offers several places to start (“Never seen a seder? Start Here. Leading your own seder for the first time? Start here). Also, she and her staff wrote their own version of the story of Moses/Passover and broke it up so each class experiences part of the story in a variety of ways. They matched a part of the seder with each part of the story to help children make the connection. They made the story into a book which every child will take home. Debbie will send the story and a better description of the program to me and I will post it to the list serv.

At Tammie's school, the parents have created “Carry out Judaism” bags – one for each holiday, the parents research, create, fund, and pack a bag for every child in the school containing background info, a developmentally appropriate holiday related activity to do at home (and include all the necessary materials), and of course, some food. For example, the Passover bag this year is a bidikat Hametz kit, which then carries home the Bidikat Hametz experience the children have at school. Tammie will send me samples of the bag materials and I will post them.

Amy asked for advice on doing a matza factory at school. Suggestions included:

- Use the book The Mouse and Matza Factory by Francine Medoff, published by Kar-Ben (republished in color in 2003)
- Be sure to have the children make bread from scratch before they make matza, so they have the contrast and see what yeast does

Shereene reads the book Matza Man, and then does a MatzaMan (Gingerbread man) type scavenger hunt throughout the synagogue building. This could also be an Afikoman Man hunt.

### Israel at 60

While we certainly celebrate Israel's birthday every year, this year is a little more hyped up because of the year. There are opportunities to connect with Community-wide celebrations and spotlight the children. For example, all the Jewish preschool children in Minneapolis are singing at the Metrodome to kick off the community celebration.

Debbie is filling a week with daily activities related to Israel, using their local shaliach, and making sure their efforts are visible in and out of the building. One project includes each class making a piece of a puzzle which will become a huge Israeli flag.

Several people mentioned pen pal relationships with schools in Israel. Marilyn's school sends a teddy bear back and forth to their pen pals. A teddy bear from the school could also visit Israel with a teacher or family, who can then document the bear's journey with pictures.

Finally, in Las Vegas, the Venetian Casino is sponsoring the community's Yom HaAtzma'ut celebration and the children will participate there.

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[www.usci.org](http://www.usci.org)

I'd stop eating chocolate but I'm no quitter.

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