



**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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## **UP-COMING TEACHER TRAINING MINI-COURSES**

**Only 4 more courses left for the semester!**

**COURSE # 6: DEVELOPING A SENSITIVITY TO CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**  
INSTRUCTOR: WENDY DRATLER, Special Needs Consultant

Wendy Dratler, our Special Needs consultant who taught our *New Jewish Child Left Aside* course, will aid educators to "feel what it is like to be disabled," allowing for empathy for these individuals and the experiences they struggle with the mainstream. Participants will have hands-on experiences, benefit from sensitivity lessons that are tied to Bible stories, how Torah tells us to treat the disabled, and how to make students with disabilities feel like the star of the class.

DATE: Sun., October 5, 12:45 - 2:15 p.m. > *Please note the new time and corrected date and location*  
LOCATION: Cong. Beth El, South Orange >

**COURSE 7: INFUSING THE PRESCHOOL CLASS WITH JEWISH VALUES**  
INSTRUCTOR: JANICE JUMBO

What about our preschool room lets all who enter know that this is a Jewish program? Is there an Israeli flag or a Shabbat set in the house corner? Are there kipot in the dress-up corner and on the snack table? Do we bring God into our discussions when we see something extraordinary in nature? Do we sing Jewish songs or use a Hebrew greeting when children enter? Janice, a very creative and innovative teacher, has been teaching nursery school Jewishly for many years. Participants in this Mini-Course will leave with many ideas they will feel comfortable adding to their daily routine, including Circle Time. You may want to bring a tape recorder!

DATE: Mon., Oct. 27, 4 - 5:30 p.m.  
LOCATION: Beth El Synagogue, E. Windsor

**COURSE # 8: DEVELOPING A SENSITIVITY TO CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**  
INSTRUCTOR: WENDY DRATLER

*Please see course description above*

DATE: Sunday, November 9, 12:45 - 2:15 p.m. > *Note the correct date*  
LOCATION: Temple Israel, Ridgewood

**COURSE 9: B'TZELEM ELOKIM: DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY OF MENSCHEN**  
INSTRUCTOR: DR. SHOSHANA SILBERMAN

Learning to treat each other with respect and dignity in the way in which Judaism teaches is a reflection of God. In this Mini-Course, participants will learn how to develop a cohesive community of students exhibiting menschlichkeit behavior, understanding that we are all created in the image of God.

DATE: Sunday, November 23, 9 - 10:30  
LOCATION: Temple Beth Torah, Ocean

If you are interested in attending any of these courses, contact Michelle Rich at [Rich@USCJ.org](mailto: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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## Combing through My Files....

*I found some interesting ideas for teaching about Yom Kippur*

...Which ones do not belong?

(young children)

...Do-It-Yourself Jonah Story Kit (grades K - 2nd grades)

...Doing Teshuvah from Yom Kippur Together (grades K - 2)

**...Jonah and the Great Fish: a story (1st - 3rd grades)**

... Jonah and the Whale: A Read-Aloud play.

Can also be attached to a point-giving game. (3rd- 5th grades)

...Yom Kippur Tzedakah Charades

(grades 3rd - 6th)

...Teshuvah Relay Race (from CAJE) (grades 3rd - 6th)

...The Yom Kippur Navigation Quiz:

*A self-check game, where the student is sent all over the list to find the correct order. This could also be made into a scavenger hunt type of activity. (4th - 6th grades)*

...Target Teshuvah: A Spy Kit (from BabagaNewz) (4th - 7th grades)

...Rambam's Tzedakah Ladder:

*Since we speak of tzedakah as one of the avenues toward atonement, this is an activity which examines the Rambam's observations about how Jews give tzedakah, from the worst way to the best way. There are several activities in this unit. (4th grade - high school)*

...Averah-Stopper's Textbook: How to identify true t'shuvah (grades 5 - high school)

*In addition, you may want to consider contacting Torah Aura to purchase their Instant Lesson units: Missing the Mark (grade 6), A Long Penitent Season, or, Doing Major League T'shuvah (grades 3 - 4)*

Al Chet and Class rules chart:

Make a class-induced list of items that would fit under the heading of: *AL CHET*

*SHECHATANU: WE HURT OTHERS WHEN WE.....* Make it into a poster to hang in the class.

During the year, when a student commits one of these acts, direct them to the chart to study it and to tell you which of those rules they broke. Remind them that these rules were a community decision! (grades K - 3)

*STORIES: We have lots and lots of stories!*

*If there are any other activities that you would like, or if you'd like to brainstorm, please contact Nita at (732) 738 - 4301, or [Levin@USCJ.org](mailto:Levin@USCJ.org). ALSO, please let your teachers know that they are welcome to contact me as well!*

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Are you beginning to think of plans for Succot and Simchat Torah? Would you like some interesting ways to decorate your synagogue succah, Beyond the Paper Chain? Contact Nita at [Levin@USCJ.org](mailto:Levin@USCJ.org).

If the Fall Chagim are upon us, that means that the secular fall holidays--such as Halloween and Thanksgiving--are soon to follow. Halloween falls on Shabbat this year. Contact Nita for some ways to approach this!

We also have ideas for putting a Jewish "tam" on the holiday of Thanksgiving, including for Preschoolers!

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Cheshbon haNefesh for Religious School Leaders  
Creating a New Vision for 5769

Shalom, Chaverim.

By now, most of you have received a copy of the August, 2008 Avi Chai study headed by Rabbi Jack Wertheimer, Professor of American Jewish History at the Jewish Theological Seminary. *A Census of Jewish Supplemental Schools in the United States, 2006-2007* reports the findings gleaned from the responses of approximately 2,000 supplementary schools relating to questions of population, demographics, attendance trends, educational goals and curriculum trends.

The key findings reported by Professor Wertheimer include:

- The recognition that supplementary Jewish education is the vehicle used by the majority of Jewish families in America.
- A continued drop-off of attendance beyond B'nai Mitzvah.
- The enrollment in conservative schools of 26% of all students in supplementary schools.
- Among conservative homes, approximately 40% send their children to Jewish Day Schools.

- The majority of Jewish supplementary schools have less than 100 students, and geography affects school size.
- A rising number of supplementary schools have decreased the hours of attendance.
- When asked their primary goals for their children's Jewish education, parents from the conservative movement were most likely to stress Hebrew reading and the skills to participate in services.
- A list of implications of this study and the challenges it presents.

**We thank Professor Wertheimer for this important work. If you have not received a copy of the census, you can access it on line at [www.avichai.org](http://www.avichai.org).**

Each year, as we approach the *Yamim Noraim*, the Days of Awe, all Jews are responsible for assessing their behavior and attitudes: what behaviors and attitudes from the past year are worthy of continuing, and what requires change and improvement. In 1993, Rabbi Moshe Edelman, Director of Leadership Development for United Synagogue, created a document entitled *Cheshbon Ha-Nefesh K'hilati*. He enjoined each congregation to take a close look at their operations as a self-evaluation toward improvement.

As educational leaders faced with the realities of the recent Avi Chai census, it behooves each of us to examine our own practice, to determine if the schools that we are overseeing are the most effective schools they can be. Is each of us doing what we can to promote quality conservative Jewish education? In participating in our own educational *Cheshbon haNefesh*, we need to ask:

1. Do our curricula meet the standards of Conservative Judaism? Do they provide adequate time and appropriate methods to teach:
  - ❖ Hebrew as language and Hebrew decoding
  - ❖ Jewish Prayer
  - ❖ Jewish holiday history and traditions
  - ❖ Conservative halakhah and traditional Jewish values
  - ❖ Torah and Bible study
  - ❖ Knowledge about and concern for Israel
 (For details about the goals for our conservative schools, please refer to the *Aims Statement for Conservative Jewish Schools* at [www.uscj.org](http://www.uscj.org) under *Education*).
2. Are we finding the most effective teachers, and providing the training and support they need to do their jobs well?
3. Are we providing Shabbat experiences that bring children and their families into the synagogue on a regular basis?
4. Are we providing good home-school communications, and encouraging parents to take a part in their children's Jewish education?
5. Are we creating meaningful and memorable holiday experiences in our schools?
6. Are the environments of our classrooms, hallways, and offices welcoming to students, teachers and parents?
7. Are we providing opportunities for our Day School students and families to be actively involved in the life of the synagogue?
8. Are we providing the resources and staffing so that our youth groups flourish?
9. Are our high school curricula meeting the needs of our teens, and encouraging them to continue their Jewish education beyond B'nai Mitzvah?

A little more than six years ago, the conservative movement established the Framework for Excellence. The goals and models of the Framework provide the opportunity for each of our schools to reach for the highest standards of quality and effectiveness. For more information on Framework, go to [www.uscj.org](http://www.uscj.org) or contact Wendy Light, USCJ Framework Consultant at [light@uscj.org](mailto:light@uscj.org).

**May 5769 be the source of enrichment for you and your schools, and may each of us learn and grow as we move into the New Year. May quality be a priority in our work, and may all of our good decisions serve to strengthen Conservative Judaism for ourselves and for our constituents.**

Susan E. Wyner  
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North American Consultant for Synagogue Education

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**OUR VISION:**

The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism promotes the role of the synagogue in Jewish life in order to motivate Conservative Jews to perform mitzvot encompassing ethical behavior, spirituality, Judaic learning, and ritual observance.

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**preschool corner**

Please accept my apologies on the tardiness of this shiur. With all the excitement of CAJE and this summer, this shiur got left on the back burner too long. I hope you enjoy it. The October shiur will be coming your way soon. As always, feedback is helpful and always welcome.

L'shana tova u'mituka,  
Max

*It's Elul - did you hear the shofar today?*

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USCJ EC Staff Meeting *Shiur* –September 2008

**Questions for discussion:**

1. A new year has just begun in school, and a new Jewish year is quickly approaching. What are your hopes and dreams for this new year?
2. For Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, there are specific greetings that we offer each other. In the weeks before Rosh Hashanah, we say “L’shanah tovah tovah tikatevu,” which literally means, “May you be written [in the Book of Life] for a good year.” We might also say “Shanah tovah” (A good year),

“Shanah tovah u’mitukah” (A good sweet year), or simply “Gut yohr” (Yiddish for Good year). Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the tone changes a little. We say “G’mar chatimah tovah,” which literally means “May you finally be sealed [in the Book of Life] for good.” We also wish each other “Tzom kal” (An easy fast). On Yom Kippur, we say “L’shanah tovah tikatayvu v’tē-cha-taymu” (May you be inscribed and sealed [in the Book of Life] for a good year). What do all these greetings tell us about the Jewish hopes and dreams for the new year? What is the Book of Life? (To answer this question, check out a study guide at <http://www.uscj.org/Koach/documents/bookoflife.doc>) In Judaism, we have the value of *sayver panim yafot*, essentially, of having a pleasant demeanor. How does it affect an interaction when we begin it with a sayver panim yafot? Role play an encounter in two ways – once with a sayver panim yafot, and once with a grouchy attitude. How do each of these moments feel? How might a habit of sayver panim yafot and the high holiday greetings set a strong, positive tone for the entire year?

4. What role will the high holiday greetings play in your classroom? How will you instill in your children a habit of sayver panim yafot? Does this work even with infants? *Check out this shiur: September 2008 coincides with Elul 5768, which means you could be blowing shofar every morning in your school. Check out the Staff Meeting Shiur from September 2006*  
[http://uscj.org/September\\_20067123.html](http://uscj.org/September_20067123.html)

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 Consultant for Early Childhood Education, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism  
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## A Tashlich Idea for the Classroom

In is traditional during the afternoon of the first day of Rosh Hashana for Jews to participate in a *tashlich* ceremony. Jews go to a body of water where they empty their pockets of “crumbs” representing their sins, in the hope that they will be washed away. (Or bring breadcrumbs, Cheerios or cracked corn to feed the ducks that inhabit the body of water!) Water is a symbol of purification, and *tashlich* is used as a time for reflection to purify our souls, and help us shed the heaviness that our troubles and sense of guilt add to our bodies and souls, as well as our lives.

Here is a classroom activity that get into the spirit of *tashlich*. It can be adapted to any age level.

**Materials:**

- Coffee filters
- Washable markers (must not be water-proof!)
- A vat of water (even better if there is a nearby hose and children’s pool)

**Activity:**

Students take a coffee filter for each of the actions of the past year for which they want to say, “I’m sorry” and change their behavior. They write or draw an image of the activity on the coffee filters with the washable markers. Students then go as a class to the water, and “wash away their sins!”

**(My thanks to Cleveland master teacher Sherry Linden for this wonderful activity.)**

**From all of us in the Education Department of United Synagogue:**  
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**Shana Tova u’Metuka**  
 May You Be Blessed with a Happy and Sweet Year

Feel free to share the contents of the message with other educators, but please add the tagline:  
 Presented by Susan Wyner, North American Consultant for Synagogue Education, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

Susan E. Wyner  
 United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

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## Some Gastronomic Rosh Hashana Traditions

אנו מברכים אתכם ואת משפחותיכם

# Shana Tova u'Metuka A Happy and Sweet Year

With this greeting, our Tradition invites us to greet friends and family with a variety of intents: good wishes for the year to come, numbering 5769 in the Jewish calendar, and the imagined flavor of apples or challah and honey, to symbolize the hope that the year ahead will be a source of sweetness (both in *Ashkenazic* and *Sefardic* traditions).

In her *Jewish Holiday Cookbook*, author Gloria Kaufer Greene offers a variety of traditions from around the world for each of the *chagim*. So, in the spirit of our holiday greeting, here are some customs that Jews in other climes might be experiencing at this time of year:

- Fish is often served as a symbol of fertility and immortality. Sefardic Jews often serve the entire fish, including the head, so we may strive to be the "head" and not the tail (or in the vernacular—use our noggins!)
- With the same idea in mind, Italian Jews might make ravioli filled with calves' brains (a different take on the Ashkenazic *kreplach* familiar to most of us). Moroccans cook the brains into fritters, while Greeks create tasty pastries that use both hard-boiled eggs (fertility) and brains (*sechel*)!
- On the other hand, some Iraqi Jews do **not** eat fish on Rosh Hashana because the word in Hebrew (דג, *dag*) resembles the word for "worry" (דאגה, *da'ag*). In the same light, some Ashkenazic Jews will not eat nuts, because the numerical value of the word "nut" is close to that of a word for "sin".
- In both *Sefardic* and *Ashkenazic* traditions, it is customary to eat seasonal vegetables and unusual fruits over which special blessings are said. Pages 782-785 in *Siddur Sim Shalom* provides us with an array of blessings used for this purpose. ***This could be created into a wonderful school event—with classes participating in an in-gathering of different seasonal or unusual fruits and veggies to share in the school community, in order to learn and practice the different blessings.***
- Some foods are included in home ceremonies because their Hebrew names are puns on some of the words in the Rosh Hashana liturgy. The word תמר - *tamar* (date) sounds like part of the blessing in which we ask to be purified of our sins (תפילה). Israelis may cook and chop up green "bottle" squash into a special dish because its name sounds like part of the prayer that asks that "our enemies be chopped down".
- On the second night of *Rosh Hashana*, it is traditional to eat one fruit not yet tasted in this season, and to recite the *sheheheyenu* prayer in honor of the occasion. In North America, the pomegranate is often available in stores for this specific purpose. The pomegranate is especially useful with children because of its symbolism. Among the many *Midrashim* that correspond to the pomegranate is the belief that it contains 613 seeds, reflecting the 613 *mitzvot*. Another *Midrash* says that the assemblage of the seeds around the center resemble the gathering of students around the teacher, eager to study Torah.

Susan E. Wyner

United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

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Interested in a Museum trip, for you, your teachers, or your students?

The Jewish Museum:

Educator Workshop: Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls:

Tuesday, 10/28, 4 - 7, fee: \$10, includes a light dinner

*Discover dynamic ways of teaching about the ancient world. In addition to the Jewish Museum's extensive collection of original artifacts, view the Archaeology Zone children's exhibit and the special exhibition, The Dead Sea Scrolls: Mysteries of the Ancient World. Dr. Neil J. Goldberg (archaeologist-in-residence, the Dalton School), will discuss unique strategies for bringing archaeology to life in the classroom.*

To register, call (212) 423 - 3289 by Mon., 10/20.

Yeshiva University Museum School Programs:

For grades 1 - 12: *Tu B'Shevat Handmade Paper, Jan. 25 - Feb. 9*

Grades 2 - 6:

**\*Sukkot: Sukkah Build-Up**, Sept. 21 - Oct. 7: *create a sukkah model & learn about shapes and materials used around the world.*

**\*Purim: Fancy Masks**, March 1 - 8

Grades 2 - 12: **Hanukkah: Stained Glass Panel**, Dec. 7 - 21

Grades 3 - 6: **Exploring the North Atlantic** (the time of Rashi), Sept. 16 - June 18

For grades 3 - 12: **The Garment Factory Workshop**, March 11 - 26 (includes a simulation of "mass production and, for middle school students, analysis of artifacts such as an antique sewing machine and cast-iron pressing iron, document reproductions, and 19th c garments.

Grades 4 - 12:

**\*Metal Repousse**: *students create a aluminum cover for a book, learning metal tooling technique: throughout the year*

**\*The Mystery of a Medieval Hidden Treasure**: *a hoard of medieval Jewish treasures was discovered in 1998 that was hidden for 650 years by a member of a Jewish quarter in Germany. Students will also examine jewelry from the Gothic period (1280 - 1349) to reveal a secret while telling the story of life in a major medieval commercial center. They will examine goods traded on the Great Silk Rd., a model of a medieval synagogue and illuminated manuscripts. Followed by a studio workshop where students will craft their own metal applique jewelry. Sept.16-Jan. 29.*

**\*Repousse** for Passover haggadah, March 29 - April 7

**\*Shavuot: Paper Cuts**, May 17 - 27

Grades 6 - 12: **The Art of Holocaust Memorials** will be explored and students will construct a 3- D model, April 21- 28.

Grades 9 - 12: **Curator's History Workshops**: *Hands-on study of antique pieces, Sept. 16 - June 18.*

For information, contact (212) 294 - 8330.

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Wishing you a very happy, healthy, and accomplished Shanah  
Tovah!

Michelle Rich & Nita polay levin