



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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**Welcome back to another wonderful year of shaping
the future of Judaism!!**

We are gearing up to be of service to YOU!!

Take advantage of our services:

- The weekly *Electronic Educator*
 - The semi-annual *Lilmod U'ilamed* (if you haven't received any yet, or need more copies, please contact Nita at Levin@USCJ.ORG)
 - Cultural Arts Programs (CAPs) for your seventh graders *
 - The Preschool directors' Listserv and national consultation, articles, etc.
 - Enrichment classes *
 - In-service Teacher Training Mini-Courses (see list below)
 - Consultation, including personal and confidential support to directors and teachers
 - The Teachers' Center (with our array of books and materials)
 - Information on the popular methodologies being used in the secular field (that really do work in Jewish education!)
 - Assistance with curricular development and helping to design programs for small schools
- All of these services are free of charge, a benefit of your synagogue's membership in the USCJ; any program marked with * indicates that there is a materials fee only for art supplies. Consultants and presenters are compensated by our office.

Contact Michelle Rich, Director of Education and Youth Activities at Rich@USCJ.org
Or a Polay Levin at Levin@USCJ.org
Or call us at (732) 738 - 4301. We'd love to talk to you

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IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO REGISTER FOR OUR FALL MINI-COURSES!

1. TALKING TO GOD AND REALLY MEANING IT, with Rabbi Ron Isaacs
Wed., Aug. 29, 4 - 5:30 pm, Closter
2. CREATIVE WAYS TO TEACH WITH A TEXTBOOK, with Dr. Shoshana Silberman
Tues., Sept. 4, 7 - 8:30 pm, Cranford
3. POSITIVTE GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE IN THE PRESCHOOL CLASS, with
Caryn Bruckheimer
Wed., Sept. 5, 1:15 - 2:45 pm, Woodcliff Lake
4. TALKING TO GOD AND REALLY MEANING IT, with Rabbi Isaacs
Wed., Sept. 5, 3 - 4:30 pm, Oakhurst
5. MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES, with Dr. Silberman
Wed., Sept. 5, 6:30 - 8 pm, Rumson
6. PUTTING ISRAEL IN YOUR CURRICULUM, with Linda Ripps
Thurs., Sept. 6., 4:30 - 6 pm, Metuchen
7. FROM A CHILD'S PERSPECTIVE: HOW TO "WORK THE ROOM," w/ Dr.
Silberman
Thurs., Sept. 6, 6:30 - 8 pm, Park Ridge
8. EXCELLENCE IN THE CONGREGATIONAL SCHOOL, USCJ-STYLE:
FRAMEWORK FOR EXCELLENCE
Wed., Nov. 7, 7 - 8:30 pm, Regional office, Edison

To register, contact Michelle Rich at Rich@USCJ.org, or (732) 738 - 4301

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Hi,

Here is a fun idea that supports the notion that the director's role is to help teachers succeed:

Go to your local toy or drug store and buy a bunch of "sand buckets", one for each teacher. With permanent markers personalize a bucket for each teacher and then fill it with "tools" and "stuff":
pencils, scissors, ruler, stickers, memo pad, post its, glue stick, tape, etc. The sand bucket adds fun color to the teachers' desk.

You can also put any opening memos or instructions in the bucket as well, and present each teacher with this "present" at your opening meeting.

Serene Victor
USCJ National Consultant for Synagogue Education

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PRE-SCHOOL CORNER

Join the listserv for preschool directors and participate in these wonderful discussions! ECDIR@USCJ.ORG.

Hi Maxine,

Thanks for your words of support. I wanted you to have the "informal" section. Please feel free to change, simplify or otherwise edit any of it. I hope it will be useful.

Informal

Teachers can use the informal nature of the classroom to create a small Jewish world for the children. Jewish identity and values can be nurtured throughout the regular routine of the day.

-greeting and mezuzah--"Boker tov" greets each child upon entry, with a helping hand to reach out and kiss the mezuzah as a real connection to God and our belief in God's presence in our lives. The tone of the day is set, as we try by our actions to emulate God.

-gathering time and the Sh'ma--through this declaration of our faith, belief in the one God, we are at one time set apart and brought together. (state prayer, in three ways) We join the prayers of Jews past, present, throughout the world and future. It's our way of saying, "I love you, God."

-room "jobs" and daily routines--children can learn the mitzvot and middot on which our everyday jobs and routines are based, i.e., taking care of pets, watering plants, being careful of wasting supplies, sharing food, welcoming guests, returning lost articles and so on.

-making the ordinary holy--when we wash hands before snack, and learn and recite "al netilat yadayim", we connect the everyday act to God. Similarly, blessings recited appropriately, before lunch, when eating a new food, when seeing a rainbow, in thankfulness for a special event, all can be elevated to bring holiness into the children's lives.

-Teachers have the opportunity to foster the idea of the whole classroom as a sacred space, where Jewish life enriches everything that goes on in the classroom every day. Torah stories, music, dance, science, art, language, Hebrew, math, play, Israel, family, friends, community and much more. All can be infused with a sense of God's presence.

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Hi Everyone,

August has arrived and I know that means your work will really be picking up. Last year I sent out a very popular note #387 with a sample opening letter written by Rabbi Stuart Seltzer based on Mah Tov. I will resend that, particularly for those new to Ednotes. Below are two other samples in the same genre that you might want to adapt for your own school.

One of the most important responsibilities of school leadership is to "tell the story" of the school that inspires and connects people to its vision. You will notice that the three samples (the two attached here and the Mah Tov letter from

Ednotes #387), are attempts to do that. They create a picture of what the school is like. I encourage you to do the same for your school.

Best wishes as you gear up for the new year,

Serene Victor
USCJ National Consultant for Synagogue Education

Dear _____ Religious School Family,

As I think about the upcoming school year, I am preparing for a school and synagogue community based on living a life of Jewish values, on teaching and learning Torah over our lifetimes, and on creating a comfortable, creative environment for Jewish observance, learning, fun, and the celebrations of life. I have realized that my preparations this summer are about creating the home that we (parents, students, teachers) will share here at _____.

Come with me on a tour of our _____ home:

The Study: In our classrooms, we find our students and teachers engaged in a lively, spirited, important discussions about Torah texts and mitzvot.

The Playroom: We find our students and teachers taking their learning a step further, and discovering their studies through art, music, drama, role-playing and games.

The Kitchen: We watch our students experiment with all of the ingredients they've been given (by their parents and their teachers), as they take all that they've learned and combine it into an understanding of Judaism and a passion for Jewish learning.

The Backyard: We see our students playing and using their creativity and imaginations as they participate in our youth-group activities. _____, the 3rd and 4th grade and _____ the 5th and 6th grade) provide our students with that extra, outside-of-the-classroom time to be with their friends in a Jewish setting. Watch out for our fabulous 4th grade Sollelim Shabbat Sleepover in January and our 5th grade geshet Shabbat Sleepover in February.

The Front Door: We are greeting our parents, grandparents, and other friends as they join us for special family programs and school-wide activities throughout the year. We love welcoming guests to our home, and hope that you'll join us for _____ Tikkun Olam Day in October, for Aseh Lekha Rav: Parent Study Day in November and for our School-Wide Winter Festival in December.

And we face **the Eastern Wall** of our home; we join in with Jews around the world and throughout time, in focusing our prayers towards Jerusalem. Our home has lots of different types of prayer services, and we hope you'll try us out! Junior Congregation (families of k-4th grade) meets every Shabbat from 10:45-11:45 a.m. in the Chapel. Kindergarten and 1st grade students and families meet once per month from 10:45-11:45 a.m. in the multipurpose room. 5th and 6th grade meets twice per month in *Simchat Shabbat* from 10:30-12 noon in Room 252. Come find the service that's the right fit for you and your family.

Our home has many more rooms than those listed here. But, as with any home, it's only as "homey" and comfortable as the people in it. Thank you for being part of our _____ home and for making it the warm, supportive, Jewish home that it is. It's going to be a fabulous year.

Dear Parents and Students,

I hope that you are having a restful and enjoyable summer. With the school year fast approaching, I would like to welcome you back to school. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome our new students and their families to our community and to which everyone *hatzlacha* – good luck ... in the year ahead. Welcome _____ and _____ and _____. In addition I would like to extend a *mazal tov* to _____, our new Education Committee Chairperson and to _____ our P.T.A. President.

ASHREI YOSHVE VEYTECHA ... Happy are those who dwell in your house.”

These words taken from the Psalms, and part of the prayer service, are traditionally said upon entering a synagogue. Let me suggest that this tradition of reciting *Ashrei* would also be appropriate when entering our religious school. At Chizuk Amuno we have created an educated, proud, vibrant, and “happy” community of learners. It is not uncommon to hear remarks from our parents such as “Religious School wasn’t like this when I was growing up!” “My kids love going to Religious School.” “Another wonderful program. Keep it up!” How about this comment, often made by the faculty: “Yes, it can happen in an afternoon school.” My person favorite is one that a particular enthusiastic parent remarked to me: “We should have religious school instruction for parents as well.” I would like to suggest that the reason we have created a “happy” community of learners is precisely because, to be part of our religious school is to “dwell”, indeed, to live in the synagogue, which is God’s house. Our religious school provides many opportunities to make Chizuk Amuno our dwelling place: junior congregation, youth groups, family programs, school-wide activities, and holiday celebrations.

To paraphrase the words of the Psalmist: “Happy” are those families who attend Rosenbloom Religious School. So, I invite you to join me in reciting *ASHREI YOSHVEI VYTECHA*” as we joyously begin the new school year.

Included in this booklet is important information for the coming religious school year. Please familiarize yourself with its contents. It will address questions you may have pertaining to such items as the school calendar, Bar and Bat Mitzvah requirements youth programming, attendance, behavior code, Jr. Congregation and Middle School Minyan information, and much more. **Please keep it in a handy place.**

If you have any questions or concerns, please call the school office at_____.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Stuart Seltzer

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Hi Everyone,

Once again, I want to pass on to you a gem from Rabbi Stuart Seltzer. If you are wondering what you might say at your opening assembly, or for a back to school

night, try "telling the story" of your school using Mah Tovv as a theme. Below is an example of what it might look like. Adapting this to your own school should be a relatively easy thing to do. (Those of you from NDI, the USCJ New Directors' Institute, will immediately recognize this theme).

Let me know if you need anything. I'm here to help.
B'shalom,

Serene Victor

Opening of School or Back to School Night

By Rabbi Stuart Seltzer

What are the first words we say when we enter the sanctuary?

How lovely are your tents, people of Israel, your dwelling places, descendants of Israel.

We praise *the place*.

These words actually come from the Torah, from the Book of B'midbar, and were originally recited by Bilaam.

Bilaam was hired by Balak, a foreign king, to curse Israel.

But when he saw the Israelites' camp, the spirit of God came upon him, and he praised the Israelites with these words of *Mah Tovv*, a blessing.

Though this biblical story happened long before there were any synagogues, even long before (*your synagogue's name*), the Rabbis of the Talmud suggested that just as Bilaam praised the Israelite encampment, we should praise our sanctuaries and houses of study.

Thus, reciting the Ma Tovv upon entering the synagogue is derived from the talmudic interpretation of *your tents* as houses of study, and *your dwelling places* as synagogues.

How lovely are your sanctuaries, people of Jacob, your study houses, descendants of Israel.

And it is in this spirit that I would like to welcome you to (*this year at our religious school or back to school night*)

Let us imagine Bilaam, crossing (*name a highway close to your synagogue*) to look over the encampment of (*your synagogue's name*) Religious School.

What would Bilaam see?

We need to take time to note and to celebrate all the things he would see, that would overwhelm him, and make him cry out in praise.

He would see *Mehinah* parents and children reading and talking about Bible stories

He would see *Aleph* students beginning to read Hebrew for the first time and hear them sound out syllables and build them into words

In the *Bet* class, Bilaam could accompany students on an imaginary trip to Israel, realizing that this imagined journey will be the first of many real journeys to come.

Bilaam would sit with *Gimmel* students as they begin to read and to study from the original text for the very first time.

In the *Dalet* class, Bilaam could study *Haggadah* for the entire year, and at the end be invited to a *seder* led by the students.

Bilaam could follow the *Hay* students as they start their journey toward Bar and Bat Mitzvah and watch each one make the journey personally meaningful.

And finally, how lovely are these *Vav* students, Bilaam, would say. Their spirit and enthusiasm spreads throughout the school like a song.

I am sure that Bilaam, before he crossed back over Route , would have a few words to say to the parents of all these students who so astonished him: *How lovely are you who so lovingly and strongly support your child's religious education.*

And finally, Bilaam would say to the teachers, *How strong is your flame for learning and teaching, lighting all these smaller flames so that I will see a great light when I go back over Route .*

No matter how hard we are working to improve, we should remember to step back and celebrate how far we have come.

Please join me in praise: How lovely is our sanctuary, _____, and our house of study, _____ religious school.

Hi Everyone,

Did you know that you can make Havdalah as late as Tuesday? Rabbi Stuart Seltzer wrote (and Serene adapted) a lesson for teaching havdalah, including a havdalah ceremony, that would be appropriate for an opening school assembly that includes teachers, students, and parents. Once again, thank you to Rabbi Stuart Seltzer for his inspiration and creativity.

B'shalom,
Serene

Serene Victor
USCJ National Consultant for Synagogue Education

If you would like a copy of this, contact Nita Polay Levin at Levin@uscj.org and ask for "the havdalah lesson." It will be mailed to you.

The Conservative Yeshiva is pleased to announce an On-Line Course Judaism and Modernity: Worlds Collide taught by popular Conservative Yeshiva instructor Matt Plen. The course will begin the week of September 23, 2007, and continue for 14 weeks through the end of December. The course is open to Yeshiva alumni, members of USCJ congregations, USCJ staff, and others who are interested in furthering their Jewish learning.

In this course we will examine the destructive power of modern philosophy and ideology for traditional Judaism. We will ask whether it is possible to reconcile Judaism and modernity and go on to explore how key modern Jewish thinkers have actually harnessed the potential of the modern world as an invigorating force for Jewish life. As well as learning some of the classic texts of modern Jewish philosophy, we will address the challenge of being a Jew in the modern world and explore our attitudes to belief, observance and ethics on a more personal level.

We will open by studying one of the earliest expressions of the modern critique of Judaism, that of Baruch Spinoza in his Theologico-Political Treatise. We will then explore four distinct intellectual responses to this challenge: Rationalism, Jewish Nationalism, Modern Orthodoxy and Existentialism. We will study key Jewish thinkers in each of these areas against the background of the general (non-Jewish) philosophical and ideological thought which shaped their world views.

The course will cover the following thinkers (in thematic, not chronological order):

Baruch Spinoza
Moses Mendelssohn
Mordecai Kaplan
Ahad Ha'am
A.D. Gordon
Religious Zionism
Yeshayahu Leibowitz
J.B. Soloveitchik
Martin Buber
Franz Rosenzweig

Instructor: Matt Plen has been living and teaching in Jerusalem since 1998. He is pursuing a PhD in Jewish Education at the Hebrew University, where his thesis topic is Radical Education and Israeli Ideologies of Social Justice. Matt works with Israeli educators and high school students, and teaches Modern Jewish Thought at the Conservative Yeshiva.

Tuition: \$200. Since a goal of the class is Hevruta study, a 10% discount will be given to Hevruta partners who sign up together for the class. Alumni of the Conservative Yeshiva receive an additional 10% tuition discount. Students from Israel, Asia, South Africa, Eastern Europe and other developing nations will receive a 50% tuition discount. Employees of USCJ are invited to register for the course at no charge.

Registration: To register for the class, please click on the link to the Conservative Yeshiva on-line registration system, <https://uscjisrael.researchsuccess.com/> and choose "on-line learning fall 2007" for your choice of program. Follow the instructions for completing the on-line application. Alumni of the Conservative Yeshiva, please email yeshiva@uscj.org to receive an application.

Love,
Rachel

Every blade of grass has its angel that bends over it and urges,
"Grow, grow."

--Midrash Rabbah Genesis 10:6--

Tashlich Supplement:

(c) 1997 Richard J Israel

Taking a few crumbs to Tashlich from whatever old bread is in the house lacks subtlety, nuance and religious sensitivity. I would suggest that we can do better. Instead:

For ordinary sins, use - White Bread
For exotic sins - French Bread
For particularly dark sins - Pumpernickel
For complex sins - Multi-grain
For twisted sins - Pretzels
For tasteless sins - Rice Cakes
For sins of indecision - Waffles
For sins committed in haste - Matzah
For sins committed in less than eighteen minutes - Shmurah Matzah
For sins ofchutzpah - Fresh Bread
For substance abuse/marijuana - Stoned Wheat
For substance abuse/heavy drugs - Poppy Seed
For arson - Toast
For timidity - Milk Toast
For high-handedness - Napoleons
For being sulky - Sourdough
For silliness - Nut Bread
For not giving full value - Short bread
For jingoism - Yankee Doodles
For telling bad jokes - Corn Bread
For being money-hungry - Enriched Bread or Raw Dough
For telling small lies - Fudge
For war-mongering - Kaiser Rolls
For promiscuity - Hot Buns
For racism - Crackers
For sophisticated racism - Ritz Crackers
For being holier-than-thou - Bagels
For unfairly up-braiding others - Challah
For provocative dressing - Wonton Wrappers
For snobbery - Upper Crusts
For indecent photography - Cheese Cake
For trashing the environment - Dumplings
For the sin of laziness - Any Very Long Loaf
For being hyper-critical - Pan Cakes

For political skullduggery - Bismarcks
For over-eating - Stuffing Bread or Bulkie Rolls
For gambling - Fortune Cookies
For pride - Puff Pastry
For cheating - Bread made with Nutrasweet and Olestra
For being snappish - Ginger Bread
For dropping in without calling beforehand - Popovers
For trying to improve everyone within sight -Angel Food Cake
For being up-tight and irritable - High Fiber or Bran Muffins
For sycophancy - Brownies
For rearing children incompetently - Raisin Bread
For immodest behavior - Tarts
For causing injury or damage to others - Tortes
For hardening our hearts - Jelly doughnuts
For abrasiveness - Grits
For recurring slip ups - Banana Bread
For davening off tune - Flat Bread
For impetuosity - Quick Bread
For silliness - Nut Bread
For risking one's life unnecessarily - Hero Bread
For auto theft - Caraway
For excessive use of irony - Rye Bread
For larceny (especially of copyright material) - Stollen
etc.,etc.

Remember, you don't have to show your crumbs to anyone.
For those who require a wide selection of crumbs, an attempt will be made to have pre-packaged Tashlich Mix available in three grades (Tashlich Lite, Medium and Industrial Strength) at your local Jewish bookstore.

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**With thanks to Robbie Fein who suggested the original formula.**

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Shalom,

More than 140 communities around the country have already purchased the Melitz [Israel@60](#) Educational Celebration Kit. This indispensable collection of educational resources will provide the backbone for all your communal activities surrounding the celebration of our State of Israel throughout its sixtieth year, highlighted by Yom Haatzmaut on May 8<sup>th</sup> 2008.

FOR FULL DETAILS OF MELITZ'S [ISRAEL@60](#) EDUCATIONAL CELEBRATION KIT [CLICK HERE](#)

**Hurry to order now!**

In order to ensure inclusion in the first shipment (end October 2007) please send your order in by September 1st 2007. After that date, we will do our best, but we cannot guarantee shipment by that date.

**Meanwhile...how about booking a Melitz educator to come to your community?**

With celebrations for Israel@60 fully underway, Melitz educators are booked this fall in communities across the country including Houston, Austin, Milwaukee, and Sacramento to name just a few. There are still a few dates open for Melitz educators to do informal Jewish and Israel education with all segments of your community (except children 5<sup>th</sup> grade and younger). The basic cost is \$1000 per day, or \$500 per single program, plus domestic travel costs where applicable. The remaining available dates for **Fall 2007** are listed below, and are on a first come, first served basis:

**October 18-21, 23/24 and November 5-7, 15-18**

Please note that if these dates are not of interest to you, we are currently booking for **Spring 2008**. Our dates then are:

**January 20-27    Feb 1-17    March 24-April 7    April 28-May 25**

To get a better idea of what our educators can do, have a look at our full menu of [cutting edge programs](#).

To book or for more info contact [rena@melitz.org.il](mailto:rena@melitz.org.il)