

The RAVSAK Journal



The Jewish Community Day School Network  
רשת בתי ספר קהילתיים

# הילד לעוון

HaYidion

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The

אמנות

in

Jewish Education



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# A Word from the Editor

Judaism and the arts have always had a complicated relationship. Whether it be an avoidance of drama because of ecclesiastical connotations, a rejection of vocal music if it included *kol isha*, the voice of a woman, or the absence of figurative representations in art due to the prohibition of graven images, the arts have historically received shorter shrift in Jewish pedagogy than other subjects.

As Jewish culture has evolved, however, the arts have increasingly come into play as vital expressions of Jewish thought and spirituality. In our schools also, there has been a renaissance of creative Jewish exploration of the visual and performing arts, as

with some fascinating glimpses into the talents and creativity of the programming in our RAVSAK schools. Whether you are seeking to initiate or deepen your current arts cur-



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ricula, or whether you are looking for innovative and stimulating new directions to take, this issue offers background, concrete examples, and guidance and support.

The holiday of Shavuot celebrates the harvest of the first fruits, which were cut and placed in baskets woven of gold and silver, laden onto ox-



[Murals from the Morasha School, page 14]

well as new media, as a means of increasing students' understanding of the roots of our faith and the many ways in which this faith can be expressed.

This issue of *HaYidion* will allow you to explore these new avenues of learning for your students. The collection of articles is broad and far-ranging and will provide you

with some fascinating glimpses into the talents and creativity of the programming in our RAVSAK schools. Whether you are seeking to initiate or deepen your current arts curricula, or whether you are looking for innovative and stimulating new directions to take, this issue offers background, concrete examples, and guidance and support. The holiday of Shavuot celebrates the harvest of the first fruits, which were cut and placed in baskets woven of gold and silver, laden onto ox-

# From the Desk of Susan Weintrob, RAVSAK President

**T**he Talmud asks the question, **מִי הַחָכָם?** “Who is wise?” and answers: “The person who can see into the future.” But who among us is a seer? Who can foretell what tomorrow will bring?

We live in a time of epochal change, but none of us can truly know what lies ahead; we can only imagine. As parents, educators, and leaders in the Jewish community, however, we must understand the rhythm of change and always try to steer our schools wisely through seas of challenges and opportunities.

One of RAVSAK’s goals is to anticipate trends and help Jewish community day and high schools prepare for the future. All too often, we become swamped with day to day stresses and activities, and

lose the ability to “see into the future.” RAVSAK aims to help us acquire that far-seeing wisdom. Our recent energizing Houston conference focused on the big issues, the big questions, and the big picture. Right now, the RAVSAK staff and Executive Committee are planning the 2009 conference in San Francisco which will take us in a new direction: for the first time, the conference will include an innovative full day of workshops for teachers and staff, where they can learn about best practices and build a network for future professional interchanges. For all schools, this is a valuable addition; for the smaller schools in our network, where there is limited funding for professional development, it is priceless.

Project SuLaM is an example of RAVSAK’s support of professional development is one of its key components. SuLaM II is in its second year, returning to New York City for the study of Jewish texts, history and liturgy. SuLaMites from both cohorts joined together at the Houston Conference for a very successful Tu B’Shvat seder. SuLaM III is already in the planning stages. Anyone interested in participating in this unique and in-depth program of professional preparation and enrichment should contact Elliott Rabin at the RAVSAK of-

fice for more information.

Another new RAVSAK program is “Re/Presenting the Jewish Past.” The Network for the Teaching of Jewish History, the AVI CHAI Foundation, and The



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Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development are collaborating with RAVSAK to offer this program this summer at NYU. This new initiative includes consultation and mentoring, bringing together leading scholars of Jewish history with current teachers to transform the teaching of Jewish history in schools across the spectrum of Jewish observance.

RAVSAK’s inclusion of the North American Association of Jewish High Schools under our umbrella has allowed us to cooperate in another unique venture: eleven teams of high schoolers recently competed in mock trials at a Moot Beit Din, held at the Tannenbaum Community Hebrew Academy of Toronto. Larger and better than ever, the program provided a

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# Widening the Learning Circle

by Debbie Krivoy

**H**ow do the arts show up in our classrooms? What real opportunities does arts integration provide? What do we need to do to make arts-based learning a reality in our school?

For the past nine years, these are the kinds of questions I've posed to teachers and principals in Jewish schools around the country. As a curriculum designer, trainer of teachers, and director of Avoda Arts, my goal is to help educators infuse the arts—both productively and confidently—into their unique learning communities.

My work is informed by groundbreaking research in the general education community over the last 25 years, which has expanded our thinking about how people learn, communicate, and understand the world. These findings help explain why the arts can play a vital role in improving students' ability to learn. We know that schools that incorporate music, art, photography, film, dance, and theatre provide a range of ways for young people to access content and express understanding of ideas.



For purposes of this article, I am defining the arts in the broadest sense to include visual arts (painting, drawing, and sculpture), media arts (photography, film, and digital imaging), performing arts (theater, dance, and puppetry), musical arts (song-leading, chorus, and orchestra), and literary arts (creative writing and poetry).

## **Creativity, Connection, and Community**

We can readily talk about the many compelling reasons for integrating the arts into education. The arts make content more accessible, foster creative expression, encourage collaboration, engage diverse learners, and build critical thinking skills. The spirit, excitement, and energy generated when the arts thrive in our schools is palpable to any observer.

I believe that the arts are an essential component to Jewish day schools because they help strengthen *kavanah* (focus and intention) among students and teachers, foster *charizut* (diligence) around serious art-making, and build *kehillah* (com-

munity) throughout the school. Simply put, the arts bring joy, fullness, nuance, and connection to the Jewish classroom. They serve as a literal gateway to more inspired, thoughtful, and committed learning.



## **Debbie Krivoy**

is the Director of Avoda Arts in New York City. She can be reached at [dkrivoy@avodaarts.org](mailto:dkrivoy@avodaarts.org).

As Jewish educators, then, it is incumbent upon us to create and nurture a learning environment where the arts are the vehicles through which students can wrestle with complex concepts, translate their beliefs about the world, and make more personal connections to learning. Toward that end, I offer a framework for thinking about arts-based teaching and learning in the Jewish day school:

*Clarify the Role of the Arts.* At some schools, the arts serve as a basis for both general and Jewish studies. Students build proficiency in specific artistic disciplines, but the arts are used primarily as a lens through which all other subjects can be studied. At other schools, the arts are included in the weekly roster of core subjects, and in-house art specialists work in tandem with general studies and Jewish studies instructors to fulfill curricular goals. In other instances, the arts may be viewed solely as electives outside of the basic curriculum. It is important to understand the strengths and limitations of these distinctly different approaches.

*Train and Empower a Network of Educators.* Teachers must be provided with tools, training, and ongoing support to infuse the arts into their daily curriculum, especially (as is typically the case

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# Art in RAVSAK Schools

**W**e invited RAVSAK schools to present programs that showcase some of the ways that the arts play powerful roles in educational programming. The examples offered here represent projects for a wide range of ages, including courses for lower, middle, and upper schools; artistic media, from drama to music, dance and podcasts; scope, from one-time project to classes running for 30 years; and concepts, from parent outreach to school architecture as artistic statement. Included as well are impressive, in-depth initiatives that fully integrate the arts into ambitious general and Judaic curricula. We hope and believe that every school will find here material that can inspire new thinking and programming.

**D**ance, sing and spread out the colors of memory, all washed down with a sweet cup of tea! Pound out the rhythms of a Sephardi melody, reclaim a few words and ideas in Yiddish, nourish your heart, soul, and stomach with the folklore and fine points of Jewish cuisine...

Yes, school is in session, but the subject here is the joy and spirit of our creative Jewish culture. This unique initiative at New Community Jewish High School in Los Angeles is designed to provide our incoming ninth-grade students



with an introduction to the diversity of the Jewish tradition in the arts. As such, we are not merely an arts department, dedicated to excellence in the various arts disciplines, but an integral part of the overall Jewish studies program. Our formal Jewish studies program is made up of three parts: Hebrew, Jewish Law and Ethics, and Jewish Civilization (known as J-Civ), which includes the arts. The goals of the J-Civ program are historical and cultural as well as textual—in other words, the lived life of the Jewish people through time, space, and spirit.

Over one hundred ninth graders rotate through these Jewish art classes seven times each year. Each rotation comprises 14 classes over 5 weeks. This program fulfills their ninth grade J-Civ requirement; this exposure also enables students to make more informed choices for their yearlong arts electives in the tenth grade

(which continue to fulfill the J-Civ requirement as they are infused with Jewish content). Our arts rotation offers the following classes:



- **Instrumental Music**—Showing the connection between popular music of today and the Jewish music of the past two centuries.
- **Israeli Dance**—Understanding and learning the steps of Israeli dance and its relationship to Jewish cultural history.
- **Singing**—Exposure to Jewish vocal/choral music, and its historical or cultural context from different parts of the world, by singing in English, Hebrew, Yiddish, and Ladino.
- **Visual Arts**—Exploring Jewish traditions in art through folk art, ceremonial art, art as ideas, art as political and social narrative and individual expression.
- **Media Arts**—Exploring the fundamentals of digital media and animation through a Jewish lens, including Jewish media arts history.
- **Yiddish**—Discovering the rich traditions of Eastern European Jewry through written and spoken Yiddish as presented through art, media, and music.
- **Jewish Foods and Culture**—Exploring the relationship between food, Jewish culture, and the environment through cooking, eating,

discussion, film, reading, and creative writing.

In these classes, our arts faculty employ teaching styles that are experiential and multi-sensorial. They engage and surprise students with the rich artistic diversity that is our cultural legacy, and encourage students to take “ownership” of it. In order to have maximum impact as educators and artists, the arts faculty continually expand their base of Jewish knowledge to provide students with a broad, meaningful, and joyful experience.

To help guide our diverse and wide-ranging curriculum, our faculty strive to address the following content areas:

1. **Historical**—Students should have a sense of artistic continuity over time.
2. **Cultural**—Students should have an understanding of the cultural influences and the evolution of our folk arts and folkways.
3. **Narrative**—Students should have opportunities to reference, interpret, analyze and finally make art that takes influence from a variety of Jewish source materials, including folktales, poetry, song lyrics, liturgy, Tanakh and other sacred texts and stories.
4. **Intercultural**—Students should understand our cultural experience in relation to other cultures.
5. **Master Practitioners and Techniques**—Students should become fa-

miliar with Jewish artists, as well as techniques, styles, and methods that are traditionally Jewish artistic forms.

6. **Religious Practice**—Students should understand the role of art in Jewish ritualistic settings.

This innovative approach evolved out of the original vision of our school that recognized the central role of the arts in a well rounded general and Jewish education program. The Jewish Arts and Culture Rotation began in our second year as a school. Now, as we complete our sixth year, it continues to grow and develop. The strength of our pluralistic school is that we have many lenses through which to encounter, learn about, and create broad Jewish knowledge and experience. *ז*

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## Professional Development in Jerusalem for Novice Judaic Studies Day School Teachers

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The Pardes Educators Program was developed with and is funded by a grant from The AVI CHAI Foundation.

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# Putting the Arts into Jewish Education

by Dr. Ofra Arieli Backenroth

Enter a seventh-grade Hebrew class at the Toronto Heschel School, taught in an art studio. The students, wearing aprons, are sitting around large tables covered with plastic, kneading, rolling, piercing, and shaping clay. They are learning vocabulary pertaining to sculpture in Hebrew and at the same time learning the basics of sculpture. The students are busy working the clay while simultaneously describing their activities in Hebrew. As they knead, they run through a verb conjugation in present tense: *Ani lashah chomer, Tovah lashah chomer* (I knead the clay, Tovah kneads the clay).

During the class, the number of verbs and nouns expands. Later, the students will have a homework assignment in which they will have to use the new verbs they learned in sentences. Additionally, they will write a detailed description of the new skills of sculpture they acquired during the class. A few days later, the students will have to submit a proposal for creating a sculpture of an oil jar based on

aspect of the school curriculum. Teams of teachers design the lessons, and in this case the unit was designed by the integrated art supervisor, the art and Hebrew teacher, the homeroom Hebrew teacher, and the social studies teacher.

Traditionally, the arts have been absent from Jewish day school curricula, relegated to occasional visual art classes, choral music courses, or extracurricular classes after school hours. Currently, the arts are making their way back into Jewish education in day schools, informal education, camps, colleges for Jewish studies, and graduate programs in Jewish education.

Even though Jewish education is fundamentally text-based and most educators believe that making knowledgeable Jewish students requires practice and mimetic education, more and more educational institutions realize that reading is only the beginning of Jewish educa-

tion, theory, and performance. Other schools teach the arts in conjunction with other disciplines. Teaching the arts and teaching through the arts allows teachers to vary their teaching methods and find new ways of appealing to learners.

Teaching through the arts implies that the teachers need to teach in an integrat-



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ed method. There are various models of subject integration, and they are defined differently in the literature about integration. Integration of the arts into the curriculum moves on a continuum from discipline-based teaching, in which each subject is taught as a discrete discipline, to theme-based teaching, in which all the curricular subjects are focused around a central theme. Creating integrated curricula or units relies on Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences: linguistic, logical mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic; and on principles of differentiated learning based on the understanding that people learn in different ways.

Here are some examples of programs and courses at different levels that integrate the arts throughout the curricula:

- At Gann Academy, a high school in Waltham, Massachusetts, students are required to take at least eight trimesters in the arts over four years, but are free to choose which courses they take. The school has multiple arts events throughout the year and offers jazz, chamber music ensemble,

## Traditionally, the arts have been absent from Jewish day school curricula.

old Greek and Etruscan jars they studied a few days earlier in the art museum. The proposals, written in Hebrew, will spell out all the steps that are needed to accomplish the design; they describe the sources of inspiration, the symbols used to decorate the jar, and the historical background of the oil jar. Instead of a formal evaluation, the students will give an oral presentation explaining their project during a schoolwide Chanukah exhibition. The teacher who runs the class is both an art teacher and a Hebrew teacher.

The Toronto Heschel School is not an art school; however, the arts permeate every

aspect of the school curriculum. The ultimate goal of teaching Jewish texts does not end with transmission of knowledge, but requires the complex process of understanding and interpretation by the mind and transformation of the spirit. Jewish day schools want to contribute to students' spirituality as well as make students knowledgeable and culturally literate, and most of all, make learning memorable.

To this end, more and more educational institutions include the arts in their curricula. Some teach the arts as discrete disciplines, enabling students to explore the world around them and to express their inner lives. These schools teach tech-

visual art, dance, Israeli folk dancing and many more.

- The Columbus Jewish Day School in Columbus, Ohio, a kindergarten through fifth-grade school, seeks to combine a focus on academic excellence with a commitment to the arts. The school believes that integration of the arts—visual and language arts, music, drama, and dance—into the curriculum affords the students the possibility to use their imagination, spirit, compassion, understanding, and creativity.
- At the Prozdor High School program at the Jewish Theological Seminary, Elisheva Gould teaches a class called “Woe is Me: Difficult Experiences Within Jewish Art and Text,” which integrates text study, art making, and visits to the Jewish Museum. The teacher and the students examine expressions of suffering that run throughout Jewish art and biblical and rabbinic texts. They analyze painting, photography, film, and other artistic media, they create art, and they study related biblical and talmudic sources.
- In introductory Bible courses, students at the Jewish Theological Seminary’s undergraduate List College are introduced to visual art midrashim. They study works of art during class, and they investigate biblically inspired paintings and sculptures during a visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. They learn how to “read” visual images as valid, multifaceted interpretations of text.
- The William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education offers a course titled “Arts as Exegesis in Jewish Education,” in which students learn the theory and practice of using the arts as a powerful tool for motivating students to apply their knowledge, work cooperatively, and make connections across content areas. The students explore

how the arts can be used as a basis for learning and teaching the content areas of Jewish education to people of all ages in a variety of educational settings. They read texts and discuss them in a traditional way, but their awareness is enhanced and they become more fully engaged as they recreate them visually. The art helps fill in the gaps in the biblical narrative, imagination is engaged,

vides tools that will help them utilize the arts to further the teaching and learning of Judaic studies and the enhancing of Jewish identity.

In his book *Back to the Sources*, Barry Holtz posits that the “Torah remains unendingly alive because the readers of each subsequent generation saw it as such, taking the holiness of the Torah seriously, and adding their own contri-

## More and more educational institutions realize that reading is only the beginning of Jewish education.

and the students can better identify with the characters and create personal artistic interpretations. By interacting with the content, the students make the Bible more vivid and relevant.

bution to the story.” Given the opportunity to interpret the text by creating their own artistic midrashim, students fulfill the most essential mitzvah of Judaism, becoming links in the long chain of those engaged in the interpretation and the teaching of Torah. ז

Another initiative to promote the role of the arts in Jewish education is the MeltonArts website, dedicated to teaching Judaism through the arts. The website is a project of the Melton Coalition for Creative Interaction, which was created by Samuel Melton in 1993 just before he passed away. MeltonArts.org’s goal is to emphasize the role of the arts in Jewish and Israeli education and to demonstrate that educators can integrate the arts with all areas of Judaic studies, including Jewish text study, Jewish history and civilization, Israel, and Jewish holidays. The website supplies Jewish educators of all affiliations and in all settings with resources to develop their own awareness of the arts, and pro-



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# Art in RAWSAK Schools

The creative arts program at Metrowest Jewish Day School weaves diverse subjects to expand the children's view of the world and capitalize on everyone's learning styles. Language arts, science, math, literature, history, and other subjects are reinforced through various music, dance, and art activities that encourage creative, social, and interactive learning. Concepts of line, shape, and color are studied in each art form along with melody, rhythm, harmony, texture, and form. Students explore and create with these elements as they learn about the lives of musicians and visual artists side-by-side. They study Russian artists Marc Chagall and Modest Mussorgsky in a unit concentrating on "Pictures at an Exhibition," as well as French artists Camille Saint-Saëns and Henri Rousseau for a study of "Carnival of the Animals."

Many of the lesson plans are integrated arts projects that stem from classroom units.



Study of the solar system develops into a school play for the fourth grade incorporating recorders, Orff percussion instruments, narrated facts about the planets, and dances and songs written specifically for these students in the style of Gustave Holst's "The Planets." At Rosh Chodesh, we studied the Spanish artist Joan Miro's "Carnival of the Harlequins," which uses celestial objects (moon and stars) painted in primary colors to display fantastical moving objects; we describe the painting in haiku and create dances to mu-

sic of 12-tone composers Gunther Schuller and Edgar Varèse. The students generate movements and sounds as if they were the objects in the painting. We then produce a musical composition with percussion instruments to represent the objects in the art and set it to original poems.

Recently the third graders toured the Boston Museum of Fine Arts' room of ancient and multicultural musical instrument in conjunction with their study of sound. In the museum studio, the children designed abstract representations of their chosen instrument with acrylic paints. We reviewed the four families of orchestral instruments and studied the various instruments played by the Levites in the Holy Temple. We read sentences from *Hallel* and the *Tehillim* that illustrate many of the instruments used, such as *Halleluhu be-neivel ve-kinor, tziltzelei tru'ah, tof umachol* (harps, trumpets, drums), and we will create our own musical instruments and arrange an accompaniment for our poems and songs.

With first graders learning to tell time, we studied Salvador Dali's surrealist art of melting clocks in his painting "The Persistence of Memory." We then created "clock music" with instrumental sounds to the measure of the minute hand. In

conjunction with a unit on Native Americans, third graders designed collective art on paper bag "skins" of the Pacific Northwest animals portrayed by the Canadian artist Norval Morriseau. They learned dances, songs, games, and weaving patterns which they presented at our Thanksgiving concert.

Our most recent project, integrating Israel, Hebrew vocabulary, and various art forms, centers on the study of British artist David Hockney. His painting reinforces mathematical concepts of geomet-



song "Eretz Yisrael Sheli." A PowerPoint of the children's art is displayed as the children read their poems for a final performance with the three folk dances.

Display the Hockney painting and ask the following questions. What do you see? What colors are there? Which shapes do you recognize?

ric shapes and intersecting lines, with concepts common to poetry, dance, 3-D art and music: patterns, shape, color, and theme.

Three folk dances describing the land of Israel are taught along with Hockney's "Garrowby Hill," described through cinquain (five-line) poetry and accompanying percussion instruments. The children then create paper sculptures and pastel paintings representative of the work, using similar blended colors with patchwork shapes and intersecting lines. The main curved line parallels the movement of the children's dance improvisations and of the Hebrew word *mish'ol*, path, in the



[Garrowby Hill by David Hockney]

ognize? Find the curved lines. Draw a curved line in the air. Can you move in a curved path? Find the straight lines? Can you move in a straight path? Are there any repeated rhythmic patterns of lines in this painting?

Play Pachabel's Canon and have children draw lines in the air in slow motion, up, down, horizontal, vertical, wavy, smoothly, etc. Draw a continuous curvy, intersection line on paper with sharpie markers, not lifting the marker until the music stops. Fill in spaces created by lines with color. Next, brainstorm words with the class describing this painting and write the words on individual cards. Spread the cards on the floor and choose words to a cinquain poem using nouns, verbs, and adverbs in this five line format. Do the same with Hebrew words. Then create a 3-D art project to represent the painting with multicolored paper strips and shapes for a landscape with a winding path, fields, and trees.

The goal of our arts program is to integrate all of our children's learning into a multi-disciplinary experience that reinforces our daily learning while fostering a love for the arts, Judaica, and the world around us. ז

*Judith Spitzberg is Creative Arts Director at Metrowest Jewish Day School in Framingham, Massachusetts. A selection of her lesson plans can be found online at [www.judyspitzberg.com](http://www.judyspitzberg.com). She can be reached at [jspitzberg@gmail.com](mailto:jspitzberg@gmail.com).*



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# Photography: The Door That Connects

by Zion Ozeri

Photography has a profound ability to speak to students and to empower them because of the accessibility of the medium. Students are used to seeing hundreds of photographic images everyday; they feel a high level of comfort with photography, which enables them to discuss photographic images without reserve or intimidation. Likewise, they are accustomed to taking photographs or digital images from a young age. Even if they have never thought of photography as an art per se, they have developed an innate sense for what makes a picture good and interesting.

Photography can have a potent impact upon students in two ways: by looking at photographs and by taking photographs. Both of these activities are woven into a curriculum that I have developed in coordination with Avoda Arts, called The Jewish Lens. The program grew out of an experimental course given at the Morasha Jewish Day School in Rancho Santa Margarita, California, in which my photographs were used to teach about Jewish values and community.

## I. Looking at photographs

I am a professional photographer whose focus is Jewish life around the globe. I try to understand and in turn highlight nuanced differences among the diverse Jewish communities. What has always captivated me and piqued my curiosity was this unique ancient Jewish experience that I am a part of. Observing the clear divide in looks, customs, and even some traditions among all these Jewish communities strewn around the world, it is fascinating to see that many Jews seem to share a deep connection, common ground, and a sense of responsibility towards each other.

The more I have traveled, the more these differences as well as similarities are apparent. I feel privileged to have the oppor-

tunity to be a witness and at the same time exhibit and publish my work. With these exhibits and books, I have come to realize the educational advantage and the impact that photography can have in helping people of any age comprehend and explore ideas.

For teaching to be effective I realized some emotional exchange must happen. I saw it more and more in the effect my work was having on people who came to know it. This was not only an intellectual exercise, but also an emotional one.

My photographs of Jews from different ethnic and religious backgrounds convey a message of Jewish diversity with an immediacy and force that students get right away. Young students often want to be like everyone else. They may feel ashamed about the ways that they or their families stand out—being more religious, less religious, Moroccan, Chasidic, Israeli, converts; they may question their own legitimacy as Jews and want to hide their family's particularity from their friends and peers. By seeing images of Jews who are like them, within an exhibition of Jews from dozens of different backgrounds,

they are overwhelmed with a sense of belonging to the larger tapestry of the Jewish family. Their fears over questions of legitimacy melt away, and they feel a new sense of pride and belonging as the



### Zion Ozeri

is a photographer whose work exploring Jewish communities has been exhibited in museums throughout the world and been published in numerous books and magazines. Zion's website: <http://www.zionozeri.com>. He can be reached at [zionozeri@aol.com](mailto:zionozeri@aol.com).

circle of Jewish identities expands in their minds.

This power of photography to educate about Jewish diversity was brought home to me recently when I visited a school in Jerusalem with a predominantly Ethiopian student body. Seeing pictures of Ethiopian Jews alongside Jews from Yemen, Uzbekistan, Poland, Hungary, Iran, the United States, and other countries made the students feel a part of the larger Jewish world in a way that many had never fully grasped before.

## II. Taking photographs

The struggle that educators have in mak-

[continued on page 29]



[Cave, Yemen 1992]

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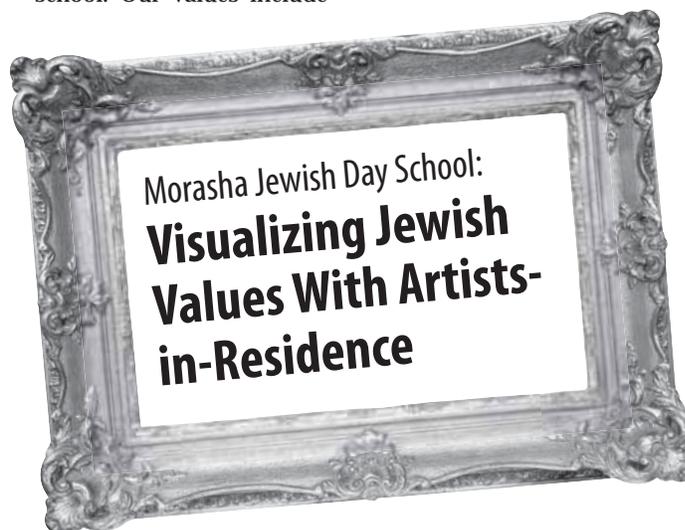


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**M**orasha School's artist-in-residence program was created to expose our students to professional Jewish artists and their mediums and to expand our visual representations of our school's guiding Jewish values. Working with Hebrew Union College and the Jewish Day School for the 21st Century project (JDS21), we selected ten values that we integrate into every aspect of our school. Our values include

become a special part of our sixth grade program. As the graduating class, their art becomes a gift and a legacy for the school. Two years in a row, we worked with world-renowned Jewish photographers, Zion Ozeri and Bill Aron. Our students had the unique opportunity to view Mr. Ozeri's and Mr. Aron's photographs, to learn about the Jewish communities depicted and the values demonstrated in



their beautiful pictures. They also learned about the art of photography. With instant cameras in hand, the sixth graders set out to photograph their own pictures of the values living in their own community. Our professional photographers worked with them and helped them select their best pictures.

*kehillah, chinukh, tikkun olam, menschlichkeit, Eretz Yisrael, klal Yisrael, tefillah, emunah, kavod, and halakhot u-minhagim.*

The students then explained in writing and with Jewish texts the sentiments and values of their photographs. Our Jewish Values photography exhibit is now a permanent fixture at Morasha School.

Our collaboration with San Diego artist Viviana Lombrozo culminated our JDS21 experience. Every student, parent, faculty member, administrator, and lay leader of Morasha contributed to the creation of ten murals, each representing one of our guiding Jewish values. We studied Jewish texts and then utilized drawing, expository writing, poetry, micrography, tear midrash (in which children tear shapes out of colored paper and glue them onto white paper to create a picture), iconography, photography, and personal reflection. Ms. Lombrozo then gathered all of our work and let it inspire her to create the murals. All ten murals hang in our sanctuary where they are not only inspiring to look at, but also serve as educational tools for our students to continue to study our values.

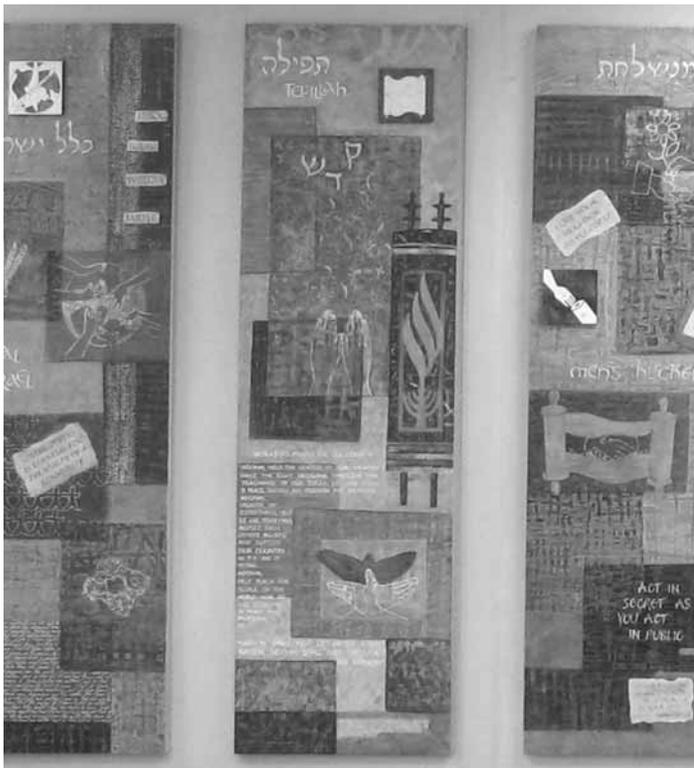
Viviana Lombrozo joined us again to work with our next sixth grade class. This creative project involved story writing and illustration. Each student selected a value that they wished to explore and they wrote their own children's story that teaches a lesson about that value. Viviana helped the children visualize their story through art and taught them how to publish their work. We created our own books, sewn by hand, and illustrated in color.

The artist-in-residence program grew to

Most recently, we "visualized" the value of *tikkun olam* through the art of song. Renowned Jewish musician and songwriter Dan Nichols spent time with the class of 2007. We studied texts of Heschel, Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav, and Lurianic Kabbalah to explore our personal relationship to the world and how we can repair it through our good deeds. Af-

ter much discussion, Dan collaborated with the students and they put their thoughts to music and created a song called “*Shomrei Ha’adamah*” (Guardians of the Earth). The class performed their song at their graduation ceremony and we continue to teach the song to our younger students.

Not only do our artists-in-residence bring their unique talents and insights to share with our students, they also greatly appreciate our efforts to use artistic mediums to express our Jewish values. Each artist connects with Judaism in a unique way and shares his or her personal journey with our students. In the short time they spend with our students, they bond with them and create relationships that enhance our students’ experience. Our professional artists encourage the children to be expressive and deliberate in their process. When the graduates present their final projects as a graduation gift to the school, they do so with pride knowing that they are giving a gift that is an expression of themselves and what they learned at Morasha.



Eve Fein, the head of school at Morasha, is responsible for bringing the artist-in-residence program and the artists to our students. Her unique vision to represent our values through art led her to make connections with Jewish artists interested in working with children. Eve explains that she has several criteria for choosing artists for our school: they all value collaboration, are committed to Judaism and knowledgeable, and they are creative with texts and ritual. We have been fortunate that most artists are willing to donate their time to work with our students and they understand the important impact of the project on our school as a whole. The program has been so successful that it is now a line item in our annual

[continued on page 48]

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# Cultivating Young Jewish Artists

by Rachel Happel

**B**IMA is a summer institute at Brandeis University that brings together talented high school artists, musicians, actors, and writers with professional artists to pursue serious artistic growth in a diverse Jewish setting. Its mission is to guide participants as they develop their artistic faculties and explore the dynamic encounter between artistic expression and Jewish life. Participants come to BIMA from all over North America and Israel, from a wide range of Jewish backgrounds and experiences. BIMA was founded in 2003 by Rabbi Daniel Lehmann, former headmaster of Gann Academy in Waltham, Massachusetts, and took place at Williams College for its first three summers before relocating to Brandeis University in 2007.

What does it take to cultivate young Jewish artists? We have been learning a great deal about this subject at BIMA over the last five years. While our setting enables us to devote significantly more time to the arts than a typical day school schedule would allow, our core concepts might be adaptable to a wide variety of settings.

Our program is guided by three central

commitments: (1) artistic growth, (2) Jewish exploration, learning, and commitment, and (3) pluralistic Jewish community. These commitments are interrelated and inform each other throughout the summer, creating a unique, holistic approach to learning and teaching in a Jewish environment.

## Artistic Growth

A strong arts program takes seriously the growth and education of young artists. Our focus in BIMA's arts majors is not on "Jewish art" or "Jewish music." Rather, our primary goal is to guide the participants as they advance their skills, learn new techniques, expand their repertoire, and pursue excellence in their artistic disciplines. Our approach includes:

### *Technique and Skill Development*

Faculty members work with participants to advance their technical skills in their artistic disciplines. This involves instruction, directed assignments, structured group and individual work, and faculty coaching.

## *Self-Direction*

Being an artist requires more than exceptional skills and techniques. Artists who aspire to "make it" must have the ability to conceive their own work and develop their own artistic style. They should also have sophisticated notions of what art is



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and where it can happen. The arts faculty works with students to understand the artistic process and to prepare them (technically, conceptually, and personally) to create their own work.

### *Structured Individual Practice Time*

Serious pursuit of artistic growth involves dedicated practice. Without it, artists in any discipline are limited in their potential for development. Teachers should aim to instill in participants a commitment to regular, deliberate practice. They should build practice time into the daily schedule for all of our arts majors. Faculty members model this commitment through their own daily practice, and they provide guidance for participants to create structures and goals for their practice time.

### *Collaboration*

Arts programs should include opportunities for collaborative work. They should also encourage cross-major collaboration on specific projects and performances. Naturally, ensemble work is inherent in music and theater, but artistic collaborations have also become an important part of other artistic disciplines,



including visual arts and writing. The ability to work with other artists is thus an essential skill. Beyond skill building, collaborative work is a cooperative way to experience the artistic process, and it creates an alternative focus when a break from individual work is needed. The faculty members guide participants as they learn to work together to create collaboratively, and they model collaboration in their own work and their faculty performances.

### *Peer Critique*

Art is not only about creating, but also about viewing, listening to others and being able to respond verbally to others' work. Commenting on the work of fellow participants, as well as receiving peer and professional artists' comments on their own work, are integral experiences for participants in every arts major.

### *Challenge and Risk*

Pushing yourself to try new experiences and take risks within a supportive environment leads to growth and increased self-confidence. Members of the arts faculty should work hard to create a safe environment where participants can take artistic risks and challenge themselves and each other. Faculty members also can work with participants individually to identify areas for growth, and to set and regularly evaluate realistic goals that will challenge students over the course of a program.

### *Reflection*

The deepest learning takes place when participants have time to reflect on what they have experienced and find personal relevance and meaning. Time for both individual and group reflection ought to be

built into all elements of a class or program.

### *Immersion in an Artistic Community and Exposure to World Class Culture*

For most participants, a summer at BIMA is the first time they have ever experienced immersion in an artistic community. We spend significant time considering what it means to be a community



of Jewish artists and working together to create a dynamic context for artistic discovery and creativity. We also strive to develop a sense that our participants are part of a larger artistic community, beyond our campus. We expose our participants to world-class artists through trips to performances and exhibitions in Greater Boston and in the Berkshires, as well as workshops and performances by guest artists we bring to campus. Like-

wise, schools can facilitate opportunities for student artists to become part of artistic communities in the society beyond the walls of the school.

### **Jewish Exploration**

Jewish day schools have a unique opportunity to spark Jewish creativity and examine the intersection between Jewish identity and the creative process. Jewish creativity depends upon Jewish learning and exploration. Participants at BIMA engage in a rich program of Jewish learning that includes (1) Shabbat planning and celebration, (2) arts workshops that integrate the pursuit of an artistic discipline with Jewish texts, values, or traditions, and (3) personal and group exploration of the intersection between Jewish identity and artistic identity.

### **Pluralistic Jewish Community**

We believe that interaction among teens of diverse backgrounds (Jewishly, artistically, educationally, geographically) enhances Jewish learning and creativity. We further believe that exchanges among artists of different disciplines enrich artistic growth. Schools might include opportunities for dialogue, collaboration, and relationship building across arts majors and among participants with different backgrounds.

These three commitments form an integrated approach that results in a vibrant community packed with artistic discovery and Jewish exploration. At the best Jewish art programs, students come away not only with a serious commitment to pursuing the arts, but also with strengthened commitment to Judaism and Jewish community.

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# ART in RAWSAK Schools

**A**t Jess Schwartz College Prep: The Jewish Community's High School in Phoenix, Arizona, our newly expanded performing arts program enriches our lives, strengthens our sense of community, and reinforces our Jewish values.

We now offer a three-year performing arts sequence beginning in the sophomore year:

TheatreSports—theatre games and improvisation

Arts EnterAction—performing arts, humanities, and technology

Theatre/Performance Lab I and II—acting in front of an audience and acting to affect change (next year to merge into Black-Box Theatre)

Improvisation is integral to the performing arts curriculum. Through improvisational exercises, students become comfortable performing in front of an audience from the outset. Improvisation by its nature reflects and reinforces the values of our school community—paying attention, responding supportively, and acting constructively.

Having heard that students were learning improv, the Arizona Jewish Theatre

Company invited Jess Schwartz to participate in the Company's *Fifth Annual, First Ever, Teen Improv Festival*. From this, an improv team developed, which has evolved into an improvisation troupe the students named *Team Extreme Cheddar and the Red Dragon*. So far, *Team Cheddar* has taken its unique brand of humor combined with Jewish values to Kivel Campus of Care se-



nior nursing home, other senior nursing homes in the Phoenix area, and to the local Jewish day schools.

Improv isn't the only form of performance art used by Jess Schwartz students to educate and unite the broader community. Last fall, the senior Performance Lab class staged *Dear God, Let Me*



*Be Popular*, a one-act play by KT Curran and members of THE SOURCE Teen Theatre. According to Ms. Curran, “We desire to create an environment where teens feel confident and secure to make responsible decisions. Innovative theatre allows a breakdown of communication barriers so that we can reach adolescents at an early age and encourage them to think for themselves in ways that serve their best interests.” Jess Schwartz students performed the play for local middle school audiences.

Under the direction of singer-songwriter Todd Herzog, the Jess Schwartz capella choir, Key Tov, and singers from the other three Phoenix-area Jewish day schools are collaboratively writing and performing an original song for our citywide celebration of Israel’s 60th birthday. The Jewish Community Foundation has generously underwritten this unique project.

Back at school, performing arts and technology methodologies are combining to produce exciting results. Last fall, for example, sophomores participated in a podcast project sponsored by The Partnership for Drug Free America, Arizona Affiliate, the Phoenix Suns basketball team, and the Phoenix Coyotes hockey team. The purpose of the project was to provide an outlet for Phoenix Valley teens to talk about the pressures and successes of making it in high school, particularly with regard to drug use. At Jess Schwartz, students created storyboards and acted out each message in TheatreSports, then produced videos in Technology, edited them in postproduction, and published their finished work as podcasts. Three of these podcasts were selected by vote of the entire school to be entered into the *UB the Rent* contest, an opportunity for teens to find a voice when it comes to tough issues—a chance to say what they want to their parents, and to the entire world.

By the end of this school year, students in performing arts and technology will produce a daily news show on the school’s



website. This student-written, -produced, and -edited newscast uses a computer dedicated to the production department with Visual Communicator 3 presentation software and a webcam, all in a small studio on campus.

Finally, next month the curtain will rise on our first musical theatre production, *The Boy Friend*. Students will act, sing, dance, and help direct. For most, this is their first experience in front of a public audience. The play is expected to draw a wide audience, raising our visibility in

the community.

Whether or not these students pursue performance once they leave Jess Schwartz, they will have gained an appreciation of the arts and of hands-on technology and they will have skills they can apply to all parts of their lives. *z*

*Phil Trapani is the Performing Arts Instructor at Jess Schwartz College Prep: The Jewish Community's High School. Phil can be reached at ptrapani@JessSchwartz.org.*

# Music Education in Jewish Day Schools

by Daniel Henkin

As a product of the Jewish day school system in the 1970s and 80s and as a Jewish day school music educator for the past fifteen years, I have experienced and observed music education both as a product and a producer. In general, day schools still have a long way to go to reach the level of music education found in a decent public school or a comparable prep school. While there have been some efforts to raise the profile of music in our schools, particularly in the younger years, music education remains all too often a marginal priority in the day school world.

Jewish educators need to start by considering the value of music education in a day school curriculum. First, music is an integral part of our heritage. From the Levites in the Temple, Torah cantillation, and the sing-song of yeshiva study to chazzanut and Jewish composers of high and popular music, Jewish culture and tradition have always been nurtured by the wellsprings of musical inspiration. Second, studies suggest that music holds great value in cultivating a range of good outcomes in students, from self-discipline to fine motor skills to superior mathematical aptitude. Third, most people believe that music is inherently valuable and should be taught as a subject in its own right. From the earliest age, children are drawn to music; schools should help cultivate this innate musicality with all means available throughout their education. The level of music education, therefore, is a good index to a day school's Jewish and cultural education overall.

Let me offer some observations about where Jewish day school music education is today. In the youngest grades, one can find extensive and innovative examples of music learning and music making. Music plays an important role in many Jewish day school curricula at

this early stage. In many schools, young day school students sing, listen, play, study, and create music. It represents the point of greatest overlap with music curricula found in public and secular private schools that aim to teach music according to government-mandated standards. (To learn about those standards, go to the website of the National Association for Music Education: <http://www.menc.org/resources/view/the-school-music-program-a-new-vision>.)

However, as students move into middle school, there is a growing disparity between day school and non-day school music curricula. The dual-curriculum demands of a day school, and the need to fit more subjects into a given day, often squeeze music out of the mix. Jewish day schools frequently do not hire enough music educators, or hire music educators who are unaware of the music opportunities being offered in the non-day school settings. The middle school years also pose a new challenge to music educators. Whereas early grades are more likely to have a homogenous group when it comes to the child's music education, by the fifth or sixth grade there is much greater differentiation in students' musical ability and knowledge, though not in their interest. Many day schools cannot meet the challenge of a differentiated music education for this age group.

By the time one reaches the high school grades, the disparity in musical knowledge and ability (again, not musical interest) between those students who consider themselves "musicians" and those who consider themselves "non-musicians" is at its greatest. In addition, the number of students who consider themselves "musicians" typically shrinks, as students who had once studied music privately do not continue into their high

school years. From a curricular standpoint, many Jewish high schools offer the kinds of music experiences that resemble more closely Jewish lower school curricula than non-day school high school curricula. At a time when teenagers demonstrate a high level of musical interest, it is unfortunate that many Jew-



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ish high schools do not offer the range of music experiences that their non-Jewish counterparts frequently do.

Nevertheless, the landscape is not uniformly bleak. Some Jewish schools succeed in providing more extensive and varied musical experiences in the middle and high school years. Many day schools offer band and chorus options at both the middle and upper school level. Often, the particular interests of a music teacher, or even a group of students, will dictate the courses or clubs offered. These have included the more typical chamber music or jazz ensemble to less conventional offerings like a barbershop quartet and a percussion ensemble. Some day schools have instituted "conservatory-style" programs, with private instrumental instruction.

In non-performance areas, several Jewish high schools offer music appreciation courses that introduce students to key areas of Western music literature and theory. Some offer courses in honors or Advanced Placement music theory as well. A few day schools offer courses in choral arranging, where students use their knowledge of music theory to write original harmonies for choir songs that

are then performed by the school's ensembles. One school teaches students to write and perform original fugues as part of their music history curriculum.

As a choral director, I have seen a resurgent interest in vocal music in particular at the high school level, both in terms of solo and ensemble singing. Influences as varied as *American Idol*, Hazamir (the national Jewish teen choir), and contemporary a cappella have come together in recent years to generate renewed interest in singing at many Jewish day schools. At the same time, a stricter adherence to *kol isha* (the Talmudic prohibition of lis-

tening to a woman sing) in many Orthodox high schools has made mixed choral singing—and in some cases, choral singing altogether—a thing of the past.

While acknowledging persistent challenges of time and funding, schools still have numerous options for improving their music programs. For starters, Jewish day school music educators can learn a great deal from their non-day school colleagues; they should visit other schools for inspiration and ideas to take back with them. For schools looking to broaden their students' music education, one approach can be interdisciplinary,

such as using musical rhythms to help teach fractions in a lower school mathematics class, or studying and performing the music of a particular culture in a high school social studies course. Other opportunities include using local talent to supplement current music offerings. A parent musician, a vocal or instrumental teacher, or a community conductor could be brought into the school to offer on-site instruction. Through a combination of scheduled classes and extracurriculars, day schools should maximize their own and their communities' resources in developing their students' talent and passion for music. *ז*

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## From the Desk of Susan Weintrob, RAVSAK President

[continued from page 3]  
challenging educational opportunity and lots of great socialization.

As RAVSAK grows to include our Canadian counterparts, we are also reaching out beyond North America. We look to a future that will include schools from Great Britain, Germany, Mexico, and South America within our network, enriching us in new

ways and allowing us to share resources for the betterment of our Jewish future.

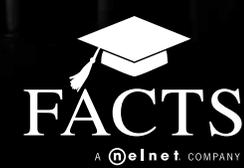
As I leave the Hannah Senesh Community Day School in New York and assume the headship of the Ronald C. Wornick Jewish Day School in the San Francisco Bay Area, it is immensely gratifying to me to know that the resources of RAVSAK are available regardless of my coastal lo-

cation. While I am not yet wise enough to see the future, I know that RAVSAK will be there for me—as it is for you—to assure that the future will be full of opportunities which I can meet knowledgeably and with confidence.

I wish all of you a successful conclusion to your school year and to a well deserved vacation. *ז*



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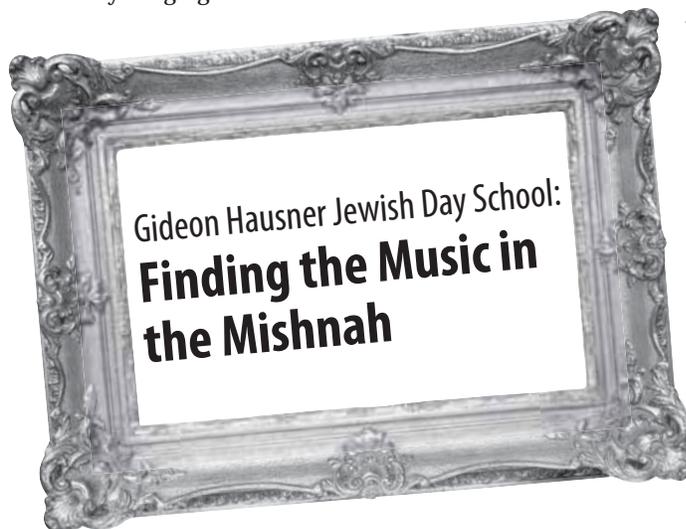
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**M**ishnah was made to be sung. Well, if not sung, then certainly repeated (coming from the root *shannah*). How better to get our students to repeat—and through repetition, remember—the mishnayot of Pirkei Avot than by singing them? How

students and the enchanting power of music to transform ancient texts to modern meaning-making hits.

Every Monday, during their scheduled Jewish Studies period, our 7th graders set aside their weekly work to focus on this project. With two teachers in the classroom, students begin the year with an introduction to the text based on a Pirkei Avot textbook by Rabbi Henry Schreiber; spend several sessions working in chevuta translating and analyzing selected mishnayot, with a focus on making



better to get our students to sing sections of Pirkei Avot than by having them write the songs and the music? Can't hear it in your mind's ear? Point your web browser to [www.hausner.com/avot](http://www.hausner.com/avot) for audio examples of what Gideon Hausner Jewish Day School has called our "Pirkei Avot to Pop Song Project." (Note: Listen to these audio samples on a computer with good speakers for full effect.)

text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world connections; listening to and discussing successful elements of classic American folk, R&B, and rock & roll songs; listening to and discussing successful elements of modern Jewish songs composed with traditional texts at their heart; and finally, in pairs, writing songs in English inspired by a mishnah of their choosing from Pirkei Avot. To receive full credit for their written lyrics, students must meet two criteria. (1) The song must be clearly related to the chosen mishnah text: there must be either an obvious or cleverly concealed text-to-text, text-to-self, or text-to-world connection between the lyrics and the mishnah; and (2) Hebrew from the Mishnah must be included in the song and must fit the rhyme scheme. We energetically discourage students from writing rap lyrics, a challenge that often stymies groups at the start but yields rich final products that stretch students beyond their ken of comfort.

Three years ago Hausner was fortunate to bring on Rabbi Josh Zweiback (from Congregation Beth Am in Los Altos, California) as a part-time faculty member. Josh, along with his prodigious talents as a teacher and pulpit rabbi, is a professional musician, a member of the well known Jewish music band Mah Tov. Upon joining the faculty he shared with us his past experiences of writing modern Jewish songs based on traditional texts during summer camp sessions with older campers. With his help we designed a Pirkei Avot curriculum that culminates in student-written and -performed songs, professionally produced in-house and distributed through CD and web portals, dramatically demonstrating both the enduring understandings of our 7th grade

Following the completion of several student drafts of each song, reviewed and edited by Rabbi Zweiback and a writing teacher, three to five (of the approximately eighteen) songs are chosen to be taken to stage two in which instrumentation is added. For some songs, students

provide their own music and instrumentation; for others, Rabbi Zweiback provides music and instrumentation. For our three strongest pieces we employ the talents of Gordon Lustig, a professional musician in Los Angeles (and musical associate of Rabbi Zweiback). Sent the lyrics and digitally recorded tracks of students singing their songs, sans instruments, as they imagine it performed, Gordon works his magic for several weeks, returning to us digital files of multi-instrument orchestrations that require us only to lay down the vocal track to complete the piece.



With a few simple tools we purchased several years ago, Hausner has created the ability to set up a mobile recording studio in any classroom. We begin with a Mac laptop, an inexpensive but

professional-grade microphone, headphones, Digidesign's Mbox (to translate analog to digital sound), and software including Garage Band and Pro Tools. Setting up the recording station in a variety of rooms (depending on availability and proper acoustics), we first record individual students singing several lyrics, then small groups for sections of harmony, and finally entire classes for "We Are The World" big chorus effects.

Students think the work is done now, but teachers know the heart of success is in the editing process. We are fortunate to have Rabbi Zweiback spend many hours mixing, smoothing, remixing, and re-smoothing the tracks until we are left with three to five songs to be played with great fanfare before all our students and parents.

Date 9/17/07 Name \_\_\_\_\_ 7A (7B) 7C

**Pirkei Avot 5:11**

*there are* four different kinds of personalities or dispositions:

Quick to anger and quick to forgive -  
His reward is cancelled out by his loss.  
difficult to anger and difficult to forgive -  
His loss is cancelled out by his reward.  
difficult to anger and quick to forgive = pious.  
quick to anger and difficult to forgive = evil

ארבע מדות בדעות:  
נוח לכעוס ונוח לרצות -  
יצא שכרו בהפסדו.  
קשה לכעוס וקשה לרצות -  
יצא הפסדו בשכרו.  
קשה לכעוס ונוח לרצות - חסיד.  
נוח לכעוס וקשה לרצות - רשע.

<p><b>Questions:</b>          Why does the mishna only talk about anger and forgiveness and not other aspects of personality?          What if a person is quick to anger and easy to forgive, but is still a nice person, is he considered evil?          What if a person is slow to anger but quick to forgive, but is not a nice person, or has other bad personality traits, is he still considered pious?</p>	<p><b>Topics &amp; Images:</b>          Topics - anger, forgiveness, good person, bad person, personality, images          equal ✓          A child that has promised not to eat treats, so throws a tantrum          • A kindergarten teacher who no matter what class patient          • A fight between me and my siblings where we fight, and then a second of later we are best friends again.          • Mathematical graph, balancing on a scale</p>	<p><b>Connections (T-S, T-T, T-W):</b>          T-S - A lot of times we and my siblings fight, and sometimes we fight even after a second later, but sometimes we stay mad at each other.          T-T - In the tank it continually does that and forgives us easily, and usually doesn't get angry.          T-W - In was a lot of times they start because of old fights and so on, and usually it is very hard to fix the wounds they inflict.</p>
<p><b>Interpretation(s):</b>          This Mishna shows the different kind of people.          This Mishna might tell us to rethink our personalities and become the person we want to be.</p>	<p><b>Structure:</b>          There is a word in the beginning then the first word of the next sentence is the first word of the last sentence, then the first word of the 3rd line is the 2nd of the 5th line, and the first word of the 4th line is the first word in the 6th line.</p>	

To facilitate sharing the work of our students with a broader community, we created a website with audio samples and explanations. We hope in the future to add a component of video production to the project as well. A song like "Action Every Day" (based on Pirkei Avot 1:15), with its call to conscience on the subject of Darfur, is ready-made for a video to be shared on YouTube.

With the success of this project and the audio recording equipment on hand, Hausner staff members have recently reached into the realm of podcast production as well. To hear some of our work in this area, point your browser to [www.hausner.com/podcasts](http://www.hausner.com/podcasts). Both the Pirkei Avot songs and student centered podcasts allow us to share the ongoing work of our students with our entire school community, with our local Jewish community, and hopefully soon with the wide world beyond our state and country. ז

Aviv Monarch is the Jewish Studies Director at the Gideon Hausner Jewish Day School in Palo Alto, California. He can be reached at [amonarch@hausner.com](mailto:amonarch@hausner.com).

# From Day School to JDub

¿ Interview with Daniel Saks, aka Shank Bone Mystic

[HaYidion asked Daniel Saks, a rising young Jewish musician, to reflect upon the impact that his community day school education had upon him and his musical identity. Here are his candid replies.]

**T**ell us about your musical life today and your accomplishments as a musician.

My band is called DeLeon. We play Sephardic folk songs, but they come out sounding like rock songs. The songs are either in Ladino, Hebrew or are translated into English. I'm the front man as well as the guitarist and banjoist. We've got our first record coming out on JDub in a few months. I became involved with JDub via another band I'm in called The LeeVeEs, known internationally for their original pop-rock Hanukkah songs. I've been playing in bands since high school and had my greatest commercial success with a band I was in while in college. We were on Atlantic Records, had videos on MTV and toured the east coast with Outkast. Our debut on TRL and album release were on 9/11/01 and given the goofy upbeat nature of our record, for obvious reasons it didn't sell as many copies as the label was hoping. Our next album was more serious and sophisticated, and as far as I know is gathering dust in an Atlantic Records broom closet, having never been released.

*In recent years there's been much talk of a "renaissance" of Jewish music. Do you feel that's true and that there is a new Jewish music scene?*

I'm no ethnomusicologist, but I bet at any time it would seem like there is a renaissance in Jewish music, be it Mickey Katz, Shlomo Carlebach, John Zorn, or The Klezmatics. Jews love to rediscover and reinterpret their heritage. Those names are just from the last 50 years, but I'm confident you could go back as far as you'd like and find Jewish music innova-

tion. Nowadays with the web and home production it's easier to be aware of all the innovation going on, and easier to be part of a scene. There are Jewish musicians using sampling, and drawing from other cultures and blending any and all influences into their music to create new Jewish sounds. Jewish music has the unique ability to be secular and Jewish at the same time, unlike say Christian music. So Jewish musicians can mine the culture in an infinite amount of ways without being restricted by the confines that come along with being a religious musician.

*Tell us about your day school background.*

I attended Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School in Rockville, Maryland, from K to 12. A long while, especially for a kid from PG [Prince George's] County, frequently over an hour commute away. I remain friends with a number of kids from my class, and one of them happens to be our bassist, Kevin Snider. I have nothing to compare the quality of my education to, but I'm told it was good. I teach music part time in Bronx public schools now and I'm thankful that we had smaller classes than they do, but I'm envious of the diversity of students and classes that they have. It's strange to think that we had minyan every morning. I sometimes enjoyed it because I was so very tired by the time I got to school and it was a mellow transition into the day, but I have memories of teachers hassling me to pray and that's not a policy I agree with. What was nice is that it was a small pond so I was able to participate in just about anything I pleased, which tended to manifest itself for me in musical ways.

*When did you start to get into music?*

I've been an omnivorous music listener for as long as I can remember. I have distinct memories of being a music snob in

kindergarten, showing off my Van Halen tapes and wearing out my Queen mix. I took piano lessons from ages 6-10 and got into guitar in middle school because my brother had one and I liked how loud it went. I also began taking drum lessons around that time. By eighth grade I was in a band with other kids from my class and was in at least two other bands by the time I graduated. JDS didn't have a high



**Dan Saks**

is a Brooklyn-based musician and a member of JDub recording acts DeLeon and The LeeVeEs. Dan's website is [www.ilovedeleon.com](http://www.ilovedeleon.com). He can be reached at [ilovedeleon@gmail.com](mailto:ilovedeleon@gmail.com).

school music department until a group of musicians from our class persuaded the school to create one. They ended up hiring my drum teacher who guided the newly formed school band through classics by Hall and Oates, Steely Dan, and The Jackson 5. Around that time the band I was playing with became the school pep band, and played alongside school basketball games. We had a song attributed to each kid on the team that in some way referenced their personality or musician they liked—i.e., Ben Landy liked Leadbelly so we played "Alabama Bound" each time he scored. Like I said, since it was a small pond we could basically write a lot of our own rules.

*Did the day school give you a solid musical training?*

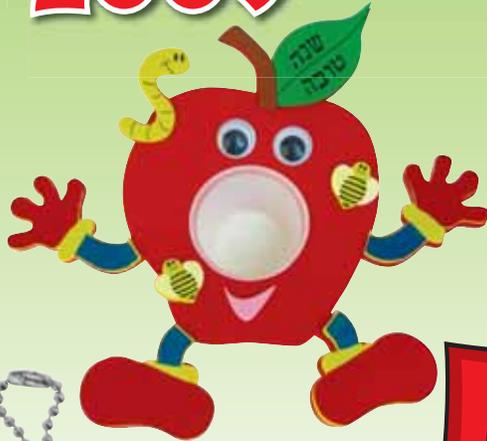
More significant than the actual musical training I got at JDS was the environment of being around other musical people and being able to do things like the pep band and the school band without much interference. A part of that is because a good percentage of my classmates were well off enough that their parents had bought

[continued on page 29]

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# Art in RAWSAK Schools

**M**usic, movement, and art at the Lerner Jewish Community Day School are special and enriching parts of the school day. Since the inception of the school, music has always been a part of the daily lives of students, from Monday morning *tefillah* through Friday afternoon Shabbat sing-along. It was the wish of the founding members of the school to create an arts program that would complement the school community, and efforts were made to add regular art and music classes to the curriculum.

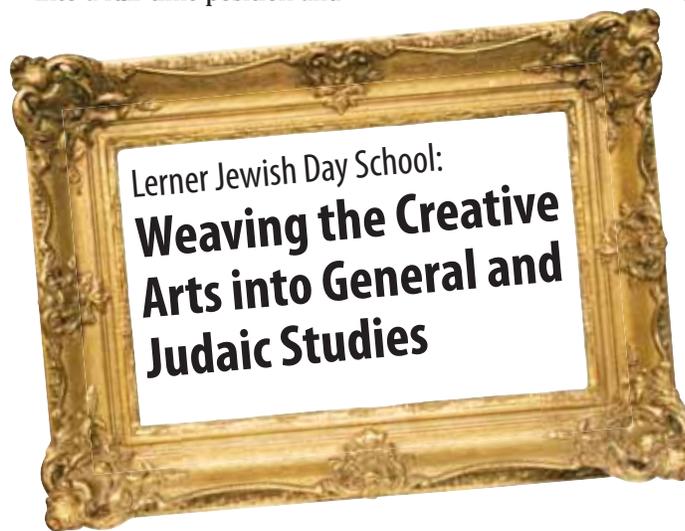
Thanks to a \$5,000 annual gift from a local corporation, The FurnitureLab Creative Arts Fund was created at The Lerner School in 2003

to fund a part-time arts specialist who could teach music, art, and drama to our elementary and preschool students. Our hope was that the job would grow into a full-time position and

Elements of art and music are woven throughout the Judaic and general studies subject areas. “The integrated portion of the job allows me to coordinate with general and Judaic studies teachers to bring the arts into aspects of their cur-



riculum and vice versa,” says integrated arts teacher Laurie Siegel. “For example, in second grade, students study butterflies and their life cycle as part of their science curriculum. I work with the general studies teacher to add elements of the arts to science and social studies. In my program, we dramatize the life cycle and learn songs about butterflies. In Judaic studies, students learn about the significance of butterflies in Judaism and represent this in even more artistic ways. Finally, in math and visual arts, this is the perfect time to focus on symmetry.”



that we could allot time and resources to fully integrate music, art, and drama into our general and Judaic studies curriculum. The program began with “art on a cart” and music and dance being held twice per week in the school’s multipurpose room. Five years later, we have a full-time integrated arts teacher with her own classroom, and our vision of full integration has been realized.

Final

In music classes, students learn basic elements, such as rhythm, melody, harmony, form, expression, and tone color, and build skills such as music reading, instrument technique, and vocal technique. The Orff approach to music education is used to involve students in the creative

process through natural expression. Students in third through fifth grade play recorder, and various classroom percussion instruments are used in all grades. In art classes, students also focus on elements such as line, shape, space, form, texture, and color, and skill building, such as use of a variety of materials and tools. Each year, a local Jewish artist works with students to create a project that will be left as a gift to the school. This idea grew from the Jewish principle of *le-dor va-dor*, from generation to generation, and is a fun way to make connections between our school and the Jewish community in our area.



With the continued growth of the school, our arts program will change and grow as well. Siegel says, "Because our school and the surrounding community, Jewish or not, is so rich in the arts, I feel confident that this trend will continue in an upward motion and we will realize an arts program beyond what anyone could have imagined when we first began."

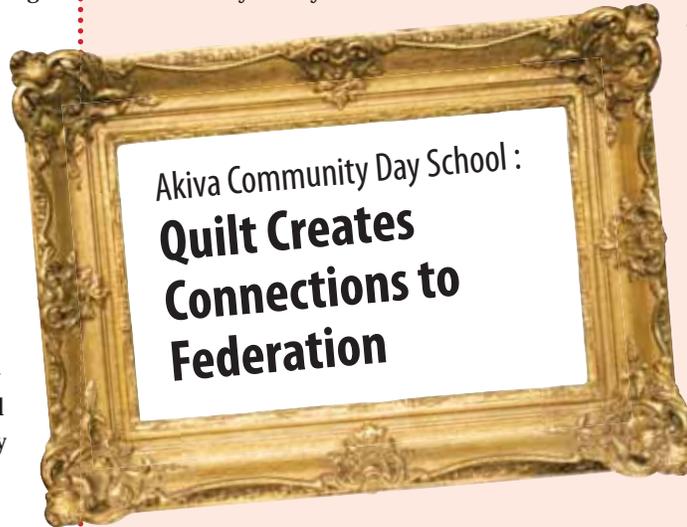
For more information about the Lerner Jewish Community Day School, visit [www.lerner-school.org](http://www.lerner-school.org), and to learn more about the American Orff-Schulwerk Association visit [www.aosa.org](http://www.aosa.org).

*Laurie Siegel is the Integrated Arts Teacher, and Ivy Wingate is the Director of Development at the Lerner Jewish Community Day School of Durham-Chapel Hill, North Carolina.*

Hosting the General Assembly in Nashville last November created many opportunities for Tennesseans to become more involved with their local Federations and the United Jewish Communities internationally. For Akiva Community Day

the community prepared and they watched as their parents volunteered to help with the planning.

Akiva's students also wanted to contribute. Together with their art teacher, Lisa Mingrone, the fifth grade class decided to create a paper quilt that included artistic depictions of the support that UJC offers to communities around the world. The students interviewed Federation lay and professional leaders, and they spent time discussing how to represent all of the great work of the Federation movement. The resulting piece of artwork incorporates student artwork and writing into a beautiful quilt that prominently displays the Star of David.



School in Nashville, having the GA just twenty-five minutes from the school allowed their students to put a real face on the Federation movement. The students watched as

During the GA the resulting piece of artwork was prominently displayed in the vendor fair. GA participants were able to purchase posters and T-shirts that included a reproduction of the artwork. The original piece of art was sold at the GA for \$3500 and then donated back to Akiva by the purchasers. Most of those who walked through the vendor fair were impressed by both the quality of the art and the effort that Akiva made to connect with the work of UJC. Most importantly, the students felt as though their efforts helped further connect the entire school community with the thousands of people who came to the General Assembly. ז



*Those who would like a copy of the poster or who are interested in learning more about the project can contact Ashlee McKinnon at 615-356-1880 or [amckinnon@akivanashville.net](mailto:amckinnon@akivanashville.net).*



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# From Day School to JDub

[continued from page 24]

them electric guitars or drum kits, and had basements or garages we could practice in. I realize what an advantage that was now that I teach in a lower income school. My students for the most part only have access to the guitars that belong to the school. Other than that, there wasn't any musical training to speak of for most of my time at the school.

*When were you first aware that you wanted to be a professional musician?*

There are professional musicians? That sounds great! I think I've always wanted to be a professional musician, well at one point, I wanted to be a space scientist, which I would still like to be. I've also always been aware of how hard it is to make a living being a musician, and for the last couple of years of high school and my first few years of college I was set to become a union organizer. I had a longtime fascination with the labor movement that

was born out of the union songs my dad used to play in carpool, but music kept interfering so despite my efforts at saving myself from a life of guitarmony, my quest for workers' rights had to take a back seat to being on tour.

*Did your day school instill in you a sense of being a Jewish musician?*

I think my growth as a musician and as a Jew both have roots at the day school, but it wasn't until relatively recently that those two aspects of my identity began to merge in this way. There's no doubt that having the background that I have and a core group of friends with the same background surely has something to do with the fact that I've found myself exploring the world of Jewish music. In some ways I think me being a Jewish musician is a continuation of a family trade. My father is a rabbi in the DC area, and I see a lot of similarities between his work and mine. The sharing of ideas from a stage

and desire to be a community leader plays a role in both of our professions.

*What does being a Jewish musician mean to you?*

Well, I'll put it like this. In college, when I was choosing my rap name, because at that time kids in college required rap names, I chose Shank Bone Mystic. "Shank Bone" because I'm all about seder. And "Mystic" because I'm a descendant of great kabbalists. Being Jewish is a malleable quality that can be approached from any number of artistic angles. I've chosen to call myself Shank Bone Mystic and play songs about love, G-d, murder, and vice on the electric guitar and banjo in Ladino and that's how I am a Jewish musician. But that won't be everyone's take on it.

*What would you like to tell aspiring musicians who attend Jewish day schools today?*

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## Photography: The Door That Connects

[continued from page 12]

ing texts relevant to students is nothing new. The traditional Jewish approach to learning has been cerebral. Intellectual dissection of ancient as well as contemporary texts has been the norm for millennia. Of course, the problem with this approach is that not everyone is cut out for it. Many students do not thrive on intellectual challenge, just as others do not succeed in expressing themselves through writing. These students need other avenues.

It seemed natural to me to use my photographs as a springboard to teach about Jewish values. Asking students to use cameras to express themselves and explore their identity and surrounding community can be a great experiential learning tool. Students use photography to give voice to their own sense of themselves, their families, and their communities. They are given an assignment to create a collage of por-

traits which enables them to discuss the complex web of relationships surrounding them. They come to understand how their own identity is enmeshed in the circle of Jewish life in which they live.

By holding a camera and focusing it upon the people and spaces in their world, students undertake experiential learning that gives them a tremendous sense of empowerment. Standing behind the camera not only trains them to look at their environment with fresh eyes; it enables them to control it to some extent, cutting it through shot selection and photo cropping to express what they feel about their world. The process of framing and selection in photography gives students tools to become more conscious of many things in their lives that they are then able to articulate and discuss in words through critical reflection. They discover that photography is another language to be explored and analyzed, just like written texts. What

photography enables these learners to do is to engage with Jewish tradition, ideas, community, and symbols in ways that significantly supplement other kinds of Jewish learning that takes place in Jewish day schools.

Increasingly, educators are realizing that the arts are not an addition to the real learning within a school, but are essential means for learning in all areas of study. Through its power and immediacy, photography has the potential to reach many students who are turned off by more traditional learning methods. Schools should consider the many ways that both viewing and taking photographs can engage students in both Jewish and secular studies. *z*

*For more information about The Jewish Lens, please call Program Director Karen Jarmon at 917-558-9018 or e-mail her at [kjarmon@avodaarts.org](mailto:kjarmon@avodaarts.org). Or go to the program's website at [www.JewishLens.com](http://www.JewishLens.com).*

# The Art of Bibliodrama as Experiential Learning

by Peter Pitzele

**B**ibliodrama, as the name implies, makes drama out of Bible, and does so by the use of unrehearsed role-playing in which participants give voice to biblical characters (or objects) in a facilitated and structured process. Bibliodrama is a recognized form of contemporary experiential midrash first developed at the Jewish Theological Seminary 25 years ago and now widely employed in classrooms and pulpits and taken up in a variety of emerging pedagogies. (For more background information, go to [www.bibliodrama.com](http://www.bibliodrama.com).)

In this article I want to give you an impression of the method by walking you through a bibliodramatic “lesson” developed for sixth graders. My explicit goal, from a content point of view, is to acquaint students with three things: 1. the major features of the family saga of Abraham; 2. a methodology of midrashic investigation; 3. the connection between an ancient text and modern life. At the end of this essay I will say something about the pedagogical goals and values implicit in the method itself. (For a far more complete discussion of this method, readers are referred to my book *Scripture Windows: Towards a Practice of Bibliodrama*.)

As facilitator with the text in hand, I begin by looking at the first mention of Abram and Sarai in Genesis 11:29-30, focusing on the figure of Sarai, “barren and childless.” After making sure everyone understands childless (*ein valad*) and barren (*akarah*)—both its English meaning and the Hebrew with its sense of being uprooted rather than sterile—I make my first bibliodramatic

role assignment. “You are Sarai,” I say to the class. “What is it like to be *akarah*, to be childless and *barren*.” I validate the answers I hear and in so doing develop their trust that I am not seeking a single right answer but rather seeking to develop *as many answers as possible*. (This is, after all, one of my goals, that they understand the pluralistic nature of midrashic exploration, for midrash is fundamentally an anti-reductive methodology: the more the merrier.)

Then I move on to Genesis 12:1-3, distilling from those verses the implicit fact that Abram is being told he will become the *father* of a great nation. “Father,” I repeat, and then to the class: “You are

Abram and you have just been told by G-d that you are to become the father of a great nation. What do you think about that? What are all the different thoughts you have about that?” And among them



**Peter Pitzele, Ph.D.,**

developed Bibliodrama for the pulpit and the classroom 25 years ago. He travels across the U. S. and to Canada, Europe, and Israel sharing his methodology with a new generation of students of the Bible. He can be reached at [asher@bibliodrama.com](mailto:asher@bibliodrama.com).

I hope to hear—and if I do not I will supply it—the concern about who is to be the *mother* of that great nation.

I recount their departure to Canaan, the famine, the trip to Egypt, the return to Canaan, and finally to Chapter 16, my next stopping place. We read verses one through three; I make sure we understand that Hagar is now a part of this clan, that though the norms of this society are somewhat different from ours, we can still understand the issues of surrogacy and adoption. And then I ask, “So Sarai, why now? Why after ten years do you make this suggestion to your husband?” And I may also ask Abram to tell me what Sarai’s proposal is like for him. And also, “You Hagar, what is it like for you when your mistress tells you to have a child with her husband?” I trust my readers can imagine the welter of possible answers that spring from these questions.

I then tell the class that in fact a child is born, a son, Ishmael, and though he may or may not know who his “real mother” is, he does know that Abram is his father. I then put out four chairs facing



[Leaf from the Burning Bush by Peter Pitzele]

the class. I have prepared these chairs in advance, and each chair has a name on it: Abram, Sarai, Hagar, Ishmael; and I say to the class, "I want you to imagine that when Ishmael is seven years old, his father Abram, decides he wants to have a family photograph." (No one minds the anachronism.) I continue, "He summons the most famous Canaanite photographer and explains what he wants. And the photographer asks Abram to arrange the family (the chairs) to present the family as he wants it to be captured." The class is now looking at the chairs in front of them, which are arranged in a simple line, one beside the other. I say to the class, "You are Abram. Arrange the chairs the way you want the family photograph to look." Slowly at first, and then with mounting eagerness, students come up to make their arrangements, and after each arrangement I ask one student, "You are Abram: what does this arrangement mean? Why is Sarai to your left and Hagar to your right?" To another student, "Why is Ishmael placed in front of you and Hagar behind Sarai?" Sometimes students cannot quite articulate why they have done what they have done; sometimes if I ask them to account for their positionings, they become self-conscious. In such cases, then, I do most of the interpreting, and though I suspect that in some ways the students may be showing something about their own family dynamics, I keep the focus *entirely* on the family of Abram, and I keep inviting different possible family arrangements. After each student presents his or her version and after the brief interpretation, I thank each of them as they sit back down.

Then—and before everyone has had a chance to do their photo arrangement—I say that the Canaanite photographer



[The Prophet by Peter Pitzele]

has to leave, but just before he does, Sarai approaches him and asks if she may have her chance to create a family photo arrangement. He says yes, invites her to arrange the chairs her way, and so we go off on round two. And then round three with Hagar, and finally round four with Ishmael.

By now, everyone is involved and even if a student does not actually get out of his or her seat to make an arrangement of the chairs, he or she is deeply involved. What students are learning at this phase in the lesson is how *point of view determines meaning*, which is something they know on one level but have perhaps never seen so fully demonstrated.

The above chair exercise may take as long as fifteen or twenty minutes depending on the size of the class. In facilitating a Bibliodrama, I find that it is useful to always leave some hands in the air so that the process does not reach a point of ex-

haustion. However, I want to make sure that everyone has a first turn before anyone gets seconds.

I thank all the students. I thank the imaginary Canaanite photographer, and I move on to the next part of the story. "Many years pass," I say. "Ishmael grows to young manhood and then, quite unexpectedly, Sarai is told that she will become a mother and have a child of her own. Which, in fact, she does. And she bears Abraham a son, Isaac." And now I turn a fifth chair to face the group with Isaac's name on it; again I have prepared this beforehand. It is a dramatic moment in the class; and even though hands may be raised of students now wanting to reconfigure the family in the light of the new arrival, I do not (usually) go in that direction.

Instead I say: "Let me read to you what happens next." I turn to Chapter 21, explain about the feast that Abraham throws for Sarah and Isaac, and then I read verses 9-14: "And Sarah saw the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had born to Abram playing..." Here I pause, and we look at the Hebrew word translated as playing (in some versions "mocking") and notice how it is related to Isaac's name. "Playing, laughing—*yitzhaking* around, like horsing around—and Sarah said to Abraham, 'Cast out that slave woman and her son, for the son of that slave woman shall not share in the inheritance with my son Isaac.'"

"You are Abraham," I say to the class: "What is that like for you?" And we explore this moment bibliodramatically in Abraham's role, and then I ask Hagar and Ishmael what this moment is like for them, and finally I ask Isaac. And after again exploring and validating the

[continued on page 48]

Integration is a critical part of the Agnon School curriculum. We look to weave as many parts of our teaching together as possible. Rosh Chodesh, it turns out, is a perfect fit as it ties science to Judaics. With a little bit of effort, many more subjects can be included in the teaching of this special monthly event.

During the late 1980s our science teacher left. Soon after having made the mistake of saying how much I enjoyed



science I became the fifth-eighth grade science teacher, as well as the art teacher. Wanting very much for science to be discovery-based and as hands-on as art, I took summer classes, and I became fascinated by the phases of the moon. It was during this time that I learned about the monthly event on the calendar called Rosh Chodesh.

My seventh grade science students investigated the phases of the moon and dizzily created their own phases with volleyballs in a darkened room using a projector as the sun. In addition, students viewed slides of moon phases, including first crescents in the sunsets. While viewing the wall size images, students were asked to write their thoughts. In art, these students went outdoors to draw a horizon line, which was then transferred and cut from 18 x 24 black construction paper. The “black sky” was discarded, leaving the silhouetted landform topped with intricately paper cut horizon. Next,

the students used a white crayon to draw a crescent in the top left section of white 18 x 24 paper. To depict the vivid colors of the setting sun, a watercolor wash was applied to the entire page. The wax crescent resisted the watercolor and we had a moon in the sunset sky. Attach the black horizon and *voilà!* a painting of the Rosh Chodesh moon at each student’s western horizon at home.

And then I told them a story. Once upon a time, a long, long time ago on a hill in Judea, there was a man who had a job. He was to sit on his hilltop and scan the skies waiting to find the first crescent moon of the month. He would peer and gaze and wait to see the slender crescent appear near the western horizon in the luminous colors of the sunset. When

he saw the moon he would light a great fire for another person to see on another mountaintop. Soon the hills of Judea were aflame and the people of Israel knew that it was the next month.

Today this program continues. It has been done in various grades (no younger than fourth) over the years, but now it is in fifth grade as that is where the moon curriculum is taught. Students continue to be inspired by images of the moon and write with their language arts and Hebrew teachers. In Tanakh class, fifth graders learn the history of Rosh Chodesh and they map the progress of the moon phases through a month. They investigate their Hebrew birth dates. In music, they learn “A Moon Song” in Hebrew and English. The song speaks of the new moon in all its metaphors.

Rosh Chodesh allows fifth grade students to connect the importance of the moon to their lives as Jews and to history. In social studies, students are broken up into

groups and asked to do research on one Native American tribe. Students become knowledgeable about the culture of Native Americans, including food, language, agriculture, games, and how they used the moon on a daily basis. Students then use this information to create picture

of this concept. They examine the different features of the lunar landscape and atmosphere. An experiment is performed with different sized marbles and sand to investigate the relationship between the size and distance of meteoroids and the width and depth of craters. The unit

horizon in the luminous colors of the sunset. The anticipation is broken when one student blows the shofar and everyone's attention is drawn to that youngster. "I don't see it—where is it?" Pale, slender, and elusive, the moon is difficult to spot as the sky slowly darkens. One person helps another, pointing and giving visual landmarks, and before long the air is filled with the sounds of shofars and the exclamations of those who have spied the moon, adults and children alike. It is really quite exciting.



Our program begins outdoors in full view of the celestial object. Blessings are said and songs are sung and we break into Israeli dance. Parents, students, general studies and Judaic studies teachers, and administrators equally join in. We dance and sing our way indoors, where our program continues. Parents are treated to various presentations: in science, as children personify the moon phases; language arts and Hebrew, as students read their diverse writings; in music, where several unusual instruments are used to enhance the eerie scenery such as Chinese gong, Chinese prayer bell, Chinese prayer bowl, and tree chimes. And of course, there is a magnificent display of the Rosh Chodesh paintings and writings.

books. Then they compare and contrast how the moon is used today, in the lives of Jews and Native Americans.

concludes with a description of how the moon's gravitational pull creates high and low tides on Earth.

In science, the students explore our moon through hands-on investigations. They learn about the rotation and revolution system between our Earth, moon, and sun. This provides the groundwork to explain why and how our moon has different phases. The students use simple manipulatives like styrofoam balls and flashlights to gain a better understanding

Usually for Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan, parents, students, and teachers meet outdoors at sunset. We stand at the best possible spot near the school to enable us to find this mysterious moon. Students bring shofars from home and we fetch all that we have in school. We peer and we gaze and we wait and hope to see the slender crescent appear near the western

Since the days of Moses and before, this moon has been circling our Earth marking time. Jews through the centuries have spied this moon many times a year: full and brilliant for Pesach and Sukkot; marking the New Year for Rosh HaShanah; changing the month for Rosh Chodesh. What a superb and genuine connection to our people and our past. ז

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# Jewish Folk Art Traditions: Cultural Identity and Personal Expression

by Jennifer Kalter and Sara Lasser

With an international collection spanning four centuries, educators at the American Folk Art Museum often teach from objects deriving from religious groups—such as Shaker furniture, Amish quilts, and Decalogues—through discussion-based explorations in the galleries. The recent exhibition “Gilded Lions and Jeweled Horses: The Synagogue to the Carousel” allowed us to explore sacred and secular objects created by Jewish artisans with a wide range of audiences. Tracing the woodcarving traditions that Jewish immigrants brought with them to the United States from Europe from the late nineteenth through the first half of the twentieth centuries, this groundbreaking exhibition charted the valuable

contributions these artisans made to the flourishing American carousel industry. At the same time, it uncovered a trove of examples from authentic Jewish folk arts whose practitioners continue to work today.

Starting with the symbolic motifs worked into Torah arks, grave-stones, and elaborate papercuts, the exhibition illuminated the inspiration many carousel carvers drew from traditional sacred carvings for the animated carousel figures they created. We positioned the themes of symbolism and immigration as the central thrust behind our tours for elementary, middle, and high school tours in “Gilded Lions.” Our goals

for all groups visiting the exhibition were to develop observation and communication skills; reveal Jewish immigrant art-

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ists’ contributions to American folk art; develop critical thinking skills through comparisons of objects; and understand the concept of symbolism, especially as a means to trace the adaptation of visual culture.

All tours began with a discussion of students’ cultural histories. Because many students who visited the exhibition had personal or familial histories of immigration, they identified with a desire to retain a sense of cultural identity. These preliminary discussions set the stage for an exploration of Jewish immigration to the United States and the ways in which communities have continued traditions while simultaneously adapting to a new lifestyle in America.

Students of all ages examined these shifting identities through symbolism. For example, many tours started at a lavish papercut from Europe, which allowed students to consider symbols such as the lion and the double-headed eagle that represented Prussia. By examining more sacred and secular objects that Jewish immigrant artisans created, students began to trace a translation of visual culture: While the hands of the *kohanim* and lions often persisted throughout various forms, the Prussian double-headed eagle shifted into a single-headed, unquestionably American one draped in red, white, and blue in American papercuts, and the features of the mythical creatures of

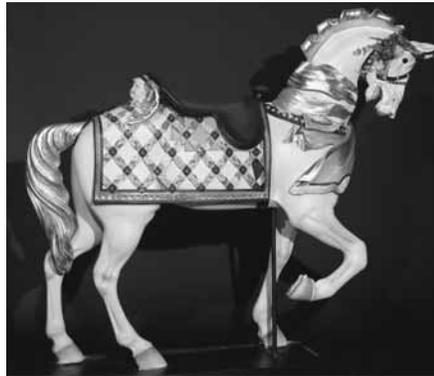


European papercuts morphed into lively carousel figures. Viewing the Decalogues, flanked by lions, and carousel figures side by side, students saw how woodcarvers transferred their skills from one form to another by adapting their visual language, including expressive lions' manes and tails.

Though the exhibition at the American Folk Art Museum has closed, the surprising connection that "Gilded Lions" revealed between Jewish immigrant woodcarvers and the American carousel industry offers opportunities for classroom discussion about major Jewish contributions to American history and culture. Educators can explore these contributions with their students in the classroom through the exhibition website, [www.gildedlions.org](http://www.gildedlions.org). In addition to an overview of the exhibition, the site highlights synagogues, Torah arks, grave-stones, papercuts, and carousels through enlargeable images and background information about each form. After a few moments of quiet looking, teachers can engage students in discussion by asking them what they see happening in each image and encouraging students to back up interpretations with visual evidence. In small groups, students can compare and contrast the exhibition objects with those that they see in their daily lives, such as Decalogues or Torah arks. In addition,

students can compare arks, papercuts, and carousel horses to discern which elements of visual language artists have carried from one art form to another.

Even without exhibition images, "Gilded Lions" uncovered important aspects of



Jewish life in the United States that are relevant for classroom discussion. Some conversation topics the exhibition has sparked for us include:

**History of Jewish immigration to the United States:** Starting with the reception by Peter Stuyvesant of Brazilian Jews transported to New Amsterdam in the 1650s, immigrant Jews have had a substantial presence in the American cultural landscape. Students can discuss where Jews have emigrated from, their reasons for emigration, and their major cultural contributions.

**Rise of Coney Island:** Coney Island, initially conceived as a seaside haven for the wealthy, eventually declined into what some called "Sodom by the Sea" before revitalization brought amusement parks and carousels to attract families. Students can explore this cultural history, approaching it as a microcosm of larger forces at play in American culture.

**The development of leisure time industries:** For many European immigrants in the early twentieth century, leisure time was a new experience; not only did American life include this phenomenon, entire industries were dedicated to it in the form of amusement parks. Students can compare the life of a first-generation child born in the United States to that of their parents in Eastern Europe. The skills that carvers transferred from sacred carvings to secular ones such as carousels serve to illustrate this comparison.

Teaching from "Gilded Lions and Jeweled Horses" with both Jewish and non-Jewish audiences has been an incredibly rewarding experience for us. Our hope is that the important contributions that immigrant Jewish artisans have made to American folk art will continue to inspire students and educators for years after the exhibition's conclusion. ז

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**K**ids love animals and they love music, and when the two collide magic really does happen. Welcome to the world of the Heritage Academy Performing Arts Club.

For the past two years, elementary school general studies teacher Jami Zmurko, who loves music and dance, has used the performing arts to enliven her curriculum. One year, her students did musical numbers with intricate choreography based on their social

discovered was, so did her students! Why not have a show to raise animal awareness in the audience? The show could also be a benefit performance to raise funds and desperately needed items for a local animal shelter. Thus was born this year's Performing Arts Club project, integrating *tikkun olam* with music, dance, photography, and design. Jami Zmurko's and the students' two passions, dogs and performance, became the driving force behind their learning about *tza'ar ba'alei*

*chayim*: preventing cruelty to animals. Jami Zmurko, collaborating with Yehuda Edry (her Judaic studies partner), Shimon Shushan (Judaic Program Coordinator), and her sister (an art teacher in Pennsylvania), designed a curriculum to accomplish this goal.



studies unit, *U.S. Immigration 1870 - 1924*. Musical selections included "Freedom" (by Paul McCartney, written after 9/11), "This Land is Your Land" (by Woody Guthrie), "Coming to America" (by Neil Diamond), and "Proud to be an American" (by Lee Greenwood). The next year, the class did a show based on the skills and concepts they were learning in the Open Circle program, a curriculum that teaches students the social skills necessary for positive, inclusive relationships. Some of the numbers that year were "Blackbird" (by Paul McCartney), "With Our Own Two Hands" (by Jack Johnson and Ben Harper), and "Hello Goodbye" (by the Beatles). This year, Jami Zmurko expanded her vision into a multi-grade after school Performing Arts Club (third, fourth and fifth grades).

Teachers at Heritage Academy are encouraged to follow their passion and bring it into their classrooms. Jami Zmurko has always had a great love of dogs. What she

Students built their background knowledge of animal awareness by reading books about how animals help humans. They also read books about the lives of homeless animals and how they can be helped. Students analyzed pictures of homeless dogs to get a better perspective on their conditions. The students visited the Thomas J. O'Connor Animal Shelter in Springfield, Massachusetts. They read the shelter's mission statement. The visit to the shelter allowed the students to better understand the needs of the shelter and the homeless animals under its care. The shelter gave the students a wish list of needed items. Upon returning to school, Heritage Academy students got down to business by sponsoring collection drives, and proclaiming a goal of raising \$500. Attendees at the Heritage Academy Performing Arts Club Benefit Performance were asked to make donations.

Simultaneously, Jami Zmurko and the students began rehearsing for their show. There was extensive use of the arts throughout the whole enterprise. There



was group and solo singing. Dance included ballet, lyrical, and jazz. There was some accompaniment on instruments. There were student-made scenery, programs, and signage. Students were involved with speechwriting and journaling about the program. Photography buffs took photographs of animals at the shelter and put together a slide show. In summation, the students were totally immersed in all aspects of theater. Some of the musical numbers in the show were:

- “The Lion Sleeps Tonight” (recognizing and celebrating all animals big and small)—one soloist was surrounded by twenty-three students acting as lions and wearing lion masks.
- “Don’t Ever Step on a Snake” (respecting animals)—two soloists and ten dancers with top hats and canes.
- “Collide” (animals being alone and what they might be thinking)—one soloist and three background singers, with guitar accompaniment.
- “Fix You” (things can be difficult for animals that are treated badly)—

three soloists sang to a background slideshow of homeless animals, while the rest of the company circled the audience performing choreographed movements with battery operated candles.

- “Lullaby” (animals persevere and can make it through difficult times)—one solo ballet dancer and four singers.
- “*Eem Rak Na’iz*” (peace and understanding)—two solo dancers followed by a group of 15 dancers in a lyrical dance.
- “Follow Me” (animals need people to guide them)—three soloists were in the front and the rest of the company held signs of how to help animals.
- “Til There Was You” (animals are so happy when they find their permanent homes)—one soloist and then the entire company; some students acted as dogs and the others acted as owners.
- “Three Little Birds” (everything will work out when people step in to make a difference)—three soloists

and the entire company on stage.

The Performing Arts Club at Heritage Academy incorporated fundamental skills in music, voice, movement, theater, set design, photography, and public speaking with *chesed*. The students in the club were looking at the world beyond themselves. They were seeking out God’s less fortunate creatures, and learned to respect and provide for them. They learned that humans are the custodians of the earth and all of its creatures. They also learned that caring for God’s creatures is both admirable and rewarding. Our students were filled with pride when they finished their show, and handed over the money, paper towels, doggie toys, blankets, dog biscuits, and dog and cat beds to their honored guests from the Thomas J. O’Connor Animal Shelter. In conclusion, after the performance, students reflected on the essential question: How can I have a positive impact on the lives of animals and do my part in *tikkun olam*? ז

*Dr. Deborah R. Starr is Head of School, and Jami Zmurko is Fourth Grade General Studies Teacher at Heritage Academy in Longmeadow, Massachusetts.*

# An Ideal Shidduch: Schools and Museums

by Gabrielle Rabin Tsabag

I've been working in a museum for twenty years, so I confess I'm biased, but I've often thought that a perfect shidduch is one between museums and schools. Schools provide the basic framework for learning, but a museum can offer a component that is simply beyond the scope of the classroom. Numerous studies have shown that when children interact with objects they acquire new ways of looking at the world. Object-centered, hands-on learning based in an informal museum environment can create avenues for exploring a wide range of subjects. To quote the Chinese proverb: "Tell me and I'll forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I'll understand." It's this mantra that forms the basis of the growing field of museum education which is today an integral part of the general museum world. Together with school systems throughout America, museum educators are redefining how teachers can incorporate museum exhibitions into their classroom.

It's profoundly exciting to see museums and schools working in tandem, as partners, to educate our children. Yet although thousands of American school children visit museums of one sort or another each year, there are tens of thousands more who do not. Since we know that the type of active learning experiences that take place in museums can truly be transformative, why aren't museum visits a standard teaching tool for every teacher? And for the purpose of this essay, why aren't more Jewish day schools using visits to museums to enhance not only classroom lessons for the purpose of meeting state standards, but to fulfill their commitment to imbue students with a common historical memory? Jewish museums in particular, with their treasure trove of artifacts, both ancient and new, can serve as an incubator for growing these memories and help generate interest in a vast array of Jewish subjects.

I've come to the conclusion that before you can have a shidduch there must be a courtship. It's not fair to presume that just because museums and schools share common goals, the matchmaking process will be easy. Both are settings geared to learning, but the methods or strategies used are quite different. So I'd like to act the part of the shadchan, or matchmaker, and provide some tips that should help schools and teachers create lasting partnerships between two very different, but compatible, educational institutions.

Where to begin? Jewish schools in America have a host of potential "partners." The Council of Jewish American Museums (CAJM) has nearly eighty institutional members spread across the continent, ranging from large institutions with vast collections to synagogues and Jewish Community Centers, some with just a few display cases. The American Association of Museums (AAM) lists more than three thousand institutional members that include museums of every type: art, history, cultural specific, science, aquariums, botanical gardens, children's museums, planetariums, nature centers, and zoos. Today, most museums have educators who reach out to connect with teachers and students. With all these choices, one would think making a shidduch would be easy. Not true.

A report published by AAM suggested that "education is the primary purpose of museums,"—easier said than done. If this is the main purpose of museums, then one of the museums' target audiences, teachers and their students in grades K-12, have to contend with a number of issues that often complicate what many would think a "no brainer"—the school field trip.

Lack of funding, increased prices in transportation, longer school days, class scheduling conflicts, testing schedules, vacation days, and most importantly, the need to meet standardized curricular requirements stand in the way of visits to museums and other cultural venues. When it comes to Jewish schools and Jewish museums, there are the added challenges of working around and with the Jewish holiday schedule, and the fact that Jewish curriculum is often not standardized by grade. But the largest hurdle to overcome is the notion that museum

programs are simply "add-ons" or supplements to lessons, not an integral part of the learning experience.

And what about the challenges faced by museum educators? Museum programs and curriculum decisions are guided by a number of factors besides state educational standards. Some but not all of the challenges include the type of museum, the general collection or theme of a particular exhibition, gallery capacity and layout, classroom availability, exhibition design, number of staff and docents, hours open to the public, competing programs, profit or not-for-profit status, storage space, and even available parking. Add to this the often daunting task of outreach to the desired audience. How to contact the teachers? There are a number of methods, but most often museum educators get school contact information from school district headquarters and the Internet. And more often than not, the school program brochures and invitations are sent to a school adminis-



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trator and then, depending upon the administrator's decision, the teachers may or may not find out about the program. But once a teacher contacts the museum, voilà—the teacher's name is in a database and it's a "keeper."

There is a better way. Teachers should be proactive.

Approach a field trip as you would any of your own lesson plans. Make "out-of-the-box" learning experiences a part of your standard teaching repertoire. Do your homework—visit museums in your area and ask about their education programs. Check out their offerings online. (Many have lesson plans that can be downloaded.) Introduce yourself to the education staff. Ask to be put on their mailing list. Look at museum offerings with a different set of eyes. If the program they offer doesn't fit well with your curriculum, but you do see some links, consider creating your own tour and materials. Talk with the educators about how you might create your own object-based learning program. If they have a collection of Egyptian artifacts, can you link these to a lesson about Passover and the Exodus? Artifacts from Revolutionary War America? Create a lesson linked to Hayim Solomon and the earliest Jewish communities

in the Colonies. Ask if the museum has materials or images to loan for classroom use. Offer to help create curricula or to help the museum test new lesson plans. Attend teacher training workshops and take advantage of the increasing number of professional development programs offered by museums around the country.

Do they offer distance learning or multi-session partnership opportunities? Ask. And remember, don't ignore the small museums. Though they may not have collections (or staff) to rival the mega-museums, they'll be thrilled to help you educate your students.

But keep in mind that like future marriage partners, you must take into account basic differences. Museum exhibitions are



generally planned years in advance. This creates a challenge for museum educators who must book school tours early, often before schools have set up their own schedules for the coming year. To plan tours for an exhibition that opens in the fall usually requires booking dates in the spring of the preceding school year,

or at the latest, during the summer when so many teachers are on vacation. If your name is on the museum's mailing list, you'll have first chance to arrange a visit.

When a museum-school shidduch works well, students are the ultimate winners.

A case in point is a sixth grade class that visits the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles to study "Archaeology of the Ancient Near East," a topic

that meets state standards. The teacher is provided with a pre-visit lesson containing hands-on replicas and other interactive materials. During the museum visit, students view actual artifacts from sites in and around Israel and participate in a dig at the appropriately named Kiryat HaMalachim (City of the Angels) where they uncover an "Iron Age" Israelite village. Then, using prior knowledge and the clues they uncovered, plus illustrative quotes from Torah, they figure out what happened at the site. The thrill of discovery is obvious, and year-after-year teachers return to replicate the experience with a new group of students.

In today's fast-paced high-tech world, our children face demands to learn new ways to approach problem solving. Physical interaction, or "hands-on" learning, engages the learner and demands different

ways of thinking. We know that by providing students with alternate paths to knowledge we can help stimulate the struggle with ideas, or more simply, teach them to "think." For Jewish schools and museums, particularly Jewish museums, this shidduch can lead to a "marriage made in heaven." ז

# Art in RAWSAK Schools

**M**eet the Masters (MTM), the comprehensive art appreciation program at Donna Klein Jewish Academy, has grown since its beginnings in every sense of the word. The program started with about ten parent docents, each of whom would visit classrooms carrying posters with notes photocopied and taped to the back. Before parents were sent into the classroom, they participated in a brief training session, held in the school's art room. Then it was "initiation by fire" as the docents made their way to visit their eagerly awaiting artists.



Over the course of 16 years, the program has changed drastically and has now become a unique and high-tech one. There currently are three art teachers on staff, one for the lower school, middle school, and high school. Meet the Masters has metamorphosed into a sophisticated, very professional learning experience for students and docents alike. The images and teaching tools have gone from color copied prints to slides, to CDs, to PowerPoint presentations on Smart Boards linked directly to the school's computer server. The classroom visit time has increased to half-hour sessions in the lower school and 50 minutes (a full period) in the middle school and high school. The docent training is a two-hour, mandatory, college-style, videotaped lecture, with attendance averaging 40 to 50 adult volunteers.

*Note: School policy dictates that no parent is allowed to participate in the Meet*

*the Masters program without first attending the instructional lecture. Additionally, school policy states that parents may not teach their own children. They can go in to the grade that their child is in, but they can't be a docent for their class.*

Six faculty members and parents serve as chairpersons for MTM. The MTM team shares in the research and the writing, with the input of parent volunteers. Each has a designated role, with the art curriculum coordinator heading the team. The parent chair is a dedicated docent who communicates with parents and works on docent visits.

Before the school year begins, an e-mail communication goes out to the entire school parent body. A sign-up sheet with information about the program is included, as well as an

invitation to interested participants to attend an introductory orientation session at the beginning of the school year. An experienced docent introduces the program at every "New Parent Welcome Coffee" to attract new volunteers. The MTM program's reputation is well known throughout the school community, as well as the South Florida day school, private, and public school worlds.

Each year, the MTM staff meets, and together they choose an overriding theme. They have included the following: "... And They Are Jewish," Woman Artists, A Taste of Europe, A Brush with Nature, The Many Faces of Art, American Artists, Photography, Architecture, and Sculpture, The Magic of Museums, and Color Our World. A writing piece is also incorporated into the program. After each visit, the students are given a prompt question and write a journal entry, a haiku, or poem relating to the images studied.



There are many benefits to Meet the Masters. Parent pride and involvement is one; students being exposed to inspiring art, and children seeing their parents as docent volunteers are others. Students, parents, and administrators work together and see art as a vital, interesting, important, and fun part of the curriculum. Parents learn! They become stu-

dents, and they now have something new to discuss and share with their children. Students develop into art patrons of the future. The program encourages families to go to museums, experience theater, and engage in musical performances.

Docents also take part in DKJA's Art Reach outreach program in partnership

with a neighboring public school, which has a very different demographic. It is an impoverished school, which, as a result of our partnership, benefits by participating in Meet the Masters at DKJA. Docents become great role models of *tzedakah* for their children to see.

Although the program now has reached a great level of accomplishment, there is always more to do and room to improve. One goal of the future is to take the program "on the road." DKJA would be honored to share its firsthand experience, seeing a concept blossom into a masterpiece. The school's faculty, staff, and docents would enthusiastically share Meet the Masters information with interested educators. It truly has impacted every area of school life at DKJA. ז

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## Small School Professional Development Scholarship

**W**e are pleased to announce the inauguration of the RAVSAK Small School Professional Development Scholarship. This scholarship will make the training, networking and professional development opportunities of the RAVSAK Annual Leadership Conference accessible to educators from small Jewish day schools and small Jewish communities across North America.

The Small School Professional Development Scholarship is made possible by a most generous grant from the Jacob and Hilda Blaustein Foundation.

The scholarship program will pro-

vide up to 20 heads of schools with full scholarships to the 2009 RAVSAK Annual Leadership Conference in San Francisco. Expenses covered by the scholarship include conference registration fees, two night's hotel stay and a travel stipend. RAVSAK's leadership team is currently developing an application form in which interested candidates will evidence both financial need and a commitment to implement conference learning upon return. Conference planners are crafting new sessions specifically for those from small schools and small Jewish communities. A key component of these sessions will be a customized implementation plan that will provide

a concrete way to track the difference the conference makes in the lives and work of the school leaders.

The Small School Professional Development Scholarship application will be available in September to paid-up member schools with student enrollments of fewer than 100 and/or Jewish communities of 5,000 Jews or less.

Information on the 2009 Annual Leadership Conference is available online at [www.ravsak.org/conference](http://www.ravsak.org/conference).

We extend our gratitude to the Jacob and Hilda Blaustein Foundation for their support. ז

# Letter from London: A Welcome from the Jewish Community Secondary School

by Michael Phillips

In 1951, there were around 450,000 Jews in the United Kingdom; now there are fewer than 300,000. Over the past twenty years, the community has introduced numerous projects designed to reverse this decline, in particular, investing heavily in Jewish day schools. From fewer than 25% of eligible Jewish children attending Jewish day schools in 1985, that figure has risen to around 60% today, with 39 state-funded Jewish schools and more than 50 small private Jewish schools now open across the UK, the vast majority in London.

It is too early to know quite what impact this huge investment will have on the overall numbers, but there is little doubt it has galvanised the community and re-engaged many Jews, as well as producing thousands of young, self-confident Jewish high school graduates. Many of the schools have established enviable academic reputations and the vast majority are oversubscribed. Furthermore, in parts of the country, such as Liverpool and Birmingham, where the Jewish population is insufficient to fill the available places, the schools have become first choices for non-Jewish parents, especially amongst Muslims, creating a vibrant mix.

## Extending choice in Jewish education

Yet, until now, one vital ingredient has been missing in the growing range of choices available to Jewish parents: every one of the UK's Jewish secondary schools (11-18 year olds) has been administered under the auspices of mainstream Orthodoxy. This has meant that the Jewish Studies curriculum is taught only from an Orthodox perspective and pupils do not learn about faiths other than Judaism. Children whose mothers have convert-

ed to Judaism through any synagogue movement other than Orthodox are not admitted as equals. And the religious authorities of these schools have even been known to reject conversions through the Israeli Orthodox movement.

Masorti, Reform, and Liberal parents (the three non-Orthodox Jewish movements in the UK), who together make up around 35% of our community, have been forced to choose between a Jewish education for their children which excludes progressive traditions from their curriculum, or a non-Jewish education altogether.

Now all that is set to change, with the launch—in September 2010—of the UK's first cross-communal Jewish state secondary school, JCoSS (Jewish Community Secondary School).

## Growing numbers

Already, there are three cross-communal Jewish elementary schools in Britain, for children from 5-11 years old, attracting a total of more than a thousand children, drawn from traditions from secular to Orthodox. Each of the schools offers an inclusive curriculum and maintains a pluralistic ethos that would be immediately recognisable to any RAVSAK member. And each is significantly oversubscribed, despite increasing competition from other faith and non-faith schools, demonstrating a clear demand from parents for this type of education.

Yet, when the children have graduated from these schools, their parents have faced a stark choice: an Orthodox sec-

ondary school or a non-faith school unable to continue the educational process begun in those junior years.

## Pluralist pioneers

But not for much longer. In 2001, a small group of determined parents set out to create the UK's first inclusive Jewish secondary school. Driven in most cases by a desire to create a school with an open and inclusive ethos for their own children, it



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soon became clear that the scale of the project would mean that the school could not open in time for their own children to benefit from it. The group was determined that the school be a state-funded secondary school, which inevitably slowed down the process of development. Nevertheless, seven years later they have secured support from across the community, a local authority site with planning permission (far from straightforward under UK law), and more than £36 million (\$60 million) in state funding. JCoSS is also well on the way to raising the £10 million target for fundraising from the community. JCoSS is set to open its doors in September 2010.

## How did it happen?

Having established the vision, the JCoSS parents' first challenge was to identify a site, an extremely challenging task. Land is scarce in the UK and especially in the two or three North London boroughs with sufficient concentrations of Jews to

support such a school. Where land does become available it is usually snapped up for commercial development, making it far too expensive to purchase for educational purposes, and where—for some reason or other—it is not suitable for commercial use, there are huge demands from competing non-commercial uses.

Eventually, however, the JCoSS parents found a perfect site in the borough of Barnet. It already housed part of a school, which was in dilapidated condition. The governors (board members) of that school were keen to merge and rebuild their two buildings, freeing up the site for JCoSS, if only the money could be found to make it happen. Lobbying of the Schools Minister by JCoSS received an extremely sympathetic hearing, and a way was found to fund the two projects in

project, and this was reinforced by the increasing demand for places at the existing Jewish cross-communal primary schools. Indeed, these schools are growing to such an extent that, by the time JCoSS opens, their graduates alone will fill five of the new school's six classes of entry. Already, three years to go, the parents of almost 180 children eligible to attend the school in its first year of opening have registered an interest in attending, enough to fill the school to capacity on day one.

### Reaching out

With the demand proven, the government came up with the funding, and the community establishment came on board. Gerald Ronson, the community's leading philanthropist and a hugely successful property developer, agreed to

brochure: "What better way to reach out to those who might otherwise be lost to Judaism than through education and through their children?"

A chair of governors (board president) has been appointed, and other governors are now being sought to provide expertise in education, marketing, recruitment, and all the other skills required to deliver a project on this scale. They will then turn their attention to finding an inspirational head teacher and start work on detailed curriculum planning.

### Volunteer to help

And that's where RAVSAK comes in. Over the coming months, we look forward to calling on the help and advice of the network to draw on the huge ex-



tandem, subject to JCoSS's parents being able to prove demand.

This JCoSS was able to do with relative ease. Independent market research was commissioned among parents from across the Jewish community which showed overwhelming support for the

support the school financially from his family trust and, still more importantly, agreed to head up the design and build phase of the project. Ronson, a member of the mainstream Orthodox community, regards JCoSS as hugely important in complementing existing Orthodox provision. As he writes in the school's

experience which you have to offer. JCoSS represents an important outpost of the RAVSAK approach and we thank you in advance for your support. ז

*To find out more about JCoSS and to volunteer to support the project, please visit our website at [www.jcoss.org](http://www.jcoss.org).*

The fifth and final day of listening, assessing, and dreaming had come to a close. The feeling in the room was emotionally charged. The five members of the architectural review committee sat around the same table for one final day. Each day, a new architectural firm presented its vision for the first and only Jewish pluralistic boarding high school,

Each committee member had one vote. The architects were narrowed from twenty, to ten, to the final five. The votes were cast... four for one architectural firm, and one for Aaron Green. As things go, Green got the job, no guessing game needed to realize who cast the vote in his favor. Upon further discussion, it became clear

that Green's design was everyone's favorite, but Green was already 81 years old, and the American Hebrew Academy project required an estimated 60 buildings and a completion date that was no less than ten years down the line.



Aaron Green was a visionary. He believed in the creation of a "perfect learning environment"

eventually to be called the American Hebrew Academy. Their hands were entirely untied. The founder, Chico Sabbah, made only the following requests: "Build it to last for at least one hundred years, use as many materials from Israel as possible, work with nature, and make it the most extraordinary school in the world."

as the key step to creating an "ideal learner." Everything from the classroom tables, which would replace desks found in nearly every other classroom in the world, to student homes and classroom spaces were to be designed by Green, with this goal in mind. Every living and learning space is illuminated by natural light; every faculty

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# Widening the Learning Circle

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in the early grades) if their classroom is the sole venue for accessing the arts. Having worked with hundreds of Jewish educators in the field, I know that many classroom teachers with little or no background in the arts are initially intimidated by the idea of bringing cameras, instruments, or sketchbooks into their classrooms. First-rate professional development that builds skills and confidence in using the arts is critical to a school's successful implementation of arts-based strategies and methods.

*Engage the Community of Jewish Artists.* I'd like to see our day schools host high-caliber visiting artists on a regular basis. There are a substantial number of artists—ranging from the most seasoned to emerging talents—who are exploring the depths of Jewish life through their work, and who would benefit from meaningful opportunities to share their work with young audiences. It's a scenario that works for everyone: students get to work side-by-side with a cadre of talented sculptors, musicians, photographers and performers; teachers acquire an interdisciplinary curriculum partner; artists gain invaluable teaching experience; and the community gets to sample an array of interesting exhibitions and performances.

*Build Commitment at Multiple Levels.* In order to develop and expand the role of arts in our school systems, parents and administrators must see the benefits. We can't just advocate for the arts when we're preparing annual budget requests. Rather, we must advocate all year long. And, we have to *show*, not just *tell*. Let principals, parents, and lay leaders experience the arts for themselves. Make them use their hands to craft a piece in conjunction with a specific theme or topic. Make them talk about the film that just moved them to tears. Help them understand that art gets us in our *kishkes*, and that deep, memorable learning comes from participating in such experiences.

*Share Success Stories Loudly and Clearly.* Throughout North America, there currently exists a small group of community day schools where authentic arts-infused learning is visible in every inch of the building. These schools are led by passionate educators and administrators who are working hard and smart to actively and systematically incorporate the arts into their core curriculum. As im-

retain our top teachers.

## Forging Partnerships for Success

High-caliber arts integration happens when classroom teachers work hand-in-hand with talented arts specialists, and when this interdisciplinary team is supported by partnerships with professional organizations and community programs



portant as it is to recognize and celebrate these exemplars, we really need to learn from them. We need to develop, document, and institutionalize a process that will enable successive school communities to create arts integration plans that are scaled to schools' unique interests and abilities.

*Motivate and Inspire Our Teachers.* Retaining our best teachers remains a daunting challenge in Jewish education. I believe that schools that embrace the arts fully are perceived as havens of creativity and innovation—places where students want to learn and teachers want to teach. As we aim to improve the educational environments in our network of day schools, I believe the arts can help us

in the arts. This type of coalition-building approach enhances student engagement, strengthens teacher commitment, and builds more meaningful, purposeful learning communities.

There are critical questions about how an arts methodology fits into the constantly evolving Jewish educational system. Challenges abound, including how best to train teachers, how to tailor programs in very diverse school settings, and how to engage communal leadership to support such a new toolkit for day schools. That is why Avoda Arts continues to work with academic and community leaders to facilitate measured integration of arts-based learning across the Jewish educational landscape.

ז

# RAVSAK Roundup: Moot Beit Din

by Elliott Rabin, Ph.D., RAVSAK's Director of Educational Programs

Imagine high school students from throughout North America coming together to share their passion for Jewish learning. Imagine 40 dedicated teens being given a challenging, contemporary case requiring them to spend evenings and weekends studying issues in Jewish law, preparing complex decisions based on numerous sources in Halakhah, and presenting their findings before exacting judges and an audience of their peers and adults. What you have just envisioned is the Moot Beit Din Shabbaton that took place April 3 to 6 in Toronto.

Moot Beit Din is a program that originated with NAAJHS, the North American Association of Jewish High Schools, and now is facilitated by RAVSAK, which absorbed NAAJHS in 2007. This year a record eleven schools participated in this most demanding and rewarding program: American Hebrew Academy, Bar-rack (formerly Akiba) Hebrew Academy, Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School, Frankel Jewish Academy, Herzl/RMHA at the Denver Campus, Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy, Jewish Community High School of the Bay, Milken Community High School, Shoshana S. Cardin Jewish Community High School, and teams from the two campuses of Tanenbaum CHAT, the host school. While the students clearly relished the opportunity to show off the fruit of their labors in front of a knowledgeable and appreciative audience, all the more so they enjoyed meeting likeminded peers from RAVSAK schools far and wide.

Perhaps most impressive about the Shabbaton was the way that the students immediately took to each other and made new friends. Students at the host campus, Tanenbaum CHAT Kimel Centre, greeted all arrivals with a tour of their spanking new, glass-walled facility. They then led off the activities with an

icebreaker that had people laughing and remembering each other's names in no time. At dinner the students joined together in one long row of tables in boisterous discussion, while advisors gladly bonded at their own table in a mellower though just as friendly mood. The same camaraderie continued throughout the



weekend on noisy bus rides, through spirited singing, and at a Shabbat stroll through a large urban park on a surprisingly balmy Toronto day.

The Shabbaton was packed with stimulating activities. The students heard from a former head of the Toronto Beit Din as well as a lawyer who specializes in dispute resolution, and learned about the actual kinds of cases that come before a Jewish court. They participated in a chesed project, preparing boxes for the local Passover Food Drive organized by the National Council of Jewish Women,

and afterwards visited the Ontario Science Centre, renowned as one of the best science museums in the world. During Shabbat students had the opportunity to learn together, alongside students from different schools and from advisors other than their own, on a range of relevant topics. Throughout the weekend, students led the davening in two minyanim, one with a mechitzah and one egalitarian. On Motz'ei Shabbat they played basketball together, participated in a musical kumsitz, or simply watched a movie in advance of the competition.

On Sunday morning the schools split into two rooms, with teams presenting their understanding of the issues in front of local rabbis serving as dayanim. It was remarkable to watch not only the intelligence on display, but also the creativity that each team put into the performance: this team had Powerpoint images and sound effects; that team acted out the characters in the dispute; one team had each member discourse on a different issue, while another broke the presentation into rapid-fire alternation of parts. Truly every team was deserving of recognition, but we want to mention here the teams that won in each category:

Group 1, First Place: JCHS of the Bay; Second Place: Tanenbaum CHAT Kimel Centre

Group 2, First Place: Shoshana S. Cardin; Second Place: Charles E. Smith

The weekend brought to mind the famous saying by Rabbi Chanina that is widely read on Shabbat morning: "Don't read 'your children' but 'your builders'" (לא (רײנוב אלא רײנוב ארקת). The students at the Moot Beit Din gave tangible proof that through Torah study, our children become the builders of the Jewish future.

# Bookcase

We are pleased to introduce a new column starting this issue. **Bookcase** will feature books, articles, and websites pertaining to the theme of the current issue of *HaYidion* for readers who wish to investigate the topic in greater depth.

## Books

Eisner, Eliot. *The Arts and the Creation of Mind*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002.

Gallas, Karen. *Languages of Learning: How Children Talk, Write, Draw, Dance, and Sing their Understanding of the World*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1994.

Goldberg, Merryl. *Integrating the Arts: An Approach to Teaching and Learning in Multicultural and Multilingual Settings* (Third Edition). Upper Saddle

River, NJ: Allyn & Bacon, 2005.

Perkins, David. *The Intelligent Eye: Learning to Think by Looking at Art*. Los Angeles: The Getty Center for Education in the Arts, 1994.

## Websites

[www.meltonarts.org](http://www.meltonarts.org): ready-made lesson plans on Judaic topics using the arts

[www.avodaarts.org](http://www.avodaarts.org): an organization that creates artistic programs that serve as portals for Jewish learning

[www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/](http://www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/)

[links/toolbox/books.html](http://links/toolbox/books.html): a resource listing hundreds of books and magazines in all fields of arts education

Council of American Jewish Museums: [http://www2.jewishculture.org/cultural\\_services/museums/cajm/directory/](http://www2.jewishculture.org/cultural_services/museums/cajm/directory/)

American Association of Museums: <http://www.aam-us.org/aboutmuseums/directory.cfm>

[www.gildedlions.org](http://www.gildedlions.org): text and images of the Jewish folk art traditions exhibited at the American Folk Art Museum (see the article in this issue by Kalter and Lasser)

American Hebrew Academy:

## Building on a Dream: Designing the Ideal School



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apartment is 2500 square feet; every laptop has access to the wireless network; the learning happens on the lake, in the gym, at the lunch table, and in the classroom.

As the only partner of Frank Lloyd Wright,

Green inherited his master's philosophy of organic architecture. The campus is heated and cooled by the world's largest closed loop geothermal system. The "Gardens of Israel" grow between the two academic buildings. Materials from Israel, including Jerusalem stone, are incorpo-

rated into every building on campus. Environmental conservationists were hired before any trees were removed to create a park-like environment on the campus. The 22-acre lake is teeming with wildlife. "As large an impact as we wish to create on the environment of Jewish education, the opposite is true for the environment itself," says Glenn Drew, executive director. "Our school is transforming the lives of Jewish teenagers. The Academy is built on Jewish values including *tikkun olam* and *klal Yisrael*. This means that we must infuse our campus and our students with those values in everything we do. Sure, our campus is unique, but we are creating the future Jewish leaders of the world. We wouldn't have it any other way!" ז

*Alina Spaulding is Director of Communications at the American Hebrew Academy in Greensboro, North Carolina. She can be reached at [Aspaulding@AmericanHebrewAcademy.org](mailto:Aspaulding@AmericanHebrewAcademy.org).*

# The Art of Bibliodrama as Experiential Learning

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range of feelings and responses, I move the chairs myself, with Sarah and Isaac on one side, Abraham in the middle, and Hagar and Ishmael on the other side; and then slowly I turn Hagar's and Ishmael's chairs so that the names can no longer be seen. "Banishment," I say. "*Garesh*" in the Hebrew, and I ask them to hear Hagar's own name in the word, the *ger*, the stranger, the estranged one.

I am moving now towards the conclusion of my lesson. "Only once after this," I tell the class, "do Ishmael and Isaac meet again in the Torah, and that is at the grave of their father, where Sarah is also buried." And I bring the class to Chapter 25:9, "His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him..." I wonder aloud what the two half brothers might be thinking and feeling as they bury their father—and here I will turn Isaac's chair and Ishmael's until they are facing one another.

Sometimes students will offer their own thoughts; sometimes students want to sit in the chairs and talk to the other sibling; sometimes I have the students write what one character or the other is feeling, or

wants to say. Sometimes I have them do a torn-paper midrash project to represent this scene. (See Jo Milgrom, *Homemade Midrash*, for a description of this invaluable method.) But my point in this drama is not to play out the scene. Usually there is too little time left and I have a final demonstration I wish to make.

I remind them that Isaac is the father of the Jewish people, for descended from him are Jacob and from Jacob the children of Israel. And from Ishmael? I ask. Some already know and I make sure all do, that Ishmael is seen as the progenitor of a great nation also, the Arabs, who in time become Islam. In other words, each son traces his lineage and legitimacy back to Abraham.

And where, I ask, where are these two brothers still facing one another? And now we come into the present historical moment and we are seeing how the relationship between Isaac and Ishmael in the Bible connects to the political relationships in Israel.

The bell rings at this point and we disperse.

I want to end by itemizing some of the values implicit in the bibliodramatic approach. The first is the way it exercises what I would like to call *imaginative empathy*, the ability to stand in someone else's shoes. The second is *pluralism* which the many-voiced nature of the bibliodramatic exploration demonstrates by showing and validating that there is no one right answer. Third, the method offers *empowerment* because it helps students find their own voices and visions and versions of the biblical text and recognize the validity of their points of view. Fourth, it is *tradition-centered*, because in creating contemporary midrash the teacher puts the student into the ancient Jewish conversation about text and meaning. Bibliodrama places students in the same context as the classic commentators, looking *with* them rather than just *to* them as interpreters of text. And finally it is a method that promotes *literacy* by placing the study of particular Hebrew words or phrases in a context charged by the experiential.

Needless to say this essay outlines only one of a multitude of possible ways of using Bibliodrama in the classroom. ז

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Morasha Jewish Day School:

## Visualizing Jewish Values With Artists-in-Residence

[continued from page 15]

budget to cover material costs and some of the artists' costs as necessary.

As the Judaic studies director, I am responsible to work hand in hand with our artists and coordinate their efforts with our students. Each artist has his or her own style. I let them guide me, and I act as facilitator when they are working with the students. I often help with the text study and communicate regularly with the artists regarding scheduling time with the children, pieces of the project that are done before and in between the art-

ists' visits, and culminating events. I am so impressed with the artists' willingness to work with young people, to help them produce their best work, and their desire to get to know each child. It has been a joy for me to get to know these talented professionals. I always learn as much as the children!

This year our artist is Jewish environmentalist Gabe Goldman. He is working with our class of 2008 to create a garden. This unique work of living art will be the class's legacy and one that we will all be able to contribute to as we guard and

tend it in the coming years.

We are very proud of our program. The end result is not only wonderful art produced by our students, but a lasting legacy of the importance of our Jewish values as well as wonderful relationships with our very talented and generous professional artists. ז

*Robin Hoffman is the Judaic Studies Director at the Morasha Jewish Day School in Rancho Santa Margarita, California. She can be reached at [rhoffman@morasha.org](mailto:rhoffman@morasha.org).*

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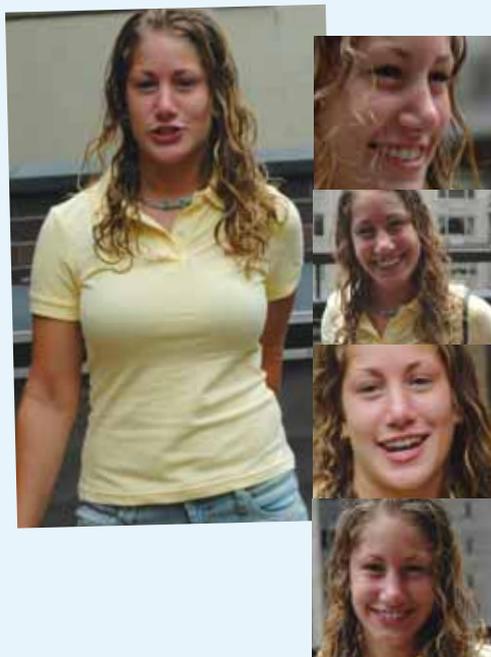
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