



THE UHI BULLETIN

The Weekly Newsletter of United Hebrew Institute, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, USA

MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL



Rabbi Raphael Nemetsky

Rabbi Wein, noted lecturer on Jewish history, has this to say about Jewish stories. "All Jewish stories are true, it's just that some haven't happened yet."

According to some, it means that even if the story did not actually occur, it could have transpired. I think that the quip means to convey that each story has a message which transcends the actual events.

With this introduction in mind, I share with you the following story. A group of Chassidim asked their rebbe (a Chassidic rabbi) why it was that he did not read the newspaper. He responded that he did not need to for the news is always the same. The rebbe noted the puzzled look on his followers' faces and explained as follows. The newspapers are always reporting the same news whether it is a war or a crime or even a natural disaster. The only things that change are the names and the places.

Obviously a true leader must know about current events. The dean of my rabbinical seminary, Rabbi A.H. Leibowitz (of blessed memory) had his wife scan the paper and cut out the important articles for him to read. This saved him the time of scanning the entire paper, plus his wife removed the immodest pictures. (And this was in the New York Times!) Other great rabbis also kept up with important events.

We live in an era when we are inundated with news, or what passes for news. I have to admit that since I was a teenager, I have been a news addict. I remember my father and I taking the NY Times news quiz to see how much we knew of that past week's events.

Today we have many news outlets, but it is rarely transmitted as simply news. We have news analysis across the entire range of political views. We are also treated to news klatches where a group of antagonists banter about the news. Why having a group of rather ordinary people merely gossiping about the news is informative or even interesting is beyond me. Yet, this passes for popular news in our times.


Our children will likely be leaders in their future social or civic circles. Now the question is how can we educate our children to be critical news consumers? First and foremost is for them to become aware and distinguish between (hopefully factual) news reporting versus commentary, news analysis, or opinion. I am particularly grateful that Mrs. Welch has her students produce writings for which the students must research original documentation and sources. Second, we must distinguish what is newsworthy and what is merely chatter. For example, what Rick Santorum says may be important, while the sweater vests he wears (NY Times article) is not.

Parents can use this election cycle as an opportunity to engage in age appropriate dialogue on many topics in the news. Unfortunately, in our very busy, almost over-programmed society we need to initiate conversations that will extend into adulthood. I have used politics only as an example. However, any area of interest is an opportunity to engage with our children. The best aspect of this is that our children crave our attention (unless we deliberately fill their time with distractions) and want to be

involved with us.



Childhood passes quickly. Let us use these precious times in any way that we are able to not only bond with our children but to assist them to become successful adults.

Shabbat Shalom
Rabbi Raphael Nemetsky



Have you signed up again?

See Miss Mary Lee or Mrs. Himelstein.

**SUPER BOWL SUNDAY
KOSHER HOAGIE SALE!
(February 5, 2012)**

**This fund raiser will benefit the
5th & 6th grade classes of UHI!**

**Hoagies, made by Lee & Dror Levi are
on 8 inch sub rolls with lettuce, tomato,
turkey pastrami, salami and bologna.**

PRICE: \$7.50 per hoagie

**Pick up: At the JCC on Super Bowl
Sunday, Feb. 5th between 2 pm and 3 pm**

NAME: _____

PHONE: _____

NUMBER ORDERED: _____

Orders must be placed by January 30, 2012

**Payment is required at time of pick up. If paying by
check, please make it out to UHI.**

Animal Adaptations

Teacher: Carole Panunzio

Adaptations can be defined as “body parts or behaviors that help an animal meet its needs in its environment.” When observing a hummingbird, it is easy to notice that it has a long straight beak which enables it to collect nectar from flowers. A hawk’s beak is short and hooked for catching animals, and a pelican’s beak has a spoon shaped bottom for catching fish.

In order to discover how the shape of a bird’s beak is related to the food it eats, the fourth grade students recently conducted the following activity. They first collected chopsticks, pliers, clothespins, spoons, and forceps. These represented the bird’s beaks in the experiment. They then gathered candy worms, cooked spaghetti, cooked rice, raisins, birdseed, peanuts in shells, and water to represent the various foods that birds eat.

The students put one type of food at a time on a paper plate in the middle of the desk and tried picking up the food with the various “beaks.” They tested all the beaks with all of the foods and made a chart to record their results. At the end of this activity, the class concluded that spaghetti, candy worms, and peanuts were easiest to “eat” with the forceps and raisins and rice were better “eaten” with a spoon. It was easiest to “eat” and crack the birdseed with the pliers.

At the conclusion of this investigation, the students understood how individual adaptations can help an animal survive in its environment. They also discovered the value of using models in scientific investigations to help them test their ideas.



“Eyewitness News”

Rabbi Moshe Gutstein, Teacher

This year, the fourth grade has embarked on a new adventure in their Torah studies. After the holidays had passed, we began to study *Navi* (the Prophets). Beginning with the book of Yehoshua (Joshua), we have been learning about how the Jewish People entered the land that was promised to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov.

Tanach, which includes *Navi*, is not a history book. All of the stories and details have important lessons for all of the later generations that would glean its holy words in search of divine wisdom. One of the main lessons that we have learned from the early chapters of the book of Yehoshua is that the military success of the Jewish people does not come from physical strength but rather from the divine protection of Hashem. If the Jewish people stay true to Hashem and His Torah, they are promised success. And if they do not remain faithful, they are doomed to failure. This lesson is made obvious and clear as Hashem performs open miracles for the Jews as they cross the overflowing banks of the Jordan River and conquer the city of Jericho without a single casualty! In order to make this very important lesson clear and even a little more real to our 4th grade students, they were given the assignment of either writing a newspaper article (complete with interviews) or giving an “eyewitness account” of these miraculous events. The assignment proved to be effective and even humorous as the students used their imaginative minds to write their own “historical fiction”! Here are a few excerpts:

“When I was walking to school this morning I saw the Bnei Yisrael next to the Jordan River...the water stopped flowing and turned into a giant pillar. I was shocked!” –Coby Kornfeld

“This is Yonatan reporting from Canaan with incredible news...All Canaanites should evacuate now!” –Jonathan Rutta

“I was sitting with my friend Molly, watching the clouds when we heard a noise...it was the Bnei Yisrael marching around Yericho.” –Natalie Zarad

It is my hope that this kind of creative thinking assignments will help our students continue to enjoy and internalize the messages of our Prophets.