

## Soviet Jewry - Kit V Student Connection

Contributed by: Enid L. Wurtman's Soviet Jewry Archives on the History of the Zionist Movement from the Soviet Union

During the 1970s and 80s, North American students just like you become involved in advocacy. Read as a class some of the ways students connected the Jewish holidays to their activism on behalf of Soviet Jews trying to emigrate.

### SIMCHAT TORAH

Students should be encouraged to participate in local community celebrations, held in solidarity with Soviet Jews.

### CHANUKAH

Soviet Jews are the 'modern-day' Maccabees - the 'freedom fighters' of this generation. Parallels can be made between the Maccabees vs the Greeks; and Soviet Jews vs the Soviet System; whose goal is assimilation.

### PURIM

The experience of the Jew in Persia and his encounter with Anti-semitism can be compared with the present-day situation for Jews in the USSR.

### PESACH

The Exodus of the Jews from Egypt is similar to the Soviet Jewish Emigration Movement today.

A 'matzoh mailout', can be organized many weeks before Passover; whereby small pieces of MATZOH can be mailed in envelopes to the Soviet Consulate or Embassy. Letters enclosed should ask that these pieces of Matzah be delivered to Soviet Jews, who do not have a sufficient amount, in order that they may celebrate this important holiday, as in the traditions of their forefathers.

A 'symbolic seder' could be held involving the whole school where a telephone call could be placed to the Soviet Union. (Numbers can be obtained by your local Soviet Jewry Committee, and their assistance could be obtained in placing the call.) Students might decide to involve the class or school in a 'third seder' at the Consulate or Embassy, or strategic location in their community, and to invite members of the PRESS, in order to gain publicity for Soviet Jewry. The focus of this seder could be on YOUR adopted refusenik.

## WHAT WE CAN DO

### A C T I O N ! ! ! ON BEHALF OF SOVIET JEWRY

There are many different forms of ACTION which can be implemented on behalf of Soviet Jewry, some of which will be outlined as follows:

#### **S** a) "WRITE-ON"

- furnishes students with names and addresses of children of refuseniks, so that any student may correspond with a Russian student.

The purpose is to involve students and to educate them to the plight of Soviet Jewry; to let Soviet Jews know that they have not been forgotten; to inform the Soviet authorities that we are aware of what they are doing to our brothers and sisters in the Soviet Union; and to press our Canadian Government to insist that the Soviets honour their International commitments.

- display photograph of POC or Refusenik, prominently in the classroom or school
- write regularly - bi-monthly or weekly\*
- write to Soviet Ambassador or Consul-General
- write to Canadian members of Parliament
- write to relatives of the adopted POC or refusenik informing them of the adoption
- wear bracelets bearing the name of your POC (they are available from your local Soviet Jewry committee)

\* letters to Soviet Jews should include information about Israel, Jewish holidays, etc.

(e.g.: Bialik High School in Montreal has adopted Leonid Brailovsky. Big buttons were printed reading: BIALIK FOR BRAILOVSKY, and were sold to the students.)

#### b) DIARY

- as an individual or class assignment, students can compile a Diary of ONE day or WEEK in the life of a Soviet Jew. This could be an English Composition lesson, and the best could be submitted to a local community newspaper.

**T** c) SOVIET JEWRY POSTER CONTEST

- this could be adapted to any grade or to an entire school, with a specific theme

(e.g.: sample of flyer for Montreal Poster Contest, with the theme being FREEDOM.)

d) SOVIET JEWRY DAY

- students can play-act, as if they were living in the Soviet Union; through skits or discussion groups.
- films can be obtained from local Soviet Jewry groups and shown to the students.

e) SOVIET JEWRY COLLAGE OR MOSAIC

- can be created on felt or burlap, using abstract or real symbols.

e.g.: Mogen David in chains; freedom flag (royal blue background with a large white mogen david in the centre;) map of Russia with arrow pointing to Israel; barbed wire depicting imprisonment, etc.

f) SOVIET JEWRY BULLETIN BOARD

- to contain news about Jews in the USSR; about POCs and Refuseniks
- articles found in the newspaper about vigils or demonstrations
- column on Soviet Jewry could be prepared periodically for the school or local newspaper

**J** g) ROUTE TO FREEDOM GAME \*

- a game of 'escape' from the Soviet Union; created by Shoshana Ramm, a young Soviet Jewish girl, who played the game and won.

\* (game can be ordered from the Board of Jewish Education; New York --- see enclosed)



## n) JEWISH HOLIDAYS

Parallels can be drawn between Jewish holidays and the situation for Soviet Jews today. It is at 'holiday time' when they most need to be remembered. School or class programs can be organized around the celebration of a holiday; (mailing of cards or letters, and/or placing a telephone call to YOUR refusenik family.)

### SIMCHAT TORAH

Students should be encouraged to participate in local community celebrations, held in solidarity with Soviet Jews.

### CHANUKAH

Soviet Jews are the 'modern-day' Maccabee - the 'freedom fighters' of this generation. Parallels can be made between the Maccabees vs the Greeks; and Soviet Jews vs the Soviet System; whose goal is assimilation.

### PURIM

The experience of the Jew in Persia and his encounter with Anti-semitism can be compared with the present-day situation for Jews in the USSR.

### PESACH

The Exodus of the Jews from Egypt is similar to the Soviet Jewish Emigration Movement today.

A 'matzoh mailout', can be organized many weeks before Passover; whereby small pieces of MATZOH can be mailed in envelopes to the Soviet Consulate or Embassy. Letters enclosed should ask that these pieces of Matzah be delivered to Soviet Jews, who do not have a sufficient amount, in order that they may celebrate this important holiday, as in the traditions of their forefathers.

A 'symbolic seder' could be held involving the whole school where a telephone call could be placed to the Soviet Union. (Numbers can be obtained by your local Soviet Jewry Committee, and their assistance could be obtained in placing the call.) Students might decide to involve the class or school in a 'third seder' at the Consulate or Embassy, or strategic location in their community, and to invite members of the PRESS, in order to gain publicity for Soviet Jewry. The focus of this seder could be on YOUR adopted refusenik.

