June 2023

AJL 2023 Virtual Conference

To: STORYTELLERS WHO TELL & READ STORIES OUTLOUD

From: Peninnah Schram, Storyteller, Educator, Author

Peninnah’s session at the AJL Virtual 2023 Conference:

Telling a Story vs Reading a Story –or a Hybrid combination - With a Detour through Zoom An Interactive Talk by
Peninnah Schram

I hope you will explore the 5 page Hand-outs that I compiled RE Stories and Storytelling. For more information, contact me.

With my best wishes for you to integrate stories into your Libraries and your Classrooms – and also in your life!

HAND-OUTS:
1. Your Personal Storytelling History w/ Questions - one page;
2. Guidelines for Storytellers – two pages;


This valuable resource is a guide to finding Jewish folktales to fit a theme or subject under eleven major categories, including The Torah, the Talmud and Their Study, Biblical Characters and Events, Trickster and Fools, and Tales for Festivals and Holidays. There are numerous tales that are summarized with variants given, along with complete citations and a list of connecting themes. Extensive bibliography, Story Title Index, and Subject Index. Print/Ebook.

WEBSITE FOR THE ISRAEL FOLKTALE ARCHIVES:
http://lifa.haifa.ac.il/index.php/en/
YOUR PERSONAL STORYTELLING HISTORY
Questions by Peninnah Schram

1. What do you love about story and storytelling as a listener? As a teller?

2. Who was the storyteller in your home/school experience? Etc.? Where were the stories told? Using all the senses, describe this particular place/room/chair, etc. Why were these stories told? Describe the context.

3. What is one of your earliest remembered stories? Try to retrieve it and write out what you can remember. Only after a time of thinking about it should you try to find a written or oral source. Compare what you recall with the written/oral version.

4. What is the story behind your name? (Hebrew name/English name/Nickname/Special Name, etc.) Do you know your Name Pasuk?

Questions for Workshop Focus

1. What is the story behind your professional career choice – or your favorite school subject(s) or activities?

2. What would help you become a more effective storyteller?

3. If you do not already use story in your life’s work and at home, think of how you can integrate story more into your conversations, classes, reports, professional work, presentations, as well as in your life.
communication skills (voice, body, gesture, face, eye contact, observation, concentration and listening), and world literary tradition (oral and written). The art of storytelling utilizes rhythm, pacing, sound and silence, words and meaning and response. Actually you are already a storyteller when, for example, you tell friends about experiences that have happened to you or to someone you know. In order to become a more skillful storyteller, there are some guidelines to follow. Always keep in mind that telling a story should be an enjoyable experience and that once you have learned the story, it is always in your head to retell whenever there is an opportunity to tell it. You can also make the opportunity by saying, "By the way, I happen to know a good story..." or "That reminds me of a story..." and your friends will probably answer, "Tell it!" Or else weave a story into the conversation/discussion in the classroom or around the holiday table. "There once was..." or "That reminds me that a long time ago, in a certain town, there lived..." These traditional openings capture the imagination and set the scene for active listening.

**Storytelling is a dialogue!**

**Some Guidelines:**

1. Remember there are all different ways to tell a story, as well as different styles. No one tells a story better or worse than you – they just tell it differently.

2. There are many different types of tales. For example, in the Jewish oral tradition there are: folktales, fairy tales, myths, fables, parables, legends, Biblical Talmudic and Midrashic tales, Hasidic and Eastern European tales, Sephardic and Middle Eastern tales, Israeli Tales, humorous and serious tales, trickster and Chelm tales, personal and family stories, as well as literary stories. Jokes, anecdotes and proverbs are also in the tradition. READ and LEARN many different types of tales.

3. Remember you must choose a story you love and want to retell.

**Storytelling is Sharing!**

**How to Choose and Prepare the Story for Telling:**

1. Find books (see my compiled bibliography) that contain many types of stories with good plots, interesting characters and worthwhile and appropriate values. If you are a beginning storyteller, select short simple stories.

2. Read a few stories out loud to friends, parents, children, students or to yourself.

3. Select a story you find interesting and would enjoy hearing over and over. Ideally, choose a story that "clicks" in your head and heart.

4. Write the following information on a card or in a computer file:
   a. Title and source of story (Book title/publisher/date, etc. – or person who told you the story);
Storytelling Guidelines continued:

b. Outline the story sequence;
c. Write the theme and moral(s) of the story;
d. List and describe the main characters;
e. List and describe the setting(s) of the story;
f. Write the key phrases or words in the story.

5. Tell a friend what the story is about and what happens in the story, but in your own words. In other words, just summarize the story so you know the sequence well.

6. Draw a map of the plot using crayons or colored pencils. Draw the places in the story, for example, the marketplace, the country inn, the floor plan of the palace, etc. or whatever appears in the story. This is the blueprint or map of the story.

7. Look up the period of the story in a history book/encyclopedia. Learn a little about the country, the climate, clothing of the period, etc. This also determines how the characters might move, sit, etc. which you would subtly suggest through your physical posture or movement.

8. What is the mood of the story? Serious, humorous, sad, happy? What dominant color(s) would you “paint” the story?

9. Read the story out loud to yourself 2 or 3 times or more. As you repeat the story, picture in your mind what you are saying. Image the colors, the sounds, the events, the scenes, the characters.

10. Now tell the story to a friend – and let the friend give you some feedback.

11. Tape the story and listen critically. Listen for verbal and vocal transitions.

12. Practice in front of a mirror and watch your hands and feet:
   a. Both feet should be on the floor with equal weight balance and with your weight forward. Do not stand on one foot only or shift weight without purpose. Feel free to move or walk, but only if you are comfortable and relaxed and the movement is purposeful, not distracting.
   b. Hands should be at your sides – or used for purposeful gesture. Do not put your hands in pockets, behind your back or crossed in front - unless you are doing it as the character. (And if you put your hands in pockets, be sure that there are no coins/keys.) The gestures should feel natural, not theatrical, and appropriate. Depending on your style and that of the story, gestures can be effective and expressive, but should never be excessive.

13. Maintain eye contact with the audience. Talk to them and never down to them, no matter what age. Their faces and interest will help you tell the story.

14. In a natural voice tell the story with energy and expression in the voice and face.

15. Work on clean strong beginnings and endings of your stories. No “um,” “ah,” “OK,” “you know,” or any other non-words. They distract and dilute the beauty of a story.

16. Do not rush through a story – but sometimes a part of the story needs to be narrated a little faster or slower for effect. Work on pacing and rhythm. Use rate, volume and pitch variations. (But remember, no timing is exact for a retelling.)

17. Enjoy the story yourself! If you have fun telling it, so will your audience. Say the story in the way that you feel it!

LET’S TELL TALES!

Peninnah Schram
Peninnah1@aol.com
Peninnah

BOOKS & CD by Storyteller Peninnah Schram

A biography of Peninnah Schram: Peninnah’s World: A Jewish Life in Stories, authored by Caren Schnur Neile, and published by Hamilton Books, an imprint of Rowman & Littlefield, 2022. This bio explores Peninnah’s life transitions leading to her becoming a storyteller and helping to revive the Jewish storytelling tradition. The author used a “Bio-Storying” approach to writing this bio.

Peninnah Schram and Gerard Edery. The Minstrel and the Storyteller: Stories and Songs of the Jewish People. CD. Sefarad Records. This 72-minute CD includes 6 folktales told by Peninnah interwoven with the songs and music sung and played by Gerard from Sefardic and Ashkenazi traditions.


Peninnah Schram and Rachayl Eckstein Davis. The Apple Tree’s Discovery. Illustrated by Wendy W. Lee. Minneapolis MN: Kar Ben Publishing, 2012. This illustrated book is about an apple tree that wants stars on its branches just like what it sees in the oak tree branches when it looks up into the stars at night. It is an inspiring story for all ages. For 9-page Study Guide created by Peninnah & Rachayl: www.karben.com/assets/images/eSources/eSourceTheAppleTreesDiscovery.pdf
64 wide-ranging stories and folktalecs culled from various Jewish oral and written traditions with source-filled introductions to each story. Foreword is by Elie Wiesel.

36 stories of Elijah the Prophet, the master of miracles, gathered from various sources and centuries with a major introduction. Foreword is by folklorist Dov Noy.

Peninnah Schram, ed. **Chosen Tales: Stories Told by Jewish Storytellers.** Jason Aronson, imprint of Rowman & Littlefield, 1995. sc
A great variety of 68 meaningful stories and presented as if the book was a "literary storytelling festival" by storyteller-authors. Foreword is by Rabbi Avi Weiss.

The fifty stories in this book are drawn from Talmudic and midrashic sources, medieval sources, and the Israel Folktale Archives, Foreword is by Howard Schwartz.

**THE HUNGRY CLOTHES AND OTHER JEWISH FOLKTALES,** published by Sterling Publishing
Co., 2008. 96 p. Illustrated by Gianni De Conno. Introduction, Glossary and Sources are given for the 22 folktales retold in this volume. These wisdom-filled folktales include Ashkenazi and Sephardic settings for various genres, including legends, trickster and Helm tales, riddle tales, etc.
Winner of an Anne Izard Storytellers' Choice Award. It is also a PJ Library Selection.

Elijah the Prophet teaches the children of a poor family why their potato menorah fulfills the mitzvah of the holiday but is also filled with the love of mitzvah.

Peninnah Schram. **The Magic Pomegranate.** Illustrated by Melanie Hall.
Illustrated folktale about three brothers who find unusual gifts. By each using those gifts, they then must decide who deserves to marry the ill princess who is now healed.

*ORDER BOOKS & CD DIRECTLY FROM THE PUBLISHERS
OR at Amazon Books: www.amazon.com/Books

FOR INFORMATION & BOOKINGS please contact:
Peninnah Schram Email: Peninnah1@aol.com