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## **World's First Contemporary Online Synagogue Releases Elijah Tracker and iPhone App for Passover**

### ***OurJewishCommunity.org Releases Two Interactive Passover Activities using New Media***

CINCINNATI (April 14, 2011) – This upcoming Passover marks the first time that Jews around the world will be able to follow the mysterious biblical Elijah character on his journeys around the world and will be able to build their own matzah ball character on their iPhones.

OurJewishCommunity.org, the world's first contemporary online synagogue that launched in 2008, is known for its innovative use of technology and contemporary Jewish voice. Rabbis Laura Baum and Robert Barr who lead the online community decided to build the Elijah Tracker ([www.ElijahTracker.com](http://www.ElijahTracker.com)) so that people of all ages could have more fun with the holiday. Baum said "too often people associate Passover with long, boring seder meals. We wanted to provide something whimsical for Passover. We figured Christmas has a Santa Tracker, so we would build an Elijah Tracker."

Elijah is a biblical prophet who appears in the book of I Kings. There is a longstanding Passover tradition of opening one's door to Elijah during the seder meal and even leaving him a cup of wine. Barr said "Elijah is clearly a central figure in the Passover story. But, a lot of the themes around Elijah don't work for us as modern liberal Jews. He's traditionally thought of us as a prophet who heralds the coming of the messiah. That framework doesn't work for a lot of Jews today, so we decided to make him a fun character who travels the world eating fine chocolate and drinking decadent wine."

Elijah will stop in over 70 locations throughout the week of Passover, beginning on Monday, April 18<sup>th</sup>. Users will be able visit [www.ElijahTracker.com](http://www.ElijahTracker.com), which will be updated several times a day with a post and photo about Elijah's journey.

In addition to the Elijah Tracker, OurJewishCommunity.org is launching its first iPhone app – "Passover Matzah Ball Builder." The app is available for 99¢ at [www.imatzahball.com](http://www.imatzahball.com) and can also be found in the Apple app store by searching 'Passover matzah ball builder.' Barr said "We built this app in 2009 for Facebook so that people could have fun with Passover. With the rapidly growing market for iPhone apps, we decided to create the mobile version this year." Baum added "We have seen that people can really carry Judaism in their pockets. People



regularly watch our video-streamed Shabbat and holiday services on mobile devices, so why not create an interactive iPhone game for all ages?”

The matzah ball cartoon character can be dressed with an array of accessories, from pink high heels to baseball caps. There’s also an Israeli flag, the symbolic four glasses of wine, and a balloon for the matzah ball to hold. Welcoming interfaith families to use the app, the rabbis decided to include accessories to dress the matzah ball as an Easter Bunny. Once you build the matzah ball character, it can be emailed or posted to Facebook. The app is also available on Facebook at <http://on.fb.me/matzahball>.

OurJewishCommunity.org has made history in previous years on Passover as well. In 2009, the rabbis of the online congregation tweeted the seder and in 2010, they hosted the world’s first online seder. In the online seder, hundreds of participants from several countries read parts of the Haggadah (Passover text) and sang songs together. This year, OurJewishCommunity.org will again host an online seder on the second night of Passover (Tuesday, April 19<sup>th</sup> at 5 PM EDT).

Other Passover features at OurJewishCommunity.org include video podcasts (including a three minute seder that has over 10,000 views on YouTube), audio podcasts, recipes, children’s activities, and background information. Throughout the year, OurJewishCommunity.org also streams a weekly Shabbat service and offers several other features: blogs, podcasts, video-casts, educational materials, holiday cards, access to rabbis, recipes, conversations, and more. Many people see OurJewishCommunity.org as their synagogue and Rabbis Barr and Baum as their rabbis.

### **About OurJewishCommunity.org**

OurJewishCommunity.org is the world’s first progressive online synagogue. Launched on September 1, 2008, OurJewishCommunity.org has reached more than 100,000 individuals in all 50 states in the U.S. and in more than 155 countries. The online community features blogs, audio podcasts through iTunes, video podcasts through YouTube, streaming holiday services, discussion boards, holiday eCards, recipes, educational materials for all ages, and more. We have more than 2,000 followers on Twitter ([www.twitter.com/JewsOnline](http://www.twitter.com/JewsOnline)) and OurJewishCommunity.org has over 7,200 Facebook fans ([www.facebook.com/ourjewishcommunity](http://www.facebook.com/ourjewishcommunity)).

### **Laura Baum, Rabbi, OurJewishCommunity.org**

As the Founding Rabbi of OurJewishCommunity.org, Rabbi Laura Baum works to engage Jews through social media and other technology. Baum was recently named one of the 50 most influential female rabbis by the Jewish Forward. “Baum’s Blog” is a central feature of OurJewishCommunity.org as are Rabbi Baum’s YouTube podcasts. An expert on social media and the changing needs of the Jewish community, Rabbi Baum has created a new model for engaging those seeking a new way to connect to Judaism.



Rabbi Baum was ordained by Hebrew Union College in 2008 and is now an adjunct instructor there. She graduated from Yale University in 2001 Summa Cum Laude, Phi Beta Kappa, and with distinction in the Psychology major. She is also pursuing an M.B.A. at Xavier University.

**Robert B. Barr, Rabbi, OurJewishCommunity.org**



Rabbi Robert B. Barr, ordained by Hebrew Union College in 1981, is the Founding Rabbi of Congregation Beth Adam in Cincinnati, Ohio. Under his leadership for the last 30 years, Beth Adam has grown from 6 members to over 300. The congregation has a significant voice and is a resource for liberal Jews worldwide. Rabbi Barr first imagined the online congregation and has played a continuing role in its development, including his weekly podcasts (“Barr’s Banter”) which are available on iTunes.

Rabbi Barr is active in the leadership of many Jewish organizations and has twice served as president of the Greater Cincinnati Board of Rabbis.

Recognized by his peers as a leader in the evolution of modern, liberal Judaism, his writings have been published in journals, books, and web sites around the world.

***High Resolution Photos available at: <http://bit.ly/ojcpres>***