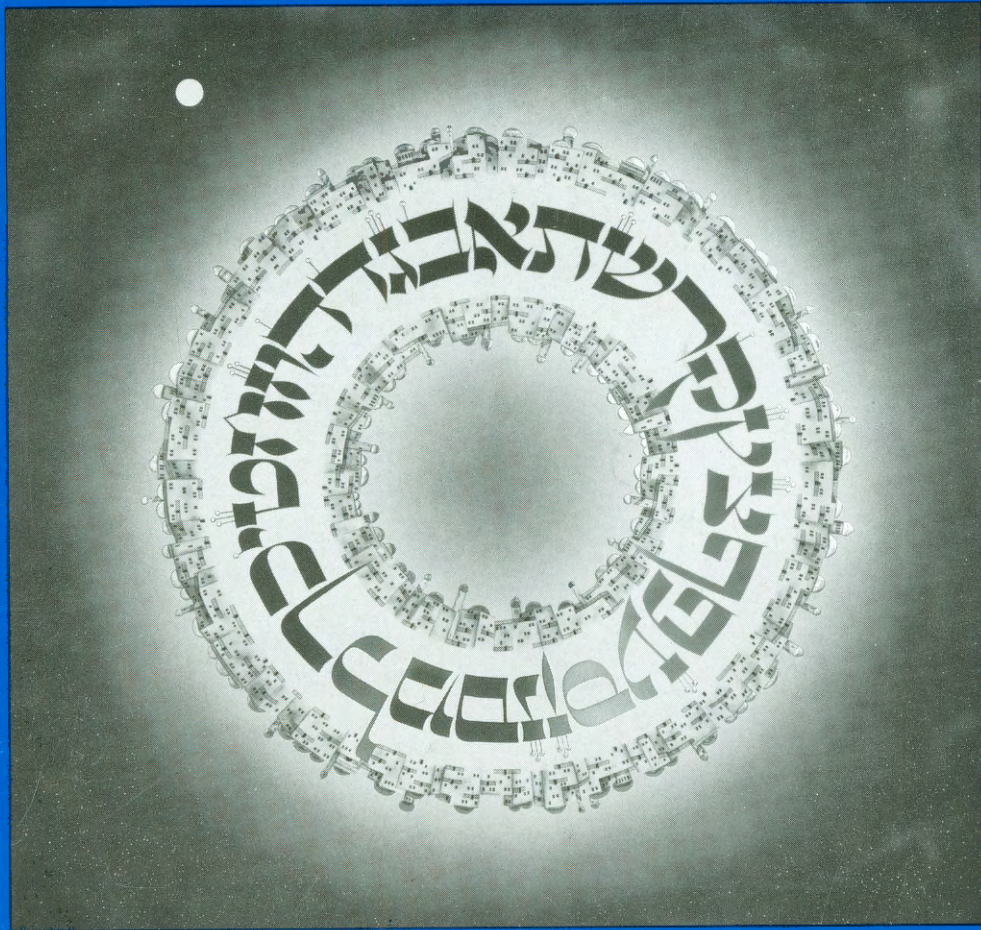


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# Ten Da'at

A Publication of the Torah Education Network

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## Ten Da'at

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# Da'ati

Everytime I went for a walk with my grandfather he would say, *'Lamir mekayim zein de mitzvah, v'sheenantam l'vanekha v'dibarta bam... b'lekhtekha baderekh'* — Now I can fulfill the mitzvah of teaching my children Torah even as we walk on our way." It was a story that I had often heard in my childhood, but it assumed a far deeper and sweeter significance as I watched each of my own youngsters clasp one of their grandfather's hands.

With parenthood we become acutely sensitized to the delicate dialogue between the generations and our own role in it. We cling to the faded photographs of our elders when they were young, drawing upon the sepia tones of their memories, and ours. But there is something more, something deeper. With parenthood we also confront the overarching mission that is part of our new turf: the transmission of our heritage. Indeed, the very reason for honoring our parents, writes Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, is to ensure "the faithful transmission by parents to children" of our tradition. "Without this bond the chain of generations is broken, the Jewish past is lost for the future, and the nation ceases to exist."<sup>1</sup>

With parenthood comes the need to mingle with the past. *Vheegadita l'vinkha*, says God. Tell your children. Tell them about Egypt: The suffering, the pain, the scorn, the humiliation. Explain to them that the essence of the existence of the Jewish people is the continuous struggle between *galut* and *geulah*. And tell them about

the Redemption. Tell them that the ultimate *geulah* belongs to them. Even Pharaoh understood this. "And who is going with you?" he asks Moshe. "Our elders and our youth," replies Moshe. "No," says Pharaoh, "go only with the elders."<sup>2</sup> Without the young there can be no redemption, no future, no promise. "*Vhaishiv lev avot al banim*" foretells Malakhi. After the elders have unfurled the past then "*v'lev banim al avotam*,"<sup>3</sup> then will the young capture the elusive fire of idealism consuming with it the complacent familiarity of *galut*. Only then is *geulah* possible. But only if we — their elders, their parents, and their teachers — motivate their allegiance and their bonding with our past.

The Holocaust, part of our contemporary *galut*, concretizes the need for this dynamic between the generations. It brings with it strains of Egypt: The suffering, the pain, the scorn, the humiliation. And the need to tell our children. *Vheegadita l'vinkha* is a perpetual process in every era. "We not only know history," writes Rav Soloveitchik, "but relive it."<sup>4</sup> But "the Pharaohs of our day are more dangerous than ancient tyrants,"<sup>5</sup> warns the Rav, and thus must we arm our youngsters ever more precisely. We must warn them of the subtlety and dishonesty of the contemporary *galut* and the deviousness that is its language. We must be ever more patient and thorough in recounting the iron furnaces of our past, alerting them to those who would rewrite our history. We must beckon

them into the warm embrace of the generations, thus ensuring their identification and their devotion.

And then we must tell them about the Redemption. For just as Egypt held the covenant of Redemption, so does our *galut* hold a promise for us. It is the promise of *Eretz Yisrael* — imperfect and incomplete, it is ours nevertheless. It belongs to us, or, more importantly, to our children. It is our future, just as they are our future. They must understand this aspect of the *geulah* in order to understand their own existence, and the existence of our people.

With this issue, *Ten Da'at* celebrates five years of publishing. It is a celebration of dialogue between and for the generations. "The child is the father of the man," wrote William Wordsworth<sup>6</sup>. And as we watch our youngsters clasping the hands of our elders we know that we are beholding the future.

Fayge Safran

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#### FOOTNOTES

1. Shemot 20:12
2. Shemot 10:8,9,11
3. Malakhi 3:24
4. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "The Mitzvah of Sippur Yetzi'at Mitzrayim," in *Reflections of the Rav*, ed. Abraham R. Besdin, Jerusalem: The Department for Torah Education and Culture in the Diaspora of the WZO, 1979, p. 211.
5. Ibid.
6. William Wordsworth, "The Rainbow."

## On Break-Away Schools

Simcha Krauss

One of the principal problems in Jewish communal life and, in particular, Orthodox communal life, is that of divisiveness and fractionalization. We are, after all, a community of limited and finite resources. That these resources are not all marshaled together and single mindedly united in pursuit of given goals, is in itself cause for lament. That the Orthodox community is split into divisions and subdivisions with a plethora of organizations and groups — all vying for the same public and competing for the ever smaller communal “pie” — is something that we will yet be called upon to explain.

Nowhere, however, is this lack of unity more pernicious than in the realm of Jewish education. Orthodoxy must continue its growth — especially in those areas out of the New York community. This growth has to come via the educational system. If the educational system will be splintered and spent, then Orthodoxy will not be able to strengthen and flourish.

I would like to describe a scenario that, alas, is beginning to happen all too often.

Let us take a city with circa 50,000 Jews in which a Day School exists. After initial failures and disappointments, the Day School establishes itself. It becomes part of the community; it is accepted by the larger community; it even experiences

some growth. With about 300 students, it feels strong enough and secure enough to address itself to issues and goals in Jewish education. It now begins to engage in twin pursuits: upgrading the quality of its *hinukh* and reaching out to provide Jewish education to as broad a base as possible. No mean task.

All of a sudden, a crisis erupts. A group of parents decides that the Day School does not live up to its expectations. The school, for example, is co-ed. Or, there is not enough stress on Gemarrah. Or — a complaint often heard — the school is not

selective enough in its acceptance policy, i.e. too many students from non-*dati* homes are accepted. And so on, etc., etc.

As a consequence, this group of parents forms its own “break-away” school, its own *heder*. What approach should we take to this separatist new school?

Proponents of the break-away school are wont to quote the Gemarrah in Bava Batra<sup>1</sup> and codified in Shulhan Arukh and Rema where it appears to be an undisputed halakha that there is no prohibition of *hasagat gevul* (encroaching on another's boundary) vis-a-vis *talmud Torah*. Instead, we say *yagdil Torah v'yadir* (to glorify and beautify the Torah). Hence, “newcomers” to the city, new *melamdin* who come to town and “take away” students may do so. In truth, this decision of the Rema has been upheld throughout generations.<sup>2</sup>

I believe, however, that upon analysis, one will realize that this *psak* of Rema has no bearing and is not relevant to our discussion.

Let us re-read what Rema says. Rema addresses himself to the prohibition of *hasagat gevul* in the following context. The Shulhan Arukh states<sup>3</sup> that, with exceptions,<sup>4</sup> salespeople and other professionals from outside may not come to “set up shop” in competition with local people. This prohibition, says the *mehaber*, does not apply to a *talmid hakham*. And, adds the Rema, *melamdei tinokot dinan k'talmid hakham* (teachers of children have the same halakha as a *talmid hakham*). This Rema<sup>5</sup> gives rise to the

If the educational system will be splintered and spent, then Orthodoxy will not be able to strengthen and flourish.

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continued

accepted notion that, regarding *talmud Torah*, there is no prohibition of *hasagat gevul*. Rather, we apply *yagdil Torah v'yadir*.

It is important, however, to make one point. The Shulhan Arukh and Rema are speaking of *melamdin* who come as individuals and compete for students. Indeed, an examination of the context where the halakha is stated shows that the question is a "local" question of *hasagat gevul* by one individual vs. another. In such a system of "laissez faire," these limits are not operative vis-a-vis *talmud Torah*. Everyone agrees, however, that a city and a community has a right to impose its own vision, its own limits, if you wish, on how Torah will be taught and disseminated in that particular city. Hence, if, as is the case, the local Day School is the concretized expression of the community will regarding *talmud Torah*, then the "separatists" have no halakhic standing or right to create their own school. This case is then analogous to the situation cited in Rema<sup>6</sup> that people who come to live in the city without permission of the Jewish elders of the "city," and, as a consequence, taxes become unbearable, have a halakha of *rodef* (pursuer). In both cases, the "new" people create burdens, which they are not entitled to do without the express approval of the people of the "city."

Perhaps the appellation of *rodef* to the new break-away school seems harsh. Still, let us examine the consequences to the Day School, to the community, and, in general, to the state of Torah education.

Due to the existence of the break-away school, the established Day School loses some students. This loss of students may create budgetary constraints and needed quality programs are cut. But there is more. Invariably, the students who leave are exactly those students who, because of their background, motivation and ability are in a position to influence the school, raise its standards, and, via the school, positively impact on the *Yiddishkeit* of the community. Paradoxically, at the very time that the Day School can begin its great role, when it is ready to become a powerful voice in the community, it is weakened by the attrition of the more motivated students.

There is yet a further consequence. The established Day School, feeling "neglected" and even rejected by the observant community, begins steering leftward. After all, it too is sensitive to the "numbers game" and it must not allow for

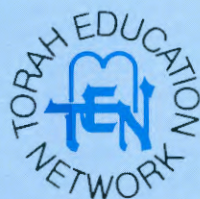
loss of students. It counteracts this loss by relaxing standards and moving leftward. Who has gained? If personal needs are discounted, has Torah gained by the establishment of a new "separatist school" or has it dissipated, for a long time, its initiative and its momentum?

The Talmud in Shabbat 119b states that the verse in *Tehillim* "Al tig'u b'mishihi," "Do not touch my anointed," refers to *tinokot shel beit rabban*, children who study Torah. Nowhere is this more applicable than in a situation where the organized Orthodox community builds a Day School, and struggles to develop it and establish it as the pride of the community. No amount of self-righteous indignation will convince this writer that *Yiddishkeit* will be saved by the destruc-

tion of the old Day School and that *Yahadut* will be better served by the creation of a break-away *heder*. ■

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Bava Batra 21b, Rambam Hilkhos Talmud Torah ch. 2, Shulhan Arukh Hoshen Mishpat 156
2. See Pithei Tshuva Hoshen Mishpat 156:17 quoting Rav Yosef Shaul Natansohn's *Yad Shaul* re-affirming this *psak*. For further analysis of the "ethics" of this position, see the comments of Hazon Ish in his very important *Emunah U'Bitahon*, chapter 3, "Musar V'Halakha"
3. Shulhan Arukh, Hoshen Mishpat op. cit.
4. As mentioned in Rema, *ibid*.
5. See Pithei Tshuva, note 2
6. *ibid*.



*TEN DA'AT* is very pleased to introduce two additional departments: *Madaf HaSefer: Library Notes* and *On Media*. Each will offer curricular materials and innovative techniques and resources. *Ten Da'at* is proud to welcome the professionals who will edit these columns:

Gitty Bender is the Coordinator of the New York Board of Jewish Education Media Center.

Esther Nussbaum is the Head Librarian at the Ramaz Upper School, and is the President of the Association of Jewish Libraries, New York Metropolitan Area Chapter.

Eileen Shmidman is the Director of Library and Media Services at the Ramaz Lower School and a member of the Executive Board of the Association of Jewish Libraries, New York Metropolitan Area.

*Ten Da'at* is also pleased to welcome to its Editorial Board Rabbi Naftali Rothenberg, National Director of the Torah Education and Culture Department of the WZO.

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# Holocaust Revisionism In The Classroom

Carlos Huerta

In the large quantity of literature on general and Jewish education, every now and then one comes across an article of fundamental importance, an article which should be required reading for all educators. Such an article does not usually appear with much fanfare, and it often asks more questions than it answers. It does, however, make the reader aware of a fundamental problem or concept, and leaves one to grapple with it. The above describes the importance of the article by Rabbi Jack Bieler in a previous issue of this magazine<sup>1</sup> in which Rabbi Bieler addresses the question of what views our students should be exposed to in their education. I would like to extend his discussion to the topic of Holocaust Revisionism and its place in our classrooms.<sup>2</sup>

I shall begin with a story. One evening, my wife and I decided to have dinner at a restaurant in Jerusalem. She stepped away from the table to enquire about our order. I was wearing jeans and a sport shirt and as my head was cold, kept my cap on. While my wife was away, three people, two young ladies and a young man, were seated at the table next to me. From their conversation I gleaned that they had just been to Yad Vashem and

were moved by it. I also learned that they were all graduate students in Jewish history attending a well known Jewish institution of higher learning in New York City. It appeared that they had taken a course on the Holocaust and were comparing what they had learned. At a point in their conversation I leaned over to their table and casually asked if they ever considered the possibility that the Holocaust never happened. Needless to say they were taken aback, but they very quickly started to recount the proofs of its occurrence. For every argument offered for its existence, I provided counter-arguments and classical revisionist "proofs" that the Holocaust was nothing more than a Zionist media trick. It did not take long for them to trot out the argument of last resort, and accuse me of being an ignorant anti-semitic. About this time I took off my cap to reveal my *hippa*, and my wife returned to the table with her head covered and expecting our eighth child. Feeling embarrassed, they apologized and we started to have what we all felt was an important discussion on the need for Jewish students to be taught something about Holocaust revisionism. What this incident showed me was that most students, if they hear the word revisionism, only conclude that revisionists are anti-semites. They are not taught the wide scope of revisionist literature or any of its arguments against the Holocaust.

Rabbi Bieler, in his article, asks whether our students should be presented with "outrageous" views thereby

offering them a selection of divergent opinions to think about. In a theoretical sense, he argues, one can present arguments both for and against the introduction of radical views in the classroom. For instance, views such as those expressed in *Das Kapital* or *Mein Kampf* could be taught to contrast the ideas of capitalism or understand the racist ideas of Nazi Germany. Though the reason for exposing our students to such ideas is theoretically correct, another criterion must also be taken into consideration. To expose Jewish students to *Mein Kampf* in 1991 would not have the same importance as exposing them to *Mein Kampf* in 1931. The crucial criterion that must be considered is that of need. Perhaps ten years ago, surely twenty years ago, one could justifiably argue that there was no need to teach Holocaust revisionism within Holocaust courses, as revisionism then was nothing more than a smattering of articles by unknown and scattered people. The story, today, is quite different. Revisionism is now a world-wide phenomenon spreading across Europe,<sup>3</sup> the Americas,<sup>4</sup> the Middle East,<sup>5</sup> and some parts of Asia. It is becoming increasingly organized, sophisticated, and well financed. One of the leading umbrella organizations of revisionism is the Institute for Historical Review in Costa Mesa, California. Besides publishing and supplying abundant literature on Holocaust revisionism, Israel, and World War II, they also publish a quarterly journal and sponsor well attended conferences every year. Many of their writers and

*continued*

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speakers are highly educated and "connected" people.<sup>6</sup>

The Jewish student of today, when being taught about the Holocaust, needs to learn more about the proofs of the gas chambers and the numbers that died, rather than see hours of moving and sad film footage. Though such films have their place, they do not provide students with the analytical tools to confront Holocaust revisionism outside the classroom where they will surely meet it. Students should be taught who the Holocaust revisionists are, their methods, and their literature. I would go so far as to say that all Jewish high schools and colleges should have copies of such literature at their disposal. It is one thing to talk about Holocaust revisionism theoretically, and quite another to hold in one's hand a published book with "proof" that the Holocaust never happened.<sup>7</sup>

The recognition that revisionism must be dealt with is becoming more and more ubiquitous. For example, revisionism questions the authenticity of the diary of Anne Frank. Such shadow has been cast on its authenticity that the need to defend it and answer revisionist claims against it has become a necessity. This has been done in *The Diary of Anne Frank: The Critical Edition* edited by David Barnouw and Gerrold Van Der Stroom.<sup>8</sup> Much to their credit, they offer a comprehensive analysis of the revisionist position and a good refutation of their arguments. They do it in a systematic and orderly fashion without rancor. This is a fine example of how educators should deal with revisionism in the classroom. In fact, in the study of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, such a work should be standard.

One can argue, and justifiably so, that teaching Holocaust revisionism in Jewish high schools and colleges is an open invitation for similar institutions in the non-Jewish sector to teach the topic. The fear here is that they will not teach it with an eye to supporting the Holocaust, but rather to denying it. The fact of the matter is that schools are already teaching Holocaust revisionism — without official Jewish approval.<sup>9</sup> What we lose in not teaching it is the ability to give our students the intellectual weapons they need to combat revisionism when they encounter it in literature or on a personal level. We also lose the initiative in showing how it can be taught in non-Jewish schools.

One recurring argument for not teaching Holocaust revisionism is the unwillingness to lend dignity to the revisionists

and their arguments by acknowledging their existence. This silence, however, is used by the revisionists as sure proof of the weakness of Holocaust theory. History has shown us that ignoring opposing viewpoints does not make them go away. Teaching Holocaust revisionism in the classroom adds as much dignity to it as teaching about Nazi Germany adds dignity to Nazism. And even if one could present an argument for not teaching Holocaust revisionism on the high school level, it should be imperative that Holocaust courses for teachers include exposure and responses to revisionist theories.

Imagine that in fifty or a hundred years from now there will be two schools of thought concerning the Holocaust, the Exterminationist School and the Revisionist School. Also imagine that both schools of thought must be taught because, like the Creationists and Evolutionists, neither side can disprove the claims of the other. Impossible? Only if we take the initiative now and provide the soldiers of tomorrow with the weapons they will need to combat the gathering storm. ■

#### FOOTNOTES

1. J. Bieler, "Open-Mindedness and the Yeshiva High School," *Ten Da'at*, Vol. IV, No.2 (Spring 1990), pp.20-22.

2. The author wishes to acknowledge many varied and fruitful discussions with friends at the Hebrew University and Yad Vashem. In particular he wishes to thank Dr. Judith Baumel for the chance to pick her brain, and her encouragement in this work. This by no means should indicate that the material and opinion presented here is any others' than the author's.

3. For a comprehensive look at revisionism in France and its ties to high places in both education and politics see "Les Parrains du Revisionnisme," *LEXPRESS International*, No.2034, 6 July 1990, pp. 21-33.

4. For a look at its spread in Brazil see "Among Brazil's Germans, Uproar Over Nazis," *The New York Times INTERNATIONAL*, 10 Dec. 1989, p.6. The Argentinean Jewish journal *La Luz*, covers its spread in Argentina on a continual basis.

5. For the first time the PLO weekly magazine *El-Istiqlal (Independence)*, published in Cyprus, has denied the Holocaust in its December 13 and 20 issues of 1989. For a review and analysis of these articles see *Response: The Wiesenthal Center's World Report*, Vol.11, No.2, May 1990, pp.2-3.

6. One can see this by just taking a cursory view of the editorial advisory committee for *The Journal of Historical Review*. Some of the names listed are George Ashley, Ph.D (Los Angeles Unified School District-ret.); John Bennet, LL.B. (Australian Civil Liberties Union); Alexander V. Berkis, LL.M., Ph.D

(Longwood College-ret.); Walter Beveraggi-Alende, Ph.D (University of Buenos Aires); Arthur R. Butz, Ph.D (Northwestern University); Robert Faurisson, Ph.D (University of Lyon-2); James J. Martin, Ph.D (Ralph Myles Publishers); Revilo P. Oliver, Ph.D (University of Illinois-ret.); Wilhelm Staglich, Dr. Jur. (ex-judge in Hamburg, Germany); Udo Walendy, Diplo. Pol. (Verlag fur Volkstum und Zeitgeschichtsforschung, Germany); and Andreas R. Wesseler, Ph.D (Marquette University-ret.). This list does not include some of their more prominent speakers such as the controversial historian David Irving, or Rev. Herman Otten, a Lutheran pastor in St. Louis and editor of the *Christian News*. The Tenth Revisionist Conference, which was held in Washington, D.C. on 13-15 October 1990, featured John Toland, a Pulitzer Prize winner, and author of *The Last 100 Days, The Rising Sun, Infamy: Pearl Harbor and Its Aftermath*, among other works.

7. The books that deny the Holocaust are many. Some of the ones that are considered important works by the revisionists are *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century* by Arthur R. Butz; *Auschwitz: A Judge Looks at the Evidence* by Wilhelm Staeglich; and *The Dissolution of Eastern European Jewry* by Walter N. Sanning. Prof. Robert Faurisson is presently working on a book entitled *Faurisson on the Holocaust* which is scheduled to appear this year. All are published or to be published by the Institute for Historical Review.

8. *The Diary of Anne Frank: The Critical Edition* is prepared by the Netherlands State Institute for War Documentation and contains introductions by Harry Paape, Gerrold Van Der Stroom, and David Barnouw. It also contains a summary of the report by the State Forensic Science Laboratory of the Ministry of Justice compiled by H.J.J. Hardy. It is published by Doubleday (New York). It is rather a thorough work.

9. Holocaust revisionism is being taught, both covertly and overtly, in many schools across America. In Alberta, Canada, a James Keegstra taught revisionism in his high school history courses. He was prosecuted, found guilty, and lost his teaching license. In New York City, the author knows of a prestigious Catholic high school where *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century* by A.R. Butz was taught clandestinely. At the Eighth International Revisionist Conference in 1987, Robert Countess, Ph.D, gave a talk on the success various high schools and colleges had in teaching Butz. What this shows us is that more schools than we would like to believe are teaching Holocaust revisionism.

For a meaningful gift this year give your children's teachers or staff members a subscription to *Ten Da'at*.

See inside back cover for details.



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# Goals for Helping Young Adolescents Learn About the *Shoah*

Karen Shawn

*"I cannot teach this book.  
I simply want the words  
to burn their comfortable souls  
and leave them scarred for life."*

— from "On Wiesel's *Night*"  
by Thomas E. Thorton

*"I believe that the main objective, the main  
goal, of telling the story [of the Holocaust]  
is to sensitize people."*

— Elie Wiesel

A heated argument had broken out in a seminar on selecting resources for teaching about the Holocaust.

"I always begin with the movie *Genocide*," a young high school teacher offered. "My students can't tear their eyes from the screen. The girls sob, and even the most difficult boys pay attention. Believe me, it works."

"Works?" responded an older woman, also a teacher of tenth graders. "What do you mean, 'works'? Is your idea of something working to upset half the students, so they cry, and have nightmares, and don't want to participate in the class anymore? Because that was my experience when I made the mistake of showing that

film. Believe me," she finished, turning angrily to the rest of the class, "it does not work."

People joined in, heatedly taking sides, adding their own experiences, as if theirs would be the deciding voice. But the argument was never resolved, nor could it have been, because the definition of the word "work" was never explored in the context of what it was those two teachers believed about teaching the Holocaust, and what it was they were trying to accomplish in their classes.

Let me attempt to make this context clear. If the first speaker believed that students have gradually closed off their minds to atrocity, since they have grown up seeing the horrors of the world and must therefore be shocked into paying attention with still greater horrors; and if he had as one of his goals "Students will pay attention during the lesson," then the film did work for him. If the second speaker believed that horror traumatizes and ultimately suffocates students, and if she had as one of her goals "Students will continue to view films about the *Shoah* and respond to them thoughtfully," then the film surely did not work for her. But if neither teacher recognized that they in fact had these as implicit, if not explicit, beliefs and feelings and goals (let alone whether such goals are worthwhile), then their argument has no resolution because their premises are unrelated.

Careful consideration of a number of exchanges like these among sincere, well-meaning, experienced teachers has led

me to conclude that goal-setting based on personal beliefs and feelings is the single most ignored step in the process of preparing to teach the Holocaust. This ignorance may reflect the same curious circumstances identified by Bruner (1990) as a problem in scientific psychology; what people *do* in education seems to be of more concern than what they think, feel, or believe. Thus teachers *do* something, i.e., screen *Genocide*, without first clarifying for themselves how this "doing" reveals or reflects what they think and feel and believe.

## I. Why Do We Teach What We Teach?

It is important to understand, then, that the nature of both the goals and the thematic questions suitable for a course of study about the Holocaust is and must be inherently idiosyncratic, informed by the same process of personal meaning-making that we encourage our students to attempt as they explore the Holocaust, its lessons, and its importance in their lives today.

In other words, my goals reflect my beliefs and feelings based on my personal understanding of the event, my interpretation of the nature and needs of young adolescents, my carefully-crafted teaching methodology, and my years of experience (for I too once measured my success by the number of students who cried). My goals also reflect the context in which I teach about the *Shoah*: I am a teacher of English, seeking to make my classroom a responsive community of learners.

*continued*

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But this is not to say that, in the hands of another equally competent teacher with a different set of feelings and beliefs and within a different teaching context, other goals and thematic questions which may be equally feasible and defensible couldn't, or shouldn't, be generated.

Rather than state my own goals, therefore, I instead suggest a variety of relevant goals and controlling ideas, and a number of ways to consider them.

To be sure, there are certain general goals, broad enough to be applicable to any community of learners.

They include the following:

1. For students to read with empathy.
2. For students to listen to the ideas of others with a critical and reflective ear, with tolerance for differences of opinion, and with the courage of their own convictions.
3. For students to share their thoughts and feelings through small- and large-group discussion.
4. For students to record their ideas in journals, essays, stories, and poems, both for personal reflection and for public offering.
5. For students to continue to seek out more books on this topic and respond to them thoughtfully, and to progress from choosing "the kinds of books that merely confirm prejudice...to those which promote reflection, understanding and human growth" (Thompson, 1987, p. 83).
6. For students to read critically; to realize that they may question texts and use what they learn from them to question their own values (Nelms and Nelms, 1988).
7. For students to view films and videos relevant to the Holocaust with a critical, reflective, and empathetic eye.
8. For students to become aware of a wide variety of human behavior through literature and film.
9. For students to develop an understanding of the capacity for both humanity and inhumanity of the human species, and to develop the capacity not only to observe but also to judge, and, ultimately, to act (Cohen, 1988).
10. For students to have "respect for and confidence in the powers of their own mind [and to]...extend that respect and confidence to their power to think about the human condition, man's plight, and his social life" (Bruner, 1966, p. 101).

There are narrow goals as well, related more directly to learning and teaching specifically about the Holocaust. When teachers attempt to formulate these goals for themselves, they need to examine carefully their perceptions of both the meaning and the message of this event, their approach to teaching in general, and their thoughts and feelings about teaching about the Holocaust in particular. For in the same way that effective teaching about this subject is predicated upon the formulation of the proper questions, so in a sense is the selection of effective goals. We must ask ourselves first of all what exactly it is that we want to teach our youngsters about the Holocaust, what exactly it is that we want them to remember.

Martin Weyl (1989), director of the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, raises these same questions. He asks:

What is it that we want humanity, now and for generations to come, not to forget? Is it the awesome magnitude of the madness, the incomprehensibility of it all? Should we offer an analysis of anti-Semitism, or should we demonstrate how a certain historic pattern leads to certain events? Perhaps only demographic facts should be presented — statistics, photographs, blueprints of death camps (p. 38).

If and when these questions are answered to our personal and professional satisfaction, we are faced with still others in our search for appropriate goals. Deciding what to teach, and therefore what students will learn, is as much an act of omission as commission. What historians, curriculum developers, and teachers choose to omit as well as what they choose to present reflects a definite point of view closely connected to goal selection. Israel's state-sponsored Holocaust museum, Yad Vashem, for example, seeks to tell the

story of heroes and martyrs; there is a strong focus on acts of heroism, almost as if to balance the bleak and brutal facts of destruction.

At Beit Lohame HaGetaot, the Ghetto Fighters' House, also in Israel, but founded by survivors of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising rather than by Knesset mandate, there is a strong focus on the vibrant Jewish life of Eastern Europe before the war, on the activities of the Zionist Youth groups, and on the spiritual, religious, and physical resistance of the Jews during the Holocaust, with exhibits, photographs, and even an animated film depicting the heroic Uprising and its many young fighters. It is clear from the materials and methods chosen that the goals of both museums include instilling pride and a strong measure of dignity in Israeli youth.

In the United States, at Holocaust education seminars for teachers in secular public schools, an emphasis is often put on the lessons of the Holocaust with a particular focus on prejudice reduction and race relations; in Catholic parochial schools, the role of the Church is explored; in Jewish parochial schools, the question of God's relationship to the covenantal people during and after the *Shoah* comes under scrutiny; while at interfaith workshops, or general adult education and community commemorative events, the role of the Christians who rescued Jews may be highlighted. Each choice and its concomitant methods and materials of presentation reflect stated or unstated, explicit or implicit, beliefs and goals.

It is incumbent upon every teacher to formulate, justify, and make explicit his or her own beliefs and long-range goals as he or she explores the issues raised by this curriculum. A teacher must decide, for example, whether (s)he seeks an emotional catharsis for students, whether (s)he seeks "to burn their comfortable

**We must ask ourselves first of all what exactly it is that we want to teach our youngsters about the Holocaust, what exactly it is that we want them to remember.**

## Teachers must know the difference between the affective and the cognitive domains and be sure that their objectives are in the same domain as their teaching.

souls / and leave them scarred for life," a powerful but short-term learning strategy which may ultimately turn students away from further study; or whether (s)he prefers instead to provide a catalyst for students, seeking material and methods that will sensitize them and encourage further learning — a less dramatic learning strategy but perhaps ultimately more engaging precisely because it is less assaultive.

### II. Affective and Cognitive Goals

Teachers must know the difference between the affective and the cognitive domains and be sure that their objectives are in the same domain as their teaching; difficulties arise in teacher expectation, student performance, and evaluation when the method and the goals are not matched. The first group of goals listed below, loosely categorized as learning goals, has both an affective and a cognitive component; the methods and materials chosen to achieve these goals may determine the domain. The second group below, loosely categorized as teaching goals, is more clearly affective; the methods and materials chosen to achieve these goals should reflect this.

To help with goal formulation, I offer the following list of possibilities, with the understanding that the ultimate selection will be based upon a teacher's clearly conceptualized and expressed philosophy of English and/or history education as well as Holocaust education.

I. During their studies with me, students should gain an awareness of:

1. crimes against humanity during WWII \_\_\_\_ .
2. demographic facts about the Holocaust: names, dates, places, statistics; key events \_\_\_\_ .
3. the existence, causes, and results of anti-Semitism \_\_\_\_ .

4. structures and mechanisms that underlie stereotyping \_\_\_\_ .
5. Jewish life before the Holocaust \_\_\_\_ .
6. life in Jewish ghettos during the Holocaust \_\_\_\_ .
7. the scope of Jewish spiritual and physical resistance during the Holocaust \_\_\_\_ .
8. the response of the bystanders \_\_\_\_ .
9. the role of the American press during the Holocaust \_\_\_\_ .
10. the existence and deeds of the Righteous Among the Nations \_\_\_\_ .
11. the magnitude and scope of the destruction of Jewish communities throughout Eastern Europe \_\_\_\_ .
12. the unique nature of the Holocaust \_\_\_\_ .
13. the universal lessons of the Holocaust \_\_\_\_ .
14. strategies and information for refuting neo-Nazis \_\_\_\_ .

II. My teaching goals include:

1. presenting the truth without traumatizing \_\_\_\_ .
2. assuring remembrance of the Holocaust \_\_\_\_ .
3. breaking down the general conception of the Holocaust into a series of limited, identifiable human experiences \_\_\_\_ .
4. promoting an understanding of the concepts of *kiddush haShem* and *kiddush hahaim* \_\_\_\_ .
5. fostering involvement and identification with the victims and survivors of the Holocaust \_\_\_\_ .
6. encouraging my students to continue their study of the Holocaust \_\_\_\_ .
7. maintaining and strengthening my students' Jewish identity \_\_\_\_ .
8. stressing the importance and centrality

of the existence and support of the State of Israel in light of the *Shoah* \_\_\_\_ .

9. changing my students' behavior with regard to minority groups \_\_\_\_ .
10. providing a forum for values clarification and moral development \_\_\_\_ .
11. providing a forum for discussion of acts of *hesed* in the context of lessons of the Holocaust \_\_\_\_ .
12. fostering an understanding of the tragic consequences of indifference \_\_\_\_ .
13. encouraging the attitude that each person is individually responsible for his/her own actions in society \_\_\_\_ .
14. fostering a commitment to democratic values \_\_\_\_ .
15. nurturing the capacity to observe and to judge the actions of others \_\_\_\_ .
16. making my students aware that people can overcome even the most tragic and difficult circumstances \_\_\_\_ .
17. promoting the importance of being sensitive to the pain of others \_\_\_\_ .

As teachers identify and clarify their goals, they can begin to select and appraise the controlling ideas, or themes, that will frame any curriculum. I structure my course of study of the Holocaust around certain thematic ideas based not only on goal analysis but also on an examination of the questions that my students, both young adolescents and adults, raise most frequently. These questions can be organized into the following ten general categories:

1. **Perpetrators:** How did the Holocaust happen? How could it happen in Germany? Who was the average German soldier? How could men shoot babies? Is there something intrinsically evil in the German character? Was the evil really banal?

2. **Bystanders/Decision-Making:** How could the Holocaust have been allowed to happen? Why did the world watch and do nothing? Why did friends and neighbors stand by and do nothing? How could the average German citizen live with himself/herself as this was happening? Did people have a choice? What was the response of the Church?

3. **Jews:** Why didn't the Jews leave Germany before the war? How could parents find the strength to send their children away? How did people change/cope in the camps? Why were the Jews the primary victims of the Nazis? Were assimilated

*continued*

Jews less likely to be victims than were religiously-observant Jews?

4. **Rescuers:** Who were the rescuers? What motivated them? Why were there so few? How were they able to succeed even in the midst of Nazi strongholds? What was the response of the *Yishuv* during the Holocaust? Where are the rescuers today? What is being done to acknowledge their actions?

5. **Resistance:** What is the truth about Jewish resistance? Why is there such an emphasis on the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising? Why is there such a strong need to find examples of resistance? What is the significance of the issue of resistance?

6. **Survivors:** How did people summon the will to live? Were there specific reasons why some survived while others perished under the same conditions? How did the Jews in Palestine respond to the survivors who came there? How do survivors cope today? How has the experience affected/changed them? Have they kept their faith in humanity? How have their children been affected?

7. **Present-day Germany:** What kind of responsibility do today's young Germans feel? Should they feel a responsibility? Is a Jewish boycott of German products an appropriate/useful statement of response? What is the appropriate Jewish response to the question of reparations? Is the unification of Germany a threat to Jews?

8. **Judaism — Theodicy:** How has the Jewish way of thinking and the general approach to life changed? Could God let it happen again? Where was God? How could there be a God? Is there faith after the Holocaust? How are we to regard Jewish martyrdom? Is this the Defining Event? Why am I here when so many others perished? How do we carry on Jewishly for all of those who died? Why should we remain Jewish when our history reflects so much tragedy?

9. **Humanity:** How was the Holocaust humanly possible? Is the potential for such evil in all of us? How would I react? (As a Jew, as a German?) Has humanity changed as a result of the Holocaust? How can we cope with the burden of this knowledge? What are the universal lessons of the Holocaust? Why should Christianity teach about the Holocaust? What does the Holocaust mean for us today?

10. **Education and Implications for the Future:** How can we keep the history of the Holocaust alive? How can we in-

volve and educate non-Jews? How can we prevent it from happening again? How do we preserve memory — both personal memory and the legacy of the Holocaust? Could it happen again? Can the existence of Israel prevent its reoccurrence? How are we to respond to revisionists? How can we integrate our knowledge of this event into our daily life in a positive way?

Each of these thoughtful, provocative, and difficult questions provides a focus for serious study; all must eventually be explored if students are to have a comprehensive understanding of the Holocaust and its contemporary issues. But as the Sages advise, "It is not our duty to complete the work..." As difficult as this concept is, it is imperative that we reexamine our needs as teachers, as historians, and as students of the Holocaust to try to pour into the heads of our youngsters every fact we know about this event. We must recognize and come to terms with the idea that we need not try to make Holocaust scholars out of our twelve year olds, and that, in fact, Holocaust literacy, like cultural literacy, must come slowly, over a period of years, as students are introduced to this event and its significance gradually, carefully, gently, and as much as possible at their own pace.

In considering how much to teach children, I am reminded of the old story about the little girl who one day asks her mother where she came from. The mother knows that this question is inevitable, although she never expected to hear it from so young a child. But she is ready. She takes out the books, sits down with her little girl, and tells her everything she thinks that she, as a modern mother, is expected to explain about where babies come from. When she finishes, she asks her daughter if she has any questions. The child looks at her and says, "I asked Susie where *she* came from, and she told me New Jersey."

We don't want to answer questions that our children have not yet asked. We want instead to introduce the Holocaust with specific and accurate historical background and with specific pieces of literature and testimony, but we want to limit, by design, the events and issues to be explored. We want to speak of the one and not just of the six million, to portray the Jews as vibrant and vital and not just as victims, to provide an alternative to despair by offering stories of heroism and courage and righteous acts, to engage children affectively as well as cognitively. And we want an appropriate way in which to engage the minds and the hearts of our students so that, as they mature, they will perhaps reach out to expand their knowledge of this most crucial subject.

Thus, not all of the questions raised above should be explored in one course of study. Instead, teachers can select the content and process of their unit by framing it around several basic controlling ideas that arise from the questions. Such themes, as presented below, include "Decision-making," "The Dislike of the Unlike," "The Individual in Society," "The Bystander," "Altruism and Moral Courage," and "The End of Innocence." A variety of other themes, equally appropriate for young adolescents, can be generated by keeping in mind specific criteria for selecting them:

- a) Each controlling idea should be related to a universal lesson of the Holocaust.
- b) Each should have a positive component, thereby giving hope to post-Holocaust young adolescents. Therefore, the theme of "Humanity's Inhumanity" would not be appropriate, but "Altruism and Moral Courage" would.
- c) Each should have the potential to motivate students to examine their own lives

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and behaviors and affect change where possible.

d) Each should take into account adolescent needs and conflicts.

e) Each should provide a bridge between the world of today's adolescent and the world of the Holocaust.

Four of these themes, with questions for extended discussion, are listed below.

#### **The Dislike of the Unlike:**

The age-old conflict between insiders and outsiders is at the heart of the Holocaust. Why were the Jews the primary victims of the Nazis? How does the plight of the Jews move us to consider the potential consequences of the persecution that exists in our society today? How is the following observation by Northrop Frye (1964) germane to this theme?

There's something in all of us that wants to drift toward a mob, where we can all say the same thing without having to think about it, because everybody is all alike except people that we can hate or persecute. Every time we use words, we're either fighting against this tendency or giving in to it. When we fight against it, we're taking the side of genuine and permanent human civilization (p. 154).

#### **The Bystanders:**

Elie Wiesel has written, "What hurts the victim most is not the cruelty of the oppressor but the silence of the bystander." By their silence, by their unwillingness to get involved, the bystanders aided the destruction of six million innocent Jews. How does their silence challenge us today to consider our choices of action or inaction? How is the following observation by Harding (1972) germane to this theme? "If we could obliterate the effects on a man of all the occasions when he was merely a 'spectator' it would...profoundly... alter his character and outlook" (p.242). Are bystanders themselves changed by having stood by? Could more people have tried to help the Jews? If more people had helped, could the Nazis have been stopped in their war against the Jews? What is the meaning of the following statement: "If you are not part of the solution, then you are part of the problem"? What do we mean when we say, "Not making a choice is making a choice"?

#### **Altruism and Moral Courage:**

The Christians who rescued Jews took a stand against tyranny and oppression

despite the grave danger to themselves and to their families. How do people make the decision to get involved, even at the risk of death? What motivated the rescuers? What was their relationship to those they rescued? How do people make the decision to risk the lives of their loved ones to save the lives of strangers? How was rescue accomplished? What can we learn from the deeds of the rescuers?

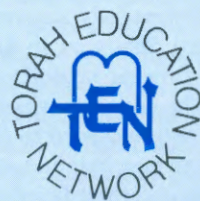
#### **The End of Innocence:**

When we look at our world today through eyes that have seen and studied the Holocaust, how do we make sense of the horror of what happened? Does our awareness of the deaths of six million innocent men, women, and children end our innocence about human nature? Or, can we still believe, as Anne Frank did, that "in spite of everything, people are really good at heart"? What are some results of a loss of innocence? How is idealism transformed into realism? Can the end of innocence be a positive step towards maturity?

These controlling ideas and related thematic questions may help teachers identify and integrate their beliefs and ideas about the *Shoah* with their goals for teaching it. In addition, they may help our students to understand, throughout their course of study of the *Shoah*, that perhaps, although our innocence has ended, a more thoughtful consideration of our humanity has begun. ■

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## TEN LEV:

### Perspectives on Emotional and Psychological Well-Being

# Yeshiva Education and the Jewish Family: An Uneasy Marriage

Irving N. Levitz

Every yeshiva student becomes a living bridge between the worlds of school and family. The day school, the child, and the family are, in fact, inexorably enmeshed in a systemic triangle. What affects one, affects them all. It is precisely for this reason that yeshiva educators cannot ignore what is happening to the Jewish family and must respond to the current trend of family breakdown in a very prescribed and purposeful way.

In the field of medicine and psychiatry, there are three levels at which medical intervention occurs. These levels, adapted from the notions of community psychiatrist Dr. Gerald Caplan, make reference to Primary, Secondary and Tertiary intervention.<sup>1</sup>

Primary intervention refers to preventive approaches that attempt to stave off the onset of a problem before it begins. The label on a bottle of detergent that warns the consumer to "Keep out of reach of children" is an example of primary intervention. In the sphere of mental health, primary intervention is basically educational in nature.

Secondary intervention refers to the early detection of a problem and the pre-

vention of its becoming chronic. An example of this would be the early or immediate treatment of an illness in order to forestall further complications.

Tertiary intervention addresses an already chronic condition. Here the attempt, however, is to prevent further deterioration in the hope of ameliorating the chronic state.

Let us make the leap from medicine to education, from community psychiatry to the community day school.

Children who have experienced family trauma, whether they are living with a single parent, in joint custody, in a reconstituted or extended family, or in foster care, represent a growing proportion of our student body. The degree to which we become aware of and sensitive to their needs will determine how helpful we can be to these children and their families in preventing further complications, despite the unalterable and chronic state of some family situations.

We could consider a condition chronic and requiring tertiary intervention when, as a result of a divorce, a youngster grieves the disintegration of family structure, the absence of a parent, or the loss of home, socio-economic status and self-esteem; when the single caretaker parent finds social, psychological, parental, and financial pressures simply too overwhelming; or, when a youngster becomes the pawn of a custody dispute, the protector of a vulnerable parent, the recipient of parental or sibling rage and frustration, or simply the helpless victim of a world

torn asunder. These are times when, deprived of familiar supports and parameters, tertiary intervention can mean the difference between establishing family stability or fostering instability. Often enough, intervention can also mean the difference between religious commitment and alienation. The sensitizing of teachers and guidance personnel to the special needs of these children and their families is crucial.

In addition, there is often a need for administrators to be sensitive to the financial strains of single-parent families. Next to the aged, the single parent family comprises the largest component of the Jewish poor. It is not only because two households are more expensive to maintain than one, but also because former husbands are frequently delinquent or irregular in their support payments. The financial stress is usually felt by the children as well, particularly at times when money is needed for such extras as class trips, projects and the like.

The loss of self-esteem that these children invariably feel can often be exacerbated by an otherwise benign or inadvertent remark pertaining to family life or the role of a particular parent. It was quite an upsetting experience recently for one youngster whose teacher unwittingly, though nevertheless insensitively, referred to a divorced woman as "damaged goods" (his apparent reason for her being prohibited from marrying a *kohen*), or for the adolescent who was learning the statement "*Lo tivashel*

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*b'kdera shebishail bah haverha.*"<sup>2</sup> For this youngster, who was already experiencing difficulty with his divorced father's impending remarriage to a divorced woman and his feelings of disloyalty to his mother, this piece of Talmudic advice was not particularly comforting. Fortunately, his teacher was a sensitive man with whom he could safely air his feelings of distress and conflict. The rebbe reassured him that his father's remarriage was in no way prohibited. *Hazal*, he explained, are alerting us to the psychological dynamics that are part of remarriage and the extra sensitivity that is thus required. He then encouraged the student to express his feelings about the remarriage of his father, his sense of guilt regarding his mother, and his own fear of abandonment. In this instance, the rebbe executed a most meaningful, impactful and successful form of tertiary intervention.

Whereas skillful support and concern are necessary for effective tertiary intervention, they are even more crucial in the realm of secondary intervention where issues present themselves in much more subtle ways, and require even greater sensitivity, sophistication, and finely honed skills. When a child from a recently divorced home or a family in transition begins to act out in class or unexpectedly fails academically, the connection between school performance and the home situation is evident. When a child, however, from an intact family begins to act disruptively and performs inadequately, the connection between home and school is often overlooked. There is a reason for this. Most of us have been trained to see each child as an individual, and, of course, this is true. Each child is an individual, but each is also an integral part of a family system. When one part of this system is under stress, there is a ripple effect felt throughout all the components of the system. We are discovering more and more that problem children will very often serve a function related to their family. They may be diverting attention away from a troubled marriage or in some way attempting to relieve other family pressures. The point is that youngsters give off signals that something is going wrong in the family.

A word of caution: This ought not be addressed by simply asking the youngster to reveal anything about his/her family life. More often than not, the child will psychologically need to be defended against this. Probing may be unproductive or even harmful. It is here that the

skill of the guidance department is called to the test.

On the level of secondary intervention, guidance and school social work personnel with a good grasp of family dynamics and a skillful interviewing approach can usually detect family problems before they become chronic. Invariably, we are discovering that not only are school difficulties often an early signal of family distress, they frequently disappear when family problems are resolved. As with disease, early detection can often mean the difference between life and death.

Finally, the yeshiva has a crucial role to play with regard to primary intervention. Primary intervention is not therapy. It is education. Within the yeshiva framework, it can be Jewish education at its best. It involves implementing measures that will prevent the onset of problems and teaching ways of thinking, feeling, and doing. This, in turn, can promote successful marital and familial relationships.

There are several important areas where primary intervention can be fostered within the yeshiva setting. The first is the most pervasive. It is in the area of what we call "incidental learning." Incidental learning involves not content but the subtleties, often unintended, that emerge from the teaching process. Fortunately, there are many warm, dedicated and sensitive Jewish educators who model excellent interpersonal skills. Their communication is clear and open; their reaction to frustration is constructive as is their ability to resolve conflicts and differences. These are teachers who indirectly teach fine *midot* and interpersonal skills by way of modeling and, consequently, create an atmosphere not only for learning Torah but also for living Torah.

There are other teachers whose sensitivity and genuine caring is sporadic and inconsistent. These educators would benefit greatly from a type of "sensitivity training" to help them actualize their potential.

Unfortunately, there are those who are simply damaging and do not belong in *hinukh*. A teacher who diminishes the self image of a student by embarrassing, mocking, scapegoating or by any of the myriad forms of humiliation, is modeling a style of interpersonal relations that will become part of the internalized repertoire of that student, even affecting future adult behavior in marriage and parenting. When I recently asked a yeshiva rebbe whether he was aware that his

students were terrified of being mocked and embarrassed in his class, he told me that he believed in the principle of establishing fear in his students ("*zrok marah l'talmidim*"<sup>3</sup>) and that he was quite purposeful in what he was doing.

When the attitude of a teacher towards the opposite sex is reflected in comments that portray men or women in less than positive terms or openly depicts them as inferior, an image and an attitude is formed that later surfaces in dating and marriage. Incidental learning is not so incidental.

A second area of primary intervention for yeshivot exists at virtually every level, particularly from junior high school on. Specific courses are needed in human relations and family life. There are many forms this could take, including workshops, guidance groups, and special classes.

Finally, an effective program in primary intervention for the yeshiva day school requires the establishing of an ongoing program of Family Life Education for yeshiva parents. Workshops need to be developed for yeshiva families on a variety of issues: couple communication, creating a more meaningful religious life, two-career marriages, step-parenting, concerns of single parenthood, mid-life transitions and issues of coping with bereavement and loss. There is a world of knowledge that exists in all of these areas, and workshops such as these are in fact being given by many professionals, in many places and in many forms. Within a Torah institution, it is a unique opportunity to integrate a Torah perspective with the process of living.

The yeshiva day school movement has had an enormous impact on the survival and development of Torah Judaism in this country. It has met the demands of each decade and has been able to flourish despite many seemingly insurmountable obstacles. It now faces a new and formidable challenge with regard to its beleaguered counterpart—the Jewish family. Meeting this challenge effectively can only enhance the impact of Torah education and the mission of the yeshiva school. ■

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Caplan, G. "The Family as a Support System," Lecture, Butler Hospital Symposium, Providence, Rhode Island, 1974.
2. Pesahim 112a. The full text is even more compelling.
3. Ketubot 103b

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# Making A Difference Through Stories

Hanoch Teller

Most educators can attest to the fact that weaving a lesson in a tapestry of stories can make the difference between “material taught” and “material learned.” Admittedly, that’s quite a difference, if not in fact a fulfillment of Gregory Bateson’s definition\* of information: “The difference which makes a difference.”

By this, I infer, the eminent scholar meant that merely imparting information is not education. If information will not cause the listener to think, if it is essentially the same facts that are already known, then it cannot make a difference. At the other extreme, if the information is too radical, or suggests too much of a departure from what the listener knows, it will evoke resistance. Likewise, if the information is imparted too slowly or it appears to represent no change at all, it will encounter other forms of resistance, such as boredom. The point of storytelling in education is to make a difference, the difference which makes a difference.

There is a special reason why a story can constitute the difference which makes a difference: By relating a story, one can tell something to an audience which could otherwise not be said directly to them.

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(Q: How do you tell your neighbors that they are dishonest? A: By relating a story about Shmerel the thief.) The audience then discovers the meaning on its own and there is an appreciable impact. Often a story is the only avenue—although a seldom-used route—for avoiding direct confrontation. Is this not the method Nathan the prophet employed with King David?

Because a story is indirect, it avoids the natural cognitive resistance of, “Yes, but...” When one is put on the defensive, one inevitably gropes, offers excuses, and keeps defensive mechanisms on high-alert. A well-delivered, relevant story can lower these barriers and subtly penetrate other defensive strategies.

Since the message of a story is not decipherable through regular patterns of dialogue, the listener must do an internal search which results in ascribing meaning, often a great deal of meaning, to the message. Because the dynamics of a story are highly personal, its message is usually more meaningful to the listener than a straightforward, impersonal message.

Let us demonstrate what we have postulated, make a difference if you will, by way of example. One exceedingly difficult area to teach, a hotbed of rationalizations, justifications, and mind-your-own-businessology, is morality in monetary matters, better known in Jewish circles simply as *ehrlikkheit*. How can an instructor effectively teach the values of financial integrity?

One method would be to highlight the merits of leading a life in accord with the Torah’s dictates. Since every mitzva is important, the prohibition against stealing is no less important than the prohibition against driving a car on Shabbat. Another method would be to point out the consequences of a life without integrity: one risks getting caught, being held responsible, and living with constant distrust of others who are likely to be equally dishonest.

Mitigating the above lessons (and a host of others) are the pressures of society which places so much value on money but

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\* Gregory Bateson, *Steps to the Ecology of the Mind*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1972, p. 194.



little if any value on how income is earned. Few individuals are innately honest enough to realize that they are victims of this money-oriented, value-free society. How can a teacher, with a modicum of non-condescending modesty, enlighten them? By making a difference indirectly.

*One bright Sunday morning, the village thief approached the house of the Rav of Shnitzelberg, his arms laden with contraband. The rabbi, glancing out the window, was dumbstruck by the sight. Why would the village thief be bringing stolen goods to him? he wondered. Everyone knew that the Rav would not traffic in ill-gotten items.*

*Without pausing to knock on the door, the thief let himself into the Rav's house. He placed everything on the table and turned to depart.*

*"Wait!" cried the Rabbi. "What is all this?"*

*"This week's haul," replied the thief matter-of-factly.*

*"I gathered as much," the Rabbi conceded, "but why have you brought it to me?"*

*"Rabbi," the thief replied with a look of total bewilderment, "I'm surprised at you. Have you forgotten that you spoke about the mitzva of hashavat aveida [returning lost items] yesterday in synagogue? I listened to your talk with keen interest, and I hastened to comply."*

*The Rabbi was flabbergasted; from one sermon the village thief had repented! "D-do you really mean it?"*

*"Of course! And I'm all excited about it—this is the first time I've fulfilled the mitzva."*

*The Rabbi felt contrite for having doubted the man even for a moment. He warmly embraced the penitent and wished him success with his new lifestyle.*

*A few minutes later the Rabbi was frantically searching his house for his watch, but it was nowhere to be found. Suddenly*

*overcome with a sneaking suspicion, he dashed out the door to confront the village thief. "Did you just steal my watch?"*

*The thief sheepishly nodded his head.*

*The Rabbi's anger knew no bounds. He demanded an explanation. "Here you purport to be a baal teshuvah eager to perform the mitzva of returning stolen items, and moments later, you're back at you're old ways?!"*

*The village thief rolled his eyes at the Rabbi's naivete. "What does one thing have to do with the other?" he asked innocently. "Hashavat aveidah is a mitzva, but stealing—that's my parnasah!"*

There may be a more eloquent way of expressing that earning a livelihood is a constant excuse for bending rules and cheating, but I doubt if there is a more effective way. The unregenerate robber has aptly articulated the problem of "religious schizophrenia," and this tale may go farther than sermons and castigations the next time *parnasah* is involved to justify actions that are undeniably anti-theoretical to the Torah precepts we hold dear.

Needless to say, the easier the example is to relate to, the greater the chances that it will "make a difference." Admittedly one cannot relate a litany of examples without eventually losing the audience, thus it is important to select examples that are the most fitting and trenchant, not necessarily the ones most witty or humorous, although wit and humor do have their place.

*The waitress delivers your bill and a quick perusal reveals that she has erred arithmetically to your advantage. What runs through your mind? Well...er...the soup was cold, the special wasn't very special, the service was lousy, and therefore... at this lower price the restaurant is really getting the better of the deal!*

Such a story is appropriate if the audience is composed of individuals who routinely eat out and can relate to such a scenario. And if they can relate to this, then they will be able to apply the lesson to other areas as well. If they cannot relate to the example, they cannot apply its lesson.

Which brings us to a common, seemingly unavoidable mistake made by teachers: After relating a story to enhance a point, the teacher then asks the students what the story means to them. This dissection and analysis transforms what was a personal message into a digital one. One of the principles of storytelling is not to dilute the ontological message; story dissection can dilute a message in the same way that explaining a punch line can dissipate the humor of a joke.

There are numerous techniques for assuring that the story and its lessons are grasped without resorting to analysis, such as employing what Paul Watzlawick, the renowned psychotherapist called "the illusion of an alternative," or what is known as "suggestibility" in hypnotic jargon, but that is beyond the scope of this article.

What is germane to our discussion is ensuring not only that the story be morally purposeful but that it subtly imbue a command to adhere to its lesson. This is the crux of moral education. For ethical teachings to be effective, they must be taught less directly than discipline, for discipline only works when it can be enforced. In the absence of the means by which to enforce the lesson stories will make the biggest difference of all.

There is an old joke about a farmer who buys a mule but can't get it to pull his plow. After trying everything, he returns it to its former owner, demanding his money back. The former owner takes a two-by-four and whacks the mule over the head. "Why did you do that?" the farmer asks. The owner answers with a shrug, "If you want him to work, first you have to get his attention."

People are not mules, but if we wish to make an impression upon them, we must first get their attention. Only then can we make the difference which makes a difference by keeping their attention. Effective storytelling is the method. No two-by-fours required. ■

**"STORYTELLING IN EDUCATION"** is the theme of the 5th Annual National Congress on Storytelling on June 12–16, 1991 at Connecticut College, New London, CT. Sponsored by the Connecticut Storytelling Center and the National Association for the Preservation and Perpetuation of Storytelling, the Congress offers keynotes, presentations, workshops, panel discussions and group meetings on a wide range of topics of interest to educators, storytellers and librarians.

For more information call NAPPS at (615) 753-2171.

*Ed.'s Note: See also Peninnah Schram's "Storytelling: Five Steps to Teaching Others" and "Bibliography of Jewish Stories" in Ten Da'at, 2:1 Fall 1987.*

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# Disciplined Discipline

Joel B. Wolowelsky

**M**any years ago, I was a member of the educational faculty at the Mount Scopus College Counterpoint Seminar in Melbourne, Australia.\* At the time, the American staff directed virtually all of the seminar activities, but Mount Scopus sent some faculty members to help maintain discipline and ensure that students understood that this was a school function. One was a history teacher from Britain. A prim and proper Englishman, he wore a tie and jacket while the rest of us wore jeans.

He and I were talking in the camp office one day when an advisor rushed in to report that two boys were fighting in one of the bunks. Advisors went to establish order and I suggested that we follow and make certain that everyone understood that this sort of thing would not be tolerated. No, said my British colleague, we first had to place a bench outside the door of the office. Even allowing for cultural differences, I thought that this was a rather curious reaction. My facial expression must have revealed my thoughts, as he offered an explanation: Schoolboys sometimes fight, he said, and the advisors were quite capable of breaking up the scuffle. Our job was to impose discipline. He intended to march into the room and tell the two boys involved to go and wait

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*Students can distinguish between infractions which are serious and those which demand only a reprimand.*

for him outside the camp office. He couldn't very well do that if there were no bench there on which they could sit and wait!

At the time, I thought this reasoning was, well, strange. But, as with many other things, time and experience has convinced me that his reaction was right on the mark. He had seen the incident in perspective, would not respond without first planning out his reaction, and knew that a cooling off period was required before he spoke to the students. Breaking up the fight required an immediate response; figuring out how to send an effective message demanded deliberation and

levelheadedness. As we walked to the bunk — he leisurely, I impatiently — he asked me to explain the goals of the Counterpoint program, describe the rest of the week's agenda and outline our impressions of the Mount Scopus students. His disciplining would have to fit into our overall program and goals.

Indeed, discipline in a yeshiva is but one component of a total program. How we discipline affects the message we send about *Shabbat*, *kashrut*, and *yirat Shamayim*. From time to time, then, it might be a good idea to step back and reassess our approaches. Here are a few principles to consider.

**Never discipline in anger:** No matter what the issue, the first thing to do is to calm down. Students often anger us when they misbehave; they can be hurting themselves, others, the school, us. But outrage and exasperation force a narrow perspective, and broad vision is required to help a student grow in Torah. Once the crisis has passed and the perpetrator is revealed there is time to deal with the issue. It is better to wait until calmness restores a broader perspective.

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\* This program, one of the most significant of the many activities coordinated with the help of the Max Stern Division of Communal Services of Yeshiva University, brings a group of American educators and graduate/professional students to Australia to coordinate a series of ten day seminars at a camp site outside of the city. About 200 students from Mount Scopus, one of the world's largest Jewish day schools, attend each seminar.

**Keep a perspective on the nature of the infraction:** It's one thing to say in a *mussar* talk that insulting someone in public is akin to spilling blood; it's another to confront a student who has publicly humiliated a friend with the charge that he or she is a murderer who should be expelled from school. Students can distinguish between infractions which are serious and those which demand only a reprimand. If the two are confused, not only will the administrator or teacher lose the students' respect, but the whole discipline will be counterproductive. The more important the infraction is, the greater the necessity of discussing the issue with colleagues *before* confronting the student. The stakes are high when the charges are significant.

**Condemn the action, not the student:** Very rarely does a single specific action typify a person. At some point it may be necessary to make the student aware that it is his or her specific action alone which calls for reprimand. Don't confuse the student with the infraction he or she has committed.

**Know the student that is being disciplined:** Good students also need to be reprimanded from time to time. But even if the offense is serious, a student who has invested years in creating a *shem tov* (good name) must be spoken to differently than a person who is a chronic troublemaker. It's true that we have an obligation to remind students — and ourselves — that a *shem tov* can be lost through a single stupid judgment. But we must be on guard against sending the message that there's no point to investing in earning a *shem tov*. Of course, the good student must be punished fairly. But how we speak to the student is part of the message we send, and when we don't acknowledge the *shem tov* of the person, we send a very negative message.

On the other hand, there are students who present themselves very well in a confrontation but who are chronically troubled or troubling. Knowing the person's history is a crucial component in determining a reaction. Either spend the necessary time examining the student's background or turn the matter over to someone who knows him or her.

**Don't abuse the principles of "making an example":** Sometimes students must be publicly disciplined so that others will understand the consequences of their deeds. But this means applying *middat hadin*, not imposing an unwarranted

punishment in order to show that the administration has the power to act. The student being punished must be the primary focus of attention, not his or her friends.

**Say what you mean and mean what you say:** One of the first rules of education is not to say anything that is not meant. The administrator who expels a student expecting to reinstate him or her after the parents beg for review — on the "theory" that they will be grateful for the reconsideration — sends many conflicting messages.

"Street smart" students quickly learn that such threats are usually meaningless; in effect, they are being tempted to try anything, having been led to mistakenly believe that no serious punishment ever follows. The school conveys the mes-

*Making a student learn mishnayot by heart for [a punishment] is a mistake — learning Torah is a treat, not a punishment.*

sage that threats don't count. On the other hand, many students take seriously what they are told by people in authority. When such a good student and his or her family must cope with the agony of a threat of expulsion that was never truly meant and which will eventually be withdrawn, the result is, at best, a negative, unproductive experience for everyone.

**Make sure the punishment makes sense:** There's nothing wrong with a purely punitive punishment, but it's a mistake to try to make it look "educational." Staying for detention may make a student aware that the infraction is not worth the price. There might be value in demanding an apology even if the student feels none is required; hurting another person requires an act of contrition. But making a student learn *mishnayot* by heart, for example, is a mistake — learning Torah is a treat, not a punishment. Worst of all is demanding an essay on why the halakha condemns the student's action. If he or she still doesn't understand that by the time the disciplining session

is over, there is no point in such an assignment. If the student thinks that he or she was justified, the essay will be a search for what the administrator wants to see, not what the halakha demands. The disciplinarian might be able to point to the essay as vindication of need for punishment, but there is no real educational value in such a composition. Better to have the student write a hundred times "I was wrong and will not do it again" — itself a pointless assignment — than encourage the abuse of Torah study by such a punishment.

**Don't try to avoid the responsibility of disciplining:** In many ways, disciplining a student is the hardest part of administering a school. But walking away from a bad situation is to encourage its return in a worse form. It's never popular to be the person administering discipline, but

when it's done fairly and constructively it forms the foundation of *hinukh*. People who want to earn everyone's friendship by never disciplining wrongdoers are more concerned for themselves than for their students' growth.

**Don't be afraid to apologize if you've overreacted:** Administrators are human too. If in the heat of anger unfair charges are made, it's the responsibility of the administrator to apologize. Doing so isn't backing down; it's showing by example how honest people deal with honest mistakes. In personal situations one has the option of not apologizing. As an administrator, however, the issue becomes one of *kavod haTorah*. The apology is a *kiddush haShem* in addition to being an effective *hinukh* tool.

How did that Mount Scopus teacher discipline the two boys who were fighting? I never found out. All I know is that after he spoke to them in private, they were active and positive participants for the rest of the seminar program. He seemed to know what he was doing. ■

# Black Jewish Relations Today

## Parting the Waters America in the King Years, 1954-1963

by Taylor Branch

A review essay by Hillel Goldberg

*Ed's Note: The issue of Black-Jewish relations is part of the fabric of American society. We offer the following insights as an important perspective to include in curriculum on the topic. Ten Da'at is interested in programs, units, and resources in this area that have been successfully implemented in your school.*

### I

*Parting the Waters: America in the King Years 1954-1963*, by Taylor Branch, is an extraordinarily titled book of extraordinarily vivid power. Truly, from a black perspective, the structural reorientation America needed after Reconstruction was as radical and remote as the parting of the Red Sea for the ancient Hebrews gaining freedom. "Almost as color defines vision itself, race shapes the cultural eye," opens Taylor Branch, in explaining why he had to write this book from a black perspective — yet not only from a black perspective.

To recreate the perceptions within [Martin Luther King, Jr.'s] inherited world would isolate most read-

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ers, including myself, far outside familiar boundaries. But to focus on the historical King, as generally established by his impact on white society, would exclude much of the texture of his life.

To overcome these pitfalls of a racially divided society, Branch tried "to make biography and history reinforce each other by knitting together a number of personal stories along the main seam of an American epoch." From black culture: stories. For white society: a seam of life. In short, the book tries to "rise from an isolated culture into a larger history by speaking more than one language."

*Parting the Waters* speaks many languages. It speaks the language of black Baptists, deeply rooted in the Hebrew Biblical metaphor of parted waters, of "righteousness rolling down as a mighty stream" and similar images popularized by Martin Luther King, Jr. It speaks the white language of dominance, deeply rooted in a vision of America that oppressed blacks and, perhaps worse, peered into daily life as if black America didn't exist. It speaks other languages, too, and it speaks them wonderfully: the language of dramatic narrative, of scholarly research, of theological debate, of biographical snapshot, of historic mood, of political power, of black churches, and, always, of violence. Perhaps this last language is the most revealing to a white reader. Whites did not, because they could not, know the extent of violence perpe-

trated against blacks during the civil rights movement. Not all the violence was reported because it couldn't have been; it was so sustained that to report it fully would have been to remove most everything else from the front pages. As white America in the late 1950's and early 1960's looked to Krushchev and Kennedy, to Cuban missiles and Berlin crises, to U-2 and the Peace Corps, blacks looked to violence. It was almost daily fare. To win constitutionally guaranteed freedoms, blacks paid with their lives and not just the activists. Lynchings and killings and assorted beatings and burnings struck blacks merely by dint of that peculiarly American bugaboo, race.

By way of example: Before I read this book there was etched in my mind that awful picture of a Greyhound bus burning outside Anniston, Alabama: the symbol of the "Freedom Rides." What I did not know, first of all, was that the bus was not "merely" bombed; it was bombed with the passengers, white as well as black, still inside, the bombers ferociously trying to hold the front door shut so that the passengers would burn to death. What I did not know, second of all, was that numerous other acts of violence were perpetrated almost daily against Freedom Riders all over the South. What I did not know, third of all, was that even as these Freedom Riders, whose only goal was to desegregate bus terminals and whose only "weapon" was their own unarmed bodies — even after they risked their lives for months and won the desegregation of

several bus terminals, the violence didn't stop.

Part of *Parting the Waters'* strength is its precision in explaining the circumstances of the violence. It is as if Branch were an eyewitness at several places at once. He takes us through the marches and riots, drawing into focus the acts of individual policemen up to the local police chief, then the governor, the judiciary, Justice Department functionaries, and, finally, the President of the United States himself. Taylor weaves their individual acts of violence or sanctioning thereof — or their helplessness before it — into the textured mosaic it was. As if all this were not enough, he carries us into black strategy sessions and prayer meetings to record the strategic and emotional responses to each wave of violence. It is as if Branch were watching split-screen television, except that his television sports not just two or three but ten scenes, all of whose simultaneous images he coherently sets down for the reader. At the heart of Branch's dramatic narrative are the initiatives and responses of Martin Luther King, Jr.

## II

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Few Americans have not heard "I have a dream." Branch recaptures in print the intellectual and rhetorical background whence this oratory sprang. Intellectually, King reached beyond the confines of his father's Baptist tradition, though without ever losing its emotional power. King's intellectual curiosity led at each stage of his academic advancement to vigorous opposition from his father. His father, noting his son's unusual oratorical ability, thought it best for him to become the junior minister at Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church. It was no small thing for an American Negro to make a living, and if one had the talent, the sooner it was put

to use, the better. But King rebelled. It isn't that he didn't relish the security of a comfortable career — his later displays of raw courage in facing violent policemen and enduring white jailkeepers never dampened his taste for fine clothing, fine housing, and fine food — it is just that King's mind was insatiably curious. It couldn't be held back. King's intellectual thirst pushed him north, first to Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania, then to Boston University. Branch makes it clear that during his student years King hardly thought of himself as an aspiring revolutionary. He was as much troubled by Hegel and Tillich and New Testament criticism, and by his pool game, as he was by desegregation, some of whose more onerous manifestations his father's income cushioned. More than anything, King in his late teens and early twenties was in search of solutions to problems of faith and theology.

This is critical to understanding King's later successes. The young King was a theological doubter; it was only out of existential crisis that he came to feel faith, not just affirm it. It was only his trials in wringing rights from recalcitrant whites that generated his first genuine sense of dependence on God — his first genuine religious experiences. These, in turn, he was able to convey with the powerful resonance of a vast reservoir of knowledge. Once he finally felt the fire of faith, he was able to give it an intellectual elaboration that none of his peers possessed. Together, his religious experience and intellectual breadth propelled him past the many other black preachers in Montgomery, Alabama, the city of his first pulpit.<sup>1</sup>

Rhetorically, King reached heights that arguably no other post-WWII American, save John F. Kennedy, matched. What empowered King's oratory was not only his speaking ability. Many speakers can spin a moving tale to press home a point,

or manipulate words to summon an emotion. What made King different was that he had something genuinely new, and genuinely substantive, to say. His most famous lines were not one-liners; they obtruded within profound contexts of thought — contexts, for example, that explained how "justice is [merely] a negative application of love." King's famous lines were interwoven into biblical, philosophical, and etymological expositions. His oratory never outran his content. He never let his power of speech simplify his message. He took the trouble to make distinctions and to illustrate them. He took the time to develop complex themes.

Branch's ability to recreate both the cadence and the content of King's sermons, as well as the audience reaction to them, is uncanny. Branch has not only read the pertinent documents and interviewed the pertinent participants, he has listened deeply to the tape recordings at the King Library and Archives in Atlanta. Part of Branch's ability to make the reader feel as if he or she were sitting right there in Birmingham, or Albany, or Montgomery, with a box seat on the turning points in American civil rights history, is his ability to recapture both the content and the emotion in King's oratory, as well as the audience response. Branch shows how one man, if, yes, dependent on the help of numerous assistants, if, yes, dependent on the shift in American mood after *Brown v. the Board of Education*, if, yes, dependent above all on a Negro populace willing to take risks — how this one man was still the force that elicited the will to fight segregation, and then sustained faltering wills, time and again. Branch shows how Martin Luther King became the one American, never elected to public office, who merited a public holiday in his honor.

## III

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Ever heard of Stanley Levinson? He was white, he was Jewish, he was selfless. He was Martin Luther King's best friend. The two often connected for post-midnight phone calls to review the harsh events of the day — a demonstration, a beating, a jailing — then to plot new strategy, and to discuss fundraising for King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). Levinson coordinated much of the fundraising for King's operations, stopping only when King, who had ignored Kennedy administration pleas to dissociate himself from Levinson, was

*continued*

*His own integrity demanded his seeing black, Jew, and southeast Asians as incidentally different on the spectrum of a common humanity.*

then pummeled *in one day* by the head of the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department, by the Attorney General Robert Kennedy, and by President Kennedy himself to dissociate himself from Levinson. They warned King, subtly and not so subtly, that he was bound to be discredited for his connections to Levinson, since Levinson was a communist. Levinson *wasn't* a communist, but J. Edgar Hoover wanted to get King in the worst way. The most effective technique was to smear King's close associate in the eyes of the Kennedy administration, all the way up to the president. King kept asking for evidence of Levinson's defective patriotism, but no one ever provided any, because there wasn't any. When pressed for some by the Kennedy administration, Hoover hid behind the impregnable claim that to reveal his evidence would be to compromise his intelligence sources. The administration submitted to Hoover's blackmail because Hoover held much over the Kennedys themselves (mainly, evidence of their promiscuous escapades). King was simply battered into submission. He felt he couldn't endanger his movement for Stanley Levinson, but his acceptance of the necessity of cutting ties with Levinson pained King immensely. Levinson, for his part, understood. He selfishly sacrificed his friendship with King for the sake of the cause.<sup>2</sup>

Branch explains how people like John Lewis, Roy Wilkins, James Lawson, James Farmer, Medgar Evers, Rosa Parks, Septima Clark, and Andrew Young gave Martin Luther King the support he needed to do what he did.

But it didn't come easy. Not just because of Southern violence and Northern apathy or ignorance. Not just because no single campaign, whether the Montgomery bus boycott (1955), the SNCC voter registration drives (early 1960s), the Birmingham marches for desegregation (spring 1963), or even the massive march on Washington (summer 1963), achieved more than a partial victory. The victories came piece by piece, a hotel desegregated in this city, a bus terminal in that city, a restaurant or baseball stadium here, a press club or movie theater there. It was slow going — but not just because of whites. The American black leadership was severely divided, at odds with itself.

There was King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which was always at odds with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, not to mention the National Bap-

tist Convention. King's entire political philosophy favored "direct action," while the NAACP favored the courtroom; the National Baptists actively obstructed King altogether. Then too, King's SCLC was taken to task by the students in SNCC. King stoutly resisted them, even as he admired and even supported and mentored them. King felt that only by planning a large campaign, focusing energy and money and people on a single location for a sustained period, could enough media attention be brought to bear on racial discrimination to move the nation. Still, King remained intermittently vulnerable to student demands to take a stand — i.e., to go to jail — when some local outrage captured the immediate attention of the movement. And there were more organizational rivalries: between the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) and the NAACP; between local leadership everywhere and the leaders of the national organizations; not to mention the various personal rivalries that sometimes dropped the hottom out of what otherwise would have been successful campaigns. If Jews believe that the Jewish people is the only, or the uniquely, fissiparous people, think again. *Parting the Waters* proves that the malady of divisiveness strikes blacks at least as grievously.

#### IV

Which brings me to black-Jewish relations today. What does *Parting the Waters* contribute to the present, less than healthy, state of these relations now that the glory days of the civil rights movement are long gone? Black-Jewish relations have undergone two decades of injury, beginning with the post-Martin Luther King self-imposed segregation of "black power"; and then, more decisively, with differences over affirmative action.

## *He was an independent thinker — and his thinking was universalistic.*

In black separatism, there was often an accompanying strain of anti-Semitism or anti-Zionism. In affirmative action, there was not only a shift in the civil rights ethos from King's fight for the equality of opportunity to the post-King fight for the equality of results, there was something more: the long Jewish memory of Czarist debilities imposed by quotas.

Affirmative action sounded and acted too much like quotas for the Jewish community to continue to offer its support of the black struggle instinctively. A new sense of calculation conditioned American Jewish views of the struggle. A new hesitation colored or reduced Jewish participation.

Now, this is a long and complicated story beyond the purview of this article, and not merely because *Parting the Waters* does not cover the later period (nor even the final five years of King's life). The reason the later story does not tally with the earlier one has less to do with the post-King black trends than with the loss of King himself. To put it plainly: If King had not been tragically cut down, things would have been different.

Because King was different.

The area of his difference was as much the process by which he arrived at his universalist aspirations as the aspirations themselves. King did not just say the right things, he believed them. He needed no prompting to see Jews as brothers, he arrived at that conclusion himself, through an arduous process of education and self-examination. He needed no "sensitization" sessions with Jewish defense organizations or prominent Jewish leaders; his own integrity demanded his seeing black, Jew, and, in the late sixties, southeast Asians as incidentally different on the spectrum of a common humanity. In responding to criticism that his outspoken opposition to the war in Vietnam vitiated his effectiveness as a civil rights

leader, he replied that he had fought too long against segregation to end up segregating his moral concerns. These desegregated moral concerns included the oppression of Soviet Jewry, which he spoke out against. His "I have a dream" included "all God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics." In short, King did not believe in black-Jewish solidarity from any sense of calculation. He did not calculate Jewish votes — he never ran for political office. He did not calculate Jewish financial support — his financial base was broad. He did not calculate his horror at the Holocaust — it was of a piece with his own philosophical convictions.

I submit to you that any individual who decides to break a law that conscience tells him is unjust and willingly accepts the penalty for it is at that moment expressing the very highest respect for law. There is nothing new about this. Go back with me if you will to the Old Testament.... Come if you will to Plato's Dialogues.... Come to the early Christians.... Come up to the modern world. Never forget that everything that Hitler did in Germany was legal. It was illegal to aid and comfort a Jew in the day of Hitler's Germany. And I believe that if I had lived there with my present attitude I would have disobeyed that law, and I would have encouraged people to aid and comfort our Jewish brothers....

Any Baptist minister who is equally at home with civil disobedience in the Hebrew Bible ("Old Testament"), the Dialogues of Plato, the martyrdom of early Christians, and the hunted Jews of the Holocaust works from a worldview decisively broader than the black leadership that immediately succeeded King.

The spur to King's universal vision was his theological doubting. He came to the study of Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich, of New Testament criticism and the Hebrew Prophets, out of intellectual need. It must always be remembered that active doubting is active engagement with the issues of faith. In searching for answers to ultimate questions — especially against a parental and cultural background that claimed it already had the answers — the searcher is probing the depths of his being. He is no dilettante. No liberal arts eclectic. He is existentially engaged. Which means that when he does

arrive at answers, however complicated or tentative, they control his conviction. They give him an inner bearing that draws everything centripetally into the scope of his own, hard-won evaluative bent. King was judgmental in the best sense. He knew what he believed from a long reevaluation of his intellectual patrimony. He was an independent thinker — and his thinking was universalistic. His loss was a loss to more than American blacks. It was a loss to Jews and Asians and lovers of humanity everywhere.

How do Jews and blacks recapture what was lost? I shall leave the details to experts in the field. But one thing is clear: however the details are massaged, there will be no qualitative change until the sense of calculation is transcended — until the original humanistic Martin Luther King ethos, and Stanley Levinson ethos, are restored.

Right now, "black-Jewish relations" is a term, and a reality, connoting negotiations: something wanted, something given. If ever these relations are to reach a higher plane, to resemble what once was, the sense of calculation will have to give way on both sides to a sense of common struggle and common aspiration. Whether this will happen, I cannot say. But to make it happen, I suggest that those who want it to happen return to Martin Luther King — read *Parting the Waters* — and pay special attention to the special hold that the Hebrew Prophets exercised on him. Then, perhaps, Jews shall instinctively reach out to blacks from a genuine sense of loyalty to their own tradition; and blacks shall instinctively reach out to Jews from a genuine sense of loyalty to the one man who, more than any other, shaped and advanced their destiny in this century. ■

#### FOOTNOTES

1. There was something else in King's academic searches that determined the course of his subsequent career. This was the multifaceted impact of the Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr's thinking on his own.

As a student, King had a way of retaining his vocational aspiration as a preacher alongside his theological doubts. The way was morality. A preacher who could not talk about salvation could always talk about the Ten Commandments (as Branch puts it). The problem was, Niebuhr knocked from under King his confidence in the efficacy of preaching morality. Here, the problem was (as Niebuhr explained it) that moral individuals could not make much of a difference. Niebuhr distinguished between "the character of people acting in large social groups as opposed to their character as individual people." Large social groups

— nations, corporations, labor unions — would always act selfishly, and would respond only to power. If King's escape from theological doubt was morality, it would have to be more than the preacher's morality of self-betterment. It would have to be political. Ghandi's stress on non-violence as a strategy of political empowerment was, to King, merely the finishing touch on a more fundamental reorientation from innocent pulpit pyrotechnics to profound political involvement.

This is why the typical Christian otherworldliness did not dominate King's sermons, why his oratory was political as much as it was religious, why he was able to summon the Western philosophers of social change and the Hebrew prophets of social protest so naturally. King's intellectual curiosity drew him to religious philosophy out of doubt, and then reinforced it in moments of despair. In these moments, when all progress in a given racial crisis seemed stymied, the particular bent of religious philosophy to which he had warmed served him best. This was the philosophy of Niebuhr, which told him (as he reformulated it) that if "love is one of the pinnacle parts of the Christian faith, there is another side called justice. And justice is really love in calculation. Justice is love correcting that which would work against love." To the Christian love of turn-the-other-cheek, King added the Jewish love of justice.

Political justice.

2. Levinson is but one of the tens of figures whose convincing portrayal in *Parting the Waters* make it a compelling history. Branch compliments his layered portrait of King with equally adept, if less extensive, portraits of Montgomery's Rev. Ralph Abernathy, King's chief assistant and successor as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (who passed away last year); Robert Moses, the indomitable founder of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), whose capacity for calm in the face of personal violence exceeded even that of King; Harris Wofford, the Ghandian who was resented by Kennedy's closest advisors but probably won Kennedy the black vote — and thus the 1960 election — by convincing Kennedy to phone King's wife Coretta when King was jailed in Georgia in 1960, and who then, unbeknownst to Kennedy, trumpeted the call in hundreds of thousands of leaflets distributed to black churches around the nation the Sunday before the election; John Doar, the idealist in the Justice Department who halted riots and pressured the FBI to prosecute civil rights offenders; Harry Belafonte, the entertainer, who put his name and fortune on the line for King time and again; Bayard Rustin, the impossibly iconoclastic and uncontrollable veteran activist who had to be deliberately kept from the spotlight, lest he say or do the wrong thing; Birmingham's Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, who, like Abernathy, sacrificed his safety and brought intelligence and courage to many fights in which, however, he (like Abernathy) was overshadowed by King; J. Edgar Hoover, who seemed as sympathetic to civil rights as the Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan; and Diane Nash Bevel, an unsung hero, a student who was young enough, brash enough, and courageous enough to keep the movement going at any number of turning points when it seemed on the brink of collapse.

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# Teaching *Ta'amei Ha-Mikra* at an Early Age

Daniel J. Lasker

Recently my family celebrated two *semahot*—my oldest son, Yonah, became a bar mitzvah, and my middle son, Dovi, began learning *Humash*. Throughout the bar mitzvah preparation I was struck by the fact that preparing the Torah reading would have been so much easier if Yonah had been taught the *te'amim* in first grade and not when he was close to his bar mitzvah. The *te'amim* would have been second nature to him by then, and we could have spent more time on the content of the *parshah* rather than on the form. Some of the drudgery of constant repetition could have been avoided.

At the same time as Yonah was struggling to learn his Torah reading, his brother was also chanting *pesukim* from the *Humash*. His chanting, however, had nothing to do with the *te'amim*—it was simply a meaningless singsong. This singsong is also used when performing rote translations of the text, the preferred method of instruction in his present school. No effort is made to teach him that the *Humash* has its own unique melody—one which is determined by the *te'amim*.

Teaching children *ta'amei ha-mikra* at an early age serves to avoid the pain and

effort of bar mitzvah training, but it is much more than that. Teaching the *te'amim* are part and parcel of a true education in *Humash*, as much, if not more so, than Rashi. The *te'amim* are not just window dressing; they are not intended merely as a pleasant tune for the synagogue reading. The *te'amim* play an important role in the understanding of the text of the *Humash*. The *te'amim* break each verse into its component parts, acting as an advanced system of punctu-

ation. It is impossible to understand fully the meaning of the Biblical text without its notes; indeed, without the *te'amim* one cannot even accent the right syllables and thereby read the Hebrew correctly.

Our Biblical exegetes have often stressed the importance of *ta'amei ha-mikra*, since the *te'amim* frequently give a different meaning to the verse than does a reading which ignores the notes. The *mefarshim* have also discussed whether the simple explication of the text always follows the *te'amim* or whether other explanations are possible. All agree, however, that the *te'amim* are indispensable for a full understanding of the Bible.

The *te'amim* are more than just exegetical aids. Rabbi Judah Halevi (*Kuzari* 2:72) stated that they are unique to the Hebrew language, one of the aspects which makes Hebrew superior to other languages. *Te'amim* take the place of facial gestures and expressions in indicating the meaning of the speaker. They show us where to stop when we are reading the Bible, clearly separating distinct matters. They also distinguish between questions and answers, between subject and predicate; between that which was said quickly and that which was said slowly. No other language has this unique feature.<sup>1</sup>

All the benefits of knowing the *te'amim* are lost on the child if they are replaced by the meaningless singsong inherited from the *heder*. As our children begin to learn *Humash*, would it not help them to learn both the words and the notes?

*It is impossible  
to understand  
fully the  
meaning of the  
Biblical text  
without  
its notes.*



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Should they not be taught this feature of Biblical Hebrew which sets it apart from all other languages? If we want our children to understand the Bible fully, the *te'amim* are an integral part of that education. Ideally, they should be taught the notes of the *te'amim*; minimally, they should be taught their functions and how they help to understand the Biblical verses.

Teaching *Humash* with *te'amim* in the elementary school will not be easy to institute. Administrators and teachers must adjust to a new part of the curriculum and a new way of presenting the Hebrew text of the *Humash*. In addition, many teachers must themselves learn the *te'amim*. The children, however, will undoubtedly accept the changeover without any difficulties. Indeed, they would probably welcome the chance to be able to read the Torah the way adults do.

Some people will surely object to teaching the *te'amim* especially if it is introduced universally for both boys and girls — lest girls are encouraged to think that they should be publicly reading the Torah. That objection, however, is irrelevant. *Te'amim* should be taught first and foremost so that the meaning of the Torah is better understood. Being able to read publicly at a later age is an added advantage of learning *te'amim* at an early age, but it is not its main purpose.

There will also be those who feel that the traditional singsong chanting of the *Humash* links this generation's children to previous generations of children. It would seem that it is more important to make the connection with those in the past who read the Torah with the correct tune, thereby benefiting from an understanding of the text as it was meant to be understood.

I realize that my proposal comes too late to help Yonah who already knows the *te'amim* or even Dovi who has already started learning *Humash* in another fashion. But it is not too late for future generations of children who will thus develop a deeper appreciation for both the melody and the meaning of the Torah.<sup>2</sup>

#### FOOTNOTES

1. For a full treatment of the nature, function, and importance of the *te'amim* see Mordecai Breuer, *Ta'amei Ha-Mikra be-Khaf-Alef Sefarim u-ve-Sifrei Emet*, Jerusalem, 5742.

2. My thanks to Dr. Moshe Bernstein who discussed with me some of the issues contained herein and also commented on the text of the article.

## A *Te'amim* Primer

Moshe Sokolow

The following is a brief introduction, for teachers, to *te'amei ha-mikra*, with an emphasis on its function as an application of conventional grammar, syntax, and reading comprehension.

### 1. *Te'amim* are Punctuation

Substitute "punctuation" for *te'amim* and their principal function becomes both apparent and familiar: combining words into phrases and indicating the relationship of adjacent phrases to one another. By teaching *te'amim* we are instructing students in punctuation: the syntactical division of a verse as it is meant to be understood. Proper understanding produces proper punctuation; incorrect punctuation betrays misunderstanding.

There is, of course, more to *te'amei ha-mikra* than just recognizing it as Biblical punctuation. We also have to establish the ground rules of Biblical Hebrew syntax and to determine which punctuation values are represented by which *te'amim*.

### 2. Continuous Dichotomy

The principle which governs Biblical Hebrew syntax (*vis a vis te'amim*) is "continuous dichotomy," i.e., a verse is divided into two parts, and then each part is subdivided in two — continuously — until each subdivision consists of no more than two words.

Let us take for instance, Genesis 1:4:

וירא אלקים את - האור כי - טוב ויבדל אלקים בין האור ובין החשך

a) The first, and major, division — indicated by a change of subject or action — separates the verse as follows:

1. וירא אלקים את - האור כי - טוב  
2. ויבדל אלקים בין האור ובין החשך

b) Next we subdivide each part into subunits of no more than two words each:

1. וירא אלקים | את - האור | כי - טוב  
2. ויבדל אלקים | בין האור | ובין החשך

c) Then we establish the relative positions of the parts of the sentence to each other, yielding the following diagram:

[NOTE: All divisions are represented by vertical lines, the height of each line determined by the relative importance of the division it represents. The attached horizontal line indicates the range of the phrase determined by that division.]

וירא אלקים | את - האור | כי - טוב | ויבדל אלקים | בין האור | ובין החשך

d) Finally, the relationships between the subdivided units — like the relationships among major and subordinate clauses in English syntax — are delineated by a hierarchic system of disjunctive (pausal) *te'amim*. (See summary below).

### 3. The Hierarchy of the *Te'amim*

a) The end of a complete sentence is marked by the highest order accent, called סילוק (a.k.a. סוף פסוק) whose symbol is | [NOTE: All *te'amim* are positioned above or below the accented syllable of the word they accompany.] Here: החשך

b) The largest break within the sentence is served by another highest order accent, the אתנחתא (symbol: א) Here: טוב

c) The largest remaining subdivision within each half of the sentence gets a disjunctive accent of the second level: טפחא for האור - את and זקף for אלקים

d) Finally, whenever a second word remains within a unit [NOTE: hyphenated words count as a single word for this purpose], it is served by a conjunctive (joining) accent: תביר is served by (ויבדל: זקף קטן מונח (yielding זקף; וירא) דרגא);

(בין ובין) מרכא both by סילוק and טפחא

e) The result:

d0 | d1 | d1 | d0 | d1 | d2  
וירא אלקים | את - האור | כי - טוב | ויבדל אלקים | בין האור | ובין החשך

### 4. A Summary of the Accents: Disjunctive accents

a) d0 (Hebrew: קיסרים) disjunctives of the highest order  
אתנחתא סילוק

b) d1 (Hebrew: מלכים) disjunctives of the second level  
סגול זקף - גדול זקף - קטן טפחא

c) d2 (Hebrew: משנים) disjunctives of the third level  
זרקא תביר יתיב פשטא רביע

d) d3 (Hebrew: שלישים) disjunctives of the lowest level  
מנה - לגרמיה גרשים גרש תלישה - גדולה פור

Principle of hierarchy of disjunctive accents: The disjunctive accent which divides a phrase is of one level lower than the disjunctive accent which marks the end of that phrase.

Conjunctive accents:

תלישה - קטנה דרגא מהפך קדמא מרכא מנח

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# Perspectives on the *Avot* and *Imahot*

Avishai David

*Ed's Note: The following is an approach to the question of how to present Biblical figures to our students: As larger than life or as very human. Ten Da'at invites additional perspectives and approaches.*

The Ramban in his commentary on the Torah has repeatedly articulated the dictum “*maaseh avot siman l’vanim*.” The footsteps of our *Avot* and *Imahot* are writ large on the pages of Jewish history for they blazed the contours of our future. We, their descendants, are mandated to flesh out those outlines and parameters. They functioned in a “creative” capacity, designing the course of history; we, by precise scrutiny of their lives can glean for ourselves patterns of our history, but we are only treading in their footsteps. A concomitant but equally significant component of this principle is the faith and strength displayed by the *Avot* and *Imahot*. Just as they confronted trials and tribulations and emerged spiritually unscathed so, too, we can be confident of our ultimate ability to survive the long night of *galut* and ultimately merit the *geulah*.

How should Jewish educators present these role models to their students? A cursory examination of the Ramban in his commentary on the Torah seems to reveal conflicting outlooks. In *parshat Hayei Sarah*, the Ramban, commenting on the

verse that describes Eliezer, the servant of Abraham, removing the muzzles from the camels, notes that it is impossible to conceive that the piety of Rav Pinhas Ben Yair was greater than that displayed by Avraham Avinu. Just as the donkey of Rav Pinhas Ben Yair was afforded Heavenly protection in his diet, *a fortiori*, were the camels of Avraham. This fact obviated the need to muzzle them, for a righteous person such as Avraham couldn’t possibly be subject to mishap of any sort. In sharp contradistinction, the Ramban, in two different contexts, takes Avraham and Sarah to task. Commenting on verse 10 in chapter 12 of Bereishit that describes Avraham going to Egypt as a consequence of a famine in *Eretz Yisrael*, the Ramban notes:

Know that Avraham Avinu inadvertently committed a great transgression by placing his righteous wife in a stumbling block of sin because of his fear lest they kill him; he should have relied on the Almighty that He would save him and his wife and all his possessions.... Also his departure from the land that he was commanded about at the outset, because of famine, was a sin he committed, for the Almighty in famine would redeem him from death. Because of this incident the decree of *galut* in the land of Egypt at the hands of Pharaoh was imposed on his seed; the place of judgment is the place of transgression and wrong.

The Ramban, in this striking comment, has linked the exile in Egypt with the actions of Avraham. Later (16:6), the Torah notes that Sarah afflicted Hagar, and the Ramban comments: “Our mother sinned with this act of affliction, and also Avraham by permitting her to do this. God heard her [Hagar’s] affliction and gave her a son that would be a ‘*pereh adam*’ to afflict the seed of Avraham and Sarah with all types of affliction.” Again the Ramban has connected the actions of Avraham and Sarah with the maltreatment of generations of the Jews at the hands of the descendants of Yishmael.

The Ran in his *Drashot* asks the following questions on the Ramban’s comment regarding the famine: 1) Later on we encounter a famine during the days of Yitzhak (26:1), and he too wanted to go to Egypt to escape the throes of the famine. The Almighty commanded him to remain in *Eretz Yisrael*. The Ran asks, if Avraham’s descent to Egypt constitutes a transgression, then why would Yitzhak want to follow such a course: *ipso facto*, we must assume that Yitzhak was unaware that this was tantamount to a sin and therefore chose to do so as a rational choice given the exigency of the moment. If so, how did the Ramban know that it was a transgression? 2) Furthermore, if jeopardizing his wife’s situation also constituted a transgression, why then did Yitzhak simulate this behavior?

To resolve these questions, one must probe the aforementioned principle of *maaseh avot siman l’vanim*. The first sev-

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## If we view them as transcendent demigods, they will be beyond our intellectual and emotional purview.

enty five years of the life of Avraham aren't subject to the principle of *maaseh avot*. Every subsequent event transcribed by the Torah has signal relevance for the future unfolding development of *kneset Yisrael*. Avraham and Sarah are the roots of the tree and we are the branches and foliage. The frenetic *hakhnasat orhim* of Avraham, of "I pray you, let a little water be brought," is related to the well that sustained the Jewish people in the desert; the morsel of bread given to the *orhim* by Avraham, to the manna in the desert; the afflictions suffered by Pharaoh in Egypt during the days of Avraham, to the afflictions given out to Pharaoh, King of Egypt; Avraham leaving Egypt laden with material goods, to the booty taken by the Jews when they left Egypt. The footprints of the *Avot* and *Imahot* are therefore indelibly etched into our historical psyche. Therefore, even though the Ramban takes Avraham to task, once the *Avot* chose to act as they did, it automatically assumed the cosmic dimensions of *maaseh avot siman l'vanim*. Similarly Hazal critique Yaakov in initiating the encounter with Esav, described in the beginning of *parshat Vayishlah* cited by the Ramban. Yet even though Yaakov could and perhaps should have chosen an alternate approach and *modus operandi*, once he opted for a particular methodology it became hallowed in our value system. The *shtadlanut* of Yaakov became a paradigm for Jews throughout their sojourn in *galut*.

The query of the Ran is therefore resolved. Even though Avraham and Yaakov should have employed a different tack, once they decided to pursue a certain

path, the *maaseh avot siman l'vanim* dictated that the identical course be followed by their descendants. Therefore, Yitzhak initially chose, during a period of famine, to follow his father until he received the Divine directive enjoining him to remain and dwell in this land. The position of the Ramban is inherent in the precise terminology of the Midrash Rabah he cites in chapter 12, verse 10 in Bereishit: "Rabbi Pinhas in the name of Rabbi Oshaya stated: The Almighty told Avraham, go and pave the road for your children." The midrash continues, "And you find that all that is written regarding Avraham is written regarding his children." Therefore, the Ramban suggests, perhaps the descent to Egypt was a transgression, but once Avraham blazed the trail, Yitzhak had to follow suit.

The superstructure that undergirds the history of *kneset Yisrael* was established by the *Avot* and *Imahot* and we can only understand our strengths and weaknesses by studying their lives with exceeding care. The Ramban, throughout his commentary on Bereishit, doesn't fail to accentuate the righteousness of the *Avot* and *Imahot*, in general, and Avraham and Sarah in particular. The Ramban focuses on their impeccable faith and piety, their stalwart commitment and their consuming love of God.\*

The position of the Ramban, therefore, is that even if a particular position espoused by the *Avot* and *Imahot* was lacking in appropriateness, it still has eternal validity and fits into the schemata of *maaseh avot siman l'vanim*. The source for this approach is undoubtedly rooted in

the *kedushah* of the *Avot* and *Imahot* and in their saintly character. They were human beings who by dint of their extraordinary efforts developed and nurtured their personalities. Ramban in his commentary on the Torah has extensively developed the Talmudic notion (Yevamot 121b) that the Almighty deals with the righteous utilizing a different barometer and standard. Harav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch (Bereishit, 12:10-13) in commenting on the Ramban regarding the transgression of Avraham, poignantly notes that the Torah never defies our great leaders and *tzadikim* but presents them as human beings who struggled violently to achieve profound virtues. By honestly describing their characters we are able to relate to them and view them as our role models. It is in that vein that *Hazal* instruct us "A person is obligated to say, when will my actions reach those of Avraham, Yitzhak and Yaakov." If we view them as transcendent demigods, they will be beyond our intellectual and emotional purview. If we view them as human beings who achieved dizzying spiritual heights through their indefatigable self-discipline, then we can begin to comprehend their attainments. Indeed, it is a subtle distinction but a profoundly important one. It's enormously difficult, if not well nigh impossible, to gain parity with the *Avot* and *Imahot*, but we are instructed to attempt to reach (*matay yageea*) or touch their heavenly bound footsteps (Sefat Emet). The Mishnah in Masekhet Megila (25a) states: "The episode of Tamar is read in the synagogue and translated." It's explained in the Talmud that one might have deemed this improper out of respect for Yehudah, but the conclusion is that the passage only redounds to his credit for it underscores the *middah* of confession exhibited by Yehudah. Harav Solveitchik *shlitah* has, in this vein, contrasted the personalities of Yosef and Yehuda in light of a dual typology employed by the Rambam in his *Shemonah Perakim*. Yosef is the "congenital *tzadik* and *hasid*" who successfully defeats the *yetzer hara* at every juncture. Yehuda is the courageous individual who may have faltered but ultimately rose to the challenge and as a result of those qualities merited kingship.

There exists a tendency to either portray the *Avot* and *Imahot* as angels that we cannot relate to or to depict them as finite mortals with foibles and weaknesses that we encounter daily. The first position engenders the problem de-

*continued*

## If we view them as human beings who achieved dizzying spiritual heights, then we can begin to comprehend their attainments.

scribed above; the second, however, reveals an egregious lack of understanding of individuals whom the Ramban often characterizes in kabbalistic terms as being “the chariot of the Almighty.” The Ramban was able to carve out a position which accords them the ultimate *derekh erez* for their *kedushah* and piety, while simultaneously demonstrating their pristine humanity.

In his *Guide for the Perplexed* (part 3, chpt. 51), the Ramban states:

When we have acquired a true knowledge of God and rejoice in that knowledge in such a manner, that while speaking to others or attending to our bodily wants, our mind is all that time with God; when we are with our heart constantly near God, even while our body is in the society of men... then we have attained not only the height of ordinary prophets, but of Moses, our teacher... The Patriarchs likewise attained this degree of perfection.... Their mind was so identified with the knowledge of God that He made a lasting covenant with each of them.... When we therefore find them also engaged in ruling others, in increasing their property, and endeavoring to obtain possession of wealth and honor, we see in this fact a proof that when they were occupied in these things, only their bodily limbs were at work, while their heart and mind never moved away from the name of God....

One must, therefore, be extraordinarily careful not to approach the *Avot* with an intellectual arrogance that would equate them with everyday mortals, but simultaneously one must not catapult them to heights where any attempt to relate to them and learn from them would constitute an impediment to relatively spiritual Liliputians. It's a tensile balancing act that must be utilized recognizing the pitfalls in both approaches. If we succeed however, we will achieve a cognition that there is no conflict and the *Avot* and *Imahot* will become our guides and role models in our lives. As the prophet Isaiah (51:1-2) expressed: “Look unto the rock from where you were hewn and to the hole of the pit from where you are digged. Look onto Avraham your father and onto Sarah that bore you, for I called him alone and blessed him and increased him.” ■

\* See Ramban, Bereishit, 13:13; 15:6; 17:1,22; 18:1,18,19; 21:9; 22:1; 24:32; 25:17.

## Take Note

### *Parashat HaShavua* Teaching Kit

*Robin Kahn and Miriam Klavan*

**P***arashat HaShavua*, a primary part of the elementary Day School curriculum, has often been relegated to a short, hurried synopsis on Fridays. As is the common practice in *kittah aleph*, we originally taught *parashat hashavua* through oral presentation and supplementary pictures. As the year progressed, our students learned to take simple notes — i.e. key words and phrases copied from the blackboard. Frequently, these notes ended up on the wrong page, under the wrong picture, or just completely illegible. In addition, we found that this method lacked several other key factors: the children were unable to describe the *parasha* in an orderly fashion; key mitzvot, *midot*, and personalities were forgotten; and parents were frustrated by the disjointed recounting and the discrepancies. We knew that there had to be a better way.

The *Parashat HaShavua* teaching kit that we have devised combines a sequence of drawings and a graded text that matches the students' progressive ability to read and understand the material. In teaching each of the days of creation, for example, we use vocabulary words similar to those in our day to day speaking. As each of the key sight vocabulary words are used, we hold up flashcards and draw pictures on the blackboard.

As the year progresses, the text is expanded to include simple sentences and, eventually, short paragraphs. There is also a teacher's guide for the first seven *parshiyot* of *Sefer Bereishit*, those *parshiyot* for which complete sentences are not used in the text of the curriculum.

Teaching *parasha* through this method provides our students with the broadest topical spectrum. At the same time, *parashat hashavua* is transformed from just a weekly time filler, into a subject encompassing a significant part of our curriculum — especially Hebrew language skills including vocabulary, verbs, roots, present and past tenses. We also try to encourage verbal skills such as reading and comprehending the written word, constructing a Hebrew sentence, and answering questions in full sentences. In addition, there is a sense of familiarity that students have developed with the Humash that is of benefit when they actually begin their formal study of the text.

Although geared for first grade, the text of the curriculum can be altered in the upper grades to accommodate a higher level, or, the children can provide their own text based on the pictures. They can, after learning the *parashah*, order the pictures sequentially, match text and pictures, or even write their own captions and descriptions for the pictures.

After one year of using this curriculum, we have noticed that student ability to recall and apply the information (such as in the study of the *hagim*) was greatly improved.

At present our teaching kit is available to schools only. We offer the institution a master copy with its name and/or logo on each page. The school may reproduce any or all of the materials, as many times as is necessary, for the institution's internal non-commercial use. ■

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*Ed's Note: Among the schools using this program are: Beth Tfiloh Community School, Baltimore, MD; Manhattan Day School, New York; Yeshiva Central Queens, Flushing, N.Y.*

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# AMBIGUITY AND DISAMBIGUITY: The Case of 1 Samuel 15:27

Moshe Sokolow

## OBJECTIVE:

The main objective of the following is to analyze a delightfully ambiguous *pasuk*. Its secondary objectives include the study and application of Biblical Hebrew grammar and syntax.

## METHODOLOGY:

As a change-of-pace, this unit is approached anecdotally. Rather than formally presenting the various textual sources and analyzing them literarily and exegetically, I have chosen the approach of “talking out” the exegetical possibilities (as one might do while making a “*lehning*” on the text) prior to seeing them in print. If you feel that your class needs the more conventional approach, start with the sources (presented here in the Appendix) and then move back to the discussion.

## INTRODUCTION:

In 1 Samuel 15:23 Samuel finishes rebuking Saul for his insubordination to God in the matter of Amalek. In verses 24-25 Saul makes what we have come, by now, to recognize as his stock excuse: “The people forced my hand,” and he pleads with Samuel to return with him and put on a show of unity before the people. In verse 26 Samuel demurs and deems Saul’s rejection at the hands of God to be

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his just desserts on account of his having rejected the word of God.

And now: “*Vayisov Shmuel lalekhet vayahazek b’knaf me’ilo vayikara.*” Samuel turned away [from Saul] to go on his way, and he took hold of the corner of his coat and it tore.

The (obvious) question is: Who tore whose coat?

## THE POSSIBILITIES:

Four logical possibilities present themselves for consideration:

- (1) Saul tore Samuel’s coat
- (2) Samuel tore his own coat
- (3) Saul tore his own coat
- (4) Samuel tore Saul’s coat

Let us consider and evaluate each of these possibilities.

(1) Conventional wisdom posits that Saul tore Samuel’s coat. After all, he has just pleaded with Samuel to remain by his side, and when the prophet gives the final indication of his refusal—by turning his back on Saul—the king makes a desperate grab for the prophet, tearing the latter’s coat in the bargain.

A likely scenario, indeed, but is it borne out by the text? If Samuel, who is the subject of the first clause (*vayisov*) is not the subject of the second clause (*vayahazek*), shouldn’t a new subject be named? What should win out here, logic or syntax?

(2) Furthermore, how do we treat the ambiguous pronoun reference of *me’ilo* (his coat)? If the syntax of the verse re-

quires Samuel to remain the subject throughout the verse, then he is the antecedent of the pronoun “his,” as well. That is to say: After turning his back on Saul, Samuel proceeded to tear his own coat. But why should he do a thing like that? Was he in mourning, or something? Precisely! Samuel, who had staked his own considerable reputation on Saul, and who now saw the fledgling Israelite monarchy being repossessed from his protege, had every reason to adopt a posture of mourning by tearing his own coat.

(3) For that matter, if the syntax can be overcome by logic and the subject of *vayahazek* is Saul, as the conventional wisdom argues, then it was his own coat which he tore rather than Samuel’s. After all, if a prophet has cause to mourn the collapse of the monarchy surely the monarch himself has an even greater cause?

Neither of these scenarios is unfeasible but they, too, run afoul of the text. *Vayikara*, in Biblical Hebrew grammar, is the reflexive form of the verb *kara*, signifying an accident (“it was torn”), while mourning presupposes a deliberate tearing which would call for *vayikra’ehu* (“and he tore it” which, by the way, is precisely how the Septuagint renders it).

Are we back at square one? Not yet. We have one more logical possibility to pursue.

(4) If the syntax commands that Samuel, the subject of *vayisov*, remains the subject of *vayahazek*, then that confirms that he did the tearing. The third person masculine singular pronominal suffix at-

*continued*

tached to the coat (*me'ilo*) however, is sufficiently ambiguous to allow for one final permutation: Samuel turned, and Samuel tore—Saul's coat!

But, wait. Forget the grammatical point about *vayikara*—logic alone proves this impossible. While Saul's grabbing of Samuel's coat—because the latter was about to abandon him—is plausible, as are even the less-likely possibilities of self-tearing in mourning, is it behavior becoming a prophet to tear the coat of a king?

Perhaps a peek at 1 Kings 11:29 ff. is in order. There, too, a monarchy is repossessed and there, too, the “dramatis personae” are a prophet and a king.

During that time Yerov'am went out of Jerusalem and the prophet Ahiah of Shiloh met him on the way. He had put on a new robe; and when the two were alone in the open country, Ahiah took hold of the new robe he was wearing, and tore it into twelve pieces; ‘Take ten pieces,’ he said to Yerov'am. ‘For thus said the Lord, the God of Israel: I am about to tear the kingdom out of Solomon's hands, and I will give you ten tribes.’

If Ahiah's tearing of Yerov'am's coat symbolizes God tearing away Solomon's kingdom, can't Samuel tear Saul's coat to make the same point? Indeed, the same verb, *kara*, punctuates Samuel's next words (15:28): “The Lord has this day torn (*kara*) the kingship over Israel away from you and had given it to another who is worthier than you.”

Indeed, if we—with the benefit of having already read the next chapter—bear in mind that the “worthier other” is David, then the symbolism of the torn coat is uncanny because it is precisely when Saul's coat is torn again—by David, in a cave near Ein Gedi (1 Samuel 24:5)—that Saul is persuaded to acknowledge his claim to the throne (v.21): “I know now that you will become king.”

Another convincing scenario, but—as we have already pointed out—the passive, accidental *vayikara* rules this out as well.

#### THE RESOLUTION:

Now we are really back at square one. Four logical possibilities presented themselves for our consideration and all four have been discounted on grounds of either grammar or syntax. It almost seems as though no matter how hard either Saul or Samuel try to tear one or another's coat,

the Scriptural narrator just won't let them get away with it.

We can decide, however, that as important as grammar and syntax are, they are only tools and are subordinate to the dictates of logic and common sense. In which case, let us return to the conventional wisdom with which we began and see if we can hurdle the syntactical obstacles we placed before it.

*Vayisov Shmuel lalekhet*: Ignoring Saul's plea for unity, Samuel turns to go on his way.

*Vayahazek b'knaf me'ilo*: Whereupon Saul, in desperation, seizes the prophet's coat by its corner.

*Vayikara*: By the force of Samuel's turning one way and Saul pulling in the other—it tears.

While only this explanation, of the four, conveys the accidental value of *vayikara*, the problem is that, without the interposition of a new subject (Saul), *vayahazek* is still governed by Samuel. Unless Saul has already been established as its subject by virtue of a previous verse.

But how can that be? Did Saul seize Samuel's coat prior to verse 27? He did; and we have two reasonable proofs to demonstrate it.

First of all, the verse does not employ the simple verb *vayohaz* (or: *vayitpos*), to take hold, but it uses the intensive verb *vayahazek*, to strengthen one's grip, which implies that Saul had already taken hold of Samuel's coat and, now that Samuel was threatening to abandon him, he *tightened* that hold.

The second proof comes from v. 16 of this same chapter. Saul greeted Samuel with the claim “*Hakimoti et devar Hashem*” (I have upheld the word of God, v. 13), which Samuel countered with “*Umeh kol hatzon hazeh be'aznai*” (what is this bleating of sheep in my ears, v.14), which Saul tried to excuse as *lema'an zevo'ah* (intended for sacrifice, v.15).

Samuel then says to Saul: “*Heref ve'agidah lekha et asher dibber Hashem eilai halaila*” (v.16), which I would translate as “Let go of me [and not “stop” as in the J.P.S. translation] and I shall tell you what God said to me last night.” “Let me go” (or: “Stay your hand,” as J.P.S. itself translates *heref* in 2 Samuel 24: 16) implies that Saul had already taken hold of his coat.

#### IN CONCLUSION:

The conventional wisdom prevails. (Indeed, the new J.P.S. translation had no problem translating our verse: “...and Saul seized the corner of his robe...”, as

though it were actually written in the text, which it is in the Septuagint which they were probably following. The Septuagint, by the way, also reads *vayikraehu*, and he tore it, in the active voice.)

Saul tore Samuel's coat, accidentally, and the prophet capitalized on the incident to turn the torn coat into a symbol of the imminent tearing away of Saul's kingdom. Some time later, Saul came to appreciate the significance of this symbolic act, himself, as a sign that it was David—who tore his coat—who was to be his successor. ■

#### APPENDICES:

##### I. Our verse in Medieval *parshanut*:

אין זה בענין קריעת בגד אחיה השילוני והענינים  
מבוארים עם הבדל הלשוני.

##### II. “Grasping the hem” in ancient Near Eastern literature:

According to Ronald A. Brauner, the grasping of the hem of a garment in ancient literature simply signifies supplication, importuning, submission to a superior. “The tragic irony here,” he writes, “is that Saul, in attempting to set matters straight, inadvertently tears Samuel's mantle and completely botches a potentially most significant and meaning-laden act.”

“To Grasp the Hem and 1 Samuel 15:27,” in *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University* vol. 6 (1974), 35-38. (My thanks to Dr. Edward Greenstein for the reference.)

##### III. Some reservations raised by Nechama Leibowitz in correspondence:

(a) The actual use of *vayahazek* in *Tanakh* is broad enough to encompass “take hold” as well as “strengthen one's hold.”

(b) Prophets usually create their own symbols deliberately, rather than relying on something to occur by accident. Cf. Jeremiah 19: 1-11.

Professor Leibowitz sees an allusion to this in the commentary of Ibn Caspi on our verse. He cites the episode of *Ahiya Hashiloni*, but declines to compare it with our own, saying:

- א. ילקוט שמעוני (בי תשכ"ד)  
ד"ה: מעילו של מי: רב ולוי. חד אמר: מעילו של  
שאל וחד אמר מעילו של שמואל.  
אמר רב שמואל בר נחמני: נראין הדברים כנף מעילו  
של שמואל שכך דרך הצדיקים להיות מצטערין בשעה  
שאין נטיעתן משובחת.
- ב. רש"י.  
שאל החזיק בכנף מעיל שמואל כדי שישוב עמו.
- ג. אברבנאל.  
כאשר פנה שמואל ללכת מעם שאל אחז שאל בכנף  
מעילו של שמואל לבקש ממנו שישוב עמו על כל פנים  
וישתחוה בגלגל לפני ה'... ואז קרע שאל כנף מעילו  
של שמואל.
- ד. אבן כספי.  
מעילו כינוי לשמואל.

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# Religious Zionism and Yeshiva Education

David J. Schnall

**I**t is a typical Saturday night gathering of close friends and old college classmates. The banter is light until the conversation turns once more to the education of our children. Listen in:

Avi: "You used to belong to Bnai Akiva. Doesn't it bother you that they pay no attention to Israel or Zionism at your son's school? I hear that on Yom Ha-Atzmaut the Rosh Yeshiva talks about how bad Israel is and how wrong it is to celebrate her independence."

Jerry: "I know what your're saying. On this count, maybe I'd be more comfortable with the Hebrew Academy. But their Jewish education can't meet the yeshiva's."

Chavi: "Oh come on, Avi, don't be naive. My children attend the Hebrew Academy. Sure they have a more positive attitude toward Israel, but all that means is they dance on Yom Ha-Atzmaut or march in a parade once a year. If that's what sets us apart from the more 'yeshivishe' schools—"

Dina: "Wait a minute. For the past three years my son has discussed little else than at which Israeli yeshiva he will study next semester. The very culture of the school has Israel imprinted. Nobody can tell me they haven't done enough to encourage Israel."

Miriam (heatedly): "You wait a minute! The boys at my son's yeshiva also care

about Israel. During the whole thing with Iraq they fasted and said Tehillim. They aren't going to the Hesder yeshivot, but the idea of a year learning after high school is ingrained in our kids too and lots of them go to Israel."

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## I

Attitudes toward the State of Israel and its importance to Jewish life are a lively and dynamic aspect of contemporary Orthodoxy. In regard to yeshiva education, they have become litmus to a school's orientation on the well-trodden continuum from Centrist Orthodoxy to the "Right Wing." Even in those circles where they are said to carry weight, one can reasonably inquire about the extent to which they have been given priority and the preparedness of those charged to carry out this aspect of their school's stated objective.

To begin, there is much good news. Hard data support the suggestion that the Orthodox, presumably the primary constituents of yeshivot and day schools in the United States, are Israel's strongest supporters among American Jews. On measures of attachment to Israel, personal contact with Israelis and number of visits to Israel, Orthodox respondents scored dramatically higher than those of other affiliations, outpacing their co-religionists by three to four-fold.

In addition, they were far more likely to have some competence in Hebrew and were better informed about Israeli life and public affairs. Finally, on the acid test

of Zionist commitment, Orthodox respondents were some nine times more likely to smile upon aliyah for their children and the only ones among whom a majority would encourage a year's study for them, at the very least (Cohen, 1987).

That this pattern was confirmed in several analyses over the past decade, is a measure of its robust character. Neither the controversial Lebanon War, nor divisive 1988 Israeli elections, nor Israel's handling of the Intifada have made a dent on the fact that by any definition of loyalty and support for Israel and the tenets of Zionism, Orthodox Jews score dramatically higher than any others (Cohen, 1989; Gruen, 1988; Lazerwitz and Harrison, 1979; Scheer, 1988; Verbit, 1985).

The findings bear further consideration, however. On the issue of Zionist commitment, Orthodoxy has exhibited a sense of inferiority toward the vast majority of American and Israeli Jews who do not share its values. It stems from Orthodoxy's presumed coyness toward Zionism. In general, Orthodoxy had come late to the parade and, in some manifestations, it has not yet joined at all. By contrast, for secular Jews, or for those of other affiliations, support for Israel stands as a central component of belief and behavior.

Notwithstanding the accuracy of this proposition regarding Orthodoxy and Zionism, it was one that has wide acceptance even within the Orthodox community. The current data suggest, however, that if such were ever the case,

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it certainly does not appear so any longer. Political and religious differences though there may be in regard to support for Israel, Orthodox Jews stand in the forefront of the American Zionism.

But for our purposes, there is much more that the data do not tell us. For example, it is by no means clear that the disproportionate Orthodox support for Israel and Zionism is the result of yeshiva or day school education. It is just as likely that it results from commitments modeled in the home. The self-made forces that motivate a family to send their children for a full-time Jewish education, notwithstanding the costs and sacrifices involved, may be those that move them to support Israel in values, words, deeds and dollars. The schools merely reflect these values and amplify them in a social rather than pedagogical sense.

But assume that the schools do play an important role in focusing these sensibilities, adding to the knowledge base upon which they are predicated, and ultimately making a contribution to the findings we have noted. It is still unclear just how important their particular orientation is. Consider the following:

- Perhaps a concern for and commitment to the land of Israel (if not the State of Israel) and (some of?) its residents, is the inevitable result of serious Jewish education, even in an intensely non-Zionist environment.
- Perhaps choosing to study in any yeshiva in Israel creates a linkage with the country, its language, culture and at least some of its institutions that transcends a school's position on its ritual or religious policy.
- Perhaps the very business of debating these kinds of issues along with a myriad of other religious, political and social concerns belies a familiarity with and an active interest in Israel that may not fulfill classic Zionist principles but, despite itself, in many ways, comes awfully close. In sum, blasphemous though it may be —
- Perhaps, in a world where Zionism has become largely interchangeable with behaviors that express support for and commitment to Israel, it is sufficient that one be religious and Zionist without being a Religious Zionist.

## II

Yet there is something disturbing here. Schools of the centrist variety are intended to fulfill a mission that goes far

beyond this rather lukewarm tolerance or acceptance of Israel as a factor in contemporary Jewish life. Those who graduate from their halls are and must be different and more.

The principle is intriguing. For all the rancor that increasingly characterizes relations between the various wings of Orthodoxy this is an area that remains virtually untouched. Herein stands an opportunity to create virtuosi (*beki-im*) in a whole complex of mitzvot that will genuinely distinguish this form of education. Ought one not to be *mahmir* and *medayek*, demanding and fastidious in fulfilling these mitzvot as well?

But if this is to be the mark of a school's accomplishments, a great deal more must be done to incorporate such learning into its curriculum and to train its teachers and administrators in its execution. Opportunities abound.

In the area of religious studies, for example, many sections of Tanakh are veritable Zionist handbooks for the yeshiva student. It is unfathomable that students, even in the lower grades, should study Humash or Navi without fully appreciating the importance that the Land plays in Jewish life and culture. Unfortunately, it happens often. Reflections on the sites of Biblical events, with available slides, maps and charts, should be *de rigueur* in a school for whom Israel and Zionism are a priority. Discussions of the contemporary implications of this ancient relationship might follow with older students. The sum could be periodically incorporated into the *divrei Torah* children typically bring home each Friday.

Those who fear that the move will draw students away from basic skills may rest easy. There is a world of *parshanut* for them to conquer, supporting such instruction. Thus they can continue to develop skills and competencies as they enrich their religious appreciation for the Land. The point is one of additional emphasis rather than change-in-kind.

Similarly in the study of Talmud. There are numerous *sugyot* that deal with the holiness of the Land, its care and nurture and the ethos that must bind those who live on it — Jew and Gentile alike. The contemporary implications of such Talmudic literature and *psak*, whether in areas agricultural, ritual, social or ethical, might serve as a didactic base in the lower grades or for individual research among older students.

Even the most practical and applied areas of instruction yield to this addi-

tional emphasis. Most students in an elementary yeshiva or day school are aware that *brakhot ahronot* differ according to whether they have eaten from the category of produce specially linked to the Land of Israel. Ironically, further detail of this designation and its religious implications in the life of the Jew go begging, though there is every reason to believe that they were delineated precisely to foster the linkage of which we speak.

Of course, there is no reason why the study of Israel should be limited to or segregated by academic division. Particularly regarding Zionism, modern history, international affairs and American foreign policy, there is much that can be done within existing general studies curricula at the primary and secondary levels. Opportunities extend from the "country reports" students typically write in sixth grade to high school social studies honors programs. In addition, Zionist and Jewish communal organizations produce mounds of resource, reference and audiovisual materials appropriate for teachers and students alike.

By the same token, the study of Israel and Zionism is an ideal opportunity for collaboration between the religious and secular divisions.

Many institutions have experimented with mini-mester and *yom iyun* programs, though these tend to draw from one or the other division rather than from both. Presentations by religious studies faculty alongside those from the secular divisions might make for an interesting and academically sound diversion from usual practice.

Alternatively, these could revolve around a plenary led by a visiting expert and followed by workshops, in essence creating an academic conference. Scaled to their needs, this model, utilized by professional organizations regularly, might also be appropriate for an honors program in the lower grades or for the general student body in high school.

One substantive concern bears mention. The quantitative studies cited earlier reflect yet another important characteristic of American Orthodoxy in its relationship to Israel and Zionism. They have consistently found that Orthodox respondents score higher on measures of "hawkishness," are more likely to hold hostile perceptions of the Palestinians and favor Israel's handling of the Intifada in greater proportion, than do their cohorts elsewhere in the American Jewish community. Consequently, they



may harbor a narrow range and a low tolerance for variation in views regarding Israeli domestic and foreign policies.

How a school handles unpopular positions and the extent to which students should be exposed to them are important considerations generally. They, along with the significant question of whether day school and yeshiva education is necessarily tied to a hawkish view of the Middle East, must be carefully evaluated before undertaking programs of this type. However, they need not deter such initiatives. There is much that can be done without necessarily offending parental sensibility, which should not be the final arbiter of curriculum and academic decision in any event.

### III

On a broader scale, if Religious Zionism is to be taken seriously as an aspect of the day school program and if it is to mean more than simply to be religious and supportive of Israel, it is time to consider the creation of a research and training center for its study. The functions of such an institute might include several areas of research, education and training, as a start.

For example, there is a great need for an extensive collection of hard data to complement those briefly described above. Just what is the constituency for Religious Zionism and for Zionism among the religious? What is its demographic, socioeconomic and political make-up, the level and form of its cohesion or cleavage, the nature of its attitudes and commitments? To what degree is it similar to or different from the general Jewish community and its analogues in Israel or elsewhere?

In most practical terms, what attracts it, and to what will it respond — personally, politically and financially? What gaps exist in its ability to evaluate the explosion of information about Judaism, Israel and the Mid-East, to advocate its position and pass it along, emotionally and intellectually, to its young? By what means will it be retained and galvanized or repelled and alienated? Wild speculation about such matters is common, but a reliable data base does not currently exist and, as noted, what we do know has generally been compiled by others.

In the more classically educational sphere, it would be most valuable to compile, organize and coordinate existing curricular and resource materials. Some have been developed for schools, others for camps and still others for social, communal or Zionist organizations not neces-

sarily within the bounds of the Orthodox community.

Publishing bibliographic and curricular listings, developing handbooks for use, offering reviews and informing educators about their availability, making referrals as well as presentations around such collections would be an enormous aid toward the kinds of programs we describe. Why continually “re-invent the wheel?”

By the same token, new and experimental materials might be given fair hearing, even commissioned, utilizing the full range of educational technology and expertise available. This should include testing and evaluation of curricula in terms of objectives and efficacy among students. In addition, it could consider the use of alternative settings (camp, Shabbaton, retreat family education, etc.) as well as alternative methodologies (self-assessment instruments, role-play, small group activities or case studies) commonly used in educational and training programs elsewhere.

Such a center might hold regular consultations, seminars and workshops both on-site and on-the-road. These would be geared to the full spectrum of Jewish education professionals including teachers, administrators, camp and youth directors, rabbis and the like. It should also be focused toward interested others in the lay community, such as parent, student and community leaders. Proceedings could be published and made available to the broadest possible readership through existing journals and/or in some forum of its own.

In all of its activities, the center would make good use of the rich supply of academic, educational, media and technological expertise readily available to the Orthodox community. Indeed, maintaining a regular listing of such personnel, keeping contact with them and “co-opting” them on a project-by-project basis, would become still another function of its operation.

Such a unit would undoubtedly interface with existing Boards of Jewish Education and Religious Zionist organizations. However, it would probably operate best were it located at one of the schools in question and grounded in an atmosphere independent of the forces of politics and personality that too often characterize this environment.

Finally, none of the foregoing is to imply a blanket absence of initiatives in this general arena. Innovative programs and resource materials have been described

and evaluated in the pages of this and cognate journals. It is to suggest, however, that they are the exception rather than the rule. Put directly, a day school education that claims to distinguish itself by its commitment to the study of Israel and the central role it plays in contemporary Jewish life can ill-afford precisely this element of its curriculum to lag or fall prey to lip service. ■

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# The Post-High School Yeshiva Experience in Israel:

## GOALS AND BENEFITS

Jay Goldmintz

*The following was presented at a meeting of the Educational Liaison Committee of the Ramaz School, New York City.*

The purpose of this presentation is to articulate, for students, some of the goals and objectives of attending a post-high school yeshiva program, to communicate with parents who are hesitant about such a program, to explain the uniqueness of this kind of religious experience, and to outline some of the long-term benefits for students whose ultimate goal is to attend college. It is hoped that it will encourage further discussion regarding concrete and creative ways in which we can educate students and parents about the importance of a post high school yeshiva program.

### TO REINFORCE THAT WHICH HAS ALREADY BEEN LEARNED

As a college guidance counselor, whenever I interview students I ask them if they want to go to college. I find perhaps one person every year or two who has the courage to say no or who can at least admit that (s)he is not sure. The rest consider it a foolish question. I then ask them why they want to go to college. At first they look at me askance, again as if the question is an absurd one. Most answer that they want to learn more, they want to be educated. But regardless of

what any individual student means by those terms, almost all agree that high school has not prepared them for the world, that it has not fully rounded out their education, that it has not taught them everything they need to know — even about subjects like math or English or history. In short, high school is not enough. High schools can do only so much.

If this is true for general studies, then is it all the more so for Jewish studies, which has fewer hours of instruction, is

taught and operates in a different language, and receives little reinforcement from the general culture.

Combine the above with the fact that students, at the end of high school, are frequently insecure about their future and are still wrestling with what they do and do not believe in. Many would benefit from time to explore and reflect. Indeed, the university system of higher education, as it is conceived in this country, is in large part constructed in such a way as to encourage students to take their time in reflecting upon the world around them and their place in it. Yet, it is one of the unfortunate trends lamented in higher education that students seem less concerned with existential, philosophical, and purely academic issues than they are with the bottom line of vocational training and opportunity.

What we do manage to convey in Jewish education is a sense of the basics that are a prelude to higher education. Ideally, then, students need to have the opportunity to build upon the basics that they have learned, to begin to pull it all together. They need an intensive learning environment of higher education where they can dedicate their minds and hearts to reinforcing the Jewish learning skills and values that high school, with all of its handicaps, has but given them a taste of. They therefore need to round out their education and, ideally, to do so while those skills and values are yet fresh and in an environment which is solely dedicated to that goal.<sup>1</sup>

Students who return from the yeshiva experience know that *Eretz Yisrael* is the one place where the national religious destiny can be fulfilled.

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## II TO FOSTER SKILLS FOR INDEPENDENT LEARNING

When old skills are reinforced and new ones are learned, students can acquire an arsenal of learning tools that lasts them a lifetime. One of these tools is a proficiency in basic texts so that they can achieve a certain amount of self-sufficiency both in the ability to learn and in areas of halakha. Students should eventually be able to quickly locate the sources for halakhot, such as which candles are lit first on Saturday night — *havdalah* or Chanukah; what changes take place in the *tefillot* on a special day; or why two loaves of bread are used on Friday night and what to do if there are none. Students who return from Israel have the skills to learn on their own and apply that learning and those skills in a way that someone with only a high school education cannot.

## III TO FOSTER AN APPRECIATION OF LEARNING — AHAVAT TORAH

*Torah lishmah* is a difficult notion to convey during a school day of conflicting interests and time constraints. The yeshivot in Israel, however, manage to convey this idea to students in a most powerful way so that they return with an understanding not only of the intellectual rigor of *talmud Torah*, but of the experiential component and with a sense of *kedushah*, the notion that learning can be a form of Divine service. When students come back from Israel they love Torah or, at the very least, they appreciate the central role that it plays in everyday Jewish life.

The successful realization of the above goals have additional significant benefits, depending upon the particular student involved:

1. Very often, too many students graduate from a liberal arts education without ever having really taken advantage of it. They are directionless as they dabble with some of this and some of that — not because they have some notion of commitment to a broad education, but because they do not know what they want or what interests them. Some are simply burned out after high school. A year in which to reflect upon goals and interests can provide greater direction in college itself; it gives many a better idea of what to look for, and how to approach their education. It works, not because they had a hiatus from learning — quite the opposite. Because they were involved in a rigorous academic life for a year, they arrive at college determined to work and maximize the experience.

2. University, by definition, is a marketplace of ideas. (For this reason Jewish studies courses and professors in secular colleges will never take the place of the *talmud Torah* experience. The very definition of university prevents teachers from assuming a *talmud Torah* posture.<sup>2</sup>)

Bombarded by ideas, students are, at best, frequently confused and, at worst, they adopt the lifestyle or value system of their collegiate peer group, charismatic professors, or people whom they are dating. Students who go through the Israel yeshiva experience, however, have a compass with which to direct them through this bombardment; they have a more clearly defined sense of self and a value system that can filter new ideas and concepts. Most important, it is a value system that is based on a recently strengthened commitment, one that is rooted in both the experiential and the intellectual — the ideal hallmarks of university life itself.

3. The very fact that some students live near their teachers on yeshiva grounds affords them the opportunity of establishing the classic relationship of *rebbe* and *talmid* — one that is almost impossible to achieve in a high school setting. Teachers, both men and women, become role models in the finest and most ennobling sense of the term.

At the same time, the learning and wrestling with ideas flourishes under the guidance not of graduate students or RA's and TA's but of adults with experience and maturity. One of the hallmarks of the yeshiva system, indeed of all Jewish education, is that *rebbeim* and their female counterparts are mandated by Jewish law to view themselves as surrogate parents.

4. Unlike high school, the yeshiva has the advantage of being able to create an environment that is completely dedicated to Torah. This has effects not only in the intellectual realm, but in the ethical and moral ones as well. The social contract of the yeshiva is one in which interrelationships and obligations to others are defined and guided by a Torah ethic, an ethic which is too often seen as idealistic or unworkable by those who otherwise have not been immersed in it or who cannot overcome the contrary influences of the majority culture in which they live. "I want to go to yeshiva in Israel," one student said, "because I saw the way some people from last year came back. The way they act towards others is so different

now. I know it's really the right way. I want to be like that." More often than not, these are in essence the same ethical and moral values that parents and teachers have been preaching to students throughout their schooling. The only difference is that these young men and women have finally been afforded the time, concentration, and environment that allow them to internalize those values.

5. Some students are simply not ready for college. By their own admission, they are not mature enough. Living away from home, in another country, yet in a structured environment that more often than not mirrors the values of their home and school, is for them the perfect stepping stone to college.

6. Some students are not ready for college from an academic point of view. One student who took his senior year rather casually wrote about how he was spending his days sitting in the *beit midrash* learning for hours at a time:

This leads to my new philosophy. I hated what I was doing to myself last year [in high school], wasting my time, not getting anything done, but I couldn't break out of it.... When I got here, I saw myself spending free time and nights after *sefer* just *shmoozing* and wasting time. I decided that if I'm going to get something out of this year I have to make a schedule and actually get on paper what I am doing every minute of the day. Now, all of my time is being used.... With my father 6000 miles away and no one to rebel against I've been forced to actually wake up. It's about time. I hope it lasts.

8. Maturity, for some students, translates into the enhancement of their own self-worth:

In [high school] I always thought I was dumb. Teachers used to tell me that in a nice way. Because I couldn't repeat what they said as everyone else, I was not smart. Although my parents always told me otherwise, deep inside I kept thinking that maybe they were just saying that because they are my parents. [In high school] I never thought I would be able to learn with a *havruta* on the same level as me and figure things out. To my surprise I was wrong. I certainly thought I would always need the

*continued*

English for everything. I have good *havrutas* for everything and I have not opened an English translation of anything since I got here!

Not only has independence in learning been acquired, but a stronger more self-confident personality who, more than ever before, believes in herself.

#### IV TO FOSTER A CONNECTION TO ERETZ YISRAEL

One of the biggest frustrations for American Torah and *Navi* teachers is the inability to walk in the footsteps of the prophets, to hear the words of the *shoftim* and *neviim* echoing on a barren hillside in Judea. These are precisely the kinds of field trips that Torah institutions in Israel

take their students on. They thus bring life and vibrancy not only to text, history, and legend, but to Torah mandates and ritual observances. Students who return from the yeshiva experience know that Zion and Torah are inseparable, and that *Eretz Yisrael* is a pathway for approaching God for it is the one place where the national religious destiny can be fulfilled.

#### V TO FOSTER A CONNECTION TO MEDINAT YISRAEL

One of the most vexing problems in Jewish education, and for the organized American Jewish community, is how to foster a commitment to the State among a post war(s) generation. One solution is to visit Israel. As such, students who return from educational programs in Israel

have a national and political commitment to the State, a fact that takes on greater significance when these students become leaders on college campuses and, hopefully, in communal activities.

In addition, most students who return from the yeshiva experience have a commitment to the religious destiny of the State as well. They also begin to understand and experience the challenges of implementing and safeguarding a Torah existence in our own country. The notion of a halakhic society becomes more than a theoretical or textual curiosity. It becomes a stimulating and, at times, painful intellectual, theological, and existential challenge.

Another benefit is a heightened sense of religious pluralism. Whether through volunteer projects, tutoring opportunities, work in development towns and immigrant absorption centers, planned weekends away, or through exposure to an array of faculty, students confront the broad range of people and opinions represented in Israel. Students are able to interact with diverse members of the community whose American counterparts they might seldom have the chance to meet. At the very least, they become sensitive to the differences among these groups and the nuances that connect and separate them.

In conclusion, the yeshiva experience in Israel is a way for students to continue to develop and build upon that which we, their educators, stand for and advocate. It represents the beginning of the fulfillment of the many years spent laying the foundation for a deeper commitment and a more profound higher education. ■

## Take Note

### *The Hillel Guide to Jewish Life on Campus*

Alan Stadtmauer

The Hillel directory has long been an indispensable component of any Day School's college guidance department. Answering a student's questions about Jewish life on virtually any campus necessitates checking the vital statistics — numbers of Jews, availability of kosher food, religious services, etc. The new 1991-1992 edition of *The Hillel Guide to Jewish Life on Campus* provides all this information and more.

Organized by state, the Hillel directory offers instant access to answers to the most common questions about a campus. In addition, entries include a brief paragraph to give a sense of the extent of the Hillel's activities. More important, however, is the name and phone number of a contact person on campus. Frequently, the best answer to a student's (or parent's) inquiry is to provide this phone number thereby recommending a deeper investigation of the campus than any statistics can supply.

The *Guide* is more than just a listing of American Hillel offices. Its 450 campuses includes schools which don't have a Hillel foundation, but are of interest to Jewish students (an obvious example — Yeshiva University). In addition, Canadian and other foreign schools are included. Separate sections provide information on various organizations which serve Jewish students; listings include the addresses for Network, AIPAC, and KIRUV. Yet another list indicates which campuses have degree programs — undergraduate and graduate — in Jewish Studies.

A welcome addition to the *Guide* is a special section dealing with issues of campus life. In addition to providing a basic introduction to students beginning their campus search, a number of provocative essays deal with more unusual issues like commuter schools and small liberal arts colleges.

Overall, the *Guide* is pleasantly laid out, well indexed, and easy to use. While it shouldn't be the last step in a student's college search, it does serve as an excellent beginning.

The *Guide to Jewish Life on Campus 1991-92* costs \$12.95 and is available through Publications Department, B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations, 1640 Rhode Island Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. Telephone orders may be placed by calling (202) 857-6560. ■

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#### FOOTNOTES

1. "Alfred North Whitehead, certainly no cultural philistine, once remarked that an education has got to be narrow if it is to penetrate; breadth alone, uniformly applied, may leave one educated and cultured but hardly competent." (cited in *Torah Umadda*. Norman Lamm. Northvale: Jason Aronson Press, 1990. p. 231)

2. As Professor Marvin Fox has said: "There is a deep and important difference between the traditional study of 'Humash and Rashi' and the study of the history of biblical exegesis in the university.... Universities do not teach Torah, nor do they produce traditional Torah scholars. It is not part of their program to advance religious faith or to foster a sense of identity with the Jewish community. This is simply not the function of the university, and it is a mistake to look to the university for the realization of those purposes." ("What Do We Expect of 'Jewish Studies?'" Marvin Fox. *Sh'ma* 20/383, December 8, 1989.)

# The Computerized Israel Center

Leonard A. Matanky

A little over a year ago, the World Zionist Organization embarked on an exciting and innovative computer project for Jewish education. Under the direction of Marc Shulman, the WZO used a computer to create an interactive "encyclopedia" of Zionism and Israel. Two thousand programming hours later, the Computerized Israel Center is now a reality.

The Computerized Israel Center (known as the Center) is a highly "user-friendly" software program providing access to detailed information on Zionism, modern Jewish history, the geography of Israel, and more. Utilizing "hypercard" technology with the highest quality computer-generated graphics, narration, sound, and animation, the Center makes learning about Israel engaging and enjoyable.

The Center, which is sponsored by the Torah Education and Culture Department, was originally intended to serve as a resource for Jewish Community Centers and Jewish libraries but has proven to be a valuable resource for schools supplementing regular instruction about the State of Israel.

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The Center consists of seven different units:

## 1. People

There are brief biographical sketches of Zionist leaders, Israeli statesmen, politicians, and Jewish religious and cultural figures. The portraits include photographs and, in many cases, actual voice recordings. In this, as in all units, all the information which appears on the screen—including pictures—can be printed.

## 2. Geography

This unit is geared to conduct a tour of Israel via maps of decreasing scale. (Inside the city of Jerusalem, for example, individual streets and intersections can be easily identified.) Multi-color sites and stereophonic sounds accompany the viewer to places of current historical, or archaeological interest, while providing factual data regarding the site's cultural, demographic, and economic conditions.

A teacher might ask students—individually or in groups—to plan tours of various sectors of the country. Giving each one a point of departure and destination, they could be asked to plan an itinerary for a stipulated period of time—to indicate where they would stop, what they would see, where they would spend the night, and even how much it would cost. (The Center can also provide the names of hotels, overnight charges, and the current exchange rate.)

## 3. History

From the "First Aliyah" in 1882, 64 separate historical events can be viewed

chronologically or alphabetically. Other options exist to either preview the whole unit in about 20 minutes, or to obtain smaller sub-units (like the Six Day War, etc.) in about 4-5 minutes each.

Since a better understanding of Israel's political and security needs requires a familiarity with its physical boundaries, the History unit also provides a visual display of maps of Israel which will, eventually, cover the entire historical spectrum from the Biblical period through today.

## 4. Hebrew Language

Geared for preschoolers, this unit offers short animated lessons in Hebrew vocabulary (parts of the body, household objects, animals), and elementary concepts. Eventually, the Center will contain the total vocabulary package of the Torah Department's early-childhood Hebrew program, *Devash Ve-Halav*.

## 5. General Information

Presently the Center contains current information, including charts and graphs, on economics, demographics, politics, health, and Aliyah. In preparation are: education and culture, youth movements, and the Israel Defense Forces.

## 6. Current Events

The Center provides both data and human interest stories regarding Soviet Jewish Aliyah.

## 7. Programs

This unit provides up-to-date information about a host of study programs in Israel. Yeshivot, Ulpanot, Makhonim, and

*continued*

other Torah and Judaic studies programs can be accessed, providing information on enrollment procedures, fees, living conditions, and educational focuses.

### Implementation

The Center is currently suitable for the junior and senior high-school grades, in particular. Portions of it, however, such as the Geography unit, can be used even in the 5-6th grades. The Hebrew language segment fits into an early-childhood curriculum.

Although the installation of the program requires some familiarity with the type of computer being used, the instructions provided and the technical operation of the Center can be followed by anyone. In addition, the sponsors of the Center can assist in training school personnel in its most effective use.

The Computerized Israel Center is available in both color and black and white versions. The color version requires at least a Macintosh LC computer and an 80 megabyte hard drive, while the black

and white version can run on Macintosh Classic with a 40 megabyte hard drive. The entire software package is \$500, while individual units can be purchased for anywhere from \$35 – \$150 per unit. A new version for the Apple IIGS will be available in June 1991.

For further information, or to arrange a preview, contact Dr. Moshe Sokolow, Torah Education and Culture Department of the World Zionist Organization, 110 East 59th Street, New York City 10022; (212) 339-6080. ■

## Madaf HaSefer: Library Notes

### Selections on Holocaust Tales for Young Readers

Eileen Shmidman

**T**he major proliferation of books about the Holocaust has not included a significant amount geared to young children. The following review presents a few selections for kindergarten through grade two.

One of the most clearly written and beautifully presented books for young children is *The Number On My Grandfather's Arm* by David Adler (New York: UAHC, 1987, 26 pages). It is a simple story of a young child who notices the number on her grandfather's arm and asks about it. Her mother says, "It's time you told her," and so the grandfather, putting his arm around the child, tells her what happened. The black and white photographs are realistic, the words are clear, touching and matter of fact.

Another moving tale is *The Tattooed Torah* by Marvell Ginsburg (New York: UAHC, 1983, unpagged). All the Torah scrolls in the Czechoslovakian town of Brno are taken by the Nazis to a central storehouse where they are tagged and tattooed with numbers. After the war an American man who is searching for a Torah small enough for the children in his congregation to carry, discovers this storehouse. He sets out to reclaim all the scrolls and brings the small Torah to his congregation. It is a beautiful, sensitive and gentle story of hope.

A well reviewed and highly-acclaimed book is *The Children We Remember*, by Chana Byers Abells (New York: Greenwillow, 1983/1986, unpagged). Although it is recommended for young children, even adults will find it too painful, too sad and too frightening. The pictures are real and the text harsh. This book should be used very carefully even with older children.

Another heart-rending and frightening story is *Rose Blanche* by Roberto Innocenti (Minnesota: Creative Education, Inc., 1985, unpagged). The author writes "I wanted to illustrate how a child experiences war without really under-

standing it." He has done precisely that — the young reader will understand neither war nor the book. A young child will be terribly frightened and disturbed by this story. The hauntingly beautiful pictures evoke feelings of fright, anxiety and danger. In addition, the character Rose Blanche is not a fair comparison with the "White Rose" in Germany. This book should be used judiciously and delicately (if at all) with very mature students.

*Promise of a New Spring, The Holocaust and Revival* by Gerda Weissman Klein (New York: Rossel Books, 1981, unpagged) was one of the first books written for young children. The author tells of historical happenings in a language a child can understand by comparing it metaphorically to nature being ravaged and then renourished. It helps teach of the courage of those who seek to rebuild and renew: to remember what was; to never let it happen again; and to restructure life with dignity.

*Terrible Things* by Eve Bunting (New York: Harper and Row, 1980, 26 pages) is not a Holocaust story. It is, however, a wonderful allegorical tale which can be used as an introductory lesson for young children. Little Rabbit and all the animals share life in the forest clearing. One day the Terrible Things come and carry away the birds. Big Rabbit tells Little Rabbit not to question what the Terrible Things do. But the Terrible Things return again and again. With only Little Rabbit left, he goes out to tell forest creatures in other places about the Terrible Things. "If only we creatures had stuck together, it could have been different." He hopes someone will listen. The story promotes lessons about family, sharing, habits, caring and rescue. ■

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# Teaching *Baiurei HaTefilla*

Isaiah Wohlgemuth

**E**ducators have always been faced with the challenge of inspiring students toward meaningful *tefilla*. One approach is to emphasize the interpretation of the words and the structure of the *siddur*. The following course utilizes this approach and has been in effect in the Maimonides School of Boston. Its emphasis is on the rationale, meaning and various halakhot of *tefilla*.

The course is divided into a number of units, several of which are taught every academic year. Although the course could have been offered in one year by teaching it daily, we thought it more meaningful to schedule one or two weekly classes on every grade level throughout high school. In addition, each year time is devoted to the *tefillot* of the *Yamim Tovim* to deepen student understanding. In the senior year students take a comprehensive test, as well as present papers on topics that had only been covered briefly.

A bibliography of the course would include all of Jewish scholarship: halakha and *agada*, Talmud and *poskim*, philosophy and history, Jewish literature and poetry. Naturally, only a small selection of that huge material can be covered and I therefore have tried to concentrate on those themes that are most meaningful and interesting. The Talmudic sources of *tefilla*, however, are not curtailed. To give students easy access to those sections I compiled a booklet containing selections,

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as well as review questions. In addition to these sources I also teach Rav Soloveitchik's ideas and philosophy of prayer.

## Texts

The texts used are the *Shulhan Arukh Orah Haim*, the *Siddur Avodath Yisrael* by Yitzhak Ber (Dov) a classic commentary on the *siddur* published in 19th century Germany belonging to the genre of *Die Wissenschaft Des Judentums*, and the above-mentioned text booklet. The school library has many volumes that can be used for research.

## Curriculum

### Grade 8

*Birkot HaShahar – P'sukei DeZimra*

### Grade 9

*Birkot Kriat Shma Shaharit V'Arvit*

### Grade 10

*Amida* for weekdays, *Shabbat* and *Hagim*

*Tahanun* until *Shir Shel Yom*

### Grade 11

*Kabbalat Shabbat – Hallel – Piyutim*

### Grade 12

Comprehensive Review

### All Grades

*Hagim* including *Slihot* and *Hagada*

Special emphasis is placed on *dinim*, adjusted of course to meet the needs and level of each individual class.

## Method of Instruction

The method of instruction consists partly of lectures, partly of class discussions. I point out to my students that *baiurei hatefilla* is not an exact science. For instance, the Talmud teaches that *vidui* on Yom Kippur is said by the individual after the *amida*, but by the congregation in *kedushat hayom*. Why? The Talmud proper does not address this. In asking students for their opinions I receive the most fascinating attempts to solve the problem. Or, for instance, the Ramo and the Mehaber, Rav Yosef Karo, argue about the need to respond to *ahava raba* and to *gaal Yisrael* with *amen*. Naturally, the commentaries offer their insights, but students find much enjoyment in devising reasons of their own. During *neilah* we only say the short *vidui*, why? What is more meaningful, a free prayer as it was said during the time of the first Temple or a set text as introduced by the *Anshei Kneset Hagedolah*? There is no end to the questions and problems that can be posed. Such probing questions stimulate students and keep their interest alive. They frequently offer novel ideas that enrich my own thinking.

## A Sample Lesson

*Birkot Hashahar* from *lasekhvi bina* until *hasadim tovim*

1) Study of Talmud Berakhot 60b from *ki shoma kol tarnegola* until *hasadim tovim l'amo Yisrael*.

*continued*

2) What is the true meaning of *lasekhvi*? If it is to show that these *brakhot* are to be said at certain activities we carry out every morning, such as putting on our shoes, then why do we say them all together in *shul*? See *Orah Haim* 46, 2.

3) Do we say them when we don't carry out the activities (for instance, don't wear shoes?) *Orah Haim* 46,8. From the Mehaber it seems we only say the *brakhot* when we actually perform the activity mentioned in the *brakha*. The *brakhot* are *birkat hodaa*, *brakhot* of thanksgiving. The Ramo seems to indicate that we say the *brakhot* regardless of our activities. They are *brakhot* of praise, *shevah*. We accept the latter opinion and, therefore, we have a different reason for saying all the *brakhot* in *shul* at one time.

4) These *brakhot* are universal in character, yet in two cases we mention *Yisrael*, since we are thanking God for a religious activity, namely, wearing a *kippa* and a *gartel* (noting the differences between Ashkenazic and Sefardic *minhagim*). A further discussion of both mitzvot can develop the *hashkafa* of the students.

5) *Hanoten layaef koah*. Why is there a controversy on whether we should recite it?

6) Where is the appropriate place for *sheasa li kol tsorki*?

7) On not answering *amen* after *meafapoi*. Is the conclusion of this *brakha* in accordance with the beginning? *Tosafot Brakhot* 46a. Why does this *brakha* start in singular and not in plural? "And force us to be subservient to you." Is this not against the teaching of free choice?

8) Study the three *brakhot* in *Menahot* 43b. Topics to be discussed: Are the *brakhot* disrespectful to women? Why do we prefer the negative version that "You did not make me a gentile" to the positive, "that You made me a *Yisrael*." In *Menahot* most likely the positive version was forced upon us by censorship. Why do we recite these *berakhot* at this place?

A similar in-depth study of each part of the *siddur* can open up new worlds for students, and strengthen their *hashkafa*. Usually lack of time makes it impossible to exhaust all the teachings contained in any section and the instructor will have to make choices. ■



## Take Note

### Teaching Halakha and Social Issues

*Basil Herring*

Teaching halakhic texts can easily become, for many students, either overwhelmingly difficult, or irrelevant to their own interests and concerns. One very effective way to deal with these problems is to utilize current social issues that have halakhic ramifications, reflected in classic or contemporary halakhic literature. But even so, everything depends on how the issues are presented and the literature is approached. Properly done, students can emerge with a heightened appreciation of the dynamism, responsiveness, and cogency of halakhah to their own lives, in a manner that few other areas of *limmudei kodesh* can parallel.

To this end, I offer the following principles:

- Do not underestimate either students' familiarity with current social issues, or their having thought about the pros and cons involved. Be prepared to listen to, and learn from, the moral insights and arguments of students. Recognize most students' ability and willingness to engage in relatively sophisticated moral reasoning — even when unwilling to openly verbalize it in front of their peers.
- Don't be afraid to encourage open debate and discussion of issues and their halakhic responses, thereby allowing students to air their true feelings and attitudes toward halakhah. Avoid the kind of dogmatism that squelches all discussion and dissent. Having students play devil's advocate, be it on behalf of a non-halakhic or minority halakhic position, is always beneficial. If, on occasion, a student demonstrates a negative or cynical attitude toward a given text, it should not be dismissed in cavalier fashion.
- Be prepared to recognize that the halakhah is not always as clearcut or as unanimous as we would like it to be. Often the *poskim* take positions that are diametrically opposed to each other, show historical and geographical variations, and sometimes offer opinions that are difficult to understand or defend in conventional moral terms. Where such "difficult" views are encountered, the teacher should point to other halakhic sources or opinions that can be more easily understood and appreciated by the students. It should also be pointed out to them that an authoritative *posek* operates within a framework of Torah-based sources and principles that make his position internally coherent and viable.
- There is no substitute for having students read texts in the original Hebrew or Aramaic. Exclusive use of secondary literature weakens the impact of the halakhic material, whereas judicious selection of original primary texts read in class (especially from *Responsa* literature) usually elicits a marvelous give-and-take from students.
- Be prepared to evaluate various halakhic positions relative to each other. At the same time, however, make it clear to your students that neither you nor the course is intended to offer a *psak halakhah*, but to merely help them understand the background and basic principles of a given issue when presenting the matter for a *psak*.
- Useful techniques include role-playing, hand-outs of current newspaper cuttings, trigger films, and source booklets geared to the appropriate level.

Taught in this manner, halakha can come alive for many students who would otherwise have difficulty in appreciating the profundity and dynamism of the halakhic process, as well as the ongoing creativity of halakhists in responding to the real issues of our time. ■

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# Creating A *Tefilla* Environment:

## PERSONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITIES

Zvi Grumet

Imagine that your son is taught to read the Cyrillic alphabet (although he doesn't understand the Russian language), and instructed to read thirty pages from *The Gulag Archipelago*, in Russian. It would certainly be a challenge. Imagine then that he is asked to repeat this daily for five years. Given that you don't think the assignment particularly intelligent, you let him know (in subtle ways, of course) that he need not take particular care in fulfilling it. As the years pass he is expected to increase his speed, while no heed is paid to his accuracy. Upon entering high school the ultimate insult is delivered — his ninth grade teacher is furious that he reads from Solzhenytsin with such a lack of feeling!

While this may sound ludicrous, it is an unfortunate description of the way our approach to *tefilla* is perceived by many of our students. At a young age they are required to perform rote reading in a language they barely understand. As years go by, they are "mainstreamed" into *minyanim* in which they are expected to race through long passages in the *siddur* at breakneck speeds. The task is repetitive, and in many cases, the models set by the parents are far from exemplary. The issue of *kavanah* becomes moot — not only do

students not know what the *tefillot* mean, they have little incentive to *want* to know what they mean.

There are, however, models of *tefilla* that are relatively successful. In particular, on Shabbatonim, retreats and seminars, *tefilla* can be an inspirational experience. We cannot (and many would argue, should not) ask yeshivot to become year-round Shabbatonim, yet we can and must investigate which aspects of the informal experience can be incorporated into the yeshiva setting, and which other issues might be constructive in building more effective *tefilla* programs.

As a start, we must recognize the inherent limitations of such an endeavor. *Tefilla* is but one component of an entire informal educational experience. Thus, while we may think that we are observing a successful *tefilla* program, we may really be witnessing the cumulative effect of an entire approach. This brings us to our first critical component. In its very nature *tefilla* is an experience, not a cognitive, intellectual process. When we enter a *beit kneset* we do so to *daven*, not to study the *tefillot*. Not that studying *tefilla* is unimportant, but it cannot be confused with *davening*. To effectively bring about affective change, a complete learning environment must be created (this is, essentially, what the Shabbaton does).

Environments are created on a school-wide basis, often in non-obvious ways.

The subtle messages that are conveyed (whether willingly or not) are sensed by the students. The priority given to *tefilla* is evident by the resources that the school is willing to devote to it. A few pointed questions about the allocation of school resources will help us examine and understand the message that the school is sending to its students.

1 — Is *tefilla* "pigeonholed" into the daily schedule, or is the schedule flexible enough to accommodate the various needs of *tefilla*? For example, is ample time given on a daily basis, on Mondays and Thursdays, on *Rosh Hodesh*, on a *ta'anit tzibbur*, etc. for students to *daven* without being rushed into the next program on the schedule? If *tefilla* must fit the daily schedule rather than the other way around, students will perceive it as having a lower priority than their classes.

2 — Is there a room whose primary function is that of *beit kneset*, or are classrooms, auditoriums, gyms, lunchrooms and the like converted for temporary use as *mekomot tefilla*? The very presence (or lack of) of a room set aside as the *shul* or *beit midrash* indicates a commitment to *tefilla*. Imagine a school claiming to be dedicated to producing quality athletes, while not having a gymnasium.

3 — Are there *siddurim* readily available? Are they uniform? What condition are they in?

*continued*

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4 — Is the room used for *tefilla* well lit? Are the acoustics conducive to *tefilla* so that the *hazzan* can be heard but noise from the *tzibbur* is muffled? Is the space available to students cramped or comfortable? Is the room esthetically pleasing, so that students will feel good about entering it?

5 — If both boys and girls attend *minyan*, are the arrangements for the girls such that they feel part of the *tefilla* and not merely bystanders? Do female faculty members participate in the *tefilla*, or are men the only models for the girls, and what roles do the faculty play in *tefilla*?

Whereas the subtle messages conveyed by the school are significant, what happens in the *beit kneset* itself is the key to creating the proper environment. In the spirit of *da lifnei mi ata omed*, it is critical that we understand the varied needs of our students. While recognizing that each student experiences *tefilla* differently, certain concerns apply on all levels. First, there must be a consciousness of the actual time allotted to *tefilla*. Too much time gives the *tefilla* an unending and oppressive tone, while too little time makes it seem like practice for a speed reading course. Second, students want to feel that the time they are in *shul* is time well spent. The problem is that different students define “time well spent” differently. It is therefore critical that a variety of *minyanim* be available to accommodate all types of backgrounds. Thus, just as students are grouped for classes — according to academic abilities, so too should they be grouped for *tefilla* — based on their interests and needs. (It is inconceivable to place a student who is the regular *ba'al koreh* in his *shul* together with a student who rarely attends *minyan* and has difficulty reading Hebrew.) At Shabbatonim this has become almost standard practice, and many *shuls* have adopted similar programs (e.g. having a *hashkama minyan*, a teen *minyan* a young couples' *minyan*, a beginner's *minyan*, etc.). Aside from a “regular” *minyan* in which all *tefillot* are said, and with ample time, the school could have a variety of other *minyanim* from which the students can choose (and all should end at the same time, to avoid “early dismissal” as a factor in *minyan* selection). These *minyanim* should incorporate *perush ha'tefilla*, singing, responsive and congregational reading of *tefillot*, recitation of *tefillot* in English, student and faculty *divrei Torah*, and discussions related to *tefilla*. The difference between the

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*minyanim* would be the different mixes and balances of these elements. Of course, each variation necessarily involves some sacrifice of “regular *davening*,” but all can be accomplished within halakhically acceptable guidelines.

There are many side benefits of such an approach. First is size limitation. Large *minyanim* tend to become unwieldy and unmanageable, whereas small *minyanim* can be supervised more easily (and student accountability increases). Second, the small *minyan* allows each student to feel part of the *tzibbur*. The more students are called upon to participate actively, the greater is their sense of responsibility to the *tzibbur*, and the more connected they become to *tefilla* in general, and to their specific *minyan* in particular. Third, the small *minyan* allows the faculty member involved to develop a rapport with the students in that *minyan*, aside from merely becoming an attendance and behavior monitor. The importance of establishing a *rebbe-talmid* rapport with regard to the creation of an environment in which the student feels connected to *tefilla* cannot be overstated.

Finally, the vexing question of enforcing attendance and behavior rules is one which still needs to be addressed. On the one hand, if rules are not strictly enforced, students will be led to believe that the school considers *tefilla* to be less important than other school activities. On the other hand, forcing students to attend

*minyan* and “behave properly” will certainly not endear them to *tefilla*. If, however, we establish small *minyanim*, in which the *rebbe*/teacher can know who is missing without having to take attendance, and has established a rapport with the students thereby encouraging appropriate behavior, we have a reasonable approach to both problems.

One significant corollary to this is the importance of role models for *tefilla*. It is unfair to expect students to become inspired to *daven* if they are not regularly exposed to people who are themselves inspired. A small, intimate *minyan* allows students to actively watch faculty members *daven* with *kavanah*, which, of course, makes the job of the *rebbeim*/teachers much more difficult. They themselves must become inspired and aware that their own *tefilla* may very well affect those around them.

Indeed, as Rav Kook was reported to have pointed out, the word *hashpa'ah* (to influence others) comes from the word *shefa* (abundance). In order to influence others, one must be overflowing. If we expect to influence our students toward improving their *tefilla*, then we must first look at our own. We must ask whether we dedicate enough of our school's resources to emphasize the centrality of *tefilla* in the spiritual life of the Jew, and whether we dedicate enough of our own resources to emphasize the centrality of *tefilla* in our own spiritual lives. ■

If we expect to influence our students toward improving their *tefilla*, then we must first look at our own.

# A Brisker Perspective On Learning Yiddish

Yaakov Jacobs

## Never Say Die

Joshua A. Fishman, ed.  
The Hague, Paris, New York:  
Mouton Publishers, 1981, 763 pp.

## Yiddish Un Yiddishkheit

eds. Emanuel Rackman, Abraham Bick,  
Yosef Bar-El, Yitzhok Korn  
Tel Aviv: World Council for Yiddish, 1986.

On February 24, 1961 an article by Rav Yosef Ber Soloveitchik appeared in *Der Tog*, one of several Yiddish dailies that was, at that time, published regularly in New York City. Some readers may be surprised that Rav Soloveitchik wrote in Yiddish and that he wrote on the relative merits of Hebrew and Yiddish. At a time when understanding Yiddish has been dropped from the educational agenda of many yeshiva high schools, the Rav's words on the subject are refreshing, and worth reading — in the original if we can, in translation if we must.

I am not a Yiddishist who believes that the language has absolute value. But I am a *Gemmarah Yid* and I know that holiness and absoluteness are not identical. The

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halakha has formulated two magnitudes of *kedusha*: there are entities which are intrinsically sacred; and there are entities that are instruments of *kedushah*.

The halakha rules that on Shabbat one must rescue from a fire not only a *sefer Torah*, but the mantle in which it is wrapped; not just *tefillin*, but the sack which holds them as well. Therefore Yiddish as a language, notwithstanding that it is not intrinsically sacred, surely stands with those ancillary entities which are also sacred and must be rescued at any cost.

Is there a more beautiful mantle which has clothed the most sacred *sifrei kodesh* — and continued to do so — than Yiddish? It was in this language that the Ramah, the Maharshah, the Vilner Gaon, Reb Haim Vohloziner, and other *gedolai Yisrael* learned Torah with their students. In Yiddish the Baal Shem Tov, the Mehzeritcher Magid and the Alter Rebbe [the Baal HaTanya] explained to their disciples the secrets of Creation. It was in simple *mame-loshon* that the Jewish masses expressed their simple faith, their love, their loyalty. To this day great *roshei yeshivot* give their *shiurim* in Yiddish. Such a mantle is surely holy, notwithstanding that its holiness is not absolute, but an acquired holiness, akin to that acquired by artifacts

used to contain [intrinsically] holy objects. There is great merit in sustaining that mantle.<sup>1</sup>

In February 1983 Yitzhak Korn, director of the World Council for Yiddish, in what he called "one of the most lofty experiences of my life," met with Rav Soloveitchik in New York City. Korn, a secular Jew, further described his meeting as one of "*hitromemut ha'nefesh*," and quoted the Rav as saying:

Our generation is seriously in error for neglecting Yiddish. We must demand — he emphasized — of the *roshei yeshivot*, that they uphold the tradition of giving a *shiur* in Yiddish. The *Yiddishe heim* dare not make peace with the possibility that Yiddish will — *chas v'sholom* — disappear, because that would bring irreparable harm to the survival of the Jewish people.<sup>2</sup>

One of the remaining outposts of Yiddish in the Torah camp is the world of our Hassidic brothers where it is the spoken everyday language, and the language of instruction in their yeshivot. To a lesser extent it is also still used in a small number of *Litvishe* yeshivot. But for the large part, graduates of most yeshiva high schools and mesivtot emerge Yiddishly illiterate. Those Torah concepts and words which lie in the "cells" of the Yiddish language and are part of the collective consciousness of *Klal Yisrael* are lost to them. The almost thousand years of

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Yiddish (yes, it is that old!) contain a wealth of Torah and folk-wisdom (they are often the same). It is these values and Jewish experiences that the Rav speaks of, when he says that the loss of Yiddish would be a horrible blow to *Klal Yisrael*.

In the wake of the Enlightenment many Jewish scholars who had turned their backs on *Yiddishkeit* as we understand it, sought to create a literature and a scholarship that would restore what they deemed to be the lost dignity of *Klal Yisrael*. They were divided in a bitter struggle over what was to be the language of the new literature: Yiddish — spoken by millions of Jews — or Ivrit, hitherto the language of the scholars. Heated by the fierce polemic, Jewish printing presses were destroyed and Jewish books burned — by Jews. Yet as Dr. Joshua Fishman, almost a lone voice for Yiddish in the Torah world and academia, has pointed

out in *Never Say Die!*, during the early twentieth century when the battle raged at its fiercest, fueled by the need for selecting a Jewish language for use in the growing *yishuv* in *Eretz Yisrael*, Torah Jews were neutral, as they went about their lives speaking in Yiddish and studying in Hebrew.

It was not until 1976 that a sort of peace emerged when, for the first time, the world council for Yiddish writers held its convention in Israel, feeling finally that the climate would no longer be hostile. When representatives of the Hebrew writers council addressed the convention — some in Yiddish — and Israeli government officials from the president on down greeted the Yiddish writers (some of whom also spoke in Yiddish) it became in effect the Yerushalayim Treaty of Peace, though some die-hards are still tilting their quixotic lances at Yiddish.

Yiddish is today enjoying a renaissance in academia, and is taught in colleges and universities like Columbia in America and Oxford in England, in the Hebrew University — where it is taught in Ivrit — and in Bar Ilan whose fledgling Yiddish department teaches Yiddish — in Yiddish.

I hear the outcry of yeshiva administrators in response to a proposal that Yiddish be taught in yeshiva high schools. Few Torah educators will quarrel about the value of Yiddish, but where, it will be argued, will an administrator find place in an already crowded sacred and secular studies curriculum for yet another subject. Yet with the debate on *Ivrit b'Ivrit* as yet unresolved, as evidenced in the pages of *Ten Da'at*, I further risk the ire of educators by proposing yet another subject for study.

But Yiddish, given what the Rav has to say, is not “yet another subject.” Nor is it yet another language, no more than Ivrit is. Jews have spoken many languages in their march from *galut* to *geula*, but only one has merited being called “Yiddish.” This sanctity, albeit an acquired one as the Rav puts it, has the potential to enrich the entire double curriculum, the lives of yeshiva students, and perhaps even to spark new interest in learning.

It is a miracle that less than a hundred years after Eliezer ben Yehudah stood alone in the world fostering the adoption of Ivrit as the spoken language, it can now be heard in every city and town in the Holy Land, as well as in the five boroughs of New York City. It will take much less of a miracle to produce yeshiva graduates who are minimally literate in Yiddish. It needs only the conviction that Yiddish is a Torah imperative, and the will to find the time and the resources to do it. ■

## וועגן יידיש

איך בין ניט קיין יידישיסט, וועלכער גלויבט, אז דאס לשון אליין שטעלט מיט זיך פאר אן אבסאלוטן ווערט. אבער א גמראיידי בין איך יא, און איך ווייס, אז הייליג קייט און אבסאלוטקייט זיינען ניט אלעמאל אידענטיש. די הלכה האט פארמולירט צוויי אידעען פון קדושה: (1) גופי קדושה; (2) תשמישי קדושה. זי האט אפגעפסקנט, אז מען דארף ראטעווען פון א שרפה שבת, ניט נאר די ספר תורה נאר אויך דאס מענטעלע, אין וועלכן זי איז איינגעוויקלט; ניט בלויז די תפילין, נאר אויך דעם זעקל, אין וועלכן זי ליגן. ממילא, יידיש ווי א שפראך, ניט קוקנדיק וואס זי איז ניט פאררעכנט צווישן גופי קדושה, געהערט זיכער צום קלאס פון תשמישי-קדושה, וועלכע זיינען אויך הייליק און וועלכע מען מח באשיצן מיט אלע כוחות. איז דען דא א שענערער „תיק“, אין וועלכן די הייליקסטע ספרי-תורה זיינען געווען און זיינען נאך אלץ איינגעוויקלט, ווי יידיש? אויף דער שפראך האט דער רמ"א, דער מהרש"ל, דער ווילנער גאון, ר' חיים וואלאז זשינער און אנדערע גדולי ישראל מיט זיערע תלמידים תורה געלערנט. אויף יידיש האט דער בעל-שם-טוב, דער מעזריטשער מגיד און דער אלטער רבי — סודות פון מעשה בראשית דערקלערט. אויף פשוטן מאמע-לשון האבן די יידישע מאסן זייער אמונה, פשוטע ליבע און טריישאפט אויסגעדריקט. עדיהיום זאגן גרויסע ראשי ישיבות זיערע שיעורים אויף יידיש. אזא „תיק“ איז זי כער הייליק, כאטש זיך קדושה איז ניט קיין אבסאלוטע. נאר אן אפגעלייסטע, אין דעם גדר פון תשמישי-קדושה. אויפהאלטן דעם „תיק“ איז א גרויסער זכות!

Abstract of Yiddish text, *About Yiddish*, from *Never Say Die!*

### FOOTNOTES

(1) Fishman, p. 8

(2) Yitzhak Korn, “*B'mkom Hahakdamah*,” in *Yiddish Un Yiddishkeit*, Tel Aviv: World Council for Yiddish, 1986.

*Yiddish Un Yiddishkeit* is a small anthology of statements on Yiddish, by such as the Lubavitcher Rebbe; Professor Ephraim Urbach of Hebrew University; the late president of Israel Zalman Shazar (a great exponent of Yiddish). Especially delightful is a selection from the introduction to the only authorized translation into Yiddish of the novels of Shmuel Yosef Agnon, *Sippur Poshut, A Posheter Ma'aseh*. The novel was recently published in English translation as *A Simple Story* by Schocken Books. One interested in the problem of translation of Hebrew and Yiddish literature would benefit from a reading of all three versions.

# Enriching Jewish Education Through Media

Meir Lubetski

When used in a suitable context, media can enrich the teaching process. The bibliography below presents articles, books, pamphlets and dissertations that explore the possibilities that media has to offer Jewish education.

The term "media" is used here to denote all types of audiovisual (referred to as AV) materials such as films, filmstrips, videocassettes, records and slides, as well as various other types of nonprint materials such as posters, games, pictures and maps. The terms media, audiovisual and nonprint are generally used interchangeably.

The bibliography contains both older and new materials, as well as a broad spectrum of approaches and experience on this subject.

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# Hebrew Learning Center at HAFTR

*Rookie Billet*

### The Concept

Imagine a situation in which small groups of students are released from their regular class once a week for special enrichment in Jewish studies. These sessions afford students an opportunity to think aloud, to be heard, and to have their tough questions entertained in a comfortable, intimate forum where there are no tests and no pressure.

We have given the name Hebrew Learning Center to just such a program that began about nine years ago at the HAFTR Lower School.\* Although we began the program as a vehicle for the enrichment of the strongest students, it has evolved into a program that serves all the fourth and fifth graders on a rotational basis over the course of the school year.

### Implementation

At the beginning of the school year, teachers in fourth and fifth grades select six students to participate once a week for a 30-40 minute period. Teachers often prefer to choose homogeneous groups so that time with remaining students can be used for drill, review, or enrichment. Preferably, no new work is introduced while the students are at the Learning Center.

After four meetings, the group members change, affording every student in

the class an opportunity to participate in the program. Students are escorted to and from their classrooms by the Learning Center teacher so that supervision in the halls is maintained.

Toward the end of the year, some students have a second opportunity to participate, depending on class size and calendar.

### Themes and Approaches

Over the years, different approaches and themes have been tried. Some detailed descriptions follow:

#### A. Drama

Skills involved in writing a screenplay from a story were the focus in this unit. Short stories with only several characters were chosen from some English sources. Books such as *The Best of Olomeinu* and *Hassidic Tales of the Holocaust* were used for their inspirational or didactic value as well as their dramatic content.

Students were taught that plays require dialogue to convey action, rather than only narration. Considerations such as ease of presentation, props, and equality of roles' lengths (important in elementary school), among others, were pointed out.

Portions of the story line were divided among students, some of whom preferred to work alone, while others worked in teams. Stronger groups were required to write their dialogue in *Ivrit*; others wrote in English. As the teacher, I served as a consultant, dictionary, thesaurus, and stimulus of more artful expression and more creative ways of depicting events

and thoughts through dialogue. Often, the original story narrated a sequence of events without conversation, and it was up to the students to discover how to express these concrete events by maximizing verbal exchanges between various characters and minimizing lengthy narration. Imagination was encouraged as students entered the character's thoughts and feelings. My role also included editing and unifying the play for "publication." Some plays were used as reading exercises in role-playing during class; others were actually performed for peers. Students engaged in self-criticism, asking themselves whether their play conveyed the emotion, excitement, or inspiration they had felt when they read or heard the stories.

#### B. Advertising

This unit introduced the concept of advertising. Ads, students discovered, are designed to catch and hold our attention, boldly, and to persuade us to buy a product or support an ideal. Students were asked to consider whether we could use the principles of advertising to persuade our peers, and perhaps ourselves, to embrace a particular *middah* or *mitzvah*.

*Midot* from Rabbi Israel Salanter's list of thirteen *midot* were presented. Mitzvot that needed *hizuk* in everyday life such as *tefilla*, *talmud Torah*, *hesed*, *shmirat halashon*, and others were also reviewed. Methods used by advertisers

*continued*

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\* At the invitation of Rabbi Mordechai Besser and Dr. Ruth Katz.

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ROOKIE BILLET is on the faculty and guidance staff of the Hebrew Academy of Five Towns and Rockaway - HAFTR. She has published and lectured extensively on topics of Jewish interest.

were noted: billboards, rhymes, jingles, dialogues, speeches, and more.

Students were challenged to employ their resourcefulness and creativity to “sell” a *midah* or *mitzvah* so that it would become a household word, or the hottest item on the block. Again, students worked independently or in pairs. Sometimes, everyone was required to use the same medium, be it art or music. Other times, they created a multi-media campaign for a single *midah* which then became a school-wide theme.

### C. Divrei Torah

Composing a *dvar Torah* is an important skill to possess, particularly in readiness for Bar/Bat Mitzvah. In addition, successful public speaking builds confidence and poise.

In this cycle, a scheme for a simple *dvar Torah* was taught. An elementary *dvar Torah* needs three parts: a question, an answer, and a message. Students were taught about the different kinds of Torah questions — textual, logical, chronological, word usage, etc. They learned that there can be more than one answer to a question — including *tzarikh iyun!* They came to realize that a message is an idea or a theme that we can apply to our daily lives and personal growth. During the

actual session simple *divrei Torah* were broken down into their components. Students were trained to absorb and retell them accurately, in their own words, with only a few notes as a guide. They developed the ability to speak extemporaneously, and a capacity to think on their feet. They were encouraged to recall and repeat the *divrei Torah* at their Shabbat table, youth *minyan*, or at school. They were also taught the basics of original research, were familiarized with *sifrei ezer*, and learned to formulate relevant thematic messages from Torah thoughts.

### D. Historical Themes:

A very popular unit consisted of studying a pre-printed time line of Jewish history that offered both Hebrew and secular dates indicating how Jewish history intersects with events in world history. It was fascinating for the children to see precisely when Avraham Avinu and Dovid Hamelekh lived. When Chanukah and Purim were placed in their historical contexts, the children saw why Megilat Esther is in the Tanakh but Chanukah is derived from external sources. Confusion about the time of the first and second *batei mikdash* and the rise of Christianity was also resolved. Anti-Semitism was an important theme which explored the Cru-

sades, the Spanish Inquisition, Russian anti-Semitism, and the Holocaust. Students were very moved to see anti-Semitic cartoons (reprinted in the *Encyclopedia Judaica*). Zionism, the birth of the State of Israel, and the reunification of Jerusalem were studied to encourage *ahavat Eretz Yisrael*. In addition, questions on Jewish beliefs about death and afterlife were consistently raised by the students. Though selecting material for these subjects is more difficult, entertaining questions such as these directly and maturely is very important.

### E. Narrative Hebrew Poetry and Original Composition.

This unit attempted to deepen emotional appreciation and encourage creativity. We selected moving narrative Hebrew poetry, some of which were familiar to students from lyrics taught in their music sessions.

A classic example is “*HaKotel*” and its theme of humans who may have hearts of stone, but stones who have the hearts of humans. In this selection, each stanza describes a person standing at the *Kotel* — a young girl, a paratrooper, the mother of a soldier — and a glimpse at the concerns, thoughts, prayers, hopes and dreams of each. After understanding the poet’s words, each student composed an original stanza to be sung. The children engaged in free-association to decide which personality they wanted to write about. Another exercise involved the writing of an original *tefilla*. This project was preceded by the teaching of the Rambam’s prayer formula of praise, need, and gratitude. Students were asked to consider the following in composing their *tefilla*: Hashem, to me You are \_\_\_\_\_; Hashem, I could really use some help in \_\_\_\_\_; Hashem, I really appreciate \_\_\_\_\_.

They were reminded to be original, personal, and specific. Careful selection of words and figures of speech were encouraged. Those who were able to, wrote in Hebrew.

### Afterword:

Although lack of continuity is built into this kind of a program, the benefits and sense of satisfaction of the students more than compensate. And, clearly, happiness in Jewish studies is certainly a valued commodity in the lower grades where newness has waned and skill levels are not yet high enough to approach the intellectual challenges that later learning offers. ■

## Historic opportunity to be involved in the revitalization of Jewish life in Hungary:

Looking for motivated teachers for the Day School in Budapest: in *limudei kodesh*, outreach work (Hungarian speaking preferable), and for ESL teachers with Judaic content emphasis.

Contact or send resumé to American Endowment School – Masoret Avot, 425 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017, 12th floor. (212) 867-4773.

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Contact or send resumé to American Endowment School – Masoret Avot, 425 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017, 12th floor. (212) 867-4773.

# Responsive Readers

I am writing to extend my compliments to you at *Ten Da'at*. Consistently, the magazine presents thoughtful and interesting articles in a manner which is readable and graphically appealing.

*Kol Ha-Kavod!* Yours is a significant contribution to our field.

Richard Wagner  
Director of Educational  
Services, Jewish Education  
Association of Metrowest

I was happy to receive the Fall 1990 issue of *Ten Da'at* which included my point of view in the "Responsive Readers" section. I was displeased, however, to note that my letter was presented not as a response to the entire Spring '90 issue of *Ten Da'at*, but as a reaction to Ken Jacobson's article, "The Ultimate Truth," in that same issue. I never gave my consent to *Ten Da'at* to present my piece in this manner. My point of view was not written to refute "The Ultimate Truth," yet Ken Jacobson's rebuttal leads the reader to believe this was the case. As such, my intention has been misrepresented.

Carmela Ingwer  
Chicago, ILL

## Yet More on *Ivrit B'Ivrit*

Your recent article on *Ivrit b'Ivrit* (*Ten Da'at*, Spring 1990) and the responses it received provoked quite a discussion at the Frisch School. The teachers' room buzzed with the disagreement "It is!" "It isn't!" "What a hutzpah to consider modern Hebrew to be *l'shon hakodesh!*" "But what's the *nafka mina?*" The *nafka mina* is a very simple and a very essential point. Is learning *Ivrit* a *hiyum* of a mitzvah or is it not?

It is interesting that we refer to Hebrew as *l'shon hakodesh*. *Lashon*, a tongue, indicates that which should be spoken and not just read. The Rambam points out that prayer was fixed by Ezra and his Bet Din when the Jews of Babylonia were no longer fluent in Hebrew and thus could no longer properly praise God<sup>1</sup>. Prayer in other languages, while permitted, is not

the ideal. Jews should make their requests of God in Hebrew<sup>2</sup>. This would seem to necessitate the ability to frame all of one's thoughts in that language.

Commenting on the words from *parashat Ekev* which we recite daily "*v'limadtem et bneikhem l'daber bam,*" the Sifrei states "when a child begins to speak, his father should speak with him in Hebrew and teach him Torah. Whoever does not speak with his child in *l'shon hakodesh* and does not teach him Torah, can be considered to have buried him." This cannot mean that he must merely be taught Torah in Hebrew because two separate activities are mentioned. On *parashat Haazinu* the Sifrei states "All who live in *Eretz Yisrael*, who recite the morning and evening *shema*, and who speak *l'shon hakodesh* will be granted *olam haba*." Similarly, the Tosefta on *Vayeshev* tells us "When a child begins to speak, his father teaches him *shema* and Torah and *l'shon hakodesh*." *L'shon hakodesh* is not held as a language for scholars, nor should it be learned as a technique to enable one to master sacred texts or to express holy thoughts. On the contrary, it is a language in which even a child should be able to speak about whatever is on his mind, whether that be baseball, *tzabei ninja*, or higher level thinking.

Some say that modern *Ivrit* cannot be considered *l'shon hakodesh* because it has been subjected to foreign influences. However, the concept of foreign words in *l'shon hakodesh* did not shock our rabbis as statements by Rabbi Akiva and others<sup>3</sup> clearly indicate. Medieval commentators have made similar references<sup>4</sup>. Foreign influence never disqualified Hebrew from *kedusha*.

Rabbi Yehudah Halevi explains in the *Kuzari* that the distinction of Hebrew is derived as much from the prominence of the people of Israel who speak it as from the fact that God communicates in it. (We, too, recognize that this is so by granting a semi-*l'shon hakodesh* status to other languages spoken by Jews such as Aramaic and Yiddish.) He observes that it is possible to express any thought in the holy tongue without finding any words lacking. Yehudah HaLevi could say this because he and his colleagues added words,

expanded forms, and continued to help Hebrew develop to meet the needs of the people who used it, while recognizing that it remained *l'shon hakodesh*.

From all of the above, it is clear that our language, like any living language, has grown and changed organically over the years, as it continues to do. Changes in vocabulary and morphology can be noted even within biblical Hebrew; it is not a static. Hazal recognized this, and noted that sometimes words changed their meanings or their forms<sup>5</sup>. They never stated that the mitzvah of speaking Hebrew was limited to the biblical form. Aware of the change in language, they formulated the halakha which states that regarding vows one follows the vernacular, not the classic meaning of the word.

I don't think that Hazal, in requiring that children be taught to speak Hebrew, recommended a passive knowledge of the language. Therefore, I disagree with Dr. Bernstein who wrote that only in the modern period has active, rather than passive knowledge of Hebrew been demanded. However, it is interesting that the sources cited above all originated in *Eretz Yisrael*. Perhaps that is because the mitzvah of speaking Hebrew, as many other mitzvot, is really best observed when our people lives in its land. Can it have been preserved passively during the long years of exile to be revived actively on our return? Is this perhaps why, to Dr. Wolowelsky, *Ivrit b'Ivrit* is an indication of one's commitment to *Eretz Yisrael*? Is this why the Netziv wrote a wonderful little book (available in the rare book room of the Yeshiva University library) called *Safah La-Ne'emanim*?

We are privileged to live at such a time when the people of Israel is again able to express all its thoughts and find no words lacking, when rabbis can write their *piske halakha* in Hebrew without depending on foreign languages, when we can talk of science, mathematics, rockets, robots and *Rehov Sumsum* and create prayers, when we can actually purchase *kishuim* and *avatihim*, *batzal* and *shum* and not just reminisce about them. Who can deny that this language of the supermarket, the newspaper and the Beit Midrash is still *l'shon hakodesh*?

Teaching *Ivrit b'Ivrit* is really another topic, too broad for this letter. But, because it worked for me, I'd like to express my belated thanks to all who taught me Hebrew as a student in the Herzliah Hebrew High School and Teachers Institute. It was by the *vayomer/hu amar* method that I acquired the key to unlock our people's treasure. The wonderful teachers I had there communicated not just knowledge of the language but also their passion for Hebrew, for Israel and for the Jewish people. In my classroom, I try to repay the debt that I owe to the Feinsein family and to my other teachers by continuing to teach Hebrew to my students and to enable them to fulfill the mitzvah of learning *l'shon hakodesh* which is a mitzvah that is, to paraphrase Rambam<sup>6</sup>, too often neglected.

Sara Bellehsen  
The Frisch School  
Paramus, NJ

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FOOTNOTES:

1. Rambam, Hilkhot Tefillah
2. Shabbat 12b
3. Rosh Hashannah 26a
4. See, for example, Sifte Hakhamim, Bereishit 41:3 on the word *dakot basar*; Rashi on *hesed* in Vayikra 20:17; or Ramban on the word *zevadani*, Bereishit 30:20
5. Nedarim 49a, 51b
6. Commentary to Avot 2:1

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May I add the following to the article and comments by your readers on the so-called *Ivrit b'Ivrit* method of teaching.

For the sake of clarity, we must isolate the various elements that have a bearing on this approach, and we must try to keep our emotions out of the discussion.

Let us briefly examine the following elements: the pedagogic, nationalistic, religious, historical and textual components.

**1. Pedagogic Element:** Pedagogically, this approach is better known as the "natural" method, stressing patterns of natural language development. First comes the aural aspect, whereby children hear simple words and sounds, and identify their meanings. Pictorial, auditory and other aids are very helpful at this stage. This is soon integrated with oral development, wherein children learn to express the words and sentences which they hear.

Of course, a very important factor is the active participation of the learner.

Visual aids are actually the introduction to "reading," i.e., reading as comprehending. When a child sees a picture and vocalizes its "name," he is reading! Short one-syllable or two-syllable words are then introduced, followed by simple sentences.

Before long, various systems begin to introduce writing (stick printing or the like). Many textbooks and readers have been developed based upon this approach. These methods will be effective to the extent that the teacher knows the "philosophy" behind them and prepares well.

**2. Nationalistic Element:** Hebrew is the national language of our people! Not Ladino, not Yiddish, not even Aramaic. It is true that at certain periods of our history, many of our people spoke other languages. But this did not displace the primacy of Hebrew as the spoken language within the borders of our State of Israel. Even before 1948, there were zealous men and women, rabbis, teachers, writers and others, who held aloft the banner of Hebrew as a vibrant language, not to be relegated solely to prayers and ritual. This was the period when *Ivrit b'Ivrit* was unswervingly promoted by the so-called zealots who founded the day schools in which this method was employed.

Now that we have the State of Israel, where the majority of inhabitants speak, read and write Hebrew, the anomaly is that the enthusiasm for this type of day school in America has begun to wane, while, at the same time, more emphasis is placed on religious development.

**3. Religious Element:** This brings us to the third component, religion.

It must be remembered, that, for historical reasons, Orthodox Jews, except for those in Mizrahi, Hapoel Hamizrachi and similar organizations, did not participate in the development of Zionism and the State of Israel. The reasons for this are well-known. But the fact remains that the development of Israel, its government and institutions were, in the main, not in the hands of Orthodox Jews. Therefore, seen through the eyes of many Orthodox Jews, Zionism and the Hebrew language were not conducive to the strengthening of Torah life and learning.

As a result, modern Hebrew is identified with (secular) Zionism, and thus the

opposition to Hebrew as a living language was inculcated.

**4. Historical Element:** Historically, since the beginning of the *galut*, Jews became accustomed to speaking the language of the lands in which they found themselves. This was done at the expense of the Hebrew language, which, as indicated earlier, was relegated to rituals and prayer.

**5. Textual Element:** The type of textual material taught in our schools is not conducive to a graded mastery of language. This includes difficult words which are almost never used in ordinary conversation. The fact that Hebrew is a semitic language, totally different from Anglo-Saxon English, adds difficulty to its study and proficiency by our American students. This involves totally different letter characters, reading from right to left, vowel points, absence of the present-tense key verb "to be," prefixes and suffixes to indicate person and tense, and other factors too numerous to mention.

Why are children expected to overcome these difficulties, with which most adults cannot cope, without adequate preparation and practice?

In summary, learning Hebrew as a modern language will help overcome some of the difficulties described in the previous paragraphs. This cannot be achieved by the "translation method."

Dr. Sampson Isseroff, Director  
Metropolitan Commission  
on Torah Education  
New York City

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### Torah And...

In his article "Educating for Two Worlds" (*Ten Da'at*, Fall 1990) Dr. Irving Levitz effectively discusses the quagmire which educators find themselves in. He states the objective of Torah education to be "...to affect the formation of a predominantly religious identity with which to process the secular world, and filter it in a way that is consistent and congruous with Torah imperatives."<sup>1</sup>

Later in the article, Dr. Levitz decries the problem of compartmentalization in our schools. He writes, "Do students learn that the Torah and secular worlds each have their own areas of containment and consequently learn to compartmentalize

*continued*

their own identities into separate Jewish and secular value systems?"<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps a *modus operandi* which will help achieve the overall objective which Dr. Levitz suggests and obviate the problems inherent in compartmentalization, is to augment our *halakha* classes by integrating *halakhic* units into secular classes. By doing this we will educate our students that the *halakha* is relevant to all fields of knowledge and all walks of life. *Halakha* will then become the filter, to which Dr. Levitz refers, that will retain the positive values and lessons from secular studies and will remove values and influences antithetical to a Torah way of life.

The following are several examples of this idea. Some of them have already been implemented in our school and have proven to be effective.

Today young men and women are well informed about many aspects of health preservation. Schools often reinforce and supplement this knowledge through health education classes. Unfortunately, students are not aware of *halakha's* approach to *pikuah nefesh* and the value placed on life in general.<sup>3</sup> Most students do not realize that with the exception of a few situations, the *halakha* ranks the value of life above all other laws, including the observance of *Shabbat* and *Yom Kippur*. To teach these concepts within the setting of a health education class or a biology class would leave students with an indelible impression. When certain bio-ethical issues are discussed in class from a scientific perspective, the Torah view should be presented as well. Students will then be aware of the fact that the *halakha* has what to say about all problems and issues which the health fields have to deal with. From the outset of students' exposure to such issues we should sensitize them to the approach of the *halakha* which ultimately should become their own, if it isn't already.

In our school, when the biology class studied evolution they were presented with the Torah view of evolution in a lecture by Rabbi Dr. Moshe Tendler. Other topics such as genetic engineering can be viewed through the prism of *halakha* as well.

On a recent economics test, students found the following question: "The *Mishnah Berurah* chapter 242: 2, writes that if fish salesmen unjustly inflate the

price of fish, the community should refrain from eating fish until the price is lowered. Explain this *psak* in terms of modern economic theory." Suddenly the bridge between *halakha* and economics is built. The students now realize that modern economic theory can help them better understand certain *halakhot* and that ultimately their *halakhic* values will determine their usage of economic principles.

In social studies and political science this approach can be used as well. When studying the causes and nature of war, a unit can be studied based upon Rabbi Shlomo Zevin's article on war.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the war with *Amalek* could be used as a case study, based upon the Malhim's analysis of the causes of war.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, when Marx's theory of revolution is discussed, a unit on the use of counterviolence to undo a regime in the eyes of the *halakha* can be studied.

Last year, when one of my colleagues in the English Department<sup>6</sup> was teaching *The Scarlet Letter*, I prepared sources on the plight of the *agunah*. This is by no means the only forum, or for that matter the ideal forum, to discuss such an issue but it does serve to sensitize young people to the problem of the *agunah*. It also enables and conditions them to evaluate what they read from the vantage point of *halakha*. Coincidentally, this year I discovered that as I was teaching a unit on civil disobedience with a case study of Kent State in an ethics class, this same colleague was teaching, in an AP English class, the famous essay on civil disobedience by Henry Thoreau.

The opportunities are endless. With this approach our students will begin to measure everything they do against the yardstick of the *halakha* and its values. Compartmentalization is very dangerous in terms of our objective as defined by Dr. Levitz, because the Torah values will more often than not take a back seat to secular values when our students enter the working secular world. Only when we succeed in inculcating in our students the values which we teach them in *limudei kodesh* classes will we succeed in giving our students the "Torah glasses" which they need to view the world.

Rabbi David Hertzberg  
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High School for Girls  
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#### FOOTNOTES

1. page 6
2. page 7
3. See *Shulhan Arukh: Orach Hayim*, chapters 328 and 329 for a detailed discussion of these laws.
4. See *L'or HaHalakha* ch.1
5. See Devarim 25: 17-19
6. Mrs. Esther Herzfeld.

#### Sacred or Secular: Who Decides?

Rabbi Cohen in "Educational Censorship: Pro and Con" (*Ten Da'at*, Fall 1990) presents the arguments on both sides of this question and concludes with a discussion of the problems inherent in presenting materials which expose young people to all kinds of influences which will challenge their commitment. The dangers of this exposure or lack of it are clearly and fairly presented.

The answer to the question presented by the title of the article, however, is answered in an unequivocal affirmative in which Rabbi Cohen would "insist that the ultimate determination of acceptable or non-acceptable texts and topics is properly within the purview of Torah educators." This is followed by a suggestion that, "Perhaps we ought to insist that the English studies teachers share our positive values." The rationale for this position is supported by reference to a case in which an English teacher, who professed her agnosticism, assigned a book which graphically depicts scenes of sex, violence and drug use. This extreme example of insensitivity does not make a convincing argument for either of the two conclusions reached by Rabbi Cohen.

As chairman of English and a teacher of senior classes, I do agree that any attempt by secular studies teachers to propound or propagate ideas that are inimical to Torah teachings is a violation of trust. It does not follow that trusting us to determine what is appropriate is a mistake. The cited case is so clearly one in which the teacher had no respect for the teachings fundamental to the aims of the institution. This was such a blatant provocation that to use it as a basis for determining the relationship between sacred and secular studies would result in deciding policy based on an isolated incident.

My responsibility is to provide the stu-

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modern world. It would be unconscionable to accept anything less.

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### Israel Revisited

Rabbi Amsel noted ("A Closer Look from Israel," *Ten Da'at*, Fall 1990) that parents should discourage their children from taking trips home during their year of study in Israel. "Amen" to that. But he should have noted that all too many of the Israeli programs evict their American students during the holidays so that they can rent out their campuses, effectively leaving the students to fend for themselves.

We understand the financial considerations that motivate such policies. But that does not make them any less irresponsible. Parents who pay a hefty tuition for the year deserve better. They should be objecting loudly when this happens, and our educators who encourage students to spend a year of study in Israel should be backing them up, if not initiating the protest.

J. Irvington  
Brooklyn, NY

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I was so disturbed by Esther Krauss' "A Closer Look From America" (*Ten Da'at*, Fall, 1990), that for the first time in my life I feel compelled to respond to something in print. Mrs. Krauss contends that although there are various factors which should make the American-Jewish educational community hesitant about encouraging our students to partake of the Israel experience, nevertheless, "it is a laudatory expression and outlet for our increased economic prosperity."

Such lukewarm approval for the Israel experience indicates to me that Mrs. Krauss fails to recognize the significance of the students' study in Israel. The unusually high percentage of young people who return from Israel with an increased spiritual and Zionist awareness represents a devastating critique of not only twelve years of primary and secondary education, but a lifetime of inadequacy in the other two parts of the triad — the synagogue and the family. To be sure, it would be unfair to indict the American-Jewish establishment based on the success which young people enjoy in Israel. What Israel by its very nature offers is

beyond that which America can ever hope to offer.

Israel is far more than "... a laudatory expression and outlet for our increased economic prosperity"! For countless young men and women it represents what may be life's final opportunity to achieve significant growth in Judaism. Unfortunately, many who do grab hold of the spiritual lifesaver that is Israel, float aimlessly upon returning to the U.S., while the glaring failure that is the American-Jewish community never passes by with the rescue boat.

The criticisms Mrs. Krauss levels at the Israel experience can be summarily dismissed. She claims that going "immediately after high school might not yield maximal result." Although this, in fact, may be true, there is no guarantee that once our children become so steeped in the travails of higher education that they will even entertain the notion of going to Israel. As the mishna says "*Al tomar k'she'efneh shemah lo tifneh.*" Furthermore, the student who goes immediately after high school may alter his college/career plans upon returning to the U.S. ("I'll go to Y.U. instead of Brown").

The claim of "undue financial pressure on parents" is spurious. Firstly, the cost of many colleges exceeds, or at least is equivalent to a year's study in Israel. True, there are numerous financial grants offered to defray the cost of study in Israel. What irks me most about the whole essay is the word "undue." Clearly, this is an implicit indictment of the entire Israel experience along with the concomitant increase in religious and Zionist commitment. To brand Israel's influence as underserving and unworthy of even significant financial outlay is to slight *artzaynu hakedosha* and *Torataynu hakedosha*. The number 1 (and for that matter numbers 2 and 3) priority of the Jewish parent is to instill in his child an understanding and appreciation of his religion. Toward this end, no financial burden is too great so as to preclude giving a child additional motivation and skill to learn Torah.

Mrs. Krauss' assertion that students "engaged in less than serious activities" on the streets and at the eateries run counter to educational dogma is misguided. Clearly, running roughshod about the streets of Tel-Aviv is not preferred, however, it is by no means a substitute for

schooling. It is not a critique of American education, but a critique of American recreation. Instead of the midwinter Bermuda vacation, the student goes on a school-sponsored *tiyul*. In place of the trip to the Village, young people walk through the streets of Yerushalayim. All this serves as an adjunct to motivate the pupils in their studies.

We, as educators, must realize that just as Jewish education is essential, so too is the Israel experience. In order for the Modern Orthodox educational agenda of Religious Zionism to be met, it is vital that we vigorously stress the critical need for study in Israel. From our top honor classes to our most jaded low level students, Israel offers an unparalleled educational opportunity which can never be realized in *hutz l'arets*. Although admittedly, the finer Israeli institutions may offer more than the lesser schools, the charm-no-*kedusha* of *Eretz Yisrael* will impact on every student fortunate enough to go.

Dr. M. Roisman  
Queens, NY

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### Esther Krauss responds

I regret that Dr. Roisman read my article as "lukewarm approval for the Israel experience." My personal attitude towards and encouragement of a serious, well-planned year of study in Israel is common knowledge to my students. The disproportionately large number of Central seniors who continue to study in Israel with our blessing and support amply attest to that commitment and allegiance.

It was my purpose, however, to subject what has become a mass movement to closer scrutiny by educators, both here and in Israel, and by the Jewish community at large so that we may derive maximum benefit from it while, at the same time, we avoid its pitfalls.

I direct Dr. Roisman's attention to Rabbi Norman Amsel's corresponding Israeli assessment of the situation and to his description of the consequences of the "institutionalization" and "Americanization" of the Israeli learning experience.

Furthermore, Dr. Roisman confirms one of my major concerns about the implications of the educational "success story" that Israel has become in his depressing picture of Jewish life in America. We dare not depend on one or perhaps two

years of study in Israel to provide our students with a lifetime of Jewish education. If, as Dr. Roisman maintains, Israel is indeed “life’s final opportunity [for our students] to achieve significant growth in Judaism” and if it is their “spiritual lifesaver” and “reserve boat” then we are in serious trouble.

The education of Diaspora youth is our own responsibility, one that should be shared by the home, the school and the community. Israel can only supplement and enhance our efforts.

### No Role for Karaites

Although subtlety and understatement are far more effective than robust, exclamation-point writing, there are areas where one cannot help but forego literary form and speak clearly and forcefully. One such area is in defending Judaism against those who would undermine it.

With this apologia given, I must say I was stunned by Dr. Jon Bloomberg’s “Karaites In The Classroom” (*Ten Da’at* Fall 1990). It seems to be the antithesis of everything one would expect in a publication that projects itself as “a powerful and articulate voice for the Orthodox community” (page 16).

Dr. Bloomberg presents the case for role-playing as an effective educational tool quite well. He credits it with heightened student interest, clearer understanding, enhanced sense of perspective, viewing events as participants rather than as outside observers, et cetera, etc. All this is fine, but when it becomes a vehicle for undermining Judaism, especially in the religious school, it is the duty of every Jew to speak up. The following are my main objections to the article.

When we assign students the task of studying and becoming the protagonists of Karaite *hashkafot* with specific instructions that they are to convince their classmates of the invalidity of Talmudic Judaism, aren’t we encouraging them, in fact initiating them, into the *meenu*s of Karaism — or in plainer words — to deny the validity of the Talmud and all of *Torah She-B’al Peh*? And what if it turns out that the Karaite team is more articulate, more charismatic and more convincing than their adversaries, the defenders of the faith? Would that not lead many of the student audience to the conclusion that

*Torah She-B’al Peh* is a hoax that Judaism is better off without, that the Reform movement, the modern day Karaites, is genuine Judaism and Talmudic Judaism — or Orthodoxy — the fraud?

In addition, the entire program as described in the article is a clear transgression of a *mitzvat lo taaseh*. This is clearly spelled out by the Rambam: “The idolaters composed many volumes... God has commanded us not read these books at all, nor to give thought to them [their philosophies and reasoning], as it is written [the *lo taaseh* is] *‘al tifnu el ha’ellilim*: Not only is it forbidden to turn toward idolatry, it is also forbidden to entertain or turn our attention towards any thoughts that can cause a person to uproot one of the foundations of the Torah.”<sup>1</sup> The Karaite philosophy of accepting only the written Torah and rejecting the entire body of *Torah She-B’al Peh*, is of course “uprooting one of the foundations of the Torah.” As the Rambam further writes, “There are three [who are categorized as] *kofrim b’Torah*... those who deny the *peirush haTorah* [meaning *Torah She-B’al Peh*] and those who dispute those who transmitted it, such as Tzadok and Baissus.”<sup>2</sup> This of course includes the Karaites, who are the philosophical heirs of the Tzedukim of Talmudic infamy.

I can readily see youngsters charged with studying, defining and “attracting followers to the Karaite Movement” soon convincing themselves, and perhaps some of their peers, that they — the Karaites — are the bona fide keepers of the Torah. The next step would be the abandonment of the traditional Judaism of the Mishna, the Gaonim, Rishonim and the Shulhan Arukh for the contemporary Karaite movements, the Reform wing of Judaism for instance. A logical sequence to role-playing the Karaite versus Rabbinite dispute would be to examine “from a contemporary perspective, as actual participants,” the dispute between the Perushim (Pharisees, or Rabbinite Jews) and early Christians who, incidentally, never looked upon themselves as anything other than “Good Jews.”<sup>3</sup> Their motivation was simply the removal of the confining shackles of the Mishna which, they argued, arbitrarily entangled and complicated true Judaism. This subject lends itself beautifully to open minded role-playing no less than the Karaite-Rabbin-

ite controversy.

Sound far fetched? The author actually recommends it in footnote 2!

Troublesome also is the feeble, self defeating arguments that the article proffers for the adherents of Talmudic Judaism. Nowhere is the Rabbinite case staked on the claim that the Talmud, and the entire body of *Torah She-B’al Peh* is authentic — “*Moshe kibbel Torah miSinai*” — and that we must adhere to Rabbinite Judaism because it is a God-given Torah. Rather, it is argued, we should be loyal to Talmudic Judaism because otherwise Judaism would be “fragmented,” with each group and each individual following their own interpretations. In plain English, the *Torah She-B’al Peh* is only a clever device fabricated by the early Talmudists, who also cloaked it in divinity, for practical reasons.<sup>4</sup>

Especially disturbing in this respect is the guidance the author gave his pupils when they reached conclusions which indicated that they perceived the Rabbinite-Karaite dispute to be an ideological one. The author observes that this view is quite juvenile. “Such conclusions reveal that [the] students did not yet understand, or failed to apply their understanding, that ideological struggles which involve power and influence are more frequently fought and won not on the merits of the combatants.

When the students’ flawed approach is corrected “*they also attack the Gaonim as being power hungry, and as striving to protect their power by limiting access to knowledge of the Torah, thereby making this knowledge, and thus the power, the preserve of an elite class.*” Here we have the poison of Graetz and Bolshevism rolled into one. Graetz’s grand ambition was to undermine the reverence in which our *g’dolei* Torah and *tzadikim* were held generation after generation.<sup>5</sup>

The article’s most outrageous slander is one that the author picked up from the leftist revolutionaries of the early 20th century. In their passion to discredit and undermine the reverence and authority of religion among the Christian masses, the Bolsheviks and anarchists created the legend that the Church has a vested interest in keeping the “peasants and working masses” ignorant, even illiterate, because an educated public is a threat to their power. The heads of the Church,

*continued*



they propagandized, therefore strive to reserve education as the exclusive domain of the aristocracy and the "privileged classes." This tactic was a wild success. It weaned a multitude of European youth, especially the intellectual youth, from subservience to God.

Our own underminers and discreditors of Torah Judaism are attempting to peddle the same rancid baloney: the G'onim and later Rabbinites discouraged "the masses" from becoming learned in Torah because universal knowledge of Torah would deprive them of their elite status and diminish their power. This, despite the fact that there is no single theme that repeats itself over and over in Rabbinic literature — from the Bible through the Mishna, Talmud, G'onim, Rishonim and down to our own day — as does the obsession with learning Torah. To once again quote the Rambam, "Studying Torah is the obligation of every Jew, whether pauper or well-to-do, whether a young man or aged and feeble."<sup>6</sup>

Can there be as shameless a libel as the "correction" the author indoctrinated his trusting students with? Will they not accept it as historic fact — after all, they learned it in a yeshivah history course — and pass it on as such?

There are other subtle, almost subliminal, ploys in the article which cast the Karaites in a more favorable light than the Rabbinites. To cite just one, the author states as fact that bankers and wealthy merchants, negative types in the liberal cast of characters, were pro-Rabbinite, while the "lower class people, down trodden and full of despair," in liberal mythology the possessors of healthy uncorrupted instincts, were pro-Karaite. Just the opposite is true. The Tzedukim came from the upper classes — they controlled the *k'huna gedolah* by virtue of their wealth and thus the entire political machinery of the Beit HaMikdash while the people remained loyal to Rabbinite Judaism. The same held true in every deviationist movement. The Hellenists of the Maccabean era were mainly drawn from the people of wealth; the Reform movement attracted the prosperous Jews of Western Europe but never took root among the impoverished and oppressed masses of Poland and Russia who remained loyal to Talmudic Judaism. Similarly, the Karaites gained acceptance primarily among

the privileged classes while the downtrodden paupers in the mellahs of Baghdad were staunch Rabbinites.

In conclusion, I pose a question whose answer is self evident. Would the author approve a role-playing session between Zionists and left wing anti-Zionist Israelis? The anti-Zionists would argue: What right did we European Jews, foreigners, have to come to this land and establish a government against the wishes of the native population, and on top of it legislate racist laws relegating the native population to second class citizenship? For instance, Jews may freely immigrate to Israel, but not Arabs.

The Zionist would of course reply: It was promised to us by God — our ancestors lived here two thousand years ago. The author would probably turn down the suggestion as heresy. Or, would the author approve the question of granting Jews full citizenship and role-playing the arguments before the French National Assembly of the late 18th century? (Some of the finest European minds were anti-emancipation, and many of their arguments were quite convincing.) Of course it wouldn't be considered, that too is heresy.

Now see footnote 2 and note that the author suggests only that "In the context of studying the emancipation of French Jewry, student groups play the role of members of the French National Assembly *who favor* emancipation. Groups are asked to decide *which* arguments they will employ in attempting to persuade the Assembly to grant Jews full citizenship." He doesn't entertain role playing *whether* emancipation is good or bad for France, only which arguments to employ *in favor* of emancipation. Why? Obviously because it is a given that emancipation is good and just and desirable, and to even suggest otherwise is absolute heresy.

One final question: Are the organized *kofrim b'Torah* who reject a basic "Foundation of the Torah" — the Talmud and the *Torah She-B'al Peh* — to be viewed and treated as lesser heretics?

Rabbi Moshe Greenes  
President, Torah Research  
Institute of America  
Far Rockaway, NY

FOOTNOTES:

1. Rambam, *Hilkhot Avodah Zarah* 2:2,3

2. Rambam, *Hilkhot T'shuvah* 3:8

3. The early Christians did not intend to establish a new religion. They would surely have been outraged if it were thus suggested. They viewed themselves only as the founders of a Reform movement to free the masses from the harsh edicts of the Pharisees, whom they denounced in the most slanderous terms. The establishment of Christianity as a separate religion came four to five centuries after the death of its founder.

4. It is interesting to note that the great rabbis, such as Chasam Sofer of Pressburg, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch of Frankfurt, the Oruch Laner of Hamburg, the Malbim, et. al., who were in the forefront of the battle against the Karaites of their day, the Reform and Masskilim, did so primarily on the ground that traditional Judaism is truth — *Moshe emmes v'Torasso emmes*. Even a cursory examination of Talmudic sources makes it very obvious that the Sages of the Talmud, in combating the Tzedukim and the Baisussim, did so on the very same grounds, that the *Torah She-B'al Peh* is genuine. Likewise, the literature of the later sages, from the Gaonic era through the Rishonim and well into 19th century, reveals the very same attitude.

5. It was Graetz who proposed the notion that our giants of Torah were quite low on the humanity scale: The Rosh was a cruel sadist; The G'onim were scheming despots in classical "The Sultan and The Grand Vizier" intrigues; the disciples of the Baal Shem Tov were roving bands of minstrels who wandered gypsy-like from village to village putting on singing and dancing performances to collect alms and free meals; and so on.

6. Rambam, *Hilkhot Talmud Torah* 118.

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### Rabbi Bloomberg responds:

As an objective reading of my piece makes evident, Rabbi Greenes has engaged in a clear distortion of the intent of the teaching strategy which is presented there, while at the same time launching a not-so-subtle personal attack on my own religious loyalties. Notwithstanding the strident rhetoric, however, his letter has brought me to realize that in isolating the specific example of the Karaites from my course as a whole and failing to sketch the broader educational and religious context in which this unit is taught, I may have unwittingly created the impression that the results which he so rightly fears might be forthcoming.

Needless to say, in my Jewish history classes (not to mention my Gemara classes), as in the Maimonides School program as a whole, the authenticity and supreme authority of the *Torah She-B'al*

*Peh* are axiomatic. Our commitment to this fundamental pervades all that we do, and it is in the context of this commitment that the analysis of Karaism is done. The method which I describe is simply a good pedagogical tool; it engages the mind of the student, elivens the study of history, promotes historical understanding, and involves students in studying history as they will study it later at the college level.

As for "*al tifnu el ha-elilim*," Rambam's concern (MT Avodat Kokhavim 2:3) is with "...thoughts that can cause a person to uproot one of the foundations of the Torah." By bringing Karaite (and, for that matter, early Christian) arguments to the fore, so that students confront, analyze, and formulate responses to them in a yeshiva atmosphere and under the guidance of a teacher committed to *Torah She-B'al Peh*, I believe that I am responding in a most effective and time-honored manner to that precise danger about which Rambam was concerned. Rav Saadiah Gaon, whose unwavering commitment to *Torah She-B'al Peh* can hardly be questioned, did not limit himself to proclaiming "*Moshe emet ve-Torato emet*" and to issuing *haramim*; he responded with specific arguments against Karaite teaching.

Finally, let it be noted for the record that my critic is guilty of some significant historical errors:

1) In asserting that "the Karaites gained acceptance primarily among the privileged classes..." he brings "proof" from the Zedukim who came from the upper classes. But what can the social and economic situation of *Bayit Sheni* tell us about the eighth and ninth centuries, when Karaism arose? What contemporary evidence is there that Karaism was an upper-class phenomenon? None is adduced.

2) The author states: "The establishment of Christianity as a separate religion came four or five centuries after the death of its founder." This is simply not so; as is well known, the separation with Judaism came with Paul, in the latter part of the first century C.E., some fifty years after the death of Jesus. ■

All letters should be double spaced and include the writer's full name, address, daytime telephone number and, if desired, professional affiliation. Text may be edited for space or clarity.

## On Media

# Teachers and Students

*Nathan Kruman*

*The following is from the curriculum material created for the B.J.E. of New York's Media Center video collection.*

### Film:

From the T.V. Series *The Wonder Years*

Episode: "Goodbye"

Length: 22 minutes; color

Age: 12 and older

Subject: Teacher/Student Relationships

### Themes:

1. A Jewish view on the roles of teachers and students
  - a. responsibilities of each
  - b. inter-relationship
2. A Jewish view on achievement and growth
  - a. grades and feedback
  - b. independent thinking
3. Death
  - a. unresolved issues

### Description:

This poignant episode focuses on Kevin's relationship with his math teacher, Mr. Collins. Kevin, satisfied with 'C's on his math quizzes, notes that his friend Paul is upset with an 'A-' and that Mr. Collins has written "Good job Paul!" on his quiz. Realizing that he himself is unsatisfied, Kevin speaks with Mr. Collins who offers to help him

prepare for his midterm by tutoring him privately. In these tutorials, Kevin feels that Mr. Collins is becoming his friend until suddenly, just days before the test, Mr. Collins stops helping him. In a statement of rebellion, Kevin intentionally fails his midterm. Later, regretting his decision, Kevin attempts to apologize to Mr. Collins, only to be informed that he passed away that weekend. Before he died, however, Mr. Collins threw away Kevin's test, but indicated in a note that, since his test was "misplaced" Kevin should retake the midterm, which he does.

### Introductory Questions Before Viewing The Film:

**A.** What is a teacher? What is a student? What are their responsibilities?

1. Do the responsibilities of teachers of Jewish subjects differ from those of teachers of general studies?

**B.** How do the goals of Jewish education differ from the goals of secular education? Are these differences reflected in the objectives of tests and quizzes in each area?

**C.** Who are some of the great teachers throughout Jewish history?

### Questions and Areas for Discussion After Viewing:

**A.** Why was Kevin at first determined to get a better grade?

*continued*

*NATHAN KRUMAN is currently a doctoral candidate in the Azrieli Graduate Institute of Jewish Education at Yeshiva University.*

1. Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai said, "If you have learned much Torah, do not take pride and become vain, for that is what you were created for." (Avot II:5)

2. "Seek not greatness for yourself and covet not honor; let your deeds excel your learning...." (Avot VI:5)

3. Although Kevin's father said that a 'C' is "nothing to be ashamed of," Kevin questioned whether it really was a respectable grade. When Kevin later earned a 'B' and Mr. Collins did not respond, Kevin asked himself, "What was it going to take here?"

4. What is the ultimate purpose of tests and grades? Is it for praise and personal satisfaction — for the teacher, the student or even one's parents? What do you feel when you get a poor grade; a good grade? What is a poor grade?

**B.** Did Mr. Collins handle the situation properly when he did not explain to Kevin why he could not continue tutoring him?

1. "A teacher should hold his pupil as dear as himself...." (Mekhilta, Amalek, Beshalah, I. p. 178)

2. What might have happened had Mr. Collins told Kevin of his health problems? How much should students know about teachers' personal lives or vice versa?

**C.** Why did Kevin hand in his midterm with all of the sarcastic remarks written on it? Was it right for Kevin to have done this?

1. "He who learns from his fellow a single chapter, a single halakha, a single verse, a single expression, or even a single letter, must pay him honor...." (Avot VI:3)

2. How do you think Mr. Collins felt when he saw Kevin's midterm? The only time during this episode (and the series for that matter) that Mr. Collins called him "Kevin" and not Mr. Arnold, was when Kevin walked out of the classroom.

**D.** How do you think Kevin felt when told that Mr. Collins had died?

1. Kevin said, "He treated me like a man and I acted like a child .... How I let him down."

2. Has someone whom you felt you had wronged pass away before you could apologize? How did you feel and what can you do about it?

**E.** What did Mr. Collins try to teach Kevin?

1. "Accustom your tongue to say, 'I do not know.'" (Berakhot 4a)

2. Rabban Gamliel said: "Provide yourself with a teacher and remove yourself from doubt...." (Avot I:16)

3. Yehoshua ben Perahya said: "Provide yourself with a teacher and get yourself a friend; and judge all men favorably." (Avot I:6)

4. When Kevin said, "I'll never be an 'A' student," Mr. Collins responded, "That's up to you, Mr. Arnold."

5. Mr. Collins, at another point, told Kevin that he wanted to give him "...an opportunity to do your best."

6. Was it right for Mr. Collins to "misplace" Kevin's midterm or should he have received a failing grade?

**F.** What did Kevin learn by the end of this episode?

1. "From my teachers I have learned understanding." (Psalms 119:99)

2. "Seek not greatness for yourself and covet not honor; let your deeds excel your learning...." (Avot VI:5)

3. Kevin said at the end, "I knew I didn't need him for the answers, or the praise... I was on my own now."

**G.** Do you think Kevin got an 'A' on the midterm? Does it matter or did Kevin perhaps learn something that cannot be graded?

1. Ben Zoma said: "Who is wise? He who learns from all men...." (Avot I:6)

2. The words of the song at the end include the verse, "Goodbye my friend." Was Mr. Collins Kevin's friend? When Kevin said, "I thought you were my friend," Mr. Collins responded, "I'm not your friend Mr. Arnold, your teacher." Can a teacher be a student's friend?

3. The first words heard in this episode were, "Teachers never die. They were there when you arrived. They were there when you left.... Once in a while they taught you something. But not that often ... if you were lucky, maybe there was one who believed in you." Comment on this (orally or in writing).

**Activities:**

A. Have students interview teachers asking them what type of students are excellent, or what it takes to be a good teacher, or many of the other questions previously mentioned.

B. Have students list the teachers who have had the greatest impact on their lives (whether they taught Jewish or general subjects). Next have them describe what they learned or what the impact of these teachers was. Finally, have students indicate whether the teacher was their friend or not.

C. Have students compile a checklist of the qualities needed to be a good teacher.

D. Have students compile a checklist of the qualities needed to be a good student.

E. Have students list what they think they should learn by the time they graduate from high school. ■

*Ed.'s Note: The above video is available from the B.J.E., 426 West 58th Street, New York, NY 10019; 212-245-8200 ext. 316.*

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