

# Ten Da'at

*A Journal of Jewish Education*



VOL. IX, NO. 1

SHEVAT 5756

WINTER 1996

This issue is dedicated  
to the memory of  
JACQUES SCHWALBE, ע"ה  
A man of vision and leadership  
who embodied the lofty ideals of  
TORAH IM DEREKH ERETZ



THE RABBI ISAAC ELCHANAN  
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expresses its gratitude to  
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#### HAKARAT HATOV

Several past issues of TEN DA'AT were sponsored by Mr. Jacques Schwalbe, and dedicated to the memory of his wife, Hanna Schwalbe. It is with particular sorrow that we note, here, the recent death of Mr. Schwalbe himself.

By making the publication and dissemination of TEN DA'AT possible, Mr. Schwalbe was a steadfast patron of Torah learning and teaching. If, as *Hazal* said: *kol hamelameid et ben haveiro Torah, ma'aleh alav haKatuv ke'ilu yelado*, then we have all been tragically orphaned.

*The Editors*

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## Ten Da'at

ISSN 0892-7359

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Theological Seminary

Volume IX, Number 1

Shevat 5756, Winter 1996

Moshe Sokolow

Editor

Zvi Grumet

Associate Editor

Editorial Board:

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*Ten Da'at* is published by the Max Stern Division of Communal Services of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, an affiliate of Yeshiva University, with the assistance of the Torah Education and Culture Department of the Joint Authority for Jewish Zionist Education, and with the participation of the Educators Council of America.

Executive Board:

Aharon Eldar

Robert S. Hirt

Eugene Kwalwasser

All correspondence should be addressed to:

TEN DA'AT—Editorial Office

c/o Torah Education Department/WZO

110 E. 59 Street

New York, NY 10022

Instructions for contributors appear on the inside back cover.

Moshe Sokolow

Dr. Moshe Sokolow is Associate Professor of Judaic Studies at Yeshiva University's Stern College for Women, and Director of Educational Services for the Torah Education and Culture Department.

## REISHIT DA'AT

In the previous issue I invited you, our readers, to submit your thoughts on the "Peace Process." I wrote,

No subject has so energized the Jewish community (read: polarized)—and the Orthodox community in particular—yet no subject suffers as much from a kind of educational "laissez faire." While indoctrination—on both ends of the political spectrum—surrounds us, education seems to be eluding us.

The tragic assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, z"l, and its continuing aftermath testify to the validity of those remarks.



We are grateful to Yeshivat Har Etzion, in general, and to Rabbi Ezra Bick, in particular, for their permission to reprint, here, his English translation of Rav Aharon Lichtenstein's *hespeid* for the Prime Minister. While it has circulated on the Internet, and appeared in Gush Etzion's own journal, we felt that enough of our readers were probably still unfamiliar with its contents to justify its republication. Our present issue opens with that text.

Rabbi Yosef Blau, the *mashgiah ruhani* of Yeshiva University, wrote his article on current trends in Orthodox Messianism *before* the assassination. Nevertheless, his incisive observations should be included amongst its educational lessons.

In contemplation of those events and of their educational implications, TEN DA'AT invited its editorial board, and some additional respondents, to participate in a symposium whose re-

HaRav Lichtenstein is Rosh Yeshivat Har Etzion.

sults we are presenting herein. Three questions were posed to each participant:

1. How has your school/institution/organization responded programatically and curricularly?
2. Do you think that Israel oriented religious education needs to be refined (or redefined) in light of the present climate?
3. What can we, as religious educators, do to promote strong ideological commitment to *Am Yisrael* and *Medinat Yisrael* while safeguarding our students from the dangers of extremism?

I am certain that you will find their responses edifying.



In the "business as usual" section, we feature a provocative essay by Jay Goldmintz on the teaching of *halakhah*, long regarded as one of the "orphans" of the day-school curriculum. Erica Brown contributes a fundamental article on the nature and role of adult-education in the Orthodox Jewish community. Her wide ranging remarks draw, equally, from classical Jewish and contemporary American sources.

Moshe Bleich again graces our pages with a review of halakhic sources pertaining to *hinukh*. Michael Berger offers a modest proposal for teacher recruitment. Joel Wolowelsky argues for the importance of recognizing the ancient Near Eastern cultural context of the *Tanakh*, and I offer a review essay on a new book by Moshe Ahrend on "Jewish Education in an Open Society."

We present, in conclusion, what we hope will become a standard feature of TEN DA'AT: an educational essay in Hebrew. The current contributor is Aharon Eldar, National Director of the Torah Education and Culture Department. His contribution, "Reflections on Our Educational Work in the Diaspora," consists of his thoughts on education for tolerance in the context of the relationship between Diaspora Jewish youth and the State of Israel.

## ON THE MURDER OF PRIME MINISTER YITZHAK RABIN Z"l

[Printed with the permission of Yeshivat Har Etzion]

On Monday, 20 Heshvan (November 13), the Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, addressed the Yeshiva. Having been in America during the week of the murder of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, this was his first opportunity, nine days later, to speak in the *beit midrash* about this event and its impact on the lives of us all.

The purpose of the *sihah*, at this relatively late date, was neither to express protest and shock, nor, as Rav Lichtenstein mentioned at the outset, to serve as a eulogy for the Prime Minister. For more than a week, the Yeshiva students, like the rest of the country, had grappled with unprecedented questions of guilt, doubt, and shame in a national atmosphere which included collective recrimination and accusation.

One day earlier, we had witnessed eighteen armed police accompanying a teacher in the Yeshiva who had received telephone death threats. Speaking an hour and a half, Rav Lichtenstein concentrated only on the self-examination that we must conduct and how this can be done. We are presenting an English summary of the *sihah*. Naturally, this summary, limited both by print and abridgment, cannot fully capture the anguish and passion of the oral presentation of what is, ultimately, not an intellectual *shiur*, but a personal call from Rav Lichtenstein's heart to the hearts of his students, myself included, who sought his counsel. Despite this, I hope each of you will be able to place yourselves, with open mind and searching heart, in the *beit midrash* of this *sihah*, not merely reading it but pondering, on a personal level, how it should deepen and shape your beliefs, actions, and convictions.

With sadness and hope,  
be-virkat haTorah miZion

Ezra Bick



### I. Hespoid vs. Bekhi

I spoke last week in Teaneck, referring to the funeral of Sarah in this week's *parasha*. Avraham spoke of *hespeid* and *bekhi*, of eulogy and weeping. *Hespeid* relates to the past, to an assessment of the individual,

his personality and his achievements; *bekhi* to the sorrow and the pain of the present. There, I tried to do both. Here, for people who are far more familiar with the facts, and where there are others, like Rav Amital, who knew the Prime Minister better, I will leave out the *hespeid* and go straight to the *bekhi*.

There are many reasons to cry, to mourn. First, we must not lose sight of the personal aspect, the family's loss, even when there is a national public aspect. The first and most immediate loss is suffered by those closest. Nevertheless, for us, the public side is the most important. Here we have undoubtedly suffered a grievous loss. It is rare to find someone with such a level of leadership: the combination of military background and over twenty years of political statesmanship, and the ability to lead and inspire confidence, to steer a course in turbulent and dangerous waters towards a shore whose safety is itself questionable.

Aside from this, there is a special source of worry for those to whom the settlement of Yehuda and Shomron is important. This is paradoxical, since the fiercest opposition to his leadership arose from precisely those ranks. It is clear, though, that within his government, Yitzhak Rabin was the one who more than anyone else cared for and protected the settlements, and hence will be missed by us, more than by others, for just this reason. But even more, within the peace process there is importance not just to what is given back, but also to how it is given back, not just to the contents of policy but to how it is carried out. In this respect, objectively speaking, if we arise above the opposition to the policy, Rabin was the proponent of this policy as a necessary compromise, with pain, with real feeling for the nature of the loss, more than anyone else involved in the process. This was not, perhaps, to the extent we would have liked, but nonetheless, he had a real feeling for the values we hold. Recently, out of frustration and in the heat of the argument, he made several statements which expressed disregard for the value of *Eretz Yisrael*, which I am sure he undoubtedly regretted afterwards.

Nonetheless, in summary, his genuine feeling for our values will be missed by all of us, whether we support territorial compromise or not.

All this would be true if he had died naturally. The circumstances of his cold-blooded murder, though, are a source of great pain and distress

for us. Last week I visited *mori ve-rabi*, Harav Aharon Soloveitchik, *shlita*, whose fierce opposition to the peace process is well-known. As soon as I walked in, he repeated over and over, "A badge of shame, a badge of shame." For two days he hadn't slept out of shame and humiliation. This shame, that our state, our people, should have fallen to such a level, should be felt by everyone—religious, secular, right and left. For to the extent that we feel any sense of unity within *Am Yisrael*; to the extent that we feel like a single body, then the entire body should feel shamed and pained no matter which limb is responsible for this tragedy. We should feel deep shame that this method of supposedly solving conflicts has become part of our culture. But naturally, this shame should be felt by our camp, the National Religious camp, more than any other. Here was a man who grew up in the best of our institutions. A day before the murder, he could have been cited as a shining example of success and achievement, and a source of communal pride. Coming from a "deprived" background, he studied in a Yeshiva High School, attended a great *yeshivat hesder*, and was accepted to the most prestigious division of Bar-Ilan University. Today, we hide behind the phrases, "a wild weed," from the outskirts of our society. But if a day before the murder we would have said proudly, "See what we have produced," we must say it now as well "See what we have produced!" It is indefensible that one who is willing to take credit when the sun is shining should shrug off responsibility when it begins to rain. Let us face our responsibility not defensively, but as *Hazal* would see it. I cite words which are so terrible it frightens me to say them. I am not saying that we should apply them literally, but let us examine how *Hazal* see such things and what is their standard of responsibility.

Concerning one who worships the *molekh*, the verse says, "I shall put my face against that man and his family (Lev. 20:5)." The Gemara asks, "If he sinned, did his family sin? This teaches you that there is no family that includes an extortionist where they are not all extortionists, and none that includes a robber where they are not all robbers because they protect him (Shevuot 39a)."

Let us not fool ourselves; to a great extent we are all his family. Protection is not only after the fact, but also before; not only cover-up, but also nourishment and support. Can we honestly say that what the murderer did was "despite" his education, in the same way that some

yeshiva graduates are no longer Shabbat-observers? In that case it is clear that the choice is “despite” the education. Is not here the choice, at least partly, not “despite” but “because?”

## II. A Talmudic Precedent

The Gemara in Yoma (23a-b) relates: “It happened once that two *kohanim* (priests) were running evenly up the ramp [of the altar in the Temple, in order to be first and thus be the one to perform the sacrificial service of the day.] One of them intruded within the four cubits of the other. He drew a knife and plunged it into his heart. R. Zadok stood on the steps of the Sanctuary and said: “My brothers, the House of Israel, pay heed! It is written, ‘If one be found slain in the land [and it is not known who the killer is] . . . your elders and judges shall go out . . . and the elders of the town nearest the corpse shall . . . break a heifer’s neck . . . and wash their hands . . . and declare: Our hands did not shed this blood . . . (Deut. 21:1-9).’ In our case, who should bring the *egla arufa* (broken-necked heifer), the city or the *azarot* (Temple courtyards)? And the people burst out crying. The father of the (slain) youth came and found him in his death-throes. He said, ‘May he be your atonement—my son is yet in his death-throes and the knife is not yet defiled!’ This teaches us that ritual purity was more serious in their eyes than bloodshed. And thus it is written (2 Kings 21:16), ‘And also Menashe spilled very much innocent blood, until Jerusalem was filled from end to end.’”

The Gemara proceeds to ask: We know that *egla arufa* is not brought in Jerusalem, so what room is there for R. Zadok’s question? Furthermore, is not *egla arufa* brought only in a case where we don’t know who the murderer is? Here we all know—the deed was done in public! The answer is, R. Zadok said this “in order to increase the weeping.” Is the Gemara suggesting that R. Zadok distorted the law for emotional effect? No! R. Zadok is making a point. The principle behind *egla arufa* is collective guilt. When there is a known murderer, then on a technical-legal level, he takes the guilt. If not, it is attached to the whole city, to the community, to the elders. Collective guilt is not established in order to remove or excuse individual responsibility. Family, society, upbringing and climate do not remove personal guilt. Jewish tradition

insists on personal responsibility. But *egla arufa* teaches that there is another level beyond the individual guilt; there also is a level of collective guilt.

One priest stabbed the other. Do the other priests say, “He was just a wild weed which somehow sprouted in our midst,” and return to their everyday pursuits? Do they say, “He was a lone madman,” and go home? R. Zadok is saying that this act wasn’t DESPITE us; this was, partially, BECAUSE. Did the kohen kill because he rejected sanctity and opposed the service in the Temple, or rather precisely because of his passion and love for the service of God? God forbid that we should say that his teachers taught him that killing another human being is an acceptable way to express devotion to God. But they were undoubtedly responsible for emphasizing one side—the importance of competitiveness, of devotion, of striving and commitment, of zeal and ardor, without sufficiently emphasizing the corresponding importance of brotherhood, love, and respect, which must accompany the honest, pure, good, holy and exalted desire to serve God.

The Gemara proceeds to relate that the father of the victim, himself a priest, demanded the removal of the sacrificial knife before his son was completely dead, in order to prevent its ritual defilement. “The purity of the knife was more important to them than murder.” The Gemara (23b) understands that there is an educational imbalance here and asks: Did they overvalue ritual purity or undervalue the sanctity of life? Where was the educational flaw? The conclusion is that it was human life that they failed sufficiently to value, and not that they exaggerated the value of ritual purity.

In any event, and in either case, the youth was dead, and R. Zadok stands and says: We have educated properly for some religious values, but in the end this is murder. Don’t fool yourselves into thinking that this is a case of one wild weed, that the murderer is known and bears all responsibility by himself. What has this to do with *egla arufa*? Even when technically the murderer is known, the principle of *egla arufa* still applies, because his actions derive from something we taught or failed to teach.

### III. 'Ir vs. Azarah

R. Zadok asked, "Who will bring the *egla arufa*—the city or the *azarot* (temple courtyards)?," and the people couldn't answer, but burst out crying. What is the meaning of "city" and "azarot?"

The murderer draws from two environments, two frameworks. One, wide and encompassing, is the city—society as a whole: verbal violence in the Knesset and wife-murder in the home, the lack of tolerance and a sense of arrogance. But R. Zadok was honest and moral enough to know that perhaps we cannot blame only the community at large. Perhaps we must also blame the Temple courtyards, the environment of the priests and Levites, the environs of holiness and sanctity? Why did the people burst out in tears? Not because they didn't know which environment is responsible, but rather because they all knew, instinctively and intuitively, that the real answer is both—and neither can avoid responsibility.

There are many of us for whom it is convenient to sever the connection of the city and the *azara*. The city is them: television, decadent music, pub-culture, and corruption; the *azarot* are us. To some extent, this is true. There does exist an element in general culture which is the opposite of Jewish values, which sees itself, today more than ever, as engaged in a campaign to uproot and destroy anything with a glimmer of holiness. But God forbid that we should try, or even want, to detach *azara* from city. There are some of us who rejoice at every chance to point out the drugs, the prostitution, or the violence in the wider community, so we can say, "Look at the difference between US and THEM"—look at the statistics, look at Dizengoff, look at their family lives. Remember: The people on Dizengoff aren't foreigners; they are our flesh and blood. It is our city and it should hurt; it cannot be a source of joy, of satisfaction, of self-congratulation and gloating. We should cry over the lack of values. And if, indeed, part of what has happened is the result of the culture of the city—and I think this is undoubtedly so—we are also part of the city, and we too must take part in the city's *egla arufa*.

There is, of course, a difference between the city and the *azara*. We see ourselves—justly!, justly!—as residents specifically of the *azara*, the keepers of the flame. But that is precisely why we have a special responsibility, because part of the zeal of that kohen who murdered

comes from his also having been a resident of the *azara*, from his desire to be first to the altar. Therefore, beyond our responsibility to bring an *egla arufa* as members of the city, we must also bring an *egla arufa* specifically as members of the *azara*. It is no wonder, then, that all the people burst out in tears.

### IV. Balancing Values

One may ask, but what is wrong with our values? We try to educate people to strive for holiness, to love *Eretz Yisrael*, *Am Yisrael*, *Torat Yisrael*; shall we then stop adhering to and teaching these values? Shall we abandon the *azara*? God forbid! Not the *azara*, not *ezrat nashim*, not the *heikhal*, surely not the Holy of Holies; not *har habayit*, not one rung of the ten rungs of holiness of *Eretz Yisrael*. But if we indeed strive for completeness, if we want to adhere to all these values, then we must at all times keep in mind the whole picture, the balance and interplay between these values. Have we done enough to ensure that our approach to each aspect of our sacred values is balanced? Perhaps even if we have indeed taught the evil of bloodshed—we have exaggerated, as that terrible Gemara suggests, the value of ritual purity?

There are several points I would suggest as worthy of reflection. First: the self-confidence that arises from commitment and devotion to a world of values and eternal truths—whether in terms of *Torat Yisrael* or *Eretz Yisrael*—sometimes has led to frightening levels of self-certainty and ultimately to arrogance. This arrogance has sometimes led us to act without sufficient responsibility for other people, and at times even without responsibility to other values. "We are good, we have values, and they are worthless;" this attitude has seeped deeper and deeper into our consciousness.

Secondly: at times we have promoted simplicity and shallowness. Pragmatically, this has a greater chance of success than teaching complexity and deliberation. A simple direct message, appealing to one emotion and calling: "After me!," will have more followers than the injunction to think, consider, analyze and investigate. Uncomplicated directives excite more passion than a balanced and complex approach, which confronts questions of competing spiritual values and of competing national interests. Because we wanted our youth to strive, to run up the altar, we not only promoted simplistic slogans, but also a simplistic

life-style. Once, shocked to my core, I walked out of a meeting of religious educators where a teacher said that although we know that the Ramban and the Rambam disagree about the nature of the mitzvah to settle the Land of Israel, we "must keep this information to ourselves, lest we lower the enthusiasm of our youth and dampen their fervor." Here we aren't delegitimizing Dizengoff; we are delegitimizing the Rambam!

Third: sometimes we taught our students to belittle and suspect others. One who doesn't agree with us is a criminal, not merely mistaken. Any opportunity to credit a public leader with good intention was rejected in order to credit him with alienation, with hostility, with malice—not a suspicion of evil, but a certainty! From this way of thinking, horrible things can result. The *Sifrei* (*Shofetim* 43) to the verse, "If there be a man who hates his fellow and he ambushed him and rose against him and mortally struck him and he died," states: "Based on this, it is said: If a man transgresses a minor precept, he will eventually transgress a major one. . . . If he transgresses, 'You shall love your fellow as yourself', he will eventually transgress, 'You shall not hate', and 'You shall not revenge', until he finally spills blood. From a sin of the heart, an attitude, from not enough love, *Hazal* see a straight path to the ultimate sin of murder.

I am not coming to delegitimize our entire educational system or ideology—it certainly contains much that is wonderful. But I do mean to say that we cannot claim that this murderer was a "wild weed;" we must bring an *egla arufa* on behalf of the *azarot* as well.

### V. Should We Close the Azarot ?

The awesome, difficult question is: And now, what? Should we close the *azarot*, abandon our values? On my plane, I met Rav Eichler (a journalist from the Belz, *hareidi* newspaper). He asked me whether I do not think that what happened—and he is genuinely shocked—is a result of an educational system which teaches that there are things of more value than human life? I answered, We all believe that; it is in the Shulhan Arukh. 'Yeihareig ve'al ya'avov' (commandments which may not be transgressed even at the cost of one's life) means that there are values greater than human life. The question is, What is the balance; what are the halakhic, hashkafic and moral values which enable us to know

when and how? In this sense we need not be ashamed, nor need we erase one letter of our Torah. We will not surrender to any city, nor abandon a single one of our values. Our values are eternal; nothing can be given up or erased. But in terms of balance and application; of seeing the whole picture; of the development of the ability to think profoundly in order to know how to apply the Torah—here undoubtedly we must engage in a renewed and deeper examination. Priorities must be re-examined.

The same Gemara in Yoma tells that there was another incident in the Temple which led them to change their procedures. Despite R. Zadok's speech, they hesitated about instituting a different procedure. But after a later incident, where one *kohen* knocked another off the ramp, and the second one broke his leg, they realized that something was wrong with the system itself. They no longer said, "An exceptional case cannot change ancient practice." They instituted a new procedure, using a lottery to determine who should perform the Temple service. Why didn't they do this right away, after the murder? The answer is simple. Ideally, which procedure is better—giving the prize to one who runs, strives, and makes the effort due to his commitment to values and to service, or the use of a lottery, without pursuit, without struggle, a simple mechanical system? Clearly, the old system is better, more educational, more imbued with value. But after murder, "seeing it could lead to danger," *Hazal* abandoned the method of individual initiative and competition, fully aware of the considerable educational loss, but willing to pay that price. Even things which are better in principle must be sacrificed if that is what is necessary to prevent terrible consequences.

I don't know what is the precise equivalent for us. But the process of examining the *azara*, of the problems which arise not despite its holiness but because of its holiness—that is clearly mandated. Not our principles, but surely our analysis of public policy and public needs, needs to be re-examined.

In 1978, Shimon Peres visited the Yeshiva. He asked me what the political credo of the Yeshiva was. I told him the Yeshiva has no political credo, but we teach three things:

1. Even when sitting in the *beit midrash*, you have responsibility to the community;



2. When addressing these problems, you have to think deeply and not simplistically;
3. Even when doing what is right, you have to know how to respect other opinions and the people who hold them.

This has to be our educational goal. The question is not just what are the particular values we hold, but through which spectacles we view values, through which eyes. "A man," said Blake, "doesn't see with his eyes but rather through his eyes. What sees is the mind."

Finally, there is another facet to what we have been discussing, which relates to our community and leadership.

Leaving out for now the question of individuals—who said what—we must remember the principle of the Gemara in Shabbat: "Anyone who can rebuke the members of his household and doesn't do so is culpable for [the acts of] his household; [if he can rebuke] his townspeople, he is culpable for his townspeople; the whole world—he is culpable for the whole world (Shabbat 54b)."

## VI. Heshbon HaNefesh

Everyone should tally his own accounts in this respect, but I am not wrong if I say that for all of us the degree of rebuke, of protest, was not sufficient. For some, because they did not evaluate the evil properly, for others because they were not willing to publicize wrong acts when they feared our opponents could use it to attack our whole system. The point of *Hazal* remains the same; their terrible words carry the same force in either case. "That they could have protested and did not"—this carries a particular responsibility beyond the "city," perhaps even beyond the *azarot*.

We are today in a very difficult situation, partly practical, partly metaphysical. Practically, our struggle for our values within society has suffered a mortal blow. Among ourselves, there is a shocking atmosphere. Yesterday, the sight of armed guards in the Yeshiva, accompanying R. Yoel Bin-Nun, was shocking. Why was it shocking? I remember the Gemara describing how the *Kohen Gadol* on Yom Kippur was suspected of being a Sadducee, a heretic—and both he and his accusers wept. He, because he was suspect; his accusers—because they lived in a world where such suspicions were necessary. Sadder than the sight of bodyguards in the Yeshiva was the knowledge that we live in a world

where it is necessary. The transformation from a healthy, organic, trusting society, a society of *azarot*, to one sundered by suspicions is an awful and terrifying one.

Let me read a few lines from the *Ramban* in *Aharei Mot*:

The verse states: "From your seed you shall not give to pass before the *molekh* and you shall not desecrate the name of your God." The *Ramban* explains: "The verse states that the worship of the *molekh* is a desecration of God's name, and in the next *parasha* it is added that "it defiles My holy place and desecrates My holy name." The reason may be that it defiles the people who are hallowed in My name. . . Perhaps it means that one who sacrifices to the *molekh*, and subsequently comes to the Temple of God to bring a sacrifice, defiles the Temple, for his sacrifices are defiled and an abomination to God, and he himself is defiled eternally, as he has been defiled by the evil he did. . . It mentions desecration of God's name because when the nations hear that he has given his children to the *molekh* and an animal to God, this is a desecration of God's name.

There is not only *hillul Hashem* (desecration of God's name) as reflected in what others say, in our sullied public image, but also intrinsically, because (as it were) God is not complete and His name is not complete if there is bloodshed in Israel.

Today we must, out of the crisis, assume an educational and ideological task. Someone may say, "The Rosh Yeshiva says that *azarot* can lead to bloodshed—let's close the *azarot*!! Let us abandon the *mikdash*!" I say, no! We will not close a single *azara*, nor will we encourage tepid and unenthusiastic service. The challenge is, can we continue to inspire the yearning for sanctity, shake people out of complacency, get them to face the great call of the hour—to understand the importance of the *medinah*, to understand the historical process in which we live—without losing a sense of morality, of proportion, of right, of spirituality? Do we have to choose between *azarot* and morality? *Has ve-shalom*! But we must purify our hearts and our camp in order to serve Him in truth.

About ten years ago, after the disclosure of the existence of the Jewish underground, I spoke about the role of the Levites. I said then and I say now: the Levites had a double role. On the one hand, their job

was to educate, to inspire, to open eyes and arouse hearts to the service of God and its ecstasy. At the same time, they were the guards at the Temple doors, forbidding entry to the unqualified, not letting one enter where one cannot. On the one hand, they called everyone to the Temple, and at the same time, they themselves pressed on the brakes. We are *Levi'im*—we must call a great and large company for this endeavor. We must not divide by saying, I saw and warned and you were silent. This sort of pettiness must be placed aside. We have to build a wide, secure base that can allow all Levites, all who are committed to the city and the *azarot*, to conjoin in the great effort to ensure that the light of the *azarot* shines onto the city.

This is very hard, ten times harder now than before the murder. But anything less will be a betrayal of our obligations and our rights in this holy hour. May we purify our hearts and our camp, and through a spiritual and Torah-inspired effort, attempt to purify and to sanctify, to the greatest extent possible, our city and our society.

*She-netaheir et libeinu ve-et mahaneinu, u-mitokh ma'amatz ruhani ve-Torani, nish'af le-taheir u-lekadeish, ad kama she-efshar, et ireinu.*

Rabbi Blau is the *Mashgiah Ruhani* of Yeshiva University.

## THWARTED MESSIANISM

[This article was written prior to the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin.]

"I believe with complete faith in the coming of the Messiah, and even though he may delay, nevertheless I anticipate every day that he will come." This article of faith authored by Maimonides is accepted by all Orthodox Jews. At the same time religious life has functioned on the assumption that we are not in Messianic times and that decisions for the future are made as if he is not coming. This appears to be paradoxical, but Jewish history has shown that expressions of Messianic fervor have had catastrophic results. False Messiahs have split the Jewish people and have led them astray.

The horrors of the Holocaust become more understandable if they are *hevlei mashi'ah* (the birth pangs of the Messianic era). Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman, zt"l, among others, described them in those terms. When a few years later the State of Israel was founded and the Jews had regained their homeland after almost nineteen hundred years, Messianic anticipation increased. The miraculous victory of the Six Day War, resulting in the conquering of the Old City and the return of the Western Wall to Jewish sovereignty, was seen as confirmation. When Jews were permitted to leave the Soviet Union and an essentially unknown Jewry arrived in Israel from Ethiopia, the incoming of the exiles was becoming reality.

Among those who became convinced that we are on the verge of the Messiah's coming, two groups stood out. One had a candidate to be the Mashiah and the other a program to bring him. Lubavitch had no doubt that the time was ripe and their Rebbi the only possible candidate. Though he had never declared himself, the Rebbi had not stopped the speculation. Even the death of the Rebbi has not stopped some of his followers from maintaining that he is Mashiah even though to do so requires the theological leap to a resurrected Messiah soon to reappear.

The pupils of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, zt"l, though lacking a candi-

date who would be the Mashiah, were convinced that after the Six Day War, settling the parts of biblical Israel that had been conquered by Israel would complete the process that began when the state had been declared. The formulation, included in the prayer for the state, *reishit tzemihat ge'ulatenu* (the beginning of the flowering of our redemption), no longer was seen as the start of a long process of unclear duration. The time of redemption was rapidly approaching. The gathering of the exiles would accelerate, filling all the territory of Israel with Jews.

Subsequent events that did not fit the emerging *ge'ulah* (redemption), such as the Yom Kippur and Lebanon Wars—with limited Israeli success and major casualties—did not deter them as long as the land was in Israeli hands. Even the peace treaty with Egypt, though not approved, could be lived with since the land returned to Egypt was not part of the biblical boundaries of Israel. However, the decision by an Israeli government to give territory to the Palestinian Arabs becomes not merely an issue of security and a mistake in judgment, but an act of betrayal. The Israeli government, in their view, is preventing the imminent coming of the Messiah, and Rabin and his fellow ministers are seen as traitors.

It is difficult to understand the fury and the absolute certainty of some of the religious opposition to the peace process in rational political terms. Certainly one may question the political judgment and disagree with timing and tactics, but one does not hear in these circles any suggestion of an alternative approach. The status quo of the *Intifada* and the smoldering hatred of the Palestinian Arabs does not require any change. The position of Israel keeping Arab cities where there are no Jews can only be understood if we are nearing the Messianic era and the Mashiah will rule over a transformed world.

Many religious Jews share this feeling of the immediate coming of the Mashiah without expressing it openly. Rabbinical leaders in New York support the settlers and share their horror at the possibility of any land being transferred from Jewish to Arab control, yet they do not feel obligated to personally emigrate to Israel and live in one of the settlements. Lubavitch circles oppose Zionism, including religious Zionism, and are, nevertheless, active in anti-government rallies and have used some protests as occasions to reiterate their commitment to the Rebbi as Mashiah.

It is becoming apparent that even if the present government is not reelected, the peace process in altered form will continue. If no compromise is possible and the Messianic future demands that any accommodation be rejected, then we are nearing a religious crisis. A possible scenario is actual physical conflict. The Messianic circles in Lubavitch are already becoming cultlike and separated from the rest of religious Jewry. Religious Zionists whose commitment to Israel is rooted in its Messianic potential may suffer a crisis of faith, if not in Judaism—then certainly in their Zionism. All the religious implications of Israel's existence will disappear and I do not know what will fill the vacuum. I have heard defeatist talk that if the government succeeds, then there will be no point in living in Israel. If the window of Messianic opportunity closes then we will return to the period where God hides his presence from his people. None of the physical threats to Israel's survival were ever seen in such apocalyptic terms.

The notion that the actions of a secular Israeli government will determine whether Mashiah comes, is almost as strange as assuming that he was alive in our time then died and will soon be resurrected to reveal himself. If our actions play a role in delaying his coming, I suspect our, religious, community's inability to respond to the upsurge of religious feeling that was in the air after the sense of God's presence that was manifested in the miraculous victory of the Six Day War, is more significant. Not to denigrate observant pioneers, our primary responsibility is the spiritual welfare of the Jewish people and not only the settling of Jewish land.

Active Messianism has always proven disastrous to the Jewish people and thwarted Messianism is equally dangerous. I do not know if the birth of the state of Israel is the beginning of the ultimate redemption, but our sources do tell us that if the entire Jewish people repent—Mashiah is guaranteed to come. Let us place all our efforts into achieving that goal.

## SYMPOSIUM

Steve Bailey

Steve Bailey, Ph.D., is Education Director of Shalhevet High School, Los Angeles, California.

As we collectively work through the trauma of the murder of Israel's Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, z"l, by a yeshiva student and we observe the subsequent vilification of the entire religious Zionist movement, many educators ask the question: "What have we taught our students about Torah values and the halakhic process that could have led to this desecration of God's Name?" I think that the better question is *how* have we taught Torah values and halakhah, not *what* we have taught.

Are the methods we are using educating our students for "shallow, primitive thinking," as Rav Yehuda Amital declared in his famous address to his students? Are we educating students who are unable to exercise their innate critical reasoning abilities? Are we making them vulnerable to thoughtless prejudice and simplistic answers? Are we creating mentalities of unquestioning deference to charismatic leaders and subservience to dangerous cabals? Are we creating students who claim to sanctify God's name when in fact they commit the most heinous of crimes: public desecration of God's name?

An educational system that teaches halakhah as a monolithic truth, authorized only by certain rabbinic leaders with certain outlooks, not only distorts the very nature of halakhah, but also encourages its students to become shallow, thoughtless clones—rather than vibrant, thought-provoking students of Jewish law and life. An educational system that discourages questions about the moral or ethical issues inherent in certain religious legal positions (e.g., *agunot*, pre-nuptial agreements, holiness of the land, views towards the secular, etc.), is forming minds that are vulnerable to simplistic thinking and twisted ideas of morality, rather than ethically sensitive, compassionate students of Torah. Most frightening is that such educational systems can produce people who identify themselves as religious and kill others in the name of service to God.

What would a *different* Jewish educational system look like? How

Steve Bailey

can we protect the Torah's moral values, Zionist ideals and observant Jewish practice from the distortions, prejudices and perversions of that segment of Orthodoxy which purports to be the only representatives of "true" Judaism? For the past four years, our yeshiva high school has been using an educational model of moral education that directly addresses these issues. In this time of introspection and self-evaluation, I would like to share some of the strengths of our approach.

The methodology we use, based on the Kohlberg model of moral education, encourages students to exercise their innate critical reasoning abilities and to acknowledge the validity of other views with tolerance and understanding. While traditional halakhic processes determine the parameters of discussion in practical law, the complexity and range of perspectives are emphasized so that the unacceptability of simplistic conclusions are apparent. This process enhances both the inherent morality of Jewish law and builds the student's skill at autonomous critical reasoning. Rather than being presented with foregone conclusions in selected halakhic literature, the student "discovers" the beauty of halakhah by his or her own analysis which is compared to the halakhic reasoning after the discussions, debates and evaluations.

This type of approach does not allow for shallow, simplistic thinking. It teaches that moral decision making is ultimately an internally determined process of the individual despite the heteronomous nature of halakhic practice. The followers of Yigal Amir would not fare well with this type of methodology. They would be challenged to their assertions of halakhic reasoning; they would be shown the immoral nature of their conclusion that land is more important than life, and they would be confronted with the reality that their actions are ultimately autonomous: Neither God, nor rabbi, nor halakhah is to blame for an individual's immoral act.

Whether or not a school chooses to adopt a formal moral educational program like ours is not the point. What is the point is that schools are responsible for the moral education of their students and that methods which enhance critical thinking, personal responsibility and an appreciation of the complexity and range of halakhic perspectives are necessary to prevent future actions that distort traditional Jewish values and desecrate the name of the God of Israel.

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Rabbi Bieler teaches at the Hebrew Academy of Greater Washington, and is rabbi of the Kemp Mill Synagogue.

I work in both the Hebrew Academy of Greater Washington as well as in the Kemp Mill Synagogue. Even during my years in New York, I always defined myself as a community educator, looking for opportunities to work not only with individuals, but also with families in settings not confined exclusively to schools. In Silver Spring, I once again have the opportunity to learn with both children—mainly adolescents as well as occasional involvement with those in the elementary division of our school—and adults, but also their parents and grandparents both in school and in shul. Therefore specific programming that I consider for either institution, always requires the additional dimension of how to carry themes and approaches over to the complementary institution, where other members of the community can engage in these same issues and concerns.

The Rabin assassination shocked our community, to say the least. Both the school and the synagogue could be considered strongly religious Zionist. Virtually every graduating senior spends one to two years learning in Israel and many boys are currently studying at *yeshivot hesder*, including *Kerem B'Yavne*. Bar Ilan is a consideration for our students not only in terms of a one-year program, but for their college studies. We even have a graduate studying in the Bar Ilan Law Program. Bnai Akiva is a strong force in both the school and shul, and these institutions are the foci of *Yom Ha'Atzma'ut* and *Yom Yerushalayim* celebrations within the community. The camp of choice of the children of the community is Moshava. The adult community is a strong supporter of UJA and Israel Bonds. Many of the members of KMS work for the government, some in foreign policy. Many observant Israelis who come to Washington as parts of negotiating teams, representatives of Israeli media, or as lobbyists, spend Shabbat with our families and often have made presentations to the school and shul in various contexts. Therefore we not only powerfully identify with the tragedy that has beset the Jewish community as a whole, but also with the specific issue that the assassin as well as the hostile atmosphere that some say contributed to events culminating in this manner, are the products of

the institutions and *hashkafot* with which we are quite familiar.

As the general atmosphere associated with the Peace Process became more hostile and acrid, KMS instituted a policy originating at the Board level, whereby it was decided that politics would not be formally discussed from the pulpit or whenever congregants would be attending services. Therefore, while the *derasha* on Shabbat morning and the slot between *minha* and *maariv* on Shabbat afternoon are precluded from political discussions of any sort, if people would like to have *onegei Shabbat* in their homes, would like to arrange for a speaker before *minha* on Shabbat, or at some other time during the rest of the week, the shul would announce the event. In school, I personally lobbied for an approach that would avoid bringing out the worst in people with regard to the policy struggles in Israel, and while these matters would be explored within the context of the *Ivrit* classes as part of current events—portions of the Israeli press would be read each week in order to satisfy a curricular requirement—there would be no formal public assemblies or participation in demonstrations. While some people felt that this was a form of censorship, there was strong support on the part of others, who were fearful that our school and shul communities would be broken apart as has happened in other Orthodox neighborhoods. This approach has also been conveyed to the Bnai Akiva *shlichim* in terms of planning their own programming, and in order to brief others, visiting the community on behalf of Bnai Akiva. A general consideration of what is appropriate subject matter for talks in shuls and schools throughout the American Jewish community is, in my opinion, called for. I believe that a certain cynicism that many people possess, particularly those who are younger, with regard to the lack of inspiration and/or seriousness in many Jewish Orthodox institutions could be better combated, if a concerted effort were made to concentrate all *limmud Torah* contexts and opportunities on issues of morals, values, and spirituality. The crass aspects of human interactions as they play themselves out on the political stage, while interesting, hardly contribute to more *kavvanah* during *amidah* or the impetus to be *kovei'a* more times for Torah learning.

Of course, such a policy became moot, at least temporarily, with the assassination. We felt that responses were called for in light of the relative silence of many Orthodox organizations and institutions. Tran-

scripts of the talks of R. Amital and R. Lichtenstein that were sent out by *Yeshivat Har Etzion* over the Internet, were reproduced and distributed in shul and school. *Divrei Torah* were given throughout the school in special assemblies with regard to the spiritual implications of *shalom*, and the importance of being careful about what we say and how we say it. *Sihot* were given by visiting Israeli personalities representing either Yeshivot recruiting students for next year, or Bnai Akiva. The principal, who happened to be in Israel during the period immediately following the assassination, reported on his impressions. The recent advertisement appearing in the New York Times, signed by many of the rabbinic leadership which our institutions respect, including Rabbis Lamm and Lichtenstein, was reproduced and distributed in the school and shul. In the shul, a strong statement was made at *shaharit* immediately after news arrived of the tragedy, the proclamation of the *Rabbanut HaRashit* was read and enacted (reciting a *Keil Malei* on Shabbat, discussing the sanctity of life in the sermon, and learning specific *mishnayot*, as well as giving *shi'urim* focusing upon the Jewish abhorrence for violence and the importance of reconciliation, on the following Tuesday), a program of learning *mishnayot* during the *sheloshim* (one mishnah is presented each morning at the end of *shaharit*) because it was decided on the Board level that not only should *mishnayot* be studied, but specifically those *mishnayot* that have relevance to moral issues [it is remarkable how easily each of those that has been studied to date lends itself to the situation at hand], a commemorative program took place during the shul's annual college Shabbaton at which a panel reflected upon Prime Minister Rabin's life, work, and legacy, as well as what might be lying ahead for all of us, and the Va'ad of the community has orchestrated a *siyyum mishanyot* taking place throughout the *sheloshim* and culminating in a public commemoration featuring, in addition to the local rabbis, R. She'ar Yashuv Cohen, and a representative of the Washington Israeli embassy.

With respect to Israel-oriented religious education, a point that was made by R. Yair Kahn at *Yeshivat Har Etzion* is worth considering. He stated that in his opinion, members of the religious Zionist movement have become extremely political at the expense of their religious sensibilities. I feel that too much is said in day schools about Israel's political situation and not enough about the unique spiritual role that Israel

ought to play, and actually does play, in our day-to-day existences. R. Lichtenstein has written that Israel is the laboratory of the Torah. It is the place where the principles and ideas that are contained in our primary texts can manifest themselves to the greatest degree. R. Tendler has said that students should study *teshuvot* which reflect how life in Israel is an experience of true *halakhah lema'aseh*. Rather than Israel being perceived by our students as a place to visit and a place to study, Israel has to take on the image of a place where Judaism can be lived to the fullest in a sophisticated and inspiring fashion. Rather than attributing *messirut nefesh* to only those who are living in areas that are politically controversial, the sacrifice and devotion of not only the *lomedei Torah*, but also those who live normal halakhic existences should similarly be highlighted. To dwell on rifts between the religious and secular, conflicts between Arabs and Jews, and increasing Israeli materialism, overlooks the opportunity to present Israel as an island of idealism that could prove attractive to young people.

I am concerned about the exposure that students receive with regard to Israel programs both prior to graduation as well as after graduation. I feel that American educational institutions and educators have to try to convey to the institutions and programs in which our students participate the importance that they receive an evenhanded presentation of issues that are inherently controversial. I also believe that consortiums of institutions in the United States should arrange for key figures in the Israeli Torah and educational world to visit schools, specifically, so that students and their parents can be exposed to their visions and positions. Finally, several attempts have been made to create a 10th grade program of study in Israel. I feel that a successful program that will acquaint our students with Israeli life, and yet allow them to return to their schools and provide powerful and enthusiastic student leadership for Zionist programs, is very much in order. While there are serious logistical problems involved in creating such a program, were it to be pursued under American rather than Israeli sponsorship, I believe that a worthwhile program could be created.

Rabbi Farber is the director of *Ma'ayan*: the Torah Studies initiative of Greater Boston, and a former teacher at the Maimonides School. He now lives in Israel.

Rabbi Helfgot is spending the current year in Israel, as a Jerusalem Fellow. He has taught at the Frisch Yeshiva High School and the Drisha Institute for Jewish Education.

Any discussion of religious Zionism in the modern Orthodox community must be approached from two perspectives. Religious Zionism is just one of six or seven issues which characterize a broader centrist Orthodox ideology, and as such, must be understood and taught within that context. However, independent of the general context in which religious Zionism is analyzed, a specific and nuanced approach is necessary in order to fully comprehend its multifaceted components. In contrast to some of the other issues which have become the banner of the centrist community, issues such as the positive attitude towards secular studies, women's rights or attitude toward non-religious Jews, religious Zionism has no ritual or act (short of Aliyah) which follows a commitment to the ideology. This complicates the teaching of religious Zionism.

On both levels, one must distinguish between the *dati le'umi* community in Israel and the religious Zionist community in the Diaspora. From the broad perspective, much of the *dati le'umi* community does not share all of the values of the centrist-religious Zionist community in the Diaspora. In essence the *dati le'umi* community is exactly as its name says: nationalist rather than Zionist. Much of this difference relates to the relative weight given to the values of *Eretz Yisrael*, *Am Yisrael*, and *Torat Yisrael*. In its extreme form, nationalism suggests that a people should serve the interests of the state, rather than the state serving the interests of its people. To date, most efforts to categorize religious Zionism have associated these two ideas, and thus, these two communities. The implications of this distinction are manifest in the confusion of students who attend the Yeshiva high-schools in the Diaspora and then spend a year in a Yeshiva or a *mikhlalah* in Israel.

Even within those religious Zionist institutions which do not delegitimize the *golah*, there is an effort to inculcate a nationalist ideology. Additionally, for some elements within the *dati le'umi* community, democracy is often valued for its utility rather than its innate worth.

Within the more nuanced perspective on religious Zionism, gaps exist between the Israeli and Diaspora communities as well. The *dati le'umi* confidence in the messianic implications of the return to Zion and Jerusalem, is based, in part, on the daily consciousness of its manifestations. Distance has protected the Diaspora community from this elemental force in the character of religious Zionism. Nonetheless, the ideas have carried over into the Diaspora. Precisely because of the messianic nature of the Israeli religious nationalists, critical evaluation of religious Zionism is difficult, if not impossible. In Israel, nascent messianism has led to overt fundamentalism, and the implications of this are unpleasant and, recently, violent. Developing a conscientiousness toward differences between religious Zionism and nationalism is the first step in education. Students from the centrist Orthodox community shouldn't feel that the only real Zionists are their *dati le'umi* (in the narrow sense) *madrikhim* or *shelihim*.

In addition to the difference between religious Zionism in Israel and the *golah*, the dual nature of the religious Zionist ideology raises another issue. How do we communicate the complexity of our ideology? While some of the problems which are present in the other ideologically defined issues are present here, most of the solutions are not. While *halakhah* has confronted some of these other issues and expressed multilayered approaches (for example *agunah*, secular studies, etc.), the problems of religion and state are still in their developmental stages, and an openness toward their complicated nature is in order. Moreover, independent of monographs, *sefarim*, and *teshuvot* in these areas, the living *mesorah* community has not fully addressed all aspects of religion and state. Living role models, both on the intellectual and spiritual planes, have not fully communicated their personal stances on the critical issues of religious Zionism.

The differences between the religious Zionist community and the *dati le'umi* community, and the complexities of the issues, their nuances, and the ineffective and sometimes dangerous responses to date, make the educational agenda of religious Zionism difficult to set. Be-



cause of the diverse nature of the issues and the gap between much of the *dati le'umi* ideology in Israel and the Diaspora, practical considerations must be addressed in our schools in the form of curricular and extracurricular programming, and the training of personnel. In the curricular area, the study of contemporary Jewish history requires some reevaluation. In many schools, students "reach" the period of the 20th century in the latter part of the 11th or 12th grade. Much of the course of study is devoted to the rise of Zionism, the Holocaust, and the early years of the State of Israel. It is rare to find serious and systematic study of the post-1967 history of *Medinat Yisrael*. Moreover, students are rarely introduced, firsthand, to the controversial and sometimes conflicting perspectives on the events of the last two decades. These perspectives often are bound up with very different visions of the ideal country and polity that should take shape.

Little time is devoted to studying the impact of events and trends such as the Yom Kippur War, the rise of the Likkud, the Camp David accords, the settlement movement in *Yesha*, the Yamit pullout, the Lebanon War, the Jewish underground, the *Intifada*, the rise of a strong consumerist culture in Israeli society, the Russian and Ethiopian Aliyah, the Gulf War, the Oslo accords, and a host of other social and political watersheds. The social, religious, political, and intellectual climate of 1967 Israel is simply not explored in most educational settings.

These gaps are not filled by the year of post-high school study at Yeshiva programs in Israel. Most of these programs (and especially the American Yeshivot which are growing in size and number) are by their very nature and inclination, islands unto themselves in the raging sea of Israeli life. This fact, coupled with the lack of knowledge of advanced, conversational, Hebrew and a sociological trend to "remain" as American as possible, prevents most students from achieving a fuller and more mature understanding of the debates, with all their nuances, within the Israeli body politic.

The revisiting of the Jewish History curriculum is, thus, a desideratum: critical study of the foundation documents and pronouncements of *Gush Emunim* and Peace Now (at various junctures during the last two decades), the last few platforms of the Labor and Likkud parties, and parts of the various treaties signed in the last two decades. In addition, the reading of articles and speeches by prominent Israelis

including: Menahem Begin, Amos Oz, Yoel Bin-Nun, Yossi Beilin, Shmuel Shnitzer, and the study of some contemporary Israeli literature—from across the spectrum—touching on vital existential issues should become a priority. This may also have a positive effect on the students' ability and readiness to explore these issues more intensively during their stay in Israel. We need to ensure that our students have a more complete and honest picture of *Medinat Yisrael* than that which they now obtain by way of *Yom Ha'Atzma'ut* programs, the various summer tours, and Sukkot at the Larromme Hotel.

There is little doubt that this study may have to come at the expense of fuller exposure to other periods in Jewish History. This is a price we must be ready to pay in order to deepen our students' appreciation of the historical reality of the Jewish people and state. Hopefully such a program of study will also expose students to various points of view; sincerely held, passionately advocated, and all predicated on a strong desire to achieve the best for *Am Israel* and *Medinat Israel*. This orientation can be a welcome antidote to the dehumanization of and attribution of nefarious motives to one's ideological opponents, that has crept into the thinking of some in our camp. The self-righteousness from within, and the impugning of motives of members of other camps, has been one of the most destructive forces to have found quarter amongst elements of the religious community.

This openness should also find expression in the informal educational programs, as well as in the more amorphous world of discussions and assemblies. Too many of the informal Israel programs in schools today continue to focus on the early history of the state, and Israel's stunning and miraculous victories on the battlefield. While these moments of collective recollection are critical for many reasons, they will not, or should not, suffice. We need to complement our *yemei iyyun* and evening programs with activities exploring the contemporary realities, debates, and dilemmas over what is a Jewish state? These will include discussions on the challenge of power vs. powerlessness, the relationship between a religious minority and a non-religious majority, the values of *Am Yisrael* vs. *Eretz Yisrael*, the interaction between Israel and the Diaspora, the importance of the democratic process, and the responsibility to abide by its decisions.

Moreover, the notions of complexity and diversity must penetrate

the teaching of religious Zionism as a whole. Multiple models of religious Zionism exist, and need to be explored by our students. There are, today, a wealth of materials both in Hebrew and English—including articles by Rav Soloveitchik and Rav Kook, Rav Amital, Rav Lamm, Rav Lichtenstein, Rav Goren, and Rav Reiness—that can help in presenting the various positions and nuances of religious Zionism on the significance of the State. Use should also be made of the various symposia, old and new, on religious Zionism, that have been published in *Tradition*, *Morasha*, the *Orthodox Forum* series and *Jewish Action*.

It is clear that the introduction of texts, alone, will not sensitize students sufficiently to the complexity of the issues. As stated above, students need exposure to real-life models who reflect and express the passion and commitment of the serious religious Zionist. As Abraham Joshua Heschel once quipped, “We don’t need good textbooks as much as good text people.” The training and hiring of teachers is critical in this area. Future teachers in their training programs, and current staff in their continuing education, should explore the rich and multi-varied world of religious Zionist thought in the context of the broader issues outlined above.

New thinking on religious Zionism in the Diaspora demands sacrifice in a number of areas. Allocation of time and resources (personnel and financial) must be reconsidered. In light of the realities our community is facing, however, these sacrifices are important and necessary.

Rabbi Goldmintz is Assistant Dean of the RAMAZ Upper School in New York City.

It is not at all clear to me that the present climate calls for a refinement or redefinition of our Israel oriented education. For to admit as much is to presume that such a system of education was in place beforehand. But is this really the case? Where are the curricular statements of goals and objectives that are now in need of redefinition? Where are the curriculum materials we must now refine? When was the last conference or principals’ meeting dedicated to the question of the teaching of Israel? Was there an educational crisis after the War in Lebanon, after the beginning of the Intifada, after the massacre in Hevron? If so, how did modern Orthodox schools change their education afterwards?

I have little social science research to corroborate the feeling, but it is a feeling nevertheless: There has been a crisis of sorts in religious Zionist education for some time. *Ivrit be’Ivrit* schools seem to belong on the endangered species list. The role of Hebrew language education in many places seems to have taken a distant backseat to other “more important” subjects in the curricula. With few exceptions, those who even have courses in Zionism or Jewish history or so called World-Jewish history, often have difficulty getting to the modern period and, once there, often have difficulty or disinterest in discussing contemporary political or theological issues. Do all of the students in our schools know the words to *Hatikvah*? Do they know what the words mean? Do they know what we mean when we speak of the theological implications of *Medinat Yisrael*? Do they know the *mahloket* regarding *mitzvat yishuv ha-aretz*? Should they?

Our students have been to Israel as tourists in unprecedented numbers. In that sense, they do not share the disassociation with the State that so worries those now concerned with Jewish continuity. But to what extent do they come to see living there as a viable option? To what extent do they see it as an imperative? The students who understand religious Zionism best are probably the ones whom we help motivate to study Torah in Israel after graduation. But to what extent did we relegate that part of their Zionist education to the Israeli yeshivot? And what of the students who decide not to go at all?

We know that many (but how many?) of our students identify with the land and the state. But do we really know how or why? We know that they have grown up in a different time, when there has not been a "clean" war to help rally the masses. The threats now before the State can no longer be divided as easily as they once were between the good guys and the bad guys. One cannot send students to kibbutz in the same way one once did in order to get the feeling of building the land; the students have changed, the kibbutz has changed and so has the land. And what have we changed in our schools in order to reflect this new reality?

Perhaps it is time for us to rethink some of these questions and to find a forum for sharing our deliberations. Perhaps it is time that we reexamine all of our curricula in Tanakh and Talmud and Hebrew Literature in an attempt to find missed opportunities for teaching religious Zionism. Perhaps it is time to take advantage of the research done in Israel on the teaching of religious Zionism and to learn from the mistakes and successes there. Could we not take out more time to help our students understand and interpret current events for themselves? Could we not be doing more to highlight the State's role as a living laboratory for *halakhah*? Could we be helping our students and their families to shape their trips to Israel? Could we not enter into partnerships with those tours willing to accept our input into their itineraries and educational programs? Should we not be exploring the potential of the Internet for bringing our students closer to Israel and Israelis?

The present climate in which religious Israel-oriented education needs refinement is not defined by the recent tragic events but rather the *laissez-faire* attitude which fails to help students shape and articulate their commitment to religious Zionism. It is that kind of commitment which will help them make their own decisions about how to respond appropriately to challenges from without and from within.

This, in turn, brings me to the first question regarding the present crisis. To be sure, our school like so many others, had assemblies and prayers and ceremonies, letter-writing and calls for reasoned debate. But I think one of the most important things we did was have a faculty meeting. For close to an hour we sat together after school to explore our roles as teachers. Where do you draw the line between indoctrination and religious education? At what point do we share our own viewpoints

with students? How do we counter the polemics without ourselves becoming polemical? When must we enter into the fray in order to preserve our religious goals and objectives and when do we sit back and let students make up their own minds?

One of my mentors has often reminded me that the purpose of schools is not so much to preach as it is to teach. Our primary task is to present students with the facts as best we can and then to try to balance the fine line between conveying to them what we want them to do or believe, as befits our own philosophy and objectives of religious education, and allowing them to make choices for themselves. To the extent that we do not try as hard as we can to make a fair presentation of differing viewpoints is the extent to which we *potentially* lure our students into extremism of any kind, be it political or otherwise, be it in Israel or in our own backyard.

We must be prepared to empower our students with choices and have the confidence in them that they will choose wisely. That is the reason that of all the responses the school had to the Rabin assassination, there is one of which we are the most proud. When many boards of schools and institutions were putting ads in the newspapers in memory of Rabin, our student leaders decided on their own that they, as Orthodox Zionist students, wanted to do the same. They met and argued for some time over the precise wording of the text. Ultimately, they compromised in order to allow for the representation of their differing and opposing opinions. After some deliberation, they sent the ad to a local Jewish paper and, in Hebrew translation, to *Ha'Aretz*. In the process, they learned valuable lessons in working out disagreements and in reaching out to others in the community, both here and in Israel. At the same time, they reminded many of us who are entrusted with their education that, given the proper amounts of direction and freedom, they can make the kind of choices which make us all the more proud to claim them as our graduates.

Rabbi Grumet is Associate Principal of the Torah Academy of Bergen County in Teaneck, New Jersey.

The educational crisis facing religious Zionists has been brewing for years—recent events, however, have forced it to the surface. Two generations of Jews were raised on the image of the pioneering spirit of the Israelis. The Israelis were heroes who made the desert bloom, drained the swamps, created a nation out of the ashes of the Shoah, and defended it against the might of the combined armies of twenty-two Arab aggressor nations. The Israelis set the standards for morality in the military, and stunned the world with a brilliant victory in 1967. The very existence of the State of Israel defied the odds, while it remained a besieged underdog in a hostile international community. For religious Zionists, the rise of the State of Israel was seen as Divine Providence, the beginning of the flowering of our redemption, and the liberation of the holy places in 1967 brought us to the brink of the Messianic era.

The images generated by the first twenty-five years of the State were powerful enough that anyone who grew up in the shadows of those images could develop powerful emotional connections to the State and the ideals of religious Zionism. Since then, however, the images projected have changed considerably. Today's generation of students has their formative years in the eighties, where the images of Israel are of the war in Lebanon, Sabra and Shatilla, and the Intifada. To counter those images, Jewish educators have dug into the collective memory of *Am Yisrael*, recreating the images of 1948 and 1967. As dated as those images may be, they capture the essence of the experience of two generations of Jews struggling to imbue their students with the same emotional and visceral connections to Zionism they experienced themselves.

The pioneers and heroes projected in the post-67 Jewish world were those who dedicated their lives to holding on to the gains of 1967, ensuring that there would be no backsliding in the unfolding process of our redemption. Suddenly, however, we discovered that a large segment of the Israeli populace, including the government, did not share our vision of heroism and ultimate destiny. Increasingly, the very lessons we taught to increase our students' connection to Israeli heroes and values

were alienating our students from the greater vision of Israel, its government, people, and connection to all of *Am Yisrael*. The more passionate our students became, the greater their alienation from the collective whole.

Perhaps even more disturbing than the assassination itself, which should shake us all at the core and give us reason to step back and take personal inventory, is the climate that allowed it to be justified publicly by the assassin and privately by a frightening segment of the Orthodox community and its leadership. The climate of us versus them; delegitimation rather than dialogue, persists despite its disastrous consequences. The religious Zionist community still perceives itself as under siege, although now the besiegers are Jews as much as they once were Arabs. Under a siege mentality, almost anything can be justified.

Where do we go from here? We need to refine and refocus the messages we deliver, the images we project, and the scope of meanings those images have. Part of that may include a fundamental redefining of religious Zionism, both for ourselves and our students. I propose the following:

1. Religious Zionism must teach that there are three components to God's covenant with the Jewish people: *Eretz Yisrael*, *Am Yisrael*, and *Torat Yisrael*. Whereas in the past some may have felt that anyone not committing to all three was to be excluded, we must now proclaim that anyone willing to commit to any one of the three will be recognized as a member of the covenantal community, with the ultimate hope that the limited conviction will expand. This places religious Zionists, who commit to all three, as the bridge to the rest of the Jewish people who might connect to only one or two of the covenantal components.
2. In light of the above, religious Zionists must not take positions which will alienate any segment of *Am Yisrael*. One model for this is the position held by the Mizrahi party for the first thirty plus years of the State, which joined every government coalition as a loyal opposition. This also necessitates that one goal of religious Zionist education must be the appreciation of all Jews and the need to be able to communicate effectively with them.
3. The Zionist heroes we project must span a broad range, from across the religious and political spectrum, defined only by their

commitment to some element of the covenant. Heroic figures such as Natan Sharansky need not be shunned merely for the fact that their religious commitments don't meet our standards—it should suffice that their commitments to *Am Yisrael* and *Eretz Yisrael* are exemplary. And yes, we can tolerate the non-observance without legitimizing it. Similarly, religious figures whose commitments to *Am Yisrael* and *Eretz Yisrael* don't meet our expectations can be projected as heroes in the spheres of their contributions without legitimizing their flaws.

4. While we may believe that the rise of the State of Israel is *reishit tzemihat ge'ulateinu*, we must be humble enough to recognize that we cannot establish that as a fact, nor can we state with any certainty what path the rest of the development of that *ge'ulah* will take. *Ge'ulah*, like childbirth, may be a long and painful process with one step back for every two steps forward. Furthermore, while we have the right to believe that we are in the midst of a redemptive process, we have no right to dictate to God that He fulfill certain promises at any given time, nor to rely on that fact that He will.
5. We must be careful to avoid confusing positions of moderation with those of mediocrity. We can and should be passionate about our positions, and convey those passions to our students. Yet those passions should not be limited to particular pieces of the overall vision, for that leads to the very distortions of the vision from which we currently suffer. Rather, our passion should encompass all of the components of religious Zionism, including those of moderation and tolerance for those with whom we disagree.

Rabbi Halpern is on the faculties of several *yeshivot* and *midrashot* in Jerusalem.

#### Frustration!

Frustration is probably the only term that comes to mind in conveying the tragedy that has enveloped the educational community since the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

#### Why frustration?

As an educator for American Orthodox university students, at study in Israel for a year or perhaps two, how can I possibly educate those who are, by definition, already separate and cut themselves off from Israel? How can I describe and make real for them the most sensitive and raw emotions of that society?

The reality is that education about Israel has always been a form of hero worship. Especially within the Orthodox community. That is: how wonderful Israel is; how many more *mitzvot* one observes in Israel; how exciting it is to walk in the footsteps of our ancestors from Abraham to the liberators of the *kotel*.

Sometimes, but rarely, social issues and political dilemmas in Israel are addressed by Orthodox educators. When these issues and dilemmas are addressed, educators usually minimize the non-religious and the secular approaches to these challenges. The leaders of modern Israel are often portrayed as modern-day assimilationists or quislings, selling out traditional Jewish values,

So, again, how do I now explain to my students the tragedy of the murder of the Prime Minister after much of what they've heard from my colleagues would have made it appear that they should be elated by his demise?! As religious educators plying our trade in Israel, we bear partial responsibility for shaping a society in which the Prime Minister is seen, by some, as a collaborator, and portrayed by others as an enemy of the people. It is this vitriol that daily infuses the lives of those impressionable youth at study here in Israel, in classrooms and in *batei midrash*.

Since the assassination I have heard very "creative" historical analyses in the halls of religious institutions. Some people seem to have forgotten what they had said about Rabin before his assassination. They

have created a new past and removed themselves from any sense of responsibility. Yet, their students remember what was said by them, and have, in fact, brought up this incongruity to me and asked that I explain this inconsistency between memory and reality. Others, both faculty and students, begin to justify the assassination. They blame Rabin for alienating so much of the population. They blame the *Shin-Bet* (secret service) for not protecting him better. They blame the Prime Minister for not wearing a bulletproof vest and for not taking threats against his life seriously.

All of these excuses simply deflect attention from the heart of the issue. That is: a citizen murdered the Prime Minister of his country. Many people here, too, camouflage this tragedy by suggesting that the real sin was that of one Jew killing another Jew. Although there is little question that the murder of any Jew at the hands of another Jew is tragic, this case is so much more than that. It represents a rejection of the very essence of democracy and rips at the very fabric of our society.

My classes could not get enough information about the assassination and about the assassin. Almost to a whole, my students were riveted to my descriptions of the rifts which split Israeli society in the wake of the assassination. Now, suddenly, they were all too aware of the divisions between the religious and the secular, between the right and the left in today's Israel. Yet, the day before the assassination they knew next to nothing about this conflict and actually believed that the Prime Minister represented a minority opinion in Israel. Today, they see and feel a backlash against the religious community and want to know why.

In teaching Religious Zionism today we must approach the subject differently than we would have only last month or last year. We now walk a tightrope—how does one teach nationalism and yet remain open to those with a different vision? How does one teach religious commitment and at the same time recognize that some students may misconstrue or exaggerate the message? How does one teach a love for the land and a love for peace and recognize that both can be achieved? This is truly the frustration of teaching both *ahavat Eretz Yisrael* and *ahavat Am Yisrael*.

Indeed, religious Zionism is in the throes of an educational crisis in classrooms not only in Israel, but around the world. Coming to Israel for a year of study in a religious institution had always been a way to

help formulate the students' future relationship to Israel. It was a shot in the arm to students and forced them to define their Zionism—whether that meant just a warm feeling towards Israel, or the desire to move here. Completing that same year of study this year, in the aftermath of the assassination, students must be shocked at the fact that a product of their institutions was the murderer, that some of their, or their friends' *rebei'im* are being held and questioned by the police for fomenting seditious thought leading to treacherous action. Today, those same students can't help but question their institutions and their teachers. This must lead them to further questioning of the religious Zionist dream and their place within that dream.

As educators it is our task to retool, and to provide a framework within which students can regain their love of Israel the country, and Israel the people. To do this, we must temper our message. We must recognize that whatever our perspective, it is just one of many, not just within the religious world but within the entire body politic of Israel. We must recognize that the way to effect change within our Jewish society is by democratic means. Not by murder, not by name calling, not through hatred.

Mrs. Kraut is the Principal of the Cincinnati Hebrew Day School.

I should like to address myself to the question, of safeguarding our students from the dangers of extremism, by means of an illustration from the Torah: the case of Pinhas.

I have always been unnerved by the prospect of a zealot (*kana'i*). For me, he is never wrapped in the mantle of a hero, but is always cloaked in danger, a threatening and frightening presence. For a zealot is someone who sees himself above the rules designed for the masses. He believes that he is responding to a higher calling, and does not feel bound by the restrictions or cautions designed for others. He is a person of principle and idealism and is firmly committed to bold and decisive action. He will not be deterred by consequences or faintness of heart, but is compelled to act by the need to eradicate the evil he has targeted. He is someone who sees himself as a daring, one-of-a-kind spirit, destined to challenge accepted norms. He believes that he is meant to break the rules. It is his mission. And that is why he is so dangerous.

So it was with Pinhas *HaKohein*. Seeing the prince of the tribe of Shimon brazenly parade with the Midianite princess and together enter a tent, Pinhas is reminded of the tradition he learned from Moshe: *habo'eil Aramit, kana'in pog'in bo*. [He who has intercourse with an Aramean (heathen), zealots will attack him.] Pinhas responds immediately, acting upon his righteous spirit to be jealous for *Hashem's* honor, and slays both Zimri and his consort. He ignores the need for a warning, legal testimony, or any due process of law. Pinhas murders both Zimri and Kozbi.

"Murder?", you ask. "Wasn't Pinhas acting as a zealot and was, thereby, permitted to attack Zimri?" So it would seem from the tradition quoted above, if in fact Pinhas was a zealot. Yet, how does one know if a killer is a legitimate zealot, or a murderer? How can one know whether a killer is really acting out of sincere jealousy for God, or out of some personal, ulterior motive? How can even the killer be so sure of the purity of his own motives that he can proclaim himself a zealot? In the case of Pinhas, it is only because God Himself testifies to Pinhas' genuine zealotry (*kana'ut*) that we know Pinhas' true intentions.

The Torah says: "Pinhas, the son of Elazar . . . has turned my wrath away . . . while he was zealous with my jealousy" (Numbers 25:11).

The Talmud states that were it not for this divine testimony, Pinhas might have been excommunicated.

To my mind, Pinhas' act is only justified in retrospect and should not be taken as a model to promote acts of zealotry. In fact, while the concept of zealotry is a lofty one, I believe, and projects a level of devotion to which one ought to aspire, it is a category that should never be actualized. For a zealot jeopardizes both the stability of society and the safeguards of the halakhic process, and his own authenticity and legitimacy can only be verified by God Himself. That being the case, I suggest that the concept of zealotry be presented as a desired ideal, but never be taught as an actual or practical option. No individual should ever dare presume the title of *kana'i* nor the status of being above the law of murder. No individual dare put to risk all of *Klal Yisrael* for a personal vision of being jealous for the honor of God, no matter how admirable a goal that may be.

Rabbi Dr. Matanky is Assistant Superintendent of the Associated Talmud Torahs of Chicago, Illinois, and Director of the Goldman Computer Department.

*Until the day we die we will always try to remember where we were and what we were doing at five to 10:00 on Motza'ei Shabbat the 4th of November 1995. That's what civilized people do when they try to analyze where their values faded at a critical moment, as a single despondent individual rose up to destroy them. For what happened last night in Malkhei Yisrael Square is one of those terrible defining moments, that opens a deep wound in the soul of a people, destroying the delicate fabric of a nation . . . Last night we lost a leader . . . but even more, we lost what remained of our moral superiority in the face of the nations of the world. Three bullets linked us to a world of vicious murderers, to a bloodthirsty mob of lone assassins and dead leaders. "Lo baharta banu mikol ha'amim, velo lanu natata"—We are not the chosen ones, and we were not given to this . . ."*

RON MIBERG, *Maariv*, November 5, 1995

At five to ten, on *Motza'ei Shabbat*, the 4th of November 1995, I was driving on a very dark, very secluded road somewhere behind Bethlehem. It was there I first heard the terrible news that Yitzhak Rabin had been shot.

Within the hour Israeli radio began to report rumors that the murderer was a religious Jew, an alumnus of Kerem B'Yavne and a law student at Bar-Ilan University. From that moment on I began to ask myself, "How could it be?"

During the next six hours, I did nothing but listen to the news, try to understand how such a terrible thing could happen—to him and to us—and wonder what would happen next. The only problem is, I'm still wondering. Because very few things that happened that evening or in the intervening weeks, seem to make any sense.

That a Jew could murder another Jew—makes no sense. That an intelligent person could imagine that solutions to a political crisis can be found in an act of terror—makes no sense. That a religious Jew, educated in the finest yeshivot and universities could play god and kill

another—makes no sense.

Of course, I am not the only one who has been grappling with these issues; all of *klal Yisrael* has had to address them in one way or another. But how do we, as Jewish educators try to present such a difficult issue to our students? What messages should we strive to convey?

On the morning after Rabin's assassination I called Nehama Leibowitz to say hello and arrange a time to visit her. In passing I said, I wished we would have been able to speak at a much less tragic moment in our history.

"What happened?" she asked. "Didn't you hear? Rabin was murdered by a Jew!"

"Oy, nora, nora, what a *hillul Hashem!*" she cried.

Later that day, when I went to Nehama's apartment to visit, I asked her what message should I share with my students and colleagues in the States. Nehama thought for a moment and then responded: "Tell them that everyone in the State of Israel is united in mourning. That despite all of the dissension that was, today everyone is united."

"But Nehama, that's not true," I said. "Everyone is in shock, but not everyone is mourning! Look out on the streets, life continues."

"I didn't say that everyone is mourning this man," said Nehama. "Rather, they are mourning that such a terrible thing could happen in a Jewish State."

It was a most powerful message and one that is very true. For beyond the immediate political and personal implications of Rabin's assassination, this despicable act has brought into question the very essence of the State of Israel as a Jewish state—an issue which deserves to be in the forefront of our religious Zionist education.

The time has come to ask ourselves and to discuss with our students: what makes Israel a Jewish state? Do we have a right to impose our dream of an ideal Jewish society upon Israelis who may not want to bear that burden?

What of the growing politicizing of religious Zionism? Have we forgotten that building the land of Israel is not merely limited to the issue of land for peace, but includes the need to educate Israeli youth—something that cannot be accomplished as long as we remain on the sidelines and in the opposition.

Or to put it much more bluntly: Now that the agenda of Israel has



shifted from war to peace, are we prepared to fight the new battle for its identity?

Which leads to something that has been troubling me since the assassination—the emergence of what I call the “Israelite religion.”

What is the “Israelite religion”? It is the manner in which the vast majority of Israelis responded to the Rabin assassination: the candles which were lit in what is now called Rabin Square; the funeral which was devoid of religion, save the *divrei Torah* of the American president; the concerts which were staged at the beginning and the end of the *shivah* period; and the flowers and gifts which covered Rabin’s grave. What happened to the traditional Jewish response to tragedy and death?

But the answer is—that devoid of a traditional Jewish experience and education, secular Israelis found secular rituals to express their sorrow. They invented a religion, since they had none, and this is perhaps proof of the greatest tragedy of all.

Not, God forbid, that we can ever excuse the actions of Amir; what he did was inexcusable. But at least his perversion of Judaism was limited, the expression of a disturbed individual shared by few others. But the reaction of the secular Israeli population suggests the unspeakable: the loss of an entire generation of Jews to Judaism in the very land which should have fostered their faith and identity.

How that could have happened, must be the question we ask. But even more important, what can we do to change that disturbing expression of assimilation? For while it is true that Amir changed who we are and how we must think about Zionism, the reaction of Israelis, their expressions of mourning, tells us even more of what we have lost.

For too many years we have focused our attention on the outside threat: on armies, missiles, boundaries and treaties. The time has come to turn once again inside. To look at who we really are, and what we have become.

For if not, the conclusion of columnist Ron Miberg: *Lo baharta banu mikol ha’amim, velo lanu natata*, may be more than an anguished cry. It may be a reflection of the demise of a sacred dream.

Rabbi Dr. Rabinowitz is Principal of the North Shore Hebrew Academy in Great Neck, Long Island.

How do you define home? Where is your home? Those of us in American *hinukh* often “joke” about not having a geographical place to call home because we have moved and uprooted ourselves around the “breadth and width” of this country. Perhaps as *mehankhim* we are better served by asking ourselves how we define and where we find our spiritual home.

Mine is in *Kiryat Moshe*, a quiet Jerusalem neighborhood that has been home to *Yeshivat Merkaz HaRav* for thirty years. It was there that I met my greatest spiritual hero and best example of a holy man, Rav Zvi Yehuda Kook. He showed me more by example than by teaching, though I learned his father’s teachings with him daily. It was Rav Zvi Yehuda who taught me about passion for a belief and a cause, yet he was never simplistic or one-dimensional. He showed his love for His people Israel and the entire world; I saw his visceral responses to the physical pain of others; I watched him go beyond what his age and physical condition allowed in support of the nascent villages of Yehudah and Shomron. He left a legacy of love that expressed how he lived with intertwined love for *Am Yisrael*, *Torat Yisrael*, and *Eretz Yisrael*.

Today, when I visit Israel, I am inspired. I “go home again” and find my spiritual brothers, who, alas, knew our father better. They are teaching and living Torah according to the insights Rav Zvi Yehudah left us. Although he died in 1982, Rav Zvi Yehuda’s teachings are alive and as important as ever. They are taught by rabbis, scholars, and teachers. They are lived by *kibbutzniks*, *ba’aley batim*, *yishuvniks*: people in every walk of life and endeavor.

Then, upon my return from Israel, I feel depressed. Rav Zvi Yehudah’s paradigm of thinking and living Torah is unknown to my students and indeed my own children. They may be exposed to it after high school if they study in Israel, but there are tragically few opportunities for them to experience what Rav Kook left us. The deep commitment to Torah study and *shemirat mitzvot*, an abiding love of others, a passion for the holiness of the land, and the perpetual question of “What can I do to bring additional holiness to each of these deside-

rata?" This is the stuff of Rav Kook's, the father's and the son's, teachings.

Unfortunately, many great people have shied away from the Kook legacy. They explain that Rav Kook's (particularly the father's) towering figure was beyond this world. Often his language must be decoded, and his rigorous standards are difficult to meet. Nonetheless, I am pleased to note that a number of next-generation students have accepted the challenge of making the corpus of *rabbanim*-Kook wisdom accessible to all. Rav Motti Elon, *Rosh Yeshivat Horev* in Jerusalem, is one such student. His weekly lectures on *parshat ha-shavu'a* attract hundreds of participants, and thousands more are regular listeners to the radio broadcast. Another student is Rav Shlomo Aviner. As *Rosh Yeshivat Ateret Kohanim* and rabbi of the community of Beit El, he has written both scholarly and popular works. He has made Rav Zvi Yehudah's teachings a major part of his focus and expounded on them with clarity and practical application.

Among his fifteen books and monographs (available in Israel or shipped to interested readers in the Diaspora) Rav Aviner published *She'eilot U'Teshuvot Intifada*. There, he came out strongly against the very sort of atrocity perpetrated upon Yitzhak Rabin, z"l. He spoke of the importance of friendly relations with his Arab neighbors and peaceful, if not amicable, coexistence. He wrote of Rav Zvi Yehudah's unflinching respect for the elected government of Israel. Rav Aviner is much less extremist than the media has portrayed.

Another example of how Rav Aviner has used Rav Kook's teachings to affect daily life: Rav Aviner spoke on Israeli Radio's "arutz-7" fully one week before Prime Minister Rabin's assassination. He discussed whether one may hate and cause harm to an ideological opponent, even one whose views appear to be so detrimental to the entire Land of Israel. Rav Aviner stated:

Disagreements are legitimate, and sometimes necessary. One is obligated to wage a forceful intellectual confrontation against ideas that may destroy the Jewish people. But this is a far cry from an obligation to hate the person expressing these ideas. Divided opinions yes; divided hearts—no. We must understand that even when an idea is hateful, the man expressing it is not.

Later in the broadcast, Rav Aviner added:

Everyone knows people who are of a different opinion than they are: friends, colleagues, family members . . . Open a friendly dialogue with them and you will reap a double profit. First, it will destroy his caricatured perception of you, and second, it will destroy your caricatured perception of him. I'm not saying that you will convince him of your position, but rather that each of you will begin to see the other as a human being, and therefore deserving of your respect and love.

Rav A. I. Kook wrote about the foundations of Jewish behavior in Orot. His son, Rav Zvi Yehuda, often called them "the two *alephs*:"

Faith and love (*emunah* and *ahava*) are the essence of life in this world and the next . . . Contemporary civilization, as it is now constructed, is predicated on disbelief and hatred, the negators of essential life. It is possible to overcome this illness only by revealing all the wealth of goodness stored in the treasury of faith and love. This is the purpose of revealing the secrets of Torah.

This, then, should be the blueprint for how we should refine our religious education. "Growing in faith and closeness to G-d," should be the overarching goal of our teaching and learning as we help others, respect them as people, accept them for what they are, and ultimately lead them with love, and to love: Love of each other, our Land, and our Torah. In this way, we promote a strong individual commitment to *Medinat Yisrael* without promoting extremism. Only with the goal of love as the foundation of our spiritual home, can we live in a mansion worthy of the imagination of the greatest architect.



A practical note: All students of North Shore Hebrew Academy begin *tefillah* each day with the *Ari Zal's* pronouncement: *hareini mekabeil alay mitzvat aseih shel "ve'ahavta lerei'akha kamokha."*

Dr. Sokolow is an Associate Professor at Yeshiva University and Director of Educational Services at the Torah Education and Culture Department.

*On an educational level, I think this tragic event also reveals something frightening. A law student, an educated person, thought that by killing Rabin he would solve all of Israel's problems? What primitivity, what shallowness, what a lack of thought! In our schools and youth movements, have we educated so shallow a generation where slogans have replaced critical thought?*

RAV YEHUDAH AMITAL



Much has been said over these past several weeks about our educational system. The assassination of Yitzhak Rabin by an Orthodox, Yeshiva educated, Jew, and the climate—both in Israel and in the Diaspora—which condoned verbal abuse and intolerance, have targeted yeshiva-style education as sorely in need of repair.

The changes we need to institute, however, must be profound ones. If there is “something rotten” in the state of modern-Orthodox education, then the solution is not to camouflage it with cosmetic—curricular or instructional—changes, but to root it out and replace it with concepts and practices better suited for our goals and purposes. The material we teach, and the didactics through which we teach it, are secondary to the aims and objectives we hope, thereby, to achieve. Promoting change requires not merely new texts, new methods, or even new teachers; it needs a new statement of educational purpose.

Let me illustrate.

Several years ago I organized a seminar for American *Tanakh* teachers with Nehama Leibowitz. The closing session of the seminar was devoted to the topic of comparing and contrasting different *mefarshim*. Nehama explained the need to relate each commentator's specific interpretation to his overall methodology, and then entertained questions. One of the participants asked: “What should we say when the students ask us which interpretation is correct?” Nehama responded by reiterat-

ing that it was not as much a question of right and wrong as of alternative, parallel, approaches, and the important thing was to show how each interpreter was consistent within his own methodology.

The participant persisted: “But you don't know our students,” he protested, “they will insist on knowing which is the right answer.” Nehama replied: “We aren't Catholics. We don't have a pope to tell us what's right or wrong!”

The principle educational problem with the peace process is that many people [NB: not all of whom are Orthodox and not all of the Orthodox are educators] who are against the return of territories regard the opposing view as not merely “wrongheaded,” or “politically naive,” but as “unacceptable,” and “evil.” This, they feel, entitles them not only to reject it as a political option, but to denounce it as “heretical” and its adherents as “apostates.” Let's be honest, though, and not profess shock at this wholesale condemnation of opposing or problematic views and opinions; we practice it in our own schools with astonishing regularity.

For instance: A teacher is discussing with his students the question of Rivkah's age upon her marriage to Yitzhak. The teacher—following *Rashi*—explains, in minute detail, that: (a) Yitzhak was 37 years old at the time of the Akeidah; (b) that is when Rivkah was born; (c) he married at the age of 40; and that, (d) consequently, Rivkah was only three when they married. A student asks: But only one of those four propositions (item c) is in the Torah!? The teacher replies: The others are in *Rashi* and that's as good as being in the Torah itself.

Let's now say, for the sake of this essay, that the student is not cowed by the teacher's dogmatic response and holds his ground, challenging each of the other three propositions. Regarding the first, he argues that both Avraham and the Torah call him a “*na'ar*,” meaning a youth, and Avraham lifts him up “above the altar, above the wood,” neither of which suits a 37 year old man. Concerning the second point, he notes that after the Akeidah, Avraham is informed only that Betuel had a daughter named Rivkah, not necessarily that she had just been born. As regards the final proposition, he argues that the Torah, Eliezer, and her parents all refer to her as a “*na'arah*,” a young woman, and that her actions belie a more tender age. A three year old is not called a “shepherdess,” she doesn't go alone to the well, and is hardly capable of drawing the volume of water which would be required by several thirsty

men, not to mention their camels.

How does the teacher respond? Does he allow for an alternative possibility—grounded in the compelling logic of the student's arguments and buttressed by his Scriptural prooftexts? Or does he reiterate, dogmatically, that if *Rashi*, to whom the streets of heaven were as familiar as those of Troyes, and on the tip of whose pen sat an angel, says that she was three years old, then any argument to the contrary is not only specious, but borders precariously on blasphemy?

Our stalwart student returns to class the next day, incredibly still unintimidated, and confronts the teacher with the *piece de resistance*: The *Da'at Zekeinim MiBa'alei HaTosafot*. Based upon an Aggadah [which equates Rivkah's lifespan to that of Kehat, the father of Amram], they determine that Rivkah married Yitzhak at the age of 13, which suits the descriptive term "*na'arah*," and is consistent with her actions.

Now what does our teacher say to his intellectually intrepid disciple? Does he acknowledge the legitimacy of the second source and admit that there may be an alternative interpretation of the story equal in its validity to his own? Not our dogmatist. Refusing to relinquish his cherished notion of *Rashi's* infallibility, yet uncertain about the import of the *Tosafot*, he now invokes Niels Bohr's "theory of complementarity." Just as light is both waves and particles, he solemnly proclaims, so was Rivkah simultaneously three and thirteen!



Whom are we fooling? Accommodating two mutually exclusive views simultaneously is as unacceptable an educational proposition as the alternative of intolerance. What we need, as Rav Amital observed, is "critical thinking." We need to foster the ability to discriminate between valid interpretations and those which are invalid, and to prioritize the valid interpretations in order of their suitability.

This is where *Ibn Ezra* comes in because there is scarcely another *parshan* who can so invigorate our students' critical faculties. "*Lo nitenah Torah le-mal'akhei ha-shareit*:" Torah was not given to ministering angels, i.e., to entities without free will (and without the concomitant human frailties and foibles); it was given to rational beings. In consequence thereof, says *Ibn Ezra*, "*ha-mal'akh bein ha'adam v'ha'Elo-him, hu ha-seikhel*:" The intermediary between man and God is

reason. That which appeals to the critical faculty and can be sustained by it—is acceptable; that which reason denies or doubts—must be challenged.

Let us take, for instance, the case of Exodus 25:5, "*va'atzei shittim*." The question prompted by the verse is: Where did the Israelites obtain the trees which they used in the construction of the Mishkan and its furnishings? *Rashi*, in reply, cites the *Midrash Tanhuma* to the effect that "the Patriarch, Yaakov, foresaw, prophetically, that his descendants would build a tabernacle in the wilderness. He brought cedar trees to Egypt, planted them there, and left instructions for his descendants to take them along when they left."

Not so fast, says *Ibn Ezra*, let's first see if this Aggadah is reasonable. The Jews left Egypt, he reminds us, under the guise of decamping for a three day festival. That is why the Egyptians "loaned" them their jewelry and fine clothes. In such a situation, he asks, what would the Jews have said had the Egyptians asked them why they were taking whole trees along to a festival—remembering: (a) that they had to be 10 cubits each, in length; and (b) that the Jews did not sneak out of Egypt, but left in full public view?!

"We are in a quandary," *Ibn Ezra* writes in conclusion of this matter. "If our ancestors had a tradition [*kabbalah*] that [the trees] came from Egypt, then we shall accept it without reservation. If, on the other hand, it is only speculation [*sevarah*], then we are entitled to seek an alternative." This is vintage *Ibn Ezra*. Not just the specific illustration, however illuminating, but the accompanying methodological postulate. What a difference it would make in our students' demeanor—academic, social, and political, alike—if they were to assimilate this lesson in critical thinking.



This is not the only lesson which we can learn from *Ibn Ezra*. Both he, and his mentor, *Sa'adiah Gaon*, can teach us a thing or two about "defending the faith."

It has been my observation that most of our students and graduates are ill-prepared to debate, let alone defend, the principles of their faith, before audiences of unlike-minded Jews, or of gentiles. They appear incapable of proving their points of view by resort to any means other

than dogmatic. When challenged by the non-religious to defend some characteristic Orthodox dogma or practice, they tend to pound the table with the *Mishnah Berurah*, unaware that their audience probably never heard of it, let alone regard it as authoritative.

Not so *Ibn Ezra*. In his commentary on Exodus 21:24 ('*ayin tahat 'ayin*), and, again, in the commentary on Leviticus 23:11 (*maharat haShabbat*), he presents the protocol—as it were—of a debate on the meaning of the verse between *Sa'adiah* and a Karaite. The most noteworthy detail of these debates is the total absence of dogmatic posturing. In neither case does *Sa'adiah* appeal to the Talmud as his source of authority, but confines himself, rather, to arguments based upon philosophy and philology. If he cannot overcome his Karaite antagonist on grounds of language and logic, he must concede the engagement, because the Karaites—on principle—rejected the authority of the Talmud.



Imagine, then, a nascent Orthodoxy conceived in reason, nurtured on sensitivity to text and context, and dedicated to the mutual propositions that any interpretation which is neither logical nor consistent with the text—is not credible, and that if you expect any but the faithful to accept it—it can only be proven through logic and language. Dogmas, per se, may make for good sound-bites, but their powers of persuasion are overrated.

This is not a pie-in-the-sky proposal; it is realistic. The commentary of *Ibn Ezra* is already printed in the *Miqra'ot Gedolot*; if this be reason—let us make the most of it!

Dr. Wolowelsky, Chairman of Advanced Placement Studies at the Yeshivah of Flatbush, is also an associate editor of *Tradition*.

We should say at the outset that the reassessment of our educational goals and priorities that have followed the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin should have taken place long before the killing. It speaks ill of us that it took an assassin from the religious Zionist community to bring us to this.

The Modern Orthodox community has long taken pride in that, as David Berger had observed ("Communications," *Tradition*, 27:2, Winter 1993), there is an "uneven playing field imposed on us with the Orthodox right." For the most part, we agreed to be, as he noted, *ne'elavin ve'einan olevim*. We watched passively as day after day institutions of modern Orthodoxy like Yeshiva University—and individuals like Rabbis Norman Lamm and Shlomo Riskin—were mocked in the press of the yeshiva world and we did not respond in kind. While others used contempt as an educational policy, we took the high road—reasoned discussion and moderated positions.

But, unfortunately, we seem to have noticed that teaching contempt is quite effective. Students, especially adolescents, take to it quickly. They pick up all the messages and transfer their contempt into distance from those opposing their view. If the bottom line is compliance, the educational policy is a success.

It was therefore not surprising that this educational strategy found its way into our own schools. *Rashei yeshiva* at Yeshiva University could now publicly mock its president because they disagreed with his *hashkafah* on a particular issue—spitting in the well from which they drank, if you will. If a *rebbe* at some yeshiva in America or Israel did not want his students to attend a particular *yeshiva gedolah*, he could simply treat it with contempt. Conservative Judaism, liberal philosophy, secular Zionism—whatever a particular teacher opposed—simply became the object of disdain. No public protest was raised by those of us opposed to such discourse.

Indeed, this policy of justified contempt became a most effective tool in the political debate over the current peace process. Anybody who opposed the all-or-nothing approach of the militant right was

delegitimized. Suddenly, there was no respectable halakhic position that land for peace was appropriate. Not that *talmidei hakhamim* didn't articulate such positions; they simply were dismissed as *apikorsim* and ignoramuses. Many Orthodox people opposed the government's policy for quite logical and ethical reasons. But it became all too easy for them to look the other way when irresponsible people used contempt to sway public opinion to their side.

The teaching of contempt had become part and parcel of our community.

A main victim of this new educational policy was respect for compromise. Of course, on some level we oppose compromise. We want strict observance of, say, *kashrut* and *Shabbat*; we want our students to remain firm when outside pressures create obstacles to full halakhic compliance.

Yet what we sometimes call compromise is often the mediation of two opposing positive values. Practical halakhah has always had to balance such contradictory claims. But halakhic authority moved over the years from the practicing *rav* to the academic *rosh yeshivah*. The sources of authority moved—as Haym Soloveitchik pointed out (“Rupture and Rapture,” *Tradition*, 28:4, Summer 1994)—from the living community (where, we note, debate and accommodation are part of the normal social intercourse) to the printed text (where things are clearly black and white). Halakhic positions became less accommodating. Disdain for what seemed to be compromise increased.

This has had grievous consequences for our community in general—but most tragically for the religious Zionist political party. Politics, after all, is the art of compromise; nothing can be accomplished on the practical level when the ability to compromise is lost.

In the past, *Mafdal*, the “National Religious Party,” knew how to compromise its broad vision for an ideal Torah state to bring the here-and-now state closer to its goal. But in the last few years, it too learned to have contempt for compromise. Refusing to join a government whose policy it contested, it forfeited not only the ability to moderate the peace process from within, but sacrificed the education ministry and interior ministries too. We will pay for this new myopic vision of politics for many decades to come.

If we want to recapture our ideals, we must give up the quick fix of

teaching contempt and return to reasoned debate. If we want to have a healthy religious community, we must insist that it—and we—regain our respect for compromising with integrity.

If we can do this, we may wring something positive from this terrible *hillul Hashem*.

## ON TEACHING HALAKHAH

### A Prefatory Plea

Although I have given the matter much thought and have some ideas for the resolution of the difficulties I see in the teaching of halakhah, my purpose here is, primarily, to articulate the problems rather than the solutions. For what I seek to do is to try to create some common ground for dialogue in these pages about the problems which face us in Jewish education. For unless we can at least mutually identify the challenges and recognize the similar and dissimilar ways in which each of us perceives them, we will simply continue to talk past one another. Alternatively, we may simply ignore one another, continuing to work in our own *dalet amot* oblivious to the fact that in our isolation we are reinventing the wheel.

And so, I present the following as a beginning. If it sparks the reader to write a letter to the Editor voicing radical disagreement, or sharing an idea as to how s/he wrestles with similar problems, or presenting a solution or two, then our purposes will have been well served.

### I. Introduction

We often hear that it is almost a cardinal tenet of Orthodoxy that at the moment of divine revelation at Sinai the Jewish people took their oath of allegiance not so much in statements of belief, but rather in a commitment to action: *na'aseh ve-nishma*'. The primary commitment is to act in accordance with the dictates of the Written and Oral Torahs, and with the interpretations and rulings of the successive generations of accepted authorities. Belief, or at least the ability to articulate the specifics of one's belief, was generally of lesser concern than practice. Such was the posture expressed by *HaKadosh Barukh Hu*, Himself, in the rabbinic statement: "Better that My people should abandon [belief

in] Me and keep the Torah, for observance of the mitzvot will bring them closer to Me."<sup>1</sup> So, too, despite the intellectual debate that played itself out throughout the history of Jewish education between the relative merits of study versus action,<sup>2</sup> for all practical purposes, action—as represented by some conformity with halakhah—was always the hallmark of membership within the Jewish community.

In terms of my own educational practice, I always took the teaching of halakhah as a given. Working within an Orthodox school I no more questioned the importance of teaching *dinim* in my early years as a teacher than I did the teaching of the Torah. And if students were not wholly committed to the practice of halakhah, I was naively convinced that if they only knew more they would surely join the ranks of the Orthoprax. Although my goals have changed, my commitment to the teaching of halakhah has not and, as I shall explain below, I believe that it has some critical ramifications for the modern Orthodox school in particular.

## II. Halakhah and the Orthodox School

Despite the central role of halakhah in Jewish life, and despite its importance for Jewish religious education, there is little evidence to suggest that it is taken seriously within the modern Orthodox day school curriculum. Empirical data is difficult to come by in the fragmented world of the modern Orthodox day school movement in North America.

My own informal survey began with a conference which I coordinated a number of years ago on the subject of the teaching of halakhah. Of the sixteen schools represented, only two had any formal program in place. Of the remaining schools, most left it up to the individual teacher to speak about *inyanei deyoma* when (s)he felt it appropriate. Others acted upon the assumption that whatever was necessary for students to know was being learned at home. Still others felt that, unlike other subjects of Jewish Studies, the teaching of halakhah essentially represented a head-on confrontation with students' personal practices and was "not worth the hassle" or the danger of turning students off. The overwhelming feeling was that, in any event, there were no good curriculum materials available. So much for North America. I was convinced that at least in Israel I would find that more serious work had

been done. At the very least, the presence of a national system of religious education engenders the demands for curriculum materials which, in turn, would mean that some coherent thought would have been given the subject. Yet, here too I have been disappointed. In a survey covering representative curricula in the Israeli religious educational system from 1934-1984, Yehudah Eisenberg opines that: "*Torah SheBe'al Peh* is the most important subject in the *mamlakhti dati* school."<sup>3</sup> Moreover, of the different subjects that fall under the rubric of *Torah SheBe'al Peh*, including Mishnah and Gemara, he claims that *dinim* is the most important since one of the primary purposes is *lishmor ve-la'asot*. Nevertheless, it is the most neglected part of the system.<sup>4</sup>

This neglect and the reasons often cited for failure to address halakhah more seriously stem from a number of challenges, ones which must be viewed as especially significant if they stand in the way of teaching what so many agree to be a "most important" subject.

## III. The Challenges: Symptoms and Problems

### A. Halakhah As a Discipline

In the first place, there is the nature of the discipline itself. The history of halakhah and halakhic literature is the back and forth cycle between concise codification on the one hand, and expansive interpretation and explanation on the other. The latter kind of literature is simply too broad and complex to make it useful as a major text of learning in high schools. As such, the texts most favored for the teaching of halakhah are generally those which concisely and precisely lay down the final law, especially those which are somehow related in style or format to the *Shulhan Arukh*. Indeed, as Professor Twersky has pointed out: "The *Shulhan Arukh* is the leanest of all codes in Jewish history."<sup>5</sup> It expunges all elements which are not the fixed, final law. It is thus unconcerned with the judicial process, which includes "exegesis, interpretation, derivation, awareness of controversy." There is also "the virtually complete elimination of ideology, theology, and teleology."<sup>6</sup> And what is true of the *Shulhan Arukh* is true to a greater or lesser extent, of many of the other works that are used in its place in schools: *Hayyei Adam*, *Hokhmat Adam*, or *Kitzur Shulhan Arukh*. In a similar vein, the ongoing nature of the halakhic process is such that contemporary issues cannot be ad-



dressed exclusively through these traditional works, thus calling for a variety of other texts, including responsa literature, which high school students are ill-equipped to use. The result is that contemporary issues are not addressed at all,<sup>7</sup> or at least not in any organized way.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the unique characteristics of halakhic codes, these texts present many of the same problems for the teacher that are presented by texts in other disciplines within the Jewish studies curriculum, such as: unfamiliar vocabulary; lack of punctuation; reliance upon unwritten principles and concepts; and the like. The total result is that teachers are, more often than not, left to their own devices, and, in the process, just try to muddle through. The teaching of halakhah is then reduced to an attempt to simply make students learn rules and regulations in such a way that students perceive that the same kinds of intellectual demands are not being made of them that other texts do.

The teachers themselves are no less bored. In the worst of cases, teachers simply throw up their hands in despair and do not cover material or, spend as little class time as possible on the subject, or, as in the case of the *yeshivah tikhonit*, simply assign students to learn it on their own.<sup>9</sup> For the most part, those who are responsible for teaching halakhah were themselves seldom taught it.<sup>10</sup> And save for a few examples there seems to have been little work done in arriving at a sound methodology for the comprehensive teaching of halakhah and its texts.<sup>11</sup> The one very notable exception on the North American scene is the ground-breaking work of Rabbi Raymond Harari and his staff at the Yeshivah of Flatbush.<sup>12</sup> In short, the teaching of halakhah all too often can be characterized in much the same way as R. Mordekhai Yaffe, the "Levush," characterized the *Shulhan Arukh* itself shortly after its publication: "A table well prepared with all kinds of refreshments, but the dishes are tasteless, lacking the salt of reasoning which makes the broth boil and warms the individual."<sup>13</sup>

### B. The Modern Orthodox Student

Of course, the texts might be far less a problem if the students learning them were more forgiving. But they are not, and here we come closer to identifying the problem. In the first place, there is the question of commitment, and we are not speaking here only of those who are non-observant. As Scot Berman has written:

Generally, students who attend a modern Orthodox day school have no *a priori* commitment to halakhah. At best they may observe most mitzvot. Nevertheless, the basis of their commitment is a mixture of rational thinking and considerations of conscience. If it makes sense and is not terribly troublesome, there is a chance they will accept the *din*. Otherwise, the authority implicit in the traditional acceptance of halakhah carries little or no weight.<sup>14</sup>

Suffice it to say for now that the question of the acceptance of the authority of the text raises a potentially unshared assumption of teacher and student in the classroom. No matter how tempted the teacher may be to push on; no matter how much the students may understand some of the language used; confrontation or dismissal may be inevitable. Putting it more bluntly: "Teaching what is theologically proper in a context in which it is incomprehensible—is not teaching."<sup>15</sup> If Dr. Haym Soloveitchik is correct that we live in a time when religious authority is transferred to texts and religious authenticity is enshrined in texts, then the fact that some of our students challenge those texts becomes all the more problematic.<sup>16</sup>

The articulation of this problem and some directions for its resolution have been dealt with by Professor Michael Rosenak.<sup>17</sup> The tensions and problems presented for our students by the explicit educational theology so often associated with Orthodoxy seem especially applicable to the teaching of halakhah. If it is true that "everything in the Written and Oral Torah is in principle equally relevant, because what is obligatory is what is relevant,"<sup>18</sup> then that is especially true in a discipline where the impression is given that all of the details are equally important in a way that they are not in other subjects. The questions of self-education versus indoctrination, of individuality versus conformity, teaching belief versus behavior, and the like, are all ones that must be considered if not resolved. Even acceptance of an educational philosophy of *na'aseh ve-nishma'* requires that there be some component of *nishma'* after a commitment has been made to observance.

If twenty-first century students must be given the opportunity to wrestle with the question of what ancient practices mean to them, this is especially true in the modern Orthodox school with its emphasis on the religious legitimacy of studying general culture.<sup>19</sup> Like other Ortho-

dox Jews, the modern Orthodox are judged and categorized by the extent to which they keep halakhah.<sup>20</sup> They themselves use halakhah as a way not only of defining themselves and their Orthodoxy, but of measuring themselves up against other Orthodox Jews, especially those to the right. Not surprisingly, it is one of the major planks in the polemic about the definition of what is and is not normative within Jewish traditional practice.<sup>21</sup>

But there is also a perception that is borne out by some empirical research to suggest that “centrists” are less punctilious in their observance of normative obligations than those “traditionalists” to the right.<sup>22</sup> They also may exhibit less religious fervency about traditional beliefs.<sup>23</sup> Whatever the causes for these weaknesses (and this is a critical area where more research is indicated), one is tempted to explain them, at least in part, by citing Peter Berger’s observation that: “Modern consciousness is not conducive to close contact with the gods.” It is certainly the cause that is blamed by the movements leaders. Dr. Norman Lamm, for example, has related the lack of serious observance to “Victor Frankl’s ‘noogenic vacuum’ in the life of contemporary man. It boils down to a metaphysical pain: the lack of transcendent anchorage or roots for all values and all of life.”<sup>24</sup> And if this is true of the adults in the community then it is almost certainly true of their children. Hence one finds numerous expressions by community leaders about the lack of religious fervor and the carelessness about mitzvah observance among modern Orthodox students in the areas of ethics, prayer, and basic blessings.<sup>25</sup> Whatever the causes for all of this, any teaching of halakhah must take this reality into account.

### C. The Modern Orthodox Curriculum.

Finally, lest one imagine that the challenges only come from the outside, Rabbi Eliach of the Yeshivah of Flatbush warns us that the problem is articulated in the subject matters of the modern Orthodox day school as well: “We teach our students the importance of authority in that we have to accept the rulings of the Sages and of the *poskim* (codifiers). Whatever is written in the Torah cannot be questioned . . . ; but we also teach literature, history and science in which any authority may be challenged.”<sup>26</sup>

In short, all learning takes place within a context. The context of twentieth century postmodernity presents its particular challenges for religious man in general, and, in the present context, the modern Orthodox Jew, in particular. But our students not only face these challenges from the outside, they are also confronted with them from within their own institutions, which see the presentation of those challenges as a part of their *raison d’être*. To challenge students in this way without addressing that challenge and providing some direction for its resolution is fraught with dangers. The teaching of halakhah, consisting as it does of the teaching of the commandments geared as it is to the very question of actions and beliefs in day to day life, seems particularly suited to the task. The question to be answered is, how can it be taught?

1. Talmud Yerushalmi, *Hagigah* 1:7
2. Dov Rappel: “*Talmid Hakham ve-Hassid; Shenei Idealim Hinukhiyim beYisrael, HaHinukh haYehudi biGevurotav* (Jerusalem, 1987), 103-113.
3. Yehudah Eisenberg: *Hamishim Shenot Levatim* (Jerusalem, 1988), p. 9.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
5. Isadore Twersky: “The Shulhan Arukh; Enduring Code of Jewish Law,” *Judaism* 16:2 (1967), p. 149.
6. *Ibid.*, 152, 153.
7. See, for example, some of the complaints of Yitzhak Rekanti: “*LeBa’ayat Limmud Halakhah BeYeshivah Tikhonit*,” *Niv HaMidrashiyah* (Spring-Summer, 1971), 181-187.
8. As Eisenberg notes, when the novelty of the responsa data bank at Bar Ilan University led to the creation of curriculum materials for the teaching of Talmud, the medieval *halakhah le-ma’aseh* responsa on any particular issue that arose in the *sugya* were incorporated into the curriculum. Unfortunately, it seems as if the availability of the responsa determined which *sugyot* were to be studied, a clear case of the tail wagging the dog. In a similar vein, there are those who advocate teaching “relevant” or “hot” topics without realizing that “relevant” does not necessarily mean appropriate. As Professor Michael Rosenak has said: “Just because it is interesting does not mean it mandates commitment.”
9. Rekanti, *op. cit.* Also see R. Yaakov Reinitz: “*HaYeshivah HaTikhonit; Etgar Hinukhi VeLimmudi*,” *Shema’atin* 26:7 (1970), 58-62.
10. Eisenberg, p. 19, suggests that this is the reason that many teachers cannot teach responsa literature.
11. Some notable published attempts in the field are: Raphael Shinlar: *Derakhim Ve’Emtza’im BeHora’at Halakhah* (Jerusalem, 1981); Esther Maizlish: “*Gishah Hadashah LeLimmud HaHalakhah*,” *Bisdeh Hemed* (Tevet, 5738), and “*Shabbat*”

- (Iyyar-Sivan, 5742); Michael Tobin: "Yissum Shitat de Bono BeHora'at Mitzvah 338 BeSeifer HaHinukh," *Shema'atin* 83 (Tishrei-Kislev, 5746).
12. A description of some units can be found in Raymond Harari and Joel Wolowelsky: "Developing a Yeshiva High School Curriculum in Halakhah," *Ten Da'at* 2:2 (Winter, 1988), 16-18. While this material addresses the subject material, there are few guidelines for how, if at all, to address affective concerns.
  13. Twersky, *op. cit.*, 155.
  14. Scot Berman: "Talmud; Text and Talmid, The Teaching of Gemara in the Modern Orthodox Day School," *Ten Da'at* 5:1 (Fall, 1990), 18.
  15. Michael Rosenak: *Teaching Jewish Values; A Conceptual Guide* (Jerusalem, 1986), 76.
  16. Haym Soloveitchik: "Rupture and Reconstruction; The Transformation of Contemporary Orthodoxy," *Tradition* 28:4 (Summer, 1994), 64-130. The implications of the observations in this paper for all modern Orthodox education are worthy of more study.
  17. Michael Rosenak: *Commandments and Concerns; Jewish Religious Education in Secular Society* (Philadelphia, 1987), especially chapter 7.
  18. Rosenak: *Jewish Values*, 37.
  19. Jack Bieler has already studied the educational implications of this issue for integration within the day school. See Jack Bieler: "Integration of Jewish and General Studies in the Modern Orthodox Day School," *Jewish Education* 54:4 (Winter, 1986).
  20. See, for example, Samuel C. Heilman and Steven M. Cohen: *Cosmopolitans and Parochials; Modern Orthodox Jews in America* (Chicago, 1989), chapters 1-2.
  21. See, for example, Chaim Dov Keller: "Modern Orthodoxy; An Analysis and a Response," *The Jewish Observer* 6:8 (1970), 3-14; reprinted in Reuven Bulka: *Dimensions of Orthodox Judaism* (NY, 1983), 253-271, especially 256-262.
  22. Heilman and Cohen, *op. cit.*, chapter 2.
  23. *Ibid.*, chapter 3.
  24. Norman Lamm: "Torah Education at the Crossroads," *Ten Da'at* 4:1 (1989), 5. So, too, a leading academic, Shnayer Leiman, has observed that: "No Traditional aspect of Judaism has been so eroded by the modern American ethos as its spirituality. Introspection, a practice highly valued by medieval Jewish ethicists, is foreign to the contemporary Jew." ["Symposium—The State of Orthodoxy," *Tradition* 20:1 (1982), 46.]
  25. For examples of the ethical; see Irving Levitz: "Crisis in Orthodoxy; The Ethical Paradox," in Bulka, *op. cit.*, 380-386. Steven Riskin: "Inculcating Ethical Ideals Within Our Students," *Tradition* 19:3 (1981), 234-237. Norman Lamm (*op. cit.*) has spoken of seeing yeshiva high school students at prayer where "the prayers roll off their lips fluently—and fall to the floor, shattered and splattered." So, too, he bemoans the lack of religiosity and the failure to recite blessings before eating. David Berger, too ("Symposium," 10), remarks on their failure to perform *netillat yadayim* or to recite *berakhot*.
  26. David Eliach: "The Jewish Day School; A Symposium," *Tradition*, 100.

Erica Brown, a doctoral candidate in Judaic Studies at Harvard University, has taught in several *midrashot* and *ulpanot* in Jerusalem.

## JEWISH ADULT EDUCATION: Creating an Educational Democracy

"Heraclitus deposited the book in the temple of Artemis, and some say that he deliberately wrote it in obscure language, so that only those capable of reading it would approach it, and not in a lighter tone which would expose him to the contempt of the crowd. Heraclitus himself said: "Why do you want to drag me here and there you illiterates? I did not write for you but for those who can understand me. One man to me is worth a thousand, and the mob—nothing."<sup>1</sup>

DIOGENES LAERTES

"But Heraclitus is gone, and his book has been thrown open to all the savant monkeys who desire to approach it, writing reviews and footnotes."<sup>2</sup>

UMBERTO ECO

### I. Adult Education: A "Novelty"

In the table of contents of Bertrand Russell's *Education and the Good Life* the following categories appear under "Intellectual Education": *The School Curriculum Before Fourteen*, *Last School Years*, *The University*, *Conclusion*.<sup>3</sup> Russell's discussion of education, its methods and its merits concludes after the university years. Education and the good life that follows is a process that presupposes an institution and a stage of life. "Continuing education," an idea that was evidently foreign to Russell's work on the subject in 1926, has no established classroom walls or matriculation. But despite the passage of time and the popularity of adult education, there is still a dearth of analysis on this recent phenomenon. A local public library will have shelves on preschool elementary and high school education and learning. Publications exist about gifted children, special needs children, hard-to-motivate children, on how to

learn math, do homework, take standardized tests and behave in the classroom. But where are the books on the special adults who come ready-motivated and pose no discipline problems, who no longer take standardized tests and who do not fight on the playground? Is there so little to say about the way in which they learn? More than thirty years ago Malcolm Knowles made a number of predictions about the future of adult education. One of them was an increase in the awareness of how adults learn:

There will be a rapid expansion in the body of knowledge about the education of adults. Research resources will be increasingly focused on the developmental processes of the adult years, the nature of adult learning, environmental factors affecting adult learning, characteristics of adults as learners, and institutional arrangements for the education of adults. It is probable that an enormous untapped potential for human growth and achievement will soon be discovered.<sup>4</sup>

Thirty years later there is still much to be discovered and much untapped potential. Knowles' predictions that teachers would undergo specialized training to be adult educators, that resources and facilities for adults would multiply and that a trend toward self-education would develop have not yet seen their moment but are anxiously awaited.<sup>5</sup>

## II. Adult Education in the Jewish Tradition

The popularity of continuing education, intellectual development that carries us through all stages of life and takes place inside and outside of the classroom, is nothing new to Judaism. *Ethics of the Fathers* describes patterns of wisdom that take us from age five to one hundred.<sup>6</sup> The Talmud assumed that each would contain a disproportionate amount of time for study in relation to work. Following the harvest season, adults would go off for monthly study sessions. However, as intimacy with primary sources waned, so, too, did the upkeep of such institutions. The break-down took centuries. One writer reflecting on adult education in the 1950's was saddened by the loss.

In the typical synagogue adult education enjoys marginal status. Though all congregations have a special budget and a special committee for child education, few have such a budget for adult education . . . Today, however, the sad reality is

that much of what passes for adult study is not worthy of the name. Some of it may be called indoctrination or promotion of specific Jewish causes or specific branches of Judaism.<sup>7</sup>

While a return to primary sources has been the current educational fashion, the move to promote ideas rather than promote general study is often the animus for many study programs. This is particularly true with women's continuing education, where content and text analysis often take the back seat to the speaker's agenda. Nevertheless, the trend of Jewish adult education is encouraging. It has become an accepted phenomenon for men and women of all ages. Regular weekly Torah study sessions abound; translations of once inaccessible texts are readily available. Creative and innovative learning programs have become an almost expected feature of synagogue life. With all its glittering successes, it is not too early to reflect on certain "vocational hazards." Just as children were historically once treated like little adults, we as educators cannot make the mistake of treating adults as big children. Yet, given the paucity of educational writing on the subject, it is difficult to assess the direction of adult education and create a vision for a long-term future.

Most adults who engage in some form of regular Jewish learning are highly motivated, bringing to class with them insights from a collective wealth of life experience. Their educational needs are different. Many adults, far in time from classroom days, are negligent about "homework" or proper revision. They are daunted by the thought of a test or a paper. Many do not want to take notes. They want to learn but they do not want to be in school. "Twenty years of school was enough for me," they say. They are right. But they are also wrong. Learning is not only listening. How information is retained, reviewed, and applied is largely through vehicles that make learning feel like school. How can a teacher in an adult education program encourage active learning without making the demands of a school teacher? This tension has often led to accommodation to the continuing student's demands. Many adults want an educational program that is meaningful, entertaining, stimulating, but not too demanding. They would like to spend an hour a week and gain the skills and knowledge that only a lifetime of Jewish study can offer. The following essay challenges some assumptions in current trends in adult education and, hopefully, offers a vision for future developments.

### III. Education vs. Entertainment

Torah has had to compete with a myriad of other local classes, leisure activities and hobbies to attract. In doing this educators and administrators have turned to a device being employed more and more in all areas of communication: entertainment. It is true that even the famed third century *amora*, Rav, advised opening a class with a joke. However, Nehama Leibowitz, a contemporary Bible scholar in Israel, warns the teacher:

... should anyone think that the teacher's excitement while teaching, explaining, analyzing, interpreting the Torah, and the sacred flame of *ahavat Torah* which burns within him, that these will suffice to prevent the student from falling asleep during class—let the Midrash come and slap him in the face: "Rabbi (Judah the Prince) sat and expounded. The audience dozed off. He attempted to arouse them by saying: 'A woman in Egypt once gave birth to 600,000 at one time!' (*Shir Hashirim Rabba* 1:64).<sup>8</sup>

Today, one introductory laugh is hardly enough; classes should be peppered with jokes, witticisms, and "shtick," to maintain the attention of the student. It is getting more difficult in this media-saturated age to appeal to the mind without the added visual and audio stimulus.<sup>9</sup> Today's teacher is sensitive to the limited attention span of the student and the limited time that an adult has to further his or her education. No lawyer has to spend his evenings in a *shiur* on *Bava Kamma* when Nautilus equipment and a good TV sitcom can fill up his evening. It is not that the participant puts Torah and television on equal footing. Nor is it a lack of commitment that makes the choice a challenge. Many adults who study on a casual basis have such little time for themselves that their hobbies and recreational activities get lumped together in the one small space still open in their personal organizers. This, however, has had a damaging effect on Jewish learning. Torah must compete to attract.

This motivation has inspired high-gloss brochures and promises of good refreshments after class. One adult education program took an acronym that made it sound like an aerobics class. Common to many Torah study classes is pairing up a common fashion with a Jewish discipline; "Zen and Hasidut," or the "Gestalt theory and *Seifer Shemot*"

(to name only two that I have personally seen advertised). Yet while all of this marketing attracts students, it detracts from Torah study. It takes a two thousand year old discipline and turns it into a trendy vehicle for attracting adherents otherwise immersed in the other cultures. It conveys to the student that Torah is as philosophically penetrating as reading Nietzsche, as psychologically engaging as Jung, as humorous as Seinfeld, and as strenuous as a night in the gym. It is not and it should not have to be. Torah study has its own authenticity to master and need not be a handmaiden to outside disciplines.

There is a difference between making Torah study interesting and making Torah study entertaining: it should always be the first and should not have to be the second to engage the student. Said differently, there is an important distinction to be made between disseminating Torah and marketing Torah. The Internet recently yielded an interesting find relevant to the topic at hand. Rabbi Shmuel Boteach, who runs the L'Chaim Society in Oxford University, put out for the consideration of the computer-savvy audience a plea that Torah should be like business:

Businesses cannot rely on sentimentality, patriotism, or tradition in their hopes for success and the supremacy of their product. Market share is only gained when a manufacturer's products and services have the best cost/value ratio.

His obvious conclusion is that Torah has such a ratio, is a superior product, and with the right packaging can compete in the open market of ideas. Whether it can or cannot is not the issue. His suggestion that the Torah educator become some kind of "businessman" (minus the salary and the expense account) is fallacious and dangerous, and being employed with increasing frequency. To equate the teacher with the business man, to equate education with marketing, means that the teacher pursues the latest trends and succumbs to what is wanted by the student/client rather than what is needed. Teachers should be attuned to developments in their fields and to pedagogy in general, but they must also be somewhat stalwart and a challenge to us rather than a mirror. Allan Bloom, in *The Closing of the American Mind*, argues that the teacher must always move a student to his potential rather than the teacher himself being moved to accommodate the student.

The teacher's standpoint is not arbitrary. It is neither simply dependent on what students think they want or happen to be

in this place or time, nor is it imposed on him by the demands of a particular society or the vagaries of the market. Although much effort has been expended in trying to prove that the teacher is always the agent of such forces, in fact, he is willy-nilly, guided by the awareness, or the divination, that there is a human nature, and that assisting its fulfillment is his task. He does not come to this by way of abstractions or complicated reasoning. He sees it in the eyes of his students . . . No real teacher can doubt that his task is to assist his pupil to fulfill human nature against all the deforming forces of convention and prejudice.<sup>10</sup>

In order to paint a vision for Jewish adult education which is both authentic and enduring, we must explore three facets of classical Jewish study: self-instruction, reverence for text and teacher, and motivation.

#### IV. The Importance of Self-Instruction

Traditional Jewish learning has always played down the role of the teacher, preferring the arduous task of self-instruction. Therefore, with Bloom's model in mind, the student, not the teacher, pushes himself beyond convention and the "vagaries of the market." However, since adults who take classes do not have to be in school, bring their own developed histories and life experience with them to class, are often the same age as their teachers and pay handsome tuition, there is a reasonable tendency to accommodate to their needs. The mature student more so than his younger counterpart, is a consumer of education.

"Consumer" Torah study has the teacher doing most of the work; classical Torah study has the student doing most of the work. In "consumer" Torah study, the teacher must worry about his clothing, the photocopies he hands out, the dynamic in the room and the number of anecdotes he tells. In classical Torah study, the student must make sure he is on time for his *havruta*, prepared for *shiur*, and respectful of his *rebbe*, with or without silk tie. Consumer Torah study is very hard for the teacher; it makes teaching into quasi-acting, forcing the teacher to deliberate over the externalities as well as the content of the material. Classical Torah study makes more demands of the student and ultimately makes the student responsible for the acquisition of knowledge. Consumer Torah study is very easy for the student. He pays his fee,

takes a seat, and waits; a most passive endeavor. Once again, Nehama Leibowitz advises us against this type of passivity:

In the last decade, pedagogues in various countries investigated and discovered that it is difficult for a youngster, a child—and all ages are alike in this respect—to learn via listening passively; by sitting inactively and only receiving. He desires activity; to exercise his abilities; to overcome difficulties; to wrestle with the subject matter until he overcomes it.

Passivity during class weakens the muscles, weakens spiritual abilities which are given no opportunity to exercise. . . So these pedagogues arose and demanded independent work by the student in lieu of the teacher's work: discussion, analysis, and questions on the students' part rather than the teacher's lecture to paralyzed student<sup>11</sup>

Students, of all ages, must learn to make demands of themselves to achieve a level of Jewish literacy. They can only do this if educators are not afraid to challenge them and possibly forfeit quantity in place of quality. Ultimately, the adult who stays in the classroom learning to read Rashi script for the first time, gaining a skill that ties him to hundreds of years of rabbinic literature, will be grateful that content came before packaging. He or she will not be intimidated by the printed Hebrew book and will slowly gain mastery in the rabbinic reference books of the Jewish library. Succumbing to "consumer" Torah study leaves the student empty, able to mimic the teacher's words but not able to replicate the teacher's skills. Judaism's long and proud history of literacy is a credit to the strenuous exercise of the mind that each open book presented.

Thus, on a practical level, when an adult is forced to confront a text alone (hut, obviously, with guidance) he becomes more active, physically and mentally in the task of education. The teacher becomes merely a facilitator for his study. The task appears overwhelming to the adult who has left the world of essay writing and homework assignments. It can be psychologically daunting; most adults who join a class do not want to be scholars. They may feel burdened by primary source material that they have to master on their own. The process takes time and a sensitive, sympathetic guide. The rewards are great. Whatever demands

are made will be self-imposed. Whatever disappointments are experienced will be self-inflicted and the joy of complete mental engagement will be self-possessed.

Yet, self-instruction is more than a personal victory. Employed *en masse* it has the potential to radically change society's educational expectations. The philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre, in *The Idea of an Educated Public*, argues that education is becoming too specialized and thinking is no longer democratized. His own words:

When Kant enjoined us to think for ourselves, it could never have occurred to him that thinking, in the sense in which he was talking about it, might be deformed into a professional activity, largely unavailable except in specialized contents. Yet this is just what has happened in modern society. Thinking has become the occupational responsibility of those who discharge certain social roles: the professional scientist, for example. But those topics thinking about which is of general concern; thoughts about goods and the good; about the relationship of justice to effectiveness, or the place of aesthetic goods in human life; about the tragic, the comic and the farcical not only in literature but also in politics and economics; either are handed over to certain disciplined, but limited because professionalized, specialists or are dealt with in forums in which the constraints of disciplined exchange are almost entirely lacking.<sup>12</sup>

MacIntyre challenges our everyday notion of expertise by making greater demands of the common man. An educated public, one he had trouble creating even in the philosophical realm, is one that actively pursues ideas and does not wait passively for the answer of the professional. Everyone can see the appeal of letting the professional do the thinking and yet the long-term price is very high for the short-term mental relief.

### V. Educational Democracy

Maimonides anticipated or perhaps witnessed the difficulties of advancing an educational democracy in the twelfth century. In the *Laws of Torah Study*, he writes beautifully of Judaism's three crowns: the crown

of Torah, the crown of priesthood, and the crown of kingship. The crown of priesthood was given to Aaron and his descendants, and for this the Rambam brings scriptural proof: Numbers 25:13. The crown of kingship was bestowed upon David and his descendants as is stated in Psalms 89:37. The crown of Torah, however:

... rests, stands and awaits all of Israel, as it says (Dt. 33:4): "The Torah was commanded to us through Moshe; it is an inheritance for the community of Jacob." Anyone who wants it can come and partake. Perhaps one will say that those crowns are more desirable than the crown of Torah. Therefore it says (Proverbs 8:15-16): "By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth." From here we learn that the crown of Torah exceeds the other two.<sup>13</sup>

Maimonides takes the Talmudic aphorism and sees in it the exclusivity that the crown of priesthood and kingship possess. Achieving those positions is effortless—a matter of birth and not of merit. Because the crown of Torah is available to all, it may not hold the glamour of the other two. Yet, in utilizing a verse from Proverbs, Maimonides demonstrates that God is the one who determines prestige; He is the appointer of priests and the anointer of kings, and it is He who has designated that the crown of Torah has preeminence. The following passage brought down by the Rambam is both touching and a support for this idea: the *mamzeir* who is a great scholar takes precedence over the ignorant high priest. The placing of the passages is not incidental; true status comes not with title but with knowledge. The rest of the chapter continues to describe the difficulties inherent in the life of the Torah scholar. This crown of knowledge is accessible to all, but the crowning can only take place with strenuous effort.

If we are to maintain the standard of education that has always characterized the community, it will be in keeping to the tradition of educational democracy. This can only be achieved by creating an educated Jewish public who are not afraid to make more demands of themselves; unlike the popular aphorism: "leave teaching to the teachers," we have to return to the classical Jewish approach: "leave teaching to the students."

## VI. Texts and/or Teachers

Reverence for text and respect for teacher do not always sum up the educational attitudes inculcated into the college students of yore who are the continuing students of today. Many mature students grew up with a "Question Authority" pin on their jacket lapel. Whatever was worn on the outside, students often bore a suspicion of the teaching establishment on the inside and an attitude that undermined the classics of literature and philosophy for more "progressive" and contemporary works. Much of this educational rebellion has reformed the college campus and its residual effects have effected much of our thinking about education in general. When we take these attitudes into the Jewish classroom, we find an anomaly of sorts. Rabbinic literature upheld the esteem one should have for a teacher, likening a teacher to a parent and, in some instances, more important than a parent. A person once watched a chief Sephardic rabbi from Israel being kissed on his ring. Unfamiliar with this practice and aghast at what he thought was an almost idolatrous act, he asked a participant of the class to explain its origins. "Do you kiss a *seifer Torah* when you are in the synagogue?" "Of course," the man replied. "This man is a walking *seifer Torah*."

The Talmud abounds with anecdotes of sages, inculcating awe in its readers. A teacher in a local synagogue study hall would not desire this treatment or a kiss on the hand, but the idea that he is judged about the interest of the *shiur* and does not merit respect simply for who he is, is an attitude that may belong (but should not) to the lecture hall of a university but not to the study hall of a *beit midrash*. Watch a class of students exit a *shiur*; how many thank the rabbi or teacher for an hour of stimulation or for the preparation that went into a weekly *derashah* in the synagogue. Criticism abounds. It is a small point and yet aptly puts into focus an attitude that has severed the presentation of the material from its presenter.

Take the text itself. Xeroxed sheets line the desks and floors after the class has gone. Texts that may be thousands of years old in the original, that have been handled by scholars and rabbis with the most delicate care, lie alone waiting to be collected and deposited elsewhere. Students' questions often reveal the great distance that lies between them and what they are reading. Words that have been revered and painfully analyzed one at a time are sometimes so casually dismissed.

This is not the fault of the educator, but part of a western educational attitude that has not come under enough scrutiny. This is especially true in the "Jewish" classroom and creates the anomaly mentioned before.

On one hand we guide our students in the belief that Torah is a way of life which encompasses every phase of life. On the other hand we expose them in the humanities department to a secular way of life influenced by the sciences, history and world literature, with an entirely different approach to life. From our point of view, we teach our students the importance of authority. Whatever is written in the Torah cannot be questioned. No criticism may be directed against our tradition, but we also teach literature, history and science in which any authority may be challenged. . . . We inform our students that any problem in life must be solved according to the *halakhah*. . . . And yet at the same time we teach them that in political and social problems they may follow their own point of view.<sup>14</sup>

This was written by the principal of a Jewish day school almost twenty-five years ago and, despite the alert, the bifurcation has grown. While adults do not have the mental challenge of the Jewish day school curriculum, their attitudes to Jewish study largely evolved from more than twenty years of questioning and criticizing texts, teachers, and administrations. Naturally, the residual effects will be felt in a *shiur*. How one goes about changing these attitudes is a complex issue. Perhaps exploring two Jewish thinkers on attitudes to Torah study will enlighten the discussion.

## VII. Torah Lishma

R. Hayyim of Volozhin revolutionized the Jewish intellectual world by reintroducing an idea that would change the curriculum of the yeshiva: *Torah Lishma*. Torah is to be learned for its own sake and not for its relevance (the Vilna Gaon is famed for his study of obscure tractates). Norman Lamm, in his work on R. Hayyim entitled *Torah Lishma*, writes that: "The study of Torah, however, is different. Here there is no place for inspiring religious emotion; the purpose is purely cognitive—the increase in knowledge and understanding." Where it may sound strange



to divorce Torah and religious inspiration, R. Hayyim was not denying religious inspiration as a consequence of Torah study. He writes in *Nefesh Ha-Hayyim* of the importance of *yir'ah* as a propaedeutic to Torah study. However, the motivation to study must be to glean the objective truth of what the text says and not to color or cloud the text with other messages.

R. Yisrael Salanter approached the question of *Torah Lishma* from a slightly different angle:

For the labor of Torah is unlike the labor invested in other matters, in which the effort is nothing more than a prelude to the goal, the entire purpose being to arrive at the final end, otherwise, it is as if it [the effort] is all for nothing. Not so the Torah, for the exertion [in studying Torah] is an end in itself and each and every day that one studies becomes the great goal . . .<sup>15</sup>

The study of the Torah is not undertaken in order to get to some other end goal, but is itself the goal. The discipline of everyday commitment to study is the final end.

While a full-blown discussion of *Torah Lishma* is far beyond the scope of this piece, its centrality as an educational value is of paramount importance. Rather than try to make *shiurim* more appealing through expensive advertising and snappy course description, we have to instill an educational philosophy that makes such devices unnecessary. Torah study is part of our daily spiritual routine because, as R. Yisrael Salanter contends, the pursuit of study itself is valuable. Skill building and research are critical because R. Hayyim of Volozhin contends that the entire scope of Torah must be understood.

Instilling reverence for the text is largely the responsibility of the teacher. Highlighting the difference in our treatment of a poem of Keats and a *mizmor* of Tehillim should be discussed in the classroom before undertaking any analysis of the Psalms. Creating sensitivity to the sacred is no simple endeavor. A teacher who demonstrates excitement about a text and shows himself to be scrupulous in its translation and explanation conveys a powerful message to the student. Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, in his anthology of essays in honor of his father, equated the study of Torah with an act of prayer. Anyone who has felt the kinetic energy of a *beit midrash* alive with the song of study does not have to read

Rav Soloveitchik's comparison; he has experienced it for himself. Following his model we must turn the classroom into a synagogue of study.

Instilling a change of attitude to the material is not necessarily the exclusive preserve of the teacher. Curriculum design is a critical feature of any change in educational attitude. If classes are source based and students have to personally encounter the text, learn about its author, read the words and translate for themselves, reverence will follow. Anyone who merely reads a list of the works of Maimonides will be inspired, let alone a poem of Ibn Ezra, or a biographical sketch of Yehuda Ha-levi. These discoveries show the multi-faceted interests of Torah luminaries and when we approach Ibn Ezra again, we will never do so in the same way.

### VIII. Conclusion

Malcolm Knowles, in presenting his predictions for the future of adult education (some of which were mentioned earlier), was so convinced by the potential success of this movement that he claimed it would restructure all of education. Since education would become a life-long endeavor, elementary and high school students need not bother memorizing facts and cramming every discipline into fifteen years of education, only into gaining skills for future research. "The curriculum of education for the young must shift from a subject mastery basis of organization, to a learning-skill basis of organization. . . The curriculum will be organized around problem areas or questions rather than around fragmented subject areas."<sup>16</sup> The vision appeals to us on paper, but the reality seems so far away from the vision. His words resonate with an attitude that is no stranger to rabbinic tradition. He helps bring us home:

The new world then requires a new purpose for education: the development of the capacity in each individual to learn, to change, to create a new culture throughout the span of his life. Certainly knowledge must continue to be transmitted, but no longer as an end in itself—only as a means to the end of mastering the ability to learn. The central mission of elementary, secondary, and higher education must become, then, not teaching youth what they need to know, but teaching them how to learn what is not yet known.<sup>17</sup>

Is not this our own tradition—two thousand years old—that we have forsaken? The books were almost always the same but our understanding of them deepened as our skills sharpened and our minds matured. Bible and Talmud were not studied at an early age to be disposed of later; skills were taught to the newcomer so that as an adult, the words of the *daf* would yield more and more.

To have a commitment of this nature is no easy attainment. How to instill such a philosophy into adult education courses is particularly challenging because how then does one attract the uninitiated? How can Torah classes compete for precious time? These questions and matters of curriculum restructuring require intensive investigation if we are to create an enduring educational vision for Jewish adults. Answers will take time to develop but the need for such an overarching approach to the endeavor of Torah study is increasingly urgent. In an age where education is also a matter of consumerism and Torah educators are aware of the alternatives competing for an adult's time, it is more and more attractive to improve the packaging of the product rather than the attitude of the consumer. But let the buyer beware. Teachers are not businessmen of Torah—even if it means selling fewer copies of the book.

1. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers*, IX, 1-17.
2. Umberto Eco, *Misreadings* (New York: 1963), 94.
3. Bertrand Russell, *Education and the Good Life* (New York: 1926), 6.
4. Malcolm S. Knowles: *A History of the Adult Education Movement in the United States* (Florida: 1962), 271.
5. *Ibid.* These ideas are developed throughout his chapter entitled, "The Future of Adult Education," 269-280.
6. *Ethics of the Fathers*, 5:25.
7. Leon Feldman: "Trends in Adult Jewish Education," *Congress Weekly* (Jewish Education Committee, NYC) 21:7 (February 1954).
8. Nehama Leibowitz: *On Teaching Tanakh*; Three Essays, translated by Moshe Sokolow (New York: Torah Education Network, 1986) 15.
9. There is a growing need for educational research on the effects of the media on how we learn. This goes beyond the pregnant discussion of whether or not television can be educational; a topic that has recently yielded a spate of fresh books.
10. Allan Bloom: *The Closing of the American Mind* (London: 1987) 9-10.
11. Leibowitz, *op. cit.*, 14.

12. Alasdair MacIntyre, "The Idea of the Educated Public," in *Education and Values* (London: 1987) 16.
13. Maimonides, *Mishne Torah*, Laws of Torah Study, 3:3.
14. David Eliach, "The Jewish Day School—A Symposium," in *Tradition* vol. 13, no. 1, 100.
15. Dov Katz: *Tenuat Mussar* (Tel-Aviv, 1967) 181. Also cited in: *Rabbi Israel Salanter and the Mussar Movement; Seeking the Torah of Truth*, Immanuel Etkes (Philadelphia: 1993) 150.
16. Knowles, *op. cit.*, 275.
17. *Ibid.*, 274-275.

Rabbi Bleich is rav of the Young Israel of Brighton Beach, in Brooklyn, New York, and a member of the editorial committee of *Machon Mishnat Rav Aharon* [Kotler].

## THE HALAKHAH CORNER: Use of Edibles for Arts and Crafts

The Gemara, *Berakhot* 50b, declares that it is forbidden to place raw meat on a piece of bread, to place a cup of liquid on a piece of bread, or to lean a plate of food against bread lest some foodstuff come into contact with the bread in a manner that may cause an individual to be repulsed by the bread, with the result that the bread will be discarded and go to waste. *Shulhan Arukh, Orach Hayyim* (171: 1), codifies this statement as a matter of normative law and explains that the rationale underlying this prohibition is that it is prohibited "to shame food." For that reason, *Shulhan Arukh* also rules that it is prohibited to cause bread to become unappetizing by throwing it rather than by placing it in another's hand or putting it on the table. This is the case even if the bread will remain appealing as an edible food. Thus the prohibition against causing bread to become inedible is predicated not upon waste, per se, but upon the notion that wasting food is tantamount to "shaming" the wasted foodstuff. It is clear from comments of later authorities that this prohibition is not limited to bread but applies equally to all foods.<sup>1</sup>

Rabbi Nathan Zvi Friedman, writing in *Shma'tin* (*Shevat-Adar*, 1972), an Israeli journal devoted to the field of religious education, raises an intriguing question: May children utilize foodstuffs such as noodles, lentils and beans in executing art projects, or is art work of such nature forbidden because it entails destruction of food and hence "shames" the food products utilized for such purposes? Rabbi Friedman concludes that such activities are permissible. Unfortunately, he fails to cite precedents or sources for this ruling. Although his conclusion is correct, a more complete analysis is warranted.

*Magein Avraham*, in an introductory comment to *Orach Hayyim* 171,

notes that food need not be utilized exclusively for eating. The Gemara explicitly sanctions pouring wine over the floor in order to produce a pleasant aroma in one's dwelling and permits anointing the body with olive oil (see *Pesachim* 20b and *Baba Kamma* 115b). *Magein Avraham* infers that utilization of food in a manner precluding its use as a foodstuff does not necessarily entail "shame." Rather, it is the wanton waste of food that constitutes "shame." Hence, so long as the foodstuff is used in a productive manner for any human benefit the food cannot be considered as having been "shamed."<sup>2</sup>

In support of this analysis, *Magein Avraham* cites the comments of *Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Berakhot* (7:9), who declares that one is not permitted to destroy foodstuffs or beverages in a "humiliating or disdainful manner." Thus, argues *Magein Avraham*, use of food to satisfy a particular need is not to be equated with "humiliating and disdainful" destruction. Accordingly, use of food items for artistic purposes constitutes use for satisfaction of a "need" and, in accordance with *Magein Avraham's* analysis, should be regarded as entirely permissible.

Nevertheless, as *Magein Avraham* himself notes, this analysis seems to be contradicted by the Gemara, *Shabbat* 50b, as understood by most early commentators. The Gemara states that it is forbidden to crack open olives in order to cleanse one's hands with their liquid contents because the olives are thereby rendered unappetizing and are therefore wasted. *Magein Avraham* dismisses the objection with the argument that this use of olives is forbidden only because the same purpose can be achieved by use of soap. *Magein Avraham* apparently maintains that food products may be used for beneficial purposes other than eating only if other more economical means of satisfying such needs are unavailable. When other less expensive materials are available, use of food products is wasteful and hence "humiliating and disdainful." However, even with this caveat, use of various foods by children for educational or artistic purposes would appear to be permissible. Presumably either the food items utilized in such endeavors are uniquely suited for the artistic purpose for which they are employed, e.g., items such as pumpkins for the fashioning of lanterns, or they are less expensive than alternative materials.

*Hafeitz Hayyim, Mishnah Berurah* (171:4) and *Bei'ur Halakhah* (171: 1), adopts a position somewhat at variance from that of *Magein Avraham*.

*Mishnah Berurah* accepts the principle that food may be utilized for human benefit, but instead of coupling that proposition with a stipulation that such use be economical in nature, he stipulates that it be used to satisfy a human need provided that "it is the way of the world to use the foodstuff for this purpose."

Accordingly, even though a food item may be used in a beneficial and productive manner, if it is used in an unusual manner, such use would be prohibited. It is quite true that adults do not commonly use pumpkins as lanterns or fashion potatoes into objets d'art. Nevertheless, it seems to this writer that use of such objects in this manner by children engaged in arts and crafts projects has become sufficiently widespread to be regarded as "the way of the world." Accordingly, the practice may be sanctioned even according to the more restrictive criteria of the *Mishnah Berurah*. It should, however, be noted that imaginative but unprecedented novel uses of food products are not permissible according to *Mishnah Berurah*.

However, the basically permissive view of *Magein Avraham* and *Mishnah Berurah* is by no means unanimous. From the comments of *Bah, Tur, Orah Hayyim* (171), it is clear that this authority disagrees with *Magein Avraham, Tur, Orah Hayyim* (181), records that one is permitted to cleanse one's hands with oil before reciting *birkhat ha-mazon* (grace after meals). *Bah*, however, questions why it is permissible to cleanse one's hands with oil or potable liquids other than water since, in the process, those liquids are wasted? *Bah* answers that food products and beverages may be used freely for fulfillment of a mitzvah since use in fulfillment of a mitzvah cannot be deemed ignominious. Thus, any beverage may be used for *meyyim aharonim* (ritual washing of hands at the conclusion of a meal). In addition, scented oil was applied to the hands before the recitation of grace because that, too, enhances the honor and dignity of the gratitude expressed in uttering the Divine Name. Thus, according to *Bah*, it is forbidden to use food products even in a beneficial manner other than for a purpose associated with a mitzvah. *Bah's* position is accepted by *Taz, Orah Hayyim* (171:1).<sup>3</sup>

In practice, however, there may be reason to permit many if not most, uses of food products in arts and crafts enterprises even according to the view of *Bah*. Citing *Beer Sheva, Beer Meyyim Hayyim*, no.18, *Magein Avraham, Orah Hayyim* (296:3) questions a custom recorded by

*Rema, Orah Hayyim* (296:1). *Rema* reports that in pouring wine into the *havdalah* cup it is the practice to pour a quantity of wine sufficient to cause the cup to overflow. *Beer Sheva* notes that in allowing the wine to overflow wine is wasted and, on that account, the practice should be abrogated. *Magein Avraham* explains that the custom is based upon the fact that the prohibition against "shaming" foods applies only to food of a significant size or quantity. Thus, wasting a small amount of food or drink is permissible.<sup>4</sup> *Magein Avraham*, however, does not quantify the maximum amount that may be considered as insignificant. The comments of *Pri Megadim, Eshel Avraham* (296:3), fill that lacuna. *Pri Megadim* rules that a quantity of solid food less than the size of an olive<sup>5</sup> or of liquid less than a *revi'it*<sup>6</sup> is considered "insignificant" for this purpose. R. Shalom Mordekhai Schwadron, *Da'at Torah, Orah Hayyim* (171:1), appears to accept that ruling as authoritative. It should be noted, however, that a number of authorities, e.g., the aforementioned *Beer Sheva* and *Taz, Orah Hayyim* (296:1), disagree with *Magein Avraham's* basic thesis, namely that minimal quantities may be wasted.<sup>7</sup>

However, since *Bah's* position prohibiting beneficial use of foodstuffs is ignored by such later authorities as *Mishnah Berurah* and rejected by the Sephardic authority, *Kaf ha-Hayyim* (171:5), there is certainly sufficient basis to permit use of small quantities of food products for educational purposes.

Nevertheless, a serious problem remains with regard to execution of such projects since it is quite common to prepare a larger quantity of food items than will actually be used. Although there are ample grounds for sanctioning the utilization of foodstuffs for artistic purposes, prohibitions both against "shaming" and wasting food fully apply with regard to any leftover food products not actually used for such purposes. A conscientious and imaginative teacher will not only be careful not to dispose of the remaining food in an improper manner but will seize the opportunity to demonstrate respect and concern for proper use of those food products. In conveying that message to his or her students by both word and deed the teacher will have created a meaningful learning experience.

1. This point is noted explicitly by *Mishnah Berurah* (171:3), and *Arukh haShulhan* (171:1). See also, *Rambam, Hilkhhot Berakhot* (7:9), and *Shakh, Yoreh Deah* (350:2).

2. The position of *Magein Avraham* is accepted by *Eliyahu Rabba*, *Orah Hayyim* (171:1), *Arukh ha-Shulhan*, *Orah Hayyim* (171:2), and, apparently, by R. Abraham Samuel Benjamin Sofer, *Teshuvot Ketav Sofer*, *Orah Hayyim*, no. 33.
3. See also *Magein Avraham*, introduction to *Orah Hayyim*, 171, who clearly states that he disagrees with *Bah*. See also *Mahatzit ha-Shekel*, introduction to *Orah Hayyim* 171 and *Pri Megadim*, *Eshel Avaraham* 171:1.
4. This position is accepted by *Eliyahu Rabbah* (296:2) and *Shulhan Arukh ha-Rav* (296:5).
5. For the various opinions concerning the measurement of "an olive" (*ke-zayit*), see R. Abraham Chaim Noe, *Shi'urei Torah*, 3:12-13; R. Ya'akov Kanievsky, *Shi'urin shel Torah*, "shi'urei mitzvah", secs. 21 and 24; and R. David Feinstein, *Haggadah Kol Dodi*, no. 14, sec. 11, and no. 17, sec. 3, as well as the subsequent clarification by R. Moses Feinstein, *Le-Torah ve-Hora'ah* no. 3 (Winter, 5734), p. 22.
6. For the various opinions concerning the measurement of a *revi'it* see *Shi'urei Torah* (3:6); *Shi'urin shel Torah* no. 8; *ibid.*, "shi'urei mitzvah" sec. 18; and *Kol Dodi*, no. 2, sec. 6.
7. See also *Arukh ha-Shulhan* (296:11) and cf. *Kaf ha-Hayyim* (296:11).

Rabbi Dr. Berger teaches religion at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. He was formerly on the faculty of the RAMAZ School in New York City.

## TEACHER RECRUITMENT AMONG GRADUATE STUDENTS IN JEWISH STUDIES

Over the last several years, two trends have emerged—one in the general culture and one in the Jewish—which pose an interesting and unprecedented challenge to day school education in America.

Despite the rising costs of college tuition, which substantially outpaced the rate of inflation over the last fifteen years, many institutions of higher education find themselves facing severe budgetary crunches. Since the recession of the early 1990's, universities and liberal arts colleges have been forced to mimic for-profit businesses and "downsize," in many cases imposing hiring freezes on departments for the foreseeable future, and hiring the academic equivalent of "office temps" (graduate students and adjunct professors) to offer the variety of courses to the students. In this contracting market, students with advanced degrees are finding it harder and harder to secure tenure-track positions; typically, an advertised academic position will attract hundreds of applications.

Jewish studies is no exception to this trend. Graduate students who have spent three or four years after coursework specializing in a particular area of Jewish history or thought are finding fewer and fewer openings, except, perhaps, Holocaust studies. In what was once considered an ever-expanding field in academia, Jewish Studies at most major colleges and universities already has its faculty in place, with few prospects for expansion. Furthermore, the occasional opening in a far-flung college is often unattractive to these recent Ph.D.'s; these jobseekers generally have a higher degree of Jewish identity and affiliation (reflected in their academic pursuit), and require a more developed Jewish infrastructure than these locations can provide.

In stark contrast to this academic austerity and pessimistic prospects for employment, Jewish education at all levels has received a long

overdue financial infusion. Without inspecting or analyzing the merits of the nation-wide campaign for Jewish "continuity," it is evident to every identity-conscious Jew that the organized Jewish leadership has finally decided to devote more resources to Jewish education. The major concern of most Jewish educational institutions today is finding qualified professionals in education who are prepared to assume these much-needed roles. At the risk of sounding trite, it seems that this is a match made in heaven: those with advanced degrees in Jewish Studies could staff the day schools and synagogue programs which so desperately need greater numbers of qualified educators.

To be sure, many Hebrew schools and Jewish high schools have employed graduate students as part-time or full-time teachers, offering them income to supplement their usually meager financial aid or scholarship money. While this threatened to extend the time it would take to finish their degrees, students who married and even began small families had no recourse but to find employment which would offer them an income, (in most cases) medical coverage, and relatively flexible schedules which would allow for continuing one's research, particularly during the summers. However, most of these teachers (while certainly not all) left their positions to seek the academic posts which had, understandably, been their holy grail since they first enrolled in graduate school. The luster of the title "college professor" certainly outshone that of "high school teacher."

Nevertheless, I believe that the confluence of factors I outlined earlier suggests that there is a *shidukh* here between a community in need of Jewish educators and the army of Jewish Studies masters and doctoral students who are either unemployed or are reluctant to accept (or remain at) positions where the Jewish infrastructure is underdeveloped. But this match will require more than a single *shabbaton* in the mountains. Nothing short of active recruiting and other measures are required to court these candidates and offer them positions which will make Jewish education an attractive alternative to the ivory tower.

As in any business which seeks to lure qualified candidates for jobs, lay leaders in Jewish education must appreciate who these persons are and what they seek. For the most part, these graduate students and recent awardees have become accustomed to intellectual discourse at a rather high level, reading specialized literature and conversing with

colleagues and mentors in relatively narrow fields. In short, they were being socialized into the academic community, with expectations of continuing to be stimulated in this way and even ultimately to contribute to it. Jewish institutions must offer support to allow these teachers to maintain their connection to a particular field of expertise, whether in the form of attending conferences, having one or two free afternoons to work in research, subscribing to professional journals, or providing typing services for professional papers. With a relatively minimal expenditure of funds, yeshivah high schools can make these people feel that their academic activities are appreciated and valued.

Perhaps the most serious concern is the academic's expectation to be teaching college and graduate students. But while high school students are younger, they are usually taking Jewish studies at a higher level than that offered in most college-level Jewish Studies courses. Their language skills coupled with their general knowledge of Judaism make primary Jewish sources available to them in ways rarely matched on college campuses today. This is an important recruitment tool that should not be overlooked. Moreover, if a school offers, say, the Yeshiva University Advanced Placement Program in Jewish History, a Ph.D. in that field has the opportunity to teach a rather sophisticated course, usually to a group of highly motivated seniors; CEEB-AP in European History might be another course that a trained historian could teach in a challenging and satisfying way. For the schools which offer electives to juniors and seniors, more specialized courses in Jewish philosophy or biblical literature could be constructed which would not only provide additional teaching opportunities for such teachers, but would also have the advantage of revitalizing the school curriculum. Another area for intellectual challenge can be found in arranged adult education for the parent body, local congregations, or the city's JCC.

Virtually every person with a graduate degree in a non-professional field is painfully aware that graduate education entirely ignores developing the skills required to teach. While academics may learn pedagogy over time (often at their students' expense), Jewish educators require competence in classroom management, writing tests, making up assignments and discipline almost immediately. Intensive in-service and teacher supervision must be provided to these academics in order to ease their transition into an educational environment vastly different

from the one to which they were accustomed. "Crash courses," whether in-house or at local teachers' colleges, may be required the summer before they begin in order to prepare them for what lies ahead. These would also be appropriate for *kolleil* and yeshivah students who begin teaching.

Without a doubt, trained academics who enter Jewish education are making a profound shift in their vocational paradigm. Rather than attempt to cushion that change post facto, it is also possible to approach this issue more globally by actively entering the Jewish Studies programs around the country and identifying those students who may be interested in Jewish education. On the model of the Jerusalem Fellows Program (which funds teacher development and enrichment in Israel in return for a commitment to teach several years in the Diaspora), individual schools or regional Federations may choose to fund a graduate student in return for a commitment to take certain courses in education and commit several years to teaching within Jewish education. Wexner Fellowships do this on a national level and in a very limited way; it should be duplicated on a more local level to include scores of potential teachers. Of course, schools or synagogues would have to guarantee spaces for these candidates, which may not always be possible. But this is, in the end, a mere technical problem. In any event, a program such as "Jewish Education Fellowships" would ensure a pool of highly qualified Jewish educators who would be entering the field every year, to the benefit of all concerned.

To be sure, several if not many Jewish Studies majors are dedicated to a life of scholarship and research, mining archives or collecting data in order to reveal every nuance and shade of Jewish culture throughout the millennia. For those who see their true vocation among the library stacks, college teaching is more or less their only option. However, life is often more complex, involving spouses with careers, children with educational needs, and basic financial considerations. In the complicated calculus of choosing a career, Jewish education is able to offer graduate students in Jewish Studies a reasonable and even attractive alternative to the university. The call of the hour is for Jewish leadership to develop methods to actively recruit these talented young men and women, *shemah yahtefenah aher*.

Dr. Wolowelsky, Chairman of Advanced Placement Studies at the Yeshivah of Flatbush, is a member of the Editorial Board of TEN DA'AT and an associate editor of *Tradition*.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL CONTEXT: Teaching the Flood Story

Most yeshivah students learn the pre-patriarchal biblical stories in the early years of elementary school, and for many this remains their only systematic study of any parts of *Bereishit*. This is most unfortunate, as the narrative sections of the Torah require as rigorous an analysis as that afforded the more halakhic sections studied in high school or college-level institutions. We discuss here one issue that, in our opinion, deserves presentation in a yeshivah high school Bible class: the importance of cultural context.

An anecdote might provide an orientation to this approach. While visiting in Jerusalem few years ago, I mentioned to an Israeli friend that Agudath Israel had decided to stop serving turkey at its annual national convention dinner. He reacted with disbelief. Surely the question of the *kashrut* of turkeys has not become the latest American *humrah*. True, he continued, some individuals had refrained from eating turkey because there is no *mesorah* as to its *kashrut*; but certainly this had not become the normative opinion in the American *hareidi* community! Why, he concluded, he himself had seen numerous *gedolim* eating turkey at various *semahot*!

Needless to say, I was bemused by his reaction. As an Israeli, he had no idea that Agudath Israel holds its annual convention on Thanksgiving and that Americans traditionally eat turkey on Thanksgiving. He certainly had no way of knowing that the rabbinic leaders of Agudath Israel had taken an educational line that yeshivah students should not observe Thanksgiving, which, in their opinion, has a quasi-religious status. Thus he did not realize that turkey was banned at the convention dinner to underscore their approach that, whereas Thanksgiving was a

convenient time to hold a convention, there was nothing more significant to the date. Lacking the context, he could not appreciate the message that the rabbinic leaders were trying to convey.

When I explained all this to him, he asked if any American Orthodox people celebrated Thanksgiving. I told him that our yeshivot do, and added (somewhat mischievously) that in our shul we read the Torah every Thanksgiving at *shaharit*. This ritual innovation upset him very much; unaware that Thanksgiving is always celebrated on Thursday, he missed the point that there was no significance to the fact that we read the Torah each Thanksgiving.

Context is important, and we should not lose sight of the fact that the Torah was revealed in the context of the real-life experience of the Jews standing at Sinai. The Torah speaks in the language of people; its words and messages, while eternal, had to be comprehensible to the people who heard them. We forfeit part of the Torah's eternal significance if we don't understand the circumstances of its revelation. As Rambam noted:

Just as, according to what I have told you, the doctrines of the Sabians are remote from us today, the chronicles of those times are likewise hidden from us today. Hence if we knew them and were cognizant of the events that happened in those days, we would know in detail the reasons of many things mentioned in the Torah (Guide III:50).

We understand a story differently if we know whether the teller's aim is to report previously unknown material or to correct a previous misperception of the event. For example, many students do not realize that the Jews at Sinai already knew the general flood story, as did most pagan people in the area. We now have access to many of the pagan sources, lost to us for centuries, that were circulating at the time of Sinai and centuries before. The *Tanakh* and *Hazal* frankly admitted that, unfortunately, Jews were well integrated into their neighbors' pagan cultures. If we ignore this fact, we miss part of the eternal message of the biblical story. The Torah, after all, is not a history book. In saying this, we are not suggesting that the Flood story—or any other specific part of the Torah—is necessarily allegory rather than fact. But we must be aware that the Torah retells selectively specific episodes in the lives of our ancestors. We must therefore read its stories as something told with

a purpose, and understanding the purpose involves reading the tale and its language in context.

The relatively recent discovery of these ancient texts was not welcomed by all Torah educators. After all, Bible critics and secular academics, long intent on seeing the biblical text as just another ancient Near-Eastern document, touted these stories as proof that the Torah had no special sanctity. Moshe David Cassuto, however, began investigating these stories from the perspective of Jewish pride, if not *kedushah*. He soon realized that, far from demonstrating the banality of the Torah text, a study of these documents enhanced our understanding of the holiness of our text. Some educators in college-preparatory yeshivah high schools felt it important to introduce their Bible students to these texts in order to "inoculate" them, so to speak, against the devastating effects of confronting these texts in an antagonistic, secular, college environment. There is certainly merit to this approach, but it is not our motivation here. (After all, given the anti-intellectual realities at current universities, most students will probably see few if any of these texts in their respective colleges.) Understanding the biblical story in the context of the mind-set of those who received the Torah is part of reaching *amittah shel Torah*.

Nahum Sarna's *Understanding Genesis* tries to offer a full-scale educational curriculum for studying Genesis based on understanding its ancient Near-Eastern setting. But it is inappropriate for us on many levels, not the least of which is its attitude towards higher biblical/source criticism. As important as it is to expose our students to the literature of the ancient Near-East, we have no interest in making it the primary focus of our biblical study. In a yeshivah, primary focus should be on the words of *Hazal* and the generations of traditional biblical interpreters. But just as we often supplement the commentaries of *Mikraot Gedolot* with other sources, we should be devoting some time to this discussion.

In introducing the Flood story to our students, we might first ask the students if they thought that Jews and non-Jews knew the Flood story before it was revealed at Sinai. Teachers have a continuous obligation to understand their students' mind-set—just as we are about to understand the mind-set of our ancestors at Sinai. Listening to one's students should be a basic component of every lesson. It is therefore



important to pose the question and not answer it in the same breath. New information does not replace previously-stored information as quickly as we might suspect.

Our students should know that throughout the region, people knew the general theme: there had been a devastating flood and one person and his family were saved. The name used to describe the individual hero might vary from locale to locale, but the story remains, on the surface at least, substantially the same. The hero, warned by one of the gods, gathered his family and many animals with him in a boat, rode out the storm, and, after releasing some birds to verify that the waters had subsided, exited and gave sacrificial thanks to the gods who had saved him and his family.

We should ask why the Torah included this information if everyone knew it. Was it just to get the names right? The Torah tells us so little about the *avot* and their lives. Why was it necessary to devote all that space to Noah and his adventure? Giving out a few sheets which present, side-by-side, a paragraph from one of the well-known pagan adventures and the Torah's version gives a concrete example of appreciating Torah in context. It should take no more than a few minutes to elicit from the students an appreciation of to what the Torah objected and what message it wished to convey.

It should be superfluous to say that the teacher must prepare for this class with the same professionalism that he or she brings to any lesson. One has to know much more than one expects to present to a class. *Understanding Genesis*, Cassuto's commentary (in Hebrew or English translation), or James Pritchard's *Ancient Near Eastern Texts (ANET)* are good reference texts for anyone unfamiliar with the subject; the new JPS Commentary on Genesis gives a good orientation on which issues one can focus and would be a good starting point for teachers.

In any presentation, the following will certainly emerge. The Torah wishes to uproot any hint that the Flood lacked a moral quality. In the Sumerian-Akkadian versions, the Flood is brought for capricious reasons—in one, because the noise made by human beings kept the gods from sleeping. Their hero was saved not because he was, like Noah, a righteous man, but because he had “good connections” with one of the gods. An ancient Jew who knew the Torah's version certainly had better tools to sense more intensely the immorality of the pagan version he or

she was certain to hear. We should not deprive our students of that opportunity.

The Torah's willingness to correct even minor details reflects this anti-pagan polemic. Utnapishtim (one of the names of the pagan heroes saved from the Flood) relates that, when he thought the waters had receded,

I sent forth and set free a dove. The dove went forth but came back; since no resting-place for it was visible, she turned round. Then I set forth and set free a swallow. The swallow went forth, but came back; since no resting-place for it was visible, she turned round. Then I set forth and set free a raven. The raven went forth and, seeing that the waters had diminished, he eats, circles, caws, and turns not round.

The Torah's version (Gen. 8:6-12) not only takes pains to point out that redemption comes incrementally—the dove first comes back with a plucked-off olive branch—but reminds us that redemption comes not from the carnivorous raven but from the peaceful dove. Not only changed details drive home the Torah's message, but omitted ones do too. We are often struck by the anthropomorphic quality of God having a sense of smell that is mentioned in the Torah's version:

Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and, taking of every clean animal and of every clean bird, he offered burnt offerings on the altar. The Lord smelled the pleasing odor, and the Lord said to Himself: “Never again will I doom the world because of man, since the devisings of man's mind are evil from his youth; nor will I ever again destroy every living being, as I have done” (Gen. 8:20-21).

But ancient Jews hearing this rendition would have understood this as part of an anti-anthropomorphic polemic, because they knew the following version from their neighbors:

Then I let out to the four winds and offered a sacrifice. I poured out a libation on the top of the mountain. Seven and seven cult-vessels I set up; upon their pot-stands I heaped cane, cedarwood, and myrtle. The gods smelled the savor. The gods smelled the sweet savor. The gods crowded like flies about the sacrifice.

Nowadays, we cannot fully understand v. 21 without this pagan text as background. Pagan gods smell the sacrifice and crowd around like flies. *Hashem*, so to speak, smells the sacrifice and—far removed from any physical reaction—makes a moral judgment. This informs the way we appreciate the phrase “sweet savor” (*rei'ah niho'ah*) when it appears subsequently in the Torah in connection with various sacrifices.

When we read the biblical Flood story against the background of the existing parallel ancient Near-Eastern literature, we hear things somewhat differently than had we read it as part of “the revealed history of the world.” We not only see things that we had missed, but begin to notice that some details are not as significant as we may have thought. For example, we know that when some pagan text says that “every” animal was included in its refugee-boat, we understand that we are not reading a prophetic statement conveying information that could only have been revealed. (The pagans had no way of knowing whether, indeed, every species in the world, including those species from far-away lands unbeknownst to them, was saved from a flood.) They were using the word “every” in the same way that we do in the sentence, “He thought no one knew his secret and then discovered that everyone knew it.” We understand that this sentence does not really mean to exclude the possibility that someone in room—let alone the world—did not know the secret.

If the Torah has a specific educational purpose in retelling the story of the Flood from its ethical-religious perspective, we need not think that its statement that every species was included in the ark was meant to give divine confirmation of that specific detail of the pagan story and to exclude the possibility that some esoteric species from far-away New Zealand (unknown to Noah) had survived the Flood. After all, we do not find it particularly upsetting to be told (Num. 16:32-33) that every member of Korah's family had been killed, only to learn some chapters later (Num. 26:11) that Korah's sons had not been killed.

We should offer our students the opportunity to appreciate these additional dimensions of the sacred text; to do so requires seeing the Torah in the setting in which it was revealed. I myself first encountered this approach many years ago in Rabbi David Eliach's Bible classes at the Yeshiva of Flatbush Midrasha. It's an approach to which all our students should be exposed.

Dr. Sokolow, Editor of TEN DA'AT, is Associate Professor of Judaic Studies at Yeshiva University, and Director of Educational Services at the Torah Education and Culture Department of the Joint Authority for Jewish Zionist Education.

## A REVIEW ESSAY

### Moshe Ahrend: JEWISH EDUCATION IN AN OPEN SOCIETY

*Bar Ilan University Press, 1995. 125 pp., n.p. (Hebrew).*

In its issue of Sunday, March 5, 1995, *The New York Times* published an article (on the first page of the Metro section!) entitled: “In the Urban Maelstrom, the Faithful Persevere.” Observing that, “New York is a place that specializes in certain secular seductions,” *The Times* cites instances of Jews, Christians, Muslims and others, who balance and juggle their respective religious requirements with the conflicts and pitfalls of the paradigmatic open society: New York City.

These pitfalls range from appointments scheduled for Shabbat and holidays, to invitations to dine at non-Kosher eateries, to regular tests of ethics and morality. Two items therefrom:

- “An Orthodox Jewish trauma surgeon on weekend call at Bellevue Hospital Center trudges up 15 flights of stairs, rather than desecrate the Sabbath by riding the elevator to the intensive care unit.”
- “What does an ambitious summer associate in a big Manhattan law firm, who happens to be an Orthodox Jew, order for lunch when a senior partner takes him to his stuffy club and even the house salad is sprinkled with bacon bits?”

These doctors, lawyers, accountants, etc., are our graduates, and their prospective successors are our current students. We are obviously succeeding in preparing them for their professional responsibilities; have we prepared them adequately for the “pitfalls” of Jewish religious

life in the open society? Does the doctor know that for certain types of emergencies he should take the elevator even on Yom HaKippurim? Can he articulate the distinction if questioned by a non-Orthodox, or non-Jewish colleague? Does the legal intern think he may just brush the bacon bits off his salad and eat the vegetables, regardless of how they were cut? Is he sensitive to the additional problem of *mar'it ha'ayin*? Does the accountant advise his clients that deducting the full cost of theater tickets from their income tax because the check which paid for them was made out to a charity is fraudulent? Do his Orthodox clients know that, and observe it, without being told?

These, and a panoply of related questions, are the grist which our educational mills must grind, daily and perpetually. Some are treated in our schools, explicitly, in courses on "Jewish ethics." Others are met, obliquely, through the study of classical texts. The attitudinal issues, in particular, are often met only by implication through the role modeling of teachers, administrators, and parents. The subject of this review essay offers advice on the theoretical, curricular, and instructional levels.

The Jewish educational challenge peculiar to the "open society" has been characterized in several ways. Philosophers, studying the differences between the medieval and modern attitudes towards religion, in general, and God, in particular, have referred to a conflict between "revelation" and "reason." Professor Michael Rosenak, writing from an educationist's perspective, calls it the "normative-deliberative" dialectic. Both mean that whereas Jewish life in the pre-modern, "traditional," society was characterized by an abiding, and largely unflappable, faith, Jewish life in the modern, "open," society is distinguished by critical, often even hyper-critical, examination.

The singular task of the modern Orthodox Jewish educator who daily confronts students living in both worlds, is to seize that "devil" and drag him into the *beit midrash*; in other words, to harness rational inquiry to the reinforcement of commitment. The problem, not surprisingly, is that rationalization cuts both ways: While conclusions arrived at through the inquiry process tend to be invested with greater authority, the conclusions rejected by that process are, usually, shattered beyond repair. All the Jewish educators, and all the Jewish Continuity mavens, cannot put this Humpty together again.

We greet with joy and anticipation, therefore, the appearance of a

book which offers pedagogically sound and didactically proven advice to educators such as ourselves.



The Rabbi Dr. David Ochs Chair in Jewish Education at Bar Ilan University has now published the sixth book in its series on "Jewish Culture and Its Instruction," and Professor Moshe Ahrend—his second.

[For our reviews of the first four books in the series, including Ahrend's *Principles of Bible Instruction*, see *TEN DA'AT* Vol. 2 no. 3 (Spring, 1988), and Vol. 3 no. 1 (Fall, 1988).]

The present volume, entitled: *Jewish Education in an Open Society: Selected Classic Problems*, reinforces our estimation of Prof. Ahrend as a consummate theoretician and practitioner, with a steady and sensitive finger on the pulse of contemporary Orthodox education in both Israel and the Diaspora.

In the Introduction, Professor Ahrend leads us, in the footsteps of Jacob Katz, through highlights of Jewish social and intellectual history (of Europe, only, it should be noted) of the last two hundred years, in order to comprehend the transition which traditional Jewish society has undergone during that time. Focusing on the changes caused by the Emancipation and on the onset of "Modernity," he articulates the intellectual, psychological, and moral disadvantages and dangers of seclusion within the open society. These include: a narrowing of spiritual horizons; a deterioration of aesthetic and humanistic sensitivity; the dangers of arrogance, condescension, and monasticism; separation from the majority; shirking the responsibility to "share one another's burden" (see *baraita* of *Kinyan Torah*: Avot 6:6); and evasion of *gemilut hasadim*, in the deepest sense of the term. And yet, he notes, despite these drawbacks, we need a measure of seclusion from a society such as ours which is not only open, but immoral, and exposed to the most abominable facets of modernity.

Five chapters document and illustrate these analyses and principles:

- (1) A study of the educational theory of *Hazal*, dealing with the institutionalization of Jewish education according to Mishnaic and Talmudic sources (primarily *Baba Batra* 20);
- (2) The role of *ta'amei ha-mitzvot* in Jewish education;

- (3) The status of general studies within the curriculum, and an evaluation of the arguments which *Hazal* mustered for and against *hokhmot hitzoniyot*;
- (4) An attempt to delineate the methodological principles of moral education; and, finally:
- (5) An examination of the essence of informal education, and its legitimacy within the framework of Jewish education.

Referring back, now, to our introductory remarks regarding the tension we perceive between “normative” traditional practice and contemporary “deliberative” reflection, I should like to illustrate Dr. Ahrend’s approach, as he applies it (in Chapter Two, pp. 71-74) to the use, in Jewish education, of *ta’amei ha-mitzvot*—the quintessential example of medieval rabbinic rationalization. The pedagogical dilemma is patent: If we maintain that mitzvot defy rationalization, we risk alienating our students whose modern orientation makes them innately suspicious and rejecting of anything which promotes itself without appeal to reason. If, on the other hand, we assert that every mitzvah has a (single) reason, then we appear to make its observance dependent upon the comprehension and acceptance of that reason. How often have we heard students argue against performance of a certain mitzvah on the eminently rational grounds that they do not concur with the stipulated reason? [e.g., If kashrut prevents trichinosis—an American turn-of-the-century favorite—we should be able to eat pork if it is properly cooked!]

Here is an excerpt (in my own translation) of Dr. Ahrend’s astute remarks on this dilemma. Note how he straddles the line between outright denial of the rational process (as a “threat” to faith and observance), on the one hand, and rejection of indoctrination (as equally dangerous oversimplification) on the other.

Above all else it is vital that we project the mitzvot of the Torah as mitzvot of *Hashem*, and to emphasize their legal and heteronomous [i.e., as opposed to autonomous] character. They are neither rituals, nor customs, nor traditions; they are laws which the Supreme Legislator has imposed upon us, commanded us to observe, and by which He has sanctified us. Our obligation towards them does not depend upon either our consent, or our comprehension, and we are commanded, primarily, to fulfill them—not to analyze or

internalize them. Moreover, even when we “comprehend” a mitzvah—its intentions and reasons—or we believe we comprehend it, this comprehension has no legal status and we are forbidden to draw halakhic conclusions from what appears, to us, to be the source or objective of a mitzvah. . . . It would appear that there emerge from these ruminations three practical conclusions, with clear didactic significance, affecting the teaching of *ta’amei hamitzvot*:

First of all, let us not exaggerate the rationalization of mitzvot lest we create the impression that everything is given to explanation; as though a sufficient answer exists to every question; as though we can find a convincing reason for every mitzvah—if we were only to study enough books and commentaries. Our students must hear from us, time and time again, that it is precisely the basic principles and values of the Torah which are potentially more exalted than our ordinary comprehension. . . . There is no place for *kedushah* other than in a place of mystery and obscurity, and there is no room for *emunah* with regard to that which reason already imposes. . . . It is preferable, therefore, to make mitzvot reasonable by means of *Aggadah* and *Midrash* which address man’s heart and imagination, and not necessarily by means of texts drawn from works of philosophy or contemplation. And, to be sure, we should not stimulate students to seek tranquility and satisfaction in the reasons we provide them, but we must emphasize constantly that these are mere theories which avail themselves to man only insofar as his intelligence and emotions allow.

Secondly, it behooves us to invest great effort in training the students to preface the study of “What” to that of “Why.” It is one of the hallmarks of civilization, and one of the elementary rules of spiritual discipline, that one does not adopt a position regarding a subject, nor express doubt or skepticism of it—and certainly not to criticize it, or stand in judgement of it—before becoming acquainted with it and studying it from a reasonably proximate distance. Only a boor or a simpleton allows himself to judge rashly and foolishly, that which others value. Therefore, let *ta’amei hamitzvot* be

broached after the mitzvah itself is studied; that is after its substance and essential halakhot are clarified in the type of breadth which is required by the framework in which it is being studied. In Tanakh classes, let them examine the foundations explicit in the *Torah Shebikhetav*; in *Torah Shebe'al Peh* classes—and particularly *dinim* classes—they should study the halakhic material, the halakhic rules and principles, and only afterwards should time be allocated to a clarification of “the roots” of the mitzvah and its reason, as a “dessert” which follows the main course. Nonetheless, it would not do to exaggerate the observance of this study schedule, and if the class—or even an individual student—should pester the teacher to show them a reason for a particular subject being studied, let the teacher decide, according to his own pedagogical tact and inclinations, whether to acknowledge the request in one way or another or to postpone his acknowledgment.

Finally, a word about selecting reasons. We are accustomed to relate to *Hazal* with respect and deference, and to treat the more ancient with even more respect: “If the ancients were like angels, then we are mere mortals; and if the ancients were like mortals, then we are like donkeys—and not even like the donkey of R. Hananiah ben Dosa or Pinhas ben Yair, but like ordinary donkeys” (BT Shabbat 112 b). It appears to us that this rule ought not apply with respect to *ta'amei hamitzvot*. It is not correct to advance a reason for a mitzvah even if it was suggested by *Rambam* or by the *Seifer HaHinukh*, if that reason cannot assist our students to come closer to comprehending the mitzvah and appreciating it, and certainly not if it serves to increase their perplexity and alienate that mitzvah from contemporary youngsters. Many reasons recorded in the *Moreh Nevukhim* were certainly appropriate for those times, but since they contain an historicization of certain mitzvot and explain them from within a specific context which has long since expired, the immediate reaction they arouse today is: If this is the reason for the mitzvah—it's outdated, and has no other cause to exist. Anyone who explains such prohibitions as shaving with a razor, or

*sha'atneiz*, as pagan practices which smack of idolatry, we suspect that whatever dubious advantage he gained is outweighed by a definite loss. It would be preferable to note that these are *hukkim* whose reasons still await clarification.

I would like to translate Dr. Ahrend's approach to *ta'amei hamitzvot* into practical, pedagogical, advice for values education and clarification, a subject no less fraught with “normative-deliberative” consequences. Even if we don't all teach *ta'amei hamitzvot* in our classes, we all engage—curricularly or extra-curricularly—in teaching, or communicating, values.

One: Let us not exaggerate values clarification to the extent that we imply to our students that every moral dilemma has a satisfactory resolution, and that they are capable, themselves, of discovering, understanding, and implementing it. Two: The stipulation of the halakhically correct ethics, morals, or values must always be given top priority on the pedagogical agenda. The most congenial and serendipitous classroom discussion cannot compensate for knowing exactly what the halakhah requires in any given situation, and we cannot afford to have the bell ring before that requirement is described and delineated. Three: After the relevant halakhah is detailed, there is room for a discussion of its rationale(s). If a rabbinic disagreement (*mahloket*) is uncovered along the way—use it as a fulcrum to pry their ostensible rationales out of the students who can deliberate on why the decision went as it did. If there is no apparent disagreement—stimulate them to assume hypothetical challenges (*da' mah shetashiv*), and to suggest why *Hazal* persevered with their decision in spite of them.

When the crunch comes—and in actual moral deliberations there is always a crunch—we can depend on the halakhah; we cannot always depend upon the one who is deliberating to have the moral *sang froid* to do the right thing in spite of inclement circumstances. As Dr. Ahrend summarizes his findings on mitzvot:

We recommend to educators not to cease to advance explanations for mitzvot, in general, but to present them as a symmetrical system of transcendent instructions which come to weave a tapestry of *kedushah* which has the capacity to elevate man precisely at a time when he is caught in a maelstrom of profane life (*hol*) and subject to desires and

passions which threaten to cause him to deteriorate and be demolished.

The reference to "a maelstrom of profane life" brings us back to the lead paragraph, in which we cited *The New York Times* headline: "In the Urban Maelstrom, the Faithful Persevere." What, then, of our prospective doctors, lawyers, and accountants; how will they fare when confronted with the modern challenges to their individual and collective faith? Are we so doctrinally conditioning their responses that we risk intellectual rebuff and behavioral rejection? Have we so exalted rigorous analysis that we have raised a generation which knows 49 ways to purify a *sheretz*, yet takes one in hand to the *mikvah*? Or, have we disciplined them in the normative way of halakhah while yet training them in the art of deliberation?

If the answers to these rhetorical questions concern you; if you wish to maximize your curricular and extra-curricular efforts on behalf of successive generations of "urban faithful;" Moshe Ahrend's book is a good place to start. You may find the Hebrew difficult at times (although Chapter One, on the institutionalization of Jewish education according to Mishnah and Talmud, should present no problem to anyone accustomed to Talmud study, particularly if they utilize Steinzaltz) but *lefum tza'ara—agra*.

אהרן אלדר הוא מנהל המחלקה לחינוך ותרבות תורניים בגולה, בארצות הברית.

## הרהורים על עבודתנו החינוכית בתפוצות

רצח ראש הממשלה יצחק רבין ז"ל הביא רבים לחשוב על עבודתנו החינוכית ודרך חנוכינו את הנוער בארץ ובחול. הרהורים אלה בולטים יותר בחנוך הדתי בארץ, אך בעיקר אני מעוניין לעסוק בנושא זה בחו"ל.

יש לאמר שרצח רבין לא גילה דברים חדשים ובודאי לא יצר התייחסויות חדשות. כל התופעות שאנו מבקרים אותם היו קיימות כבר שנים רבות, אך לא שמנו די לב אליהם ולא נסינו להבין את משמעותם ולא נסינו להתמודד איתם. לא פעם נפגשתי עם תלמידים בבתי ספר בארה"ב והביקורת שלהם על ממשלת ישראל היתה תוקפנית ומלאה בבטויים שלא ראוי לחזור אליהם. התלמידים בבתי הספר בארה"ב נוסף למה שראו במדיה, שמעו בבתי הספר, במשפחותיהם, ולעתים קרובות אף בבתי כנסת, ביקורת קשה כלפי מנהיגי המדינה וראשיה. דברים שהשפעתם עליהם לאורך זמן ללא ספק מזיקה.

רצח רבין חשף שתי נקודות תורפה בחינוכנו בבתי הספר בארץ ובתפוצות. נושאים אלה התפתחו בקרבנו שנים רבות, אך לא שמנו די לב אליהם, והרצח הכריח אותנו לחזור ולדון בהם. הנושא האחד הינו בתחום חינוך הפרט והנושא השני הינו בתחום החינוך הלאומי. בתחום חינוך הפרט לא שמנו דגש מספיק על אחריות הדדית, אחוה, תרבות הויכוח, נכונות לשמוע ולהבין דעה הנוגדת לנו, לכבד את המביע דעה שאינה נראית לנו, גם אם אינני מקבל את הדעה. נושאים אלה אינם דוקא ערכים יהודיים, אך לא השכלנו להחדירם בחינוכנו גם היהודי. לא השכלנו להצביע על כך שהחינוך היהודי איננו מצטמצם רק בשאלות שבין האדם למקום, ושערכים בין אדם לחברו אינם פחות יהודיים. בתחום זה יש הרבה לעשות וניתן לעשות.

התחום השני הינו החנוך לאהבת מדינת ישראל והיושבים בה, להעמקת הקשר הנפשי בין הנוער בארה"ב למדינה ולערכיה. באופן עקרוני, כמעט בכל בית ספר יש משהו העוסק במדינת ישראל, אך באופן אמיתי עוסקים יותר ב"ארץ ישראל", במדינת ישראל בעבר, וכמעט שאין תכנית המנסה להחדיר לתלמידים את התודעה שהם קשורים למדינה, שיש להם אחריות ושותפות גורל עם אחיהם במדינת ישראל ושעצם קיומם קשור במדינה.

מעטים הם בתי הספר שמדינת ישראל תופסת מקום בתוכנית הלמודים. בדרך כלל עוסקים במדינת ישראל סביב ארועים הקשורים במדינה וזה בעיקר יום העצמאות, יום ירושלים, מצעד ההצדעה לישראל, ולפעמים ט"ו בשבט. בשנה האחרונה נתוספו ארועים שעוסקים במדינת ישראל וכולם, לצערינו, ארועים הקשורים בסבל ובמצוקה. עצרת למען השבויים, עצרת לזכר נרצחי בית ליד, ת"א, הבורסה, ירושלים

וכי. מדינת ישראל העכשווית איננה הופכת לתלמידים מקום אדילי לחיות, אף לא המדינה שאנו גאים בה ורוצים להיות חלק ממנה.

עלינו לזכור שתלמידנו לא חיו בעת קום המדינה, אף לא בתקופת ששת הימים ומלחמת יום הכיפורים שבהם המדינה היתה בסכנת קיום וכל אדם מישראל חש דאגה ואחריות כלפי המדינה וממילא חש קשר עמוק אליה. היום שישראל, ביה, איננה עומדת בפני סכנת קיום, שמצבה הכלכלי משתפר, אי אפשר לסמוך על התחושה הטבעית של הקשר למדינת ישראל ויש לדאוג לקשר זה.

מצב זה לא יכול להביא את תלמידנו להדהות עם המדינה, להכרה בכך שמדינת ישראל היא מדינת כל היהודים וכל אחד ואחד חייב להרגיש חלק ממנה, אם בעליה להיות בה, אם בתקופה ארוכה ללמוד בה, ואם לבקר בה כמי שמבקר בביתו.

אני חושש שאנו נגדל דור חדש שיהיה מרוחק ממדינת ישראל ולכל היותר יראה במדינה מן חוץ שיש לצפות אליו, אך לא מציאות שיש לחיות אותה.

כדי לשנות מצב זה יש צורך בלימוד שיטתי של מדינת ישראל. הכרה במה שנעשה בישראל על הטוב שבה ועל הרע שבה — ויש הרבה מאד דברים טובים שלא עוסקים בהם, כגון קליטת עליה, בניה, לימוד, כלכלה, וכי. יש לקבוע כל שבוע זמן לעסוק במתרחש במדינה, אך לא להדגיש רק את הארועים הפולטיים ולעסוק רק בשאלות היחסים שבין ישראל למדינות ערב. לא יכול לעבור שבוע בלי שעוסקים בנושא ישראל באופן שיטתי ועמוק.

ידוע לנו שבחינוך לא מספיק ללמד את הדברים, יש גם לחוות אותם כדי להפנימם וכדי להפכם לחלק מהי התלמיד. יש לקיים ארועים הקשורים בישראל ולהפוך את הלימוד ללימוד חיייתי, להפגיש את התלמידים עם נוער בארץ, עם אחיהם בארץ, עם נושאים שונים המתפתחים בארץ, ובכך לקרב את התלמיד למתרחש במדינה. יש לפתח קשר בין תלמידים בבתי הספר באר"ב עם תלמידים בבתי ספר בארץ באמצעות ה"אנטרנט", ובאמצעות סרטי וידאו שבהם תלמידים כאן ושם מציגים את חיייהם את שאיפותיהם ואת פעולותיהם. יש לשאוף לביקור של התלמידים בארץ, ביקור שיכלול לימוד המקורות דרך טיול בארץ שיכלול הכירות עם מוסדות המדינה ופעולותיהם, מפגשים נוער בני גילם, ובניית פרויקטים משותפים של נערים בארץ ובאר"ב. דברים אלה יחזקו גם את המוטיבציה ללימוד השפה העברית והשימוש בה.

הפעלת תכנית מקיפה זו מחייבת היערכות בתוך בית הספר, מינוי אדם שיהיה אחראי להכנת החומר, לריכוזו ולהפעלתו. גם בתי ספר החושבים שאינם יכולים להקדיש שעה שבועית ללימוד מדינת ישראל, יכולים לקבוע במשך השנה 5-6 ימים שבהם כל ביה"ס יעסוק במשך מחצית היום של לימודי היהדות בנושא ישראל. באותו יום כל הכיתות תלמדה נושא מחיי מדינת ישראל, תהינה פעולות חויותיות, ותורגש אירת מדינת ישראל בביה"ס.

רק בדרך זו נעמיק את הקשר של התלמידים למדינת ישראל, ניצור הדהות עם המדינה ותושביה, ואין ספק שדבר זה גם יתרום לזהותם היהודית, להדהותם עם העם היהודי, וממילא יחזק את קשריהם ליהדות.

The purpose of *Ten Da'at* is to provide a forum for the expression of a wide variety of stimulating and responsible Torah viewpoints. Thus, the views and opinions expressed in the articles of *Ten Da'at* are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the position of *Ten Da'at*.

## Instructions to Contributors

All manuscripts must follow the MLA Style-Sheet, with notes placed at the end. Transliterations should follow Sephardic pronunciation, according to the Encyclopedia Judaica guidelines (except for  $\text{N}=\text{h}$  and  $\text{y}=\text{ts}$ ). The title and author's name should appear on a separate cover sheet. The final, revised, copy must also be submitted on a floppy disk (MAC format preferable).

Your contributions can take the form of either an original essay on a topic of interest or concern to Orthodox educators, or a response to one of the articles published in this, or in any previous issue, of *TEN DA'AT*. Brief replies, in the form of letters to the editor, will also be considered for publication, but preference will be given to more detailed and substantive responses.

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TEN DA'AT—Editorial Office  
Torah Education Department/WZO  
110 E. 59 Street  
New York, NY 10022

