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Jewish Education:
In Search of New Beginnings?

בראשית

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All the News that's Fit To Print... and Then Some Setting the Record Straight

by Eli Berman

In recent months Yehuda Schwartz has been quoting and commenting on statements allegedly made by Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, *shlitá*. Simply to say that Yehuda Schwartz stretches the truth is an understatement. The purpose of this article is to focus upon some of the blatant instances in which Schwartz either makes baseless statements or deliberately deceives the public. It is necessary to do so to set the record straight.

The latest onslaught appeared in the February 6 issue of the Jewish Press in a news article by Yehuda Schwartz on page 3. Schwartz writes that "new political overtures by Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein of Jerusalem, concerning alleged concessions on conversions by the non-Orthodox rabbinat, have left his coreligionists bewildered and angered." The simple fact is that Rav Lichtenstein made no overtures whatsoever concerning conversions by the non-Orthodox rabbinat. Schwartz adds that "many in the Orthodox circles today are angered, specifically, at Hammer's and Lichtenstein's abuse of offices, in allowing the name of the great Talmudic scholar, HaRav J.B. Soloveitchik, to be dragged into Israel's less than noble political arena in his advanced age." In fact, Rav Lichtenstein never once mentioned Rav Soloveitchik's name.

In fairness, Yehuda Schwartz might not be solely responsible for these initial falsehoods. He may have received misleading reports of statements made by Rav Lichtenstein at a National Religious Party forum in Jerusalem and one might charitably assume that Schwartz was just jumping on the bandwagon without checking the accuracy of these reports. However, soon after these distorted reports surfaced, Rav Lichtenstein issued a clarification of his comments. On February 27 the Jewish Press (p.3, "Halakha Must Decide Personal Status") printed a Jewish Telegraphic Agency press report setting forth this clarification. In this article Rav Lichtenstein "made clear his view that *halakha* must take precedence over intra-Jewish politics in issues of personal status, such as divorce and conversion. In the matter of the composition of the *Beit Din* (rabbinical court) actually engaged in the specific formal steps of conversion, we should entertain an arrangement which would guarantee that the composition and procedures to be applied to the actual *Beit Din* meet our standards, although it might act under the aegis of a sanctioning Reform or Conservative authority," Lichtenstein said.

Despite this published clarification, three weeks later in the March 20 issue of the Jewish Press, Schwartz, in his column, "Inside View," printed, in bold print, a letter written by Dr. Natan Flakkekoach attacking Rav Lichtenstein. Dr. Flakkekoach writes: "I understand that Aharon Lichtenstein...intends to form an alliance with the Minister of Religious Affairs, Mr. Zevulun Hammer, in order to establish a *Beit Din* of Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox representatives." Affording Dr. Flakkekoach the full benefit of the doubt, it is possible that when he wrote his letter he was misled by the original press reports. But what of Yehuda Schwartz, who was

undoubtedly aware of the true tenor of Rav Lichtenstein's remarks, since the clarification had been printed in his newspaper the Jewish Press three weeks before the Flakkekoach letter was printed. Despite this knowledge, he proceeded to print a letter attacking Rav Lichtenstein for statements he never made.

Two weeks later, in the April 3 issue of the Jewish Press, Yehuda Schwartz wrote in his column, "Inside View," that he feels it is permissible to abuse Rav Lichtenstein because "whenever there is a *chillul Hashem* as in the suggestion of an Israeli Tri-Partisan *Beit Din*—not only is it permissible to speak out against it, but one who has it in his power, is mandated to do so!" Yet, as we have seen, Schwartz was already fully informed that Rav Lichtenstein never suggested an Israeli Tri-Partisan *Beit Din* and that he specifically said that the composition and procedures of a *Beit Din* must meet Orthodox standards. If Yehuda Schwartz was indeed ignorant of Rav Lichtenstein's clarification, despite its prominent appearance in his own newspaper, he is guilty only of gross ignorance. This is highly improbable since, as of today, Schwartz has still not corrected his mistake. Strange as it may seem, Schwartz repeated this perversion in his column of May 29, "How can Rabbi Lichtenstein even suggest the inclusion of those (Conservative and Reform) 'rabbis' who are halakhically categorized as *apikorsim* in a *Beit Din*." The alternative is that Schwartz knew what his own paper printed but deliberately lied.

Schwartz begins his April 17 column ("Inside View") "The Peace-Loving Students," p.4; "Ka-asher yomar maishel ha-kadmoni, m'reshaim yetze rasha..." And as G-d said, from the wicked shall go forth wickedness" (Sam. 1:24,14)." He then criticizes two former students of Yeshivat Rav Etzion, one student for (in Schwartz' opinion) quoting Rav Soloveitchik out of context and the other for claiming it is possible for *Hazal* to err. Schwartz blames students' errors upon Rav Lichtenstein, the Rosh HaYeshiva of Yeshivat Rav Etzion. After reading the column it is crystal clear what Schwartz meant when he quoted the passage from Samuel—the "wickedness" refers to the students' actions and the "wicked" refers to Rav Lichtenstein. Here we have a journalist of the Jewish Press referring to the Rosh Yeshiva of the largest *hesder* yeshiva in Israel (with over 500 students) and the *talmid muv'hak* of Rav Soloveitchik as a "rasha," a wicked person. It is obvious that Yehuda Schwartz is not very fond of Rav Lichtenstein but it is equally evident that this does not earn Rav Lichtenstein the title of "rasha" nor does it permit Schwartz to say things in the name of Rav Lichtenstein which he not only did not say but even categorically denied.

In this April 17 column, Schwartz states that the student who claims *Hazal* could have made mistakes reached this idea "perhaps from some of his [Rav Lichtenstein] shiurim." Yet Schwartz does not bring one iota of proof that Rav Lichtenstein even entertained such an idea. Schwartz claims that "these students are degrading the Torah of HaGaon HaRav Soloveitchik

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and so is his son-in-law, by allowing it...L...Rabbi Lichtenstein have allowed his students to differ with the "gaon" from Boston under other circumstances?"

In light of Schwartz' column five weeks later, it is quite ironic that a student of Rav Lichtenstein took a quote of Rav Soloveitchik out of context. In the May 22 issue of the Jewish Press, Schwartz publishes what is ostensibly a transcript of a tape he received of a *shiur* given by Rav Soloveitchik. Toward the end of that column Schwartz prints a paragraph criticizing Rabbi Rackman on the issue of "Who is a Jew?" Schwartz' criticism of Rabbi Rackman is not surprising; it is shocking, however, that Schwartz placed this paragraph within the quotation marks representing Rav Soloveitchik's words in his *shiur*. The fact is that Rav Soloveitchik never once mentioned Rabbi Rackman's name in his *shiur* nor did he discuss the topic "Who is a Jew?" It is unpardonable for Yehuda Schwartz to put his personal criticisms in the mouth of Rav Soloveitchik.

In Schwartz' next column on May 29 (p.4), he discusses the issue of returning the *shatichim*. He states that "when a 'rosh yeshiva' (which, from the end of the column, clearly refers to Rav Lichtenstein) begins *paskeen* for *Klal Yisrael* it becomes incumbent upon any one who has it within his power to do so, to protest with all his might, *kol makom she'yash, hillul Hashem, eyn holkim kavod te'ra'!*" The logic of this statement completely escapes the reader. Who is supposed to *paskeen* for *Klal Yisrael*? Should we have journalists deciding the halakhic aspects of giving back land in Israel? At the end of his column, Schwartz states that "the Gush Etzion rabbi (Rav Lichtenstein) continues to teach a false halachic approach for Israel's security today." Why is this a false halachic approach? The possible return of the *shatichim* for reasons of peace is an approach which is similar to the views of, among others, Rav Soloveitchik and Rav Shach. It seems as though any person who dares to differ with Yehuda Schwartz *ipso facto* teaches a false halachic approach.

Schwartz, responding to a letter to the editor (June 12, p. 42), states: "There is no true Torah person who would deny that, halakhically there has not been a consensus of opinion on giving away

Kedushat Eretz Yisroel, as Rabbi Lichtenstein suggests it may be permissible for peace." What does this mean? It seems as though Schwartz is saying that since there has not been a consensus on giving away land, Rav Lichtenstein should, therefore, not express his views on this topic. This is ludicrous on its face. Firstly, should all leading rabbis be silent on major issues just because there has not been a consensus of opinion? Secondly, how could everyone know that there is a lack of consensus unless the *gedolim* have already expressed their views? Are we to say that all people who have stated their opinions on this subject are wrong for doing so? This implies that Rav Zimmerman is also in error for publicly stating his position on this subject, an implication with which Yehuda Schwartz would probably not agree. The only logical conclusion then is that the people who agree with Yehuda Schwartz' views on giving back land in Israel are permitted to do so, but the ones who disagree with Schwartz should not.

Immediately following this last senseless statement, Schwartz returns to what seems to be his favorite lie. He states that "one who does not believe in *Torah min Hashamayim* cannot be included in any halakhic judiciary, even tacitly, as Rabbi Lichtenstein publicly suggested in his now infamous overtures to the Conservative and Reform clergy in respect to conversions." At the risk of repeating myself, not only did Rav Lichtenstein never tacitly suggest that one who does not believe in *Torah min Hashamayim* can be included in any halakhic judiciary but, rather, he explicitly stated to the contrary, as printed in his own newspaper, the Jewish Press (Feb. 27, p.3).

These are only a few examples of statements made by Yehuda Schwartz that are either baseless or even worse—intentional lies. It is perfectly clear that Yehuda Schwartz owes an apology to Rav Lichtenstein for deliberately and maliciously embarking on a campaign to defame him, and to the public for deliberately misinforming them on a critical issue. Because of his disregard for truth, as reported by his own newspaper the Jewish Press, the very possibility of civilized discussion with our community, in general, and in his own newspaper, especially, has been truly undermined.

Religious and Secular Conflict in Israel

by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin is the Chief Rabbi of Efrat and former rabbi of Lincoln Square Synagogue. This article is an abridged version of a paper published by Ohr Torah of Efrat and has also appeared in "Eylelah" and "Chavrusa."

On a ride down King George Street in Jerusalem not too long ago, I hadn't particularly noticed the young woman in the back of the bus who sat down next to the pious-looking Chassid since he, in his black hat, black coat and long beard, and she, in her sandals, skirt, and sleeveless top were a part of a typical scene that blended into so many others that included soldiers on leave, babushka-headed grandmothers, five-year olds with knapsacks, and an occasional Brooklyn-born rabbi already late for an appointment.

It was only after a young woman quietly asked the Chassid if he would please close the window that I lifted my eyes out of the newspaper and watched him turn to her rather matter-of-factly with the words, "Would you please lengthen your sleeves?"

"Mister," the woman said, her voice rising to match her indignation, "the open window is bothering me!" The Chassid seemed non-plussed. "Madame, the bare arms are bothering me," he responded. Her face was now grim and determined as she extracted every single syllable slowly from her mouth and planted them into every ear on the bus. "Are they my arms or your arms?"

I could see my stop approaching, and although my watch reminded me that someone was probably wondering already what was keeping me, my heart was pounding my brain to let me remain on board as the words between the passengers grew hot and angry, and almost everyone on the bus, even the driver, staked a position in favor of the woman or against her.

And of course no one on the bus argued from a practical perspective—that is, "How could she lengthen her sleeves even if she wanted to?" since in Israel, one always assumed that if something had to be done, it was done one way or another, overnight, on the spot, or even out of the air. The issue here was simply who was right, period, and I, for one, found the intellectual and emotional exchange exhilarating until I overheard a man behind me cry hysterically

to the woman who was with him, apparently his wife, "I told you that's why we have to leave the country. When they are in control, they will demand total religious conformity of all of us."

By the time the ride ended for me, neither the window had been closed nor the sleeves lengthened, but for the first time I began to sense the passion of the secular Jew in Israel who is frightened of the future and sees in the growing religious trend a movement toward repression and persecution. The incident on the bus wasn't just another disagreement, but the tip of the iceberg of a conflict that threatens to tear apart a nation even before it's had a chance to live one day of peace without enemies threatening its existence.

"We'll leave the country," an 18-year-old sabra announced recently to American relatives of hers who were visiting Jerusalem, her younger brother, in army fatigues, nodding in agreement. "The only ones left will be these fanatics who only know how to grab money for the yeshivot and throw stones," she continued. "And since they don't know how to fight, the Arabs will kill them all." Her smile frightened me. She wasn't joking.

What has the religious community done to earn such scorn? After all, in the diaspora, communities like Gateshead or Boro Park are considered model neighborhoods, earning civil and federal praise and capturing the imagination of the media as well as support from government figures all the way up to the White House.

But Israel is different. A rabbi can be Minister of Interior and explain the death of school children in a bus and train collision by saying it's because their parents were Sabbath desecrators. Religious papers vilify the secular kibbutzim constantly, ignoring the fact that these same kibbutzim send their sons to the front lines daily in defense of the nation *"al kiddush hashem"*. Of course, radio, television and daily newspapers lose no time in criticizing the religious community, often without justification, but since the Torah-observant community believes in the commandment "And I must be sanctified in the midst of the Children of Israel," I believe we have a higher responsibility to speak, act and write with restraint and love towards the secular.

Since the summer of '85 and continuing

every Friday night, hundreds of religious Jews have been picketing the movie theater in Petach Tikva for opening its doors on the Sabbath, and a local rabbi spoke with pride at the solidarity of one such demonstration. "Everyone was there," he said to me, "from Agudah to Mizrahi!"

Jewish unity? All the segments of the observant minority climbing on the same bandwagon in order to impose their will on the non-observant majority? Who are those religious people who tell Israelis who have one day off a week that they can't see a movie or go to the beach or get into a car and drive to a museum when the very act of picketing is itself a Sabbath desecration?

To be sure, I am in total sympathy with anyone who believes that in a Jewish State, the collective Sabbath of the government, the arts, the sciences and the networks of communication and transportation should rest along with the individuals—that the Sabbath and Festivals are among the most visible elements of our tradition which distinguish us from every other Levantine state—but such observances will only last if that's what the overwhelming majority wants. I believe the only reason a movie theater should be forced to close is not by legislating it, but rather because there are no patrons, because nobody wants to see a show that coincides with the singing of Shalom Aleichem, Kiddush, and the blessing of the children.

If all the hundreds who picketed in Petach Tikva that first Friday night had invited the moviegoers to share their Friday night chicken that evening, there's no doubt that many, if not most of them could have enjoyed the company of the Sabbath angels far more than, say, a movie starring Angela Lansbury, *Covenant and Consent*.

Israel should close its public institutions on the Sabbath only if the majority wants it that way. That's Jewish tradition, and you don't have to go any further than the Bible to see how it works, how the covenant between the Creator of the Sabbath and the People of the Sabbath always depended on a voluntary acceptance beginning with Abraham, the founder of our tribe, who in the fifteenth chapter of Genesis is seen as ratifying his historic agreement with God in the traditional manner contracts were "signed" in the ancient world, that

is, by slaughtering an animal and dividing it into parts, each signator passing between the pieces, and the blood through which they walk symbolizing the separate individuals who are joined together by the mutuality of their contractual agreement in the same way 'blood brothers' are always united in old movies.

Later, when Abraham's descendants left Egypt after their period of slavery, and were about to become a nation through the vehicle of God's law at Sinai, a second covenant is ratified, this time between God and the whole Jewish people. But it didn't happen automatically. Actually, the Midrashic commentaries remind us that the Torah was offered to all the nations of the world.

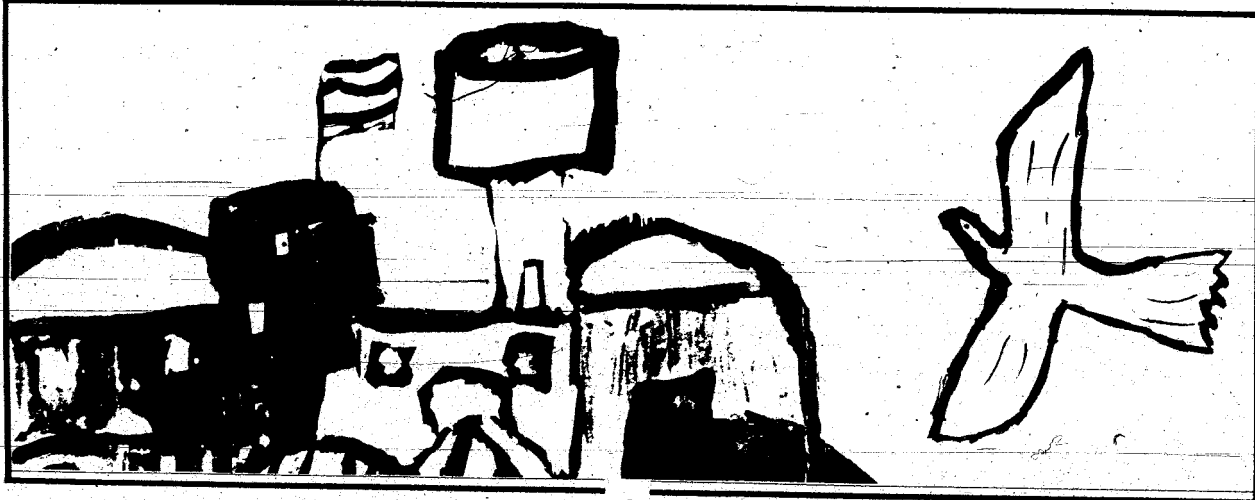
Respecting their noble genealogy, God approached the Children of Ishmael first, only the Ishmaelites weren't going to sign any contracts until they read the fine print. When God got to the part forbidding adultery, the Ishmaelites said thanks but no thanks.

Next, God approached the Children of Esau, and when He came to the part about not stealing, there was mumbling and grumbling, and the Esauites echoed the Ishmaelites. No dice.

And on it went. The entire un-United Nations, so to speak, was approached individually. Of course they gave the offering of this monotheistic law a certain measure of respect considering it was a thunderous vision from the realm of Heaven, but when it came to the litany of all the forbidden, something would rile the nations. Despite the fact that they may have appreciated a lot, if not most, of the Torah, they weren't able to accept all of it. At least one point would irk them and since they weren't about to abandon their style, it was the Torah they had to say no to.

The only people who said we'll take it all, the little laws and the big laws, the laws that make perfect sense, and those that are inscrutable were the Israelites. The rallying cry became "*Na'ase V'nishma*," the famous "we will do and we will listen." The Jews at Sinai weren't looking for deals or bargains.

Alone among the nations, we accepted
continued on page 10.



A Breach of Faith

by David Bogner

Once again extremism has reared its ugly head in Israel. The battle lines have been drawn for decades, needing only willing combatants to throw down the gauntlet. And for the population at large, the price will be paid for years to come in over sensitivity and mistrust. The only question which remains to be answered is: Who are the extremists?

The traditional recipients of that title are the Hasidim or, so called "Ultra Orthodox" Jews, so let them come under scrutiny first. It is both unfair and incorrect to label this group Hasidim since many of the members of this camp are in fact staunch *Misnagdim* (followers of the *Gaon of Vilna* rather than the *Ba'al Shem Tov*). Also the term *Haredim* (trembling ones) from the one point of view is self righteous and from the other, somewhat mocking. So, for lack of a more neutral term they will be called here the religious right (not relative to wrong but to the political spectrum).

The Religious Right has to its advantage several factors the most obvious of which is seniority. Throughout the centuries of exile, while the land of Israel lay fallow through sieges and oppressive rule, they can rightly claim that there has always been some token representation of a religious community. When Jews first began to warm to the idea of Aliyah, they arrived (at least in the Holy cities of Jerusalem, Safed, and Hebron) only to see struggling yet well worn communities of religious Jews. The new immigrants scorned the stagnation and total dependence on foreign charity of the Religious people yet they themselves were viewed as a transient phenomenon. Remember that these well worn communities had seen quite a few new-comers come and go through two millennium.

Once established as the "oldest house on the block," the Religious Right needs only to point at its quasi-legal "Status Quo" agreement with Ben Gurion and his successors to further strengthen its case for the preservation of their way of life. In fairness to the first prime minister and his successors, it should be pointed out that Israel's often shaky coalition form of government has thrown disproportionate weight into the bargaining position of well

organized special interest groups such as the Religious Right. The status quo provides for the preservation of the special nature of Israel in general and Jerusalem specifically by making Shabbat and holidays official National Holidays (most businesses, restaurants, and public transportation is shut down) as well as providing for special sabbath areas in Jerusalem and other homogeneous religious communities where all traffic is banned.

The case against the religious right is rooted in their single minded desire to impose religious law on a secular majority which for the most part finds Jewish expression in more nationalistic/patriotic observance. In a country without a

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constitution and no tendency toward a clear separation of religion and state (Israel is after all the Jewish state/ homeland) the dividing line between self preservation and infliction upon others is often a treacherous one to walk. It is within shades of gray that one can say that the non-religious Jews walk closer to this center line than the Religious Right. The non-religious for the most part are not preoccupied with imposing their values on others.

This second group is also one of many names; secular Israelis, assimilated Jews, modern Jews, etc. But in fairness to them, they will be called here, the secular left.

This group very likely embodies the vision which Hertzl had of the secular cultural Jew. After witnessing the Dryfus affair he concluded that assimilation was not the answer for world Jewry. He saw the only answer in a Jewish nation populated by modern cultural Jews who could go on to achieve the success they had found among the nations, but without fear of anti-semitism.

To their credit, these Jews of the secular left are responsible for most of the pioneering and building which led to the eventual

founding of the State of Israel. They helped protect the religious communities from slaughter at the hands of Arab attackers, even when these religious groups refused to help in their own defence. They even went so far as to turn down Uganda as a possible homeland for the Jews for the simple reason that there was no mention of Uganda in the Bible. In spite of their clear tendencies toward a national/cultural Judaism, the unified appeal to the United Nations in the form of the Declaration of Independence was couched in clearly religious terms and based on claims to the land found mostly in the Bible (they did however, mistakenly state that the land of Israel was the birth place of the Jewish people).

Despite their justified concern for their freedom of choice in matters Jewish, the Secular left has much to answer for in its own campaign of extremism. To begin with, Israeli advertizing tends to be more European in its use of sexual messages, but it is nothing short of insensitive to put life-size bathing suit ads in bus shelters frequented by the religious right (in and around the status quo 'Shabbat zones'). This bit of brinkmanship sparked an arson war which spread to bus shelters located in completely secular areas. Furthermore, regardless of personal feelings or political leverage, the status quo was an agreement made by a Labor government and maintained

There are still many unnecessary excesses on both sides of the battle lines.

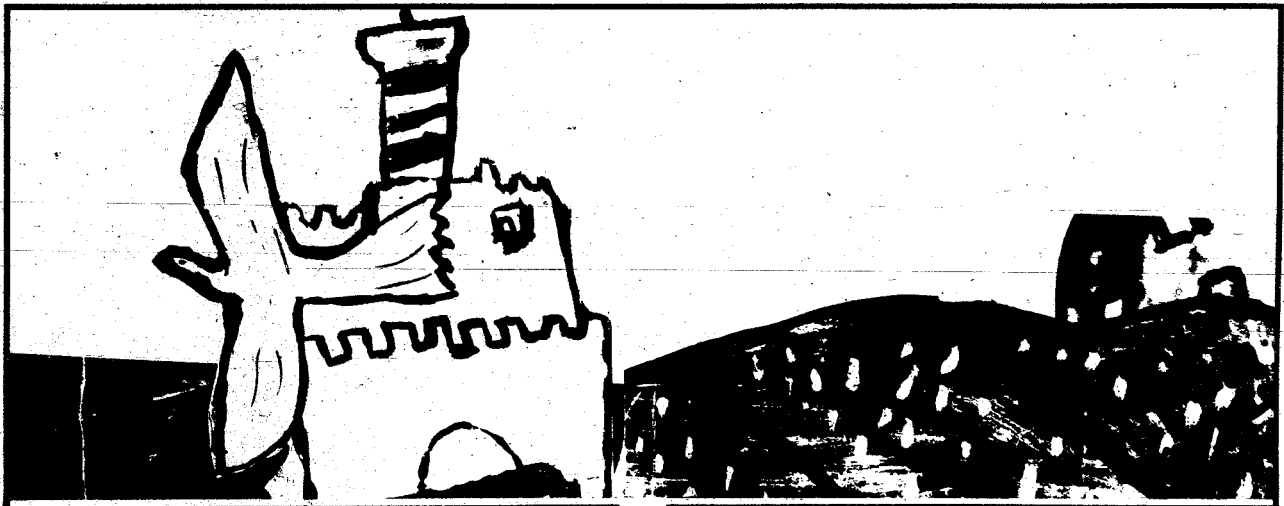
by successive governments of both Labor and the Likud. It is another form of extremism which prompts a group to take matters into their own hands concerning the status quo. The proper channels were used to shelve the "Who is a Jew" resolution in the Knesset, so the questions bears asking: Why go outside the established channels to change a (quasi)law when the trend in government is slightly less religious than in the past? The fact that the first few screenings of Friday night films were loosely disguised as lectures (with a wink and a

nod) smacks of a Machiavellian slant to achieving one's goals. Unfortunately, both groups which have been discussed up to this point suffer from this tendency.

Contrary to popular belief, there is a third party in the running for the title of extremist, and that is the media. The Israeli press has been completely polarized by the issue of the continuation of the status quo. The international press has (to the embarrassment of Jews everywhere) seized the opportunity to make thin comparisons between Israel and Moslem realms, bending to fundamentalist pressure. The very interest of the world press makes Jews from all camps feel as though their privacy has been invaded. This would be like overhearing a second hand account of an argument your family had had the night before. The world media is not privy to the origins of many of our "family" arguments and in most cases, don't realize the sensitivity of the issues being argued. Like most things Jewish, our conflicts defy black and white solutions and so, don't translate well to non-Jewish rules of logic. In short, there is enough tension in the ring already without the tabloids of the world playing spoiler.

The press not withstanding, there are still many unnecessary excesses on both sides of the battle lines which were drawn so long ago. Without a constitution, the matters of right and wrong and freedom vs. oppression, will continue to add tension to the supercharged political climate of the Jewish State. But with so many years of relative tolerance (only three major eras of conflict and one casualty) it is hard to believe that either side wants the inevitable chaos which would result if the delicate balance is disturbed. There was a time when secular Israelis spoke with equal conviction about the inconvenience of the lack of busses on Shabbat, and the tangible difference between the hustle of the week and its calm conclusion. Today secular jargon has attempted to do away with the term Shabbat, favoring instead *Sof HaShavua* (end of the week).

Both the religious and secular have become radicalized over this issue which lies at the heart of Israeli life, and every day that the trend is allowed to continue, the likelihood of compromise or an open ended, face-saving, cease-fire grows dimmer.



From *Mr. Shalom*. My Prince ed. by Jacob Zim

Ivrit or Ivris?

by Moshe Rayman

During the many years that the Jews were dispersed throughout the Diaspora, several different pronunciations (*havaraot*) of the Hebrew language evolved. The inhabitants of every region adhered to their own custom of pronunciation, and little conflict arose. However, when the Jewish people returned to Israel and revived their holy language, the new settlers decided to adopt a Sephardic pronunciation. This prompted the question: May a Jew of Ashkenazic descent use this foreign pronunciation in his prayers, or is he obligated to abide by the custom of his fathers?

R. Abraham Isaac HaCohen Kook (ORACH MISHPAT C.17) ruled that a person who recites the *Sh'ma* or any other prayer using an alien pronunciation is considered as if he has not pronounced the words correctly. And based on the Talmud, the Rambam (*Kriat Sh'ma* 2:5) explicitly states that one is required to pronounce the word of the *Sh'ma* correctly.

It is apparent that R. Kook holds that each community's particular custom of pronunciation determines for that community the exclusive form of the Hebrew language. We are to view any variant customs as a *machloket* (fundamental disagreement) between the different communities. Moreover, each individual must consider his own pronunciation to be the correct one; by praying in an alternative form, he is considered to be 'mispronouncing' his words.

The consequences of mispronunciation vary. Those that do not alter the meaning of the word uttered do not invalidate one's rendition. Thus, if the mispronunciation consisted of a petty grammatical change, e.g. one pronounces an *ot rapita* (soft letter) such as a *saf*, as a *d'gusha* (accented letter) such as *taf*, then the rule is that although he has violated the law of correct pronunciation (*dikduk otiot*), he has, nonetheless, fulfilled his obligation (*b'diavad*). If, however, the word mispronounced differs so radically from its normal pronunciation that it would be understood to have a different meaning altogether, the individual would not have fulfilled his obligation, even *b'diavad*. For instance, the normative pronunciation of the masculine third person pronoun is 'he'. Hungarian Jews, however, pronounce this word 'hee', which is the feminine pronoun in normative Hebrew. Thus, if a certain passage were to refer to both a man and a woman using their corresponding pronouns, a change of pronunciation would cause a change of meaning. If one were to commit this error, he would not have fulfilled his obligation to read this verse.

R. Zvi Pesach Frank (*Mikroai Kodesh, Purim* C.12) agrees with R. Kook in principle, similarly asserting that each community must view its own pronunciation as objectively correct. He feels, however, that a person who recited the *davener* using a foreign pronunciation is no worse than one who davens in a different language. The Rambam (Ibid 2:10) states that one may recite the *Sh'ma* in any language. R.

Frank further asserts that virtually all of our prayers may be recited in any language, even *Ivraichila*. The only prayers which must be recited in Hebrew are those enumerated in the *Mishna* (Sota 6:1). And of this list, only *Birchat Avraham* (the priestly blessing) and the verses recited during *chalitza* (the ceremony whereupon a *levir* frees his childless brother's wife from having to marry him after his brother's death) are still applicable in our time.

Hence, according to R. Frank, although different pronunciations share the same alphabet, grammatical structure and meaning, they still qualify as two distinct languages. R. Kook, on the other hand, posited that different pronunciations, although not constituting different languages, rather, they should be viewed as different forms of the same language, with only one being valid for any given community.

R. Moshe Feinstein Z"L (*Igrot Moshe* H.V.3, C.5) differs with both R. Kook and R. Frank. While they both, in principle, assumed that each community must view its pronunciation as objectively correct (arguing only about whether we can consider a different pronunciation to be a different language or rather a corrupted form of Hebrew), R. Feinstein insists that we cannot assume that any one specific pronunciation is more correct than the others. For if this were the case, no community could rely on the *chalitza* of another. Therefore, R. Feinstein writes, any form of the Hebrew language which is used by a community of Jews should be considered as Hebrew for all Jews, even though it may differ from the original Hebrew. The two criteria needed to categorize a particular *havara* as *la'on hakodesh* are that the words and letters of the Torah can be read in this fashion, and that a large Jewish community uses the pronunciation. Once a pronunciation of the Hebrew language fulfills these criteria, any Jew can pray with this pronunciation, thus fulfilling his obligation. However, R. Feinstein warns that although one can fulfill his obligation with any standard pronunciation, it is still preferable for one to daven using the 'truly' authentic pronunciation. Since we cannot determine conclusively which *havara* was used at the time of *Ma'an Torah*, one should assume that his community's *Masora* is the most correct, and, thus, most desirable.

In conclusion, according to both R. Kook and R. Frank, every community must view its own pronunciation as the only acceptable form of the Hebrew language. However, while R. Kook assumes that one should not view the different forms as different languages, R. Frank feels that the different pronunciations do qualify them as variant languages. Therefore, R. Frank feels that any prayer which can be recited in any language, may similarly be recited in a different pronunciation. R. Feinstein takes the most extreme position, emphatically disagreeing with the notion of calling a particular community's pronunciation wrong. Therefore, even prayers which should be recited in Hebrew (technically) may be said in any *havara*. Nevertheless, it is still preferable for one to adhere to his own custom, even according to R. Feinstein.

Light in August, September...

by Meir Orlian

From the beginning of the month of Elul until the end of the festival of Sukkot, Jews conclude their prayers with the psalm, "L'David: Hashem Ori V'yishi." In this psalm, David proclaims his absolute sense of security and faith in Hashem, and declares that his sole wish is "shivti b'veis Hashem kol y'mei chayai," to dwell in the house of G-d all the days of his life. He then pleads to G-d not to abandon him, and not to subject him to the will of his enemies, concluding with a final message of hope, "kavei el Hashem."

The casual Jewish davener will move swiftly from one *pasuk* to the next without observing any difficulties in the text. Upon more meticulous analysis, however, one cannot fail to detect certain obvious problems in the structure and flow of the mizmor.

At first glance, the mizmor seems highly idyllic and optimistic, as David dismisses all of his enemies as insignificant, confidently exclaiming that "G-d is my light and stronghold, from whom should I fear?" David stresses that his wish "to dwell in the house of G-d" is his only desire. And yet, immediately following a triumphant assertion, "my head shall rise above my enemies around me, and I shall sacrifice in his tent sacrifices of rejoicing," the mizmor undergoes a drastic, almost complete reversal in tone and content, turning into a desperate cry not to fall into the clutches of the enemy. Suddenly, David is gripped with panic: "G-d, do not hide from me! Do not cast me off in your anger!" The enemies he cavalierly dismissed in the beginning of the psalm, suddenly emerge as genuine threats to his existence; David's idyllic dream of sitting peacefully in the house of G-d is suddenly transformed into a fear of being forsaken by G-d.

In his book, *Phnei Sefer Thillim*, Feivel Meltzer notes this drastic change in tone. He emphasizes, however, that in fact many mizmorim similarly contain a mixture of various emotions and tones. Nevertheless, he points out that our mizmor remains problematic, because it illogically shifts from ideal optimism to fearful insecurity, which is the reverse of the sequence found in the other multi-toned mizmorim.

After raising this difficulty, Meltzer does not offer any further explanations, but simply posits that since *Thillim* is an emotional work, it need not conform to the requirements of logic.

Other scholars have suggested that the different parts of the mizmor may have been composed in different settings. According to this theory, the optimistic opening of the mizmor was uttered by David in peaceful conditions, while the pleas for salvation found in the latter section of the mizmor were enunciated by David when he was later attacked by adversaries. However, this approach is somewhat difficult. Was David's trust and faith in G-d so shallow and insincere, that he could so quickly lose his confidence when faced with actual danger?

Indeed, a comparison between the optimistic first half of our mizmor and the famous mizmor 23, "G-d is my shepherd," seems to conclusively disprove this

explanation. Mizmor 23 contains the same two themes found at the beginning of our psalm: David's absolute sense of security and trust in G-d ("I will not fear bad things, for you are with me") and his desire to dwell in the house of G-d ("v'shavti b'veis Hashem l'orech yamim"). There is, however, a difference between the two psalms. While in mizmor 23, the tone throughout is serene and pastoral, with merely a lone reference to "the valley of darkness," we find many references to war and enemies throughout our entire mizmor. Even in the optimistic beginning of the mizmor, David speaks about "evil people intending to devour me," and about "my enemies around me." Even the overly emphatic, almost exaggerated declarations of trust seem to betray a slight sense of uneasiness which David is striving to overcome.

Thus, it appears that David's situation remains consistent throughout the mizmor. The enemies that David fears at the end of the psalm are present at the beginning as well. However, we still must account for David's sudden change of tone midway through the mizmor.

An analysis of the only two other psalms which contain a similar shift from security to trepidation, psalms 44 and 89, may supply us with a feasible explanation, as well as a better understanding of the philosophy of David and the other poets of *Thillim*. Psalm 44 begins with a recollection of G-d's intervention in the events leading up to the conquest of the land of Israel. Then, in an abrupt and sudden turn, the poet begins to lament about a recent military defeat in which G-d had abandoned them. He concludes with a prayer, "Arise and help us, and redeem us on account of your goodness." Similarly, psalm 89 recounts G-d's greatness and His covenant with the House of David. Here too we find an abrupt change in tone, as the poet suddenly becomes plaintive, accusing G-d of desecrating his covenant and abandoning the King in battle. He concludes with the query, "where is your steadfast love of old which you swore to David in your faithfulness?" Clearly the poets in these psalms are drawing on past events as a source of inspiration for the present, beseeching G-d and even demanding from Him, that "just as you helped us in the past, continue to do so now!"

Hence, we can similarly explain the structure of our mizmor. Apparently, David is able, at least temporarily, to ascend to a high level of *bitachon*, faith in G-d, even when confronted by his enemies. He thus declares with full conviction, "G-d is my light and my help from whom shall I fear?" However, as the difficulties persist and David reawakens to reality, he turns to G-d in supplication, while still continuing to draw on his previous ideal state as a source of inspiration. He is able to identify the voice calling from within him "seek me!" as the voice of G-d, and still retains the faith that he will yet see "the good of G-d" in his lifetime.

However, in psalms 44 and 89, only the past tense is employed, and the victorious section of these psalms is separated from continued on page 5

Pen & Ink



"Figure Doves"
Naama Goldstein

Tefilla

My prayer, paperweight heavy
Mornings, middays, evenings
Mouthfuls muttered
From brittle-paged years of prayer-books.

Why don't the words

Jump

Up

Like a bounceball—

The red rounding of the poet woman's sounds
Skipping in my mind?

I bow dirt low

Shrunk to G-d's dust.

Why don't the songs

Fly up

Like a handdance

The rainy snowstorm

or whirling raindance of the poet woman

Who reads, eyes closed?

If my mouth were filled with

Song like the sea,

And my tongue, gladness like the waves,

And my lips, song like the firmament,

I'd never stop praising you, G-d.

Please,

My prayer

Jump

Up

by Wendy Zierler

David's Plea

continued from page 4

the more pessimistic section by the word *selah* (which is often used as a division between two thoughts), whereas in our mizmor the first section is written mainly in the future tense (which, in *Thillim*, actually indicates the present), and no separation whatsoever appears between the sections. Thus, it seems that while in the other two psalms, the beginning section merely serves as a prelude to the major theme of the psalm—the prayer contained in the latter section. The opening section of our psalm, written in the present tense and not severed from the rest of the psalm, is as integral a part of the mizmor as the concluding one. Hence, although there are some scholars who describe our mizmor too as an emotional prayer for salvation from enemies, which is merely accompanied by a prelude expressing complete trust in G-d, it seems that the main theme of our mizmor is indeed the expression of trust found in the beginning of the psalm, similar to mizmor 23, which contains only that theme. The mizmor simply evolves into a prayer, with David struggling

to once again attain and maintain his ideal sentiment in spite of adversity.

This explanation is somewhat similar to Amos Hacham's description of our mizmor, in the *Da'at Mikra* commentary, as "the prayer of a person who trusts in G-d, and thus fears no enemy nor evil, and whose sole aim is to achieve closeness to G-d." Indeed, he understands the entire request for salvation found in the second half of the mizmor as an extension of David's original wish "to dwell in the House of G-d."

In addition, Rabbi Shalom Carmy points out a problem with the end of the mizmor, the solution of which may illuminate the message of our mizmor even further.

After emphatic cries "You have forever been my help. Do not forsake me, do not abandon me O' G-d, my deliverer!" we expect to immediately hear David's plea for salvation, "Do not subject me to the will of my foes." However, David startles us instead by interjecting a previous request, "horeni Hashem darkecha," "G-d show me your way." Apparently, following the

path of G-d is a pre-requisite to being saved.

To fully understand this ideology, we must examine the meaning of the phrase "to dwell in the House of G-d." Amos Hacham notes that these words connote a double meaning. The expression can convey both the literal meaning of physically staying in the shelter of the *Bais Hamikdash*, and the spiritual notion of attaining a high level of personal *hashgacha*, of achieving a feeling of spiritual closeness and clinging to G-d. We find this intermingling of the spiritual and the physical elsewhere in the mizmor as well, as the spiritual statement, "to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord," is followed by the physical assertion, "for he shall hide me in his hut."

The reason that the physical and the spiritual repeatedly appear linked with each other is because David and the other poets of *Thillim* do not differentiate between man's spiritual and physical aspects. Rather, they seem to believe that a person's spiritual relationship with G-d actually defines his physical state in this "land of the living."

Thus, David's response to the dangers of his enemies must necessarily be a strengthened commitment to follow Hashem's path. "*Horeni Hashem Darkecha*" is truly the correct response to danger. By cultivating his personal relationship with G-d, and by seeking G-d's path, David simultaneously secures safety from the dangers posed by his enemies. And indeed, David expresses only one wish in this mizmor: to dwell in the House of Hashem—for from this flows everything else.

These messages are especially appropriate at the beginning of the year. Indeed, Hazal interpret the beginning of our mizmor, "*Hashem Ori*"—as referring to Rosh Hashana; "*V'yishi*"—as referring to *Yom Hakippurim*; "*Ki Yitzp'nam b'Sukos*"—as referring to Sukkos. The sources of the shofar on Rosh Hashana, the awesome solemnity of *Yom Kippur*, and the joyous festival of Sukkos should all serve as sources of inspiration for us throughout the whole year to develop, strengthen, and maintain our close relationship with G-d.

Integration/Disintegration in the High School Classroom

by Erica Schoonmaker

The Modern Orthodox day school education can show as testimony to its accomplishments its increasing enrollment and high academic standards. Its teachers serve as role models and inspire many students to continue their Jewish education. For many students, it serves as their sole touchstone with yehuda. In this respect the yeshiva day school functions in more than just an educational capacity; in many communities, the yeshiva day school is a community project and a center of Jewish life. This communal involvement often stretches beyond city bounds as more and

culture without losing itself in it, and while retaining full and undiminished its own spiritual and practical content. "In connection with education, he continues: "If, however, the Judaism for which we are training our young has not to be afraid of contact with any other genuine culture, then the need for educating them in general subjects is dictated by something more than the requirements of their future calling in life, though this alone would make it a religious duty. Hirsch sees an integrated education not only in terms of parnasa. He calls it a religious injunction. HaRav Joseph B. Soloveitchik echoes Hirsch's

What are the goals of the yeshiva day school? Where have Jewish educators been remiss? Are they solely responsible?

more high schools encourage activism for Jewish causes. And yet with all these factors of which it can be proud, today's yeshiva stands somewhat alone in the schoolyard, an anomaly in education. All too often it stands quietly watching those who have passed through its halls but no longer maintain its traditions. And as the number of those graduates increase, the walls seem to shake to their foundations. Some introspection seems at hand. What are the goals of the yeshiva day school? Where have Jewish educators been remiss? Are they solely responsible?

Educators and administrators often waffle when confronting these questions. They pontificate about "absolutes" in education without having a commitment to them or establishing policy around them. Instead, the Modern Orthodox movement should see as imperative, the need for a study which examines teaching methods in the day school and sets a historical precedent for an integrated education. Included in such a study should be a comparison of the goals that a cross-section of teachers determine for the graduate and the goals the day school graduate has for himself. The contrast between the two responses would demonstrate that perhaps a more realistic "philosophy" need be employed. The following cursory study points the finger of blame at the problems the day school has in establishing harmony between secular and religious studies. Perhaps students leave traditional observance because they were never presented with a real integrated world view. And in response to this crisis, Modern Orthodoxy must ask its members if they can continue clinging to "Torah U'Mada" if empirical evidence shows it to have few adherents.

Setting one of the first historical precedents for the Jewish day school, R. Shimshon Rafael Hirsch had to answer to the educational primacy and legacy of the yeshiva. In defense of his own Frankfurt school, the Israelitische Religionsgesellschaft, he writes in Judaism Eternal: "We believe that the Judaism which is derived from the literature and traditions of previous centuries is not in conflict with what is good and true in the human strivings of all times, and that therefore no age, not even one so enlightened and civilized as the present, can demand of it that it should by any modifications divest itself of its Divinely-given content. We believe that we should join the mainstream of European

words in The New York Times, "Rabbi's Rabbi Keeps the Law Up to Date." "We are committed to G-d and observing his laws... but G-d also wills us to be committed to mankind in general and to the society in whose midst we live in particular. To find fulfillment, one must partake of the human endeavor.

Two forerunners of the yeshiva day school have set the cornerstones. Yet, in narrowing our study from theory to reality, from nineteenth century Germany to twenty-first century America, we find ourselves that enter into the modern world. Hava minas. So much so that Rabbi David Eliezer, principal of the Joel Brainerd High School of the Yeshiva of Flatbush commented in a Tradition article: "...we cannot attract more than 4 1/2 percent of Jewish students to yeshivot, and by the end of high school we find ourselves with only 2 1/2 percent, or if we are to be optimistic, 3 1/2 percent. These facts give rise to the question: Don't we have in our Jewish tradition and in our Jewish philosophy enough content and material to motivate and to stimulate our future generation to observance of mitzvot and to a Jewish identification in which our youth would be proud? Where have we failed?"

We sympathize with his note of exasperation, but is he asking the right question? Of course we have in our Jewish tradition and philosophy enough tochen to sustain even the most brilliant of minds, which certainly includes a teenage population. The question of "where have we failed?" would perhaps be better stated as "how can we change?" How can we change

The question of "Where have we failed?" would perhaps be better stated as "How can we change?"

pedagogical methods and texts in order to better respond to our students? We bang our heads against the wall when we learn of another yeshiva graduate who trades in his kippa for the treif meal plan on a New England college campus, and we blame him or his non-observant parents. Should we point exclusively to the recidivist or also look to his educator?

Perhaps we assume too much, and in doing so we forget who we really are and stop setting realistic goals for ourselves. Our assumptions, even though we know

them at times to be misleading, never seem to be stated clearly. When they are not stated, they are not examined. And when stated, even in the extreme, we confront the sad reality that we operate on one set of axioms.

1) The entering student knows how to integrate Torah and secular studies himself, and providing him with information and material in a compartmentalized fashion is enough to ensure that the student will synthesize the material on his own. This assumption also implies that when discovering discrepancies in his secular and religious education, i.e. Darwin's theory of evolution and maase braisheet, he will consult qualified faculty or others to help reconcile the difficulties.

2) The student has learned by ninth grade and will continue learning enough Torah in high school to provide him with a solid foundation and perspective with which to view his secular studies.

3) The student comes from a home that reinforces Torah ideals so that the school is not responsible for instilling "hashkafic" values. If the student does not have an observant background a youth group is responsible for his religious development.

4) The teachers in the high school are competent in areas of Torah and Mada, are concerned with a student's religious development and serve as role models. Particularly important are the number of women who can serve as role models in this area, and can teach on par with men who have smicha and/or several years of a kollel-type education.

5) The philosophy of Centrist Judaism is defined and made clear to the student and is well represented in the faculty and administration.

6) The extracurricular activities complement the student's education, reinforce Torah ideals, and take halakha into account.

7) The graduating student will continue his Judaic studies after high school. If the student does not continue in yeshiva, he will be prepared to brave Jewish life on a college campus.

8) The material taught will best prepare the student for an active Jewish life — one of halakha observance, charity, limud haTorah, family life, etc.

Most day schools cannot afford to operate on one or any of these assumptions, but given the status quo, cannot help making them. Even after diagnosing the problem, a day school principal cannot simply approach a blackboard and chart out in chalk a completely new method. Too sudden "interior decorating" will erase even the best of intentions.

In this respect, Hirsch was no more successful at bringing his ideas to fruition

stray from the traditional path." Sound familiar? Liberles comments, "The IRG school had initiated neither the combined study of religious and secular subjects, nor even the contemporary adaptation of the rabbinic saying Torah im Derech Eretz, which served as the school's motto and became strongly identified as the hallmark of Hirsch's thinking." Thus, our question on the validity and practice of "Torah U'Mada" day schools expands.

According to Rabbi Jack Bieler's article "Integration of Judaic and General Studies in the Modern Orthodox Day School" the axis of the problem seems to rest on compartmentalization. After describing the psychological harm man often does himself by compartmentalizing many aspects of his life, he proceeds to apply this to Jewish education. "But the modern Orthodox school that either openly or indirectly seeks

THE JEWISH DAY SCHOOL:



Prohibited From Being Used by Lazar Kestel

to stress Havdala between Judaic and general studies is unfaithful to the specific religious orientation of the community that it was founded to serve." Think about it. We want students to see Torah and its application to the world as an integrated whole. Yet, we compartmentalize the day into Jewish and secular studies, appearing in separate time slots, without any seeming connection. History is history. Navi is Navi. Never the 'twain shall meet. Many of the academic teachers know little if nothing about Torah and vice-versa. The students from non-religious backgrounds often spend half the day engaged in studies that completely contradict their private lives. Those students continuing their Jewish education post high school feel somewhat betrayed by the "cover-up" their Judaic studies received. The compromise seems evident, and as Rabbi Bieler is quick to point out, "compartmentalization often not only entails separation, but also devaluation of at least one of the elements being kept apart from the other. Either certain aspects of religion will be accorded less importance, or features of modern life and thought

will be ignored." His assessment targets the irony of the day school. After determining the locus of the problem, the solution also narrows. The following suggestions only touch upon the many improvements that need to be made. Many yeshivot have implemented a number of these, so empirical evidence can attest to their success or failure. 1) Jewish studies should not be taught by the slow turning of Talmudic pages, but through source material on a particular 'sugiah' from the gemara to present day 'sha'alot and tshuvot.' This method would sensitize students to the formation of halakha, its validity, and those who formed and continue to debate it. Unlike the typical pre-test memorization, students would develop critical thinking and some methodology. This would also filter some Jewish history into learning and give students a broader perspective than what is on a 'daf.'

2) Teachers of secular studies, particularly the humanities, can also integrate Judaism into their courses, and vice-versa, i.e. the Jew in world history, or the poetry of Yehuda Halevi and Yehuda Amichai with that of Milton and William Carlos Williams. This assumes that teachers are prepared to teach both which also raises questions about the type of teachers the day school should be employing.

3) Point number two would be most effectively implemented if every teacher could teach both disciplines independently. This aim is only realistic if insitutions like Yeshiva University have teacher-training programs that start on the B.A. level. This, of course, also implies an upgrading of teachers' salaries and benefits. Too many mekhanichim have said, "Pay people peanuts, and you get monkeys."

4) If Eretz Yisrael is stressed as the place of an ultimately integrated Jewish life, students will see the practical manifestation of their studies. Dr. Elizer Berkovits stresses this point in "An Integrated Jewish World View": "The very existence of the state of Israel demonstrates that the raising of the question of the permissibility of secular studies, as if a question of halakha were involved, is one of the sickly manifestations of the Galut mentality... Since it is the intention of the Torah that there be a people of the Torah, living in the land of Israel, it must also be the intention of the Torah that Jews be physicians, engineers, physicists, mathematicians, men of creative search and practical application in every field of human endeavor, without whose knowledge and skill no nation could ever survive."

5) If Mada takes backseat to Torah, yeshivot must have at least the same number of hours devoted to Jewish studies as to secular ones. There can be no downplaying of the importance of grades in Jewish tracks to the angry parent who complains that her son's grade in chumash dropped, his grade point average. This also implies that schools do not dismiss the Talmud class before the math class when an assembly is necessary.

6) Parents must play a more active role than P.T.A. members. If there were some forms of adult education offered in yeshivot in the evening, parents might be more sensitive to the importance of Judaic studies. This is particularly important to non-religious parents who may feel completely alienated from their high school age child.

7) The administration must encourage post-graduate Jewish education that is not limited to a year in Israel. No talmid chacham has mastered shas, a competent knowledge of halakha, Tanach, and Jewish philosophy in a year, no matter what country he was in. How can we then expect that one year abroad will equip the product of a day school with enough knowledge to carry him for sixty years of Jewish living? Following this line of questioning, how many high school principals would take pride in a student that chose Y.U. over Yale University? Better — how many would have been instrumental in helping the student make that choice?

8) If administrators feel a responsibility to the student during high school, this sense of concern certainly extends beyond graduation. For this reason, faculty should have an active follow-up, including a newsletter or Torah journal for alumni. Holding periodical shiurim for graduates would also help insure the continuity of students' Jewish education.

Although these points do not in any

Truth or Consequences A Question of Approach

by Jerry Zeitchik

Vital issues such as the religious significance of the State of Israel, the meaning and implications of *daat Torah*, the role of women in the Jewish community, and the value of secular knowledge can be viewed from diverse and often clashing perspectives. Jewish high school educators, who must illuminate these significant and often murky issues for their students, are faced with the task of transmitting perspectives and visions in addition to their traditional responsibility to convey to their students facts and information. These educators

identity may cause students to suffer an identity crisis.

Proponents of a pluralistic approach to "grey" issues feel that the importance of intellectual honesty mandates the presentation of several coherent perspectives on a controversial issue. They reason that, for example, presenting Ray Kook's vision of the significance of the State of Israel as the proper and true perspective ignores the complexity of the issue and sacrifices truth on the altar of passion. Secondly, there are practical problems to the monolithic approach. A student who has always been

If a teacher's goal is to mold students who are committed to the Jewish cause, perhaps he should present the true cause as simplistically and lucidly as possible.

can employ one of two approaches when presenting these complex issues: the singular perspective approach, or the pluralistic perspective approach — each possessing its own unique strengths and weaknesses.

The singular perspective approach has two fundamental strengths. Firstly, it enables high school students to make their learning a part of themselves. Clarity of perspective enables a student to focus on the values he knows are true and to behave in response to that knowledge. By contrast, a teacher who offers pluralistic conceptions of Judaism and religion leaves the student's emphasis from understanding, internalizing and acting upon what he is sure is true, toward struggling and searching to discover for himself what is in fact true. Internalization and education of those values are pushed into the background. Creating *ahavat Zion*, for example, would require encouraging students to participate in self-sacrificing activities for the state of Israel such as *asahavat Zion*, for example, would require self-sacrificing activities for the State of Israel such as political activism (rallies, lobbying, etc.) and would not be able to consist of sitting in armchairs reading "Theories of Zionism: Their Meanings and Implications". If a teacher's goal is to mold students who are committed to the Jewish cause, perhaps he should present the true cause as simplistically and lucidly as possible.

One may be a religious Zionist in the spirit of Ray Kook, while still admitting the possible authenticity of another perspective. After carefully deciding what the parameters of legitimacy on a particular issue are, one would then be justified in rejecting those views that do not fall within those parameters. Proponents of pluralism also point to the inherent subjectivity of religious judgment that is significant in determining what positions one adopts on many "grey" issues.

Of course, the clash of monolithic vs. pluralistic educational approaches include only those issues which can be viewed from diverse perspectives. There are issues which from an Orthodox point of view can only

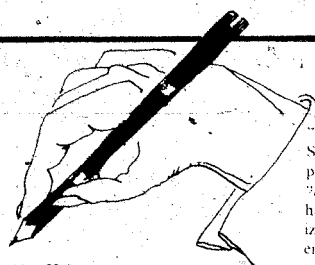
be presented monolithically, a certain starting point must be assumed. A Jewish educator can obviously not entertain Freud's view of religion as a possible legitimate truth. A basic commitment to G-d and to Jewish tradition is the starting point of Jewish education as well as Jewish existence. Once that basic commitment is made, diverse legitimate approaches to certain specific issues can then be considered.

Also, the concern for the psychological stability of an adolescent may necessitate "simplistic" or one-dimensional approaches. In 1963, Eric Erikson theorized that adolescents undergo a search for identity which must be resolved in order for them to acquire a healthy self-image and the ability to benefit others. Thus, a teacher's articulation of pluralistic conceptions concerning issues which relate to a Jew's

Once a basic commitment is made, diverse legitimate approaches to certain specific issues can be considered.

way comprise a comprehensive list of problems or outline many means of implementation, they may provide a starting point for serious questioning. Our ideas of education must progress and press against the tide of a society that so many times washes away the very values Judaism upholds. Unexamined teaching methods

and assumptions in the classroom only further remove us from rearing another generation of *fid-d* fearing, thinking individuals who share the bounty of the and the culpability for the world. As Sefer Tehillim tells us, "Henay Nachalat Hashem Banim." (127:3)



Education

YOUTH GROUP ORGANIZATIONS: Complement or Supplement

by Alan Haber

The Youth Group: Educational Institution or Unnecessary Distraction?

NCSY, Bnei Akiva, JPSY... These are but a few of the many youth organizations that are operating on the American Jewish scene. While the various organizations differ in their orientations, whether it be a concentration on Israel-oriented programs or a stress on the rudiments of Judaism, they all share certain similarities. A common denominator among all the groups is that they offer a social and recreational environment (which is usually the major attraction from the teenager's point of view) through which they attempt to sensitize the participants to Jewish values via peer and role model support and informal educational programs.

I myself was strongly influenced through my involvement in New Jersey NCSY throughout high school, and now as a chapter advisor. During my years in high school, a question often arose in discussions with a 10th grade rebbe of mine. This rebbe felt that being involved in NCSY, particularly in leadership capacity, took valuable time away from my Talmud Torah, unnecessarily distracted me from more serious concerns, and that it was generally detrimental to my development as a *ben Torah* to be attending "co-ed" social events.

I, of course, responded that NCSY made learning more exciting, that the social environment was really "kosher" and that it was very important for me to be involved with older students and advisors who could serve as friends and religious role models. Now that I am older, and an NCSY advisor as well as a prospective rabbi or mechanech, this issue continues to concern and perplex me.

In analysis of the question "are youth groups a positive factor in the American Jewish educational system?", we really must consider two separate but related questions. Firstly, we must resolve my debate with my rebbe: can participation in a youth group be beneficial to a yeshiva high school student? And secondly, if so, is this because the youth group fulfills a function that cannot be fulfilled by the school, family, synagogue, or other communal educational institution? Or have youth groups simply surfaced in an attempt to correct the failings of the institutions that should really be doing the job?

In order to answer this question, we must first clarify the exact functions of the youth group, and describe its methods. Clearly a fundamental goal of all these organizations is to educate, whether it be from traditional texts, informal discussions, or multi-media programs. The assumption being made is that there is an element of the educational process that can be best achieved in an informal or innovative setting. While most teenagers have a negative attitude about school, they may be more receptive to information and ideas that are conveyed through the youth group since attendance is voluntary. Furthermore, the content can be couched in interesting discussions and "fun" activities, instead of the "boring" classroom.

Many organizations also use singing and

"ruach" to help create an inspirational Shabbat or religious atmosphere. Thus, practices such as circle dancing, the "kumsitz," or the "havdalah" ceremony have attained significance within organizations as a vehicle for expressing religious emotions.

However, in my opinion, the most profound effect of the youth organization goes far beyond the sessions or the *kumsitz*, the learning or the dancing. When asked what I feel is the most important part of a Shabbaton, I usually give the surprising response of "the Saturday night activity," which is generally purely social and recreational in nature. It is during activities like these that participants develop social relationships amongst peers and role models.

It is well-known that peer pressure is one of the strongest motivations behind a teenager's behavior, and ultimately shapes his goals and values. It is also well-known that the peer pressure in many yeshiva high schools is anything but supportive of religious involvement and Jewish values. A teenager in a yeshiva high school who openly practices even basic halakhic requirements, such as davening or making brachot is often alienating himself from his peers, if not being openly ridiculed by them. Similarly, the role models in contemporary society are usually not the type that we want our youth to emulate. In such a climate, the value of a peer group that believes it's "cool to be frum," and whose role models are older students and advisors who spend most of their time in the *beit medrash*, must not be underestimated.

These elements of "ruach" and peer pressure often lead to sharp criticism of youth organizations. People often feel that so much emphasis is placed on building up the "group spirit" that participants may end up very committed to the organization, but not to the goals for which it stands. Furthermore, they argue, that peer pressure can be so strong and the environment so artificial, that most of what seems to be accomplished is not genuine or lasting. Arguments like these breed accusations of "cultism" and "brainwashing".

In response to this, I would simply argue that the atmosphere within a good youth group is usually quite intense, but that this is only to counteract negative, outside influences. The persuasive techniques used at an average youth program pale in comparison to the influence of the media on our value system and lifestyle. Speaking from my own experiences, I found it very difficult to be religious in my early years in high school. As I increased my involvement in NCSY, knowing that there were others who shared my values was an added impetus to strengthen these values.

It is the responsibility of the group leader to make sure that he, as well as the participants, never loses sight of the fact that the youth group is only a means to an end, namely religious growth and sensitivity. The most powerful statement can be made by the simple fact that the organization insists that at certain times in the program, the "fun" be temporarily postponed for learning sessions, or for davening. The teenager who goes to the session, and spends some time learning outside of school, is making a very powerful statement to himself as well.

However, even granting that involvement in a youth group can aid in the educational process, it has not yet been proven that

the youth group is a positive influence. It can still be argued that the youth group does more harm than good. As my rebbe in high school told me, maybe I would learn something from the two hours of sessions at a Shabbaton. But if I would stay home instead and not get involved with all the distractions, I would be able to devote several more hours to learning, preferably reviewing the *gemora* I learned in school that week.

Obviously, the response to the above statement is "it depends on the person." For the student that will sit by himself on Shabbat and learn *gemora*, it may indeed be counter-productive to attend the Shabbaton. But the fact is that a very small percentage of the students would even think of opening a *sefer* on their own. I would thus state that this position has a certain amount of validity, but is not realistic. For some reason, most students in our schools are "turned off" to learning. This may be blamed on the schools, communities, parents, or general culture. But in any case some approach is needed to present Torah to teenagers in a positive light. This can only be done by gaining the teenager's interest independent of school.

But even if a particular teenager might indeed spend time learning on his own, I could still argue in favor of his involvement in a youth group suited to his needs. Aside from the educational aspect, there is value in the social peer group, role model support, and leadership training. I attribute the greatest gains I made in NCSY not to sessions but to the healthy social life I was able

during high school years point out that teenagers are not yet ready for marriage, and therefore the relationships will be at best futile and distracting, at worst, lead to *zinus*; these programs need to be run for non-affiliated teenagers, but this is only for the purpose of *kiruv rechokim*, and must be viewed as a *sha'at had'chak* type of practice. According to this position, such programs have no place for the affiliated, religious yeshiva high school student.

The first and most powerful argument that can be presented in response is one of pragmatism. In other words, even if we agree to the above premise, experience has shown that teenagers from our communities develop relationships with the opposite sex whether encouraged to or not, unless absolutely restricted beyond their control. Thus once again, even if we agree in principle to those opposing youth groups, we must conclude that they are not being very realistic.

But far beyond the purely practical position, a lot can be said in favor of co-ed social activities and the youth group as the ideal vehicle for conducting them. Those on the other side of the ideological spectrum oppose the above position, and argue in favor of co-ed schools. They contend that although teenagers are not yet ready for marriage, they should be in an unsheltered environment that will prepare them most for their future. Additionally, it is best to have co-ed schools so that relationships may be developed in a Torah setting, and within the halakhic framework of school.

While this position presents certain very convincing arguments, co-ed schools are not approved by many for a number of reasons. Firstly, although many agree that it is highly desirable in our modern age to increase the level of education for girls beyond the traditional minimum, many still feel that the curriculum for the girls should be different than for boys. Additionally, in many boys schools in particular, there is a desire to preserve the traditional "yeshiva" atmosphere and setting. Finally, perhaps most convincingly, there is the argument that a co-ed environment is counter-productive to the educational process. Students should not be distracted by social pressures in the classroom, and the *kedushah* of the academic environment should demand separation.

It would then seem that a good compromise between the above two positions would be separate educational institutions for boys and girls, which do not frown upon, and may even encourage, social contact between them. In addition, social interaction would take place in an independent youth group. Thus the teenagers are allowed to engage in normal adolescent behavior within the framework of a Torah environment, but the separation is still maintained between the academic and social aspects of life.

I would state that youth organizations are a valuable supplement to the educational system. Many existing organizations show a high rate of success, and the percentage of teenagers who remain involved in Jewish life after high school is generally much higher among those who were active in a youth group. But the youth group can never do the job on its own, and it should be have the support of communal institutions. The youth group can never become a substitute for the influences that must come from the schools, the synagogue, and most of all, the family.

It is well known that peer pressure is one of the strongest motivations behind a teenager's behavior.

to have within the organization. The environment enabled me to develop freely, to have a recreational and social outlet, and particularly to develop leadership skills and the desire to become a communal leader.

Perhaps I would have developed a lasting commitment to Torah learning even without NCSY, maybe even a more intense one than I have now, since I would not have been preoccupied with NCSY. But my involvement in a youth group gave me both sensitivity to the community and a commitment to working on its behalf.

One final issue that must be addressed is the claim that the interaction of boys and girls during the high school years is undesirable. This has been the subject of much controversy in recent years, and it is an issue which extends beyond the question of youth organizations, to the very foundations of all communal activities.

This question must be dealt with first and foremost from a halakhic perspective, however, I will not discuss this point, because it must be addressed by halakhic authorities. The interested reader is directed to a book called *Hatzne'ah Lechet* (Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization, 1983), chapters 1 and 2, for an excellent discussion of the relevant source material. Suffice it to say that there is a halakhic position justifying co-ed activities given certain circumstances.

Those opposed to mixed social events

by Asher Brander

Gender Gap or Trap

Throughout the centuries, Yeshiva institutions have always striven to transmit a sound Torah education to their students. Although various yeshivot have differed structurally and ideologically, the goal of the yeshiva has remained constant. Nevertheless, variant formats and divergent philosophical perspectives do serve to demarcate different basic types of yeshivot, ranging from the Yeshiva Ketana to the modern orthodox Jewish Day School.

A specific type of a modern Orthodox Yeshiva, of relatively recent origin, is the co-ed yeshiva high school: an institution where young men and women learn and participate together in a classroom setting during both secular and religious studies. The halakic validity of this type of school situation has been seriously questioned by some *Gedolim*, while other *Poskim* support the notion of a co-ed yeshiva in specific circumstances.

At any rate, the co-educational environment does affect the students. This article shall examine the nature of the effects of these institutions on a general level. Naturally, the conclusions drawn will not always pertain to every single individual who has attended a co-ed yeshiva.

Hindering any serious attempt to conduct a decisive analysis of these effects is the presence of numerous peripheral factors. Firstly, a general comparison between co-ed yeshivot vs. single-sex yeshivot may ignore the differing clientele that the yeshivot attract. Secondly, a study of the general contrast between the incoming student and the departing senior would be inconclusive, since the student may either be a reaction to the school or a product of the school. Nevertheless, an examination of the different issues upon which the conclusion hinges is possible.

In its strictest sense, the yeshiva is an institution of Jewish learning. The enormity of this task needs no emphasis. But yeshivot also play another vital role. They strengthen their students' religious identity and sensitivity, stimulating a greater passion for Judaism in their talmidim. *Medrash Vma'aseh*, furtherance of Torah U'Mitzvot, and implanting in students the desire to acquire Torah knowledge is really the ultimate task of the yeshiva. Also, the environment of a yeshiva is important. The atmosphere generated by the interaction between fellow students is responsible for furnishing the yeshiva with its own distinct flavor. Only this overall conception of the role of the yeshiva can we gauge the advantages and disadvantages inherent in co-ed yeshiva institutions.

As far as the quality of learning is concerned, it is indeed possible that the crowded and bustling co-ed setting may serve to enhance competition, and thereby generate a greater desire for knowledge.

However, there is also another possibility. Current statistical trends suggest that men tend to excel in certain subjects, e.g. math, whereas women excel in others, e.g. English. This distinction could probably apply to various religious studies as well, since different *hebrew* subjects require different modes of thinking. In a co-ed setting, the gender that performs less well in a given course may be the victim of undue neglect, since the impressive performance of the superior gender in the class may mask the difficulties encountered by members of the opposite sex.

Recently, a number of studies have been conducted which have researched the educational consequences of the co-ed school vs. the single sex school. A study of Catholic

mixed schools vs. single sex schools, undertaken by Cornelius Riordan and appearing in the *American Journal of Education* in 1985, yielded the following conclusions: "On average, Catholic single-sex schools are nearly twice as effective as Catholic mixed-sex schools... Females in Catholic single schools out perform females in Catholic mixed-sex schools... Males in Catholic single-sex schools do better than males in Catholic mixed schools in math and ultimately in educational attainment".

The conclusions of this study reflect more than a mere voice in the wilderness. A study appearing in the *Journal of Educational Psychology* in 1982 conducted by Trickett, Trickett, Castro, and Shaffner arrived at similar conclusions. Additionally, a series of articles appearing in the Harvard

been averted, for men and women to be the recipients of the same religious curriculum?

Traditionally, the Jewish-studies curriculum for the highschool aged Jewish male has been primarily focused upon the study of the Talmud, with the yeshivot hoping that this learning would enable him to eventually enter the world of higher yeshiva learning. Women's education, however, is vastly different. Due to its relatively recent origin, the women's education curriculum has never really been definitively determined. The wide range of differing opinions among our *poskim* concerning the permitted parameters for women's education demonstrates the reigning uncertainty of direction.

What must be considered as fundamental, from a Jewish viewpoint, are the different roles that men and women play in Jewish

this argument for the necessity of a dual curriculum; then it is in this area that co-ed yeshivot may falter.

Do co-educational yeshivot serve to intensify the religious fervor of the students and further their observance of mitzvot? In this respect, effects of the co-ed yeshiva are highly dependent upon the type of population that constitutes the student body. Numerous Jewish communities outside of the major Jewish centers suffer from a very low Jewish identity level. When the purpose of the co-ed yeshiva is to preserve the student's Jewish identity by preventing him from attending a public high-school, then the co-ed yeshiva may indeed be more effective than the single-sex yeshiva.

However, we must also evaluate the co-ed yeshiva in a situation where the yeshiva is not established in order to preserve the students' Jewish identity, but rather to produce an even greater degree of commitment. For this aim, it is imperative to foster the environment which reflects the pursuit of such goals. The co-ed setting may be hard pressed to accomplish this task.

In the Riordan study, a point was raised about the diminishing influence of the role model in a co-ed situation.

"(In single-sex schools) More successful role models of the same sex are available, providing a greater legitimacy to being a good student. In co-ed schools not only are there fewer role models but student roles are off distributed according to sex."

Within our yeshiva system we can point to a similar phenomenon. Often, young men and women who maintain a high degree of religious commitment wield great influence upon the other students in the school. However, the positive influence of the role models manifests itself in a much lesser fashion within the co-ed yeshiva, because of the radically different roles that men and women are expected to play.

Regarding the social value of co-ed institutions, both points of view can be argued. However, even if we should assume that frequent social interaction between Jewish men and women at an early stage in life is objectionable, we cannot deny that this interaction does ease the undesired social discomfort that a product of a single-sex yeshiva often encounters at a later stage.

Nevertheless, although these benefits are indisputable, they do not necessarily justify the legitimizing of co-educational yeshivot. Judaism places a high value on social modesty and while becoming a monk is not advocated, the liberal standards that are unfortunately today's norm are often in violation of Jewish law. In contemporary society, where nothing is sacred except the right to be immoral, there is practically nothing to prevent a very affectionate young man and woman from expressing their affection in a forbidden fashion. Especially in present day society, where a marriage at the age of 17 or 18 is not a realistic possibility, the risk of bottled up emotions letting loose becomes greater.

Ultimately, the feasibility of co-educational yeshivot invariably depends upon a number of different factors, some pertinent to specific co-ed institutions, and others which relate to all such institutions in general. In any given situation, all these factors should be carefully considered in determining whether the co-ed yeshiva really is in fact more desirable than its older, more proven single-sex counterpart.

Certain statements in this article are subject to debate. A response will be published in the next issue of Hanevasser.

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Education Letter seem to similarly buffer these findings.

However, Catholic schools and Yeshivot, although similar in certain respects, are not entirely analogous: Students from the single-sex Catholic schools were found by the Riordan study to have come "from homes with an advantageous academic orientation," in contrast to their lesser-educated counterparts in the co-educational institutions. Assuming that this distinction does not apply to different yeshiva institutions, we would not be able to predict poorer student performance in co-educational yeshiva high schools.

However, even if we negate these conclusions for the aforementioned reason, we must still pose another important question.

Is it desirable, from a Jewish perspective, even assuming that halakic problems can

society. A woman's praise is her title of "Ayshe Hayil" and the "master of the mainstay of the house." Although knowledge and scholarly erudition are admirable traits and appropriate for individual women, what is critical for our determination is to search for the curriculum that would tailor to the needs of the masses.

In this light it would seem more apropos for young women to attain a well rounded basis in practical Jewish law (*halakha lema'aseh*), whereas young men would gain from a more comprehensive introduction to the Talmud. In interviewing many students, I discovered that many men bemoaned the fact that they had only received a weak foundation in Talmud. Ultimately, the woman may sacrifice the most in a co-ed situation since the general curriculum basically remains unaltered from the fundamental men's curriculum. If one accepts

From Conflict to Compromise

continued from page 2

this Torah even though we still had a lot more listening to do to find out what was in the rest of it. What makes us the Chosen People today, right now, is that because of assimilation, conversions, and Hitler horror camps, each one of us in each generation makes the choice to keep the Torah or not.

The writer Maurice Samuel once responded to an anti-semitic who threw the quip at him, "How odd of God to choose the Jews," with this rejoinder: "It was not at all odd because the Jews chose God."

And, so, the covenant between God and Abraham was reaffirmed between God and Abraham's descendants as they passed from slavery in Egypt into freedom at Sinai. That, however, wasn't the end of the covenants.

In the Book of Deuteronomy, Chapter XXVII, right before the Jews enter the Land of Israel after the forty year sojourn in the desert, there is another moment of historic acceptance at Mt. Ebal as the Jews leave their nomadic identity behind to become citizens of their own country. Again, they vote to reaffirm.

And then later, in Joshua XXIV, after many wars, and the death of many sons in many battles, the people are summoned before Joshua and he recounts the scarred history of their forefathers as they stand in front of the next plateau of their history, about to experience a period of peace in which the tribes will establish their homes and communities and create their own destinies, but before this can happen, Joshua must again ask the Israelite if they will

...each one of us in each generation makes the choice to keep the Torah or not.

join him in revering the Lord and serving Him with undivided loyalty or choose the gods their ancient forefathers served "beyond the Euphrates".

"We too will serve the Lord, for He is our God," they reply (Verse 18). And again Joshua asks, and again they affirm. So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem (Verse 25).

Finally, for the fifth, and up until today, the last time in our history, upon the Jews' return to Israel after the seventy year Babylonian exile in which they've undergone a period of assimilation and intermarriage, chapter 8, 9, and 10 of the Book of Nehemiah relate how Ezra the great rabbi of Babylon comes to Judea and sees that the majority of Jews desecrate the Sabbath. On Rosh Hashanah, therefore, he calls all the Jews together, reads them Deuteronomy and asks them if they are willing to reaffirm the covenant by getting rid of their gentile wives, for instance.

Apparently, it's a great religious revival as the heads of the families convene: "... we make this pledge and put it in writing ... we will not neglect the House of our God."

No, the Torah was never meant to be coerced, but accepted as a matter of free will. Very simply, covenant was ratified five time by a unified, perhaps miraculous, cry of acceptance—because at each major link in this historical chain, our leaders were giants of spiritual action who could inspire religious reassertments, Abraham,

Moses, Joshua and Ezra, a very special company of leaders. And if in 1948, on the day the State of Israel was proclaimed, we entered another period of Jewish history in which we are being asked to ratify the covenant for a sixth, and perhaps, final time, then just as enforced legislation through government coalitions and party politics would never have worked before, it won't work now and it will never work in the future.

And anyone who thinks that the best way to make a point of the desperate need for Jewish unity and a respect for the religious traditions is through feverish anger, stone-throwing, or name-calling, has virtually no understanding of the way people change, nor, in fact, do they have any real interest beyond their own arrogant parochialism.

At best, they are the spiritual descendants not of Abraham, but of a different Biblical character known for caring only about his own.

"Noah was a righteous man, he was blameless in his age; Noah walked with God." According to Rashi, some sages look at the phrase "in his age" as praise of Noah; if he could live, an honest life in the midst of such evil and corruption, imagine how much more of a saint he could have been had he lived in the generation of Abraham.

But other sages disagree. It was only within the context of his century that you could say anything good about him; had he lived during the time of Abraham and Sarah he wouldn't have counted for anything.

Abraham and Noah both confronted a similar challenge only each responded differently. When the Almighty told Abraham He was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorah, Abraham begins to bargain with God. "Will You indeed sweep away the righteous souls within the city ... what if there are forty-five ... what if there are forty ... ?" Moreover, the Bible and its commentaries portray Abraham as an individual driven to share his faith in God and his new found religious way of life to anyone who would listen. According to the midrash, Abraham's tent had an opening in on all sides to welcome guests and expose them to the warmth of the Sabbath and festivals. It was his hope that the song and comfort of the Divine Presence would lead his guests to embrace the faith of one God.

Noah, on the other had, after learning that the entire world is about to be destroyed by the flood; sets out to build an ark for himself and his children, never raising a word in defense of his neighbors. His concern was directed inward, toward himself and his immediate family—and that's not necessarily so bad. After all, he must have argued, what if he had tried reaching out and failed? It's possible 'they' might even end up changing him to their way of thinking. The last track was tempting.

There is a clear and unequivocal Biblical command that we dare not isolate ourselves from the non-religious but like Abraham, endeavour to reach out and bring the message of Torah to every single Jew: "You shall chastise your friend so that you do not bear his guilt." (Leviticus XIX, 17). But that doesn't mean the stone-throwers and Sabbath picketers have a leg to stand on.

Maimonides, in his *Mishnah Torah*, Laws of Proper Ideas, Chapter 6, cites this verse and says that it's an art to properly chastise

a friend. If you see him doing something wrong you must make sure that your words won't pounce on him and cause him to say "a plague on your Judaism." You should have anticipated in the first place and held your words in. Nor should you embarrass him publicly, for then you, yourself, will become even more guilty than he is. In fact, it would seem that all of the 'laws of reproving others' are based on a Jewish society whose members are all observant. According to the *Biyyur Halacha* to the *Shulchan Aruch*, Orach Chaim 608, based on the Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 54b, 55a, and 148b, if an individual declares himself to be non-observant, better not to instruct him at all because you will most likely cause him to hate the tradition with a vengeance. But if you know how to rebuke a friend so that he will say, "blessed be the God of my chastiser," and you don't, choosing passivity over passion, your friend's transgression becomes yours. Every Jew is responsible for the next. Every Jew is

Abraham understood the importance of opening his home and inviting the world inside.

a co-signer, each one for the other, part of one organism, so that the destiny of the one is bound up with the destiny of the other.

Maybe that's why Abraham was the first Jew and not Noah. Abraham understood the importance of opening his home and inviting the world inside. Everyone, not just his immediate family, was welcome in Abraham's ark.

The *Vilna Gaon*, a man who studied Torah twenty hours a day, committed to every nuance of Jewish law, a master of *Kabbalah*, a giant among giants, approached the equally illustrious *Dubner Maggid*. "I feel so close to God, is there anything you can tell me which will help me obey the commandment I find most difficult to keep: how to repent?"

Replied the *Dubner Maggid*, "You think I'm so impressed that you sit in the house of study all day, surrounded only by holy scrolls? Go out to the marketplace, meet your fellow Jews in the midst of all their concerns, fears and worries: Take the risk of involving yourself in their difficulties and than let's see what kind of saint you'll be."

The *Vilna Gaon* began to weep. He understood that true commitment means risking a little bit of your own eternity so that other Jews will come a little bit closer to God. The Hebrew word for commitment is *'mesirat nefesh'*, giving up a part of your own spirituality for the sake of other Jews. This was Abraham's strength and ought to be ours, as well. One Word

Years ago, while in Miami giving a lecture on Rabbi Israel Meir HaCohen, otherwise known as the Chofetz Chaim, the most beloved Jewish leader in the pre-World War II world, I mentioned a story, perhaps a legendary story, I had heard about a student in the rabbi's yeshiva in Radin who was caught smoking on the Sabbath, creating a scandal. But before he was expelled from the yeshiva, the Chofetz Chaim asked to see the student first and in two minutes, so the story went, convinced the young man to give up the folly of his way.

I would give anything, I told the audience, to know what the Chofetz Chaim could have said in two minutes that one part

of Israel has been trying for over thirty years to convince the other part of Israel to believe.

But as I'm going on and on about the Chofetz Chaim in this Florida hotel, I notice an older man in the front row trembling uncontrollably.

After the lecture he ran up to me and asked me where I had heard the story. But even before I could tell him I didn't recall, he grabbed my shoulder, "I'm that man!" he exclaimed. "It happened to me!"

"Nothing else mattered" any more. Not the hotel, the lecture, not the faces I left behind. We took a walk near the beach, but I felt as if I were in a forest in Poland instead of being within earshot of the waves.

"It was in the late 1920's," he began.

"I was very young, and the Chofetz Chaim was already in his eighties. He was also much shorter than me, hardly coming up to my shoulders. I never really spoke to him. He stayed in his grocery store for the first hour of the day and then he would go home and study but when he was in the street he would never let anyone say hello to him first. He always greeted the individual first. So I got greetings from him, but I never spoke to him. When I was told he wanted to see me, I didn't know what to expect when I walked into his house after being summoned. Although I was dazed by the prospect of being addressed by the Chofetz Chaim himself, I couldn't help noticing how poor everything seemed. In the room I was standing there wasn't one piece of furniture that wasn't broken. But before I could get my bearings, there was the Chofetz Chaim right in front of me. I am sure he must have looked up at me, but all I remember is a face larger than life. Suddenly he grabbed hold of my hand, clutching it tightly, and out of his mouth I heard the word Shabbos said with such feeling, as if he were uttering the name of the most beloved object in the world. Then there was silence, and then he began to cry, not sniffles, but streams of tears, and the tears from his eyes fell on the palm of my hand, and even if I live until 120 I will never forget the feeling of how hot those tears were. They actually burned my hand. And then I heard one more word, "Shabbos," with the same overwhelming, awesome sense of love and anguish, and still holding my hand he took me to the door."

When I heard the story I couldn't stop shuddering. I could almost imagine those tears on my hand, and what the word "Shabbos" must have sounded like uttered in that room in Radin.

It's very easy to throw stones, but it's very hard to be a Chofetz Chaim. Religious Jews must never stop feeling the pain of watching fellow Jews violate the Sabbath, but if we shout, then we must shout with

...if we shout, then we must shout with tears coming out of our eyes.

tears coming out of our eyes like the Chofetz Chaim, and not like some fanatical, bloodthirsty excuse for a Jew. When stones become tears, and threats are refined to a trembling voice which can teach everything about who we are as Jews with only two syllables, then I'm not worried about the rift between the religious and the non-religious. At that time, we will have ushered in a religious revival inspiring a new acceptance of the Covenant, and the bitter chapter of headlines today will become a mere footnote tomorrow.

In Defense of Tradition

Reviewed by Leah Feinberg

The Hole In The Sheet: A Modern Woman Looks at Orthodox and Hasidic Judaism. By Evelyn Kaye

New York: Lyle Stuart Publishers, 1987.

Introduction: Why Orthodox Judaism Doesn't Like Women. The Bar Mitzvah: The Great Divide Where Boys Become Men and Girls Realize They Have Failed. The Unclean Wife: What Orthodox Laws Really Teach about Menstruating Women. These are but a few of the chapter headings in Evelyn Kaye's new book detailing her childhood in an Orthodox home and her subsequent decision to leave that world in favor of a less regimented and a more fulfilling existence as an independent woman.

As the book unfolds, Ms. Kaye gives the reader an "Incredibly Short Background to Judaism," listing some of the many rules which govern the lives of Orthodox Jews. She continues by focusing on the apparent second-class status accorded to women by Jewish law, which she sees as obsolete in these times of liberated women who are free to make choices regarding careers, childbearing, etc. After all, in such an environment, is it not bizarre to find women who cover their hair, dress modestly, and allow themselves to be intellectually stifled by a male-dominated society?

Ms. Kaye recalls her childhood, beginning with her father's disappointment at her being born a girl, rather than the longed-for son. This theme resonates throughout the book, as Ms. Kaye assumes her father's

mantle, chanting the refrain "If only I were a boy. I could ..." and feels that as a girl she is consigned to a realm of spiritual deprivation. In recounting her experiences within the Jewish Community, the author does bring to light a legitimate and serious problem. She complains bitterly about the superficiality of observance that is prevalent among her acquaintances, the importance attached to external appearances, the concern for "what would everyone think" as a motivating factor, rather than true understanding or faith.

Therein lies the inherent problem with the structure of the book. The very shallowness of which she accuses the Orthodox and Hasidic groups pervades her study of them. If Ms. Kaye finds the ancient system so incapable of meeting the needs of today's changing society, perhaps criticism from within, as the result of serious study and a more respectful approach, would have been more productive in bringing about change than that which is offered in bitterness and resentment. The author set out to write an impassioned book, hoping to shake off the burden of guilt and dissatisfaction with which her Orthodox upbringing has left her. She has done so in a manner which can only serve to offend and deeply hurt those of us, both men and women, who are trying to become personally, professionally, and spiritually fulfilled, and at the same time committed to Orthodox tradition.

It is unfortunate that Ms. Kaye was raised in such unpleasant surroundings and that she was unable to find a qualified mentor who could satisfactorily field the many questions she formulated as an adolescent. It is even more disturbing to note that she is far from being alone in these circumstances. I must affirm though, that

a higher nature must take pride in rising above adversity, in the ability to reach beyond the surface in the search for understanding. It is not difficult to be a critic - the true task lies before those who wish to understand the visions of others and respect them for their beliefs. Ms. Kaye's superficial approach does not allow for this respect: Her tone at all times is mocking and derogatory. She quotes Talmudic sources out of their proper context, twisting and distorting them to fit into her convoluted picture.

For example, Ms. Kaye relates the following episode adding her own unqualified interpretations without citing the opposing argument or attempting to clarify that the Tannaitic position was changed by the time of the Amoraim. One learned rabbi has said, "whoever teaches his daughter Torah teaches her lasciviousness."

It simply wasn't acceptable for girls or women to study the Bible and its interpretations, in the past. The Orthodox, much as they dislike the concept, now accept the idea of educating girls as boys. There are Hasidic and Orthodox schools for both sexes, where religious studies are emphasized. The trouble with religion-based education is that its sadly out of date and there's little anyone can do about it.

It is here that I feel a personal note is at hand. I feel that in this book I have been attacked personally, to the core of my innermost beliefs and I feel that I must respond in kind.

The author brings anecdotes and mini-biographies to support her points selecting only those which suit her purpose. Well Ms. Kaye, I too am a wife and mother. I am also very much an individual. I do not consider myself "dirty" when I am

a Nidah, nor does my husband avoid me at such times for fear of contamination. We do observe the laws of Family Purity as mandated by G-d and interpreted by the Rabbinic authorities. I do not consider the Brit Mila celebrations of my two sons to have been barbaric ancient rituals - neither one "howled in terror" as our guests looked on "with the same voyeuristic liplicking delight with which people must have watched public hangings, whipping, executions." Instead they watched in pride and True rejoicing that we were able to fulfill our covenant with G-d. I flatter myself that I do not run around in a frenzied panic on Friday afternoons as I prepare for Shabbat - rather I prepare myself physically, emotionally, and intellectually for the gift that is Shabbat. My Judaism, and that of many, many others, is a rich and precious experience providing all of the facets for my life, giving it meaning precisely where you find it at its worst.

Living life according to the rules can uplift mental tasks into the realm of the spiritual, as you might have seen had you delved even slightly beneath the surface.

In putting pen to paper, one has a responsibility to present a balanced view of the facts. In this respect, the author has failed us; she presents half-truths and worn-out notions as absolute truth. The very title of the book is based on a gross misconception. By propagating such myths, Ms. Kaye demonstrates extreme disrespect for both her subject and her audience.

I can only hope, that this book having served as a catharsis, the author can now approach the Jewish faith with something resembling honesty and a sincere desire to appreciate the value of a holy and moral existence.

Heschel & Wiesel: Lines of Comparison

Reviewed by Ethel Greenstone

Abraham Joshua Heschel and Elie Wiesel: You Are My Witnesses By Maurice Friedman. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1987 299 pp.

Abraham Joshua Heschel and Elie Wiesel have both affected contemporary Jewish thought. Both are of Hasidic descent. Hasidism has played a central role in their thoughts and works. Thus a comparative treatment of their respective philosophies and literary styles might have been interesting. Abraham Joshua Heschel and Elie Wiesel: *You Are My Witnesses* instead pays tribute to each of these men individually, without significantly contrasting their ideas.

Maurice Friedman, the author of *Martin Buber's Life and Work* is a lover of Hasidic thought. It is his preoccupation with Hasidism which brought him into contact with Abraham Joshua Heschel. It is his preoccupation with Jewish theology which brought him into contact with Elie Wiesel. Friedman begins the book with an assessment of the life and works of Heschel. After a lengthy discussion of his own encounters with Heschel and a brief description of Heschel's early Hasidic upbringing, Friedman reviews Heschel's early work on the *Baal Shem Tov*. A loyal student

of Martin Buber, Friedman often compares Heschel's thought to that of his own teacher: "Heschel was as close to Buber in his recognition that there were two streams... from Hasidism." However Friedman faults Heschel when Heschel departs from Buber's way of thinking. "Heschel", Friedman claims, "stressed that Hasidism can never be understood on the basis of the literary sources alone without drawing upon the oral tradition which preserves its authentic living source."

It is in his chapter on Heschel's Passion for Truth that Friedman successfully, albeit with limitations, compares Heschel to Wiesel: "Nothing sounds more exactly like Wiesel than this saying of the Kotzker which Heschel also makes his own..." Friedman soon abandons this comparative analysis of Wiesel and Heschel's work. Friedman's insightful next chapters on Heschel's philosophy of 'Modern Reason', prayer, and 'Heschel's dialectical and paradoxical thought' do not mention Elie Wiesel.

In his chapters on Heschel's philosophy of Halakha, Friedman is most critical of Heschel's thinking. Another major problem is the style of Friedman's discussion of Heschel; the anecdotes of his personal relationship with Heschel, which Friedman claims serve only as a backdrop, often eclipse the main storyline, that is, the analysis of Heschel's works. Furthermore,

after having spent so much time relaying to the reader "the life and times of A.J. Heschel as he relates to Friedman", there is scant room left to thoroughly discuss Heschel's philosophy. Friedman rushes too quickly through Heschel's analysis of the Kotzker Rebbe, Hasidism, prayer, God's need of man, Mitzvot, Prophecy... all in less than seventy pages!

Friedman's critique is also contained within these seventy pages. In his introduction, Friedman emphasizes his subjectivity - "Yet I do not come to know that thought as some hypothetical neutral observer but as the very person that I am." Even so, this subjective approach prevents Abraham Joshua Heschel and Elie Wiesel: *You Are My Witnesses* from serving as a good introduction to either Heschel or Wiesel's works or though the latter longer part of Maurice Friedman's book is devoted to an assessment of the life and works of Elie Wiesel, identifying the Holocaust as a "negative touchstone of reality". Friedman claims "that the work of Elie Wiesel has shown (this) again and again." Even though Friedman dedicates more pages in the book to his discussion on Elie Wiesel, he does not describe "my friendship with Elie Wiesel at length", as he does with Abraham Joshua Heschel. Presenting a creative critique of Wiesel's literary career, Friedman effectively categorizes the major motifs in Wiesel's books. Friedman presents

the reader with an analysis of Wiesel's use of laughter and madness, attributing its appearance to the author's Holocaust experience.

The chapters on Elie Wiesel prove easy reading. At times however, the writing borders on the melodramatic. For example: "It is precisely Elie Wiesel, the Job of Auschwitz, who has pointed the way to the messianism of the redeemed."

Whereas Friedman's discussion of Heschel lacks depth - both for the layman and the more serious student - his analysis of Wiesel's work is enjoyable. The structure is original, and the organization of themes effective. Friedman poignantly highlights his scholarly analysis of Wiesel's work with a number of personal anecdotes.

It is unfortunate that Maurice Friedman did not develop the Hasidic theme which he initially asserts is manifest in the works of both Elie Wiesel and Abraham Joshua Heschel. Certainly Maurice Friedman's personal interest in Hasidic thought would make him a good candidate for comparing the Hasidic themes present in Heschel and Wiesel's works. The result of such a development would have been original and intellectually stimulating. Instead, we have *Abraham Joshua Heschel and Elie Wiesel: You Are My Witnesses* a disjointed biography of two men interspersed with only a somewhat effective analysis of their works.

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