HAMEVASER

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Morris Oppenheim's "The Examination" elegantly depicts the simple structure of the typical early nineteenth century Jewish education institution. The Rebbe focuses his attention exclusively on the one boy in front of him, who in turn devotes his concentration solely to the Rebbe and his sefer. The boy's mother sits to the side, perhaps offering some gentle encouragement, but the parent is detatched from the active study process. The Rebbe and his talmid - little more.

Today, the picture of Jewish education has become crowded with several combatting forces that a teacher must deal with. It includes twenty to thirty additional, and somewhat more rambunctious, students, an equal number of sets of parents, each of whom provides a slightly different background for their child, a principal, and often an extended faculty who together share the burden of responsibility with the one Rebbe. How does today's teacher function in this complex environment?

In this issue, Hamevaser attempts to address a portion of the vast array of issues that confront today's mechankhim. *We have solicited the opinions of several prominent teachers whose recent and current classroom experience has illuminated many of the dark passageways through which today's teachers must travel. This artificial symposium appears on page 4.*

Opinion

What Kind of Animal is an MBAT?

Towards the end of last semester, I heard my friends discussing the upcoming MBATs. MBATs? What in the world are MBATs? I've heard of MCATs, LSATs, even GMATs, but what kind of animal is an MBAT?

"Not to worry," they assured me. "It's only the Mishnah Berurah exam given after the end of the semester." I vaguely recalled the signs posted in the Beit Midrash, mentioning the sections of Mishnah Berurah to be covered during the fall semester. I had naturally presumed that these plaintive placards pertained to some voluntary program proscribed by the MYP office. "How nice," I thought, "that the Yeshiva promotes extra learning."

Then, new signs came up. "The Mishnah Berurah Examinations will take place on...." Mishnah Berurah? EXAMINATIONS? With finals looming ominously large, I had enough trouble dealing with the exams I was aware of. Besides, I hadn't heard anything about a Mishnah Berurah program throughout the semester.

"Don't worry," they said. "Nobody takes the MBATs seriously, and it never counts on your grade anyway. So just take the test without studying (which I did)... or don't take the test at all. No one will care, or for that matter, notice."

Although the MBATs never did affect my grade, and only cost me the hour it took to take the test, they nevertheless trouble me. Why bother giving a test if it's not going to be taken seriously, by the faculty or by the students? More importantly, in their current form, the MBATs desensitize students to the importance of the study of halakha, making it another joke exam, similar to the CLEPs (but that's another issue). Also, if the goal of the Mishnah Berurah program is to increase awareness of Halakha, why are the RIETS students, who ought to know practical halakha, exempted from this test? (Perhaps the exemption serves as an incentive for underclassmen to enter Semicha?)

While additional Torah study is certainly a worthy goal, the administration must realize that the foremost restraint on MYP students is time. Halakha is not taught in shiur, and it is impossible to expect students to prepare sections of Mishnah Berurah during seder, when they lack the time to prepare for shiur itself.

To leave the Mishnah Berurah examinations as they are is both unrealistic and unfair. If given at all, the MBATs should be voluntary exams, to encourage those with added initiative - and added time - to further their Torah study.

Ruby Spolter, YC '94
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Letters

To The Editor,

Yeyasher kochakhem le'oraita for presenting the Lubavitch and Satmar views of Mashiach in a fair and even-handed way. Thank you for not treading the wearisome, well-worn path of contempt for other *hashkafot*. As Rabbi Lamm wrote in defending his article on Satmar in Tradition twenty years ago, "Our side is not above criticism - and the opposing ones, not beneath it." By taking the road less traveled by, that of tolerance, you display a self-confidence seldom found among the Orthodox. We spend so much time playing up the points of contention between Orthodox groups that we tend to forget we agree on all the major issues: belief in Hashem, *yodgimel ikkarim*, and *taryag mitzvot*. We're all in the same boat, with the same destination, so there's no point in squabbling over who has a better view. Seen in this light, our much vaunted differences suddenly seem trivial and can be overlooked without fear of compromise. We have nothing to lose and everything to gain in striving for more unity and tolerance in our own ranks.

Uri Cohen
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The Trouble With Esav

Continued from back page

that God is the conductor of world history.

In halakha we similarly find that rejection of God's role in history constitutes a fundamental rejection of the Jewish religion. The Sabbath violator, along with the idol worshipper, is treated as a heretic, losing all his special rights as a Jew. Why does the Sabbath carry so much theological importance? One well known but incomplete answer says that since the Sabbath observer confirms his convictions that God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh, the Sabbath violator shamelessly declares that he does not believe God created the world.

But there is another aspect of the Sabbath, which we find in the second account of the Ten commandments, namely that Sabbath commemorates the Exodus from Egypt. Maimonides explains that by devoting one day a week to worshipping God, abstaining from all tedious, distracting, and earthly efforts and instead concentrating on the spiritual, the metaphysical, and the divine, we pay homage to God who unshackled us from a life of toil and labor in Egypt, devoid of spirituality and meaning, and gave us the freedom to pursue worship, wisdom, and holiness (*Guide to the Perplexed*, 2:31). Therefore, the Sabbath violator openly defies God the Redeemer, and thereby makes himself a heretic.

Esav's revolt against history was continued by his descendants, the nation of Amalek. This evil and twisted nation waged war against the Jewish people immediately after their miraculous escape from Egypt. Before they dared to confront the Children of Israel, it was clear to all nations that God runs the world, as they watched, wide eyed and open mouthed, God lead his people from slavery to freedom, toppling the great nation of Egypt in the process. "Nations heard and shuddered;
Terror gripped those who dwelled in Philistia.
Edom's chiefs then panicked;
Moab's heroes were siezed with trembling;
Canaan's residents melted away.
Fear and dread fell upon them.
At the greatness of Your Arm
They are still as stone" (Ex. 15:14-16).
Only one irreverent nation was unimpressed. Like their ancestor Esav, Amalek stubbornly challanged God's involvement in world events, and they actually went up in arms on the unholy mission to destroy any evidence that God is the mastermind of history. The Torah commandment to destroy Amalek coincides chronologically with the return of the Jewish people to Israel and the appointment of a king (*Yad, Melakhim* 1:1) because at that time, when the Jews return to the center of history, we have a special obligation to recognize God as the source of our achievements, and therefore must wipe out those who dare to denounce these events as coincidence.

If the Patriarchs set the stage for the sake of the future generations, we are currently witnessing the final act in the long and painful drama of Jewish history. With the recent establishment of the State of Israel, we are given a unique opportunity our grandparents never had, an opportunity to join hands with the Almighty, as it were, and together with Him to actuate the climax of history, the return of the Jewish people to the center. In the past, it was great individuals like Avraham Avinu, Moshe Rabbeinu, and Mordechai and Esther who changed the flow of history for the sake of God and His people, but today, every Jewish person has the oppurtunity to do so. Every Jew can become his own Moshe Rabbeinu.

Samson's Strength Replenished

The Current Relevance of Samson Raphael Hirsch's Philosophy

Ari Berman

Modernity has created tensions within many educated religious Jews. Given our tendency to hunt for rational explanations for life's problems, we can only despair at the current epistemological limitations that shackle our intellects. This tension achieves special poignancy in the area of religion; a rational bent pitted against a modern skepticism forces us to question the role of the intellect in Judaism.

Although two prominent Jewish Medieval scholars, Maimonides and Yehuda Halevi, resolve a similar tension to their own satisfaction, they cannot cure our modern affliction. Maimonides proposes total rationality, while Halevi advocates unadulterated obedience; we refuse to accept either. Perhaps we can find our quarry in the works of a modern thinker, Samson Raphael Hirsch. Only a person like Hirsch, who has both recognized the epistemological tribulations of the intellect and entrenched within himself the thought of his rationalistic era, could possibly remedy our contemporary malady. To understand Hirsch's philosophy, however, we must first dig up some of the German roots in his thought.

In nineteenth century Germany, a new branch sprouted from the trunk of Judaism. Trying to fit in with secular society, some communities adapted their traditional religion by inventing modern amendments. These reformers mainly constrained their changes to beautifying their synagogues and eliminating prayers that offended the gentiles. In its early stages, the new Reform movement, reluctant to break with tradition, rationalized each of their minor deviations by referring to traditional sources.

Discontented with external refinements, the second generation reformers developed a new Judaic ideology that diminished the authority of the ancients. Inspired by Kantian and Hegelian philosophy, their new viewpoint disposed of the need to observe divine commandments if modern society deemed them meaningless. Thus, they abandoned Jewish ceremonies and rituals which they judged archaic, while emphasizing the priority of Jewish ethics.

Reform's ethical focus caused the new movement to flourish throughout Germany. Many modern Jews, previously repelled by Judaism's ostensible irrationality, now felt captivated by its pure morality. Daily the ranks of Reform increased; to meet the growing demand, Reformers constructed new synagogues and established new school systems based on a revamped curriculum. The proud German Orthodox tradition began to melt into its modern successor.

Samson Raphael Hirsch, raised in this setting, grasped the danger that Reform Jewry posed for Orthodoxy. Feeling an obligation to rescue his co-religionists, he devoted much of his life to combatting Reform; accordingly, he enlisted his literary works and his philosophy to fight in that lifelong struggle.

Hirsch expresses his points of contention with Reform through his attack on Maimonides. According to Hirsch, Maimonides' life and attitude towards Jewish philosophy represented the main model on which the reformers based their new ideology. Maimonides' education in Greek philosophy taught him to consider self-perfection through the knowledge of truth as the highest purpose of human existence. Using his classical education as a guide, Maimonides developed his own outlook on Judaism's perplexities.

Hirsch rejected Maimonides' methodology, claiming that Maimonides had endeavored to view Judaism in a Greek light rather than seeking the true spirit of Judaism; this fallacious approach led him to misinterpret Judaism. Hirsch asserted that Reform Jews have inherited this methodology of understanding Judaism: "People set up their standpoint outside of Judaism, and [seek] to draw Judaism over to their position. They conceive *a priori* opinions as to what the *mitzvoth* might be, without troubling themselves as to the real nature of the *mitzvoth*" (*The Nineteen Letters on Judaism [NL]*, New York: Feldheim, 1960, 120). Thus Reform Jews, through their heavy reliance on German philosophy, have distorted true Judaism.

Hirsch also rebukes Maimonides for elevating the knowledge of truth to man's ultimate goal. Maimonides' supposition indicates that "the many folios of the Talmud are nothing but a wearisome mass of hair-splitting subtleties ... and practical Judaism is nothing but unreasoning torture of the flesh" (*NL*, 124). Many laws seem pointless because they don't portray sublime truths, and other rituals appear insignificant since we have already perceived their message. Hence granting knowledge priority breeds antinomianism. Following Maimonides' example, reformers stressed the supremacy of knowledge; unfortunately, unlike Maimonides, they carried this emphasis to its logical conclusion, eliminating the need for total halakhic observance. As opposed to Reform, Hirsch insists on the ultimate validity and binding character of the *mitzvot*. One endnote in Hirsch's *Nineteen Letters* both characterizes his methodology and displays his importunity:

"Two revelations are open before us; that is, nature and the Torah. In nature all phenomena stand before us as indisputable facts, and we can only endeavor *a posteriori* to ascertain the law of each and the connection of all.... The highest attainable degree of certainty is to be able to say, 'The facts agree with our assumption' - that is, all the phenomena observed can be explained according to our theory. A single contradictory phenomenon will make our theory untenable.... If, however, all efforts should fail in disclosing the inner law and connection of phenomena revealed to us as facts in nature, the facts remain, nevertheless, undeniable, and cannot be reasoned away. The same principles must be applied to the investigation of the Torah. In the Torah, even as in nature, God is the ultimate cause. In the Torah, even as in nature, no fact may be denied, even though the reason and the connection may not be understood... Its ordinances must be accepted in their entirety as undeniable phenomena, and, must be studied in accordance to their connection to each other, and the subject to which they relate. Our conjectures must be tested by their precepts, and our highest certainty here also can only be that everything stands in harmony with our theory. In nature, the phenomena are recognized as facts, though their cause and relationship to each other might not be understood, and are independent of our investigation. So, too, the ordinances of the Torah must be law for us, even if we do not comprehend the reason and the purpose of a single one." (*NL*, 143).

For Hirsch the reality of the Torah equals that of nature. Accepting the *mitzvot* as facts, not temporal creations, underlies our study of Torah. If we fail to comprehend the reason for a commandment, or we conclude that we have already revealed the truism behind the precept, we still cannot deny the perennial force of the *mitzva*. Just as we cannot refute facts of nature, we cannot dispute the laws of the Torah. Our intellect does not sanctify or validate our laws, but analyzes them. The *mitzvot* receive their binding character from the fact that God has commanded us to observe them, not because we rationally grasp their value. In Hirsch's words: "Even, therefore, if every Divine precept were a riddle to us with a thousand unsolved and insoluble problems, the obligatory character of the commandments would not in the slightest degree be impaired.... We ... have to perform them [the *mitzvoth*] , not because there was such-and-such a reason for any commandment, but because God had ordained it" (*Horeb*, London: The Soncino Press, 1962, clv). This axiom serves as the foundation for Hirsch's investigation into Judaism.

Samson Raphael Hirsch

Hirsch adds one more specification for proper study. In order to comprehend authentic Judaism, Hirsch requires us to return "to the true sources of Judaism, to the Bible, Talmud and Midrash; ... to know Judaism out of itself; to learn from its own utterances its wisdom of life" (*NL*, 127). As opposed to Reform, Hirsch insists on examining religion from within its own sources, barring any preconceived secular notions that would pervert Judaism's true essence.

So, what does this study from within produce? What does Hirsch establish as the Torah's ideal? He claims that the Torah regards practical Judaism, not knowledge, as its highest goal. Hirsch believes that we must devote each minute of our lives towards God, and "understand Judaism as the law of life" (*NL*, 130). We must study Judaism "with one sole object in view, namely, to ascertain the duties of life" (*NL*, 99). Judaism "accepts no speculation which does not lead to active, productive life as its ultimate goal" (*NL*, 98). One rabbinical dictum summarizes Hirsch's stance -- "to learn and to teach, to keep and to do" -- Judaism values knowledge but "looks upon [it] only as a means to ... action" (*NL*, 119).

This practical view of Judaism portrays a simple Jewish life. It depicts Jews serving God's will without inquiring into His reasons, or disturbing themselves with religion's perplexities. As a blind man follows his seeing eye dog, we must pursue the path paved by God. We regulate our studies to disciplines that aid our practical life; and we ignore the teachings of theoretical fields, such as metaphysics, unless we deem them necessary for attaining obedience.

A pragmatic portrait of Hirsch, however, seems incongruous given his other works. Throughout his writings, Hirsch emphasizes the prominent role of the intellect: he devotes a whole book to rationally understanding the *mitzvot*; he continuously discusses the need to perceive God's underlying motivations behind His laws --even claiming that one of the six categories of the precepts remains "incomplete without ... research" (*NL*, 144). Further, he proclaimed the necessity of a thorough secular education -- with this background, Jews will "enrich their minds with all that is good and noble and true in the contributions of the noblest spirits to the realm of knowledge" (*Judaism Eternal* Vol.1, 218). Finally, he often asserts that "Judaism bestirs us to the endeavor to understand the world, man, human history and God's plan as it operates in the development of them all" (*NL*, 98).

Independently, these quotes seem to have originated in a man who attributes an intrinsic value to knowledge and grants priority to the intellect; they describe a life in which Jews attempt to rationally comprehend both of God's revelations, the world and the precepts. Viewing Hirsch's works collectively, however, produces an ostensible contradiction: total rationality versus unadulterated obedience.

Obviously, Hirsch acknowledges the importance of both the intellect and the practical. As Dayan Grunfeld explains, although Hirsch strongly emphasizes obedience, "he does not go so far as Yehuda Halevi in his *Kuzari*, who puts the perfect believer on a higher plane than the searching thinker" (*Horeb*, lxxxiv); indeed Hirsch stresses the human intellect and reason as strongly as any rationalist. Since Hirsch awards significance to both religious patterns, we must ask which merits priority?

In his unified system, Hirsch highly praises the attributes of rationality, but, nevertheless, exalts obedience as the ultimate goal of a Jew. In the hierarchy of Judaism's aims, Hirsch rates the practical observance of laws higher than knowledge about these laws. Hirsch simultaneously expresses the importance of the intellect and its secondary place in the Jewish order of ideals in his commentary on Psalms CXIX: "This Psalm declares that the understanding and fulfillment of the Divine law is the supreme concern; one might say indeed, the sole concern, of a Jewish person.... [It] is consistent with an endeavor directed not simply upon memorizing what has been declared to be the Law, but upon the full and thorough understanding of this Law.... Yet such maximum understanding still does not constitute the ultimate end of his search. To him the ... meaning of life lie[s] in everyday living, in the faithful fulfillment of God's laws" (*Psalms*, New York: Feldheim, 1966, 323-325).

According to Hirsch, God granted us the Torah for two reasons: observance and studying. Hirsch distinguishes each of these purposes by their degree of necessity: while a Jew who rationally understands God's commandments yet doesn't perform them, has failed, a Jew who blindly abides by God's will, has "fulfill[ed] his vocation ... even though he has never unravelled the significance ... of any one of ... the Divine Commandments" (*Horeb*, clvi). Thus Hirsch formulates a conceptual hierarchy of Jewish ideals with obedience as the supreme value.

Practically, Hirsch's rating system presents a dual life of simplicity and rational inquiry. We must blindly accept the authority and obligation of the precepts, always striving to fulfill God's law. But this does not negate investigation. We can and should delve into the complexities of the world and the Torah. God did not give us meaningless laws, but precepts filled with divine truths; God did not create man as brainless scarecrows, but with the mental capacity to perceive truths. By suppressing our minds, we fail to completely fulfill God's will. We should go through life accepting our obligation while probing into God's intentions. As Dayan Grunfeld exclaims, "we should meditate on the *mitzvoth*, but our acceptance of their Divine origin must precede our search into the motives of the laws" (*Horeb*, lxxxv). Hirsch encourages each Jew to understand God's laws; if we don't succeed, then we should mourn the limitations of our intellect, but console ourselves with the realization that God has exalted observance as the main purpose for the *mitzvot*.

We can better appreciate Hirsch's ideal for

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The State of the Classroom: A Symposium

Hamevaser's Michael Segal and Aliza Levin recently interviewed these four educators, who shared their views on many aspects of chinukh. Their individual responses were amalgamated into a symposium, a round table discussion bringing different perspectives together into one forum.

Hamevaser: Education is often touted as a personally rewarding experience. What were your expectations in this regard? To what extent were these expectations met?

Rabbi Kerner: Many times we come out of *semikha* or graduate school into the field of education with certain grandiose plans. I think most *mechankhim* end up realizing that *chinukh* is only a little bit of what they anticipated. Many times we visualized utopian schools. I think that in terms of the rewarding experience that we speak about, the best way to be practical about it, and to be on the one hand idealistic, and on the other hand somewhat cautious, is to view the reward in terms of educating, and not necessarily in terms of advancing our own personal learning. For every student that you can get to the next *shelav*, to get to the next stage of his education, for you the reward should be that every student grew that much during the course of the year. One thing we must always realize is that not every student will come back and say thank you, but the reward doesn't necessarily have to come from the thank you.

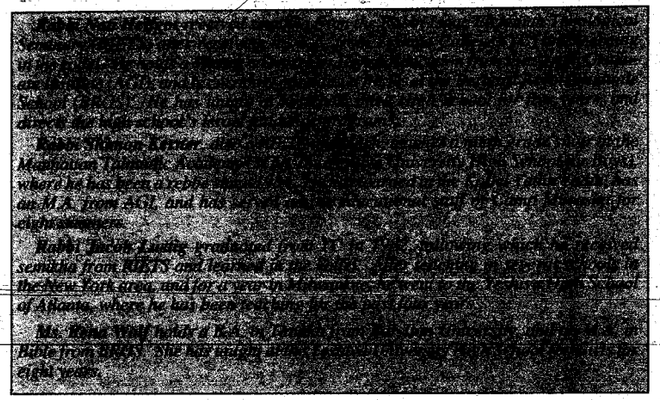
Rabbi Lustig: I realized from talking to people at the time, and from the experience I had subbing in MTA and OTI (Ohr Torah Institute), that it's not the safest thing to get one's expectations real high. I felt [this] was important... because if things don't work out, it [can be] very uncomfortable and self-defeating. I initially wanted to try to have an effect on students, and get some kids more interested in learning and more sincerely dedicated to *yiddishkeit*. That was one of my earlier goals in actually teaching, in going into the field of *chinukh*.

Rabbi Helfgot: I felt I wanted to make a contribution, and be involved with kids. I've been involved in Seminar, NCSY, and [other similar programs], and a lot of my *rebbes* had spoken about how important it is to contribute to the *kelal* (community). It has been very rewarding dealing with kids and seeing growth, and seeing them come back later. It's also been very frustrating; you want to see more instant results. But you also get into people's lives. You can even help in some situations, in terms of kids' [relationships] with their parents and with other kids. Teenagers especially are at the stage where they're thinking about decisions; they're very open to hearing ideas most of the time, and in that sense it's very rewarding.

Rabbi Lustig: I think the expectations vary with the types of kids you're teaching. When you're teaching kids in elementary school, [the goal is] more to get them interested in attending a Jewish high school. In certain communities, where it is expected that they will go to a yeshiva high school, you want them to be more dedicated to their learning. I think, overall, it's very rewarding. It's something you have to realize, though, takes time. You don't always see the fruits of your labor until a little later. When I see kids that have graduated high school, gone to *Eretz Yisrael*, and come back, I really see that everything I had to go through -- the good, the bad, the ugly -- was really worth it in the long run. Again, you don't necessarily see it in every kid, but *Chazal* already pointed out that not everybody that begins learning is going to end up coming out the way you want them to, but you shoot for the best. The expectations were basically met, even if kids just kind of turn out to be *menschen*. I've had experiences here where we've had kids come in as seniors from public schools with relatively no background. If you end up realizing, sometimes, that the goal for them is that they'll end up marrying Jews, that can be a positive thing. On the other hand, you have kids who have grown up in *shomer shabbos* homes and you want them to grow up to be *talmidei chakhamim* and *b'nei tora*. One has to keep that in mind and realize that you have to adjust your expectations to the type of student that you have.

Ms. Wolf: I got into education via my love for *tanakh*. My love for *tanakh* left me no choice but to go into education. It was a side reward that I got that I really love to teach also. I guess I had an opportunity to make a difference in some people's lives, and that was very nice. That was a tremendous reward when students come back later on and tell you that they're going into either *tanakh* or Judaic studies or into education, and that you played a role in it. There are very few fields that you really get that satisfaction from.

Hamevaser: How much does content-oriented graduate study relate to the classroom experience?



Ms. Wolf: I would say that the courses I took [toward] my B.A. were certainly more helpful with regard to teaching. Less so at Revel... Any course that was book-oriented, [such as] *Tehilim*, *Yeshayahu*, *Shemuel*, or *Devarim*, ended up being in some way very helpful to my teaching. Courses that were more generalized, "*Chazal*'s view of X" or "Dead Sea Scrolls," those of course were not quite as helpful. The most important course I took in all my years of education was probably a course in bibliography; in other words, what are the books to use when and if you have this sort of problem or that sort of problem. I took that in Bar-Ilan, and it really enabled me to go anywhere to really investigate any area in *tanakh* -- and this is something I know is missing in schools in the United States. I can take any area in *tanakh* that I need to analyze for class, and I know where to go to get the material together, or to get the articles, the books, and so on that are available. I've met doctoral students who don't know how to do that, and it was pretty shocking.

Rabbi Kerner: You have to be very knowledgeable, as knowledgeable as you possibly can. That comes from years of learning. Especially in the field of *chinukh*, it's important to be as much of a *talmid chakham*, as much of a *yode'a* or *yoda'at sefer* as you possibly can, because even if you know the material you're teaching textually, there are bound to be questions that come in, tangential things, that students always question you about, and we have to try to be prepared for everything. Therefore, I would certainly recommend as intensive a program as possible in terms of *Tora* learning.

Rabbi Lustig: In my preparation for *chinukh*, the graduate courses I took were methodology courses in teaching *tanakh* and *mefarshei tanakh*. Certainly, any amount of knowledge is helpful - *marbe tora, marbe chayim*. The better understanding one has of learning in any particular topic in *tora*, be it philosophy, or halakha, or *navi*,... is extremely invaluable in teaching on any level. Not only in the knowledge, but in the way you learn, in the preparations, and the way you find it easier to learn. The more broad-minded you are yourself within your studies, the easier it is going to be to relate and to teach kids, and, ultimately, to be a good Jew.

Rabbi Helfgot: There's no doubt that the more you know on all fronts, it always helps, because you can always answer questions, and you can always be more prepared, which gives you more weapons in your arsenal. That doesn't mean that everything that you learn in graduate school can be used in a high school classroom, but it's always useful; it has to be coupled with methodology.

Hamevaser: How important are courses in education for the high school teacher?

Rabbi Helfgot: Some education courses are very important, especially something like Dr. Eliach's course in Azrieli... in terms of organizing a lesson. That doesn't mean you do that every time you get up in front of a classroom, but there are a lot of elements, in terms of the notion of preparation, going from the *kelal* to the *perat*, trying to have a motivation, trying to relate things to the kids' lives, all these are the major things, and all the small things, in terms of how to prepare a lesson, are helpful, in terms of organizing material. There's no doubt about it.

Rabbi Kerner: In terms of graduate school education and courses in education, there will be courses that are more valuable, and courses that are less valuable. There will be courses that work on the philosophy of education, which is important. Clearly, in terms of pragmatic preparation for teaching, those courses that deal with methodology are more critical. Overall, for a person to have a good core base of knowledge of what education is, and what educational methodology is supposed to be, and educational psychology, graduate courses can only be of help.

Rabbi Lustig: I didn't take that many education courses *per se*. From my experience from those courses, and from talking to colleagues in the field, there's a lot to be said for taking education courses. There are principles that have been elucidated both by *Chazal* and by many very good educators in the field of education in general. The best type of experience is student teaching, to really get a feel for what it's like, for applying any types of principles one has. It is a time where a person has to actually practice what one preaches. That's a critical component, and it's helped me personally. The times when I had to sub at MTA itself and at other places gave me an incentive and a realization of what could be done, [although] I was not necessarily qualified at the time to be a teacher. It's more just to get your feet wet, just to get a sense of what teaching's all about; what *chinukh* is about. Experience is obviously going to be the best teacher. Rabbi [Yitzchak] Cohen (a rebbe in MTA) once discussed with me something which I think was very apropos. He mentioned to me that the best way for a person to learn how to make a *leining*, how to learn a piece of *gemara*, is to learn a few hundred *blatt*. There's no easy way, or shortcut, to [learning how] to learn. One just has to do it, go through it. To a degree, I think it's similar with *chinukh*. There are no two classes that are going to be the same, no one approach that works for everything.

Ms. Wolf: When you take courses in college and graduate school you're learning material; you're not learning how to present the material. You have to have some sort of talent to do that. But some things can be taught: how to present certain *perakim*, what to look for, how to break them down. Methodological courses are very important in that area.

Hamevaser: What general principles are applied to the distribution of courses in various disciplines of study, including *Tora she'bikhtav*, *Tora she'be'al pe*, Jewish History, Jewish Philosophy, and Hebrew language. Are these principles effective?

Rabbi Kerner: *Gemara* is the core of the MTA curriculum; no question about it, *tora she'be'al pe*. But, in terms of the other two subjects that are taught in the *shiur*, *chumash* and *dinim*, [the amount of time devoted in class] varies according to the *rebbe* and according to the level of his *shiur*. In my ninth grade *shiur*, on the average day, I cover all three subjects.

Rabbi Helfgot: I think that for the average yeshiva high school student, it's a mistake to focus exclusively on one area of *Tora* studies, especially if that area is *gemara*. For the average kid, certainly it's a mistake; it's a turn-off and it's very difficult to teach that way. It's very difficult psychologically to go with one [subject] straight. Number two, even for the kids who are more capable, more exposed to *gemara* learning, even they would also benefit from a varied curriculum, because they should be exposed to the wealth and breadth of Jewish Studies. I would like to see more Jewish Philosophy, and again, it doesn't have to be in the medieval sense, and not in the *mussar* sense of *hashkafa*, either, but dealing with issues as a more formal part of the curriculum. I think that in some schools, there's an overabundance, a little bit too much emphasis on *Nakh*, to the detriment of *Tora* and *Halakha*. I think we need to sometimes give up on *Nakh*, especially *Nevi'im Acharonim*, until the later grades, in the interest of really understanding *Nevi'im Rishonim* in depth. Many schools make a type of make-believe world, as if the kids learned *Nevi'im Rishonim* in elementary school [and] therefore don't have to learn it in high school, which is a big mistake, because they've learned it on a very superficial level. Generally, I think there should be a distribution, with of course a greater concentration given to *tora she'be'al pe*, because that is part of what we as an Orthodox yeshiva high school are trying to communicate, the value of *tora she'be'al pe* as the central pillar of our existence as halakhic Jews.

Hamevaser: Should the same principles be applied both to boys and girls?

Ms. Wolf: You always get into a sticky halakhic issue with girls learning *gemara*, and how much time should be spent on that. I went to Maimonides in Boston, and there we learned with the boys, and it was probably one of the most rewarding experiences I had. Some people have said to me, "Well I wish the boys would have more of the girls education; they spend too much time on *gemara*." Let's put it this way: I'm not entirely sure they need to have the same education. I do think boys should spend a little more time on areas other than *gemara*. Girls should have set aside for them courses specifically designed in *gemara*, let's say one period a day in *gemara* which they don't have now. That would equalize it in the sense that boys would have more Jewish History, Jewish Philosophy, *Navi*, *Chumash*, which is often weak in the boys schools, but that girls would increase their learning of *tora she'be'al pe*, and the study of Talmud in and of itself in particular.

Any person, whether he is a mechanekh or not, has an obligation to recognize his role as being part of the mesora

Rabbi Helfgot: I'm a big devotee of girls' education. I think that if girls want to learn, if they're brought up with the notion that they should learn, that they can achieve in learning, [then] in general in high schools the distribution can be the same. I would of course point out that there has to be some difference in terms of emphasis in certain areas of *halakha* that are different for women and men. I wouldn't have a class in *hilkhos tefilin* [in] a coed high school where you [spend] the whole year [learning] in the *Mishna Berura tzitzis* and *tefilin*. That's a mistake... But I would at the same time want to expose girls to the basics of *tzitzis* and *tefilin*, just like we'd want to expose boys to the basics of *halakhos* that apply to women. I could see areas, such as *taharas hamishpacha*, in which you have to have separate [classes], but in terms of exposure to *gemara*, girls are capable, and if they grow up in a society which encourages it, there's no doubt that they can achieve. On a high school level, I don't really see that much [difference].

Rabbi Kerner: I think in terms of the roles that boys and girls play, boys perhaps need a stronger emphasis [on *gemara*] in [light] of the fact that they, generally speaking, will go on to higher learning, [although] there might be certain exceptions among girls. In general, I don't think we stress *halakha lema'ase* sufficiently for boys or for girls, but I think that the needs are different, and we have to treat them differently.

Rabbi Lustig: *Chazal* were obviously very astute. They gave us directions of learning and a hierarchy of how a person should learn, and what's proper for whom. In teaching girls and teaching boys, obviously there [will] be certain subject matter which would not be as apropos to teach to one as to the other. Certain halakhic issues pertaining to women might be better taught by a woman to girls' classes, and by a male *rebbe* to boys' classes. The issue of dealing with boys and girls differently comes up often - "It's not fair. Why do they get to do this and we don't? Why do they get to *daven* this way when we don't?" Sometimes we have to realize that we as *mechankhim* have to teach kids that there are different people, and there are different expectations for different people, and *HaKadosh Barukh Hu* set up the *Tora* in that way, to give everybody what's best for them. If we don't apply the same principles equally across the board, it might lead to some uneasy feelings, but if that is overall the best [arrangement] for a particular situation, we should not feel tied down to doing the same across the board.

Hamevaser: What should the role of the teacher be in planning curriculum structure and course content?

Rabbi Kerner: I think that it is crucial for administration to involve teachers in curriculum planning for one basic reason: teachers know from the classroom experience what can realistically be covered in a forty or fifty minute lesson. Teachers know in terms of the level of the student [for whom] the curriculum is being planned, whether it [sets] a realistic goal. Therefore, I think teacher input is crucial. I think administration should be the key in terms of orchestrating curriculum development and planning. They should be the ones that initiate plans to come up with a curriculum and create the structure.

Ms. Wolf: With regard to general curriculum, even then, I think the experts in a particular field, [be it] *navi*, *chumash*, math, or science, whatever the field might be, are the teachers themselves. Most often, the principal is really not an expert in each one of those fields. You have to rely on the people that are the experts, that have the educational background, that have the academic experience, and so on, to arrange a curriculum. So I think teachers are vital to the curriculum planning.

Rabbi Lustig: The teachers are obviously on the front lines of the battlefield when it comes to actually setting up the curriculum. Being a *mechanekh* is being very much on a daily basis involved with and exposed to what the kids need, and what they should be learning... Sometimes the soldiers on the front lines really have a better idea of what's going on. The generals who are planning in offices, behind the front lines, might have a better sense of what's going on overall; certainly it has to be worked out together. But the teachers who really are on the front lines have to be, and should be, involved with setting up the curriculum, structuring it, knowing what should be taught. Curricula have to be set up where kids first learn certain *Nevi'im Rishonim* or *Nevi'im Acharonim*. For kids coming from public school [to yeshiva] for the first time in twelfth grade, [it may be inappropriate to teach certain *sefarim* that the rest of the school is learning, such as] *Tehilim* or *Mishlei* or *Iyov*... Teachers have a responsibility to see to it that maybe these kids should not be learning that, maybe they should be taking an introduction to Judaism course. Maybe they should be learning basic *chumash*: who was *Avraham*, who was *Yitzchak*. Before they study the *meshalim* of *Shlomo HaMelekh*, we should... give them more of a background. I think teachers are not the only critical component, but certainly a major piece of the puzzle of any curriculum structure.

Rabbi Helfgot: I think there's a specific role for teachers to very carefully think through what should be learned in a specific *sefer*, what should be learned in a specific *masekhta*. More needs to be done. I think [this kind of planning] it's woefully inadequate in most yeshiva high schools, real thought being given *mamash* to every *pasuk*. [Such planning] takes time, that takes summers, in which people need to be paid as professionals to sit down and write curricula. Ideal curriculum writing means that people sit down and write exactly [which] *Rashi* we're going to do and exactly what value, what goal [we] want to accomplish from that *Rashi* or *Ramban*, and what skills you want to teach.

Hamevaser: How do you approach varying levels of interest and skills of the students in your classes?

Rabbi Helfgot: I think many schools try to deal with it by tracking, which is basically what we do in our school, so most of the time, you have very little problem with that. [But] even within a homogeneous group, you have different levels. For that, as all good educational theorists tell us, you have to use different methods of communicating ideas in the classroom. Some are auditory, some are visual, some are written, you have to use different skills; different children learn different ways. Motivation is a function of personality. You do some "shtick," and you have to be a forceful personality, and hopefully you try to use the material in engaging ways. Unfortunately, one of the biggest motivations in the high school classroom is grades and tests.

Rabbi Lustig: There are a number of different approaches to actually working with kids on different levels. In high school, an approach would be to make certain kids responsible for less material, thereby giving [some] students more freedom not to get depressed, not to get overwhelmed by the wealth of the material, and at the same time, perhaps, giving the more advanced students in the class more work to do, enrichment work. Sometimes you can even team up the more advanced students to help out the [weaker students]. More often than not, you're going to come across situations where not everybody in the class is on the same level. Again, depending on the reason for it -- the background, the motivation -- there are many different approaches that are used.

In terms of exposure to gemara, girls are capable, and if they grow up in a society which encourages it, there's no doubt they can achieve

Rabbi Kerner: What you have to do is try to challenge each student on his own level. If I ask a very basic question... or a basic piece of information, I'll expect some of the weaker students to answer that. I'll call on a weaker student, because I won't have to embarrass him by either not involving him at all when I get to the more complex issues, or by asking him a more complex issue and having him not know. I try to involve everybody. Over the course of a *shiur*, there are various times that you'll ask a challenging question, and you can get a student who is weaker to be involved in answering that question as well, by saying something to the effect of, "I don't want anybody to answer this question right away. Take thirty seconds to think about it, and then share your answers with your next-door neighbor" so that the weaker student who is sitting next to the more advanced student is talking about his answer which he did or did not come up with. He is involved in the process, and he didn't just get swept away because somebody raised their hand after two seconds. I'll then ask someone to share their answer with the class. Maybe it's a weaker student who got it from a more advanced student, and that's okay. As far as testing is concerned, there are times when I'll give two different models of tests; I'll give a *bechina* and there will be certain questions which are altered for the weaker student, and he will not necessarily be expected to recall as much, because he might not have as good a memory, or come up with the more advanced *sevaras*. We try as much as possible here in MTA to have homogeneous classes, but within every homogeneous class, you're still going to have varying levels. There will be students who will be misplaced. If there is a student you're not servicing, he shouldn't be with you, and you shouldn't be with him.

Hamevaser: How do you handle discipline problems in your classroom?

Ms. Wolf: In the eight years I've been teaching, I haven't really encountered any discipline problems that with just a look or a word were not taken care of. Remember, also, that I teach in a girls school and that also makes a difference. A boys school is different, and mixed classes are also different. In a girls school, I think it's much more decorous. I didn't really encounter any problems of that nature.

Rabbi Lustig: Perhaps it's because of what the gemara tells us, *be'ikvesa demeshicha chutzpa vasye*, the rise in the level of chutzpah right before Mashiach comes, maybe that's what we're living through. Certainly, American/Western society does not have as much *derekh eretz* for elders and *rebbeim* as there was in the past. Conveying ultimately how to be a person is something that kids don't always pick up, and one needs to be able to tune in to many different types of kids. One has to know that in teaching, the primary goal, once you have the decorum that's needed, is to motivate, to actually give over the material, which is something that's a great challenge.

Rabbi Kerner: As one of my teachers, Rabbi Eliach, the principal of Flatbush, said in graduate school in a course that I took with him, the best discipline is a well-planned lesson, and I found that to be a truism. We, as high school teachers, have to make a basic assumption that the high school student is not uninterested, antilistening, but basically needs a reason to listen. If I tell a student, "Okay, read *pasuk alef*," that's not going to get me very far: "Why should I read *pasuk alef*?" However, if I come in and ask a question, and then I tell the students, after discussing it for a few moments, "Now the answer to this question will be found in *pasuk alef*," there's a reason why the student is going to want to read *pasuk alef*. He's curious as to what the answer to the question is. If we raise the level of the curiosity of the student, we've created a reason to listen. He's too busy to fool around, to talk, to disturb.

Hamevaser: How would you characterize your relationship with your students outside the classroom?

Rabbi Helfgot: It's a good one. A problem most young *rebbes* find [is] the balance between on the one hand being very loose and open, and on the other hand maintaining a sense of distance. I think I err sometimes on the side of too much closeness rather than too much distance. It's generally good, but the fact is, it's still school, and school has a certain life of its own, with the [social] and academic pressures that maintain a certain sense of structure.

Rabbi Lustig: On the realistic level, one doesn't "connect" with every single one of the students you meet. My particular situation, here in Atlanta, is where a good number of the students happen to live in the community. You see them on *shabbos*. You get to interact with them, not so much on a teacher-student level,

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The Choice of a New Generation

With the resurgence of an Orthodox Jewish generation of idealistic movers and shakers comes a fresh set of dilemmas it must face. In a world where there is so much to be done, how should one prioritize and concentrate his or her energies? One of the greatest choices confronting instrumental yeshiva students of our day lies between activity in American chinukh, a national Jewish education drive geared toward saving disappearing and uncommitted segments of American Jewry, and the stronger than ever drive to fulfill one's Jewish destiny of settling in Israel (yishuv ha'aretz). Both are tremendous responsibilities which present concerned young people with the dilemma of which effort to undertake. For some, there is no choice at all; they feel yishuv ha'aretz takes clear precedence over any commandment to be fulfilled in exile. For others, the decision is not so idealistic; they feel that dynamic and motivated yeshiva students are the only ones who can prevent the loss of millions of more Jews through assimilation.

What follows are the views of a few men and women of Yeshiva University who have undergone precisely this struggle. They have explored the issues involved in this conflict that faces so many of their contemporaries. However thorough these personal accounts may be, however, they by no means even begin to scratch the surface of the hashkafic controversy surrounding this problem. The editors qualify the nature of these pieces as purely exploratory. No solutions are offered and, more importantly, no halakhic ruling was sought out in assembling this piece, although the available body of responsa on this subject is sizeable. It is left to each individual to seek council on this matter from one's own rabbi, based on personal strengths, hashkafa, and life goals. For all of ***Hamevaser****'s readers faced with similar conflicts, we hope this piece may serve to illuminate some of the issues. -- Yakov Blau and Sara Klein*

A Case For *Chinukh*

Ari Israel

What makes American Jewry tick? They are a certainly a unique bunch. Technically, they reside in Golus; physically, they don't. If Golus means hardship, persecution, and a sense of being an outsider, then 1992 America is not Golus. Yes, there are disturbances, but they are diminishing. Assimilation and intermarriage are tragically not. As Dennis Prager said, "the biggest problem facing the Jewish people today is that the Goyim are nice." The results are horrific.

American Jewry is rapidly being sucked into the Black Hole of Temptation and Denial of their Tradition. What can be done to stop it? Maybe, it's too late. Maybe our ninth-inning reaction won't save what our apathy created. But we have to try. The Talmud advises us that even if the sword is upon our neck, we shouldn't despair (*Berachot* 10a). We have to reach out and enlighten those who need our help. Education can and must work. Additional qualified teachers are needed to create the movement that will affect millions across the country. The current system needs severe help and it has to receive it from the dedicated and concerned among us. But, shouldn't this include every caring Jew? If not, then we may embarrassingly have to concede defeat. I, for one, am not ready to. Are you?

But where to begin? Most of American Jewry, including the Orthodox, are so far from the mark. Last year, during the height of the Gulf War, the song "*Achainu*" became very popular. Instead of an intangible Hebrew prayer, the words immediately came alive with the sense of urgency felt by all. As SCUDs were falling on our brothers in Israel, American Jewry cried out to God to save Jews "who are placed in distress and captivity." Their pleas allayed their consciences and allowed them to watch the Superbowl feeling much relieved. As long as they continued to cry out, "*Hamakom Yerachem Aleihem* - may God have mercy on them," they were fulfilling their duty as concerned and caring Jews.

A few weeks ago, I attended a rally to free Syrian Jewry. Once again cries of "*Achainu*" rang through the air. Recent generations of American Jews have risen up to deny Cain's claim of not being his brother's keeper. Freedom for Soviet, Ethiopian, and Syrian Jewry have kept thousands of activists busy. But what now? Soviet, Ethiopian, and even Syrian Jewry are free to emigrate. Who will be the next victim that needs our moral and monetary support? Are there any left? *Kibbutz Golios* has affected Jews worldwide except in America. "*Aleihem . . .Aleiehem . . .Aleiehem*" - What about "*Alainu* - may God have mercy on us (in addition to them)?" How much longer will American Jews forgo the opportunity to truly become a part of the Jewish people? When will we cease to shelter ourselves in our ghetto which is lined with immense wealth and whose main currency is physical pleasure? From the luxury of our exile we consider ourselves pivotal and central players in the destiny of our people. In reality, we grow further and further removed from the most pressing concerns of our times.

The Talmud *Bavli*, written in the Diaspora, records a discussion which took place in a *Beis Medrash* in Israel: "How can there be sages in the Diaspora when the Torah dictates, '*Lema'an Yirbu Yemaichem . . . Al Ha'adamah* ' . . ." (*Berachot* 8a). Jews in Israel today ask themselves essentially the same blunt question. Why don't American Jews return to Israel? Never before has a generation in Golus had such an easy opportunity to realize the dreams of their fathers. In many ways we are closer to Israel than the Jews of Babel were. But we no longer dream of returning to Israel; the possibility is a part of our waking lives and this is exactly the problem. We no longer dream of Israel. As close as we may be in some physical sense, Israel is far removed from our minds, is hardly a goal that extends beyond vacation. So why don't American Jews return home?

The issue of willingly residing in Golus has bothered Jews for millenia and they have invented answers and "excuses," ranging from a prohibition to live in Israel before the coming of the Messiah (Satmar) to an element of *Sakkanat Nefashot* (Rabbainu Ya'akov in *Ketubot*) to the *heter* of "*Parnasa*, marriage, or to learn Torah (*Bavli: Moed Katan*)." But are any of these options viable in 5752, when one can travel to *Eretz Yisroel* in as little as 11 hours? What can be said of our situation today when there exists a very vibrant and thriving haven for Jewry?

Aliya to *Eretz Yisroel* is a very beautiful and necessary goal, and I certainly support those who decide to reside there. However, if, and only if, one has an inclination towards *Chinukh*, towards helping educate and enlighten fellow Jews, then America has to be an option. Abandoning millions of directionless Jews to the pressures of assimilation, while the elite make *Aliya*, would all but cut off millions from Judaism. The fate of the ten lost tribes should remind us of what could occur. If we, the dedicated and concerned, do not share our convictions and ideals with other Jews, who will?

Rav Meir Schlesinger, Rosh Yeshiva of Sha'alvim, believes that one "can" be a *Mechanekh* in America if the imparted education focuses on Israel and *Aliya*. By instilling students with these ideals, the teacher serves *kelal Yisrael* and *Eretz Yisrael*. However, eventually, even this type of educator must make *Aliya* to practice what is preached. Failing to do so, renders the messages inconsequential and meaningless. Thus, only a temporary mission here is beneficial. After that time someone new will be needed to continue the mission.

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin of New York and Rabbi Pinchas Hayman of Calgary accomplished something which few have been able to duplicate. By the time they made *Aliya*, their influence had sufficiently aroused some of their congregants to join their leaders in Israel. The Chasam Sofer, in his introduction to his responsa on *Yoreh De'ah*, discusses how a Tzaddik who ignores the community at large and only works on his own *Avodas Hashem* is

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Some Issues in American *Chinukh* vs. *Aliya*

Sara Klein

"I personally feel that people must notch up *mitzvot*. The place to fulfill as many *mitzvot* as possible is in Israel, primarily." So began the interview with Simone Alony, who will be graduating Stern next month, is actively involved with NCSY and the Israel club at Stern, and plans to teach next year in New York "at least for the time being." Her connection to *chinukh* is strong, a goal to which she aspires, but this young woman cannot overstate her conviction that the essence of Jewish life is and must be in Israel. She feels that everyone that can possibly make *aliya* must do so.

Alony's arrival at this ideal was not simple. She often asks herself about the Jews in America that are "totally off the *derekh*." "In Israel", she says, "at least the average *chiloni* (secular Jew) knows more than the average assimilated American Jew. For one thing, they know they are Jewish." She wonders what the point of going to Israel is if a whole segment of our nation in America were to ultimately disappear. What swayed her opinion toward *aliya*, however, is the notion that one must be spiritually responsible for herself. For Alony, the value of *mitzvot* in Israel and the chance to fulfill the commandment of *yishuv ha'aretz* itself override any issue that may be pressing in America. Additionally, she contends that there is so much *chinukh* and *kiruv* to be done in Israel with newly arrived immigrants and other non-religious Jews that she would have her work cut out for her there as well. Alony does not feel any shirking of her duty to the Jewish community by moving to Israel. In fact, she feels that her duty lies there, and the *chinukh* of Jews here is better left to others.

One of those others is a young woman also graduating from Stern next month, who is extraordinarily involved with NCSY and with TAC activities at Stern. She cannot reconcile herself to leaving behind American Jewry in favor of moving to Israel. While she recognizes that there is a mitzvah of *yishuv ha'aretz* and that *aliya* is an ideal for many of her peers, she feels honestly that these would not be her motivations were she to eventually end up in Israel, which is her intention. Instead, she feels that *aliya* for her would be primarily because she sees America as growing increasingly unsafe for Jews, both physically and spiritually. She came to love Israel as a place for all Jews, but feels that her primary objective is *chinukh* here, at least for now. While she still has a chance, she would like to rescue as many Jewish souls as possible. "We have a responsibility to save the Jews here; someone has to give them an identity", she says. "In Israel, there already is a Jewish identity. Here the biggest *churban* is going on with assimilation - we can't let that happen." Another point made by this young woman was that if all of Orthodox leadership were to go on *aliya*, American Jewry would be lost. "Without communities, without *yeshivot* and *kiruv* organizations, what will happen to the Jews here?" This seems to be the major concern of those who decide to stay and do *chinukh* in America.

Perhaps the most profound interview conducted was with a Stern Junior, who is deeply involved with HASC and has wanted to enter *chinukh* since she was in eighth grade. Upon returning from her year in Israel, she felt that she would definitely move back there. She had no doubt that her spiritual fulfillment could only be achieved in Israel. However, she asked herself how she could realistically merge this dream with her other dream of *chinukh*. How could she enjoy any financial stability in Israel with a career in Jewish education? Moreover, what about the tremendous fulfillment that she would achieve here, teaching American Jews who desperately needed her guidance? After she began the ritual dating-inspired *cheshbon hanefesh*, she made the following decision: "*Chinukh* is the most important thing to me. But the *ikar* (essence) of *chinukh* is that of one's own children. I don't feel that the education in an American home can be on par with that in a home in Israel - especially if one is involved in small town *kiruv*, where there is bound to be a lot of bad influence on children due to the lack of religious surroundings. The bottom line is, my home comes first. My heart tells me that I must build my life in *Eretz Yisrael*. I never got as emotional as when I thought of not living there." Although she admits that the opportunities for Jewish education here are pressing, she feels that there are equal such opportunities in Israel. Of course, she is worried about making a living in *chinukh* in Israel, but she feels there are no guarantees in that area in America, either. "This country is so impermanent. I wouldn't feel any more rational or surer I could make it settling here. Besides, I'd always feel something missing here, even if I felt I could fulfill my dream of *chinukh* better in America. The truth is, maybe it would be better for someone without such strong feelings for *Eretz Yisrael* to do *chinukh* here. I don't think I could wholeheartedly stay here for more than a short period of time. It wouldn't be fair to go into *chinukh* without a whole heart." However, she still feels enough of a struggle that she may compromise and do a few years of small town *kiruv* here before her children reach the age of *chinukh*. Ultimately, though, her family's and her spiritual growth and fulfillment is the deciding point- pointing straight to Israel.

While these three young women took different approaches in working through this dilemma, all of them share a common ground: each took into account her *hashkafot*, ideals, and individual strengths in forming her life goals. One woman put her philosophy succinctly: "I don't know ultimately what my *tafkid* (role) is really supposed to be. That's why it's such a hard decision. But somewhere there has to be a glaring deciding factor. Your heart should tell you where you will be better fulfilled."

Symposium

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in the classroom, but you get a chance to become part of their lives.. You can see them after school, or even during winter breaks, or over *yom tov*, when they'll come by just to talk, or they'll come over to learn. In small communities in general, we have an opportunity to have a much better influence, a much better *hashpa'a* on kids, simply because of the way it's set up. In "out-of-town" communities, you have much more of a chance of becoming a role model, not only in the classroom, but they see how you work at home, how you help in the house, see how you shop for your family. You get to bump into kids, you get to be much more of a living role model, not just as someone who teaches them *Tora*, but as a more complete human being. Ultimately, the goal of *chinukh*, in that sense, is to impart to kids not only the knowledge and understanding of *Tora*, but the whole lifestyle of *Tora*.

Rabbi Kerner: I try to treat them like human beings both in and out of the classroom. I believe very strongly in *yehi khevod talmidekha chaviv alekha keshelakh*. I try to teach them and become a role model and someone to whom they can look up. I also try to develop the type of relationship in which they can feel comfortable coming to me for advice, treating me as a real confidant. Outside the classroom, there are informal meetings which we have on a personal basis, one on one. Once in a long while, after a *bechina*, I'll take the *talmidim* down to the gym to let them let out a little steam, and maybe play a little ball with them. I try to have them see me in a different light, try to see me as someone who not only appears in the classroom. I wasn't born with a tie on. I have a personal life, and they get to see the way I interact with my family when they come for *shabbos*. I have a *chagiga* for them *Chanukka* time, and at the end of the year we make a *siyum*. The *shiur* should feel as a group; we should have some sort of cohesive unit. The *chaverim* that they make during this year should be long-lasting relationships, hopefully with me and with each other.

Ms. Wolf: I would say it's friendly and cordial, and only close if they initiate that. In other words, if they have a problem, if they have an issue, if they have something they want to talk about, then I'm available to talk with them. I hesitate to initiate that type of closeness on my own because I'm not a psychologist. I've gotten into areas that are sticky and that are unpleasant for me that I'm not equipped to deal with. For the most part, like I say, it's friendly and pleasant, but only close when initiated by the student for the most part.

Hamevaser: What role do you see for yourself *vis a vis* the community?

Ms. Wolf: I think that the teacher is the best one to speak to the community at large, letting them know what really goes on in the high schools, what needs to be done, and how their children should be educated. We're involved in it. We're the hands-on people. We know how it should be changed and what should happen. In the community at large, I can see teachers who are experienced in teaching and who feel comfortable in the crowds of adults, as well as kids, getting out there, talking about *chinukh* and what changes need to be [made].

Rabbi Lustig: In any community which is not a major metropolis you are involved in your position as a public, adult educator, as well. It comes up all the time, be it in *shul* between *mincha* and *ma'ariv* during the week where you will be called to speak, or be it at a *bris*, or a *shalom zachar*, *pidyon haben*, a *bat mitzva* or a *bar mitzva*... There are times when one is called on to... develop relationships with parents of students, or *ba'alei batim* that they are not so directly connected to the school and they feel a certain allegiance, a certain comfort in talking over both *hashkafic* issues and halakhic issues. You have to be on your toes, you have to at least know where to find things, you have to know practical issues and how to deal with them.

Rabbi Helfgot: I think it's important that every teacher not limit himself or herself. I think [simply teaching third or tenth graders all your life] is a sure way to get to burnout. I think you need to vary yourself, and therefore a teacher should be involved in the community. That means giving *shiurim* in the synagogues and being a spokesman when called upon. I think that teachers need to get involved in local Jewish affairs. For example, I am involved in the ECA, which is an umbrella organization, the Educators' Council of America, which tries to bridge different Modern Orthodox educators all over the country, and plans conventions and mini-conferences. That's one way that you can speak as a unified voice on issues of concern to the Jewish community. I think teachers should be heard and should contribute, and be involved in adult education. Sometimes the American Jewish community has greater opportunities for pulpit Rabbis, because they are looked upon as community leaders, and sometimes they don't look to principals and certainly not teachers in the community, and they need to do more of that, especially people who are competent, have something to give. I think people have to look for it. I'll give you an example. I had a student last year whose mother teaches American Jewish History in Solomon Schechter. She was coming to the three streams of Judaism, and she invited a Reform and a Conservative Rabbi to speak on different days, and she thought she wasn't going to bring in an Orthodox person. The kids in the class asked her to, so she communicated to me, would I be interested, and I went, and it was a very worthwhile experience. It was supposed to be an hour and a half, and I was there two and a half hours, and the kids ate it up.

Rabbi Kerner: I think that any person, whether he is a *mechanekh* or not, whether his official job is to be a teacher, every person in *kelal Yisrael* has an obligation to recognize his role as being part of the *mesora*. If the person has the knowledge and the ability, he definitely should take part in transmitting *tora* to the next generation. That applies not only to children; that applies to this generation. Now with the proliferation of adult education and *ba'alei teshuva*, there are countless opportunities for *mechankhim* and [other] people who are capable to give classes and *shiurim*, to really take a part in transmitting the *mesora*.

Rabbi Helfgot: Again, I think the primary responsibility is to our kids in our classroom and our preparation. Certainly, a teacher has to be involved in the broader Jewish community, whether it's *tzedaka*, whether it's Israel, whether it's bonds, everything in which another Jew can be involved.

Hirsch

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individual Jews by noting its congruity with Hirsch's national scheme. Hirsch claims that God separated the Israelites, charging them with the mission of guiding the other nations by declaring God as "the only creative cause of existence, and the fulfillment of His will [as] ... the only goal of life" (*NL*, 54). The Jewish God created the world for the salvation of all mankind, not only Jews. Instead of directly declaring His sovereignty to the whole world, however, God granted His laws and his revelations to the Israelites. God commanded the Israelites to perfect themselves, whether in Israel or in exile, by observing His Torah. Following this national development, we can execute our charge by serving as a model for the gentiles, who, after observing the truth and beauty of the Jewish laws, will come to recognize the one true God. Thus, although Judaism seems to embody particularism, it espouses universalism.

In order for the Jewish nation to complete its mission, every Jew's life must personify God's law; only then can the gentiles discern the pristine purity and perfection of God's commandments. Logically, our intellect must also play a part in our national mission; it would seem quite difficult to convince people of the purity and truth of our commandments if we ourselves remain uncertain of their purpose. Hirsch, however, emphasizes our actions:

"If, though everywhere else avarice, lust and greed should become the motives for human action, every Jew would be a mutely eloquent example and teacher of universal righteousness and universal love.... if only we were ... that which we should be, if only our lives were a perfect reflection of our law - what a mighty force we would constitute for steering mankind to the final goal of all human education!" (*NL*, 65).

Hirsch hails the performance of God's law, not knowledge, as the impelling force that will attract the gentiles. Since obedience reigns supreme as the ultimate aim for both of our functions, we find that Hirsch's universal goal accords with his ideal for individual Jews. When a Jew fulfills his personal task of dutiful service to God, he also draws us closer to completing our nation's charge; through the splendor of our deeds, mankind will finally perceive the true good.

Hirsch's hierarchy of ideals also corresponds with his epistemological stance. Hirsch, like many post-Kantian Germans, believed in the differentiation between the noumenal and phenomenal world. In his commentary on the verse in Genesis that described Adam's role as the world's nomenclator, Hirsch declares:

"Man gives things name, not as God, Who sees things objectively as they truly are, but ... subjectively, ... as ... an individual ... who receives the ... impression of the things about him.... In these names he expresses the impressions which his imagination forms of things, and thereby he indicates their ... place in his world.... All our knowledge of things is such a namegiving. But this knowledge is only subjective, how a man calls things for himself, ... what they are to him. What things really are, the true nature of things in themselves, no human eye sees" (*Genesis*, London: L. Honig & Sons, 1959, 66).

Man cannot perceive the world as it truly stands; thus we must accept the limitations of our intellect. By binding our intellect to the phenomenal world, Hirsch declares the imperfection of our knowledge. Accordingly, it would seem absurd for Hirsch to extol our rationality as religion's primary tool. As Hirsch exclaims:

"[Judaism only] accepts ... speculation which lead[s] to active productive life as its ultimate goal. [Judaism] points out the limits of our understanding and warns us against baseless reasoning, transcending the legitimate bounds of our intellectual capacity" (*NL*, 99).

Hirsch asserts that Judaism recognizes the subjectivity of our intelleet, and does not want us to hunt for hidden objective truths; indeed, the people that ventured along that path eventually misinterpreted our religion.

Hirsch does not totally deny validity to the truths that our limited mind perceives. As Hirsch affirms:

"God ... guarantees men that the amount of knowledge of the nature of things which is granted to him, is no deception. That this fraction of the truth is also true, and is as much of the truth ... that he requires in his association with things for the accomplishment of his mission on earth" (*Genesis*, 66-67).

Hirsch's belief in the veracity of our limited intellect explains his emphasis on reason. Since he restricts our mind's capacities, we might have thought that he would dispute any role that the intellect could play in religion; however, because Hirsch asserts that God acknowledged some level of truth to man's impressions, we realize that he can attribute importance to rationality. Since at best reason can only achieve a "fraction of the truth," Hirsch must relegate it to a secondary function, while granting primacy to obedience.

After studying Hirsch's priorities and examining his underlying motivations, we can note the applicability of his viewpoint to our contemporary situation. Maintaining comparable epistemological positions, we, like Hirsch, remain skeptical of our intellectual power; but just as he refused to discard reason from Judaism, we repudiate the renouncing of our rationalistic bent. Thus, in this modern scholar we can possibly find a model for our own religious quests.

By positing the supremacy of obedience over knowledge, while also maintaining the necessity of each, Hirsch reconciles both aspects of our thought. Consequently, he has formulated a hierarchy of ideals that we can base our religious life on. With a Hirschian blend of study and faith, we must endeavor to penetrate into the *mitzvot*, yet, realizing our limitations, never lose sight of our paramount purpose.

A Case For *Chinukh*

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not as great as the Tzaddik who forgoes his own personnal advancement and influences others to serve God. While it can be argued that *Aliya* does help the community, it is largely undertaken for personal reasons: To be exposed to the atmosphere of *Eretz Yisrael*, and to raise ones family there. But, as my *Rebbe*, Rav Azariah Berzon, has stated, "sometimes one sacrifices oneself for the *kelal*."

One of the most alarming statistics concerning American Jerwy is the rising intermarriage rate. 52% (based on the CJF study) has serious and immediate implications which need to be addressed by the overall Jewish community. The answer has to be found in the education of American Jews. Education by dedicated, caring and **competent** *Mechankhim*. We speak the language, for better or worse, we are exposed to and understand their culture, and, hopefully, we can relate to them. If not us, then who? Israeli *Shelichim* who can't speak English and don't know the Simpsons from the Redskins? Abandonment should not and cannot be a viable solution. This issue affects all of us, and only together can we work on it.

But let's not deceive ourselves. America is a spiritual wasteland. Only spiritual *chinukh* can permit one to live here. A constant *Cheshbon Hanefesh* is necessary to ensure that one does not sustain irreperable damage. Raising a family in a true Torahdika atmosphere is extremely difficult. A personal Shikkul has to consider the spiritual welfare of it too, since all charity must begin at the home.

As Hillel said, "If I am not for myself who will be for me;" one has to be spiritually selfish. "If I am **only** for myself, then what I am I;" I myself am lacking when there are others who need assistance. And, "If not now, when?;" 52% will only increase, and millions will diasappear. Each delay has devestating ramifications. Too much is at stake. "It is not upon you to complete the task," but you cannot hide behind your status as a *ben chorin* (*Ein ben chorin ela mi she'osek betalmud torah*) to be able to hide from it. We have to use our skills, talents and knowledge to benefit others, to heed the Chasam Sofer's message. Not, God Forbid, to be the sole remaining Tzaddik while the whole generation remains ignorant of God. We are all ultimately held responsible by the One who is *choker levavos* and who is concerned with the Entire Am Yisroel.

The Trouble With Esav

Mark Smilowitz

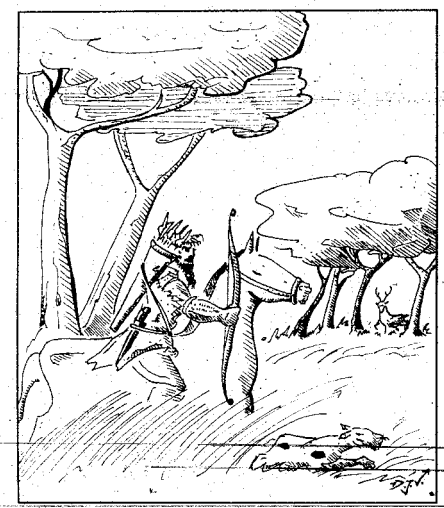
Traditionally, one of the most diabolical characters depicted in the Torah is Esav. Chazal portray Esav as a cold-blooded fiend, whose relentless acts of moral disgrace include the three cardinal sins of idolatry, adultery, and murder (*Bereshit Rabba* 63:10,12). Yet, careful examination of Esav's actions in the Torah reveals no more than three seemingly small, possibly justifiable misdemeanors of Esav. Esav plots to kill Ya'akov in an understandable reaction to his losing the blessing which would have made him and his descendants the most important and prosperous nation in the world; certainly his reaction can't reveal any innate bloodthirstiness. He married women who were disagreeable to his parents; perhaps an insensitive act, but not a criminal one. Third, his selling the birthright hurt only himself. So why has Esav's name become synonymous with evil?

Clearly, Chazal's portrayal of Esav is partly colored by the characteristics of Edom, the corrupt nation descendant from Esav and one of Israel's prime antagonists in the books of the Prophets. Chazal also claimed that Rome, who destroyed the second Temple, descended from Edom. But perhaps the evil nature of Edom is a reflection of Esav himself. In one particular instance the Torah goes out of its way to condemn Esav's actions. When Esav declares his rationale for selling the birthright, "I'm going to die anyway, so why do I need any birthright?" (Gen. 25:32), the Torah comments, "Esav thus rejected the birthright" (v. 34). Rashi remarks, "Here the Torah testifies to his evil nature." Here, apparently, lies the source for Esav's fundamental flaw. Rashi explains that since the responsibility of the birthright carries with it too many possible incursions of the death penalty, Esav feels it is too dangerous to keep. Ibn Ezra and Rashbam give a more direct interpretation, suggesting that since Esav constantly endangers himself by hunting, he fears he will die before his father and never receive his inheritance. Esav's words "I'm going to die anyway" thus may reflect a twisted philosophy on life, that nothing is of significance since all ends ultimately in death. What do I care about the birthright if in a few years I will be dust? Esav's apathy and blindness to any purpose beyond his own existence is antithetical to fundamental Jewish beliefs and principles.

We are commanded by the Torah to follow in God's ways. "Just as He is merciful, so too must you be merciful." Man must mold and fashion his personality, focusing all his passions, emotions and intellect toward recreating himself as a reflection of the Divine One. Netziv suggests that this idea is the basis of the Hebrew word for "man;" "*adam*" comes from "*adameh*" - I will be like - suggesting that the essence of man is to strive to imitate God (*He'amek Davar, Bereshit*, 1:26). With this notion Netziv explains why our Sages usually understood the word "*adam*" to refer only to Jews: not because Jews are a higher level of humanity, but because the Jewish people have a special obligation to imitate the Almighty.

Which divine attributes must we imitate? In our liturgy, we repeatedly find mention of God's involvement in this world with respect to three particular themes: nature, Torah, and history. The Tur writes that the three Sabbath prayers of the evening, morning, and afternoon correspond respectively to creation, the giving of the Torah at Sinai, and the ultimate redemption at the end of days (O.C., 395). The three blessings surrounding the morning *Shema* also reflect these themes: *Yotzer Or* exalts nature, *Ahava Rabba* requests revelation through Torah, and *Ga'al Yisrael* lauds Hashem as the one who interferes with history to redeem his people. Similarly, Psalm 19 - which we say on Sabbath mornings - glorifies God through an animated portrayal of the sky, earth, sun, and stars ; then exalts various aspects of the Torah, and finally ends with the appelation for God, "my Redeemer."

Clearly, these are not just three mediums through which God acts; rather, they represent three fundamental attributes of God. God is the Creator, the One who fashions and forms, the One who takes a lump of clay and breathes into it life, the One who arranges a complex universe governed by strict laws called nature. God is also the Source of divine wisdom, the author and the teacher of our Torah. And God is the Redeemer, the one who controls the tides of



history, sometimes veiled behind the monotony of time, and sometimes revealed in full glory through wars and through miracles. If our Sages so strongly emphasized these three aspects of Hashem, then we are obligated to emulate them in particular.

How can this be achieved? Can man create worlds as Hashem? Can he fashion an intricate system of particles and energy that is the makeup of Mother Nature? Can man make any contribution to Torah, that infinite sea of divine wisdom that no mortal can master? And granted that certain chosen individuals can affect the flow of history, but can the common person have any influence on the outcome of world events?

Judaism teaches that the answer to every one of these questions is an emphatic yes. The Rav developed a portrait of man as creator:

"Man, like God, is often faced with '*tohu vavohu*' (utter desolation) and he does not know where to begin. He doubts his ability to say '*Yehi Or*' ("let there be light"). It seems that the world can never be illuminated, such is the prevailing gloom (*choshech*). Yet man is bidden by the principle of *imitatio dei* to create, to be a *shutaf* (partner) in *Yetzirah* (creation), fashioning form out of chaos. Of course, man does not create *ex nihilo*, as did God, though at times it seems to man that his task is as formidable as if it were '*yesh me'ayin*' (from absolute nothing).... There are diseases to conquer, rivers to control, miseries to extirpate (Avraham R. Besdin, *Reflections of the Rav*, Alpha Press, Jerusalem, p.26).

Man is charged "*vechivshuha*" (Gen. 1:28) to take the raw materials of nature and harness them, shaping them into a new, improved world. In this century alone we have seen a marvelous fulfilment of "*vechivshuha*" through the startling developments in science and technology. Every atom we split, every space shuttle we send, every wilderness we cultivate, bestows upon us the title "creator," a title that the Ultimate Creator paradoxically shares with his own creations.

In Torah, too, we have the ability and the obligation to follow in God's path. "The commandments of God are clear/they open the eyes" (Ps. 19:8). We struggle to clarify, to open eyes, by elucidating the commandments of the Torah through intense study and analysis. "The testimony of God is trustworthy/it wisens up the simple" (ibid.). We also make the simple one wise by organizing and systematizing the Torah to make it understandable and enjoyable to ourselves and our children.

But our role in Torah goes far beyond learning and transmitting. We actually participate in creating Torah. When there is a question regarding a halakhic principle, the majority vote of the court determines the solution, and their decision actually becomes part of the Divine Law, as if the Almighty had said it himself. "*Lo bashamayim hi*;" the Talmud rules like the majority even if a divine voice rules to the contrary (*Bava Metzia* 59b). We become partners with the Almighty in "making" Torah, by studying it, understanding it, and applying it to new situations.

Less popular than the previous two themes is the idea that, as a fulfillment of *imitatio dei*, we must become movers of history.

Some maintain that history is a cycle, continually repeating itself as nations rise and fall, as civilizations appear and disintegrate. Judaism, however, teaches that history is an unfolding drama, with a beginning, a middle, and an end. "The world has 6,000 years: 2,000 of desolation, 2,000 of Torah, and 2,000 of the coming of the Messiah" (*Avoda Zara* 9b). Sometimes, when the natural flow of history seems to deviate from its plotted course, we find God overtly interfering in order to push things in the right direction: "I have seen the suffering of my people in Egypt. I have heard them cry out because of their oppressors, and I feel their pain. Therefore I have come down to save them from the hand of Egypt, and to bring them out from that land, into a good, spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey..." (Ex. 3:7-8). We in turn are responsible to gain a sense of God's master plan, and then do all in our power to ensure that the drama of history follows the right path.

Avraham Avinu was aware of this responsibility, and attempted to fulfill it. Before his death, he orchestrates two events: he purchases from Efron a burial ground in Canaan (later to be Israel), and he sends his servant to find a wife for Issac. Avraham's insistence on precision in both events seems perplexing and out of character. Avraham is known as the *Ish Chesed*, the Man of Kindness, yet in these two instances he seems to put aside all etiquette for the sake of exactitude. Why does Avraham insist on his own particular formuation of the agreement? "But if you'll just listen to me! I'll give you the money for the field; take it from me and I'll bury my dead there" (Gen. 23:13). And why does Avraham, when warning Eliezer to find a specific kind of girl for Issac, make him, his trustworthy servant who runs the household, bind himself with a sacred oath?

The answer to this questions, as once suggested by Rabbi Michael Rosensweig, lies in the particular nature of these two events. Both in buying *Me'arat HaMachpela* and in finding a wife for Issac, Avraham had one goal in mind - to guarantee the future of the Jewish people. Avraham understood that the importance of securing the future outweighed the rules of normal behavior. When investing in a homeland for his descendants, and when insuring the physical continuation of generations, Avraham could not play the sweet and gentle man of kindness. He had to make the deal with Efron absolutely clear, and he had to be absolutely sure Eliezer would follow his instructions. The Torah preserves the detailed descriptions of these events to teach us that we must expend every effort when the future of the Jewish people is at stake.

Avraham was especially sensitive to his role in history because he lived in a special time period. The Talmud marks his lifetime as the dawn of a new age; 2,000 years of desolation are about to usher in 2,000 years of Torah. Avraham was well aware that through him, the Almighty was planning to build up a nation that would be devoted to God's service, a nation which, living in its homeland, Israel, would ultimately redeem the entire world by teaching it about the One, True, God. "I will make you into a great nation, . . . and all the people of the earth will be blessed through you" (Gen. 12:2-3). "The entire land of Canaan shall be your eternal heritage, and I will be a God to [your descendants]" (17:8).

Esav lived in the same time period. He could have been the next in the line of Patriarchs, the vehicle of fulfilment of the prophecies. Surely he had heard, perhaps as a child sitting on his grandfather's lap, of the special mission for which God had designated Avraham's children. But Esav had no long term ambitions, no far reaching goals, no visionary aspirations. "I'm going to die anyway," was his motto. Apathy is always corrosive, but for Esav, given his historical context and his potential, apathy is deep-rooted heresy. God handed Esav greatness on a silver platter, but Esav carelessly turned his back and never noticed. In exchanging everlasting glory for instant gratification, Esav mounted a viscious assault on God's master plan, and ultimately he defied God the Redeemer. That is why our tradition views Esav with such repugnance, because the very essence of his character is the antithesis of our belief

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