The Future of the Past: On Creating Meaningful Jewish Memories for our Students[1]

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Central to our role as Jewish educators is our responsibility to create meaningful experiences for our students. We want them to leave our classrooms with memories that will sustain them in their unfolding Jewish lives and to which they will return, time and time again, in the years and decades ahead. We want them to learn to love Judaism and to respect its values, and to take those feelings with them as they move on to the next level of their education.

These experiences fall into two categories, generally identified as formal education and informal, or experiential, education. We want our classrooms to be interesting and exciting. We want our teaching of *Chumash*, *Navi*, *Gemara*, or *Dinim* to be memorable and challenging, inspiring our students to remember the material and internalize its values. In addition, much attention has recently

1. I first began thinking about the subject of this essay in the Fall of 2014 when I was invited to present a lecture on this theme to students enrolled in the Certificate Program in Experiential Jewish Education at Yeshiva University. I want to thank Shuki Taylor, then head of this program and one of the most thoughtful, deliberate and innovative Jewish educators I have ever met, for giving me this opportunity. I also want to thank my wife, Yocheved Schacter, and my son-in-law, Rabbi Jonathan Knapp, Head of School, Yavneh Academy, Paramus, NJ, for reviewing this essay and for their most helpful psychological and pedagogical insights. For more on this topic, see Yaakov T. Glasser, "From Sinai to 'Seminar': The Transformative Power of Experiential Jewish Education," in Zev Eleff and Jacob J. Schacter (eds.), *Ennoble and Enable: Essays in Honor of Richard M. Joel* (New Milford and Jerusalem, 2018), 67–76.

been paid to experiential education, to programs like *Shabbatonim*, after-school activities, *chesed* projects, and others that are designed to appeal more to the emotional rather than the intellectual sides of our students. In addition, a relatively new instructional methodology known as "Project-Based Learning," or PBL, has focused on bringing together these two educational modalities by engaging texts in a more experiential format.[2] We work hard, in many ways, to make our students' multifaceted school experiences – both inside and outside the classroom – positive and meaningful, experiences to which they will refer with warmth and respect for the rest of their lives.

One way we seek to accomplish our goal is to help our students feel that they are part of something larger than themselves or their families, that they are part of the Jewish people as a whole. Much of what we teach them revolves around this effort. We teach them *Tanach* not as Bible stories, but as ways to connect them to the life narratives of people whom we identify to them as their ancestors. We want them to see themselves, personally, as *bnei Avraham, Yitzchak veYa'akov*, the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We teach them about the *chagim* not for anthropological purposes, but to expose them to the many historical narratives of their own people, both positive and negative: *yetzi'at Mitzrayim*, *kriyat Yam Suf*, and *matan Torah*, as well as *milchemet Amalek*, the *egel*, and the destructions of both *Batei Mikdash*. In fact, we teach them that they are even obligated by Torah law to remember some of these events. "Remember (זכור) this day on which you departed from Egypt" (*Shemot* 13:3) and "Remember (זכור) what Amalek did to you on the way when you were leaving Egypt" (*Devarim* 25:17) are the most well-known *mitzvot aseh* in this category, and there are others as well.[3] We want our students

2. The literature on "PBL" is large and growing. See, for example, John Larmer and John R. Mergendoller, "Seven Essentials for Project-Based Learning," *Educational Leadership* 68:1 (September 2010): 34–37; Maggie O'Brien, "What is Project-Based Learning?" www.definedstem.com/blog/what-is-project-based-learning (accessed March 27, 2019); "Project Based Learning," www.performingineducation.com/project-based-learning (accessed March 27, 2019).

3. See Rambam, *Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Chametz U'Matza* 7:1; *Hilchot Melachim* 5:5. For an example of another *mitzvah* involving memory, see the Ramban (comments on *Sefer HaMitzvot* of the Rambam, *mitzvot lo ta'aseh* 2; Commentary on

to place themselves into these narratives, to identify themselves as descendants of those who experienced them, to hitch their personal wagons to the caravan of the Jewish historical experience and of Jewish destiny. We want our students to feel part of a larger entity called the Jewish people, to cultivate a national or collective memory, just as we want them to develop a reservoir of their own personal memories that we work hard to create in our classrooms.

But how is this possible? I understand that I can remember an event that occurred to me, but how can I "remember" an event that I never experienced? How is it possible for the Torah to require me to do something that appears to be impossible? How can our students, or we, possibly "remember" *yetziat Mitzrayim* or *milchemet Amalek*? What, in fact, does the Hebrew word *zachor* mean?

There is no doubt that memory is central to Judaism. At the beginning of his justifiably celebrated work entitled *Zakhor* and subtitled "Jewish History and Jewish Memory," Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi writes, "Only in Israel and nowhere else is the injunction to remember felt as a religious imperative to an entire people. Its reverberations are everywhere."[4] He notes that the Hebrew root "*z-ch-r*" appears in its various declensions no less than one hundred and sixty-nine times in the Hebrew Bible.[5] It is clear that memory is an essential feature of Jewishness. Jews, surely, are a people of memory.

At some point in the later Middle Ages, Kabbalists inserted *shesh zechirot*, "six remembrances," to be recited at the end of the daily morning service: the Exodus from Egypt, the Revelation at Mount Sinai, the battle with Amalek, God's anger at us in the desert, the episode with Miriam and Moshe, and Shabbat. These "six remembrances" – three positive (Exodus, Sinai, and Shabbat) and three negative (Amalek, God's anger, and Miriam) – were deemed so important

Devarim 4:9, s.v. *rak hishamer lecha*), who counts not forgetting *Ma'amad Har Sinai* as a *mitzvah lo ta'aseh*. See also Elchanan Samet, "*Zichron HaHitgalut B'Har Chorev B'Parshat Va'etchanan*," in idem, *Iyunim B'Parashot HaShavu'a*, series 2 (Jerusalem, 2005), 333–53.

4. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle and London, 1982), 9.

5. Ibid. 5.

that they were incorporated into the daily prayer book.[6] But the question still stands. What does it mean for a people to "remember?" How can a member of that people "remember" an event that she or he never experienced?

Maurice Halbwachs, a French sociologist and philosopher, was the first to systematically discuss the notion of collective memory.[7] His groundbreaking understanding was summarized by Jeffrey K. Olick:

> Halbwachs thus distinguished between "autobiographical memory" and "historical memory." The former concerns the events of one's own life that one remembers because they were experienced directly, though it also includes reference to events which one did not experience directly but around which one's memory is oriented. For instance, you are likely to remember what you were doing when an event designated historic by the group took place – such as the attacks of September 11, 2001 – even if these events did not affect you directly in your individuality rather than in terms of the group of which you are a member. "Historical memory," in distinction, refers to residues of events by virtue of which groups claim a continuous identity through time. "Historical memory" of the U.S. Civil War, for instance, is part of what it means to be an American and is part of the collective narrative of the United States. But nobody still has "autobiographical memory" of the event.[8]

6. For a comprehensive analysis of these "remembrances," see Yitzchak Bogatz, *Shesh Zechirot* (Bnei Brak, 2005). R. Chaim Yosef David Azulai (Chida) has a list of ten "remembrances"; see ibid. 9–13. At the same time it is important to note that forgetting is, also, sometimes very important. See my "The Blessings of Forgetting," in Zev Eleff (ed.), *A Century at the Center: Orthodox Judaism & The Jewish Center* (New Milford and London, 2018), 117–21.

7. Halbwachs was a Catholic married to a Jewish woman. In 1944, his father-in-law was arrested in Lyon and murdered by French Nazis. Halbwachs rushed to the local Gestapo headquarters to protest, only to be imprisoned and sent to the Buchenwald Concentration Camp, where he was murdered on March 16, 1945, less than a month before liberation on April 11. For Halbwachs' work, see Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, edited, translated, and introduced by Lewis A. Coser (Chicago and London, 1992).

8. See Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy (eds.), *The*

"Autobiographical memory" or "personal memory" is a memory of events we ourselves experienced; "historical memory" (or "collective memory," "group memory," or "social memory") is a memory of events that define us as a group, like, for Jews, the Exodus from Egypt, the Revelation at Mount Sinai, and the battle with Amalek.[9]

But what does it mean for an American born after 1865 to "remember" the Civil War? How is it possible for a Jew born in the desert, or any time thereafter, to "remember" *yetzi'at Mitzrayim*? How can one remember an event that occurred before one's lifetime that one did not personally experience? This question is particularly acute for a Jewish educator, who is tasked precisely with this very responsibility – to teach her students about the absolute non-negotiable Torah commandment to "remember" *yetzi'at Mitzrayim* and the battle with Amalek. What is at stake here is not just fulfilling a civic duty, as important as that may be, but rather the fulfillment of the Divine will, the *kiyum* of a *mitzvat aseh*. But how is that possible? How can the Jewish educator help her students actively to form, or create, or experience, or cultivate a "collective" Jewish memory?

I would like to suggest that the Hebrew root ז-כ-ר is not to be understood as what we mean in English to "remember." Rather, I believe that it means "to draw one's attention to" or "to place at the forefront of one's consciousness." My clearest proof comes from the obligation to "remember Shabbat," – זכור את יום השבת לקדשו (*Shemot* 20:8) – the last of the "six remembrances" mentioned above. What

Collective Memory Reader (Oxford and New York, 2011), "Introduction," p. 19. People of my generation would probably use different examples, like the Kennedy assassination or the outbreak of the Six Day War. See Barbie Zelizer, *Covering the Body: The Kennedy Assassination, the Media and the Shaping of Collective Memory* (Chicago, 1992); Michael Oren, *Six Day of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (New York, 2002).

Also relevant here is the important work of Pierre Nora. For an English translation of some of his central points, see Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire", trans. by Marc Roudebush, *Representations* 26 (1989): 7–24.

9. For the phrase "social memory," see the title of James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford and Cambridge, 1992). See also the first chapter in Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge, 1989), 6–40; Amanda J. Barnier and John Sutton, "From Individual to Collective Memory: Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives," *Memory* 16:3 (2008): 177–78.

does it mean to "remember Shabbat?" Was Shabbat an event that "happened" that every Jew is obligated to "remember?" In his commentary on this verse, Rashi writes, "Pay attention to always remember the day of Shabbat so that if [during the week] you will come upon an attractive object, prepare it for Shabbat." Rashi is referring to the Talmudic passage (*Beitza* 16a) that relates:

> They said about Shammai the Elder that every day he would eat in honor of Shabbat. If he would come across a superior animal [at any time during the week], he would say, "This should be for Shabbat." If he [later] came across a more superior one, he would designate this second one [for Shabbat] and eat the first one.[10]

Thus, the obligation of זכור את יום השבת clearly means, "Make Shabbat important," or, "Focus on the significance of Shabbat."

Furthermore, Shabbat itself is meant to elicit other "memories." The text of the Friday night *Kiddush* includes references to the Shabbat as – זכרון למעשה בראשית – "a remembrance of the work of creation" and – זכר ליציאת מצרים – "a remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt." How is it possible to "remember" the act of creation? Indeed, for the Ramban, this is precisely the point of Shabbat: "By always remembering the Shabbat, it will at all times remind us of creation, and we will forever acknowledge that the universe has a Creator."[11] But how can anything "remind" us of Creation in the

10. For interesting analyses of Hillel's opinion presented in this passage, see R. Yitchak Hutner, *Pachad Yitzchak, Sha'ar UV'Yom HaShabbat* (New York, 2014), 87–88; R. Avraham Rubin, "*B'Din Hazkarat Shabbat B'Shir shel Yom L'Achar Tefillat Shacharit,*" *Kovetz Beit Aharon V'Yisrael* 34:2: 446–51. For a larger context for this Talmudic passage, see my "To Be an Erev Shabbat Jew," in Daniel Z. Feldman and Stuart W. Halpern (eds.), *Mitokh ha-Ohel: From Within the Tent: The Shabbat Prayers* (New Milford and Jerusalem, 2015), 1–15.

11. Commentary of Ramban, *Shemot* 20:7, s.v. *zachor et yom haShabbat l'kadesho*. By contrast, for Ibn Ezra, the point of "remembering Shabbat" is not theological but practical – to keep track of the days of the week so that one will never mistake one for another and come to desecrate the Shabbat. See Ibn Ezra, Short Commentary, *Shemot* 20:7, s.v. *v'ta'am zachor et yom haShabbat*. For other examples of a theological basis for the memory of an event, see Ramban on *Sefer HaMitzvot* of the Rambam,

standard English understanding of that word? No human being was alive then!

The Hebrew root ז-כ-ר is, then, is not to be understood as "remember" in the conventional English sense. Rather, as noted, it means "to draw one's attention to" or "to place at the forefront of one's consciousness." If one still insists on associating it with the English "remember," I would suggest that it does not mean "Remember an event that happened." That is impossible. Rather, it would mean, "Remember *that* an event happened."

But how does one even "remember that an event happened?" What is the mechanism for the transmission of this "historical memory" (or "collective memory," "group memory," or "social memory")? How can a Jewish educator convey the substance and importance of this memory to his/her students?

In addressing the meaning of "remembering" Shabbat, angering God in the desert, what happened to Miriam, and Amalek, the *midrash* notes that in none of those cases is thought sufficient; rather, a verbal recitation is necessary: יכול בלבך... שתהא שונה בפיך[12] – one cannot just be told to think something; one must be taught to say something. Notice that the Rambam states that the way one fulfills the Biblical obligation of "Remember (*Zachor*) this day on which you departed from Egypt" (*Shemot* 13:3) is "to tell of the miracles and wonders that occurred to our ancestors in Egypt."[13] Commenting on the verse in *Megillat Esther* that mandates that "these days should be remembered" (*Esther* 9:28), Rashi comments, "Through the reading of the *Megilla*."[14] "Remembering" is not enough; recital is necessary.[15] "Memory flowed, above all," wrote Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, "through two channels: ritual and recital."[16]

Furthermore, in their commentaries on this passage in the

mitzvot aseh 7 (remembering Amalek); *mitzvot lo ta'aseh* 2 (remembering revelation); see above, n. 3.

12. *Sifra*, *Torat Kohanim* (Jerusalem, 1959), 119b (*Vayikra*, *Parshat Bechukotai* 1:3). See also *Megilla* 18a; R. Eliezer Papo, *Pele Yo'etz* (Jerusalem, 1903), part 1, 32a.

13. Rambam, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchot Chametz U'Matza* 7:1.

14. Rashi, s.v. *nizkarim*.

15. See also Rambam, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchot K'riat Shema* 1:3.

16. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 11.

Rambam, both Rabbi Shimshon of Shantz and Rabbi Abraham ben David of Posquières noted that even saying something is insufficient. The recital needs to lead the individual to do something, such as observe the laws of Shabbat.[17] The Talmud (*Pesachim* 106a) notes that the fulfillment of זכור את יום השבת לקדשו (*Shemot* 20:8), is not achieved just by "remembering"; rather, one must "remember it over wine." While the status of the obligation of wine as part of *Kiddush* is subject to a disagreement,[18] it is clear that mere memory, or even recital, is insufficient. Similarly, in commenting on the verse, "Remember (זכור) what the Lord, your God, did to Miriam" (*Devarim* 24:9), Rashi comments, "If you wish to care that you not be stricken with leprosy, do not speak *lashon hara*."[19]

The *mitzvah* to "remember" these events, then, is not simply "to remember" them, but to perform the *mitzvot* relevant to each of them. We recite *Kiddush* on Shabbat, we eat *matza* and drink *arba kosot* on Pesach, and much, much more. We Jews define what it means to be a part of the Jewish people by reciting or by doing, and the responsibility of the Jewish educator is to teach her students the importance and technicalities of reciting and doing in order that they will be able to feel that they too are part of the Jewish people. "Memory" imposes obligations on us. It makes demands on us, either in the form of belief or ideology (Ramban, Ibn Ezra) or in the form of action or behavior (Ras"h MiShantz, Ra'abad).[20]

But herein lies one of the greatest challenges of twenty-first century Jewish education. In pre-modern times, Jews shared certain fundamental assumptions: (1) The individual felt part of a larger group called "the Jewish people." She felt a strong group identity. (2) The individual felt that belonging to this group mattered, that this association had a hold on her, and that it obligated her to do something that she was prepared to do. (3) Finally, the practices and behaviors

17. Commentary of the Ras"h mi-Shanẓ and the Ra'abad, ad loc.

18. See Tosafot, ad loc., s.v. *zochrehu al hayayin*; Rambam, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchot Shabbat* 29:6.

19. Rashi, s.v. *zachor et asher asah*. See also Ramban, *Devarim* 25:17, s.v. *zachor et asher asah lecha Amalek*; R. Abraham Borenstein, *Avnei Nezer*, *Orach Chaim* (Pietrkov, 1912), vol. 2, 140b (*Hilchot Megilla*, *She'elot U'Teshuvot* 517:16).

20. See also *Megilla* 18a.

that the individual was obligated to perform were familiar to her. As an integral part of "the Jewish community," she recognized what a *sukka*, *matza*, and *arba kosot* were. The expectations for their use were known to her and the language of *mitzvah* discourse was resonant with her and meaningful to her. In sum: Identity was self-evident. Expectations were self-evident. Forms of obligated behavior were self-evident.

By contrast, in the times in which Jewish educators currently work, all these assumptions are virtually gone: (1) Most contemporary Jews do not feel part of the Jewish people; they have no strong group identity. (2) As a result, nothing matters. Nothing has a hold on them. They feel no sense of obligation. (3) Finally, so much of what is uniquely Jewish is not at all familiar to them – not the expectations and not the language, objects, or practices of Jewish ritual – and therefore not at all meaningful for them.

It seems to me, then, that the primary responsibility of the contemporary Jewish educator, even in an Orthodox day school, is to address these three basic points in a thoughtful way. Our goal is obviously not to recreate pre-modern realities; that clearly will not happen. Instead, our goal is to address these three challenges in contemporary categories that will resonate first with us and then with our students: (1) Help them develop a group identity, to feel like they are a part of the Jewish people. (2) Help them appreciate at least a sense that "Jewishness," if not an actual sense of *Halachic* obligation, matters to them, and that it asks, and maybe even demands, something of them. (3) Finally, help them create a set of Jewish memories, in and out of the classroom, that will matter to them, will resonate with them, will be meaningful to them, and will stay with them after they leave our classrooms and continue along their Jewish journeys.

I suggest that the following points need to be kept in mind in order for this effort to be even partially successful:

(1) The "memory" needs first to be personally "usable" and relevant for the educator herself. It needs to matter to her. Really.

The Jewish educator is not teaching physics or English literature, calculus or the Russian Revolution. Her responsibility is not just to convey a collection of facts or a body of knowledge, but to convey love and respect for a precious tradition, for a meaningful way of life.

As a result, the Jewish educator needs to be personally committed to that tradition as a central, if not *the* central, component of her own personal life.[21]

(2) While the "memory" being conveyed is a "national" or "collective" one, it needs to be presented in a way that resonates with every individual in a personal way.

Any sharp demarcation drawn between "personal memory" and "group memory" is clearly an overstatement. Maurice Halbwachs himself wrote:

> While the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember. While these remembrances are mutually supportive of each other and common to all, individual members still vary in the intensity with which they experience them.[22]

Susan A. Crane stressed the importance of "writing the individual back into collective memory."[23] Amos Funkenstein perceptively noted:

> Consciousness and memory can only be realized by an individual who acts, is aware and remembers. Just as a nation cannot eat or dance, neither can it speak or remember. Remembering is a mental act, and therefore it is absolutely and completely personal.[24]

"Individual and collective memories are radically interactive," wrote Elaine Reese and Robyn Fivush.[25] William Hirst and David Manier

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21. For the notion of memory being "usable," see the title of the book by David G. Roskies, *The Jewish Search for a Usable Past* (Bloomington, 1999).

22. See Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy (eds.), *The Collective Memory Reader*, 142.

23. Susan A. Crane, "Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory.," *The American Historical Review* 102:5 (1997): 1372–85.

24. Amos Funkenstein, "Collective Memory and Historical Consciousness," *History and Memory* 1:1 (1989): 6.

25. Elaine Reese and Robyn Fivush, "The Development of Collective

lamented the fact that, "A significant portion of the social science literature on collective memory proceeds in a manner that seems unaware of the role that individuals, and their psychology, may play in the formation and maintenance of collective memories."[26] I would change that sentence to read, "of the role that individuals, and their psychology, *do* play in the formation and maintenance of collective memories." After all, only an individual can "remember." Collective memory lives in the individual members of that collective.

As a result, the memories that the Jewish educator is creating need to be inclusive. She needs to be sensitive to the fact that not all of her students will resonate to the lessons of "memory" in an identical fashion. Each student is different and needs to be separately considered if "memory consciousness" is to be successfully transmitted. A verse very relevant here, worn thin by repeated reference in this context, is "חנוך לנער על פי דרכו" – "Train a lad according to his way" (*Mishlei* 22:6).[27]

In particular, women need to be included in the world of Jewish memory. I have often wondered about the etymological connection between the Hebrew word for male (זָכָר) and the Hebrew word for a memory (זֵכֶר). Whether or not this connection is academically sound, and I'm not sure that it is, it does seem to point to the fact that for a long time, the creation of appropriate Jewish "memories" was a male prerogative. But times have changed. But by now it is clear that "collective memory" cannot be successfully conveyed unless it includes everyone, particularly women.

(3) The methods we utilize to convey these "memories" need to change, to be constantly in flux.

While the substance of what the Jewish educator wants to convey to her students is constant, the way to convey that substance needs to change, not only from student to student but also from generation to generation and from country to country.

Remembering," *Memory* 16:3 (2008): 202.

26. William Hirst and David Manier, "Towards a Psychology of Collective Memory," *Memory* 16:3 (2008): 184.

27. See the beautiful letter by R. Yisrael Zev Gustman, "*Michtav B'Inyanei Chinuch*," *HaMa'ayan* 52:1 (Tishrei 5772): 3–4.

The *gemara* (*Menachot* 28a–b) states: "All the vessels that Moshe made were valid for him [his generation] and were valid for all generations [*l'dorot*], whereas the trumpets [that he fashioned] were valid for him but were invalid for future generations." The trumpets (*chatzotzrot*) are specifically contrasted in that Talmudic passage to the ark (*aron*). The *aron* is *l'dorot*; the *chatzotzrot* are only appropriate for Moshe's generation. They need to be refashioned for use at a later time.

While the *gemara* bases this teaching on a textual nuance, within it lies an important lesson very relevant here. The *aron* contains the *luchot*, the substance of Torah, its core and essence. The *chatzotzrot*, by contrast, were used to get the people to move, to travel, from place to place (*Bamidbar* 10:2). By contrasting the *aron* with the *chatzotzrot*, *Chazal* are teaching us that the *aron*, the core of Torah, the substance and the content of Torah, never changes; what Moshe made remains for eternity, *l'dorot*. By contrast, the *chatzotzrot* that were utilized to move the people to travel need to change from generation to generation and from place to place. What moved the people in the twelfth century will not move them in the seventeenth or twenty-first century; what moved them in Babylonia will not move them in Poland; what moved them in Poland will not move them in the United States. The substance (*aron*) is constant, but the way the people are moved (*chatzotzrot*) must change.[28]

Robert Bellah, a former prominent sociologist of religion, and his colleagues write that "we can speak of a real community as a 'community of memory.'"[29] Robert Wuthnow quotes Bellah and writes about "The Church as Community of Memory."[30] But just as not all communities are the same, so are the "memories" at the heart of those communities not the same: "Memory is not an unchanging

28. I am grateful to Rabbi Isaac Rice who pointed out to me that this thought is found in the name of Rabbi Yechezkel Abramsky in Aharon Sorski, *Melekh B'Yofyo* (Jerusalem, 2004), vol. 1, 235.

29. Robert Bellah, et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley, 1985), 153.

30. Robert Wuthnow, *Christianity in the Twenty-First Century: Reflections on the Challenges Ahead* (New York and Oxford, 1993), 46. See also Barbara A. Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering* (Maidenhead and Philadelphia, 2003), 15–19.

vessel for carrying the past into the present; memory is a process, not a thing, and it works differently at different points in time."[31] "What is memory? Not a storehouse, not a trunk in the attic, but an instrument that constantly refines the past into a narrative, accessible and acceptable to oneself."[32] Memory is dynamic, not static. The Jewish educator needs constantly to find new ways to "re-enact" the past, to "reclaim" the past, to make the past "usable," "purposeful," and relevant for her students for all her students at the moment she is teaching them. This is central for the perpetuation of any religious tradition; only in this way can she be sure that "what is left behind lives on."[33]

(4) Feelings and experiences, not just class presentations and assigned readings, are central to the creation and retention of meaningful memories.

It is self-evident that the Jewish educator needs to devote much thinking and creativity to creating opportunities for her students to personally feel or experience what is being transmitted to them. The power of a Pesach *seder* or the joy of the founding of the State of Israel can best be transmitted not only through book knowledge but, even more so, by the educator helping her students "feel" how precious and important they are. How important is it for the educator to share with her students those pivotal moments when "knowing" became "feeling" – when she saw her mother or grandmother shed a tear while lighting Shabbat candles, when she stood under her father's or grandfather's *tallit* during *Birkat Kohanim* as a little girl, how she remembers the tune of "*Kevakarat*" sang by the *Ba'al Tefilla* in her shul on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur when she was a child. James E. Zull wrote, "In the business of reason and memory,

31. Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins, "Social Memory Studies: From 'Collective Memory' to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices," *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998): 122. Olick and Robbins cite this from a 1995 article by Barbie Zelizer.

32. This quote is attributed to Stanley Kauffmann. See www.azquotes.com/quote/759666 (retrieved on February 20, 2019).

33. See Jeff Greene, "What is Left Behind Lives On," *Parabola* 35:2 (2010): 34–43.

feelings count."[34] After all, is this not what "experiential education" is all about?

Central to the teachings of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik is the notion that not only is ritual performance of *mitzvot* centrally important, but the feeling associated with *mitzvah* performance is as well. Rabbi Soloveitchik came back to this central point again and again in his oral presentations and his writings, but for me, he most sharply presented it in the eulogy he delivered for his *machatenista*, Mrs. Rebecca Twersky. In describing the role of the archetypal Jewish mother and in reflecting on his own Jewish mother, the Rav said:

> I learned from her [my mother] very much. Most of all I learned that Judaism expresses itself not only in formal compliance with the law but also in a living experience. She taught me that there is a flavor, a scent and warmth to *mitzvot*.... The fathers knew much about the Shabbat; the mothers lived the Shabbat, experienced her presence, and perceived her beauty and splendor.[35]

While elsewhere Rabbi Soloveitchik again presented this distinction along gender lines (the father is responsible for "knowing" and the mother for "living"),[36] I do not believe this to be the case and seriously question whether he was himself committed to this dichotomy. For me, and maybe for him, both mother and father are responsible for both "knowing" and "living," and I would add the teacher to this list as well.

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34. James E. Zull, *The Art of Changing the Brain: Enriching Teaching by Exploring the Biology of Learning* (Sterling, 2002), 69, subtitle to Chapter 5, "A Feeling of this Business."

35. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "A Tribute to the Rebbetzin of Talne," *Tradition* 17:2 (1978): 77. For more examples of the centrality of the religious experience for Rabbi Soloveitchik, see my "*Tazri'a*: Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik on Marriage, *Mitzvot*, and a Jew's Relationship to God," in Naftali Rothenberg (ed.), *Wisdom by the Week* (Jersey City, 2011), 324–31; my "Halakhic Authority in a World of Personal Autonomy," in Michael J. Harris, Daniel Rynhold, and Tamara Wright (eds.), *Radical Responsibility: Celebrating the Thought of Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks* (New Milford and Jerusalem, 2012), 171–72 and n. 45.

36. See the essay "Parenthood: Natural and Redeemed," in David Shatz and Joel B. Wolowelsky (eds.), *Family Redeemed: Essays on Family Relationships* (Jersey City, 2000), 114–15.

However, it is precisely here wherein there lies a formidable challenge. As central as conveying feelings is in the enterprise of teaching, it is extremely difficult to do so successfully. James Zull tells the story of a colleague named Kerry who taught math to students who had a hard time mastering that discipline:

> "The other day I derived an equation for a student," he said, "and she seemed to understand it. But then, out of the blue, she floored me with her question."
> "You know what she asked?" he went on. "She looked right at me and said, 'How do you know how to do that? How do you know how to derive equations?'" "She had me!" Kerry exclaimed. "I couldn't answer. I just have a feeling for it!" Then, after a pause, he went on. "And I don't know how to teach that feeling."
> Maybe I'm wrong, but it seemed that this made him sad.[37]

Rabbi Soloveitchik himself also personally reflected on this challenge. I have already noted how important feelings and experiences were for him as central components of living a Halachic life. Yet he himself noted how difficult it was for him, as a teacher, to convey these feelings and experiences to his students. In a talk he delivered on March 13, 1974, Rabbi Soloveitchik said:

> As a teacher, I can transmit my ideas to my pupils on an intellectual level. When it comes to the transmission and passing of experiences, I feel so inadequate. Sometimes it drives me to despair. It is very hard.... I am very helpless in this regard. How can I convey experiences to my students? I simply do not know how.[38]

He returned to this theme in greater detail in a talk he delivered slightly more than a year later, on May 28, 1975:

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37. James E. Zull, *The Art of Changing the Brain*, pp. 69–70.
38. Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff, *The Rav: The World of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik* (1999), vol. 2, 238–39.

> A Jew is not only supposed to know what *Yahadut* stands for and to have knowledge of *Yahadut*; he is also called upon to experience *Yahadut*, to live it, and to somehow engage in a romance with the Almighty. Knowing about *Yahadut* is not enough; it is a norm to be implemented and experienced. It is to be lived and enjoyed....
>
> Let me make an admission here; I will confide in you. This is the toughest of all jobs, the most difficult of all tasks. I know from my own experience how difficult it is. I am not modest; I am far from being modest. I know that I am a good teacher. I can teach Halacha. I can explain the most abstract concepts. I can popularize the most complex Talmudic debate and break it down into its component parts. I can explain and elucidate abstract ideas....
>
> But one trick I have not mastered. One thing I cannot do to perfection is to tell my students how I felt on Rosh Hashana and Yom HaKippurim when I was their age. The emotions I experienced, and not what I knew about it. I knew a lot, and they know a lot. But what I felt on these days! How I lived it! I am unable to share with them what I experienced.[39]

If our great master and teacher, Rabbi Soloveitchik, considered this to be a challenge, where does that leave us? Only with the awareness that it is important and with the renewed commitment to do what we can.

Dannie Epstein Grajower *a"h* was a teacher who understood and modelled all four points I consider indispensable for success as a Jewish educator. 1) Jewish tradition mattered to her. Personally. A lot. 2) She understood and appreciated the uniqueness of each of her students and treated them accordingly. 3) She taught in innovative and creative ways. 4) Feelings and experiences were at the heart of her teaching, in addition to texts and book knowledge.

I first met Dannie and her family when we travelled together as part of a group to Morocco in the summer of 2005. Shortly thereafter, I had the privilege of having her as a student in my classes at the

39. Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff, *The Rav*, 178–79.

Stern College for Women in the Spring of 2006 and 2007. Each of those semesters, she distinguished herself in her class participation and written work, and both times she received the grade of A. I actually saved her final exams and want to quote, verbatim, from one of them. Dannie wrote:

> The thing that we learned that I can relate to most in my relationship to my family and friends is what the *Meshach Chochma* wrote in regard to Noach and Moshe. There are similarities between the two. Both were saved by a *teiva*, and both were faced with the possible actual destruction of their generation. But the difference is this – Noach was building his *teiva* for 120 years and changed no one! He didn't reach out to a single person to influence them in 120 years!! Moshe, however, fought like crazy for *Bnei Yisrael* after the *chet ha'egel*. Moshe took a proactive role, while Noach was passive. As a result, the vehicle of Moshe's *teiva* had tar only on the outside, whereas *teivat Noach* stank because there was tar on both the inside and outside.
>
> We need to be as understanding as possible, embrace them with love and kind words (Chazon Ish), but at the same time take a proactive role – have *sedarim* with people who drive [on Shabbat] and who are *over* on other *issurim* – if there is any hope of effecting change.[40]

Dannie lived this lesson. She was understanding, and she embraced those who were blessed to know her – especially her students – with love and kindness. All who knew her join her precious and exceptional family in mourning her loss.

דניאלה שרה בת אליעזר ישראל הלוי ולבה טובה.
תהא נשמתה צרורה בצרור החיים.

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40. The reference to the *Meshech Chochma* is to his commentary on *Parshat Noach*, s.v. *ish ha'adama* (including what I added in class). For the reference to the tar on the *teivot* of Moshe and Noach, see Rashi, Bereshit 6:14, s.v. *ba'kofer*; Shemot 2:3, s.v. *ba'chemor u'va'zafet*, quoting from earlier *ma'amarei Chazal*. The reference to the Chazon Ish is in his commentary on *Yoreh De'ah* 2:16.

עלי דשא

ALEI DESHE

THOUGHTS ON JEWISH EDUCATION

in Memory of
Dannie Grajower *z"l*

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RABBI ISAAC RICE

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