

# THE JEWISH DAY SCHOOL: A SYMPOSIUM

## INTRODUCTION

Among those committed to vibrant Jewish survival, there has emerged by now a consensus that Jewish Day Schools offer the best hope for producing the kind of Jew who is genuinely dedicated to Torah and the Jewish people. As one reviews the dramatic epic of the heroic struggle against overwhelming odds, one is tempted to paraphrase Winston Churchill's statement that "Never before in the history of American Jewry have so many owed so much to so few Day Schools."

The miracle looms ever larger in the light of the staggering financial burdens shouldered by Day Schools because they have never received governmental aid nor the kind of support from Jewish Federation and welfare organizations commensurate with their needs and importance.

But in spite of or, perhaps, because of the growing popularity of Jewish Day Schools there has also come to the fore increasing self-criticism on the part of educators and community leaders. Alarmed by the relatively large number of graduates from Jewish Day Schools who, upon entering college, defect from the ranks of Judaism and reject the pattern of Jewish observance which they had previously practiced, some educators entertain doubts whether the Jewish Day School, however superior it might be to other forms of education, is really adequate to the challenge of developing genuinely committed Jews. Moreover, there are also some who wonder whether a Jewish Day School does not create a kind of ghetto which fails to prepare students to meet adequately the onslaught of competing ideologies to which they are exposed on the campus.

*TRADITION* has turned to a group of prominent educators and religious leaders to obtain their reaction to the educational philosophy, methods and procedures of day schools. Participants in this Symposium were asked to address themselves to the following questions:

1. In the light of modern experience does the Jewish Day School set realistic goals for itself?
2. What do you believe are the most serious shortcomings of the Day School?
3. Is the Jewish Day School too much insulated from the community and too over-protective of its students?
4. How do you evaluate the role of secular studies in a Jewish Day School? Are secular studies properly integrated with Jewish subjects? Should there be more or less synthesis between them?

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5. Can a Jewish Day School produce learned Jews while trying to integrate them into over-all society?
6. How can a Jewish Day School better prepare its students for the competing life-styles and ideologies of the campus?
7. How can a Jewish Day School improve the quality of the religious life of its students and deepen their commitment to Torah?
8. Does the Jewish Day School sufficiently stress the involvement of its students in Jewish communal activities and other forms of social action?
9. Does the Jewish Day School sufficiently tap Jewish community sources, Rabbis, Synagogues, Jewish Agencies to supplement and enhance its educational program?
10. How should a Jewish Day School improve its method, curriculum, and educational goals?

W.S.W.

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*Saul J. Berman*

Rabbi Berman is Chairman of the Department of Jewish Studies at Stern College for Women of Yeshiva University.

Analysis of the Jewish educational process must begin with an understanding of the student. The Solomonic proverb, urging us to "teach a child in his way," must be more than just a directive to know when the child is capable of learning how to read, and when he is capable of more intellectually demanding forms of study. The "way" of the child must include an understanding of the total society with which he interacts. The student of today is different from the student of the past because he relates to a markedly changed society which has produced new pressures, new responsibilities and new options.

While the traditional *yeshivot* may continue to attract predominantly students who are sufficiently sheltered from the outside world as to maintain their basic similarity to the students of the past generation, even they, and certainly the more open Day Schools, are attracting in increasing numbers, students whose life styles are being shaped by the new cultural patterns in American society. If the Day Schools continue to teach in the old, even previously successful, fashions, they will fail to accomplish their goals with their new students.

The indications of such failure

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are already foreshadowed on the college campuses. Rabbis having substantial contact with college students have already noted that a significant proportion of Day School and even Yeshiva High School graduates fall into one of two patterns; either they insularize themselves on the campus and fail to confront the campus community, or they enter fully into the social patterns of their peers and abandon altogether the degree of observance of Halakhah with which they arrived. Both alternatives indicate that they have not been adequately prepared to live as halakhik Jews, bringing their own unique perspectives to bear, while confronting and interacting with the general society within which they live. Despite their "integrated" education, they continue to see the worlds of Halakhah and of American life as mutually exclusive paths incapable of integration within the life-style of the individual.

Of course, many of their *Rebbeim*, and many people who occupy positions central to the Day School's educational process, will view this situation not with resignation but with joy, and will interpret it as great success. For them, the creation of an absolute dichotomy between Torah and the secular world is a desideratum. They may lose some of their students, perhaps even most of them to the secular world, but those they keep will belong heart and soul to the world of Torah.

If this dichotomization is unacceptable as either the formulated goal or as the unintended consequence of Day School education,

then positive steps must be taken to prevent it from occurring. Firstly, we must reevaluate the basis of selection of textual sources used in the schools. No one can deny the importance of communicating basic skills in the study of Hebrew and Aramaic texts. Without a working knowledge of the languages of Biblical and Rabbinic text, Jewish education becomes a dead end road. But we may question whether the study of consecutive pages in any text is geared to accomplish anything more than literary skills. Exposure of our students to carefully selected texts which are value-infused, which deal systematically with basic legal, philosophical and moral concepts can be a more valuable approach to the study of Tanach and particularly to the study of Talmud and Halakhah.

The first fifteen pages of Tractate *Berakhot*, are in their subject matter and in their structure, no more intrinsically relevant to our students than are the first fifteen pages of *Baba Metzia*. It is fallacious to assume that the substitution of one tractate by another will automatically increase student motivation and participation. On the other hand, a carefully structured sequence of texts, Biblical, Talmudic, and post-Talmudic, may not only expose our students to basic areas of Jewish values relevant to their lives, but may also engage them in a life-long pursuit of Jewish perspectives while maximizing their abilities to handle the Jewish sources from which those perspectives are to be culled. The mere awareness that Judaism deals with problems such as cheating, social

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responsibility, war, freedom of speech, business ethics and so on, could only help them in the process of seeing their societal existence as part and parcel of their lives as Jews.

Secondly, we must not be frightened away from a more direct integrative approach in our teaching of Jewish and general studies. There are Jewish perspectives to the teaching of world and American history; there are Jewish values related to the study of government and social sciences; there are areas of Jewish law and custom which could take on infinitely greater significance if taught within the context of mathematics and the natural sciences. The development of an integrated curriculum on that level would more effectively project Judaism as a total life pattern rather than as an appendage to Americanism.

Thirdly, premium must be placed on finding and keeping teachers who express not only in words but in their life style the goal of a halakhic life within the structure of American society. Just as not every Israeli is *ipso facto* a teacher of Hebrew, similarly not every religious Jew is capable of serving as a model for the fullness of religious life. If the *Rebbe* is himself totally removed from society and lives in a closed world, he can be, at most, a partial example for the student who will have to make his way — fully as a committed Jew through the labyrinths of American society.

In this regard, our schools could make much further and effective use of people outside of the edu-

cational structure who can serve as appropriate models. By co-opting members of the general Orthodox community who have preserved their Jewish integrity while fully engaged with the general society, the school can project model images more closely related to the reality our students will face. Such contact, if properly used, could also serve to minimize the occasional antagonism between school and synagogue community which develops all too often to the detriment of both.

Fourthly, greater effort must be expended to establish administrative integrity in the schools. As students learn from their teachers, they learn also from the administration of the institution. The fairness with which students are handled, the public image projected through fund-raising activities, the manner of calendar design, the persons honored by the school, the way in which parental concerns are treated, all these and more, project to the student what it really means to be an Orthodox Jew and to live a Halakhic life.

A school administration which shows itself to be unfeeling, which favors the children of wealthy parents, which is unscrupulous in its dealings with its community, may defeat everything it is struggling so hard in the classroom to communicate.

Fifthly, we must look toward a greater integration of the classroom setting with the informal process of the Orthodox youth movements. Organizations such as N.C.S.Y., Bnai Akiva, Yeshiva University Torah Leadership Seminars, Pirchei

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Agudath Israel, and others have a potential for providing the youth community within which the formal learning of the school can take root and flourish. Maintaining a religious peer group is at least as vital as providing religious knowledge in the process of assuring the continuing allegiance of our students to the religious community. The greater the integration between formal and informal educational influences, the better our chance of preventing Jewish knowledge from being fragmented from the total life style of the student. In this regard, the pioneering efforts of Torah Umesorah at developing a distinct curriculum for the teaching of Jewish moral values, could effectively be supplemented by the development of actual projects in which

those teachings could be put to use in the community as well as in the school. Such demonstration of the immediacy of transition from talking about morality to actually living morally would be more than just an educational device, it would serve as a much needed model to the Jewish community as a whole.

Our goal in the Jewish Day School must be more than just communicating a given body of religious knowledge. We must strive to shape a Jewish personality not only capable of resisting violation by the general society, but also capable of creatively interacting with that society to the enrichment of his Jewish commitments. I believe that the suggestions made above can aid in moving in that positive direction.

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*David Eliach*

Rabbi Eliach is Principal of Joel Braverman High School of the Yeshiva of Flatbush. His contribution to the Symposium is based upon a lecture delivered at a conference of the Rabbinical Council of America in Lakewood on November 30th, 1971.

The future of Jewish education in the United States looks very bleak. As is well known there has been a sharp decrease in the number of students attending Talmud

Torah. Only 4½ percent of Jewish students attend *yeshivot*.\* We know that not all these graduates of yeshiva who attend college remain religious. I do not refer to *yeshivot*

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\*Rothman, Eugene, *Midstream*, June/July, 1971, "Whither the Hebrew Day Schools," p. 19.

where the majority of the students come from non-religious homes but to *yeshivot* where the majority come from religious backgrounds. The latter do not retain their *Yiddishkeit* after attending college for a year or two.

It is true that some of our graduates are very active in establishing *kosher* kitchens on various campuses, and are involved in fighting the battle of Israel. They also have meetings, seminars, classes and conventions dealing with Jews and Judaism; but they are a minority even among yeshiva graduates. A good number of them are actually becoming alienated. Why? If we took a closer look at Jewish education, we would find that even the numbers and statistics which look encouraging are really not so at all.

We repeatedly hear that many more *yeshivot* have been established in recent years, but we do not learn about *yeshivot* which closed down or which are about to be closed, including *yeshivot* that had 700 or 900 students. At a time when the public school system is degenerating, and many parents are sending their children to *yeshivot*, we should have tripled the number of our students during the last five years. But we have not done so! We must ask why. Granted some *yeshivot* exist partly because of racial problems, political upheavals and a lack of security. But even so, we cannot attract more than 4½ percent of Jewish students to *yeshivot* and by the end of high school we find ourselves with only a two and one-half percent, or if we are to be optimistic, 3½ percent. These facts give rise to the

question: Don't we have in our Jewish tradition and in our Jewish philosophy enough content and material to motivate and stimulate our future generation to observance of *mitzvot* and to a Jewish identification in which our youth would be proud? Where have we failed?

I can see three major reasons for our failure. The first one is an apathy on the part of Jewish leaders toward yeshiva education. Even among the Orthodox leadership building a synagogue or a center was more important than erecting a yeshiva. A thousand Orthodox synagogues could collect enough money to support all the *yeshivot* which are struggling for survival and have to settle for second best in their education.

The second reason is our schizophrenic approach to Jewish education. We educate our students in two opposite directions — philosophically and psychologically. On one hand we guide our students in the belief that Torah is a way of life which encompasses every phase of life. On the other hand, we expose them in the humanities department to a secular way of life influenced by the sciences, history and world literature, with an entirely different approach to life. From our point of view, we teach our students the importance of authority in that we have to accept the rulings of the Sages and of the *Poskim* (codifiers). Whatever is written in the Torah cannot be questioned. No criticism may be directed against our tradition; but we also teach literature, history and science in which any authority may be challenged. Every part of

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science, literature and history is open to criticism.

We inform our students that any problem in life must be solved according to the Halakhah. This means a definite follow up of *Chazal* permitting no critical views. And at the same time we teach them that in political and social problems they may follow their own point of view—be it the Democratic or the Republican way—both of which philosophies have nothing to do with *Da'at Torah* (Torah outlook upon life). Thus we create a figure with a split personality within a compartmentalized mind, and in most cases working in two opposite directions. In essence, we repeat subconsciously the same historic mistake which was committed during the era of the Second Temple consciously by Jesus' famous saying "Give to God what is God's and to Caesar what is Caesar's"—a philosophy which marked the initial split with Judaism because Judaism tolerates only wholeness and a total commitment. Judaism is based on a One concept. God, Torah and Israel are One. This One concept is the source of all the Halakhot and philosophies; whatever we do and whatever we think has to stem from this central concept of One. It is true that we live in an open society where we are subject to all kinds of influences and in which we have to take a stand in order to survive, and our position has to be based on this One concept. But what we are really doing is using the psychology of "Be a

Jew at home and a man abroad" even though we cover our head with a *yarmulka*. If we are going to continue our schizophrenic approach, we may end up with a split personality which will result in a very sick Judaism whose existence will be precarious.

The final problem we face is our weakness in launching an educational revolution. We—who are living in the midst of a crisis and I would dare say in the middle of a spiritual holocaust — do not do enough to stop it. The most recent statistics about mixed marriages show a substantial increase. However, more serious than that is the fact that a much smaller percentage of American Jews now disapprove of mixed marriages compared with only six years ago.\*\*

We are experiencing a repetition of the Haskalah movement where many of our Jews left Judaism to join Communism, other revolutionary movements and atheism. As at that time, when we were faced with many new challenges, our religious leaders were shocked by the phenomenon but very few knew how to cope with the new situation. Very few realized that if a change in attitude did not take place, we would lose a generation. Most of the leaders did not look for immediate Halakhic and philosophic answers beside a *Cherem* (ban) or an *Issur* (interdict). Many tried to compromise but they did not succeed and we lost our Jews to alien philosophies. The challenges we are facing today are of a similar nature

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\*\*Sklar, Marshal, *Commentary*, March, 1970, "Intermarriage and Jewish Survival," p. 51.

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and again we find ourselves unable to answer them or to explain in the context of our society from a Torah point of view. We are exposed to a new outside world with many new problems.

Our problems are more severe than at any other periods in the last era. We live today in a world of dynamic change where a six-year period may seem like a generation. In the last few years many changes have taken place in this country that are in complete opposition to all our concepts as an ethnic group and as religious Jews. These changes are a direct result of the new revolution which has been going on in our country for the last decade. The influences of secular society are very great upon all of us, especially on the younger generation which is very impressionable. Therefore, Jewish and religious education are confronted with greater difficulties and obstacles than at any other time. The truth is that we are trying to educate our children toward a philosophy which is not accepted today. There was a time that we, as Jews, had many things in common with the outside society. For instance, our code of morals and ethics had *some* similarity to that of the outside world. Today, however, an unwed teenager comes to school with her baby, and society is proud of its progress. The coed dormitories in the colleges are also a source of pride. As a result, we with our traditions are irrelevant in the eyes of the students. These are the realities of our times and an answer must be found. We cannot ignore them, but who of the *Gedolim* is

willing to give an answer that does not involve total surrender of university/education or segregation. We are confronted with the problem of a lack of recognition of the realities of the times and how to deal with them.

We live in a world where religion is collapsing. The Church is losing her power and is being crushed by the forces of liberalism and communism. This phenomenon of secularism was a result of the achievements in science, technology and economy. We live in a world where wholesale murder is heroism. It is no wonder that the 20th century has been the scene of two world wars, a holocaust, mass murder in Russia and Mylai. We live in a world where new morals offer a new way of life. How have we challenged these threats? What did the Orthodox community do about finding solutions? One possible answer is isolating ourselves and adopting a ghetto mentality; enclosing ourselves and shutting out the entire world from our children, and continuing the traditional way as it is known in some of our communities. I don't know if this type of ghetto will have a future in the United States and I am not sure that some of the new concepts will not penetrate even into these groups. So far, the isolationists have been successful. To the majority of Jews, however, this philosophy is not valid. How, then, did we challenge all the problems of our time? The answer is, we did not! Here and there you find a few educators who have tried to find solutions but these solutions did not catch the imagination of the Jew-



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ish community. There is not one good textbook in Jewish philosophy which attempts to treat these problems and explain them to American youth. There has been no new approach to teaching the Torah or the Talmud in order to make them relevant and more meaningful to our students. There has been no new approach to the entire curriculum. Some educators made abortive attempts to prepare a new curriculum and have failed because they lacked the background of the historical, the philosophical and Halakhic adaptations. *Yeshivot* are still competing among themselves as to which is teaching more *gemera*. Our main problem stems from the fact that our leadership is not ready for the new revolution and is not prepared to lead one. The only time Judaism was saved in times of crisis was when its leaders were ready to make a revolution, and when I say a revolution—I don't refer to a revolution in our central ideas, but a revolution in concepts of methods, emphasis and adaptation to new situations.

When the Rambam wrote the *Mishneh Torah* he created new methods to the approach of Halakhah for reasons he himself cites in his Introduction:

"ובזמן הזה תכפו הצרות יתרות  
ודחקה השעה את הכל ואבדה חכמת  
חכמינו ובינת נבוננו נסתתרה"

"Nowadays extraordinary troubles gripped us and conditions oppressed all so that the wisdom of our sages is lost and the understanding of our wise is concealed."

Suddenly the wave of a new era came. The old wisdom was lost and a new method had to be established.

The Talmud in its original form could not give all the answers and a new approach had to be found. The Rambam had written *The Guide of the Perplexed* at a time when philosophy endangered Judaism and again the Talmud and the *Gaonim* with their approach could not furnish the answers. The Rambam adopted the new method to explain Judaism—not to explain a new Judaism, but rather the old one which needed (as the Rambam himself wrote in his introduction) "a key permitting one to enter places the gates to which were locked."

The Chasidic movement was a revolutionary movement which saved thousands of Jews. It knew how to adopt a new situation into Judaism regardless of the bans pronounced by the greatest scholars of that time. Chasidism was the answer to many problems the old traditional way could not solve. It came at a time of upheaval when new approaches had to be found. To a lesser extent the *yeshivot* of Lithuania were involved in a revolution. There was a change from the pilpulistic method to that of a Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik of Brisk (*Shaarey Yosher*) because this was an answer to the Haskalah movement. The approach had to be more rational and more logical because people who were influenced by the Haskalah movement would not tolerate the pilpulistic method.

Much more than a change in the methods of teaching of Talmud was the introduction of *Mussar* in *yeshivot*. This met with great opposition. At a time when the Haskalah movement pointed a finger at the

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religious Jew because he was not so concerned about the obligations governing man's relations to his fellowman—the *Mussar* movement came to emphasize these commandments. At that time these were revolutionary acts, as can be proven by the many bans and anathemas proclaimed by the *Gedolim* of the generation. All those new adaptations came in changing times when old methods and emphases could not be used anymore and new ones had to replace them in order to save Judaism and Jews. Those leaders had the vision and the bravery to act. They did not divide their philosophy between God and Caesar, but rather worked out a wholesome philosophy with a change in emphasis and a change in methods. We live in an era when there is an aversion of proper values, where almost everything has changed. A world of sexual licentiousness and murder and what did we do? We still teach the *Chumash* with Rashi with the same old methods. We still do not realize that our method of teaching *Gemara* is not going to produce a *Lomdan* and a pious individual as in Slobodka or Radin. Perhaps we need a new approach which will make it more relevant, and perhaps we need a different curriculum of studies in the Oral Torah. How many *yeshivot* have realized that *Machshovet Yisrael* (Jew thought) is one of the most important subjects we have to teach today?

How many principals have realized that there are certain interruptions of regular forms of Torah study that actually produce more Torah and more piety—like the sem-

inars where students leave regular classes for a few days in order to live and breathe *Yiddishkeit*. To what extent do we adapt our regular program so that our students may spend time in Israel in *yeshivot* and in other religious institutions as a part of our high school education? Many of our students come home and find there the very antithesis of what we are teaching them. How many congregations have stipulated that members must attend regular classes? How much in dues do members of the synagogue pay to a central fund for *yeshivot*—the pillar and the future of our existence?

It is clear, therefore, that we need a complete change in our thinking in order to save our future generation. Therefore, I would like to make a few suggestions. We are testing some of them in the Yeshiva of Flatbush but many of them can only be proved through a national effort.

1. To establish a national central committee for yeshiva education where *Gedolim* and great educators will work out together a new approach to our education which will be relevant and meaningful. They will set the aims and goals which will be followed up by new textbooks, new guidelines in teaching the various subjects, a new curriculum and ways of teaching our youth in Jewish causes.
2. A seminar for teachers where this new approach will be taught to them. That the teachers of the secular departments should be pious Torah scholars and they will have to teach from a Torah point of view.
3. That a way must be found to educate

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the parents, because a good number of students are coming from non-religious homes.

I would suggest that classes by highly qualified teachers should be conducted in every synagogue on *Shabbat* morning between *Shacharit* and *Musaf* in order to familiarize the parents with the essence of Judaism. Sermons and Talmud classes alone are inadequate to fulfill the needs of adult Jewish education. It is sad to reflect that many hundreds of Orthodox teachers in the public schools do not feel obligated to teach in *yeshivot*. 4. A part of our education today must be involvement in Jewish causes. 5. There must be a youth movement in every yeshiva. 6. A part of our education must consist of seminars at least once a year with a follow-up in the yeshiva. Perhaps we have to look for other answers also with which we can influence our students — such as building dormitories where we would be able to create a way of life and more summer camps which will continue yeshiva education. 7. To encourage and support the Jewish religious colleges in order that they may become excellent institutions so that students will have a desire to attend. 8. To establish a central fund for *yeshivot* where every synagogue member must contribute a certain sum of money for yeshiva education. 9. To support

the Yavneh groups on the campuses so they will be able to continue Jewish education for our students. 10. To make it a part of our condition for graduation that every boy and girl must spend six months in Israel in one of the *yeshivot* for the boys and in one of the religious schools for the girls, or a *kibbutz* program.

We must establish a national organization where all of us will work together for a Jewish education if we intend to see any success.

Jewish education cannot survive in a vacuum. The modern Jew is part of society and Jewish education must therefore adapt itself to new problems and find a way which is basically and essentially a traditional path relevant to the new generation.

It is unfortunate that one of the greatest Jews and sages of modern Jewish history, Rav Abraham Yizhok Kook, former Chief Rabbi of the Holy Land, who did so much to find true relevance in Torah Judaism, should be virtually unknown to the majority of Jews today. A rediscovery of his work and spirit might well provide an approach to the solving of our serious problems.

Only a combined effort, however, by every major Jewish agency can ensure Jewish survival in the 21st century through Jewish education.

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*Joseph Kaminetsky*

Dr. Kaminetsky is National Director of Torah Umesorah, National Society for Hebrew Day Schools.

The questions submitted by the Editor for this symposium fall broadly into two categories. Although not projected in sequential fashion, about half of them deal with the goals of the Day School, its curriculum and how to improve the quality of the religious life of its students. The others, in essence, attempt to examine the impact of the Day School on the community at large and evaluate its relationship to it. In the process, we are asked to indicate some of the most serious shortcomings of the Day School and forecast its success in helping its charges to meet the problems which they will face in the competing life-styles and ideologies of the Campus.

To answer these crucial questions adequately would require an in-depth analysis which would fill volumes. And there are many who have already attempted to answer these questions. The conference of Rabbis and educators convened by the Rabbinical Council of America at the end of November 1971 in Lakewood addressed itself to some of these problems. All we can hope to do in this article is to give some partial answers to these questions as directly as we can, by-passing well-known shibboleths, pious slogans, and even detailed statistical data—we hope. The over-all picture, after all, is well-known to the

readers of this journal.

At the outset, it must be stated that the Day School movement in this country grew out of a sense of urgency to rid American Jewry of the stigma of *am-ha-aratzut* which plagued it for so many decades. Day School enthusiasts had one over-riding goal: To teach children Torah, to give them some measure of knowledge of the basic texts of Judaism and, at the same time, inspire them to observance of the *mitzvot* and commitment to the Torah way of life. Knowledge of Torah comes first—action is predicated on cognition—abetted by emotional involvement. These primary purposes still motivate all of the close to 400 Jewish Day Schools in the United States which are conducted under Orthodox auspices.

Yet, as is well-known, schools do not operate in a vacuum; they are part and parcel of the environment in which they are born, mature and blossom. Accordingly, as the movement grew ancillary goals were added; and, as a result, we have today a multi-colored movement embracing the different point of emphasis which characterize American Orthodoxy itself.

Some of the more intensive schools gear their program to inspire their students to further Jewish study in higher *yeshivot* and

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even *Kollelim*, concentrating on Torah study *per se*. Others stress the religious-nationalistic aspects of Judaism, giving a central place in a core curriculum to *Eretz Yisrael*. Still others stress the attainment of synthesis between Judaism and Western culture. Despite these varying degrees of emphasis which are radiated by the wide spectrum which represents Orthodoxy in our age, it is most encouraging that the preponderant majority of our Day Schools share some basic goals. These are, most succinctly stated: Learning, commitment, observance, the attainment of *Emunah* (faith in God), the primacy of Torah as a guide to the development of a lifestyle, and *Ahavat Yisrael* — the people and the land (despite the internecine battles and political differences which divide us). These goals, I submit, represent an inspiring melange of realism and idealism. The purpose of the school is to *raise* the level of the culture — and this the Day School has done. No one will argue that the consistent dynamic growth of Orthodoxy in this country is due to our Day Schools which have proven to be a grand strategy for the production of *B'nei Torah* who have changed the Jewish or Torah character not only of the large Metropolitan areas but many of our out-of-town communities as well.

These goals have thus proven to be realistic, in that we now have a richer, Torah-minded Jewish community than ever before. The idealism enters into the process when we weigh what has been accomplished in the scales of our visions and dreams — and come to the con-

clusion that there is still so much more that has to be done. The movement as a whole has been a most successful one, but here and there one notes some weak links which sometimes threaten the strength of the chain.

One of the major shortcomings of the Jewish Day School has been its inability to attract adequately trained and daring personnel to help it grow in depth. The reasons for this crisis are manifold and run the gamut from a desire for self-growth in *lomdut* to a lack of status and financial security. Our yeshiva students are just not daring enough to go out into "the sticks" where the comforts of a religious *sevivah* (environment) are so evidently lacking. Those who do go into the field, on the other hand, are so overwhelmed by the long hours of their teaching duties that they have no time for adequate preparation and, what is more important, for the writing of workbooks, teaching aids — and the like — which are so vital to the growth, in breadth and in depth, of the educational process. The Day School movement has been "derelict" in not providing for itself a cadre of trained educators who have the ability and capacity for the production of such material because of the strictures noted. The fact, too, that in many cases the principal or chief educational officer of the school must become involved in fundraising and public relations work stunts the improvement and development of the Day School curriculum and the methods of instruction.

That so much has been accomplished despite these handicaps is,

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of course, a tribute to the devoted educators and teachers who have shown the necessary courage and have given all of their energies and abilities to the task. I think we owe it to the men in the field to do all in our power to recruit the soldiers for these inspired and inspiring generals. We do, indeed, need our own *palmach* — *plugat mechanchim* — as someone picturesquely put it.

Yet, to be realistic, we do not see the sudden entrance of thousands of yeshiva students into the field of *Chinuch*, as much as we hope for it. There is, however, one effective way that many Day Schools have found to upgrade the teaching quality of their staffs — and that is through the setting up of regular *in-service* training programs in their schools, with the help of Torah Umesorah and other central educational agencies. The National Conference of Yeshiva Principals, an affiliate of Torah Umesorah, has added to this process through the convening of regular regional conferences of educators and through regular series of inter-school visitations where the latest methods are projected and successful ideas are exchanged. These processes must continue — and the lay leaders of our Day Schools must be ready to add to their budgets the regular setting up of these programs of in-service training, even to the extent of paying for experts to direct them.

It is high time, too, for our Day Schools to begin to apply the traditional methods employed in the *yeshivot* of Eastern Europe which proved so successful. We refer to the use of “master teachers,” as we

call them today, who gave the *master shiur* which was followed by *chazarah* (re-study) in *chaburot* (smaller groups). As a matter of fact, more emphasis on grouping according to rate of learning, and even individualized instruction, are needed in many Hebrew Departments. The teachers of secular studies who are constantly re-gearing their methods in these directions could be most helpful in these processes. We know of many instances where English teachers helped develop fine teachers out of neophytes straight out of the yeshiva through such guidance. Again, here, we need the funds and the creative minds to work out the teaching aids upon which these techniques are dependent for success. Further, the financial plight of so many of our Day Schools still represents a formidable handicap in achieving these ends. Some schools, however, have overcome this obstacle through the use of retired teachers and parents working as teachers’ aides.

Another method generally employed in all higher *yeshivot* cries for adaptation by our Day Schools. Many general educators who have visited our higher *yeshivot* are unduly impressed by the *chavrusa* idea (the “buddy system”). A child *learns* best, we have come to realize, when he is called upon to *teach* his younger or less adept friend.

All of these techniques are, in some form or measure, in evidence in many of our Day Schools. More regular sustained guidance in their application and adaptation by people who will be given the means and the opportunity to spread them

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in practice — and in writing — are calculated to improve the in-depth learning taking place in our schools.

The improvement of the quality of the religious life-style of our pupils and the deepening of their commitment to Torah are certainly among the crucial and basic goals of our Day Schools. From my own experience I have found that these blessings are always the result of the charisma and personality of the teacher. "The Law of Imitation" is basic to religious growth and commitment. What the teacher himself is will determine what his pupil will be. This is an axiom which has proven its efficacy throughout the ages.

In this area, many will claim that such a teacher is born; he cannot be "manufactured." I agree. Yet, given a genuine desire to inspire others and possessed of a great love for children, many "un-born teachers" have been extremely successful. Religious commitment is an intangible and it is caught by the pupil who knows that his teacher loves him, cares about him, and is completely involved with him. As an Israeli educator put it: "Give a child your heart and he will give you his mind." Among the many legendary stories I have heard about Reb Feivel Mendlowitz *Zatzal*, the unforgettable founder of Torah Umesorah, certainly a master teacher, tells of his regular habit each night before retiring, to evaluate the progress of each and every one of his pupils.

Besides the teacher in this process, whom the teaching machine or the latest educational hardware will never replace, there a number

of techniques which have proven most successful in many Day Schools whose primary goal is precisely the development of *Yirat Shemayim* — the core term for religious commitment. Among these are: The daily *Minyan*, the Thursday night *Mishmar* and the *Mussar Shmuess* (yes, even in the elementary yeshiva) — the 3M's, as Rabbi Elias Schwartz of Yeshivas Toras Emes-Kaminitz in Boro Park calls them. Other successful techniques include: A *Shabbat* at *Rebbe's* home; a visit to a *Yeshiva Gedolah*; A *Shabbat* at the Day School — converted into a motel for the occasion — in out-of-town communities and similar innovative projects.

We come now to that group of questions which deal with the relationship of the Day School with the community, its Rabbis, leaders and agencies; its supposed isolation or encapsulation; and its involvement in social action. These problems were discussed, to some degree, at the RCA Conference on Yeshiva Education referred to above and occupy the center of the stage at the present time — both on the part of those who favor the Day School and the members of Federations and Welfare Funds who are called upon to allocate more funds to them. The latter seem to question, in my view, the particular *community* aspects of the Day School program. Hence, at the risk of over-writing, some attention must be given to this problem.

Examining the Day School canvass from a broad perspective, looking at the forest itself rather than being diverted by the foliage of the trees, we can safely say that

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in most of our out-of-town communities our Day Schools are *community* schools. They cater to the needs of all Jewish children, irrespective of their home backgrounds and affiliations. Designed as a grand strategy to erase *am-ha'aratzut*, they welcome the offspring of the uncommitted as well as the committed. As a matter of fact, the impact which our Day Schools have had on the homes of the non-observant accentuates what I like to call the *mystique* of this great movement. Through our Day Schools we have been able to realize in many communities the Messianic dream of the prophet, Malachi: "And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers" (Malachi 3:23-24). Entire communities in this broad land have experienced miraculous forms of Jewish renaissance because they have been blessed by a Day School in their midst.

In many of these communities, these blessings have come about precisely because all the Rabbis, Synagogues, and Orthodox leaders have realized the great stake all of them have in the Day School. And they have banded together to safeguard its educational and spiritual integrity. In the process, to be sure, they have had to insist upon ideological independence and have thus been accused of isolationism or separatism by those who are either jealous of or do not as yet fully understand the philosophy of the Day School.

On the other hand, we would be myopic were we not to admit that in some communities, especially in

larger Metropolitan areas, there are stresses and strains between the Rabbis who have their own educational establishments — a Talmud Torah, for instance, which is fast disintegrating due to the Day School's growth — and the leaders of the Day Schools. Unfortunate conflicts of interest and personality clashes between principals and Rabbis are in evidence. These strained relations are further augmented by the formation of "cliques" of parents who clamor for different emphases in the curriculum of the school. The unfortunate fragmentation of the Orthodox Jewish community in our times also contributes to the stresses and strains between Day School educators who feel the need to posit the highest possible standards and goals for their students and take what is sometimes called "extreme positions" and those who seek the "middle-of-the-road."

In a dynamic situation such conflicts are inevitable. Yet, as stated, on the whole Day School leaders are fully cognizant of the need for unity of purpose and action to gain their ends — especially when the Day School's existence is threatened by so many groups who, even at this late stage of the game, do not savor its existence — and they work hard at achieving such unity. As a result, many schools do pursue programs of social action, so to speak. Their students are involved in *Gemilut Chessed* projects, visiting old age homes, hospitals and the like. *Tzedakah* campaigns for *Eretz Yisrael*, Russian Jewry and local institutions are included in the programs of most Day Schools.



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It must be emphatically stated, however, that by philosophy and design there are certain limitations to community involvement on the part of our Day Schools. To safeguard their religious integrity, they maintain little or no contact with those agencies and groups which are unsympathetic or outright hostile to Orthodoxy and its way of life. In this sense, our Day Schools do endeavor to encapsulate themselves, in order to maintain their point-of-view effectively. Long ago, many of us have seen the positive values of such insistence on the Torah point-of-view; and "indoctrination" is no longer a "dirty word" to us. Whether we "over-protect" our students from the realities of life which they will have to encounter is, after all, dependent upon the measure of the ability and effectiveness of our teachers. Some are able to "accentuate the positive," without instilling rancor against other groups. Others are more direct and do stress differences sometimes inept. Yet, in the end they feel that they have a point-of-view to maintain and that they must teach their charges to swim against the tide.

How successful we have been in

ingraining this point-of-view and its attendant values into our students who go on to college is a debatable issue. Many Day School graduates have, indeed, shown the capacity to "swim across the dangerous Danube" (as Dr. Leo Deutschlander, famed educational designer of the Beth Jacob program of education for girls in Europe, delineated secular studies). The growth of our Orthodox Scientists and Teachers Associations attest to this fact, as do the *Shiurim* at Harvard, Cornell, etc. . . . Others, no doubt, have fallen by the wayside. But even Slobodka had its quota of defectors. One thing is clear, however. Greater attention and open discussion of the problem will generate greater efforts to rectify the situation.

After all, the Day School movement has gone a long way and has solved many of Orthodoxy's great problems. It alone cannot solve all of them. Greater attention by *all* national Orthodox organizations — better still: greater *unification* of all Orthodox organizations and groups, mobilized to work for the welfare of our Day Schools, will certainly enhance the great accomplishments it now has to its credit.

Haskel Lookstein

Rabbi Lookstein is Associate Rabbi of Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun and Principal of the Ramaz School.

The Talmud disqualifies a person from testifying about himself — either favorably or disparagingly. This may call into question most of my comments on Day Schools inasmuch as I am a product of a Day School, a principal of a Day School and a parent in a Day School — in each case the same school, Ramaz. I offer my responses to the editor's queries, therefore, out of a deep prejudice, an all pervasive subjectivity and a profound commitment to the Day School in America. *Caveat emptor!*

1. The goals of a Day School clearly vary from school to school, depending upon the sponsorship, the community, the educational leadership, the parents and the student body. Speaking personally, I see fundamentally two goals for the Day School:

A. To develop a student who is learned in the disciplines, history and values of Western civilization, who is capable of — and interested in — pursuing further study in those disciplines in an effective manner and who is committed to the ideals that, broadly speaking, form the fabric of the American democratic heritage.

B. Simultaneously, to develop a student who is committed to Judaism in its totality, which includes:

a deep knowledge of Torah and a desire and competence to further that knowledge, the practical observance of Judaism as a religion that determines all facets of human behavior (religious, ethical, personal, etc.), a love for the Jewish people that translates itself into loyalty, concern and active efforts in behalf of all Jews, and a loyalty to Israel — commonly known as Zionism — with or without the readiness for *aliyah*.

These are realistic goals for the Day School movement although, like any set of goals, their realization will not be uniform for all. The decisive determinants would appear to be home support of the school's two-fold commitment, inspiring teachers, a quality curriculum geared to the needs of the individual child and, most important of all, a life style in the school designed to encourage students to act out the two-fold commitment.

2. The most serious shortcomings of the Day School are as follows:

A. Uncommitted parents. The surest deterrent to realizing the Day School's goals is a home which is inhospitable to those goals. One of the secret ingredients in the academic success of the children of immigrant Jewish parents was the

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absolute commitment of the immigrant Jewish home to school, to teacher and to study. This has been documented seriously by educational and sociological analyses and humorously by Sam Levenson and others.

If the present parental home is similarly committed — if parents read, discuss, and manifest interest in ideas and values rather than in possessions and social status — the school's efforts will be enhanced. Often, the opposite is the case and the results are consequently opposite as well.

As far as the commitment to Judaism is concerned, the support of the home is more than important; it is often decisive. A home that is not religiously and nationally supportive, a home that says to the child, paraphrasing the advice of the *maskil*, "Be a Jew in school and a man at home" — such a home effectively undermines the school's goal of teaching Jewish commitment. The child may grow religiously in the early grades but the blandishments of the secular, hedonistic and less demanding world will offer him an easier and more compelling choice, with few exceptions. His future commitments are more likely to be drugs than *davening*, Zen, than Zionism and yoga than *Yiddishkeit*.

B. Uninspiring teachers. If commitment is our goal, then the uninspiring teacher must be public enemy number 2. This hardly requires elaboration. A textbook or a schoolmaster can convey facts, dates, even ideas; only an inspiring and committed human being, however, can communicate the elements

of commitment. Inspiration, it should be added, is not a substitute for depth and substance — that will result in a shallow and transitory emotionalism on the part of the student which time will readily erode. The inspiration which we suggest here must be rooted in intellectual excellence which will attract the young, inquiring mind and which will underscore the judgment that in the Jewish way of life knowledge informs piety and a rigorous mind is an essential stimulus for a religious body.

C. A "closed" classroom (as distinguished from an open one). The "joyless" educational atmosphere of the present day American classroom described by Charles Silberman (*Crisis in the Classroom*), among others has unfortunate implications for every school. The implications, however, are far more serious for a school system whose primary goal is commitment. Opening our classrooms, individualizing instruction to meet the needs — existential as well as educational — of every child, freeing children to learn actively and involvedly are great boons to learning in general. They are, however, fundamental to developing love, passion, enthusiasm — in short, commitment.

D. Education confined to the classroom. Too many of our schools are satisfied with formal education, conducted in and around the classroom. If our goal of commitment is to be a realistic one we must look for opportunities for students to act out the values and life style we are teaching.

For example, students will "learn" more about the plight of

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Soviet Jewry in two hours devoted to neighborhood campaigning for signatures on a petition they have formulated themselves than in two weeks of classes on Soviet-Jewish problems.

The same applies to contemporary political issues in America. Some of our students in Ramaz matured literally overnight two years ago during the Cambodian invasion and the subsequent Kent State violence. We held teach-ins on the issues. Students formed their own opinions and were encouraged to formulate and circulate petitions based on their conclusions. The result was a new sophistication on the part of high school youngsters, an understanding of the complex issues, a deep involvement in the news and its interpretation, and a new commitment to morality in America as the student perceived it — not surprisingly some of them saw it quite differently from their teachers and principal.

All of this demands from the school a degree of confidence and trust in children and a readiness to let them think for themselves and act accordingly. In such an atmosphere the student newspaper must be uncensored — as painful as that may be for the administration. Students must be encouraged to participate in protests and demonstrations even at the risk of using school time (*bitul Torah* included). The underlying assumption is that the student will learn more by doing something constructive outside the classroom than by sitting in the classroom, understanding, of course, that even an educational blessing can become a pedagogic

curse when carried to an extreme.

I believe that this stress on informal education can have profound effects on improving the realistic quality of our goals. If the Talmud, speaking of Jewish commitment, states "*Lo ha-midrash ikar, ela ha-ma'aseh*" (performance supersedes study), Day School educators should take careful note. This approach is fundamental to questions 5, 7, 8 and 10 relating to religious commitment, community involvement and integration into society. The intellectual foundation is indispensable; but the extra-classroom performance in writing, in speech, in organizing, in programming and in communal activity will be the determining factors in producing a committed young person.

I might add a final extra-classroom program: at Ramaz we call it a *Yom Iyun*. In this program, school stops for a period of time and the entire student body is involved in a significant issue, most recently it was the holocaust. Students hear presentations, participate in small discussion groups, prepare original programs and in every way immerse themselves in the issue. The result is education at its best — untested, unmarked and unrecorded, but influencing, inspiring and, we hope, fairly permanent in its impact.

If the Day School wants to have an impact of the kind suggested by the editor's questions (particularly numbers 5, 6, 7, 8, 10), much will have to be done with the parents, the teachers and the curriculum; but most will depend upon the life style in the school. For too

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long that life style has been weighted toward the first part of the *Ahavah Rabah* a blessing: "Place in our hearts the desire to understand, to comprehend, to listen, to learn and to teach . . ." This is but the beginning. If our desire is goal

oriented we had best direct our attention to the blessing's goals: ". . . to practice, to perform and to fulfill the entire Torah in love." Let us, then, get on with the "doing"!

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*Steven Riskin*

Rabbi Riskin is spiritual leader of the Lincoln Square Synagogue in New York and teaches at the James Striar School for Jewish Studies at Yeshiva University.

As a graduate of Yeshiva University High School of Brooklyn, as a staff member of the Yeshiva University High School Seminars, and as a Manhattan Rabbi who comes into personal contact with hundreds of Yeshiva High School graduates each year, I shall specifically address myself to the problems of the centrist and left-of-center Yeshiva High Schools within the greater Metropolitan area.

1. The explicit goal of every Yeshiva High School is to prepare its students for college entrance and at the same time to produce graduates who are intellectually rooted in classical Jewish sources and emotionally committed to Halakhah. Although the overwhelming majority of our Yeshiva High School products are accepted in the best colleges and universities, their

religious knowledge and commitment leaves a great deal to be desired. Even those who remain observant are often cynically bitter about Torah learning and Torah values. Any random study of what has become of the graduates of any given year will demonstrate a far greater defection from Orthodoxy than most yeshiva educators are willing to admit. What is most disturbing is that many of our young people—after twelve years of intensive Jewish education — are not merely indifferent to Halakhah but are downright antagonistic towards it. The time has long been overdue to face the problem squarely, for — as the Talmud so correctly teaches — unless one understands the question he can never even hope to find a solution.

2. The centrist yeshiva curricu-

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lum is based upon that of Slobodka, and post-Haskalah Jewish history would testify that the curriculum was not even successful in Slobodka. Talmud is the major text studied, but it is taught solely as an intellectual exercise not very different from Mathematics 613. The ethical and religious principles underlying the rigorous analysis of our Sages, the search for closeness to God and an understanding of His will which is the basis of all Torah study, are rarely if ever expressed in the classroom. The erroneous assumption that the student will spend the rest of his life studying Talmud and must therefore be taught methodology rather than specific *sugyot* (topics) is the order of the day. Therefore those tractates and chapters which would enhance the students' understanding of and appreciation for the Sabbath, the various Festivals and the Prayer Book are generally ignored (they are not "*yeshivishe masechtot*," and the Talmudic mind must be finely honed on *Nezikin*), and the chapters which deal with relevant issues of fair business practices and proper sexual attitudes are hardly mentioned during the four year high school period.

Moreover, rarely is the student actually taught proper methodology by receiving the necessary linguistic and analytic tools to enable him to study a *blatt gemara* and its commentaries by himself. Most *Roshei Yeshiva* attempt to give a *shiur* (lecture) no less original than Rav Soloveitchik, and as a consequence the *Rebbe* is generally found to be talking to himself. He is answering his problems in the

any practice is never made clear original Revelation and contemporary Talmud is the bridge between the Codes of Law. The fact that the Bible and forwards to the various from the Talmud backwards to the does not learn to trace a Halakha to skill. In addition, the student would gradually develop from skill by means of which the student vide a logical and orderly system since the curriculum does not provide a valuable time is lost. Much text rather than those of his student and so the student is often confused as to the significance of his studies. A total revamping of the four-year Talmud curriculum is necessary if we are to inspire our students with the excitement and significance of *gemara* learning.

But Talmud — although crucial for a proper understanding of the normative development of Judaism — is not the only significant branch of Torah study. The Pentateuch, especially with the commentaries of Rashi and Ramban, should provide the intellectual and theological matrix from which all other learning must develop. And the study of Rashi and Ramban requires as much training in methodology as does the study of Tosfot and Rishonim.

Many of our young people are disappointed and frustrated by the "parochial" vision emphasized in most *yeshivot*. Our most creative and poetic souls are defecting from the ranks because they do not discover in our yeshiva curriculum a proper vehicle for their emotional and religious expression. The Messianic sweep of Isaiah, the Divine love of Song of Songs, the moral

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indignation of Amos, the intellectual frustration of Kohelet, the pagantry and wisdom of the Aggadah are all closed books to most of our yeshiva students. Indeed, to the contemporary ear, the prophet Micah sounds like a Reform Rabbi. A proper exposure to *Torah Shebichtav* (Written Torah) would provide a universal dimension as well as balm to the searching souls of many of our students. Certainly a general curriculum must be devised with the basic requirements for a knowledgeable Judaism and with room for electives in both *Torah Shebichtav* as well as *Torah Shebeal Peh* (Oral Torah, in *Halakhah* as well as in *Aggadah*, in the Codes of Jewish Law as well as in *Piyut* and Chassidic literature.

The most serious shortcoming in the Yeshiva High School, however, goes beyond the area of curriculum. The crisis in secular education, so cogently expressed by educators like Silberman and Kozol and so agonizingly portrayed by authors like Albee (*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*), Bellows (*Herzog*) and Roth (*Portnoy's Complaint*), may be defined as the absence of purposeful direction despite academic attainments. If Victor Frankl, the Viennese psychoanalyst, is correct in stating that the "will to meaning" is a far deeper drive in man than either the "will to pleasure" or the "will to power," then proper Torah education can provide purpose for a generation in search of meaning. Instead, the Yeshiva High School imparts information, but generally fails to communicate values; it emphasizes subjects, but neglects our religious

goals and life-style; it attempts to teach, but rarely does it touch.

3. The Yeshiva High School must first and foremost become a community unto itself. Judaism cannot merely be taught; it must be experienced. Optimally, students, faculty and administration must form a cohesive community of Torah and *mitzvot*; their relationship to each other must be infused with the concept of the Godliness-in-man so that together they can learn to relate to God and world. A memorable *Shabbat* replete with *Zemirot*, special *shiurim* (Torah sessions) and the accessibility of instructors and their families is an invaluable means of Torah communication. Sharing each others joys and sorrows in halakhic perspective — praying, learning, socializing and questing together — will create the atmosphere crucial to proper intellectual, religious and emotional development. Most important, each *Rebbe* must serve as an additional parent to each student. In the words of the Midrash: "'And thou shalt teach (Torah) diligently to thy children' — these are thy students, who are referred to as thy children throughout (religious literature)."

And once the students have a sense of their own community, they can properly begin developing relationships with the community surrounding the yeshiva. Involvement in problems of the Jewish poor and aged, the lack of religious observance, the local standards of *kashrut* and the status of the community *mikveh* and *chevra kadisha* can add a vital practical dimension to the academic studies. Pressing gen-

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eral community issues such as the problem of the minorities, housing, drug addiction and abortion clinics can become sources of intellectual enrichment and will deepen the student's notions of the contemporary American community and the place of the halakhic Jew within it.

4. A separate block of time each day for Jewish studies is crucial in order to give the student the notion of the primacy of Torah and to expose him intensively to Torah texts. I do not believe that there need exist a hot or cold war — or even a spirit of peaceful co-existence — between the Jewish studies and secular subjects. God is the ultimate source of all wisdom, and therefore despite the tension which can often be discerned between the Torah and secular worlds (and this tension dare not be glibly disposed of with meaningless clichés), the student must be given the wherewithal to utilize his secular learning in the service of Torah wherever possible and to discard those secular values which are inimical to the Torah *weltanschauung*. Wherever possible, an attempt

to integrate Torah values and the secular courses must be made by utilizing religious secular teachers as well as by introducing interdisciplinary courses and discussions (the literary style of the Bible, Torah and evolution, the logic of the Talmud, etc.). History must be seen as an entire unit, with Jewish History as a most vital aspect of world history.

5. The Yeshiva High School must produce intelligent Jews who can cope with the various problems of contemporary society. But in order to do this, every student must be seen as a unique individual who requires personal guidance and a particular program of study. This can only be feasible if the American Jewish community re-orders its priorities and expends the necessary finances to create diverse programs in dynamic institutions. The Torah *Rebbe* must feel that he is a member of a well-paid, exciting and respected profession so that we can attract our intelligent and creative young people to a field which holds the master key to the Judaism of tomorrow.

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*Alvin I. Schiff*

Dr. Schiff is Executive Vice-President of the Board of Jewish Education in New York and Professor of Education at Yeshiva University's Ferkauf Graduate School of Education.

The serious enrollment problems currently faced by Jewish day schools are not unrelated to the

philosophy, program and quality of yeshivah education. I wish to address myself to various quantitative,



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geographic and ideological aspects of the problem and the challenges it poses to the Orthodox community.

### *Era of Great Expansion*

To be sure, the development of Jewish all-day education has exceeded the fondest expectations of many Jewish leaders and educators. In 1945 one educator wrote: "The Jews may get more than 0.8 percent of their children to attend all-day schools (the Protestant percentage); they are hardly likely to go above two percent (2 percent being the percentage of private school pupils in this country) for the whole Jewish child population."\* The fact is, however, that Day School pupils now constitute 7% of the total Jewish child population and 15% of the total Jewish school enrollment in America.

Underlying the individual factors that motivated the development of the Jewish Day School has been the unique combination of the right circumstances, namely: the need for intensive Jewish schools, the readiness of many sectors of the Jewish community to accept and support the day school, the continuing external forces catalyzing its development, and the stubborn zealotry of Jewish Day School leaders.

The year 1940 marks the beginning of the era of great expansion of the Jewish Day School movement.\*\* Ninety-two percent of all

existing day schools were founded after this date. To appreciate the pattern of growth, we might divide the last 30 years into three periods. During the first decade (1941-1950) enrollment increased at an average *annual* rate of 1,500 pupils. Between 1951-1960, enrollment peaked to an average yearly growth of 3,200 students. During the sixties, however, the average increase declined to less than 1,800 pupils per year.

In absolute terms, the increase in each of the decades is remarkable, particularly when one considers the background of communal conditions against which the growth took place. However, it is evident that while enrollment has increased steadily, the growth rate slowed down considerably during the 1960's. And, between 1970-72 there was almost no increase at all.

The present enrollment problem raises several questions. Is yeshivah enrollment becoming stabilized? Will the increases abate altogether? In this regard, two things are clear: (1) the potential Orthodox family sources for pupil recruitment have been fully tapped; (2) continued increase will be achieved largely via the intrinsic ability of all-day education to attract new pupils.

Also, not to be overlooked are the external causes motivating day school growth. But these factors are not predictable, much less regulated by the Jewish community or the *yeshivot*, and not to be depend-

\*Samuel Dinin, "The All Day School," *The Reconstructionist*, October 5, 1945, p. 5.

\*\*Alvin I. Schiff, *The Jewish Day School in America*, Jewish Education Committee Press, 1966, pp. 48-65.

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ed upon.

A significant if not dramatic dimension of day school growth is the steady enrollment rise in the face of continuous marked annual declines in supplementary Jewish school enrollment since 1962 in the country at large, and since 1965 in Greater New York. During the past decade, the American Jewish supplementary school population has decreased by 13% or by approximately 70,000 pupils.

As a result of the current overall enrollment patterns, the percentage of the day school pupil population within the total school enrollment rose from less than 4% in 1940 to more than 15% in 1972. In New York, the yeshivah component of the Jewish school enrollment rose from 11% to 35%. The question here is whether the reasons for the decrease in supplementary school enrollment — low birth rate, demographic and social changes, apathy of the adult Jewish community and intermarriage — will affect the current and potential day school enrollment as well.

### *Three Dimensional Growth*

An important characteristic of day school development is its three dimensional growth — schools, pupils, and day school communities. As of 1972, every community in North America with a Jewish population of 7,500 or more has at least one Jewish day school. To be sure, day schools have been founded in 23 communities with less than 7,500 Jewish residents. All but eight Jewish communities with 5,000 to 7,500 residents have Jewish day

schools. However, day schools have been established in only 20 of the 110 small Jewish centers with 1,000-5,000 population.

The spread of Jewish all-day education suggests several crucial challenges to the Orthodox Jewish community. Will it be possible to organize and maintain new Orthodox day schools in many more small communities? What about small communities without Orthodox rabbinic leadership? What should be the posture of the Orthodox communities regarding the establishment of communal, trans-ideological day schools in small and not-so-small communities?

### *Urban-Suburban Patterns*

Until the era of great expansion, the yeshivah movement was concentrated almost entirely in New York City. Since 1940, the pace of founding of new schools has been significantly faster outside of New York. Today, less than half of the *day school* units are in the New York area.

However, as far as *enrollment* is concerned, there has been no appreciable change in the New York-American balance since 1950. Currently, two-thirds of the enrollment is in Greater New York. The other third is spread throughout the United States and Canada, particularly in the larger cities.

That yeshivah enrollment is mainly a large urban enterprise can be underscored by one simple statistic: almost 90% of all day school pupils are found in the ten largest Jewish population centers. This datum suggests yet another chal-

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lenge. To what extent can the day school enrollment in large Jewish communities be increased? In Greater New York, the day school pupil population represents 35% of the total Jewish school enrollment. In the other large urban areas, however, day school children comprise less than 10% of the Jewish school enrollment. Due to rapid demographic changes, the growth of schools in the suburbs of these centers has been substantially greater than in the cities themselves. In New York, for example, the increase in the suburbs during the past decade has been twice as rapid as that of the boroughs. However, despite the relatively fast growth in the suburbs, day school enrollment in these new areas is very small indeed. There are, for example, less than 3,000 yeshivah pupils in Long Island, a megacommunity of a half million Jews.

The challenge arising out of this analysis is clear. How can day school constituencies be developed in the large city-satellites which, like the small communities, complicate the response of the Orthodox community, since Orthodox residents and Orthodox synagogues are not a significant component of Jewish life in these areas, if they are visible at all?

### *High School Growth*

The most dramatic increase in yeshivah enrollment over the past two decades have been on the high school level. While the elementary school enrollment increased 200% between 1950 and 1970, the high school pupil population rose over

500% during the same period. This increase was essentially a New York phenomenon. New York comprises 83% of the total Jewish day high school enrollment. Yeshivah high school enrollment in New York rose from 13% of the total Jewish day school enrollment in 1950 to 27% in 1971. Nationally, the yeshivah high school student population represents 20% of the total day school enrollment.

How do these data apply to expectations of high school enrollment increases in the next decade? A perfectly balanced elementary school-high school — nine grades of elementary school (including one pre-school grade) and four grades of high school — should provide a 70-30 ratio. The current yeshivah enrollment ratio is approximately 80-20. According to the present continuation rate only 2/3 of the present elementary school pupils will continue beyond the eighth grade. What with attrition during the secondary grades, increasing the high school enrollment base becomes a challenge of critical moment.

In small communities, where no local opportunities for continuation exist, the problem of Jewish secondary day schools is especially severe. To insure day school continuation on the high school level a shared-time arrangement might be made with the local public high school. However, in terms of environmental influence this plan is not the best answer. Is importing *mesivtot* from New York and establishing nuclei of older *bahurei yeshivah* in smaller communities an appropriate solution? For one,

it is an expensive proposition. Secondly, as experience has shown in at least one community, the nucleus concept does not always work. With respect to students from religious homes whose parents are college-trained and who have professional aspirations for their progeny, the delicate and critical question of *kibbud av* becomes a reality when the questions of college-boundness and the appropriateness of a college education are considered.

The subject of continuation has yet another dimension, namely — *continuousness*, or sustained attendance until graduation. While it has not been established, one might estimate the dropout rate of *yeshivot* at about 5% per year; and the pace of attrition seems to be increasing in many schools. Reduction of this rate will serve the same purpose as enrollment accrual. The challenge here is obvious. The causes of attrition — some evident, some subtle — as well as the factors motivating continuation must be given serious attention. In this arena, where school-family relations are paramount, rabbinic leadership plays a significant role.

### *School Size*

School size is both a function and result of the enrollment process. While the size of schools might be the product of deliberate planning, for most *yeshivot* is simply the sum of recruitment efforts. Individual Jewish day school populations range from a handful of children to registers of more than 1,500 pupils, with a national mean school-

enrollment of 170. The average *yeshivah* in Greater New York is twice as large as its American at-large counterpart. The typical New York *yeshivah* has 220 pupils, compared to 110 in other American day schools. If we exclude from this latter mean enrollment figure of 110 the six largest Jewish urban communities outside of New York, the average enrollment of the rest of the *yeshivot* — which comprise fully one half of the day school units on the North American continents — is substantially less than 100 pupils.

These data suggest several important challenges. Can the enrollments of small schools be increased? What steps need to be taken to motivate their growth? How can the mini Jewish Day Schools (in the small Jewish communities where prospects of increasing enrollment up to 100 pupils or beyond are remote) be made or helped to remain viable? Also, what can be done about the small, and very small, closely-situated *yeshivot* in the densely-populated Jewish areas of New York? Per capita costs are, among other things, a function of school size. Small schools are inordinately expensive. For this reason alone — in light of skyrocketing costs of education — all measures must be taken to increase enrollment in small schools or to merge them.

On the other side of the school size picture, maximization of community resources becomes a unique challenge as new schools are established or outgrow their facilities. This includes the use of synagogues, centers, and all other communal

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facilities for day school education. *Day School Recruitment*

### *Ideological Composition of Enrollment*

The question of enrollment cannot be considered without reference to its ideological composition. In all, 88% of the day school enrollment is in Orthodox sponsored schools.

During the last decade, a marked increase in day school growth has taken place in the Conservative movement. Beginning in 1957 with a handful of schools, the Solomon Schechter School system now claims 41 schools and approximately 7,000 pupils in the United States and Canada. Solomon Schechter Schools constitute slightly less than 10% of the school units and 10% of the total day school enrollment. While the development of the Solomon Schechter Schools has been motivated and facilitated, in part, by the climate of greater acceptance for the day school idea, it is largely due to the concerted efforts of individual leaders in the Conservative movement and to careful nurturing by the United Synagogue. The challenge that the Solomon Schechter School development poses to Orthodox day school leadership is crystal clear. Can it stimulate improvement and greater achievement in terms of *kin'at sofrim tarbeh chokhmah*?

While they do not as yet play a significant role in the all-day school enrollment picture, it might be well to note that three day schools have been organized under Reform auspices during the past two years.

Pupil recruitment in each school should be accompanied by the wherewithal to achieve and maintain high standards. What does the school need to do in order to accommodate larger numbers of pupils efficiently and productively? Day schools are currently suffering from a critical shortage of qualified personnel — both on the instructional and supervisory levels. Hence, the significance of the question of providing proper instruction and effective supervision to growing numbers of yeshivah children.

The day school movement now speaks of launching an enrollment campaign. In reality, promoting the day school idea has a double meaning. In the first place, it means initiating a campaign to increase enrollment. Secondly, it underscores the need to keep the current pupil population. While enrollment can be increased by recruitment techniques, it can be assured of continuous growth via the strengthening of the educational programs. In essence, this challenge speaks to enrollment in terms of preventing attrition — attitudinal and behavioral fallout — during attendance and after graduation from elementary *yeshivot*. Making the day schools more effective educational instruments must become a vital concern of the Orthodox Jewish community.

In the small communities, and in those schools where a significant percentage of the pupils are from non-religious homes, the quality of the program must be carefully appraised and measures taken to in-

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sure its effectiveness. According to the most reliable research evidence in general education, schools are, at best, reinforcers of values, attitudes, and behaviors acquired in the larger environment. To succeed in the face of these findings with children from non-religious homes, *yeshivot* must create climates of learning — new environments — within and outside the school. And parents must be encouraged to become partners in this process.

The dimensions of this last challenge can be best underscored via a simple statistic. Until 1950, the majority of pupils in Jewish Day Schools were from religious backgrounds. Since 1950, the percentage of children from non-observant homes has increased to the point where, I would venture to say, a

surprisingly large segment of day school students are from non-Orthodox and non-traditional families.

Increasing *yeshivah* enrollment can be achieved by recruiting pupils enrolled in supplementary schools under Orthodox auspices. Currently about 40,000 children are enrolled in Orthodox congregational schools. Encouraging these children to enroll in day schools is one of the most significant educational challenges facing the Orthodox Jewish Community in America. This challenge involves the preparation of parents for the change and the conditioning of the *yeshivot* for the smooth transfer and adjustment of pupils. It will mean family education — an important, but oft-lacking concomitant of the educative process.

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*Abraham N. Zuroff*

Rabbi Abraham N. Zuroff is Supervisor of Yeshiva University High Schools.

1. If the prime goal of our *yeshivot* is to insure Jewish survival, then it is as realistic today as in any other period in Jewish history. In every age since the dawn of civilization, Torah has not been in keeping with the prevailing values and perspectives. In our own times, the modern experience has challenged the validity of Torah with

greater impact than perhaps ever before. To guarantee the preservation of the Torah way of life, requires a broadening and deepening of Torah education for our youth. While it took a long time in coming, this idea is slowly but surely beginning to take root among segments of the Jewish community that heretofore considered *yeshivot*

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divisive and segregating instruments. The Conservative movement for example, has embarked on an extensive campaign to establish not only Day Schools but also High Schools to meet the overwhelming threat of the modern experience to Jewish survival. Even the Reform movement has begun to pay some heed to the importance of Day Schools and is beginning to establish its own network of such schools. Only this year we were witness to a strong shift in American Jewish thinking on Jewish Day Schools by segments of the Jewish Community that had been inimical to them and at best indifferent to their existence. Max Fisher, president of the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, urged Jewish leaders "to re-examine their obligations to the Day Schools . . . for the Day School holds one of the very best answers to further Jewish continuity, and has earned the right to our most careful consideration of what could be done to help." The Synagogue Council of America for the first time in its history called on Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds to give the Jewish Day School the highest priority, for "few causes had contributed so significantly as the all-day Jewish Schools to the survival of Jews as a distinctive religio-cultural entity."

In discussing realistic goals I am considering only those *yeshivot* which have not lost sight of the need to prepare students to become integrated into general society. This goal, while secondary to the primary goal of Jewish survival, is nevertheless worthy of top priority. It cannot be ignored or shunned,

for it represents an integral part of the educative process. Most people do not want to live in isolation, and it is therefore imperative that they be prepared to take their place in society. It would be unrealistic in light of the modern experience to omit the secular training necessary to develop Jewish Orthodox scientists, doctors, lawyers, teachers and the entire gamut of professional occupations.

2. The most serious problem confronting the *yeshivot* on all levels is the shortage of well-qualified and inspiring teachers. Although the financial crises that confront the *yeshivot* are a contributing factor, it does not really tell the story. The sad and tragic fact is that our *Yeshivot Gedolot* and our Teachers' Institutes are by no means providing the faculties that are so sorely needed. The worst part of the situation is that there is no organized and systematic thinking on the part of the Jewish Community to evaluate the needs and to implement programs that would develop the needed teacher personnel. (The Bureaus and Boards of Jewish education in cities throughout the country are perhaps making some effort and rendering some service to the realm of minimal Jewish education.) People are not being trained to become teachers in our Day Schools and *yeshivot*, but are choosing to go into the teaching field in the absence of better alternatives. Too few of those who have the intellectual capacities, choose to become teachers in *yeshivot*. They would rather choose professions with more money and more prestige. As a result, too many

young people who could revitalize the *yeshivot* are lost to them.

Another serious shortcoming is the absence of the "creative tumult" that is the trademark of general modern education. While general (public) education is involved in new research, new programs, new services, new analyses, yeshiva education is distinguished by an abysmal failure to initiate anything that is new. It would seem as if innovation, even within the framework of tradition, is by definition anathema. It is as if the learning process in *yeshivot* is so successful that nothing need be changed. Actually we are guilty of not facing up to the manifold problems that confront us, as if they will disappear in and of themselves if we do not come to grips with them. Is this really a true image of things as they exist? To begin with our very attempt to give students a dual curriculum of Jewish and secular studies is by its very nature not a simple matter. To assume that all we need do to provide two comprehensive areas of study is to lengthen the school day by several hours and the rest will take care of itself is only being either blind or short-sighted. How to effectively transmit these programs requires much testing, experimentation, and study. On the one hand, we believe that Torah study is not the prerogative of the intellectually gifted only but rather the right of every Jew — nay even the duty and obligation of every Jew. On the other hand, there are an appreciable number of students with limited mental capacities upon whom we impose a regimen with which they cannot possibly cope.

Have we ever considered seriously the problems inherent in such a situation with a view towards a possible solution? What have we done in the way of curricular revision to meet the needs of such students whose right to a Torah education is unquestionable and who can contribute much to the preservation of *Klal Yisrael* in diverse ways? We have established highly structured institutions with little allowance for individual differences in students. We have created rigid monolithic frames with little elasticity and flexibility. To use an illustration — our *yeshivot* are like clothing stores that offer only a limited number of sizes. There are some — perhaps a distinctive minority — who can find the sizes that fit them, while many have to make the best of it by wearing sizes that are either a bit long or short, a bit narrow or wide. The risk is in terms of future commitment to Judaism. Many of our "alumni" whose yeshiva experience induced alienation to Jewish perspectives and ideals are the heavy price that we are compelled to pay. The experience of wearing a suit that does not fit can be neither pleasurable, not a source of pride. If living a Torah way of life is neither enjoyable nor prideful, then Judaism stands little chance of survival, God forbid.

3. The modern *yeshivot* are guided by a philosophy of education which is based on the recognition that we live in two distinct worlds that are in conflict with each other and whose divergences are not easily reconcilable—the Jewish world and the non-Jewish world. Yet many Jews who are committed



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to tradition do not want to live in isolation from the world around them. Rather than retire quietly to the security and safety of the spiritual ghetto, they prefer to live as happily as possible in both worlds. To bridge the gaps that separate these two worlds requires a dual education — a yeshiva education to live Jewishly in the Jewish world and a secular education to live successfully in the non-Jewish world. The aim of yeshiva education therefore is to help prepare a student to *live a creative Jewish life* based on knowledge of Jewish sources, on the Written Law and the Oral Law, and simultaneously to prepare him to *make a living*, by giving him an excellent grounding in the humanities and the sciences.

While everything should be done to emphasize the primacy of Torah studies within its framework, for they represent the very *raison d'être* of the institution, we should strive for an excellent secular education as well. It would be self-defeating to elevate our Torah curriculum by offering an inferior secular education. One factor which is imperative in achieving superior status for Torah studies is their scheduling for the morning hours. An integrated schedule which allows for a Torah subject to be given one period, followed by a secular subject and vice versa, does little to enhance the importance of Torah in the mind of the student.

It would be an ideal situation if the faculties of both the Torah and secular departments in the *yeshivot* were sufficiently well-versed in both disciplines so that they could reconcile divergent viewpoints expressed

in the Jewish tradition and current secular thinking. Unfortunately, the number of such teachers available is so infinitesimally small that we can only dream of such a possibility in the distant future. It should be emphasized that potentially the sources for this type of teacher personnel are not dry, yet little conscious effort has been expended to attract them to yeshiva education.

5. The answer to question 5 is an emphatic YES! It is based on personal experience with graduates of Yeshiva University High School, and the roles they play both in the Jewish community and the general community. While a scientific survey of Y.U.H.S. graduates and their impact on the Jewish community still awaits the dedication of a future scholar, it can be stated on the basis of formal and informal meetings with them, stories by word of mouth and other such unreliable sources of information, that they are playing vital and effective roles in their communities and in many instances represent the nuclei of their groups. Our graduates are well represented in every profession and many have reached the highest rung of the academic ladder. Many are today rabbis, spiritual leaders of many communities who have been sending their sons and daughters to the same Y.U. or T.A. high schools that they themselves once attended. A significant number are *musmachim* who are members of our Yeshiva faculty. Several are themselves principals of elementary *yeshivot* and directors of Bureaus of Education. A very large number have chosen the medical profession,

specializing in diverse branches of medicine and in a number of instances are themselves teachers in medical schools. A great number have received doctorates in mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology and are today either college professors or workers in industry. A substantial number have earned degrees in the many branches of the field of engineering and today occupy positions of prominence. The profession of law has attracted many of our graduates — both in the teaching and in the practice of the law. A large number have entered the fields of teaching — both Hebrew and secular — attaining positions of leadership in this profession.

6. An area of deep concern to us should be that dealing with *Hashkafat ha-Yahadut* (Jewish world view). While the foundations for Torah perspectives can begin to be laid in the elementary *yeshivot*, it is on the high school level that problems appear and questions that demand answers confront our youth. It becomes even more ominous when we realize how many of our Yeshiva high school graduates are unprepared to meet the hostile forces on college campuses. Existing programs in *mussar* (Jewish Ethics) and *Hashkofah* (Jewish Weltanschauung) are woefully inadequate in the face of the onslaught that awaits our graduates.

The story is told about a delegation of Rabbinic leaders who once visited the then-famous Rav Yosef Zecharia Stern of the Lithuanian city of Shavel while he was on vacation. It was at the height of the controversy that was raging

in European *yeshivot* about the need for the study of *Mussar*. Recognizing the greatness of Rav Stern, they asked him for his opinion on the subject. He answered: "You certainly agree that those who advocate the introduction of *Mussar* study in the *yeshivot* still maintain that Torah study takes precedence over everything; similarly, those who deny the need for *Mussar* study still maintain the importance of piety and observance of *Mitzvot*. The whole controversy therefore reduces itself to a question of money — Will my yeshiva prevail or your yeshiva? Will I get the "ruble" or will you get it? Now I am on vacation, come to the city of Shavel and I will "*paskan* the *Din-Torah*."

While Jewish life in the European "shtetl" could be preserved without *Mussar* study, according to some, this is hardly the case on the American scene. While there may have been a time when the words of the Rabbis that the light of Torah study somehow had a charismatic and magical effect on people and brought them back to its ways, in our time it is possible only if it is brought out in its pristine form through instruction, direction and inspiration.

What is especially needed today is a concerted effort to achieve a three-fold goal — a deep interest in Torah, *Eretz Yisrael* and *Am Yisrael*. These should be viewed as three individual facets, each of which is important by itself. It would be ideal, of course, if we could achieve the complete syndrome whereby each of these elements would inextricably be bound

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up with each other. Yet each is so important on its own merit that it would be an achievement of vast magnitude to attain commitment by our students to even one of these. Our primary aim of course is the development of a *Drang* for Torah learning and living which is so overwhelming that the student cannot possibly visualize himself bereft of this. If we are successful in inculcating this on the high school level, it would become a powerful weapon for the student who is confronted by hostile college campus forces. To achieve this lofty goal requires the untiring efforts of administration and faculty — to spend many hours outside the classroom to think, discuss, and investigate the means and methods of transmitting Torah learning and love for Torah living. The term “relevance,” so highly abused in our own time, is very significant, for it strikes at the very heart of the problems that we are grappling with in our yeshiva education. It is a basic source of irritation to students who question the need of “learning *gemara*,” when in their minds, to know how to live as an observant Jew would be more enhanced by the study of *Dinim* (Laws). We must be firm in our position — to abandon the study of *gemara* in a Yeshiva High School is unthinkable, for without the study of the Oral Torah, we would reduce Torah to an empty shell whose meaning would elude us. It would constitute a return to *Karaism* — a philosophy of Judaism which is untenable and a distortion of Torah which must be categorically rejected. With the teaching of

*gemara* however must come also a presentation of the role of the Oral Torah in the whole Halakhic structure and explanations of its significance in the determination of Jewish thought and practice. Perhaps it is time that we pay closer attention to what *Chazal* tell us in (*Avodah Zarah* 8a) “that a person should study Torah that appeals to his heart.” For students who are at this age unaware of the contents of the broad “sea of the Talmud,” we should perhaps select those *inyanim*, *sugyot* and *perakim* that would stir their interest and arouse their curiosity and thus create a captivating and exciting experience. To the extent that we are successful in generating this excitement shall we be able to motivate our students to love *gemara* and thirst for it continuously.

The importance of *Eretz Yisrael* and *Am Yisrael* cannot be over-emphasized, for they may spell the difference between retaining the loyalty of our youth or losing it to a host of radical and anti-Jewish movements that are sweeping the campuses. If there ever was a time when study must be coupled with action, it is our own time, when activism in behalf of causes is the order of the day and part and parcel of our existence. If we do not encourage our students to participate actively in the cause of Soviet Jewry and *Eretz Yisrael*, we run the risk of losing them to causes that are hostile to our people. There is a vacuum in the lives of our youth that demands to be filled. It is our responsibility to fill it with the proper content, or suffer the consequences of losing them to for-

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eign ideologies and strange idols. It behooves us to utilize all the means at our disposal — through both study and activism to capture the minds and hearts of our students so that they may join our ranks as lovers of Torah, *Eretz Yisrael* and *Am Yisrael*.