



think

THE LOLA STEIN INSTITUTE JOURNAL

ISSUE #15 | SPRING 2014



SPECIAL FEATURE:
THE RENAISSANCE CHILD

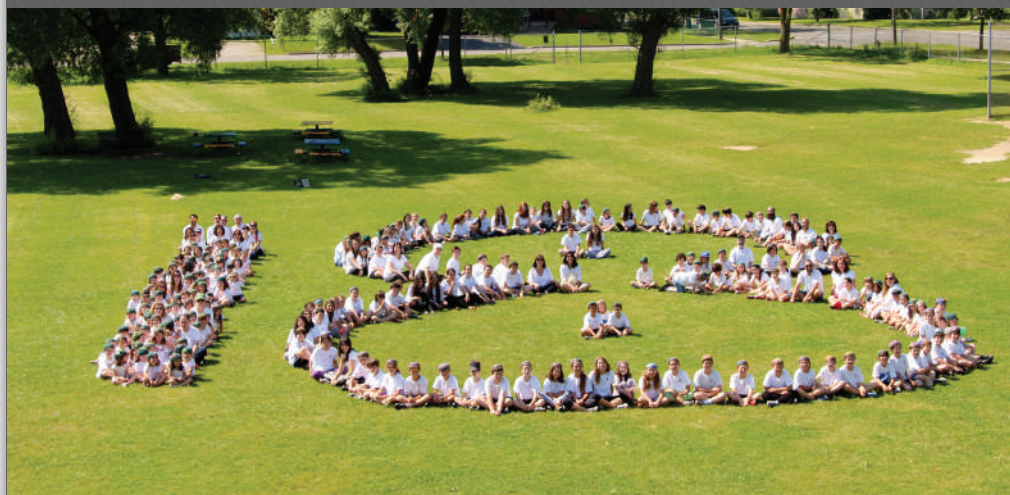
TRADITION AND
AUTONOMY IN
BIBLICAL
INTERPRETATION

THE MEDIUM
IS THE MATZO:
NEW RITUALS
FOR OLD VALUES

GAMALIEL IN
QUEEN'S PARK



Happy Birthday TORONTO HESCHEL



Celebrating 18 YEARS OF INTELLIGENT JEWISH EDUCATION

The Toronto
Heschel School  בית הספר
על שם חשכל
a gold certified **eco**school

EDITOR
Pam Medjuck Stein

JOURNAL TEAM
Lisa Richler
Michelle Shulman
Greg Beiles
Bryon Borzyko

COPY EDITING
Beth McAuley
The Editing Company

GRAPHIC DESIGN
Karen Patel
fivethreedesigns.com

PHOTOGRAPHY
Daniel Abramson
V. Tony Hauser
Judith Leitner
Karen Patel

THE LOLA STEIN INSTITUTE

CHAIR
Pam Medjuck Stein

VICE CHAIR
Michelle Shulman

DIRECTOR
Greg Beiles

**DIRECTOR OF
LEARNING COMMUNITY**
Gail Baker

ADVISORY PANEL
Elizabeth Wolfe
Ricki Wortzman
Nancy Marcus

Integrated Jewish Studies
espoused by The Lola Stein
Institute are delivered at
The Toronto Heschel School,
a Jewish day school in Toronto,
Canada.



Lola Stein z"l was an early female
pharmacist in South Africa, but her
special talent was in hospitality
and friendship. She cared for
family and friends, at home and
abroad, individually, uniquely, and
lovingly.

We honour her memory in a way
that also reaches out to many.

We lovingly remember
Mannie Stein z"l whose
enthusiasm and support for
our work with children is
gratefully acknowledged.



TO
RECEIVE
think
AT YOUR
SCHOOL
OR HOME.

**SIGN
UP@** lolastein.ca

think

THE LOLA STEIN INSTITUTE JOURNAL



P.04



P.12



P.20

COLUMNS:

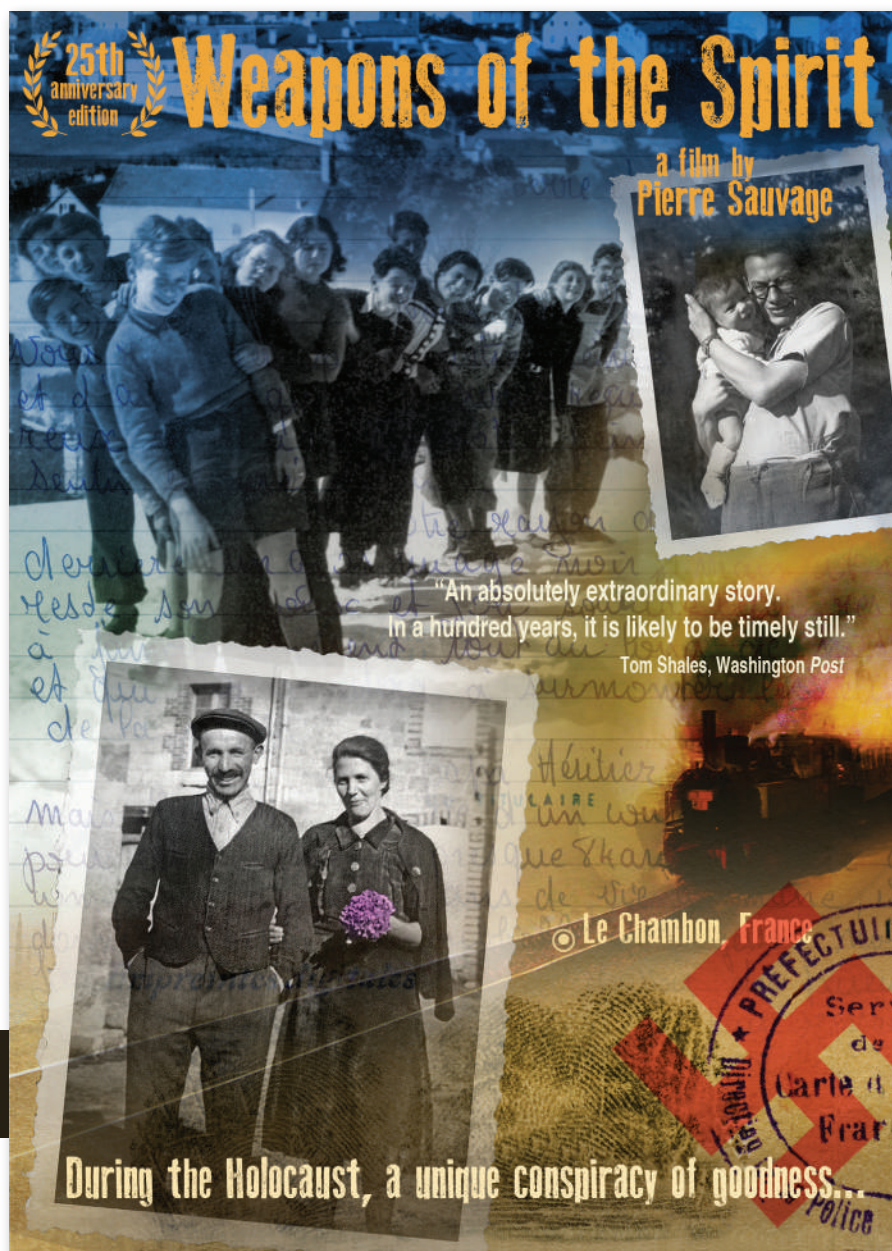
- 04 EDITOR'S DESK**
TRAINING OUR CHILDREN
TO NOTICE THE TRUTH
Pam Medjuck Stein
- 06 AWE & WONDER**
RENAISSANCE MATH
Greg Beiles
- 08 TEACHING TEACHING**
A SUSTAINED VISION
Gail Baker

FEATURES:

- 10 LANGUAGE, RELATIONSHIP,
AND OBSERVATION:
A FRAMEWORK FOR
CHILD STUDY**
Heidi Friedman
- 12 MIDDLE-SCHOOL HEBREW:
CHAVAL AL HAZMAN**
Edna Sharet
- 14 WHAT DO I THINK?
WHAT WILL I DO?**
I CHOOSE HOLOCAUST
EDUCATION
Naomi Rosenfeld

SPECIAL FEATURE: THE RENAISSANCE CHILD

- 17 INTRODUCTION**
Greg Beiles
- 18 TRADITION AND
AUTONOMY: THE HISTORY
AND FUTURE OF
INTERPRETATION**
Martin Lockshin
- 20 THE MEDIUM IS THE
MATZO: THE ART OF NEW
RITUALS FOR OLD VALUES**
Melissa Shiff
- 22 PUBLIC JUDAISM:
GAMALIEL IN QUEEN'S
PARK**
Yehuda Kurtzer



A REVISED EDITION OF THE FILM WILL
BE RELEASED IN SEPTEMBER 2014.

TRAINING OUR CHILDREN TO NOTICE THE TRUTH

EDITOR'S DESK | BY PAM MEDJUCK STEIN

The documentary film *Weapons of the Spirit*¹ was recently screened at a staff meeting at The Toronto Heschel School in preparation for Yom HaShoah—Holocaust Remembrance Day. Greg Beiles invited me to come and watch, but the event was a last-minute impossibility and I couldn't make it, so I borrowed the film for the weekend instead. I'm so glad I did.

The film documents the story of Le Chambon, a small town in France where the townspeople hid and saved 5,000 Jews from the Nazis and the Vichy Regime during the Second World War. When it was shown to the American Psychiatric Association, the film received a standing ovation for the clear portrait it offers of mental health. In the film, surviving residents of Le Chambon, those who provided refuge

to thousands of Jewish adults and children despite house-to-house searches and Nazi occupation, explained how their actions were simply the natural expression of their commitment to their Protestant faith, their empathy and compassion for the persecuted, and their custom to do what was right on an individual and daily basis.

This issue of *think* contemplates several themes that run through *Weapons of the Spirit*. The writer, producer, and director Paul Sauvage uses the story of Le Chambon to cogently demonstrate what good values, good training, and good work look like. Our writers address a teacher's focus on the individual child, on the importance to elicit from each student the habit of creative response, and how both this attentiveness and this encouragement connect to moral and ethical responsibility.

Teachers focus on their students' sense of self, on the habit of creative response, and how both connect to moral and ethical responsibility.

Gail Baker's column Teaching Teaching reflects how children develop the self-possession to act on their values if they grow up with adults who pay close attention to their personal qualities and who role model the ethics that comprise the Jewish way. Heidi Friedman explains that child development is critically influenced by a child's relationships with teachers, parents, and friends; children know who is on their side and so teachers must make sure that they are both trusted and trustworthy. Naomi Rosenfeld shares her decision to pursue graduate studies in education and human rights; her journey will explore new methodologies for Holocaust education and social action.

In *Weapons of the Spirit*, Le Chambon flowed with natural creativity; townsfolk hid false documents in beehives or graves, and identified Vichy officials who would collude in favour of Jewish refugees. With hindsight, it seems so obvious. Yet other towns throughout Europe reacted differently. In truth, the point of departure for the heroic actions of the people of Le Chambon was their mundane daily habit to hold on to their religious beliefs and adhere to the practice of Christian virtues. One resident said that he just always felt he was his brother's keeper.

The Lola Stein Institute held a symposium called The Renaissance Child this past November. Guest speakers discussed where we might see the creative application of Jewish ethics and ideas generating innovation that is exciting and valuable to the Jewish community and society at large. Our goal, of course, was to contemplate new ideas that might serve Jewish education. In this issue of *think*, we share three of the five presentations.

Professor Martin Lockshin reminds us that reinterpretation is part of the Jewish tradition. He looks into the study of biblical interpretation and explains that being true to age-old precepts requires the integra-

tion of new information in a way that advances core values. Yehuda Kurtzer describes a Talmudic model that teaches Jews to sense their joint ownership of the public square; full participation as citizens of the world need not dilute Jewish identity if we respect ourselves as equal players and nurture our identity from the inside out. Professor Melissa Shiff illustrates novel ways to communicate Jewish ideas. Through art installations she conveys traditional Passover ethics and the meaning behind rituals; she renders the experience of ancient virtues as modern and urgent.

In his Awe and Wonder column, Greg Beiles describes the program he calls Renaissance Math. It is premised on student mastery of calculation and computation, and includes the kind of applied mathematical thinking that brings students to appreciate the logic and mystery of the world.

To conclude, I must say that Edna Sharet's middle-school Hebrew-language course combines all the above. Using evocative Israeli bumper stickers and films, she teaches her students how the daily lives we live are the true reflection of the values we claim to hold. Edna writes how her students become engrossed in the political messaging that is plastered all over Israel and the emotional themes of carefully selected Israeli movies. She channels her students' curiosity and compassion into an urgent quest to speak Hebrew and understand Israel. Their need to know enhances their spoken fluency.

I am struck by how effective it is to simply train our children to notice the truth. The students' ethical motivations and Edna's guidance mirror the moral convictions and religious training of the Huguenots of Le Chambon. Edna's bumper stickers, Melissa's artwork, and Martin's interpretative techniques speak to reaching and teaching ancient Jewish values in new ways. Yehuda, Gail, and Heidi illuminate the essential ingredient in what to teach our children: they must know who they are. If we raise children to love and understand themselves as capable and responsible citizens, if we empower them to act, perhaps then we won't need *Weapons of the Spirit*.

1. For more on the film, see http://www.chambon.org/weapons_en.htm.

RESPONSA

.....I just read the latest issue of your institute's magazine and loved the article about the intergenerational learning that brought together Baycrest and The Toronto Heschel School. I hope other schools will be inspired to incorporate this approach to learning. Kudos to you for publishing a magazine that disseminates such information.

Best,
Linda Bronfman

RENAISSANCE MATH

AWE & WONDER | BY GREG BEILES

A colleague of mine who is a rabbi once joked that there are two subjects in a Jewish day school that parents consider Holy: math and science; and, of these, the Holy of Holies is math. Parents send their children to Jewish day school because they cherish a Jewish education. At the same time, they want to make sure that their children have the skills to be successful. Math is deemed essential in this regard.

There is precedence for this pragmatism in Jewish tradition itself. According to the Talmud, parents are responsible for three aspects of their children's education: learning a trade, learning Torah, and learning how to swim (Kiddushin 30b). Today, proficiency in mathematics is essential for many jobs, just as important as swimming was for the fisherfolk and shipping merchants mentioned in the Talmud. But, like learning Torah, math is more than preparation for the job market.

When I took university calculus – mostly because I was interested in the idea of infinity – most of my classmates were aspiring medical school students. Calculus, it turns out, is a prerequisite course for medical school, yet any doctor will tell you that differential equations are not part of their daily practice. Why, then, do universities insist that medical students master asymptotic limits?

The answer is that mathematics has become a kind of new intellectual gatekeeper. In our society, math is a test of intellectual capacity. This means that abstract reasoning, complex problem solving, and representing reality in symbolic forms should be central to the math curriculum. It means that it is insufficient to require students only to run through long lists of pencil-and-paper computations and that we must go far beyond training students for tasks that can also be done by Excel spreadsheets. Reasoning and logic are the true “basics” of mathematical proficiency; the ancient peoples who invented math understood this. If schools limit math training to rote memorization, they are not being true to both parents and children. A Renaissance in math is now needed.

I like the term Renaissance Math for a number of reasons. First, the Renaissance was characterized by a high level of craftsmanship as guilds endeavored to perfect their trades. It also typified a non-compartmentalized view of the world: a Renaissance person sees the connections between math, art, and science, and even religion. The Renaissance saw the rebirth of critical reasoning and a renewed focus on discovery and innovation. These four elements of the Renaissance – craftsmanship, integration, critical reasoning, and innovation – are central to Renaissance Math.

Let's begin with craftsmanship. Like all disciplines, math uses key materials and tools. In elementary school math, the “materials” are the digits 0–9, and the “tool” is the base 10 number system with its place values: ones, tens, hundreds, etc. Understanding the power of the number 10 is fundamental to learning math. Young students make a great discovery once they realize that they can add the series of numbers from 1 to 9 as “tens” – that is, $1 + 9, 2 + 8, 3 + 7, 4 + 6, + 5 = 45$. Later, they realize that thinking in groupings of tens helps them add bigger numbers – for example, $450 + 90$ is $450 + 100 - 10 = 440$; and of course, knowing your tens is key to multiplying and dividing since, 6×9 is $6 \times 10 - 6$ and 399×4 is the same as $400 \times 4 - 4$. What students commit to memory is mathematics that is rooted in fundamental and continuous understanding.

In the debate between “New Math,” which emphasizes discovery, and “Old Math,” which prioritizes memory and formula, the Renaissance approach opens a third path. Students who simply memorize “math facts” along with a few algorithms for applying them might succeed through elementary math, but, unless they simultaneously learn to think about math logically, they will hit a wall. Over and over we hear the same two comments from parents: those who are natural mathematical thinkers say, “Oh, you're teaching math the way I naturally think about it.” Those who struggle with math say, “I wish I had learned this way. I might have been able to get past Grade 10 math.”

A Renaissance approach to math recognizes the value of integrated projects that render math meaningful and show it as one way that human beings use to understand our world. In their Ancient Civilizations course at The Toronto Heschel School, students in Grades 5 and 6 study number systems used by ancient peoples. They learn how the Babylonians used a base 60 number system, which is still used today to tell time (60 seconds, 60 minutes) and measure circles ($60 \times 6 = 360$). The culminating Grade 6 project sees students imagine a civilization with a fictitious number system, unique digits, and place values, such as one where a six-fingered people use six digits (0–5) only and a number system with only a ones column, a sixes column, and a thirty-sixes column. Renaissance Math engages students to play with mathematics in imaginative, fun, and challenging ways. Students be-

gin to think analytically about mathematics as a way to represent objects and ideas. This is a valuable implication for the development of higher-level thinking.

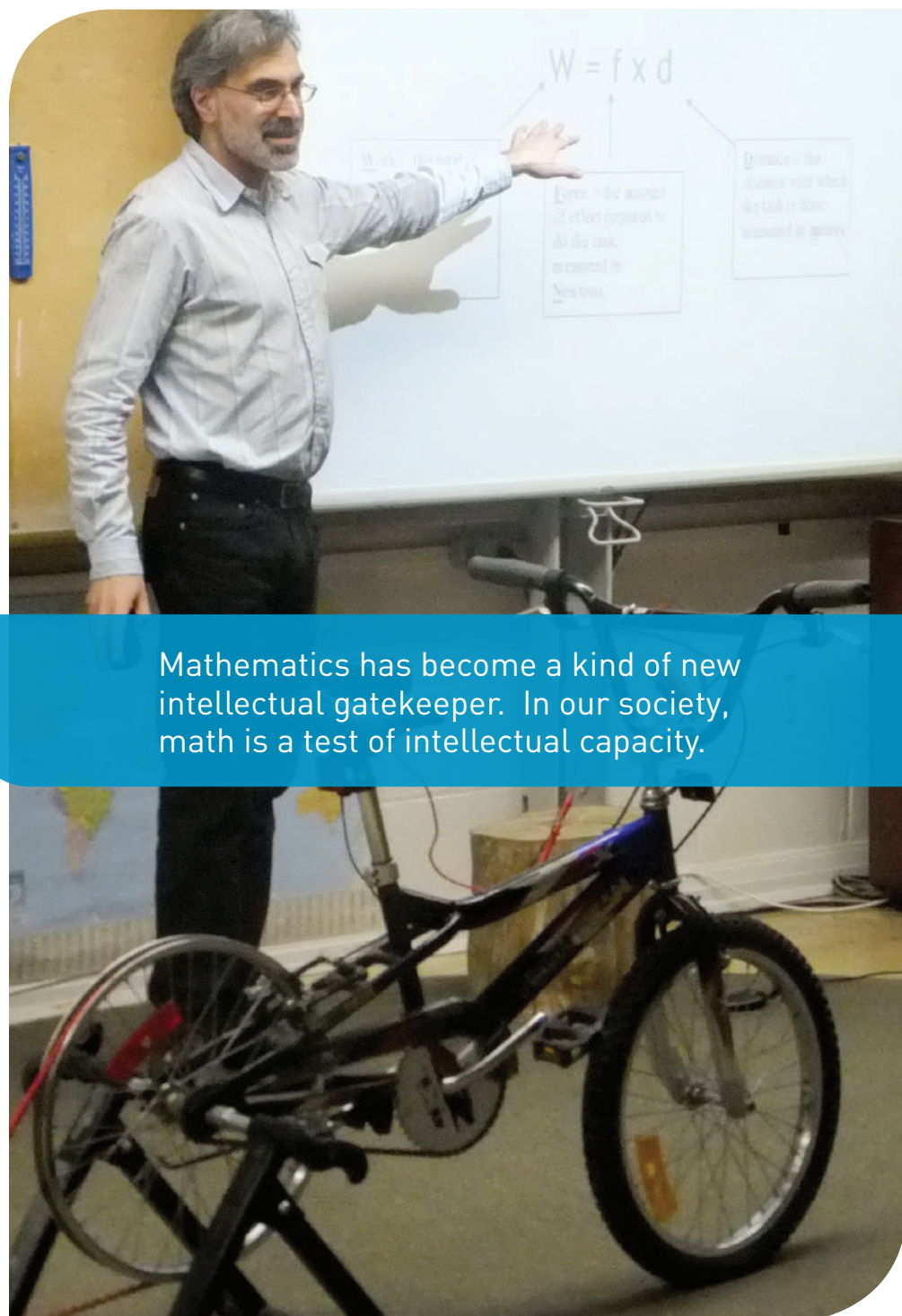
In one of my favourite Grade 8 units of study, students employ various computational skills to compare calendars from three different cultures – Gregorian, Jewish, and Muslim. The project culminates with the creation of what we call the Talmudic Clock, combining math with geography and Jewish studies. The Talmudic Clock is so named because it reflects a rabbinic notion of time that divides the day equally into two parts, demarcated by sunrise and sunset, and allocates 12 units of time called “hours” to each part. For different locations around the globe and different times of year, students calculate the length of each “hour” of the 12 daylight and nighttime units.

The project demonstrates how the experience of time – which varies with seasons – differs from standard clock time, which is uniform and constant, just as our lived experiences diverge from standardized measures. In his book, *The Sabbath*, Rabbi A.J. Heschel writes, “There are no two hours alike. Every hour is unique and the only one given at the moment, exclusive and endlessly precious. Judaism teaches us to be attached to holiness in time.” Using the tools of ratio and geometry to deepen our children’s Jewish experience of time gives them an inkling of how math can bridge the mundane to the sublime.

Mathematics is the “abstract science of number, quantity, and space.”¹ Renaissance Math grounds this abstraction through instruction in how numbers explain and relate to the world. It prioritizes mathematical thinking – with all the mental and written computation this entails. However children approach math, they need to practise, practise, and then practise the skills they learn. The value added by Renaissance Math is that when children approach math through relevance and meaning, what they learn sinks deeper and becomes more a part of their daily thinking and point of view. Taken together, discipline, critical thinking, and creativity generate a Renaissance in math that serves our children well.

¹ *Oxford Dictionaries*, retrieved March 27, 2014, from <http://www.oxford-dictionaries.com/definition/english/mathematics>.

Greg Beiles is Director of The Lola Stein Institute and Curriculum Consultant at The Toronto Heschel School. He has been appointed the new Head of The Toronto Heschel School, effective June 30, 2014.



Mathematics has become a kind of new intellectual gatekeeper. In our society, math is a test of intellectual capacity.



A SUSTAINED VISION

TEACHING TEACHING | BY GAIL BAKER

The beach was strewn with starfish stranded by the retreating tide. An old man walking at dawn noticed a young man picking up the starfish one by one and throwing each back into the sea.

He asked, "Why are you doing this?"

The young man replied that the starfish would die if exposed to the morning sun.

"The beach goes on and on and there are thousands of starfish!" the old man cried. "You will not be able to save them all. How can your efforts make a difference?"

The young man looked at the starfish in his hand and quietly replied, "Yes, but to this one, it makes a difference."

This is a story told by the well-known American anthropologist Loren Eiseley, and it is one that applies to our school.

Eighteen years ago when we imagined The Toronto Heschel School, our eyes were on our love for children and for Jewish eternity. We had a very specific vision: We would prepare each child in our school to participate in society as an informed and motivated Jewish citizen. Each would have a strong academic and ethical foundation and view the world through a Jewish as well as a universal lens. But how do we sustain this vision?

We thoughtfully parse our goals pedagogically and communally. We pay strict attention to the unique complex characteristics of each child. We remember how the power of play feeds the alert calmness that is essential for an optimal learning environment. This multivalent focus makes sure each starfish can enjoy the ocean of opportunity that being Jewish in Toronto offers today.

We want our students to understand themselves as Jewish and Canadian all day long, not as Jewish for part of the day and Canadian for the other part. This holistic sensibility means that our Jewish ethics and values permeate all aspects of our students' lives; we walk the talk. The breadth and depth of our detailed vision has made the dream school that we imagined blossom from a small basement premise to a full-sized five-acre campus with its ambitious targets still centred and within our grasp.

In *Hope Not Fear*, Edgar Bronfman and Beth Zasloff quote Rabbi David Hartman's comment about embracing Judaism: "It is building identity through strong roots and through attachment, instead of just floating freely in the world...Judaism always insisted on the importance of relationships, in the family, in the community. And out of the strong relational framework, you then go out to the larger world."

Our vision-driven school is about relationship building. Everyone counts. Students learn ethical behaviour by watching how their teachers and school leaders relate to one another, how school professionals relate to parents, how parents deal with other parents and

how students engage with their peers. Any organization can declare a compelling vision, but without the right people on board and healthy relationships at work, all plans fail. Internet connection cannot substitute for human connection. A virtual or digital community may augment but not replace a safe, trusting human community.

We are inspired by the teachings of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel and embrace the diversity of the Jewish world. We ground the school program in tradition and *halakhah*, and we collaborate widely to respect diverse opinion and modern sensibilities. To make pluralism work we go beyond tolerance to invoke an ethic of inclusivity. We have had to be very creative to ensure that students from all sectors of Jewish observance feel welcome – and warmly so.

Our commitment to coherent values and practices affects not only how we teach but also the space between the classes. One of my earliest and most profound memories at Toronto Heschel brought this point home clearly. One morning, 10-year-old Arielle knocked on my office door looking very distressed. When asked what the problem was, she answered, “We booked my Bat Mitzvah last night.”

“But that’s exciting,” I responded.

“I know,” Arielle answered, “but my best friend Rebecca [a Heschel classmate] keeps Shabbat. How is she going to get there?”

I was filled with a sense of awe. Here was a 10-year-old child clearly understanding how the values that we teach must become conscious expressions of all that we do. Each starfish matters. From that moment on we made sure that all Toronto Heschel families could participate in celebrations and that, if necessary, special arrangements would be made. Thank you, Arielle, for teaching me this important lesson.

The Toronto Heschel School is rare in its authentic double commitment to the individuality and the Jewish identity of each child who comes to learn. It stands out amid the trends of global outlook, mass messaging, and splintered attention: the World Wide Web meets a single child’s focus. While many schools train students to look around first widely and then even more widely as a core ability, our school trains teachers to focus on each child and to be sure they are engaged in understanding both themselves and their studies. Of course, we use the Web to inform this very grounded and very personal attention, but most fundamentally, we teach our students how to focus and train their attention on the close and the important. The Toronto Heschel School way remains a refreshing and reliable path on the sometimes scattered educational landscape.

We want our children to grow up and be successful in life. We want them to find their song and to be able to sing it. With the courage and imagination to value and honour each child – each starfish – then we will raise Jewish citizens with the skills to cope with life’s challenges, the presence of mind to pay attention to what is important, and the motivation to create a more compassionate world.

Gail Baker is Head of The Toronto Heschel School and Learning Community Director of The Lola Stein Institute.



The Lola Stein Institute

NEWS 2014

FEBRUARY

THE ARTS IN JEWISH EDUCATION

PRESENTED BY GAIL BAKER

Graduate Research Workshop,
York University, Toronto

JUNE

“MIRACLE AS THE FAVOURITE CHILD OF FAITH: THE PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF FRANZ ROSENZWEIG’S CONCEPT OF MIRACLE AS A WAY OF KNOWING”

PRESENTATION BY GREG BEILES

Network for Research in Jewish Education
Conference, Los Angeles, California

SHALOM HARTMAN INSTITUTE: RABBINIC TORAH STUDY SEMINAR

SENIOR EDUCATOR PARTICIPANTS:
LESLEY COHEN, HEIDI FRIEDMAN,
MALKA REGAN, EDNA SHARET,
GREG BEILES

Jerusalem, Israel

LANGUAGE, RELATIONSHIP, AND OBSERVATION: A FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD STUDY

FEATURE ARTICLE | BY HEIDI FRIEDMAN

“Teacher language influences students’ identities as learners,” writes Paula Denton in *Educational Leadership*. Indeed, the father of socio-cultural theory, Lev Vygotsky, held that it is our language that shapes our thoughts, feelings, and experiences.¹ This is essential information for educators.

Lev Vygotsky was a peer of the more famous psychologist Jean Piaget, who theorized that children are responsible for their own development. Vygotsky was Russian; he died young and his work remained in the shadows until the demise of the Soviet Union. He differed from Piaget and theorized that child development did not depend uniquely on the child but rather on the child’s social environment. Vygotsky wrote that how parents, teachers, and others interact with a child is what most profoundly shapes that child’s development.²

Consider this list. After reading each phrase, pause to notice the feeling the term elicits in you and try to define the terms in your own words:

- Regular education
- General education
- Gifted education
- Special education
- Learning disability education
- Education for the physically disabled
- Children with exceptionalities
- Diverse learners
- Remedial education
- Child study

These are the terms that are generally used to identify what is commonly considered to be a particularized or customized educational focus. Defining the terms is difficult. Each one is ambiguous and brings its own associations to mind, generating different feelings inside each of us. At our school we use the term “child study” to describe our focus on students because this is the essence of what we do as educators – we study children!

Child study assumes that every child in our school can become a responsible independent adult and a respectful caring citizen. To this end, teachers intend that each child is prepared for the path ahead. Remembering Vygotsky and that relationships matter in child development, the affinity between teacher and students and the rapport among the children become the cornerstones of the best classroom culture. All of this depends on the teacher’s purposeful attention to who the players are and what they need to fulfill their roles.

Teachers wield an awesome power over the children in their classrooms; students may remember their relationships with a teacher for a lifetime, for good or for bad. Many of us have stories about personal experiences with the teacher who lifted our goals, the one who embarrassed us one morning, who never got our name right or whose stinging criticism we have not forgotten. We also remember the teacher who inspired us and set our imaginations on fire.

Children know who is on their side. This is the key to the student-teacher relationship. Effective instruction flows once the teacher understands what the learners require, both collectively as a classroom community and as individual students. If the teachers do not study each child closely, gaps emerge and children slip through them. Child study in class begins when a teacher accepts personal responsibility to meet the learning needs of each student.

Two incredibly powerful tools that can support teachers in getting to know their students are the class profile and the individual student profile...The class profile is an information-gathering tool, a reference tool, and a tracking tool all in one...It provides a snapshot of the strengths and needs and interests and readiness of the students in the class... The student profile gives detailed, in-depth information about the learning strengths and needs of the individual student. It supplements the class profile as a tool for planning precise and personalized assessment and instruction for students who need extra attention and support in particular areas of learning.³

The idea for a class profile such as this comes from the principle of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which was inspired by the



architecture of accessible buildings. Architects who were renovating buildings to assist people with physical disabilities noticed that the new accessibility features facilitated entrance for everyone, not just those with physical disabilities. An access ramp provided easier entry for a person using a wheelchair, but it also eased the way for a parent with a stroller, a tourist with a suitcase, a cyclist, or someone using a walker.

Universal Design found its way into the world of education with the adage “Necessary for some, good for all.”⁴ Teaching strategies that had been intended for the special needs of a particular student or group turned out to be advantageous for all. It means that the teacher’s goal becomes planning lessons using learning strategies that serve every member of the class. This takes time; to do this properly teachers need time during their day to reflect on their students, discuss their observations with colleagues, and keep up with the research into educational psychology that informs their profession.

At The Toronto Heschel School we are so committed to the study of children that teachers come together to strategize in small biweekly working groups during the school day. A trained specialist in special education or a master teacher follows each teacher’s strategic plan

and spends time in the classroom alongside the teacher. The master teacher observes the students, models different teaching practices, and coaches the teacher. The key is the deadline; we set firm timelines to assess the strategies. This allows us to alter our techniques as early as we can if need be. We stay flexible.

We remember language, relationship, and observation. We are careful with the words we use; we know the far-reaching effect they have. We keep our relationships with each child supportive and disciplined. We watch our students closely, and we make sure that all students in our school are successful and see themselves as capable individuals. This is a child study framework that champions students as they mature and achieve. Child study is the heart of what we do as educators.

1 Paula Denton, “The Power of Our Words,” *ASCD, Educational Leadership*, retrieved March 27, 2014, from <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/sept08/vol66/num01/The-Power-of-Our-Words.aspx> 2 “Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky,” *History of Psychology Archives*, retrieved March 27, 2014, from <http://www.muskingum.edu/~psych/psycweb/history/vygotsky.htm> 3 “Learning for All,” *Ontario Government*, retrieved March 27, 2014, from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/learningforall2011.pdf> 4 “Learning for All,” *Ontario Government*, retrieved March 27, 2014, from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/learningforall2011.pdf>

Heidi Friedman has been appointed Director of Early Years and Child Study at The Toronto Heschel School.

MIDDLE-SCHOOL HEBREW:

FEATURE ARTICLE | BY EDNA SHARET

CHAVAL AL HAZMAN

חבל על הזמן

What a waste of time! That's awesome! One Hebrew expression means both.

Experienced Jewish educators know that bringing middle-school students to express themselves in Hebrew can be a big challenge. Equally demanding is the task to connect young Canadian teenagers to Israel; for many of them, Israel is just an idea or a set of picture postcards. Is it a “waste of time” to try? Or are there ways to bring Israel education and Hebrew together in an “awesome” way for our students? I am happy to share one way we have been successful in doing this.

For the past few years I have been involved in the development and implementation of a unique approach to teaching Hebrew in middle school. Our strategy is to bring students to an authentic understanding of the richness and complexity of Israeli culture, history, and contemporary issues. The premise is that students deserve to understand the State of Israel as more than an idealized vision of kibbutzim and blue-and-white flags. They also deserve to see Israel as more than a locus of television news about politics, wars, and attacks – a place to fear.

Teaching Israel through the arts is one very effective way to provide a rich and multi-sensory learning experience; it engages students at both cognitive and emotional levels. Art forms such as drama, film, and lyric-rich music deliver a strong linguistic impression and are particularly advantageous when it comes to learning about Israel through the Hebrew language.

In our Grade 7 curriculum, we have chosen two films – *Ushpizin* and *Hakayitz Shel Aviya* – to bring Israeli culture and history into a Canadian classroom. *Ushpizin* takes our students into the world of Hasidic Jews in Jerusalem during the festival of Sukkot with a humorous and empathetic view into the spiritual struggle of the main characters, Moshe and Mali. *Hakayitz Shel Aviya* explores the experience of living in Israel in the 1950s through the eyes of a young girl; students contemplate this pivotal time in Israeli history when Holocaust survivor families struggled to integrate into a new society.

Recognizing that watching a film in a foreign language is a challenge, we nonetheless declined the subtitled versions and instead

transcribed the films. We fix the students' attention on the Hebrew language even as they enjoy the story; students watch the film and read along with a Hebrew script. We provide a vocabulary list with key words and explain complex expressions in simple Hebrew.

The most captivating element in the language-learning process seems to be the idiomatic expressions that come up in almost every scene. Students really enjoy the added fun of Hebrew phrases such as *ashkarah?* (really?), *tizrom* (go with it), and *ani lo omed be ze yoter* (I can't take it anymore). I knew the approach was successful when I overheard a student discussing a recent math test with her friend. When asked how it went, without skipping a beat and with the appropriate expression, she replied, “*Al hapanim!*” (Horrible!) (meaning literally “flat on its face”). The friend replied, “*Na'avor gam et ze!*” (This too will pass!).

We want our students to speak Hebrew a lot at school. We create exercises for grammar and vocabulary development from the words and common language structures found in the film scripts. We develop drama games and improvisational exercises using the idiomatic expressions that they so enjoy. We encourage Hebrew speaking in as many situations as we can. It all leads to more conversation.

As our students learn about Israeli culture and history, they become primed to question Israel's social and political dilemmas. Engagement deepens. In Grade 8, we introduce topics through the well-known Israeli pop song “*Shirat Hastiker*” (The Sticker Song). The song is a mash-up (combination) of slogans that appear on bumper stickers, lamp posts, and bus stops throughout Israel. Each sticker has its own back story.

Performed by the popular Israeli band *Hadag Nachash*, “The Sticker Song” and video open a fascinating entry for middle-school students to study four key topics in contemporary Israel: Yitzkah Rabin and the Oslo Peace Accord; Ariel Sharon and disengagement from Gaza; tensions between *chilonim* and *dati'im* (secular and religious); and the Palestinian–Israeli conflict.

One well known sticker “*Chaver atah chaser*” (Friend, you are missed) refers to Yitzkah Rabin, the Israeli prime minister who was assassinat-



ed for his involvement in the Oslo Peace Accord. We present a variety of resource materials so students can understand the circumstances that inspired each sticker. For example, regarding Rabin and the Oslo Accord, students watch a newsreel summary of the history: they get a sense of Israel's shock at the assassination of Rabin and see a video of the speech at Rabin's funeral given by his granddaughter, Noa Ben Artzi Rothman. The resource materials are in Hebrew, again with our written Hebrew transcripts and vocabulary guides. The students want to understand the real story and so they do.

Learning this way incites conversation; students have opinions and strong feelings about the topics at issue. There is always a reason to speak in class and because these deeply felt opinions must be

expressed in Hebrew in class, our students speak a great deal of Hebrew! The conversations continue into the hallway – always a sign of success.

Through videos, newsreels, songs, and other forms of pop culture, students learn more than just the facts. They get a feel for the complexity and nuances of Israel today and they can better imagine what it might be like to live there. Israeli film and pop music are the media through which we deliver the message of Israel and its language. Teaching Hebrew our way is definitely no “waste of time.” It is truly “awesome.” As the Hebrew expression says: *chaval al hazman!*

Edna Sharet is the Director of Junior High at The Toronto Heschel School.



"Our children must be knowledgeable. The study of history prepares students to be ready to respond to events around them. We teach about the struggle for human rights and study the people who stood up to injustice. Our students learn that the world is bigger than they are, their lives are part of a much wider picture. We want our students to speak out against what shouldn't be and to raise the alarm when necessary."

Dana Cohen Ezer co-teaches with Daniel Abramson, an integrated Grade 8 program at The Toronto Heschel School which combines history, human rights, studies in Shakespeare, and the art of portraiture.



I CHOOSE HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

WHAT DO I THINK? WHAT WILL I DO? | BY NAOMI ROSENFELD

I have recently made a significant choice about my future, one that my peers cannot seem to comprehend and my family questions. I have decided to pursue graduate work in Holocaust education. In my career, I intend to create and facilitate learning about the Holocaust and other genocides. This is the right path for me.

I have chosen this path because the Holocaust provides invaluable lessons that are important to teach – no doubt this is why Holocaust education is already a part of school curricula in many countries around the world. It is not possible to put a value on what we can

learn from the Holocaust. The list of lessons is endless; lessons about the best and worst of humanity.

I will study how to communicate with students from different backgrounds and experiences. Despite the story of divisiveness that it tells, we can use Holocaust history to bring different groups of students together. I will translate educational initiatives into a call to action for the next generation of students; we must embed mutual respect and human rights in our hearts and minds and never let this happen again.

I observed that many of the non-Jewish students had never heard anything like this story before. Their gut-wrenching shock and disdain for the events described in Mr. Riteman's testimony had a powerful affect on me; their response heightened the intensity of his words.

Personal stories are a powerful way to share history. For the past 70 years, Holocaust educators have used survivor testimony as the cornerstone of their work. However, time is passing and live personal testimonies about the Second World War may not be available to us much longer. In a post-survivor world, we need new educational techniques to ensure that Holocaust education evolves and remains personal and relevant. We must create new kinds of educational experiences that deliver the same effect as that which flows from a survivor's speech. I hope to investigate these innovations.

My first memory of hearing a survivor speak formally comes from a summer day when I was a young camper at Camp Kadimah in Nova Scotia. Mr. Phillip Riteman, a Holocaust survivor, came to speak to us. I am now working as a professional in Atlantic Canada, and this past November I again heard Mr. Riteman describe his experiences. This time he was speaking to an audience of non-Jewish students at Dalhousie University. In both presentations, Mr. Riteman's commitment to bearing witness was relentless and incredible. Nonetheless, something felt very different for me, something that was more powerful than a difference attributable to the location or my own maturity.

I observed that many of the non-Jewish students had never heard anything like this story before. Their gut-wrenching shock and disdain for the events described in Mr. Riteman's testimony had a powerful affect on me; their response heightened the intensity of his words. Previously, I had only discussed the Holocaust in familiar surroundings – with survivors in my own family, with classmates in a Jewish day school, or with friends at a Jewish summer camp. The difference was palpable. I now intend to research and discover more about the difference between learning Holocaust history in a heterogeneous group and learning about it in a group that is solely Jewish. What can this tell us about reaching out to new learners, both Jewish and non-Jewish? It will be up to researchers like me to investigate methods to share insights with both homogenous Jewish groups and groups of different cultures and communities.

Holocaust lessons are lessons about humanity with implications for students of all backgrounds. I feel that we should teach the Holocaust in the context of general history; many groups were victimized by the Nazis and many others have experienced horrible traumas both before and after that time. It is critical that we build dialogue between all communities that have experienced genocide and with those who do not want it to happen again. When we make the learning about genocide common cause to all of us, we provide students with an outlet for action. Whether in a lecture hall, on a university campus, or alongside a mass grave in Poland, I have seen first-hand how teaching about the Holocaust affects character development. I have seen

how personal awareness of Holocaust history awakens non-Jewish students to new perspectives and convictions and how in turn this affects Holocaust education for Jewish students.

At the age of 16, I had the privilege to travel to Poland with TanenbaumCHAT as a Grade 11 student on The March of the Living. The trip offered experiential education, first-hand survivor testimony, and a sense of community among the students. It also galvanized me into action. It took me three years to find the right outlet for this feeling: I became a co-chair of Holocaust Education Week at Queen's University.

We reached out to other student groups, including the Queen's Pride Project and the Students Taking Action Now: Darfur (STAND). We raised the profile of our events in the eyes of the broader student population. By placing the Holocaust in the context of both historical and current tragedies, we opened an immediate channel for social action, which was what Holocaust Education Week was intended to generate.

To conclude, I will get even a little more personal. My very name speaks to my commitment to Holocaust education. Most of my friends and family think of me as Naomi Rosenfeld. But there is one person who refers to me only by my middle name of Esther – my paternal grandmother and greatest inspiration, Zelda Rosenfeld. More specifically, Bubbie calls me by the rhyming Yiddish nickname Schvester Esther or "sister Esther" – I was named for her late younger sister.

Bubbie says that I remind her of her little sister in many ways: in my love of academics, my passion for athletics, and the very special bond we share together. Sadly, I never met my namesake; she was murdered at the age of 12 at Majdanek, a Nazi death camp near Lublin, Poland, over 65 years ago. Although I am honoured to hold the title of Schvester Esther, sometimes I am lulled into a false sense of security and think that I have the natural ability to carry Bubbie's testimony as if I am her contemporary.

I am not my bubbie's peer. I am her descendant, and with this designation I assume the mission to bear witness to her legacy. I will become an activist and create a future that is different from her past. It will be a future that values Jewish creativity and ingenuity over Jewish continuity. With this mission in mind, I enter the next phase of my education, creating Holocaust education programs that recognize the past but are tailored for the future.

Naomi Rosenfeld is a graduate of Queens University, Tanenbaum CHAT and the Toronto Heschel School. She is currently Hillel Director of Atlantic Canada.



SHALOM HARTMAN INSTITUTE מכון
OF NORTH AMERICA שלום הרטמן

STUDY WITH HARTMAN IN TORONTO at the **SHALOM HARTMAN SENIOR EDUCATORS STUDY FORUM**

HOSTED BY **THE LOLA STEIN INSTITUTE**

World-class faculty — Serious text study with educational leaders from day schools, congregational and supplementary schools, summer camps and universities — Learning over lunch at different locations around Toronto

.....

CURRICULUM 2014 - 2015

GENDER AND POWER IN JEWISH LIFE

WE WILL ASK:

Does Judaism promote problems of gender and power?

Does it offer solutions? Can Jewish ethics respond to gender inequality?

We will explore how gender relates to Jewish life and what the Jewish tradition offers to our understanding of gender and gender-specific roles. Studying Jewish texts and diverse interpretations from a perspective of Jewish values, the Senior Educators Forum will create a dialogue between ancient ideas and contemporary assumptions and practices. **TOPICS MAY INCLUDE:** theological exploration into gender, portrayals of men and women in classical sources, rabbinic thoughts on power, and classical explorations into family dilemmas and life choices.

SENIOR EDUCATORS' TESTIMONIALS



SUSAN SERMER

Director of Education

Temple Har Zion Religious School, Thornhill, Ontario

My responsibility is to motivate and educate my teaching staff and students. I do this best when inspired by my own learning and expanding horizons. Heads of schools must continue to grow as educators and as Jews...

Studying with brilliant teachers from the Shalom Hartman Institute gives me the opportunity to study topics and sources I would never think of studying. I revisit the challenges facing me as an educator in new ways, and I question my assumptions.... Studying regularly with colleagues from diverse backgrounds is not usually available. This collection of professionals offers another way to discover new ideas. We are educators with very different points of view; we come from different movements of Judaism and different kinds of institutions.



DR. MITCH PARKER

Principal/Clinical Director

Zareinu Educational Centre of Metropolitan Toronto

The Senior Educators Forum is a high point in my month. The topics are relevant to our professional lives; they stretch our understanding of our Jewish beliefs...The Hartman educators are first-rate scholars and excellent

teachers. The sessions are so engaging that when time is up, we are eager for more. I always leave with at least one "I never thought of that before."

...The students in the Forum are all master teachers themselves... Discussion is a big part of each session, and participants' points of view are a major factor in the success of the learning...I recommend the Senior Educators Forum to anyone interested in serious learning in a pluralistic setting. The "take away" is knowledge and understanding that is fresh, exciting, and transformative.

REGISTRATION BEGINS IN JUNE 2014 AT www.lolastein.ca/020~hartman/
OR SEND AN EMAIL TO info@lolastein.ca

THE RENAISSANCE CHILD

A COLLOQUIUM ON JEWISH EDUCATION

THIS SPECIAL FEATURE PRESENTS IDEAS THAT WERE SHARED BY INVITED SCHOLARS AT OUR SUNDAY MORNING THINK TANK IN OCTOBER 2013

WHAT DOES RENAISSANCE MEAN FOR JEWISH STUDENTS TODAY?



Thanks to Jewish creativity, Judaism has renewed itself over and over for 3,000 years and counting. At The Lola Stein Institute, we promote the legacy of Jewish creativity – we call it Jewish Renaissance.

Renaissance means rebirth: it implies re-invigoration and liveliness. Renaissance also evokes the image of a child; the next generation offers true renewal. Our Renaissance Child Colloquium pondered the conditions that allow a Jewish Renaissance to flourish.

One key to Jewish creativity and renaissance is to learn from other cultures, other peoples and other ways of thinking without abandoning our core identity and principles. The most creative periods

of Jewish Renaissance coincide with close Jewish interaction with other peoples.

Today, we find ourselves again at a moment which calls for Jewish Renaissance. We can raise Renaissance Jewish children by guiding them down a path of productive interaction between Judaism and other intellectual disciplines and cultural traditions. The Lola Stein Institute, The Toronto Heschel School, and other innovative institutions understand this educational approach as “integration.”

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks advocates for integrated education. He reminds us that it correlates with the Jewish view that God is the creator of all knowledge. Rabbi Sacks said,

If you are studying art, integrate that in your Jewish work.... If you are doing economics or moral philosophy, integrate that... try and make sure that the same critical intelligence that they are using in their secular studies they are using in their Jewish studies and they are weaving them together. Don't forget, in Judaism we believe the God of revelation is the God of creation. So all of the secular studies they are studying about creation or the nature of creation must dovetail with what they are studying in Torah *sh b'al peh* and *sh bikhtav*. Assume that they are integrated.

The goal is to leverage the ways of thinking in secular disciplines to enhance Jewish learning and, reciprocally, to leverage Jewish studies to enhance learning in secular subjects. Students who study Tanach and Talmud in their original languages receive intensive training in the decoding, memory, and logical reasoning skills needed for successful math, science, social studies, and language arts. Similarly, the study of poetic metaphor in language arts can add meaning to students' understanding of references to God in the High Holy Day prayers.

1 Jonathan Sacks, “Future Tense: Where Are Judaism and the Jewish People Headed?” Lecture presented at Torah in Motion, Shaarei Shomayim Congregation, Toronto, November 2, 2011.

SPECIAL FEATURE CONTINUES PP.17-23 ➔

TRADITION AND AUTONOMY

THE HISTORY AND FUTURE OF INTERPRETATION

RENAISSANCE CHILD | BY MARTIN LOCKSHIN



What is our goal when we teach Jewish Bible commentaries to our students? Are we encouraging students to respect and adopt the wisdom of the great rabbis of the past as authoritative, or are we training our students to become new independent interpreters of the ancient texts? Schools of all Jewish denominations – even those that are non-denominational or post-denominational – should be struggling with this question.

Here's an example of how some great Jews from the distant past related to the question of tradition and interpretive autonomy. Let's see if we can draw a lesson from this.

The following passage from Deuteronomy is one of the best known texts in traditional Jewish circles. It was originally prescribed in the Bible as the prayer recited when bringing first fruits to the Temple, but its summary of the enslavement in Egypt and the Exodus was repurposed as the core text of the Passover Haggadah. This guaranteed that the passage would not languish along with other agricultural references from early Israelite history. (To make the interpretive issue clearer, I will leave the three crucial Hebrew words untranslated.)

You shall then recite as follows before the Lord your God: Arami oved avi. He went down to Egypt with meager numbers and sojournd there; but there he became a great and very populous nation. The Egyptians dealt harshly with us and oppressed us; they imposed heavy labour upon us. We cried to the Lord, the God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our plea and saw our plight, our misery, and our oppression. (Deuteronomy 26: 5–7)

In the Passover Haggadah, the *arami oved avi* passage is not simply recited, it is “explicated” using standard methods of rabbinic interpretation. The Haggadah’s explanation and elaboration of this central story in Jewish history is probably the best-known example of rabbinic midrash for most Jews, whether formally trained or not. Here is the traditional explanation as translated by the great Jewish scholar Nahum Glatzer in his 1989 publication *The Schocken Passover Haggadah*:

Go forth and learn what Laban, the Aramean, sought to do to Jacob, our father. While Pharaoh decreed death only for the male children, Laban sought to uproot all. For it is said, “An Aramean would have destroyed my father [*arami oved avi*], and he went down to Egypt...”

In his Torah commentary, the revered Jewish Bible commentator Rashi (1040–1105), explains the verse the same way: “An Aramean would have destroyed my father.” This is not surprising, given Rashi’s reliance on traditional Jewish sources, but his explanation does not actually reflect the plain meaning of the Hebrew verse in Deuteronomy.

In the 12th century, a number of famous Jewish Bible commentators disagreed with Rashi’s interpretation; they wrote explicitly that the phrase *arami oved avi* could not reasonably be interpreted as meaning “An Aramean would have destroyed my father.” Rabbi Samuel ben Meir (Rashbam; born c. 1080), Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra (born 1089), and Rabbi David Kimhi (born 1160) all explained the verse in a non-traditional way that conformed better to biblical Hebrew usage. They understood the words to mean, “My father was a wandering Aramean,” and their understanding is now found in all modern academic trans-

lations of the Bible (although not necessarily in all translations of the Haggadah).

Hebrew grammar and syntax were areas of study that were newly developed in the 11th and 12th centuries, and the three rabbis offered detailed technical arguments to show how the more traditional understanding could not arise from the plain sense of the words, the *peshat*. They argued that the verb *oved* must be an intransitive verb in this sentence, just as it was throughout the Bible, and therefore it could not take a direct object. So *avi* (my father) could not be the object of the verb as proposed by Rashi and, in the Haggadah (“destroyed my father”), it had to be the subject of the sentence (“my father was”). Furthermore, they explained that in biblical Hebrew *oved* (a qal form) never meant “destroy.” The transitive verb that meant “destroy” was *ma’avid* (a hifil form from the same root), and *ma’avid* was not the form of the verb that appeared in this verse.

Let us strive to turn our students into innovative interpreters of the Bible and encourage them to respect the teachings of those who came before us.

Certainly the Haggadah that Rashbam, Ibn Ezra, and Kimhi used on Pesach assumed that *arami oved avi* meant that Laban tried to destroy Jacob. But, when it came to the biblical text itself, those three great rabbis felt free to look at it again and apply new scholarly tools to its understanding; they used the newly developed tool of biblical Hebrew grammar. For them, the verse did not mean that an Aramean wanted to do something to “my father,” it meant that “my father” was an Aramean who wandered homeless from place to place.

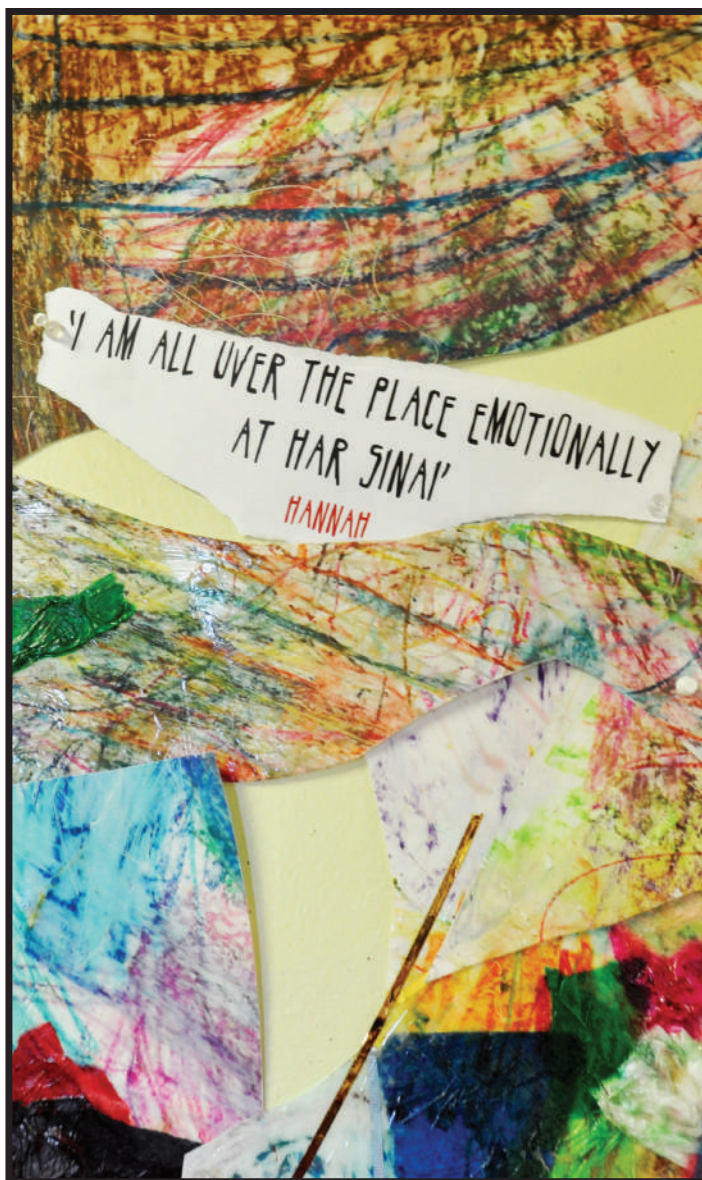
Of course, there was resistance. The most interesting opponent to their “modern” critical understanding was Rabbi Eliyyahu Mizrahi (born c. 1455), who offered a spirited refutation of their innovation. Among other claims, he argued that the interpretation found in the Haggadah and in Rashi was unassailable because it was the interpretation provided by God: “Our Sages passed along their true traditions from person to person all the way back to Moses who received it from God, that the Aramean is Laban and *oved* is a transitive verb.”

Mizrahi’s approach might well be labelled that of the arch-traditionalist who maintains that the authoritative interpretation of the Bible has already been offered by people who had access to better sources of information than we do – a direct line going all the way back to God’s communication with Moses at Mount Sinai. Yet let us recall that some of the greatest rabbis of the Middle Ages did not subscribe to such an approach. They felt entitled, perhaps even obligated, to apply the best of their newly acquired knowledge of the Hebrew language to the biblical text, even when the results were at odds with the insights of the great rabbis of the classical past.

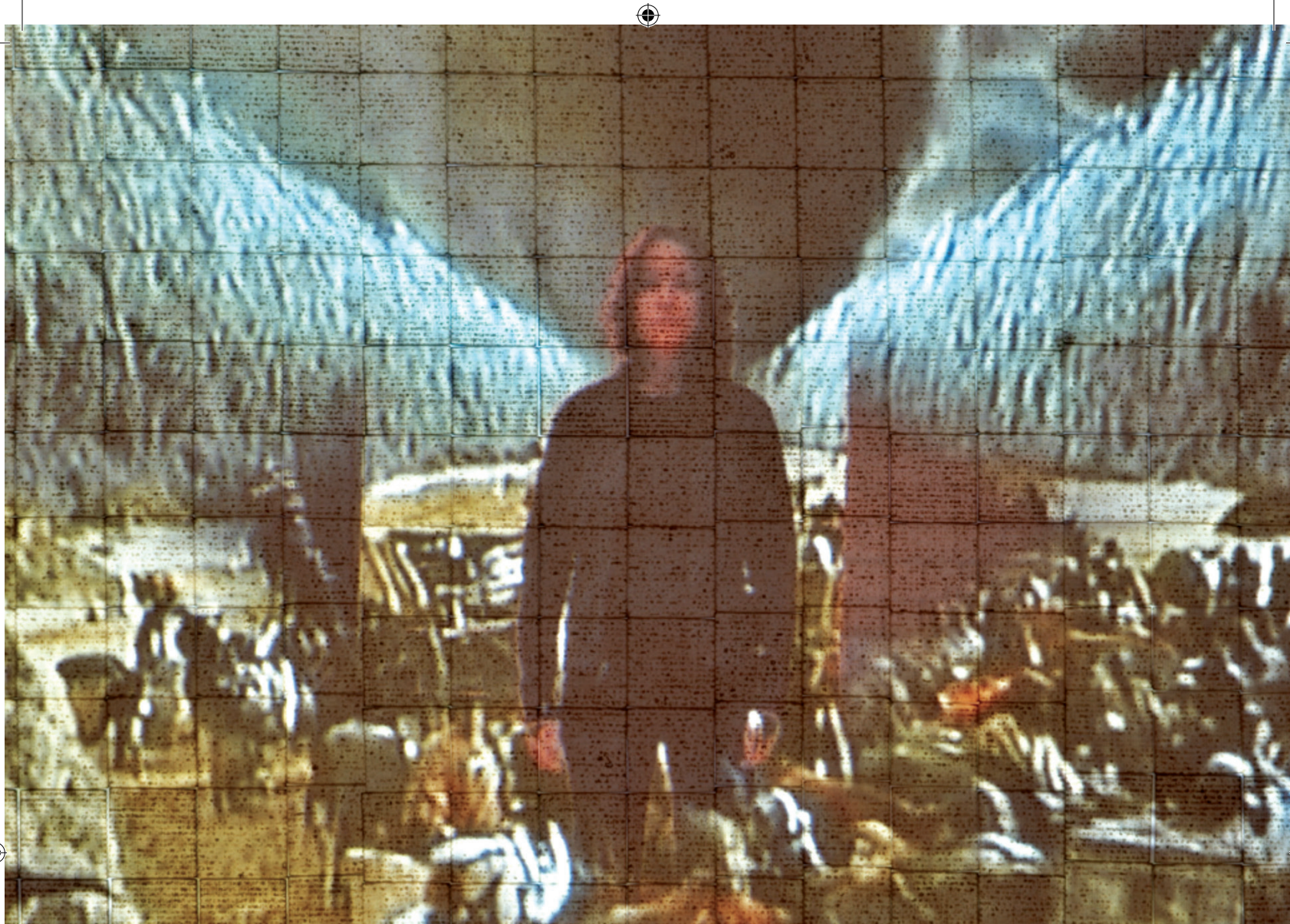
So, of course, let us empower our young people to think that they can reinterpret the biblical text. We can cite the examples of Ibn Ezra,

Rashbam, and Kimhi to show students that new interpretations are a part of our tradition and not a rejection of it. Nonetheless, at the same time, we must teach them that new interpretations are of value only when they arise from knowledge and learning; the occasional claim, that every interpretation is valid if it is offered sincerely, makes a mockery of our people’s long tradition of respect for knowledge, argument, and proof.

Let us strive to turn our students into innovative interpreters of the Bible and encourage them to respect the teachings of those who came before us. There are no fast-track options. Hillel may have provided a one-sentence response to the person who asked him to sum up Judaism while standing on one foot, “That which is hateful to you do not do to your neighbour,” but then he added, *zil gemor* – now go and study!



Martin Lockshin is the Chair of the Department of Humanities at York University and has served as Director of York’s Centre for Jewish Studies. His primary area of scholarly expertise and writing is the history of Jewish biblical interpretation, particularly the interplay between tradition and innovation.



RENAISSANCE CHILD | BY MELISSA SHIFF

“THE MEDIUM IS THE MATZO: THE ART OF NEW RITUALS FOR OLD VALUES”

My art practice involves the contemporary reinvention of Jewish traditions, in which I find certain affinities with British historian Eric Hobsbawm, who wrote:

Modern societies constantly redefine the framework of traditions that constitute the very basis of their existence. They resurrect certain elements of an allegedly golden tradition for different purposes than originally intended. What seems to be a retrieval of authentic traditions becomes, rather, a modern construction or invention of a tradition.¹

Over the past 12 years, I have created numerous large-scale multimedia installations that do exactly what Eric Hobsbawm describes. Some reinvent tradition for decidedly different purposes than what was originally intended. Others reframe ritual to suit the contemporary moment. My projects transmit and reactivate original Jewish ideas and ideals that too often become routinized and lost due to the very nature of ritual itself. To quote Samuel Beckett, “Habit is the great deadener.” In other words, when religious ritual is habitual, people often lose touch with the power and meaning embedded in it.

Reinventing and reframing religious ritual through artistic forms can have the unintended consequence of sparking a Renaissance in Jewish education. Using such artistic forms to unpack the core values of Jewish rituals can elicit a rebirth.

The Medium Is the Matzo was a project that explored the ability to teach and transmit the values and customs of Passover by means of contemporary art. It was first installed in 2005 at New York University. In 2011, with a grant from the Jewish Community Foundation of Montreal, it was installed in the atrium of the library at Concordia University. Through this installation, I have sought to move the Passover ritual into public spaces and educational settings such as the university, the museum, and even the street.

The installation was a three-dimensional Haggadah that I created using 4,000 pieces of expired Manischewitz Matzo. Visitors travelled through a series of spaces that were designed to evoke the Passover story. The first room they entered represented Egypt, in which a rapid video montage of the 10 plagues was playing. An audio accompaniment recounted the ancient plagues as well as 10 contemporary afflictions: war; homophobia; hatred of the other; unbridled lust for profit; religious fundamentalism; rape of nature; HIV/AIDS; exploitation of workers; homelessness; and tsunamis.

Visitors could leave Egypt by walking through the Matzo Mitzrayim Tunnel while interacting with a video presentation that superimposed their own images onto scenes from Cecil B. DeMille's *The Ten Commandments*. This video enacted the traditional Haggadah's injunction that admonishes its readers to consider how we have each found freedom from Egypt and bondage. Once out of Egypt, visitors entered the Elijah Lounge and Miriam Bar to quench their desert thirst, rest on Crush Oppression pillows, and enjoy the video imagery set into the fireplace. Tradition tells us that the Prophet Elijah departed the earth in a chariot of fire: a flat screen TV placed within the hearth played images of endless doors opening to welcome the prophet.

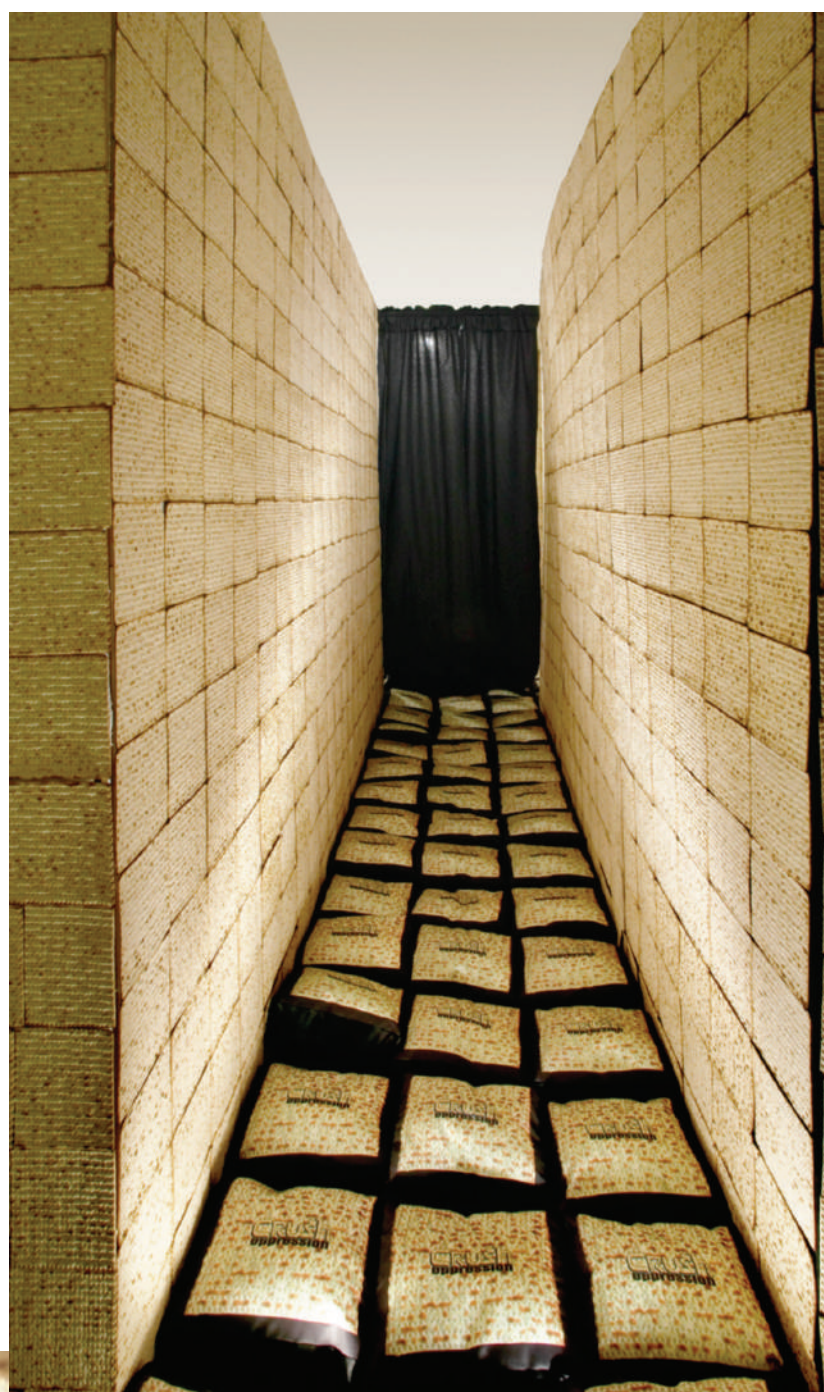
The installation concluded at the Matzo Ball Activist Store where the Crush Oppression pillows and Matzo Ball Activist Kits were on sale. Completion of this activity-centred Haggadah afforded visitors a personal chance to take action and renew their sense of ritual through purchasing the newly created Crush Oppression pillows, 600 of which covered the floor. As the pillows were purchased, not only did oppression disappear from the room but a portion of the proceeds were donated to a cause that worked to end hunger.

I had set out to engage a youthful audience in the values and ideas of the Passover ritual. To renew and revitalize these ancient values, I chose a new and refreshing medium through which to convey my message. A wide spectrum of participants passed through the installation each day: the visitors' book was signed by Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, atheists, religious Jews and cultural Jews, all of whom signed their names and commented on their experiences.

Unlike the traditional ritual of reading a Haggadah, my three-dimensional version was not read in a group around a table. My story of the Exodus was enacted by each individual who passed through the installation. One visitor commented that the scenario felt analogous to visiting a sukkah – a Passover sukkah where we were living in the mitzvah and where Passover with all its themes of liberation, oppression, plagues, and narrow spaces was embodied in physical space and could be discussed and analyzed in new ways. Most importantly to me, *The Medium Is the Matzo* became a place where social action could be inspired and enacted.

1 As quoted by Michael Brenner in *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 4.

Melissa Shiff is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Art at the University of Toronto as well as a practising artist.





PUBLIC JUDAISM: GAMALIEL IN QUEEN'S PARK

RENAISSANCE CHILD | BY YEHUDA KURTZER

One of the most unexpected turns in the transformation of Judaism in our time is the emergence of Judaism lived out loud in the North American public square. Judaism today is practised in public in radically different ways than it was just a generation or two ago. No longer just “tolerated,” Judaism has become part of the North American ethnic and religious fabric, part of the social currency.

How do we interpret this phenomenon? What is welcome and what is challenging? What will it mean to educate Jewishly the coming generations of Jews for whom this new reality will be a familiar norm?

Until recently, the North American Jewish experience reflected an image advanced by the early Zionist poet Yehuda Leib Gordon. In 1863, Gordon suggested that modern Jews should respond to the Enlightenment and emancipation in Europe by being “a Jew at home and a man in the street.” To separate the universal from the particular in this way, Jews were to foster a “neutral” public square for all citizenry, one where Jews could participate equally while locating their particular Jewish loyalties in the privacy of their homes.

In the 20th century, Jewish institutional life largely followed Gordon's template. Jewish life was built as an “indoor” activity. Jews became increasingly comfortable playing important public roles as citizens

in free societies. Their Jewishness remained in their institutions and in their homes.

In stark contrast, the State of Israel enables a different manifestation of Jewishness. Israel has become – sometimes for good, sometimes for bad – a living laboratory of Jewishness as a public social experiment. Sovereignty offers the Jewish people the chance to play out a public vision of Judaism that, historically, has not been afforded by the Diaspora, except in isolated and self-contained environments. For the first time in thousands of years, Hebrew culture defines the social fabric of a total society: the calendar, the official language, the community values.

North American Jews enjoyed both paradigms throughout the 20th century and into the 21st. Those actively engaged with Israel tend to like precisely those aspects of Israeli society that are not part of their Diaspora experience. They enjoy its public Jewish culture and the rhythms of participating in a Jewishly inflected society.

One might even suggest that the relationship between North American Jews and Israel has hinged on the possibility for North American Jews to participate in two Jewish experiments simultaneously. On the one hand, they could swaddle their Diaspora Jew within organizations

that afforded them an idiosyncratic local Jewish identity. On the other, their support for Israel celebrated a different and public version of Jewishness.

North American Jewishness is now shifting. Jews are no longer content with public Judaism as an exclusively Israeli activity; they will not keep their Judaism indoors. There are countless examples – public celebrations of Chanukah in city squares, the Passover Seders in the White House, Jewish public servants who openly describe how their Jewish values inform their public policies, and many more. Jews are remaking Jewish life as the stuff of public discourse.

Jewish institutions are struggling to keep up. Communal organizations were accustomed to competing with similarly constituted institutions. Now they vie in a marketplace of unbounded options for Jewish expression. There is a feeling of instability and anxiety in the Jewish community and it is produced by what can only be described as an essentially good problem.

Jewish educators face the challenge of what it means to teach Jewishly in the 21st century. Our tradition and classic pedagogy infer a certain Jewish insularity. It seems to run counter to our educational history and canonical texts to educate our children towards a Jewishly informed yet fully participatory democratic citizenship. Can educators cast Jewishness as a tool of belonging and not an intrinsically separate or countercultural identity? Can we preserve the integrity of the tradition that we are teaching? Will we allow environmental factors to shatter the significance and the durability of the core Jewish ideas that have withstood so many changes in the past?

The closest historical antecedent to the present moment may be the Jewish experience with ancient Rome – the often idealized enemy of Jewish civilization: Rome was the destroyer of the Temple, martyr-maker of rabbis, and persecutor of Jewish practice. In truth, Rome was a massive civilization in which Jews were bit players. The Roman–Jewish antagonism merged with other ethnic frictions as part of Rome’s widespread cultural takeover of the ancient world.

There is a surprising moment in one rabbinic text that I wish to explore here. The Mishnah in Tractate Avodah Zarah (3:4) records the following exchange:

Proclos, son of a philosopher, asked Rabban Gamaliel in Acco when the latter was bathing in the bathhouse of Aphrodite.

He said to him, “It is written in your Torah, ‘Let nothing that has been proscribed stick to your hand (Deuteronomy 13:18).’ Why are you bathing in the bathhouse of Aphrodite?”

He replied to him, “We do not answer [questions relating to Torah] in a bathhouse.”

When he came out, he said to him, “I did not come into her domain, she has come into mine. People do not say, ‘The bath was made as an adornment for Aphrodite’; rather they say, ‘Aphrodite was made as an adornment for the bath.’

To the traditionally minded, everything here should be surprising. We find Rabban Gamaliel, head of the rabbinic academy, not only in the heavily pagan city of Acco but also in a bathhouse. This prompts the query from Proclos, whose name and lineage affirm him as the ultimate “other” to Gamaliel: what is a great rabbi doing in a bathhouse? It seems to violate the explicit biblical commandment that a rabbi should distance himself from all that is forbidden. Proclos is challenging the very notion of Jewish participation in a society that is riddled with pagan imagery and pagan public culture. Shouldn’t Jewishness, as defined by its own values and cultural narrative, be lived essentially in isolation?

Gamaliel’s response is astonishing, “I did not come in to her domain, she has come into mine.”

Rather than offering a tortured legal justification for why visiting the bathhouse does not violate the commandment in Deuteronomy, Gamaliel turns the tables and claims the bathhouse as a fundamentally Jewish space. He appropriates the public square both as a site that is a legitimate self-confident expression of Judaism and as one that is authentically his. The fact that someone adorned the bathhouse with statues of Aphrodite is an aesthetic choice. For our purposes, Gamaliel’s response is an instructive one.

Gamaliel does not identify as a participant in a foreign public culture through which he must navigate potholes. He offers a self-serving interpretation of paganism that lets him claim the space as his own; it not as an instrument that he considers problematic.¹ He sees himself as the owner and shaper of the public culture in a way that can withstand the attempts by others to claim it as their own. Gamaliel redefines and appropriates the public square and makes himself a citizen of it, and does so even with sites that seem antithetical to Jewishness.

This is one approach to a central challenge facing Jewish life today. As we witness the relocation of Jewishness into environments that once seemed foreign, we must foster a Gamalielian confidence in our students that encourages them to participate publicly in this new Jewishness and to make it their own.

1 Seth Schwartz, “Gamaliel in Aphrodite’s Bath: Palestinian Judaism and Urban Culture in the Third and Fourth Centuries,” in Catherine Hezser and Peter Schaefer, eds., *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture*, vol. 2 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2000).

YEHUDA KURTZER is President of the Shalom Hartman Institute of North America. He has taught at Harvard University, Hebrew College, the Brandeis Initiative on Bridging Scholarship and Pedagogy, NYU’s Center for Online Judaic Studies, and the American Jewish Committee’s Commission on Contemporary Jewish Life.

CONGRATULATIONS



LOLA STEIN INSTITUTE DIRECTOR **GREG BEILES** BECOMES THE NEW HEAD OF THE TORONTO HESCHEL SCHOOL

Greg joined The Toronto Heschel School as a young teacher in 1997 under the founding Head of School Baruch Rand. Toronto Heschel is delighted to again be able to appoint a Head of School from within our senior team. Beiles' appointment follows the unanimous recommendation of the retiring Head of School Gail Baker and The Toronto Heschel School Leadership Team.

Beiles' leadership emerged steadily during his 17 years on the Toronto Heschel Team. Working closely first with Baruch Rand and then Gail Baker, Greg's role at the school expanded from teaching a single class to directing the school's educational program. In 2000 Greg became the Elementary Division Head. In 2001 he was appointed Director of the Middle School. In 2004 he assumed the position of Direc-

tor of Curriculum with principal responsibility for the school's educational approach and methods.

In 2011 Greg left his full-time position at the school to complete his Ph.D. at the University of Toronto and become Director of The Lola Stein Institute where he develops teacher training and integrated curriculum for The Toronto Heschel School as well as the wider educational community, Jewish and general. Greg retained an advisory role at the school as Curriculum Consultant and remained close to the implementation of the curriculum that he developed. Greg has presented papers at conferences in Canada, France, and the U.S. and in 2013 he received an Emerging Scholar Award from the Network for Research in Jewish Education in New York.

“Our school is a dynamic institution and we have a strong leadership team and committed staff that are well positioned to take our school to the next level while remaining true to our vision and mission.”

GAIL BAKER, RETIRING HEAD OF SCHOOL