think

THE LOLA STEIN INSTITUTE JOURNAL

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LEAD BY EXAMPLE:
THE CANADIAN MUSEUM OF HUMAN RIGHTS
GAIL ASPER

JEWISH EDUCATION:
MISSION, LEGACY & IDENTITY
BERNIE STEINBERG

PARENTING:
THROUGH A JEWISH LENS
LISA RICHLER

EDITOR'S DESK

"Values are caught, not taught."[1] Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks's statement is a succinct description of Jewish education and legacy, and the theme of this issue of *think*. Parents and educators wonder whether our children are capturing what we intend to give them; instructions on how to catch a baseball can help.[2]

1. Get a glove that fits you perfectly and has enough padding for your protection.
A child welcomes Judaism with easy comfort if Jewish values help him or her make sense of the world; when children find meaning in the Jewish way despite the pressures and prejudices of our times, it will host their journey through life. Greg Beiles writes that children are our legacy; we support their renewal of the Jewish spirit through role modelling, responsibility, and hope.

2. Watch the ball from the time it leaves the thrower's hand till the time it gets to your glove.
Focus is important; with critical thinking skills and mindful self-discipline, children can discern what is valuable to them and what is not. Gail Baker describes that she connects even very young children to the treasures that Judaism offers; her students identify the rewards of spirituality, morality, and social conscience with the wisdom of ancient texts and keep their eyes on the ball.

3. Move your glove to a position where the ball would land safely into the pocket.

When parents and educators offer a secure positive environment, learning blossoms. Claire Merbaum explains that, according to both internationally acclaimed educational research and a mother's caring heart, attention to students' cognitive development and their emotional well-being affords the best in child development and education. Her conclusions are mirrored in Lisa Richler's presentation of Jewish ethics as effective parenting tools that can serve to keep families on the path to responsibility and compassion.

4. Close your hand when catching the ball so you do not drop it.
Children grab onto relevance and hold it close. Bernie Steinberg explores the relevance of Jewish legacy to young people today; he suggests that understanding choice, memory, and purpose can bridge generations and foster Jewish identity. Dana Cohen teaches junior high history as an exercise in relevance; when young people witness the continuity of human experience, it empowers them to appreciate what is happening today and to think about how the future might unfold.

5. If the ball is high in the air (pop up) move under the ball and catch it with the glove above your head. This gives you the advantage of not taking your eye off of the baseball, as you would have to do if you caught it at your waist.
Circumstance matters. Adaptability is a challenge. A wide spectrum of educational options exists to position young learners to absorb values and knowledge in postures that promote success. *think* canvasses Jewish educators from a day school, a secondary school, a supplementary school, a summer camp, an Israel experience, and a university to discover the particular affect they each attribute to their mode of education.

6. Bring your throwing hand into the glove as you catch it for a quick take out and release.
The future is built by what our children do with the values they inherit.
The Canadian Human Rights Museum is the legacy of a Jewish family from Winnipeg, and Gail Asper shares with *think* readers her family's contributions to this remarkable project. We hope all our children catch Jewish values and throw them home.

Let's play ball!

1 Jonathan Sacks, *Rabbi Jonathan Sacks's Haggadah: Hebrew and English Text with New Essays and Commentary* (New York: Continuum Press, 2007).
2 www.wikihow.com/Catch-a-Baseball

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Integrated Jewish Studies espoused by The Lola Stein Institute are delivered at The Toronto Heschel School, a Jewish community 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.

The Lola Stein Institute offers consultation in integrated studies and curriculum development, presents workshops for educators, and publishes *think: T he Lola Stein Institute Journal*.

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COLUMNS

FEATURED ARTICLES

SPECIAL REPORT: *CREATING JEWISH LEGACY*

OUR CHILDREN ARE OUR LEGACY

By Greg Beiles

Each of us hopes that the work we do and the life we live is of value: not only for the present but also for the future. We hope that the efforts we put forth to help our families, our communities, and our broader society will in some way endure, and will not simply dissolve in the shifting sands of time. We want to "leave a mark," "make a difference," "be remembered for our positive contributions."

Jewish tradition is circumspect about our ambitions to leave such a legacy. The wise King Solomon wrote, "I have seen all the works which have been done under the sun and, behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind; for nothing of the past is remembered by those in the future" (Kohelet 1). Solomon's skepticism is a reminder that we must be humble concerning the lasting impact of our "works" on future generations. If so, is there anything we can hope to leave for future generations?

Only if our children teach their children to be responsible and moral will we be remembered as being responsible and moral.

Rabbinic tradition provides an interesting response to this dilemma by turning the issue on its head. A famous Midrash (rabbinic parable) recounts that when the Israelites were preparing to receive the Torah God said to them, "I will not give you the Torah unless you provide worthy guarantors who will assure that you will observe its laws." At first, the Israelites suggested that their ancestors would be the guarantors, to which God replied, "Your guarantors themselves require guarantors!" To this the Israelites responded, "Our prophets will guarantee our observance of the Torah." But God rejected this offer, too. As a last resort, the Jews declared, "Our children will serve as our guarantors!" "They truly are worthy guarantors," God replied. "Because of them I will give the Torah" (from Midrash Rabba, Song of Songs 1:3).

This seems to be a strange reversal: shouldn't the ancestors – the parents – be the ones responsible for the moral integrity of their children? How is it that the children are actually the moral "guarantors" of the "guarantors" – their parents?

I understand this teaching as follows: only if our children teach their children to be responsible and moral will we be remembered as being responsible and moral. Our children's moral behaviour and moral teaching is the only guarantor of the contribution we have made in our lifetime. And, of course, the chain continues, so that it is not just one generation but each successive generation that either verifies or negates the legacy of our values.

In Judaism, positive values are understood to be in some sense eternal, yet dependent on each generation to renew and affirm them. As A.J. Heschel puts it, "The moment at Sinai depends for its fulfillment upon this present moment, upon all moments."[1]

If our children are the guarantors of our efforts, of our legacy, where does this leave us as teachers, parents, and community leaders? What is our responsibility? Again, we can turn to rabbinic teachings for some insights.

The Talmud recounts how a traveller named Honi Hamea'gel once came upon a man who was planting a carob tree. He asked the man, "Why do you bother planting this tree which will only bear fruit in seventy years?" The man replied, "I found [ready-grown] carob trees in the world; as my forefathers planted these for me so I too plant these for my children."

Honi then fell asleep and dreamed for 70 years. When he awoke he went to the Beit Midrash – the house of learning. He overheard the scholars say, "The law is as clear to us as in the days of Honi the Circle-Drawer, for whenever he came to the Beth Hamidrash he would settle for the scholars any difficulty that they had." Upon hearing this, Honi called out, "I am Honi." But the scholars would not believe him nor did they give him the honour due to him (Babylonian Talmud, Ta'anit 23a).

I find two lessons in this passage. The first is that Honi is remembered for his ability to deliberate and to resolve difficulties, and yet he himself is not recognized. From this we learn that it is our thoughtfulness, our deliberation, and our care in problem-solving that will be remembered and honoured by future generations. Once we offer these "works" and values to the world, whether to our children, our students, or our communities, they no longer belong to us. Nor can we expect to see them recognized in quite the same way as we taught them. As the 20th-century Jewish philosopher Franz Rosenzweig noted, it won't be really good until they use me in sermons without quoting me, and best of all, without even knowing that it is me they are using."[2]

The rabbis reinforce this idea when they recount how Moses travelled thousands of years into the future to visit the classroom of Rabbi Akiva. Moses sat at the back of the class and could not recognize a word of what Akiva was teaching, and yet he was reassured when Akiva said, "And all this is the word of our teacher Moses."

Our children and grandchildren will reinterpret and renew our teachings to make sense for their time and circumstances. Through this renewal of the spirit of our efforts, they affirm our legacy. Our job is to role model the responsibility, thoughtfulness, and creativity that we wish them to renew.

Our children and grandchildren will reinterpret and renew our teachings to make sense for their time and circumstances. Through this renewal ... they affirm our legacy.

The second lesson of the text, related to the first, is that we must leave a world of hope and possibility for our children and grandchildren. The man plants a carob tree without expectation of seeing the fruits of his labour. Rather, he plants to provide for his children and grandchildren. As with all rabbinic teachings we ought to understand this at several levels. At the literal level, we learn that we must provide a sustainable world – a world of trees and fruits – in which our children can thrive. From this we learn that environmental responsibility may well be the greatest legacy we leave, and one for which we will be affirmed or denied by our children.

As a metaphor, planting a carob tree – which takes several generations to bear fruit – means taking responsibility for a future in which we can neither participate, nor control. It means doing whatever we can to lay the groundwork for our children to be responsible and creative, even though we cannot be sure what form their creativity will take. And it means providing them with the physical, spiritual, and intellectual tools to teach the same responsibility and creativity to their own children. In this way, they continue our work, and are the guarantors of our legacy.

1 A.J. Heschel, *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity, Essays Edited by Susannah Heschel* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2001), p. 17.
2 Franz Rosenzweig, Letter to his mother, October 5, 1921, in *Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought*, ed. N.N. Glatzer (New York: Schoken, 1953), p. 104.

Greg Beiles, M.A., is Director of The Lola Stein Institute and Curriculum Consultant at The Toronto Heschel School. Greg believes children are active builders of knowledge and empathy, and that a child's perspective is shaped as much as how learning takes place as by the content at hand. Greg is now completing his doctorate in the Philosophy of Religion.

THE JEWISH FUTURE STARTS EARLY

By Gail Baker

Parents tell me that their children cite the ethical theme of a Jewish story learned in class when dealing with siblings at home. It warms my heart and tells me that a Jewish future starts early.

In all Jewish institutions today, whether a school, synagogue or community organization, talk inevitably turns to the sustainability of our Jewish way of life. While outside threats are not new, increasingly the concern now comes from within. We worry about diminished participation in Jewish organizations, the rise in marrying out and relinquishing a Jewish lifestyle, and dwindling support for Israel. I must go against the grain. As a Jewish educator, not only do I have hope for the Jewish future, but also I can point to it.

To see what the future of Jewish life can be, I invite you into the classrooms of The Toronto Heschel School Early Years Programme. "The world only endures through the breath of school children" (Talmud Shabbat 119B). I say it's time to let them breathe; let them draw in the wisdom of the ages and exhale the learning into their own daily lives. We provide the oxygen.

We connect universal ethics and values to the treasure trove that is Judaism, strengthening our students' character and inspiring our families and staff towards meaningful Jewish life. Early years education provides an exquisite opportunity to bring meaning to our youngest students and empowerment to our community. As Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah said, "If there is no Torah there is no *derech eretz*. And if there is no *derech eretz* there is no Torah" (Pirke Avot 3:21). *Derech eretz* means the way to the land; it comprehends following the path of good deeds and kindness in pursuit of redemption. It is the Jewish way.

In Junior and Senior Kindergarten, we use text-based ethical themes to frame living and learning. I do not imply an hour of study scheduled here and there but a deliberate Jewish consciousness that permeates the school, a living Judaism all day long. We involve our families in this culture; their collaboration is critical to the education of our students.

We teach children to search for meaning.

We lead our young children to find their individual life journeys reflected in the journey of the Jewish people. Through the study of sacred ancient Jewish texts we plant deep roots and grow sturdy stems. We teach that all humanity is created *B'tzelem Elokim*, in God's image. Children learn that, while this makes them unique and special, it does not make them superior to anyone; as young as they are, they meet their peers with compassion, dignity, and a sense of mutual responsibility.

Abraham and Sarah's tent was open on all sides and we bring our young students to view the outside world from inside their own tent. We must know who we are. We nurture a mindful and deeply emotional attachment to Judaism that will form a bedrock for lasting commitment.

Spirituality infuses our classrooms as we connect mind, heart, and body. Abraham Joshua Heschel writes, "Awe is more than an emotion; it is a way of understanding, insight into a meaning greater than ourselves. The beginning of awe is wonder and the beginning of wisdom is awe."[1] To this end we use Hebrew, speaking, listening, reading and writing in our very own language and we link our shared culture to Jewish history, traditions, and modern-day Israel. Children begin their day thanking God for something particular which inspires their personal gratitude. As a first step to becoming thinking citizens of the world, our early years students are responsible for the care of plants and small animals. We focus their attention on how life begins with a tiny seed nurtured through the seasons; as they work outside in our large organic garden they grow to appreciate creation.

Young children brim with questions: "Why can't I see God? Does God know if I'm bad?" In the time-honoured Jewish tradition, we encourage the young students to ask questions; we engage, we struggle with new ideas, and we debate. Chumash in hand, our teachers read and retell Bible stories dramatically to eager listeners, fomenting their curiosity in the text and its meanings. We prompt with "What puzzles you about how Joseph's brothers behaved?" Teachers listen attentively to the queries and invite the children to respond to each other's concerns.

Children learn that Jewish values and ethics are rooted in Torah.

For example, we begin Chumash study with the story of Creation and highlight collaboration as an ethical theme. The children learn what collaboration meant in the Garden of Eden and they extrapolate to see how their own interactions affect their classroom community. We explain how there is always conflict in life and show this reflected in the stories of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and Noah 1 and 2. We teach the children to search for meaning.

To our students' eager minds, the stories facilitate insight into the dilemmas they face as young as they are. Teachers and children explore the teachings of the text; the youngsters readily recall the scenarios and integrate the lessons with their own challenges. Retaining an overt connection to text, themes of morality and principles are drawn from the narrative to reveal the wisdom therein. Classroom themes include taking responsibility for our actions; making good choices even when others are not; and helpful habits that foster good choices.

At the heart of The Toronto Heschel School lies our core vision of an engaged skilful and lifelong Jewish learner. We teach that Jewish values and ethics are rooted in Torah and best activated through a knowledgable mindful appreciation of the Jewish way. The approach continues through all grades at Heschel and we witness the progress of our students from young children to junior high graduates. We see their deep respect for universal values, their understanding that Jewish wisdom is their source for ethical principles, and their evolving *menschlich* behaviour. What we find in our own children gives us confidence in a flourishing Jewish future. It starts early and continues.

1. A.J. Heschel, *Who Is Man?* (Stanford: University of Stanford Press, 1965), chapter 5.

Gail Baker, M.Ed., co-founded The Toronto Heschel School in 1996 and has served as Head of the School since 2001. She is the Learning Community Director of The Lola Stein Institute, which she co-founded in 2003. Gail's parallel commitment pursues the essential individuality in each child and the unique talent in each teacher. She presents lectures and seminars throughout North America and writes regularly for educational journals.

I TEACH HISTORY AS AN EXERCISE IN RELEVANCE

By Dana Cohen Ezer

Every year I begin teaching Grade 7 Civilizations at The Toronto Heschel School in the same way. I distribute a cartoon showing a teacher standing at a board which bears the word "History" written in chalk, while her disengaged students listen to music and doodle. A think bubble floats over one student's head reading, "What does this have to do with me?"

I see that my students relate to the cartoon; smiles creep onto their faces as they knowingly glance at one another. I then ask them to flip the page and answer the question, "What does history have to do with me?" They respond with "I don't know" or "Probably a lot, but I'm not sure how or why" and there's always the token, "Nothing." This is exactly what I hope will happen.

The exercise ignites a wonderful learning process through which I guide my students to understand the discipline of history in a meaningful way: its relevance to them. In June we revisit the cartoon and ask the same question: "What does history have to do with me?" The answers are now very different. While some still show struggle, the answers are all personal, substantive, and constructive. This tells me that my students have successfully engaged in a contemplative process, and, in fact, this contemplation is key to the study of history.

Many Jewish thinkers argue that Torah is the body of Judaism, while Midrashim on biblical texts are the soul. I extend the metaphor and claim history as the heart of our people: it is complicated, ever moving, and we would not exist without it. I believe that our students cannot fully understand current realities or future possibilities without a grasp of historical events.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel offers us an educational model for the study of history when he describes the Revelation at Sinai as an encounter between God and the people of Israel. Heschel suggests that while the precise experience will always remain a secret between God and our ancestors, the written text of Exodus 19:16-20-:1 reveals a human attempt to make sense of what occurred at Sinai.

As a report about Revelation, the Bible itself is a Midrash. To convey what the prophets experienced, the Bible could either use terms of descriptions or terms of indication. Any description of the act of revelation in empirical categories would have produced a caricature. This is why all the Bible does is to state that revelation happened; how it happened is something they could only convey in words that are evocative and suggestive.[1]

> Learning to apply historical knowledge to new situations is a powerful equation; it prepares our students to navigate their world with critical knowledge.

Because we have no empirical evidence of the actual revelation at Sinai, Heschel shows how our tradition offers a rabbinical method to decipher the text and fill the uncomfortable spaces; important questions were asked and a narrative emerged to help formulate answers. Heschel teaches us to frame questions that search for meaning.

All our ancient texts abound with ambiguities and complexities. The existence, and therefore, the significance, of so many enigmas reveal why Heschel's pedagogical orientation is relevant. He is searching through the unknown for meaning. We should explore a historical event by asking questions and then answering through introspection. Heschel recommends that we approach history through the midrashic method; we should refract the historical dilemmas in terms of our own lives. This method is powerful and works in the classroom.

One example is the experience of my Grade 7 class during our study of Hellenism in ancient Judea. The unit begins with the appointment of Alexander the Great as king and his expansion of the Greek empire. In 332 C.E. Alexander conquered Jerusalem and, while he did intend to spread Greek culture, he did not force Hellenization on his new colonials.

> Finding links to peoples of the past, my students begin to think like historians and draw valuable conclusions for themselves.

Our class focuses on the Judean response to the foreign rulers. We examine two primary midrashic texts that represent different responses to Hellenic society and are characteristic of Jewish society at the time. One Midrash (Avodah Zarah 4B) depicts Rabban Gamliel's ability to maintain his own connection to Judaism while living among the Greeks. The other Midrash (Menachot 29b) portrays Rav Ishmael's separatist belief; as a Jew he could not mix with others. We also discuss a third response which saw many Jews of the time willingly Hellenize, leave Judaism, and adopt a new religion. The students examine the three responses: acculturation, separation, and assimilation.

My students next explore their own lives and assess how they respond to Canadian society. They create a Venn diagram of two intersecting circles to depict their findings. The circle on one side of the diagram is titled "My Jewish World," and here the students describe ways in which their lives are flavoured by Judaism: school, shul, trips to Israel, and so on. On the other side, a second circle, entitled "Other Influences," itemizes where students see their lives affected by other cultures, such as television, sports, friendships. Where the circles overlap, a middle section contains a list of elements where Judaism and other influences coexist and blend.

Using historical knowledge and mirroring the personal dilemmas that Judeans faced, my students create a bridge of understanding back to Jews of antiquity. The educational result is twofold: students learn the history of ancient Greek imperialism and evaluate how external cultures influence their own Jewish lives in 2012. They are almost writing their own Midrashim, as they describe their own interactions with a diverse society. It is empowering for them to be able to refer knowledgeably to ancient texts, to take a personal stand and either agree or disagree with Raban Gamliel or Rav Ishmael, and to consider how they too are influenced by external cultures in their lives.

This is my kind of history class: students lifting an experience from the ancient world and applying it to their own lives. Whether it's the inspiration of the Golden Age or the Pioneers of Israel, the despair of the Spanish Inquisition or the Nazi Holocaust, historical lessons prove pivotal as youngsters mature and learn about themselves. They may not relate to autocratic monarchies or archaic laws, but they can connect to the human experiences and the emotions of the people they study.

Finding links to peoples of the past, my students begin to think like historians and draw valuable conclusions for themselves. They see patterns of behaviour and notice recurrent themes that can help solve their own puzzles. Evaluating ideas and examining rebellions can inform their understanding of wars and political unrest today.

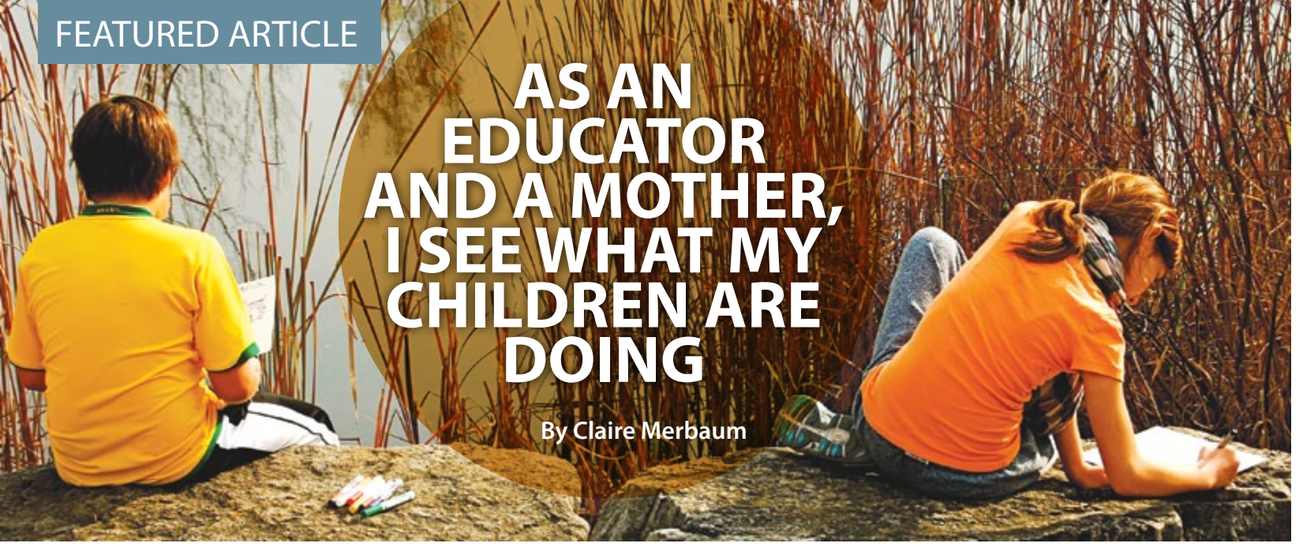
During one discussion about Hosni Mubarak, I asked, "What do you think will happen next?" The students answered that democracy was needed to restore order. We discussed modern Egypt in the context of the Ionian Rebellion where ancient Ionians craved democracy and fought to break free of Persian dictatorship. The conversation then flowed into what we Canadians could do if there was suddenly an ominous shift in the Harper government. Our exchange began with modern Egypt, drifted through ancient Greece, and ended in Ottawa.

This is the kind of educational experience that fills the void illustrated by the black-and-white cartoon I use as Grade 7 begins. This is the dialogue that bridges yesterday with today. Learning to apply historical knowledge to new situations is a very powerful equation; it prepares our students to navigate their world with critical knowledge as they create their own legacy.

1 A.J. Heschel, *God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976), p. 194.

Dana Cohen Ezer teaches Civilizations and Language Arts in the Junior High Division at The Toronto Heschel School and is passionate about making history and ancient Jewish texts relevant to adolescents. She has an M.A. in Jewish Education from the Jewish Theological Seminary and a B.A. in History from Dalhousie University. She is the mother of two young children, the eldest a Heschel student.

FEATURED ARTICLE



AS AN EDUCATOR AND A MOTHER, I SEE WHAT MY CHILDREN ARE DOING

By Claire Merbaum

Dr. Adele Diamond, Ph.D., FRSC, has spent the past years researching and disseminating how understanding a child's brain functioning can complement education. Named one of the "2000 Outstanding Women of the 20th Century" by the International Biographical Centre, Cambridge, UK, and a Distinguished Scientific Lecturer by the American Psychological Association, she now heads the Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience program at the University of British Columbia.

Brought to Toronto last fall by Jewish Vocational Services (JVS), Dr. Diamond addressed psychologists and senior education professionals from schools across Ontario. Her talk was entitled "What Will It Likely Take To Be Successful in the 21st Century?" Dr. Diamond focused on executive functions (EF) which are the cognitive control abilities dependent on the prefrontal cortex. This part of the brain, lying just behind the forehead, is often called the "CEO of the brain," as it receives information from the senses and orchestrates thoughts and actions to achieve specific goals.[1] Although EF entail many aspects, including problem-solving, reasoning, and planning, Dr. Diamond focused on two: creativity (coming up with new ideas, hypotheses, and inventions) and cognitive flexibility (the discipline to stay focused on task). Discipline accounts for over twice as much variance in final grades as does IQ, even among university students.[2]

Executive functions are the most critical skills for cognitive, social, and psychological development, for success in school and life, and for mental and physical health. Dr. Diamond emphasizes they are a more valuable indicator of school readiness than IQ or entry-level reading or math; they are a bigger indicator of school success as they predict math, reading, and social competence. They also become critical to job success and marital harmony.

While it is true that EF depend on the brain, it is also true that EF can be improved by specific activities. Two of the most exciting research findings, achieved through neuro-imaging of brain function, are that experience and activity can change the brain's functioning and that the brain changes throughout life based on these experiences. This is what is referred to as "neuroplasticity." Exercise, use, and practise can improve the functioning of a neural system (cognition), just as they improve the functioning of a muscle system (motor skills).

This is an important finding because we know that, as compared to students of the same age a few generations ago, five-year-olds today lag behind in executive functions. The shift is attributed to less social play; less physical activity; less time outside in nature; less participation in music, dance, and other arts; and more time alone with computers and video games.

Dr. Diamond stressed that it is far more effective and less costly to prevent problems than to try to correct them later and we should start children on a healthy trajectory with good cognitive behaviours. She explained, "Small differences at the beginning can lead to bigger and bigger differences over time." Under the guidance of skilled classroom teachers, the experiences of even four- or five-year-old children can bear significant consequences later.

Executive functions are the most critical skills for success in school and life.

"The Tools of the Mind" approach, based on theories of noted psychologists Vygotsky and Luria, is one specific program that shows evidence of these results.[3] It demonstrates that structured social pretend play improves cognitive control (or executive functions) in young children, and is predictive of superior academic performance. This type of play does not take time away from improving academic outcomes; rather, it helps to improve them.

Our conference heard that programs addressing the WHOLE child (inclusive of cognitive, emotional, social, and physical needs) should be most successful at improving any individual aspect of the child. Dr. Diamond stressed that teachers must find time to address EF, social, emotional, and physical development in addition to their academic curriculum. She referred to the hypothesis, now gaining acceptance in the academic world, that to achieve the academic, emotional, and social successes that we want for our children, the arts (including music and dance, structured play and physical activity) are critical. Unfortunately this runs counter to where many schools are moving – the reduction of these programs/activities within schools.

As the morning concluded, I noticed my fellow participants shaking their heads as if to say that, even if they agreed with Dr. Diamond's recommendations, they had no idea how to integrate them or to convince principals and teachers of their importance. Over lunch, I heard, "It's ideal but is it possible?"

It was at that point that my thoughts turned to The Toronto Heschel School, where my children attend. I recalled the numerous times I have heard Gail Baker, the Head of School, and Greg Beiles, now Lola Stein Director, but still consulting to Heschel on curriculum, speak to these issues and how all these very considerations are interwoven throughout The Toronto Heschel School's curriculum as part of the articulated objectives for each grade. I know first-hand that this is not just "talk." The curriculum units and projects that I have seen my children engaged in these past four years provide me with "proof."

The arts are essential to achieve the academic, emotional, and social successes that we want for our children.

While most conference participants that day seemed overwhelmed wondering how they could get their teachers or principals to buy in, I knew that Gail and Greg spend their time thinking, implementing, and honing these exact strategies and training their staff in them. Grounded in Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligence and Costa and Kallick's concept of habits of mind, the integrated Heschel curriculum comprehends the importance of developing and applying executive functions. In a moment, I understood the incredible value that accrues to my children in attending a school that focuses on all aspects of their education.

But, it was during the second half of the conference that my "hat" fully transformed from that of an educator to the hat of a mother of Toronto Heschel students. After lunch, Dr. Diamond explained that brain research indicates that the different parts of a human being are fundamentally interrelated; we have intellects, but we also have emotions, bodies, and social needs. That is, "What nourishes the human spirit may also be best for executive functions."

This focus is one of the Heschel School's main goals; they call it "habits of the heart." Few schools are fortunate enough to have a head of school like Gail who can both understand and address emotional needs at the individual and group level, and who guides teachers to help reduce children's stress so that learning can take place. It is proven that our brains work better when we are not in a stressed emotional state.

Moreover, the early understanding of The Toronto Heschel School founders in 1996 seems almost visionary: how important it is to include diverse activities like martial arts and to emphasize use of the arts to enhance and support students' learning experiences. Dr. Diamond concluded her presentation by pointing out that "even if your goal is only to improve academic achievement, the best way to achieve that is not to focus narrowly on academics alone, but to address" the full spectrum of executive functions.

The integrated Heschel curriculum comprehends the importance of developing and applying executive functions.

As the day closed, I asked Dr. Diamond whether she knew of The Toronto Heschel School. She smiled and nodded, and explained that she had had conversations with Gail Baker, that she knew how the school taught and how it used programs that accorded with "evidence-based" principles. She also knew that "Tools of the Mind" had already been integrated into the Heschel school's early-years program. For me, this was the ultimate confirmation that the school my children attend is miles ahead with regard to both its understanding of my children and its pursuit of academic excellence.

1 B.J. Casey, R.M. Jones, and T.A. Hare, "The Adolescent Brain," *Annals of Academic Science*, Vol. 1124 (March 2008): pp. 111–126.
2 A.L. Duckworth and M.E.P. Seligman, "Self-Disciple Outdoes IQ in Predicting Academic Performance of Adolescents," *Psychological Science*, Volume 16, Issue 12 (2005): pp. 939–944.
3 See E. Bodrova and D.J. Leong, *Tools of the Mind: The Bygotskian Appraoch to Early Childhood Education*, 2nd ed. (New York: Merrill, 2007); and A. Diamond, W.S. Barnett, J. Thomas, and S. Munro, "Preschool Program Improves Cognitive Control," *Science*, Vol. 318, No. 5855 (2007): pp. 1387–1388.

Claire Merbaum, M.A., is Founder and Director of The Centre for Mediated Learning; TCML offers programs enabling children to become more successful independent learners, as well as consultations and workshops for educators and parents. Claire is pursuing a doctorate in Developmental Psychology and Education at OISE / U of T.

FEATURED ARTICLE

PARENTING THROUGH A JEWISH LENS

By Lisa Richler

On a drizzly evening this past spring, a group of mostly non-Jewish parents and educators crammed into the auditorium of Toronto's St. Clement's School for a lesson in Judaism. The crowd had assembled for a lecture by Dr. Wendy Mogel, a Los Angeles–based clinical psychologist and author who draws on Jewish teachings in order to counsel families of all backgrounds.

Dr. Mogel was not raised in an observant home. Quoting Jon Stewart, she described her upbringing to the St. Clements audience as "Jewish." As a child, her family's Jewish rituals consisted of lighting the Chanukah candles for eight nights and attending a Passover Seder at her aunt's house.

Our job is not to make our children's lives easy; but to teach them how to fend for themselves.

It was only in adulthood, after what she describes as a "crisis in faith," that Dr. Mogel reconnected with her Judaism. It began when she was moved to tears by High Holy Day services she attended with a friend. Over time, Dr. Mogel and her family began to go to shul regularly and to observe Shabbat. She took a Torah study course and within a couple of years, took a year off from work to study Judaism full time. She writes in her best-selling book *The Blessing of a Skinned Knee* that in Judaism she and her family found "unexpected moments of closeness and harmony, clarity about daily ethical dilemmas, and a sense of the holy potential of everyday life."[1]

Dr. Mogel also discovered that Jewish wisdom could serve as an effective guide in helping the parents she counselled to raise independent, compassionate, and ethical children. In *The Blessing of a Skinned Knee*, Dr. Mogel recounts that by the early 1990s (after 10 years in practice), she had come to the conclusion that her psychological training was not sufficient in helping families deal with a generation of overindulged, reliant, and unhappy children. Her practice was shifting away from children with legitimate psychological issues (e.g., obsessive-compulsive disorder) to children with problems of character (e.g., petulance, obstinacy, greed, cowardice). The root of these character problems seemed to lie with well-intentioned parents who were pampering and overprotecting their children.

Dr. Mogel found that she could offer practical advice to parents by teaching them to look through a Jewish lens. According to Dr. Mogel, the Jewish perspective on childrearing can be summed up in a single sentence from the Talmud: "A father is obligated to teach his son how to swim" (p. 90). We can interpret this sentence as

an instruction to pass on the tools of survival. But there is a larger lesson here, Dr. Mogel points out. She writes:

> Jewish wisdom holds that our children don't belong to us. They are both a loan and a gift from God, and the gift has strings attached. Our job is to raise our children to leave us. The children's job is to find their own path in life. If they stay carefully protected in the nest of the family, children will become weak and fearful or feel too comfortable to want to leave. (p. 90)

In other words, our job as parents is not to make our children's lives easy; our job is to teach children how to fend for themselves. Because one day, whether we like it or not, our children are going to have to leave the nest.

According to Dr. Mogel, teaching our children to fend for themselves means resisting the urge to swoop to the rescue every time they struggle or feel pain. One example: "When Ellie's feelings are hurt about not getting invited to Mimi's birthday party and her dad offers to call up Mimi's mom to try to find out why, he's teaching her that her missing out on a party is a catastrophe that deserves special intervention" (p. 91). A better approach might be to validate Mimi's feelings and remind her that there will be other parties.

At the St. Clement's lecture, Dr. Mogel put it this way: "If we want our children to become problem-solvers we need to let them have problems." She described parents who call their school demanding that a difficult child be removed from the class because they take up too much of the teacher's time. "Many good parents don't realize the value of having such a child around," Dr. Mogel points out. "A difficult child gives the rest of the children a chance to build up their conflict-resolution muscles, to learn how to manage with a distraction, to grow strong as an inclusive group" (p. 108). She also argues, "If they don't have the chance to be bad, [children] can't choose to be good. If they don't have the chance to fail, they can't learn. And if they aren't allowed to face scary situations, they'll grow up to be frightened of life's simplest challenges" (p. 113). In other words, we need to get our children into the habit of solving problems on their own. Dr. Mogel argues that having the clear goal in mind – "I want this young person to learn to swim" – can help parents figure out how to guide and support their children without inoculating them from the necessary challenges of life.

Before we can teach anything to our children, according to Dr. Mogel, we must first teach them the Fifth Commandment: "Honour your mother and your father." She writes that the inclusion of the Fifth Commandment among the "Big Ten" is proof that "rude children are nothing new" and that God recognized that "children are not naturally inclined to treat their parents with respect, so He commanded it" (p. 62). Unless children learn to honour their parents, they will have difficulty with authority figures (teachers, coaches, bosses) throughout their lives, and will likely develop into "self-absorbed, rude, thoughtless" adults (p. 62).

One important way to teach our children to honour us is to lead by example. When we give our own parents the respect they deserve, our children will take notice and likely follow suit. Another way is to remember that a family is not a democracy. As Dr. Mogel writes: "A democratic system doesn't work well for … children; it just makes them feel insecure. Parents get fooled because their kids are such skilled debaters, but children are not psychologically equipped to handle winning those debates" (p. 70). Dr. Mogel reminds us that the First Commandment, "I am the Lord your God ... You shall have no other gods besides me," contains no rule about behaviour. It's not like "Don't steal" or "Don't commit adultery." She writes:

> "I am the Lord" functions only as a preamble, establishing God's authority so that people will pay attention to the rest of the commandments. God is saying, "I'm the boss" like a parent might say, "I'm your mother." (p. 71)

Parents must not feel the need to rationalize their rules to their children. They must set the expectation that their children need to follow their rules because first and foremost, they are the boss.

So what are the rules? Mogel cites five basic rules that Jewish law demands of young children. Children must:

- Always address their parents in a gentle manner
- Not contradict their parents' words in front of others
- Respect their parents' privacy and the privacy of others
- Not sit at their parents' place at the table
- Honor their stepparents (p. 73)

Mogel also urges parents to press children to contribute at home – setting the table, helping to prepare meals and do the laundry – even if they whine and resist. From rules, kids learn their roles in the household, and from chores they learn practical skills – when they do leave the nest they will know how to take care of themselves.

Beyond the family, children need to be taught basic etiquette. In the Talmud, specific social obligations – the *derech eretz* – are emphasized because they are considered an "essential element of a stable and wholesome community" (p. 84). These social obligations include greeting others with eye contact and graceful small talk, honouring guests at one's home, and speaking respectfully about others. Dr. Mogel argues that teaching social obligations trains children to think about other people's feelings and to learn compassion.

Parenting through a Jewish lens enables parents to shift from overprotecting children to fostering their strength.

Parenting through a Jewish lens can enable parents to shift away from pampering and overprotecting and towards fostering strength. Dr Mogel writes:

> The purpose of having children, according to the teachings of the Torah, is not to create opportunities for our glory or for theirs. The purpose of having children and raising them to be self-reliant, compassionate, ethical adults is to ensure that there will be people here to honor God after we are gone. So the rules regarding childrearing are not primarily about making children feel good, but about making children into good people. (p. 36)

Perhaps our most lasting legacy as parents is how our children will treat their fellow creatures. Whether or not we observe Judaism, helping our children to develop the character traits and skills needed to "swim" will enable them to take care of themselves and the world we are leaving them.

1 Dr. Wendy Mogul, *The Blessing of a Skinned Knee: Using Jewish Teachings to Raise Self-Reliant Jewish Children* (New York: Scribner, 2008), p. 38. All subsequent quotations are from this book.

Role models are the most effective teachers; children mirror their parents just as student artists copy the masters.

Lisa Richler, M.A., earned a Master of Arts in Humanities at the University of Chicago and worked as a writer and teacher before having kids. She now volunteers in various roles at The Toronto Heschel School and The Lola Stein Institute.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE: A FAMILY MOTTO AND THE CANADIAN MUSEUM FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

By Gail Asper

My father, Israel Asper, taught me that my responsibility as a global citizen is to take action when I see things that I believe are wrong. I greatly admired my father's courage to always speak out against injustice: "Lead by Example" is the motto on the The Asper Foundation coat of arms. I was lucky to have a father who instilled a sense of right and wrong in his three children and who inspired us to want to take personal responsibility to combat injustice where we found it, just as he did.

Both my parents, my father and my wonderful mother, Babs Asper (who passed away last year), taught my brothers and me about the importance of giving back to our communities. They were always very involved volunteers and they expected their children to help improve the world by giving generously of both time and money. The message was clear: you must leave the world a better place than it was when you arrived. Now that both my parents have passed away, I feel it's more important than ever to set a good example for my own children, by giving back, even if the task of establishing a new national museum seems rather daunting!

As the son of Russian immigrants, who came to Canada seeking freedom from persecution, my father never forgot how lucky he was to live in a place that valued human rights. He was, however, very concerned about the rise in anti-Semitism around the world, and the ignorance most Canadians exhibited with regard to how the Holocaust could have happened. He saw that Canadians did not understand how Canada's own human rights odyssey had unfolded to result in all the rights we enjoy today.

He established Canada's only national student program on Human Rights and the Holocaust, which has now taken almost 11,000 Canadian students on a life-altering journey to Washington, D.C. This award-winning program comprises a twenty-hour educational component, a three-day trip to Washington, and volunteer service.

My father was also profoundly affected by the plight of the Aboriginal people of Canada. In the 1970s, as Leader of the Liberal Party of Manitoba, he witnessed the terrible injustices. He was deeply upset by the unfair treatment that Aboriginal people continued to experience in subsequent decades. Their fate haunted him and prompted him to introduce Manitoba's first Bill of Rights in the provincial legislature.

"Lead by Example" is the motto on the The Asper Foundation coat of arms.

Realizing that no institution existed where human rights issues were studied or celebrated, my father resolved to establish an institution in Winnipeg, the geographic centre of Canada, where all Canadians could come to learn about Canadian human rights heroes and global human rights issues. Hence, the idea for the Canadian Museum for Human Rights was conceived.

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights is a $351 million initiative currently under construction in Winnipeg. It is Canada's first new national museum in 45 years. It is the first national museum outside of our nation's capital, Ottawa, and the first museum in the world dedicated to the theme of human rights. My father had one objective for the Museum: to transform visitors from bystanders to

human rights heroes themselves. He believed firmly that anyone, however ordinary, can achieve extraordinary things if he/she refuses to give in to complacency and indifference.

My mother and father were hugely important to our family but they were also integral to the success of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. When my father died suddenly in 2003, we could have decided not to proceed with the project. In fact, that would have been the logical response! However, we were urged by everyone not to give up, but to carry on and continue to work to make the dream of the Museum a reality.

My father believed firmly that anyone, however ordinary, can achieve extraordinary things if he/she refuses to give in to complacency and indifference.

I will never forget my mother's incredible strength during that dark period. Her love, wisdom, and passion have been my inspiration for the last eight years. I know how lucky I was to have such an amazing woman in my life and I truly enjoyed having an opportunity to work with her year after year at The Asper Foundation, of which she was Chair, and on the Museum campaign. It turned out she was a formidable fundraiser to whom no one could say no!

While our family spearheaded the initiative and donated significantly to it, the project has many partners, including the City of Winnipeg, the Province of Manitoba, and the Government of Canada. The Museum could never have happened without this official support which resulted through the tireless efforts of Moe Levy, The Asper Foundation's Executive Director.

It was the federal government under the leadership of Jean Chrétien that first recognized how essential a museum for human rights was to the Canadian spirit, and it was Prime Minister Stephen Harper who determined that the Museum had to be a national institution given that it embodies Canada's respect for human rights within our country and around the world.

Indeed, over the years, we have learned that thousands of Canadians agree and feel as my father did about human rights. This is why Canadians have wholeheartedly embraced the idea of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. Over 7,300 donors have stepped forward with generous donations.

The Friends of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights have raised $136 million to date through a private sector capital campaign. Gail Asper chairs the campaign and continues to champion efforts to help fulfill the vision to create the most compelling and unforgettable exhibition and programming possible. The exhibits are under the design leadership of Ralph Appelbaum and Associates, designers of the Washington Newseum, the Washington Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the Clinton Presidential Library, among others. Friends of The Canadian Human Rights Museum invites all citizens to participate in its efforts; no gift is too small or too large, all gifts matter and are welcome.

Contact The Friends of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, 4th Floor - 269 Main Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3C 1B2 or visit www.friendsofcmhr.com

The Jewish community embraces the human rights agenda because our community is keenly aware of the consequences of intolerance and indifference. While several Jewish communities across Canada have developed their own Holocaust museums, what distinguishes treatment of the Holocaust by the Canadian Museum for Human Rights is that its presentation is officially national. The Canadian Museum for Human Rights will house Canada's only national gallery profiling the events of the Holocaust, as well as the four other genocides officially recognized by Canada: the Holodomor (the Ukrainian Famine), Rwanda, Srebrenica, and the Armenian genocide.

The Museum officially demonstrates that the Government of Canada recognizes the Holocaust, including the role that our country played in the Holocaust by allowing it to happen through Canadian complacency with Hitler's regime prior to World War II and through discriminatory immigration laws before and during the war. With anti-Semitism alive in our times and Holocaust denial or diminishment ever present, this official position, stated through the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, firmly establishes and identifies Canada as a country that will not tolerate anti-Semitism, one that values educating generation after generation of Canadians on the horrors of the Holocaust and genocide so that such evil never happens again.

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights is working towards an inauguration date in 2014. It pains me deeply that neither of my parents will be here to celebrate the opening of the Museum. It was their hope that this Museum would yield dividends of a more peaceful, humane, and empathetic world and I am incredibly proud to be carrying out their last mission. Together, we can repair the world!

Gail Asper, O.C., O.M., LL.D., is President of The Asper Foundation which supports Manitoba, Jewish, and Israeli charities. With a passion for the arts, she volunteered for many years with the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre and is now Vice-Chair of the National Arts Centre Foundation. Gail is a Governor of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and a Member of the Board of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

JEWISH EDUCATION: MISSION, LEGACY, AND THE QUESTION OF JEWISH IDENTITY

By Bernie Steinberg

What is the mission of Jewish education? This basic question is as elusive as it is fundamental. And vital. For mission is the ultimate purpose, the "why" an institution exists, not the "how" it functions. Great organizations are driven by large purposes that transcend immediate needs and goals. In the words of Peter M. Senge, distinguished professor at MIT's Sloan School of Management, "being true to our purpose – has the greatest intrinsic significance" to the leader. "All the rest are means to the end.… The ability to focus on ultimate, intrinsic desires, not only on secondary goals" is the mark of a mission-driven institution.[1]

Many young Jews settle for a thin Jewish identity, not by actual choice, but by default.

Often immediate goals that appear self-evident require further thought. For instance, affiliation with the Jewish community might seem the obvious purpose of Jewish education, yet unless we reflect on the larger meaning of the community, we can't build educational institutions that actually support that goal. It is noteworthy that when the pre-eminent Jewish philosopher Franz Rosenzweig envisioned the Lehrhaus, his pioneering school of adult education in Frankfurt, he framed its mission by raising the big question: "What, then, holds or has held us together since the dawn of emancipation? In what does the community of our contemporary life show itself, that community which alone can lead from the past to a living future?"[2]

The crafting of curriculum, design of pedagogic methods, and selection of faculty of the Lehrhaus directly followed from Rosenzweig's answer to that large question.

Great Jewish educational institutions need to answer questions of transcendent purpose in order to frame and inform the daily work of education.

What are the big questions of Jewish life in the 21st century to which Jewish education is a vital response? How do we understand the existential condition and questions of today's students?

And of critical importance: What is the content of and what is our approach to the Jewish legacy – the inherited collective experience of the Jewish people as articulated in the ideas, sources, norms, and narratives of the Jewish people from ancient times to the present?

STRENGTHENING JEWISH IDENTITY?

One way or another, most Jewish educational institutions regard the strengthening of Jewish identity as a primary goal. The nagging question remains: What is actually meant by the term? For "Jewish identity" functions as a sort Rorschach test, a vague image that can mean all things to all people. Often Jewish identity is understood as Jewish pride; or self-assertion in response to anti-Semitism; or simply "feeling good" about being Jewish. In these visceral meanings, it is not clear if there is, or what is, the core of Jewish identity. What is the inner consciousness that infuses the heart and mind of the living young Jew? And equally, it is not clear, if or how, the Jewish legacy has anything to contribute to the intellectual, psychological, moral, or spiritual growth of young Jews.

Sometimes the strengthening of Jewish identity is associated with "Jewish continuity." In this sense, Jewish identity means loyalty or conformity to what was. As a result, the educational model becomes the transmission of the Jewish legacy as a fixed entity, as a given. Often, motivated by the desire to measure concrete outcomes, Jewish identity is reduced to narrow behavioural terms, such as ritual observance, marriage choices, and institutional memberships.

JEWISH IDENTITY AS DILEMMA AND OPPORTUNITY

The above approaches to Jewish identity, whatever their validity, are simply too piecemeal, simplistic, or reductionist to undergird and inspire Jewish education. For Jewish identity is a complex of psychological, sociological, and philosophic factors that reflect the modern (and post-modern) condition of the Jewish people.

Understood in these comprehensive terms, Jewish identity is a dilemma, a challenge, and an opportunity of living between worlds – the worlds of Jewish tradition and modern culture. Consequently, Jewish identity is constituted by substantive tensions: between competing world views and conflicting values, and, most critical, Jewish identity raises fundamental questions, such as: Why choose to be Jewish?

The Toronto Heschel School Grade 8 class mural says "Hineni, I am here." With this theme, the graduates declare readiness and affirm their voices.

For these reasons, Jewish education must address Jewish identity, not as a technical problem with clear-cut answers and mechanical solutions, but as an adaptive question: How must we connect Jewish learning with contemporary living? How do we equip young Jews to flourish in a complex, rapidly changing, and uncertain world in which there are competing claims of value and meaning, for which, in Rosenzweig's words, "the one recipe alone … is to have no recipes."[3]

This adaptive dilemma also presents a growth opportunity. For living in two worlds can provide wisdom and insights, valuable perspectives which can serve as correctives to the dogmatic and parochial thinking that inevitably results whenever we inhabit a single or a dominating universe of discourse. David Hartman puts this well:

> A living Jewish tradition can provide a person with a critical perspective on contemporary social reality by pointing to alternative possibilities and by providing a sense of distance that enables one to evaluate current beliefs and practices.… It thus counteracts the ideological prejudice of modernity that equates "the now" with "the good," and the "latest" with the important and valuable.[4]

DIMENSIONS OF JEWISH IDENTITY: CHOICE, MEMORY, PURPOSE

There are three defining aspects of Jewish identity which can inform the exploration of Jewish legacy: choice, memory, and purpose.

Historically, Jewish identity has become a "dilemma" only in recent times. Since the Emancipation of the Jews in France in 1791, the Jews have been invited to participate in the mainstream of Western society and given the option for the first time – without the compulsion to convert – whether to be Jews and how to be Jews. Choice therefore is a defining feature of modern Jewish identity.

Although the idea of choice might evoke positive connotations of freedom and liberation, practically and existentially, choosing – whether and how – to be Jewish is difficult.

In an increasingly pluralistic, relativistic, global world, young Jews are barraged with a plethora of values and life options. They must sort out and distinguish the Jewish and non-Jewish elements within contemporary culture and within themselves. More challenging, they must critically evaluate each element and determine which Jewish values overlap, which complement and enrich, and which contradict contemporary values. Most important, they need to determine for themselves what makes sense and what matters to them.

Uncritical loyalty to the Jewish past will not compel the present generation of young Jews. On the other hand, mindless conformity to the cultural fads of the moment, whether moral or intellectual, can cheat young Jews out of precious resources that can help them to grow and flourish as human beings and to cultivate a rich, purposeful life.

Yet how can young Jews choose to be Jewish when they are confused about the substantive content of Jewishness and what it might offer? How can they freely choose, when immersed in a contemporary non-Jewish world in which assumptions and values – whether secular or Christian – are so deeply embedded that they feel self-evident, while fundamental Jewish ideas, beliefs, and values feel vague, remote, inaccessible, as though locked behind closed doors?

If choice defines Jewish identity, then Jewish education needs to level the playing field: it needs to create a conversation between the Jewish legacy and Western values, an unapologetic, nuanced, and critical conversation. And it must give young Jews the language and tools to participate fully in that conversation. It must, in other words, provide real options. Many young Jews settle for a thin Jewish identity, not by actual choice, but by default.

Choice is dependent on a second defining aspect of Jewish identity: memory. Memory is necessary for the identity of all people. I know who I am because, in spite of changes throughout my life, my memories provide continuity from childhood to present self-awareness. A person with amnesia, we say, suffers a loss of identity.

Just as individual identity requires personal memories, Jewish identity is dependent on the collective memories of the Jewish people.

In the Jewish legacy, the imperative to remember is not a neutral cognitive action. As biblical scholar Nahum Sarna points out:

> The stem z-k-r (remember) does not connote mere intellectual activity, a simple recall or retrieval of information stored away somewhere in the cells of the brain…. Hebrew z-k-r is better rendered "to be mindful," and this includes awareness and paying heed. To be mindful implies involvement. The attitude is subjective and relational. There is concern, engagement, and responsibility. This is why the stem z-k-r is frequently accompanied by a verb of action…[5]

The Jewish imperative to remember is an invitation to embark on a personal journey in time and space. Jewish collective memory reflects the accumulated experience of an ancient/contemporary people who have lived around the world in extremely diverse conditions. Jewish identity is enriched by memories which extend further back in time – beyond our lives, and beyond even the lives of our grandparents. Jewish collective memories evoke images and stories of the Jews in the desert, in Spain, India, and Italy; in situations of affluence and poverty; in circumstances of heroism and humiliation.

Collective Jewish memory thus deepens personal Jewish consciousness, broadens Jewish horizons, and serves as a corrective to the parochialism of modern culture, and thereby transforms the identity of the modern Jew. No longer locked into the isolation of a radically individualistic self-understanding, he see himself as part of a larger story, to which he is connected, to which he shares concern, to which he feels a sense of responsibility.

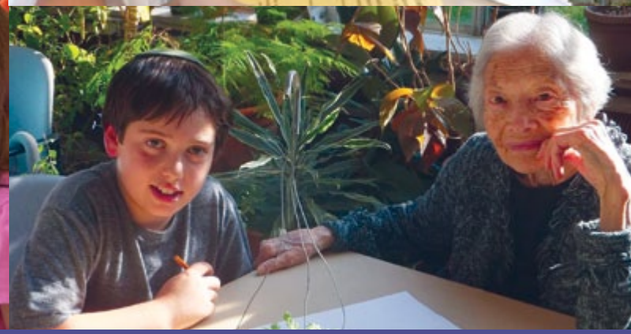
The mission of Jewish education is to invite young Jews to explore ... to empower them ... and to inspire them ... as actors within the drama of the Jewish people ... and authors of the next act.

Jewish moral values and aspirations are a third defining feature of Jewish identity. This approach to Jewish identity reflects a philosophic conception that links identity to moral value and aspiration. Charles Taylor writes in his magisterial work *Sources of The Self: The Making of Modern Identity:* "Who am I? But this can't be necessarily answered by giving name and genealogy. What does answer this question is an understanding of what is of crucial importance to us. To know who I am is a species of knowing where I stand."[6]

Likewise, the question of Jewish identity cannot be adequately answered by appeals to ethnic loyalty, or defined by the accident of birth, i.e., I am a Jew because I was born a Jew. Rather, to know who I am as a Jew means to know where I stand and who I aspire to become as a human being through the lens of Jewish values and beliefs.

For a young Jew to know where she stands means that she must have a firm sense of grounding; that she must have a rich moral language to discover, shape, and articulate her values; that she must envision a picture of the world, in which these values make sense, add up, cohere, lead to, and express a life of purpose.

In the contemporary world, where there is a profusion of views, a profound skepticism about the very possibility that values have any "objective" or real meaning, and where possibilities of larger purpose are often cynically denied, the challenge and opportunity for Jews to discover and shape who they are and who they aspire to become is far from automatic. Young Jews need (and deserve) the support of a model of Jewish education that actively explores the values and substantive content of the Jewish legacy, that is intellectually plausible and emotionally resonant.



Baycrest Centre for Geriatric Care and The Toronto Heschel School have embarked on a yearlong intergenerational project that brings the life experience and wisdom of our elders to the classroom. As learning partners, Grade 6 students and Baycrest participants use the arts to study poetry, life sciences, environmental studies, Jewish culture and foundational values.

HAVRUTA LEARNING: A TRADITIONAL PEDAGOGY FOR CONTEMPORARY REALITY

To this end, personal engagement with Jewish sources is a primary way to enable Jewish choice, enrich Jewish memory, and inspire Jewish purpose. The most effective pedagogy of engagement is through traditional *havruta* study (reading and discussing sources in pairs) adapted to the contemporary reality of the student. The root meaning of the word *havruta* means to connect, to befriend, which suggests that *havruta* learning is interactive, relational, and personal.

Havruta learning is a powerful pedagogic process that places questions at the heart of learning, that encourages students to interpret texts both carefully and creatively – respecting both the meaning of language while simultaneously inviting them to bring their own voice and life experience to their interpretation. *Havruta* discussion between students cultivates respect for the views of others, and equally important, underscores the value of learning from difference. *Havruta* can be utilized to foster a pluralistic sensibility in an increasingly polarized world.

Havruta learning should be integrated with modern disciplines so that students can sharpen their capacity for critical thinking as well as to explore substantial differences and overlap between Jewish and Western values.

WHAT, THEN, MIGHT BE THE MISSION OF JEWISH EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY?

To invite young Jews to explore the relevance of the Jewish legacy to their personal lives through engaged conversation with the big ideas, values, and sources of Western culture; to empower them to discover and shape who they are and who they aspire to become; and to inspire them to see themselves as actors within the drama of the Jewish people, as the authors who are writing the next act.

1 Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), p. 148.
2 Franz Rosenzweig, *On Jewish Learning*, edited by N.N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), p. 63.
3 Ibid., p. 66.
4 David Hartman, *A Heart of Many Rooms* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2002), p. 3.
5 Nahum M. Sarna, *Exploring Exodus* (New York: Schocken Books, 1996), p. 124.
6 Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 27.

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SPECIAL REPORT *CREATING JEWISH LEGACY : A COMMUNITY*

The following 6 articles reveal a spectrum of educational options from across the community landscape. All aim to nurture the Jewish way.

think asks Jewish educators from a day school, secondary school, supplementary school, summer camp, Israel experience, university, & The Lola Stein Institute to explain why their mode of Jewish education is effective and meaningful to the Jewish future.

THE LEGACY OF JEWISH RENAISSANCE

For think's SPOTLIGHT ON THE LOLA STEIN, Greg Beiles, Director of The Lola Stein Institute, writes that integrated education continues the historical legacy of Jewish Renaissance

Continuity has always been the byword of Jewish legacy. *Mi dor ledor* – from generation to generation. Yet continuity presumes creativity. Only Jewish creativity, as witnessed in countless generations, has allowed Judaism to renew itself over and over, and thus endure for 3,000 years and counting. The legacy that we at The Lola Stein Institute promote is the legacy of Jewish creativity, what lately I've been calling the legacy of Jewish Renaissance.

Many periods in Jewish history stand out as moments of creative renaissance. The period of the ancient prophets — Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah – (8th-6th century B.C.E.) introduced what A.J. Heschel considerers Judaism's great contribution to the world: the concept of Tzedek – of Justice. The 1st and 2nd centuries C.E. saw Judaism rise from the ashes of the destroyed temple remarkably transformed from a sacrifice-centred religion to a religion based on law and ethics. The Golden Age in Spain (8th-12th century C.E.) and the Hasklahah (18th-19th century C.E.) were periods of intense intellectual and creative vigour for the Jewish people. More recently, the 20th century, despite the dark shadow of the Holocaust, has been a period of great Jewish ingenuity, producing figures such as Freud, Einstein, and the visionary leaders of Israel. Each one of these historical moments, and many others as well, constitute a Jewish Renaissance.

Renaissance literally means "rebirth": the term evokes a sense of reinvigoration and liveliness. When Martin Buber wrote in 1903 of a Jewish Renaissance, he described it as the "rejuvenation of the Jewish people in language, customs, and art," as "a warm, flowing feeling of life" that would reinvigorate the old forms that he felt had encrusted Judaism in the late middle ages.[1] Renaissance also evokes an image of the "child." For it is the birth of the child, of the next generation, that offers the only real potential for renewal.

But Renaissance is not automatic. What conditions allow for a Jewish Renaissance to flourish?

A clue can be found in the fact that most periods of creative Jewish Renaissance coincide with high levels of interaction between Jews with other societies and peoples. The encounter of Judaism with ancient Greece deeply influenced both cultures, not to mention the whole of Western society. To this day we engage in a form borrowed from the Greek philosophical Symposium in the way we conduct our Passover Seder. Familiarity with Greek, Islamic, and Christian philosophy helped Maimonides clarify the key principles of Jewish theology. The Jewish Haskalah was influenced by the European Enlightenment. The early Zionist movement was strongly influenced by European nationalism.

It would seem that the ability to learn from other cultures, peoples, and ways of thinking without abandoning our core identity and principles is a key dimension of Jewish creativity, of Jewish Renaissance.

Today, we find ourselves again at a moment which demands a Jewish Renaissance. As parents and teachers, we can educate Renaissance Jewish children by illuminating a path of productive interaction between Judaism and other intellectual and cultural traditions. Educators at The Lola Stein Institute, The Toronto Heschel School, and other innovative institutions understand this as the main goal of the educational approach known as "integration." Integration refers to the teaching of Jewish and so-called secular subjects in ways that highlight, rather than suppress or hide, resonances and potential inter-connections. In advocating an integrated curriculum, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Chief Rabbi of Britain, describes how this approach correlates with the Jewish theological view that God is the creator of all forms of knowledge. Rabbi Sacks states:

> ... 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 *shebe'al peh* (rabbinic texts) and *shebikhtav* (biblical texts).[2]

In an integrated curriculum, a student isn't a Torah student in the morning and a science or math student in the afternoon; rather, she is a Jew and a scientist, a Jew and an artist, a Jew and a writer, a Jew and a mathematician, all day long.

An integrated curriculum leverages ways of thinking in secular disciplines to enhance Jewish learning; and, reciprocally, leverages Jewish studies to enhance learning in secular subjects. At The Toronto Heschel School, for example, a study of metaphor in poetry provides an opportunity to explore the diverse metaphors and similes used to refer to God in the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur liturgy. Reciprocally, studying Tanakh and Talmud in their original languages provides intensive training in decoding, memory, and logical reasoning skills that are essential for the successful study of math, science, social studies, and language arts.

As for the fear that an integrated approach will diminish the integrity of each discipline, this is entirely avoidable as long as high standards are maintained across the board. As a Grade 8 science teacher I always prepared challenging end-of-unit examinations. A question on one such exam required students to draw a diagram of the configuration of the sun, earth, and moon on the Jewish holiday of Tu Bishvat. A student once commented to me that the exam was so challenging that it made it seem as though science were more important than other subjects. I responded that if I were her Torah teacher I would prepare an equally challenging exam. And there'd be some science questions on it, too.

1Martin Buber, "On the [Jewish] Renaissance," in *The Martin Buber Reader: The Essential Writings*, edited by Asher D. Blemann (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), pp. 139-144.

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

WAVING the **JEWISH SUMMER CAMP BANNER** with **PRIDE**

By Jared Goldlust

Picture the scene: It is that thrilling time at Jewish summer camp when *Maccabiah* (colour war) is announced in the *chadar ochel* (dining hall) and the camp divides into four teams. Everyone, from the youngest camper to the oldest staff member, will take on a different role to support their team in the spirited competition. For one shy camper on the Yellow Team, her moment to shine awaits as a staff member, whom she looks up to, asks her to help create the Yellow Team's banner.

The young girl's eyes light up and for the next few days she is all smiles as she pursues her project, hand in hand with her favourite counsellor. The result is a masterful piece of work, magnificent artistically, as well as educationally. The banner encapsulates traditional Jewish values, themes of modern Israel, and powerful messages for Jewish youth in North America. But the most important value that this counsellor and this banner spark is the strong sense of belonging that this youngster feels as she engages in a mission that she knows is important to her team. Jewish expression, camaraderie, and a sense of purpose combine in a way that this young girl will always remember. This is why Jewish summer camp is the most effective vehicle to build Jewish identity.

Increasingly North American Jewish communities are recognizing the educational value of Jewish summer camp.

Increasingly North American Jewish communities are recognizing the educational value of Jewish summer camp. It is well documented that a Jewish immersive environment is replete with experiential education and can have a tremendous impact on instilling Jewish identity in our youth. Nonetheless, while Jewish institutions continuously ask "How can we become more like a Jewish summer camp?" the answer is not simple. To identify and articulate the interplay of components that make Jewish summer camp a fertile breeding ground for Jewish identity is a subtle and complex inquiry.

One critical aspect of the summer camp experience that is often overlooked and underappreciated is the pervasive influence of the camp counsellor. For several summer weeks, Jewish camp staff are charged with the opportunity and responsibility to assume an almost parental role with our youth; they must care for campers just as any good parent looks after his/her own child. However, from the

YELLOW TEAM, CAMP KADIMAH, MACCABIAH 2012

perspective of the camper, camp consellors are seen less as parents and more as older siblings. This anomalous paradigm creates a powerful learning opportunity.

The camp counsellor fulfills the role of "holistic educator," which Spertus Institute Professor Barry Chazan sets as both the defining characteristic of informal Jewish education and the key ingredient to the success of Jewish summer camps.[1] The campers' new found older "sister" or "brother" becomes their role model as they aspire to be like their counsellors in every which way.

We understand that if the goal is to foster Jewish values and commitment, we must be able to entrust this purpose to our camp staff as primary educators. Our goal is not simply a fun summer for Jewish kids: our goal is a Jewish summer for all campers. We recognize that the power of *doogma ishit* (leadership by example) is central to the day-by-day, hour-by-hour, informal educational experience that is camp.

At a summer camp like Kadimah, where Jewish values and practice are woven into the daily routine and programs, the selection, training, and supervision of Jewish camp counsellor-turned-role-model is critical. We direct our energy to staff selection. While selecting staff from a very large pool of candidates necessarily encompasses pressures to accept alumni, we nonetheless pay particular attention to discerning which applicants will be exemplary role models to our campers. Strong moral fibre and the enthusiastic espousal of Jewish values are pre-requisite to being on staff at Camp Kadimah.

Jewish expression, camaraderie, and a sense of purpose combine at camp.

When a well-liked, well-respected counsellor belts out the *Birkat Hamazon* after a meal or leads *Havdallah* on Saturday evening, the campers enthusiastically follow his/her lead and join in the experience. Camps need staff who can be that *doogma*, that role model. There can be no divide between having fun and living Jewishly.

To foster this kind of staff performance, for example, we create a camp environment free from outside distractions; Camp Kadimah remains the one place where a camp counsellor can "unplug," not check his/her cellphone every minute and not keep current with what's new on the web. In fact, Kadimah staff are prohibited from doing so. With distractions removed, we direct our counsellors to hone in on what is important: their campers' needs and their own commitment to being a positive example at all times.

Campers, who experience a happy fun environment in which their admired role models celebrate Judaism and community, not only participate but also come to desire more. Just as summer camp allows the youngsters to experiment with independence as they sleep away from home and manage new social situations, so campers also experiment with Jewish living, growing and exploring as individuals in a supportive and safe mini-Jewish community.

At Camp Kadimah there are special moments where this feeling is wonderfully palpable. Sometimes it appears when several campers stand to lead the entire assembled camp in a beautifully spirited *L'cha Dodi*, sung in unison during a Friday sunset. Sometimes the Jewish soul is visible as a more introverted camper comes out of his shell to dance his heart out, happily among friends, in a crowded and lively *Oneg Shabbat*.

A Jewish immersive environment has a tremendous impact on instilling Jewish identity.

So when a Jewish role model turns to a camper and asks, "Will you be part of something special and work with me on this banner?" the setting is perfect for *na'aseh v'nishma* (I will do and then I will understand).[2] Kids thrive in a positive Jewish experience, as summer after summer they come to appreciate why it's so great to be who they are.

Summer camp perfectly sets up the scenario for creative Jewish exploration, community involvement, and warm memories. Isn't this the essence of the Jewish identity? Within this simple Yellow Team experience lies the unique educational power of the Jewish summer camp.

1 Barry Chazan, "The Philosophy of Informal Jewish Education" (2003), *The Encyclopedia of Informal Education* (Infed), www.infed.org/informaleducation/informal_jewish_education.htm.
2 *Na'aseh v'nishma* is taken from Shemot 24:7. It was the response of the Jewish people to Moses, declaring their acceptance of the Torah and the Laws they had just received at Mount Sinai.

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"THE ISRAEL EXPERIENCE" IS THE EXPERIENCE OF ISRAEL

"The air over Jerusalem is saturated with prayers and dreams." - Yehuda Amichai

By Michael B. Soberman

Jewish education in Israel has something about which other kinds of education can only dream. It has the "real thing" – it has the Israel Experience. What is unique about Jewish education through an Israel Experience is, quite simply, that the experience is the education.

We have e-tickets, airplanes, tour buses, hotels, youth hostels, dogs and cats that understand Hebrew, walls and hills that tell ancient stories, and real people living in a thriving modern Jewish country. The Israel Experience has never been more accessible and all encompassing.

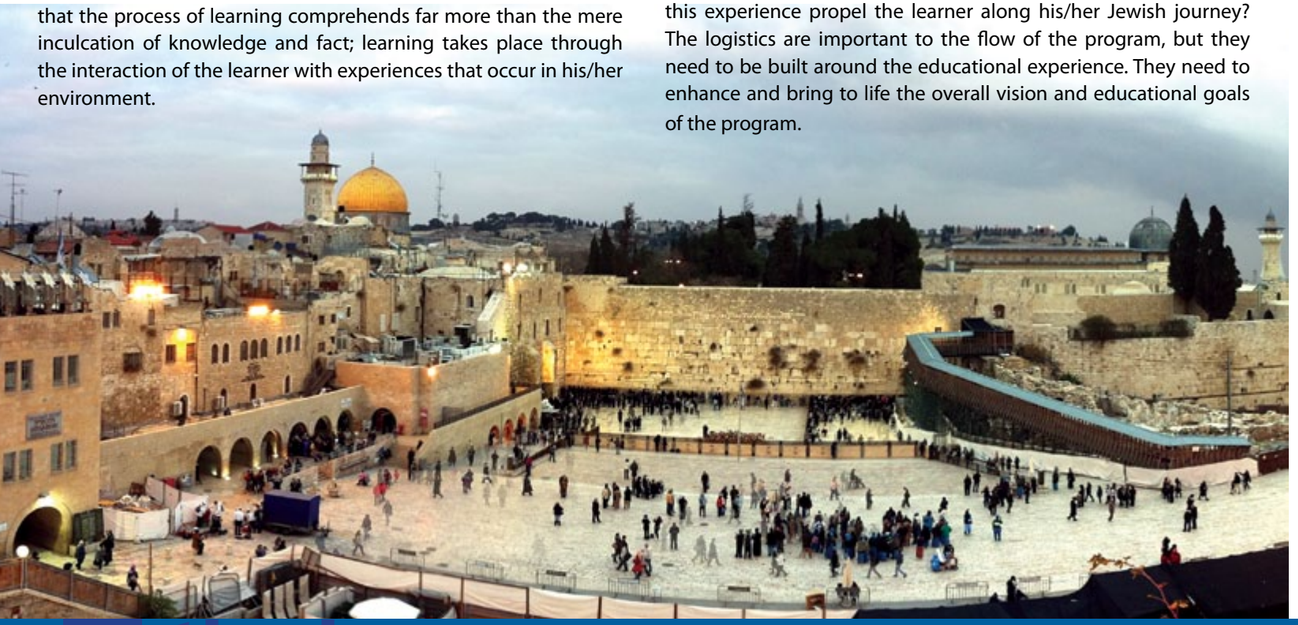
Something magical happens when a busload of young adults spend time together in Israel.

The educational approach of "The Israel Experience" stems from the seminal work of John Dewey (1859–1952), an American psychologist and educational reformer whose ideas about "educative" educational experiences provide the foundation for what is known today as experiential education. Dewey propounds that the process of learning comprehends far more than the mere inculcation of knowledge and fact; learning takes place through the interaction of the learner with experiences that occur in his/her environment.

Dewey writes that if an experience is "educative," it will spur the learner to want to learn more, and if an experience is "mis-educative," it will shut down the learning process.

His theories apply to learning that takes place in any environment and they inspire educators to capitalize on all environments as places for learning and growth. From John Dewey we learn that the physical surroundings of Israel function as a powerful educational tool because the subject matter (Israeli history, geography, culture, etc.) matches the setting in which the learning is happening.

If done correctly, the entire experience is looked at as educative and virtually every component of the program/itinerary provides "teachable moments." Putting together an itinerary for an Israel Experience is no easy task and there are many factors that need to be taken into account in the developmental stage of the program; for instance, who are the learners? What is their background? Where does this fit in their educational journey? Who will be the most effective tour educators and *madrichim* (staff members)? What are the messages that are most important in this program? How will this experience propel the learner along his/her Jewish journey? The logistics are important to the flow of the program, but they need to be built around the educational experience. They need to enhance and bring to life the overall vision and educational goals of the program.



Each year, Canada Israel Experience sends over 3,500 young adults to Israel on educational programs, including Taglit-Birthright Israel, March of the Living, MASA–Israel Journey, and other high school, youth movement, summer camp, and supplemental school programs. Canada Israel Experience is a department of the Jewish Federations of Canada –UI, funded by UJA Federation of Greater Toronto.

Something magical and not always explainable happens when a busload of young adults spend a period of time together in Israel. Powerful results emanate from the many different interactions that ensue: a *mifgash* (encounter) experience facilitates social interaction between young members of our communities and their Israeli peers, while daily touring and exploring offer personal interaction with the land, culture, history, and language of the modern state of Israel. The experience is holistic, immersive, and personal, and the outcomes mirror this pervasive intensity.

Often, it is the first time that the young adults sense their relationship to Jewish peoplehood and community. They come to understand how the story of the Jewish people is not someone else's story but, rather, their own, and they begin to see how they can assume an active role in authoring the next chapter. All of the research points to the fact that an experience in Israel is crucial and essential to the growth and development of their Jewish identity, one that will determine the face of our community in the coming years.[1]

The Israel Experience field has developed through various stages. Its modest beginnings saw just a few thousand of the most engaged "elite" of North American youngsters visiting Israel, usually at the age of 16, on six-week summer trips organized by youth movements and camps. The field then expanded to include trips to Israel sponsored by day schools, supplementary schools, and congregations which opened the market to a wider variety of age groups and lengths of stay. But the majority of our youth remained untouched by an experience in Israel.

Thinkers with big imaginations dreamed of a time when every young Jew would be able to visit Israel.

Meanwhile, thinkers with big imaginations dreamed of a time when every young Jew would be able to visit Israel. Charles Bronfman and Michael Steinhardt revolutionized Jewish education with the creation of Taglit-Birthright Israel, which has now taken more than 250,000 young adults to Israel since 1999. With the dream ever evolving, the initiative called MASA–Israel Journey now offers a longer-term Israel experience (minimum five months). In the arena of Israel Experience, there is always room to innovate and grow.[2]

An experience in Israel is crucial and essential to the growth and development of Jewish identity.

If the success we desire is a strong Jewish community that is connected to Israel and the Jewish people, then we must embrace the strategies that increase the number of participants in quality programs. It is a wise investment strategy to invest in what is known to succeed.

All practitioners of Jewish education will see the benefits when they include an Israel Experience in their work. I encourage everyone involved in Jewish education to contemplate how they can make an Israel Experience part of their course of study. As Herzl said, "If you will it, it is not a dream" (*Eem tir'tsu ein zo agaddah*). Canada Israel Experience will be honoured to help you fulfill this dream.

Portions of this article come from "The Aleph-Bet of Israel Education—The Israel Experience," written by Michael Soberman and Clare Goldwater. www.theicen

1 Barry Chazan, "Veulai – and Perhaps: Israel as a Place for Jewish Education," in *What we NOW Know About Jewish Education*, ed. Paul Flexner, Roberta Louis Goodman, and Linda Dale (New York: Bloomberg, 2008).

2 Leonard Saxe and Barry Chazan, *Ten Days of Birthright Israel: A Journey in Young Adult Identity* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis, 2008); Shaul Kelner, *Tours that Bind: Diaspora, Pilgrimage and Israeli Birthright Tourism* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

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JEWISH DAY SCHOOL: A COMPELLING PLATFORM FOR LIFELONG JEWISH ENGAGEMENT

By Eric Petersiel

I didn't choose to be Jewish. It is a fluke of birth and heritage over which I had no control. But how I choose to live my life Jewishly, and the fact that the choice belongs to me, is the essence of Reform Judaism, and what I believe it means to be a Jew in the modern world.

Understanding what goes into helping us make our Jewish decisions has become my life's work. We are all in some way Jews by Choice and, in my struggle to understand Jewish choices, it does not surprise me to find that one of the most significant factors at work is the power of day school.

Jewish day school offers valuable relationships and immersive experience throughout the year.

To begin his presidency of the Reform Movement in North America, Rabbi Rick Jacobs has launched the Campaign for Youth Engagement, which aims to help stem the tide of young Jews disappearing from active engagement with institutional Judaism. The campaign's "Internal Survey of Reform Congregations" indicates that 80% of those who celebrate Bar or Bat Mitzvah at a Reform congregation absent themselves from active Jewish life by age 18. Rabbi Jacobs and his team are taking great measures to reverse this trend.

On hearing these figures, what struck me immediately was how my association with day school graduates reveals a demography that is precisely the inverse of Rabbi Jacobs's statistics. My experience is with the graduates of The Leo Baeck Day School in Toronto, the largest Reform day school in North America, where 70% of graduates continue on to attend the Jewish high school, The Anne and Max Tanenbaum Community Hebrew Academy of Toronto (CHAT). This gives our graduates the opportunity to remain fully engaged in Jewish study and culture at a day school until 17 or 18 years of age.

Furthermore, when I factor this percentage with the Leo Baeck graduates who may choose non-Jewish high schools but do continue to be engaged with their synagogues beyond graduation, the level of Jewish engagement among graduates of our day school at age 18 is well beyond 80%. Given the North American norm, this is a staggering figure.

So what is it that makes day school such a compelling platform for lifelong Jewish engagement? What experiences predispose day school students to stay connected to their Judaism, while the average Jew drifts away, hopefully to reconnect sometime later in life?

The most in-depth study of Jewish leaders in North America reveals the three experiences that overwhelmingly influence those who choose a life of service to the Jewish people: years spent at a Jewish summer camp, an intense peer-to-peer trip to Israel, and eight years or more of Jewish day school. [1]

The Campaign for Youth engagement recognizes that the key to long-term involvement is the deep personal transformation that can occur during these three experiences. This portends a dramatic revolution in institutional Jewish life; the focusing of resources and energy on the next generation of Jewish leaders when they are very young and in immersive Jewish environments should be understood as the most critical moment in their Jewish lives.

With over 10,000 Toronto Jewish youth in day schools, our Toronto community is an anomaly in North America, with a century-old history of day school education. It is no surprise that our city continues to produce great leadership for the UJA Federation, local and Israeli hospitals, and other philanthropic endeavours, as well as Jewish clergy and educators who serve the community worldwide.

The potential inspirational force of caring adults during intense educational experiences heightens the impact these programs have on their participants. The Jewish day school experience also offers valuable personal relationships and immersive Jewish experiences that extend throughout the school year. Given that often our greatest inspirations are our teachers, day schools offer Jewish youth the dual benefit of effective educators, who recognize their mission to serve as Jewish role models to their students.

Reform Judaism has long faced the imposing dilemma of how to support a deep and meaningful Jewish existence while taking full advantage of the modern world. I remember clearly the difficult struggle I faced as a student at public school each fall: school vs.

shul on Sukkot. I knew that the time I spent in synagogue becoming more engaged Jewishly was equal to time taken away from my secular life. I would fall farther behind in school work and grow farther apart from the social fabric in which I longed to succeed. Day school students face no such dilemma in their young lives.

When the academic year takes its cues from the Jewish calendar, meaningful Jewish engagement becomes seamless and easily attainable. It still requires an active choice, but attendance at Jewish day school removes barriers of time, fluency, and comfort that can hinder a life of meaningful Jewish practice. The door to Jewish engagement opens wide, inviting students and their families to enter.

When the academic year takes its cues from the Jewish calendar, Jewish engagement becomes seamless and more easily attainable.

As an adult I realize that my path to a position of Jewish leadership would have been infinitely easier had I attended day school, Jewish summer camp, or a teen tour in Israel. Luckily, I found inspiration in the Jewish leaders around me in our community and at university, and I was able carve my own path to spirituality and engagement. It was a steep hill to climb. With the option of Jewish day school and so many other remarkable opportunities available to the youth of our community today, I feel blessed that my children may find their road much more manageable to navigate.

1 Jack Wertheimer, *Generation of Change: How Leaders in Their Twenties and Thirties Are Reshaping American Jewish Life* (New York: Avi Chai Foundation, 2010).

Eric Petersiel, RJE, is Head of School of The Leo Baeck Day School, the only Jewish IB World School in Canada. He has taught students and adults in a wide range of educational environments. Having grown up in the Reform Movement in Toronto, Eric served as the Principal of the South Campus of The Leo Baeck Day School for seven years before becoming Head of School in 2009.

JEWISH HIGH SCHOOL: THE CORNERSTONE OF OUR VIBRANT FUTURE

What does a Jewish high school education offer that isn't available elsewhere?

By Rhona Birenbaum

Parents enrolling their children in high school can't just "click and compare" Jewish high school education to other alternatives in the education landscape; the value-added features of Jewish day school secondary education are unique. All high schools aspire to deliver the non-negotiables of a secondary school education – academic excellence, high-calibre teaching, university preparedness, care and support for each student. The very reason that Jewish high schools exist isn't even on the checklist. The Anne & Max Tanenbaum Community Hebrew Academy of Toronto (TanenbaumCHAT) more than meets these universal requirements, but that's where the comparison ends.

We provide a solid foundation for the development of character through nurturing the Jewish soul. While, at age 18, TanenbaumCHAT graduates may not leave high school with Jewish identities fully formed, their extensive study of Jewish history, values, culture and traditions does result in a knowledge base from which they can explore throughout their lives what it means for them to be Jewish.

Embarking on their post–high school journey as independent young adults, they are exposed to many new ideas, people, and experiences. Their high school education gives them a Jewish lens on the world.

Jewish high school activates the communal spirit and sense of contribution that mean so much to teenagers.

Teenagers in particular need to feel a sense of purpose and to believe that they can make a difference in the world. One study found that "Jewish high school alumni describe a greater sense of belonging in their schools, and feel more strongly that their peers enjoyed being together, than do respondents who attended either private or public high schools."[1]

Research also shows that teenagers, who feel a sense of community or belonging in school, demonstrate greater social and coping skills, higher academic performance, better attendance and fewer behavioural problems. Fostering such a sense of belonging to community is a priority at TanenbaumCHAT, because the strong connection to other Jews experienced by teenagers in Jewish high schools today is the foundation for a flourishing Jewish community tomorrow.

Dr. Stephen Lorch, Head of the Solomon Schechter School of Manhattan, explains why Jewish day schools are more effective at fostering a sense of belonging:

> The power of Jewish day schools to create belonging and community is even greater than that of other independent schools. Traditions in Jewish day schools are derived not only from the school's institutional past, but also from the sweep of Jewish history across the centuries. Culture is not only the school's culture, but also the participation of the school community in the shared experience, the drama and celebration of the Jewish community that transcends continents and encompasses past, present and future. Shared values are reinforced by a common engagement with a canon of richly resonant foundational texts and committed action.[2]

Only Jewish high schools can "enable students to formulate and articulate the integration of their Jewish values into the democratic traditions of Canada."

We model an atmosphere that respects differences of opinion, exposes students to diverse points of view and expects them to analyze conflicting views objectively. We respect pluralism and our students represent all streams of Judaism. We promote dialogue, understanding, and mutual respect in a safe, supportive environment and encourage our students to question and challenge teachers, clergy, and peers. This is the same process our students will rely on to evaluate divergent ideas and form their own Jewish identity as adults.

Jewish high school is an optimal place to activate the communal spirit and sense of contribution that mean so much to teenagers; shared concern for a common cause can facilitate individual engagement and participation in a way that independent and public high school communities cannot.

Through activities at CHAT, students become highly involved in Jewish communal life; their engagement in a myriad of volunteer and philanthropic causes also develops students' social conscience with respect to the wider community. Over the past half century, we have provided an environment that builds strong minds, inspires independent thinking and prepares its students to take their place in society as participants and community leaders.

Young adults graduate from TanenbaumCHAT with more than an Ontario Secondary School diploma; they graduate with lifelong friends who share history, values, and culture. Connected to community, they emerge from our halls as concerned, caring global citizens committed to make the world a better place. And they are predisposed to live Jewish lives. Surveys show they are least likely to intermarry, and one in ten will marry a TanenbaumCHAT alumnus.

Many different high schools are competing for the attention of Jewish parents and their adolescent children. In the words of the TanenbaumCHAT Statement of Philosophy and Purpose, only Jewish high schools can "enable students to formulate and articulate the integration of their Jewish values into the democratic traditions of Canada and the Western world." A Jewish high school education is holistic; the overall impact on a teenager is far greater than the simple sum of its parts.

1 Fern Chatok and Len Saxe, "What Difference Does Day School Make? The Impact of Day School: A Comparative Analysis of Jewish College Students" (May 2007), *PEJE Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education*, http://www.peje.org/.

2 Stephen Lorch, "Jewish Day Schools: The Same as Other Independent Schools but Different," *2008 Edition of The Parents League Review*, The Parents League of New York,.

Rhona Birenbaum is currently Acting Head of School at TanenbaumCHAT, and is the school's CFO and Executive Director. Rhona has had a 30-year career as a business officer at private elementary, secondary, and vocational institutions. She has been a Jewish day school administrator for more than 20 years.

SUPPLEMENTARY JEWISH EDUCATION: A GREAT OPTION

By Susan Sermer

Jewish families in the Toronto area are truly fortunate to have a variety of options for the Jewish education of their children. One such option is to "supplement" their children's secular learning through after-school Jewish education and Sunday classes. Good supplementary education is about the whole package – class time, retreats, worship, and youth groups. Students not only gain an education, they also make friends and become involved in the community. In the process, they become well-rounded members of the Jewish community.

Supplementary education combines formal and informal learning.

Supplementary education lends itself well to combining formal and informal learning. At Temple Har Zion (THZ), we recognize that the "core" curriculum is important, but we also strive to provide as much experiential learning as possible, whether it be in the areas of arts, Israel, celebrations, or *Tikkun Olam*, to name just a few. For example, at THZ, as early as Grade 3, our students attend weekend retreats, immersing themselves in Jewish living and learning; as well, we have developed synagogue-based youth groups for three different ages that help students cement friendships formed during class time. The older youth groups participate in the Reform Movement's youth events and meet peers from other parts of the United States and Canada. We want students to learn, to do, and to love the experience of their Jewish education.

The classical supplementary school is associated with a synagogue or with other faith-based organizations in the community. This structure in itself provides opportunities for families to be involved with their children's education if they so choose. The message that "Jewish children become committed Jewish adults when they grow up in an environment in which Jewish living and learning is part of their family life as well as their school life"[1] is a strong and important one. In our school, parents take on the role of teachers in the classrooms. We offer adult study for parents while their children are in class; and in our family classes (where parents and children learn together), we round out the concept that Jewish learning is a lifelong pursuit and a cornerstone of our tradition.

Pursuing Jewish education through a synagogue community facilitates development of a child's innate sense of community. This is an important and fundamental building block in nurturing Jewish identity. One of the stated goals of the Temple Har Zion Religious School is "helping our students and their families to form connections with other temple families, thereby strengthening their ties to Temple Har Zion and the greater Jewish Community."[2] We plan values-based opportunities for families to meet and get to know each other, in some cases forming long-lasting friendships. We overtly emphasize that community building is a valid and meaningful part of Jewish life. Children who form friendships in the classroom are more eager to ask their parents to bring them to synagogue-based family events, such as Shabbat and holiday dinners, or festival celebrations such as decorating the sukkah or a Chanukah party. The children want to spend time with their friends and informal educational events let them do it through Jewish experiences.

Family worship is separate but interconnected with the agenda of supplementary Jewish education. Our Family Services are the best-attended services in our community. During their regular class time, students have the opportunity to join a choir or learn to help lead the Family Service. This is a wonderful opportunity for children to show off what they have learned, for parents and grandparents to *kvell,* and it brings families to synagogue on Shabbat! While worshipping, students see the relevance of their Hebrew learning and have a chance to practise their skills. All students in our school are required to attend a certain number of services, thereby supporting the connection between school and the congregation.

Supplementary education integrates our students' religious, family, and communal experiences.

Supplementary education integrates our students' religious, family, and communal experiences, while providing a vibrant Jewish life for them and their families. At THZ, our students demonstrate how invaluable this experience is to their Jewish education and identity.

1 Temple Har Zion, *Your Guide to 2012-2013 Religious School at Temple Har Zion* (2012).
2 Ibid.

Susan Sermer is the Director of Education at Temple Har Zion. She received her education at the University of Toronto. Before taking on the role of educator at THZ, she had a lifelong career in public education. Susan and her husband and daughters have been active members of Temple Har Zion since 1984.

JEWISH STUDIES IN THE UNIVERSITY: THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN WITH OTHERS

By Sol Goldberg

Of all the venues, both formal and informal, in which one can learn about Jewish history, literature, ideas, and practices, the university is unique. Elsewhere these subjects are communicated by teachers who are Jews to students who are Jews within programs supported and administered by Jews. The university differs fundamentally. It is not an institutional agent of any segment of the Jewish community, and many of those who today teach and study the long, diverse phenomenon that is Jewish civilization are not Jews.

Now, I don't wish to deny that Jewish students regularly explore their identities by studying the core texts and key experiences of their people at universities. Indeed, a few decades ago, I myself was such a student. Like me, these students also inevitably encounter professors who model one way of being actively and identifiably Jewish. Moreover, several Jewish studies programs and centres across North America have benefitted from the support and interest of the surrounding Jewish population, among which my own community in Toronto has been especially generous and engaged. Except in cases where a rabbinical seminary is also an accredited university, however, programs in Jewish studies operate within secular universities that maintain a basic institutional, ideological, and intellectual independence from every extramural community.

Scholars created a new Jewish identity in which critical distance and participation merged.

Independence was a cornerstone of the establishment of Jewish studies as an academic field, though neither the "Science of Judaism" nor its earliest scholars found a place within the then-emerging modern research university. They nevertheless studied Jewish civilization not as a living tradition to which they belonged, but rather as a historical past from which they were fundamentally separated. In adopting this perspective, these scholars created a new kind of Jewish identity in which having a critical distance from Jewish culture and participating in its continuation somehow merged. A continuation of Jewish tradition by untraditional means marks, I suppose, all modern forms of Jewish identity. But a particular integrity, it seems to me, distinguishes the identity of professors of Jewish studies, whether orthodox or irreligious, since the examination of evidence, arguments, and oneself required by academic life ideally produces people who own their beliefs or disbeliefs with the utmost clarity and for the best possible reasons.

All my colleagues, I like to imagine, exemplify this view of academic Jewish studies to some degree, although I tend to assume that it holds above all for my own discipline, Jewish philosophy. The subject matter of philosophy applies, I believe, to everyone; but it appeals, I have discovered, only to a few. Jewish philosophy courses usually have fewer subscribers than other courses in Jewish studies and are typically least popular with students developing and extending their Jewish roots. In the eyes of such students, philosophy's incessant questioning often appears inimical to any stable identity. Philosophers themselves know otherwise, but historically we have had little success convincing those who feel at home in the world as it immediately seems that questioning has its existential rewards.

Nothing is new in philosophy's unpopularity among those who find unsettling the insistence that each owes others a compelling and complete account of her/his thoughts and deeds. But, as I've suggested, the "others" next to the Jews in university classrooms today are genuinely different, and this novel situation cannot but generate other possibilities of the Jewish "self." So what makes Jewish education at the university a special and especially important opportunity for young Jews is that the opportunity has come to be available to all.

Dr. Sol Goldberg is a Lecturer at the University of Toronto's Centre for Jewish Studies and the Department for the Study of Religion. His teaching and research focus on continental philosophy, especially its intersection with the Jewish philosophical tradition. His new research project is tentatively titled "What is Jewish Philosophy?: A Post-Apologetic Answer."

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