

# Judaism AND MODERNITY: REALIGNING THE TWO WORLDS

AN EDITED TRANSCRIPT OF AN ADDRESS BY  
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edited by Zvi GRUMET

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## Editor's Introduction

In 1999, The Lookstein Center for Jewish Education initiated its Principals' Seminar. Designed to help professionalize the field of Jewish education, its components include a focus on visionary leadership and reflective practice alongside exposure to a variety of outstanding thinkers whose job it is to enrich, challenge, inspire and provoke. Since its inception, the seminar has blossomed into a multi-phase program including the summer seminar in Israel, a follow-up winter seminar in the US, and at least a year of individualized mentoring focused on a school-based project. To date, more than 150 educators from an extraordinarily broad spectrum of the Jewish educational world - Community, Conservative, Orthodox, Labor Zionist, *Haredi* and Reform day schools - have benefited from the program.

The various elements of the program are integrated toward a single goal - the development of a cadre of Jewish day school leaders that will set the standard, and continually raise that standard for the entire field of Jewish education. Much of the program draws from the best practices in general education, particularly the emerging tools of action-research, and applying them to the unique situation of Jewish day schools.

In July 2004, the particular theme of the summer seminar was *The Leadership Challenge: Navigating the Two Worlds of the Jewish Day School*. The keynote speaker was Rabbi Dr. Yitzchak Greenberg (fondly known as "Yitz"), one of the seminal Jewish thinkers of our day. Rabbi Greenberg's presentation offered a brilliant and deep analysis of Judaism's two-hundred plus year grapple with the variety of challenges presented by the modern world. The inspiring lecture set the tone for the entire seminar.

We are pleased to present this monograph, which is an edited version of his address. We express our deep appreciation to Rabbi Greenberg for his permission to print and distribute this lecture. At the conclusion of his address there was a period for questions. We have included Rabbi Greenberg's responses to those as addenda.

We are especially grateful to Targum Shlishi, a philanthropic foundation, for supporting the publication of this monograph. A preface by its Director, Aryeh Rubin, precedes Rabbi Greenberg's comments.

*Bivrakha,*  
**Zvi Grumet**  
Editor



## Preface

It is an honor for Targum Shlishi to sponsor the publication of Dr. Yitz Greenberg's *Judaism and Modernity: Realigning the Two Worlds*. It is also an honor to be affiliated with Rabbis Stuart Zweiter and Zvi Grumet and the rest of the Lookstein team. As a group, they are creating a community of caring and thoughtful teachers and administrators, and have raised the bar of Jewish learning and education.

In this monograph, Yitz proposes the challenge for this generation: bridging the gap between the dominant world civilization and our "local" Jewish world. Our success or failure at this mission will determine the security of our Jewish future for better or worse. The same Modernity which has brought so many benefits to the Jewish people threatens to undermine it, and in more than two hundred years of struggle we have yet to find the way to successfully integrate the Jewish world and the Modern one.

Yitz describes the ideal of a covenantal community marked by a school environment that fosters a commitment of love for one another – by the teacher and by the student learning in an atmosphere which embodies a model community. Changing the way we do business will alleviate much pressure and permit such a community to flourish.

One of the primary challenges facing the Jewish people in America is our youth's extreme attraction to secular culture, and the unfortunate reality of assimilation. Why is this our reality? In part, because we're not adequately conveying to them the grandeur of Jewish history and the majesty of our heritage. Without a strong connection to our culture tugging at their soul and offsetting the pull of the "outside" world, the temptations of the banal youth culture can be overwhelming.

Two systemic issues contribute to the problem. The lack of resources allocated to Jewish education has resulted in many parents and students not opting for a Jewish education, and those students who do attend day schools are often so bombarded with trivial minutiae that they never develop an appreciation for Jewish culture. They lose the beautiful tapestry of Judaism in the focus on the small threads.

The financial tools to tackle the systemic issues are available, if only we could organize and coordinate them. The mega-money needed to improve the content of the message and upgrade Jewish education to the levels of

the secular private schools is not immediately forthcoming. Tuitions are barely affordable, costs continue to rise, and we need to pay our teachers as the professionals we demand them to be. The generation of European immigrants willing to work for substandard pay is gone; women who were historically underpaid deserve equal pay.

The educational tools are also available, and the emergence of new technologies challenges educators to think in new paradigms. The centrality of the role of teacher as role model cannot be replaced, but the teacher as the font of information from which the students drink need no longer be operative. The ability to inexpensively connect to a master teacher across the world, to create our own broadcasting networks with full video and audio, to communicate messages in a media our children will relate to (be it games, movies, instant messaging, or the next innovation) all present us with extraordinary opportunities that we have not as yet begun to exploit.

Technology is challenging basic ideas about education. The secular educational world has been grappling with what learning should be in today's world – does a student really need to memorize the state capitals when they can be called up instantly on the screen of a cellular telephone? Perhaps more time should be spent teaching critical thinking and love of learning. The Jewish world needs to have the same conversation. All of the texts of extant Jewish literature, from the Torah with all its commentaries to the Talmud with Rashi and Tosafot, and from the *Rishonim* to the literature of the *Haskalah*, from the Hebrew poetry to Yiddish political tracts, from Chaim Grade's opus to Philip Roth's novels, fit onto one Blu-Ray DVD, and are all instantly recallable in an array of languages. We need to rethink how to appeal to a child who grew up on the AOL home page or the teen who relates to her peers on Myspace.com. Should students be memorizing 20 forms of the pluperfect Hebrew tense or mumbling the *tahanun* without exploring its meaning and history?

And now a tribute to my *Rebbe*. In the beginning of this monograph, Yitz discusses how he had prepared to be *Hasidic rebbe*, and how he needed to switch course because times had changed. But to a generation of Jews who came of age in the late 60's and early 70's, Yitz was the ultimate Rebbe. When he held his *tisch*, be it in the classroom or his Shabbat table, his charisma and *hidushim*, his insights and inspiration, his wisdom and his love, moved us all. He treaded where no one, not Orthodox, not Conservative,



not Reform, dared to go, and in so doing inspired an entire generation to do more, to find their voice, to find their *shlichut* (mission), and to forge ahead. Scores of baby boomer activists who have made and are making a difference in Jewish life today might not have tried, had it not been for this *Mitnaged*-born *Hasidic rebbe* and his wife Blu. In fact, the very name of the foundation that I founded, Targum Shlishi, was inspired by Yitz's teachings, that of our being in a new third era (following the Temple and the Rabbinic eras.) For his keen insight, for his dynamic leadership, for his daring intellect, and above all his radiant warmth, I, on behalf of my generation, thank him. You, dear reader, are fortunate in that you are about to reap the wisdom of our *Rebbe* in the pages that follow.

Aryeh Rubin  
Aventura, Florida  
July 7, 2006  
11 Tammuz, 5766

Rabbi Dr. Yitzchak Greenberg is presently the president of the Steinhardt Foundation's Jewish Life Network. He was formerly the chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council and the founder of Clal - an organization that changed the face of the federation world. Prior to that, Rabbi Greenberg served in a number of capacities, including as rabbi of the Young Israel of Brookline and the Riverdale Jewish Center, and it was his vision which inspired the creation of the SAR Academy in Riverdale. He was a professor and the founder of the Jewish Studies Department at the City College of New York.

**F**or the past two and a half centuries, the dominant force in Jewish life has been the impact of the world of modernity on the world of Jewish tradition. All the movements in modern Judaism and modern Jewry have struggled to relate the two worlds in a way that would enable Jewish life to go on and flourish. Despite specific successes, thus far no one group has succeeded in establishing an integrated, stable, constructive relationship in which the two worlds reinforce rather than clash with each other. I believe that this generation has the opportunity – nay, the mission – of achieving a successful stable synthesis.

### The Mission of Human Beings

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (the Rav), in *Shlihut*<sup>1</sup>, suggests that the fact that every human being is created *betsalem elokim* (= in the image of God) is the underlying core of all the interpersonal *mitzvot* (*bein adam lahaveiro*). I have argued further that *tselem elokim* is the core of the entire tradition – not only of the interpersonal *mitzvot*, but the ritual commandments as well.<sup>2</sup>

The Rav applies the concept of *tselem elokim* in an original way, building on the concept of *sheluhō shel adam kemoto*. If someone wants to send a messenger or appoint an agent to represent him/her in a particular event or transaction, the *halakhic* rule is that the *shaliah*, the one carrying out the mission or the assignment, must be similar to the sender. To properly

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<sup>1</sup> Appeared in *Yemei Zikaron* (Hebrew), World Zionist Organization, Jerusalem 1986, pp 9-28.

<sup>2</sup> See the view of Ben Azzai in Jerusalem Talmud, Nedarim, chapter 9, *halakha* 4.

represent someone, to operate with their power of attorney, the agent must share an understanding with the one who sent them; if the agent does not grasp and stand for those values, how can he/she truly fulfill the responsibility of representation? The Rav applies this concept to the question, “Why did God make human beings in God’s image?” The Rav replies that it was necessary for humans to have extraordinary capacities, to enable them to be God’s agents; making humans godlike fulfills the *halakhic* requirement of agency - *sheluhō shel adam kemoto*. Says the Rav: this implies that Hashem created *every* human being in the image of God because God has some mission/assignment for *every* human being.

Since the world is unfinished, the mission/assignment for the human being is to complete and perfect the world - *tikkun olam*. So great and challenging is the task of world improvement, that the human being needs God-like powers to get the job done. The gifts God bestows upon human beings, e.g., hearts capable of loving like God, minds capable of understanding the universe like God, wills free like God to choose to do good - are given because God wants humanity to carry out this divine mission.

### **The Mission of the Individual and of the Generation**

It may be argued that this description of a call to *tikkun olam* is appropriate for the overall mission of humanity as a whole. But the Rav applies the concept of a divinely directed mission to the individual as well. What is my (your, their) personal mission? In the Rav’s view, every individual has to ask that question personally - what is my mission, what is my *shlichut*, which God has in mind for me? Unfortunately, there are no neon lights flashing the answer or messages directly from God that tell us what to do. The age of prophecy is over; the good old days when one could go to the Temple to query the *Urim veTumim* and get a direct answer, ‘yes’ or ‘no’, are gone. Therefore, each of us must figure the mission out for ourselves, and that task may take a lifetime.

The Rav does suggest two fundamental signals, given by God, that can help the individual discover his/her personal mission. The first sign is the era and the place into which you were born. Your mission has to do with where you live and the time you are in. For example: when I was growing up my great dream was to be a *Hasidische rebbe*. The trick to being a *Hasidische rebbe* is that the *Hasidim* are persecuted; the Gentiles hate us; we live in poverty.

We sit around a table with a piece of herring; there is not enough herring to go around because there is only one piece for everybody, so we look at it collectively. Then we sing and dance and what-have-you. I practiced for many years how to be a *Hasidische rebbe*. Then, I was hired to be the Rabbi in Riverdale Jewish Center. When I showed up, I took a piece of herring and put it in the middle of the table and tried to explain to people that even though they hate us, we have to sing and dance, because... The congregants looked at me like I was crazy. Their problem was not that they could not afford a piece of herring - their menu for breakfast offered a choice of four fish entrees, twelve cereals and eighteen *forshpices* (= appetizers). Their problem was that with so many choices, they could not figure out which course they truly wanted. They had so much wealth and could afford so much that they could not find a basis to say "No" to any request from their children. As result, they were spoiling their children and they needed my advice on how to transmit values and discipline in an affluent society. Then I realized that I was unprepared to function as a Rabbi in twentieth century America.

Had I been born in Berditchev in the seventeenth century, I would have been perfectly trained. In retrospect, I was totally unprepared for American life, in which the Gentiles did not hate us. In the United States, all people had equal rights; therefore, the women had different conceptions of what they should be than those with which I was raised in my tradition. There were a thousand other issues that my education had overlooked. But if we follow the Rav's direction - being born in a time of affluence, in a place where Gentiles love Jews - then educators should assume that this time and place in this world is linked to one's personal mission, and prepare accordingly.

The other guide to finding one's mission, says the Rav, is to examine what your talents are. God would not give a *shlichut* which a person can not effectively carry out. If, like me, you are not a particularly athletic person, you should not assume that you were destined to be an Olympic runner. Rather, one must realistically look at what one talents are - emotional, intellectual, artistic, spiritual, etc. - and on that basis figure out how one can make the world better.

Jewish educators must recognize that there is an unprecedented level of impact of the dominant world civilization on all "local" worlds - including

ours, the Jewish world. There is less and less chance to shut out modern culture with all of its dynamism and channels of communication. Then one should understand that establishing a positive interaction or a dynamic synthesis between the two is needed to assure the health of both worlds. I would argue that the issue of relating the two worlds positively - or creating syntheses that bring out the best in both - is the particular mission of our generation. Meeting the challenge will make or break the Jewish future. This is a task worthy of contemporary Jewish educators.

### **An Historical Perspective**

Let us put this task into some historical perspective. For most of human history, people lived in their own cultural world - their own world was the "inner" world. At best, the rest of the world was the outside world - with very sharp delineations between the two. People raised children in an environment in which their particular set of viewpoints, their community, their religion - in our case, Judaism - was the one that they were exposed to all the time; it supplied the value system with which they conducted their daily affairs. The outside world was seen as distant, threatening, and inferior. Although Jews were persecuted and did not have citizens' rights, they survived through the Middle Ages. Despite being very vulnerable, despite the fact that the majority around them despised them and saw Jews in negative terms, Jewish culture flourished because the outside world was viewed as manifestly inferior. The majority of "Others" were not so much other human beings; they were *goyim*. In the eyes of a medieval Jew, a *goy* was not the same type of human being as a Jew. *Goyim* drink, Jews don't drink; *goyim* are threatening, dangerous, and evil, unlike Jews, who are *rahmanim bnei rahmanim* (lit., merciful children of merciful parents) - loving, kind and moral, etc. Under those conditions, who would seriously consider joining the outside world or adopting its values?

For most of history, this internal sufficiency was true of most value systems. What was it like being a Christian in the Middle Ages living in the Moslem sphere? It was the same as a Protestant in the eighteenth century in a Catholic country. One was raised in an inner community. The community had its own value system, its own role models, its own relatively closed world - all others were outsiders. The outside religion/culture was not presented as intelligently, as dignifiedly as the faith of the insular community. To consider joining any value/religious system other than what

was accepted by the inner community was self-evidently ridiculous. Take the Christian justification of ranking the Jews as degraded outsiders. In the Christian world view, the Others, i.e., the Jews were hated by God; they were a group that was once chosen by God but were then rejected because of their spiritual arrogance and blindness. They were stiff-necked, and legalistic; they were morally corrupt. Jews were people who were capable of cutting childrens' throats and then using their blood for matzah, etc. Simon of Trent was made a saint for allegedly suffering this fate. Would any Christian consider that world of Jewry to be a serious living alternative? No. Rather, the Jews deserved the degradation and humiliation inflicted on them by Christians.

For much of history, that is the way it has been in every group. (Does not the Talmud assume that idolaters routinely practice bestiality and that one dare not leave a baby with them untended because killing such babies is their standard operating procedure?) Classically, the inside world is presented positively, constructively, vividly; it has role models with which one can identify. The outside world, the other culture, is perceived in much more negative, much less dignified terms.

In the pre-modern era, the Jewish people lived in a world that was almost Manichean.<sup>3</sup> The inner world, the Jewish world, consisted of loving, responsible and good people with a classic and glorious tradition. Although Jews were basically alienated from the rest of the earth (being in exile), the cosmic Lord was concerned only with their turf - the *dalet amot* (= four cubits) of *halakha* of the Jewish community. Jews' prayers were the only ones which mattered to God; their words were what really moved the divine cosmos. In the theurgic terms of *kabbalah*, only Jewish activity could bring about *tikkun olam*. The other people of faith were, at best, role players, in the divine plan; and not such good players, at best.

Even Maimonides, who offers one of the most positive and generous comments on Christianity and Islam in medieval Jewish history, emphasized the evil that the two religions had done to the Jewish people - even if in the end, they have some redeeming value. Rambam said that

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<sup>3</sup> Manicheanism is a dualistic philosophy which sees the world as fundamentally divided between the forces of good and evil.

Jesus and Muhammad, with all their lies and the terrible behaviors they unleashed into the world, helped bring the Messiah closer.<sup>4</sup> Christianity and Islam have brought the world closer to the concept of Messiah by getting many human beings to understand and to talk about the redeemer and the Messianic age in Jewish terms. Still, in Maimonides' view, when the day comes and the world finally discovers the truth and recognizes the authentic Messiah, namely the Jewish Messiah, humanity will recognize the truth of Judaism only.

### **The Crisis of Modernity**

The concept of the inferiority of the outside world was true of all cultures. Therefore, by reaching out and offering universal equality and economic and political rewards to all, modern culture assaulted the credibility and challenged the magnetism of all inner worlds and local cultures. That is the essence of the crisis that modernity has imposed on Jews and non-Jews as well. In the case of the Jews, the modern world presented itself to the Jewish people as the alternative to living in two worlds. Modern culture invited Jews to join in and contribute to making one perfect world. The new world would offer equal dignity and equal value for everybody. Jews would no longer be treated by the majority as inferior outsiders. Thus, modernity offered the Jewish people a redemptive vision which was, in many ways, the fulfillment of the Jewish Messianic dream. The prophets dreamt about a Messianic age in which humanity would overcome poverty and hunger, defeat war and cure sickness, create a world in which even the poor have justice. This is the world which Modernity offered to the Jewish people - indeed to everyone - now. There was a tacit bargain, however. The Jews would give up their otherness, that which makes them different. The people of Mosaic persuasion would turn their backs on their "reactionary" religious ideas, or "backward" nationalist ideas. They would dissolve the particular social cohesion with which Jews have lived. Together, all of humanity would make one perfect world. In that world, everybody will be redeemed, and humanity will live happily ever after.

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<sup>4</sup> Laws of Kings 11:4. The passages relating to Christianity and Islam were censored from the standard, traditional editions. Academic editions (Frankel, 1998, and others) have restored those passages.



In effect, Modernity's offer was doubled for the Jews. The end to universal poverty would go hand in hand with an end to Jews' pariah, outsider status. Jews would leave the ghettos of economic and political disadvantages, and the state of cultural and social inferiority, and enter a world of freedom, affluence and democracy. The only price was to relinquish that identity and religion which would differentiate them.

Modernity was very hard to resist. Imagine an end to Jewish marginality - no more dependence and living off the good will of other people, with exposure to attack and persecution. Imagine an end to economic and social problems; an end to diseases, to which Jews, like everybody else, were vulnerable; imagine a tremendous expansion of lifespan and of material welfare. To top it off, imagine the realization of ideals of the highest kind - human dignity, equality for all people - now being at hand. This was an offer one could not refuse. There is an old Yiddish proverb - love is wonderful, but love with noodles is even better. The modern world offered the Jewish people love with noodles. The noodles were unprecedented economic, political and cultural advances for them and for all people. The love was human dignity, equal rights, peace, and the end of war. The remarkable offer proved overwhelmingly irresistible to Jews.

## Responses to the Challenge of Modernity

Much of modern Jewish history reflects the attempt of various groups to rewrite Judaism, to make Jews eligible and worthy of living in this new, united world. Many Jews accepted the terms without quibble - full acceptance, and equal dignity in an affluent world in return for complete integration and assimilation. They were prepared to judge religious and cultural differences as reactionary, standing in the way of the final perfection. In Russia, the Yevseksia, the Jewish communists, closed day schools and yeshivot because they felt them to be great obstacles to the arrival of communism, which represented equality and dignity. They felt that it was a *mitzvah* to close these religious institutions down in order to eliminate the last obstacle to redemption. This assimilationist assumption became the dominant value for the majority of Jews in the past hundred fifty years. According to this scenario, Jews give up living in the two worlds in exchange for life in one (perfected) world. Thus, Jews would lose Jewish identity but gain the highest form of human identity.

Another version of the rewrite of Judaism suggested that modernity did not demand giving up being Jewish; rather, modern civilization asked Jews to give up Jewish nationalism. Socialism, said the Bund, is the answer, possibly transmitted through Diaspora Jewish nationality. Jews did not need to go off to Israel. Instead they should become worthy citizens of humanity, help overcome the old regime, and together with the vanguard of the proletariat, make a better world. This policy would allow the Jews to remain Jewish, while making their particular contribution to the universal redemption of humanity.

A third version: Yiddishists suggested that it was unnecessary to give up being Jewish; it was sufficient to give up Judaism's ages old religious component. Religion, most Yiddishists argued, was reactionary, the opiate of the masses; Yiddish secular culture was the true path to restructure Judaism. If Jews could join in creating a democratic, egalitarian society, that would show the way to solve the problems of humanity.

### **Religious Responses to the Challenge of Modernity**

There were various religious versions of rewriting Judaism to qualify for modern life. Reform Judaism essentially argued that by improving their tradition, Jews would do more than acculturate to the modern world - Jews and their perfected Judaism would lead the way in modern civilization. The emerging world of modernity, Reform argued, was uniquely designed to enhance and embrace Judaism at its best. In order for Judaism to lead, it needed to cleanse itself of its excrescences - the inherited rabbinic legalistic, tribalistic distortions - and thus restore Judaism to its prophetic Biblical essence. After all, the modern world was going to be rational, universal, ethical, and inhospitable to inherited religions filled with all sorts of irrational beliefs. Similarly, modernity could not respect nationalist, parochial and tribal values like *kashrut* and other practices designed to separate between people. A morally cleansed, ritually reformed Judaism would be worthy of participating fully in the modern world - it would, in fact, become a leader in the dawning age of redemption. In time, Reform would conclude that upholding the values of autonomy and reason would leave no room for the binding legalism of *halakha*.

The Conservative version of this re-imagining essentially judged Reform to be right in concept but wrong in being too extreme in execution. Change

must be evolutionary and gradual even as modern values are used to filter and adapt the tradition. Furthermore, Reform desired to do away with separatist nationalism, but Conservative Judaism envisioned a continuing peoplehood with distinct religious practices. Still, these practices, like folkways everywhere, were subject to change and growth. The primary direction of growth would be to fit more comfortably into modern culture at its best.

Even the Modern Orthodox articulation stressed the need to meet the standards of credibility of this new period. Credibility meant that a persuasive religion needed to make clear that it is separated from superstition. Religious life should be lived and expressed in the language of the host country. This purified tradition should show a decent respect for the broader knowledge of humanity. Samson Raphael Hirsch, for example, felt that the *haredi* version of Orthodoxy was mummified (that is the language that he uses in his classic *Nineteen Letters of Ben Uziel*). Despite his insistence that Torah is eternal and transcends all local cultures, Hirsch sought to adapt Judaism to modernity. In his view, there was no need to give up any of the true religion, but it was necessary to engage the insights and practice the best of modern culture in ways which were genuine, alive and dynamic.

The *haredi* version also rewrites Judaism in reaction to the challenge of modernity - the tradition is made more rigid in order to withstand the impact of the modern. In truth, the *haredim* and the assimilationists both agreed that in order to live in one world, it was necessary to give up the tradition in its entirety. The *haredi* position, however, asserted that given that inescapable choice, they prefer to retain the status quo of two worlds. Essentially accepting the assimilationist argument that integration of the two worlds was impossible without destroying Judaism, and that participation in the modern world demands total sacrifice of any values and practices which could distinguish or separate Jews, the *haredim* opted to stay in their two worlds. Let the modern world be the outside culture that would be portrayed in the inner world as the inferior, hostile, other one. Rabbi Akiva Eiger (1761–1837) wrote a letter to Napoleon asking him not to bring emancipation to the Jews of Germany. In Eiger's judgment, notwithstanding the obvious benefits of citizenship, civil rights and economic opportunity, the cost of such an advance was too high. Emancipation would undermine Judaism. Swearing loyalty to modernity would be null and void because

such an oath spelled giving up the Jewish covenantal mission. This was analogous to the Talmudic ruling that an oath to annul the Torah was not valid because the individual and the Jewish people were already sworn (ever since Sinai) to uphold the Torah. To avoid the temptation and the clash of values, Eiger pleaded with Napoleon not to emancipate the Jews.

### **Modernity's Magnetic Attraction**

For almost three hundred years, modernity was so powerful, so dominant, so magnetic to Jews that few could resist. Today - as post modernity emerges - it may be difficult to understand fully the power of that dominance, before it was broken. It was a well-known fact that the more successful, the more integrated into America a person was, the more likely he/she was to move religiously to the left. There was a joke in Chicago: when a person makes \$25,000 a year he is Orthodox, at \$50,000 a year she becomes Conservative, at \$100,000 the family joins the Reform temple, at a quarter of a million dollars, Jews become Unitarian, and at half a million income, they join Bahai. The sociology was accurate. The more integrated, the more accepted, the more successful a Jew was, the more he/she tended to adopt the expectations of this particular host culture. In practice, this meant being willing to drop or revise that which was distinctively Jewish.

I grew up in the immigrant Orthodox community, which, feeling very defensive, tended to say that people sold out to modern life for money. It is a misunderstanding to judge this process as simply a sell-out. The deeper truth was that as people were more fully exposed, they also were drawn by the best values of the new culture. Take Reform Judaism in America. America is the classic country of modernity. This nation was born in modern civilization and had little or no medieval social/cultural residues to dilute the impact of modernity. The *echt* (=genuine) Reform document of the nineteenth century is the Pittsburgh Platform (1886), which articulated the Jewish religion in its most beautiful, idealistically modern version. "What does God expect of you?"<sup>5</sup> is transformed into, "What does modernity expect from you?" [Not stated literally, of course.] The Pittsburgh Platform of American Reform is one of the classics of modern Jewish literature and religion; its climax is perhaps found in the fifth of its eight principles of

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<sup>5</sup> Deuteronomy 10:12.

Judaism. “We recognize in the modern era of universal culture” [- not *two* worlds -] “of heart and intellect, the approach of the realization of Israel’s great Messianic hope for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice and peace among all men.”<sup>6</sup> “We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state.” In the light of modern culture, the Mosaic legislation was a system of training the Jewish people for its mission. The rituals - and Zion itself - were useful during Israel’s period of separate (= inner world) national life. In the modern world, however, in which all national identity needs to be replaced by a universal human citizenship, Jews must only accept the moral laws of the Torah, those that qualify by the (highest) standards of modernity. This promise of true perfection set the dominant tone of the first two centuries of modernity.

I myself am a living example of the thesis that just about every Jew wanted to qualify. My *abba*, *zikhrono livrakha*, (father, may his memory be a blessing) was ordained by Rav Ḥayyim of Brisk; he was an ultimate *mitnaged*.<sup>7</sup> Talmud was his life. He taught it every day that he lived in America as Rav of a *Hevra Shas*.<sup>8</sup> My mother, *aleha hashalom* (may she rest in peace), prayed devoutly and talked to God, literally, all the time. My parents were not assimilated or assimilating Jews. At my *brit* they named me after my great-grandfather Yitzchak. That is my name, Yitzchak. If you think about it, my great-grandfather was named after his grandfather; the name goes all the way back to our forefather Yitzchak in the Torah. Yet when my parents came to the moment of truth, when they were about to give me my legal name, they asked themselves: “Are we going to stigmatize our little boy with a name like Yitzchak which will put him hopelessly outside the mainstream

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<sup>6</sup> This last phrase, “the approach of the realization of Israel’s great Messianic hope,” is reminiscent of the Chief Rabbinate’s prayer for the State of Israel, in which the State is identified as “the beginning of the flowering of our redemption.” In both cases, the writer is full of hope but realizes the dream is not yet fully actualized.

<sup>7</sup> *Mitnaged*, literally “opposer,” was the term used to describe those who professed a rationalist opposition to the mystical, populist *Hasidic* movement. The classic *mitnaged* was steeped in Talmudic learning.

<sup>8</sup> Group devoted to lifelong Talmud study.

of modern society? God forbid!” So, they called me Irving. Yes, Irving. Of course, at home they never called me ‘Irv;’ they called me ‘Yitzchak.’ But they named me Irving because their dream was that I fully integrate and achieve in modern culture, i.e., American society. They wanted a WASP, White Anglo-Saxon Protestant, name for me, and they found it. Irving.<sup>9</sup>

We know that names are tremendously powerful symbols of one’s basic values. The Midrash asks: by what merit were the Jews redeemed from Egypt? Its answer is that among other things, the Israelites did not change their names. The need to belong was not an idea limited to assimilated Jews; it was the dominant drive of the whole community. So great was the reward for joining in the one world of modernity that Jews of every stripe struggled to make themselves worthy of participating. Everyone was ready to do whatever was necessary to bring Judaism up to the level of successfully living in this new civilization; they only differed in what the answer is to the question of, “what will it take?”

### **The Counter-Reaction to Modernity**

In the past few decades, as the iron grip of modernity has weakened and the multifold critique of modern civilization has opened the door to an emergent post-modernity, people began to realize that if one accepts the dream of one world unqualifiedly, Judaism ends up losing. In order to pass muster in this world, the faith needed to constantly remake itself in the image of the other. Increasingly the path of change seemed to be a one-way street. As Jews became more modernized, as Jews became more integrated, some of them began to say that the price was too high. That realization poses the opportunity which we face today. The reassertion of Jewish integrity and the right to a coherent Judaic worldview leads to the argument that there are two legitimate worlds, and that the Jewish world has independent values of its own. Jewish tradition and claims deserve to be placed side by side with those of the other world. The educational challenge is no longer how one [Jewish] world can reshape itself to be integrated into the other; rather the question is how do the two worlds – standing side by side – correlate, integrate or confront each other? The time has come for

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<sup>9</sup> So many Jews adopted the name Irving that the WASPs dropped it; it became a Jewish name.

a two-way conversation of equals, not a one-way conversation between a dominant and a minor culture.

In the United States of America, two early pioneers of this new two way conversation were Mordecai Kaplan (1881-1983, founder of Reconstructionist Judaism), and albeit with a very different approach, the Rav (Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, 1903-1993, the leading figure of modern Orthodox Judaism). Already in the 1930s there was a serious educational counter-reaction which proclaimed that the pedagogical aim should not be a one-sided adaptation. With a recovering sense of pride and value, there came the affirmation that Judaism has its own values, insights and dignity, which modernity needs to incorporate in order to cure its own ills. Therefore, the two systems should interact with greater mutuality.

Kaplan sensed that as Judaism was being re-oriented in order to be accepted it was being bowdlerized, censored and reshaped in a way that would destroy it. In order to modernize, Judaism was being articulated solely as a religion (see the fifth principle of the Pittsburgh Platform above). Kaplan grasped that this definition was highly selective and one-sided; in the long run, this was an unhealthy reformulation. Judaism is more than a religion, he argued; it is a civilization. A civilization includes religion, but also folkways, a set of social institutions, and much more inclusive nationalism. A Zionist policy could be justified - Kaplan was a Zionist - but the ultimate outcome, a Jewish homeland, must be validated as a progressive culture and democratic state.

Kaplan's educational point is fundamental. Most people are not drawn to religion because it is relevant or rational. For most people, their own identity is shaped by the world they live in; they give what Kaplan calls "intuitional response." They absorb the circumstances of their lives, their social surroundings, its assumptions and understandings, and put it all together. The sum of their habits and living practices is the foundation of their identities. Judaism should be understood and taught fully as the sum of all these factors so that it could nurture a viable Jewish identity, both individual and group.

Ask modern Orthodox Jews today why they observe *mitzvot*; their response would be that Judaism is a religion. We observe the religion because God is eternal, and God's authority is not to be undermined in the modern world.



Kaplan argued that people fundamentally do not observe because there is a religion which God has commanded. Rather, says Kaplan, religious definition ultimately is the product of the complete environment in which identity is nurtured. Living as part of a social reality, with institutional and educational experiences, makes one choose to live a particular lifestyle. Kaplan argued that the key to renewal was to restore the complete world which was Judaism - as a civilization whose institutions had to be structured right, whose practices and thoughts had to be articulated.

For Kaplan, to successfully correlate the two worlds of Judaism and modernity, it was important to avoid unnecessary conflict. One must make sure that the teachings of one world do not sound unbelievable in the other world. For example, Kaplan felt that supernaturalism was no longer credible. He believed that it was possible to transmit Judaism as a religion, including all its practices - *kashrut*, Shabbat, etc. - but that the articulation must omit any supernatural terms, such as a God who sits in Heaven commanding people or punishing them for disobedience. That naturalistic version would be credible as part of the total environment which is the modern world. With institutional redesign, the two worlds could coexist and interact. The Jewish world could protect and confirm itself; the key being that the Jewish world not destroy its credibility in the other world. Still, although Kaplan insisted that the two worlds coexist side by side as dignified cultures, he also understood that the American modern world was, nonetheless, the dominant one for most Jews. Avoidance of conflict was necessary, because the Jewish world would always lose in a confrontation.<sup>10</sup>

The Rav faced the same challenge despite his insistence that Judaism was the Jews' primary culture and world. In his masterwork, *Halakhic Man*, Soloveitchik insisted that Jewish values met the highest standards of modern culture; therefore, he believed that they were capable of maintaining themselves in the presence of the other. Indeed, Judaism could instruct and upgrade the modern world. Here the Rav opened the door to a one world solution in which an integrated but distinctive Yiddishkeit could hold its own. But to function in that way, Judaism would have to be

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<sup>10</sup> In this sense Kaplan concedes that Judaism would be subordinate to the dominant modern civilization.



taught and transmitted at a level equal to the education received in modern culture. Thus, Soloveitchik developed the concept of a school where Torah was primary but instruction in both cultures was at equally high levels. This was to be the Maimonides Day School in Boston. He faced fundamental opposition from those people who were committed to maximum integration in American life. They were afraid that were they to separate, i.e., create a day school, they would basically condemn themselves to second-class status as American citizens. They wanted their children to be all-American. (To this day, the dominant obstacle to day school education in America is probably still the fear that separation will pull students out of the 'other' world as the primary world.) Although he believed that the Torah was the standard and that the modern world must be shaped to the measure of Torah, so powerful was the need for full integration that the Rav did not directly confront the lay demand for Americanization. Rather, he assured them that their children would be fully equipped to function in the modern world. They would get into Harvard!

Nor should this be seen purely as a tactical yielding to parents' demands. The Rav's own children went to Harvard. When his son, Haym, asked him whether he should attend Yeshiva University or Harvard, his father told him to go to Harvard. And he went to Harvard. During this heyday of modernity, I remember sitting at a Yeshiva University *Hag haSemikha* (ordination ceremony) in which the Rav was being presented. At the end of a very moving introduction and a powerful statement highlighting how great the Rav was, the speaker said, "I want to present to you Dr. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Professor of Talmud at Yeshiva University." Not Rabbi, but Doctor. In the heart of modern Orthodoxy the dominance of modernity was palpable. The dominance of the modern could only be countered by presenting an equally compelling Jewish world. But Modern Orthodoxy at Yeshiva University was not fully capable of offering such a world; possibly, it had internalized the supremacy of the modern. Thus, even while talking about Torah U'Madda<sup>11</sup>, Yeshiva leadership was split. Some spoke in the spirit of the Rav of a synthesis of the two worlds. Others continued to emphasize living in two worlds. Still, it was clear even in the heart of Yeshiva which world had the most attraction. To engage in both worlds, one needed the assurance that the other world would not completely overshadow the

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<sup>11</sup> YU's motto, referring to the fusion of Torah and science or secular learning.

Jewish one. From the beginning, there were those educators and *Rashei Yeshiva* (traditional Talmud teachers) who argued that the college/the secular studies, etc. should be kept at a second rate level in order not to overshadow *limudei kodesh* (the religious tradition).

### Where Do We Stand Today?

Looking back, it may be difficult for some to appreciate the struggles of the past, yet humility demands it. The Talmud (Sanhedrin 102b) tells the story of Rav Ashi who appeared to take lightly King Menasheh of the Kingdom of Judah - who, after Hizkiyahu's incredible reformation purging idolatry, restored *avodah zarah* (foreign worship). Rav Ashi in effect ridiculed and criticized Menasheh for engaging in idolatry. That night Menasheh appeared to him in a dream revealing that he was a great scholar of Torah. Astonished, Rav Ashi asked: Why then did you engage in idolatry? Menasheh replied that it is easy to dismiss idolatry (and all its practitioners) if one is living in a later generation (when idolatry had lost its credibility and was "dead" culturally). Menasheh continued that had Rav Ashi lived in Menasheh's time, Rav Ashi would have hitched up his robe and run ahead of Menasheh (to be the first one to worship). Similarly, it is hard to recapture now the attraction of modernity in America, but that feeling was so overwhelmingly dominant that every other culture - including Judaism to its own practitioners - often came in second.

To understand this phenomenon of Judaism's secondary status, we must appreciate the ongoing enormous advantages of the world of modern, secular culture. We must not forget the incredible rewards it still offers to the vast majority of Jews. While one may make fun of the excesses of Jewish lusting for the fleshpots of modern culture, the appeal is still enormously powerful. The rewards of affluence are many: an easier and longer life, a higher average level of welfare, of health, of comfort, and freedom from many ills from which humanity has suffered through most of its history. These achievements are unprecedented. Jews are amongst the greatest beneficiaries of this rise in standards of living. Jews are concentrated in the wealthiest, most successful parts of the developed world. Within that world Jews are overwhelmingly located in the middle and upper middle classes. American Jews, or, for that matter, Israeli Jews and Anglo-Saxon Jews in Australia or England, are living in the top one-half percentile of well-off human beings

in history. These material benefits kick in even before the improvements in Jewish standing and stature.

Similarly, take the issue of women. The status of women, the value of their lives, their dignity and rights, is affirmed in modern culture as never before in human history. Therefore, there should be no mystery as to why this world is attractive to the average woman, and, *a fortiori*, to the average Jewish woman. All these material benefits are backed by an ideology that promises freedom and dignity and choice and a thousand other qualities of life that people find extremely magnetic and powerful. One should never underestimate that factor in dealing with the question of realigning the two worlds side by side.

### **The Impact of the Holocaust**

Still, the cultural situation is more open today to a more equal realignment. As a result, the atmosphere to sustain compatibility and coexistence of the two worlds is here. We have lived through a major turning point, an historic transformation that has changed the terms of integration and aligned them somewhat more in our tradition's favor. I refer to the impact of the Holocaust, and the breakdown - or at least the crisis and the beginning of the breakdown - of modern culture. It is likely that this event will turn out to be a fundamental turning point in human history, not just in Jewish history. The Holocaust represents a crisis of credibility for the dominant culture in which we live. Jews were swept up in modern culture especially thanks to its Messianic vision - the promise of the realization of ancient dreams of the final perfection of humanity. Modernity promised to overcome poverty, war, and sickness; science brought with it the ability to cure diseases. These were unbelievably powerful promises. This utopianism was the dynamic behind the surge of democracy, liberalism and capitalism. Then, in the twentieth century, the world was rocked by a stunning outburst of murder, destructiveness, cruelty and degradation.

For many Jews - and increasingly throughout the world - the shock of the Shoah has brought about the realization that the Messianic promises of modernity were either false or, at the least, premature. Initially, people thought that if a little upgrade of industrial production could make the world more affluent, then a vaster expansion would make the world perfect, i.e., overcome poverty. If a primary transformation of science and medicine

could cure some diseases, then an all out expansion would lead to a cure of all diseases. However, when all these incredible accomplishments came together - power and technology and science and communications and more - the shocking outcome was not a perfect world. Totalitarianism on an unprecedented scale unleashed destructiveness and degradation and killing that made a mockery of all those promises. An image which I frequently invoke captures this paradox. If growth is good, then growing a lot is even better. However, it turns out that unchecked growth is cancer. Cancer kills.

The shock to the credibility of modern civilization was so enormous that the initial reactions tended to denial. People argued that the Holocaust was not a product of modernity, but represented some atavism. Some cited Heinrich Heine's warning that the old Teutonic gods of Germany could come back to life - as if the Shoah is a reversion to something from the past. But the Holocaust was not a reversion. The Holocaust was made possible by technology, one of the glories of modernity which was harnessed to industrialized killing. Without technology, the Nazis could have never killed at that mass level - year after year, day after day. It took the resources of mass transportation to successfully ship millions of victims to the death camps. A similar role was played by bureaucracy. Bureaucracy, with its efficient processes that deliver services and ensure that all get the same treatment, is one of the key enabling systems of modern production. Bureaucracy makes Social Security possible. Applied to the task of genocide bureaucracy enables mass death, just as effectively as it facilitates mass social welfare. The sheer amount of bureaucratic functioning needed to carry out the Holocaust is staggering. As Raul Hilberg, Christopher Browning and other scholars have pointed out - unlike assaults fueled by hatred and sadism which burn out quickly - bureaucratic proceduralism could carry on the genocide, year after year, without exhausting the enablers or stopping the process.

Take another of the foundational axioms of modern culture - universalism as principle and practice. The fact that there are no exceptions is the glory of modern culture. Everybody has equal rights; everybody has (or should have) equal access. Luxury goods makers do not discriminate against customers on the basis of skin color or religion; money is a universal solvent of obstacles. One does not need a special privilege or birth status to get the cheapest prices at Wal-Mart. In universal legislation, there are in principle

no exceptions. But that same policy of ‘no exceptions’ makes possible a no-exceptions destruction.

The unquestioned acceptance of the moral supremacy of modern culture disarmed the Jews. Read Alexander Donat’s *Holocaust Kingdom*, his biography of life in the Warsaw Ghetto, or Elie Wiesel’s account in *Night*. When he arrived at Auschwitz with his father, Wiesel tells that one of the prisoners, presumably having mercy on them in a cruel sort of way, said to him, “You see up ahead? They are going to gas you and burn you.”<sup>12</sup> Wiesel was so shocked that he turned to his father and said that this could not be. This was the twentieth century, not the Middle Ages. In his mind: in the Middle Ages they burned Jews, not in the twentieth century. A hundred yards away from where his father and he stood, the Nazis were burning children alive. Wiesel describes that scene as a truck drove up and dumped live Jewish babies into the burning pits. Yet as close as he is to that scene, Wiesel cannot believe it – because this is the twentieth century. The shock of the Shoah undermines the credibility of modern culture’s promises and reveals that all these glittering redemptive visions disarmed the victims even as modern technology armed the victimizers. This loss of credibility ended the stage of idolatry, i.e., the absolutization of modern culture.<sup>13</sup>

## Post-modernity

The recoil from modernity is not just happening in the Jewish world. We witness this phenomenon on a worldwide basis in the growth of post-modernity. The most striking characteristic of post-modernity is its claim that there should be no one dominant voice. Even if one wants to be part of the modern world, it is not healthy to have a singular, rational, universal version of modernity that dominates all the others. The presence of one dominant culture is itself a source of evil. The feminist version of this critique is that since modern culture is universal and rational, then such values, by definition, are male-centered. Feminists and post-colonialists

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<sup>12</sup> That was an act of love; the prisoners were not allowed to tip-off the incoming people; they could be put to death themselves if they spoke to the deportees. The Nazis did not want a rebellion on their hands.

<sup>13</sup> This underlying shift has sustained the tremendous upsurge of *haredi* Judaism, which essentially says that modernity was a lie, was always a lie, and should never have been embraced.

and other culture critics argue that multiple voices are necessary to allow the values of the minorities and of the disadvantaged to be heard. There are a multitude of versions of this critique - a Marxist version, a social-cultural version, a gay liberated version - the particular iteration does not matter. The point they all have in common is an insistence that there cannot be a single controlling voice - or world - because that is inherently threatening. Each party in its way is challenging the universal dominance of modern culture. The answer to the hegemony inherent in modernity is multiculturalism. This principle breaks up the authority that demotes every other authority to secondary status.

Multiculturalism gives us a much more powerful, philosophical and educational alternative in dealing with the challenge of two worlds. Multiculturalism affirms that the existence of an alternate world provides health and moral balance to both worlds. Seeking multiple values, post-modernity comes to the realization that secularism dominant now is just as dangerous as religion dominant once was. Most Jews have not quite caught up to the dangers of a domineering secularism. Today, in America, most Jews have a negative gut reaction to the presence and activities of evangelical Christians. Even when the Evangelicals support Israel, they evoke nervous reactions in many Jews - their motives must be wrong (i.e., they seek to bring about Jesus Second Coming), their missionary zeal must endanger us. The new truth that Jews need and should welcome a wider distribution of power and influence in American society has not fully sunk in yet. It was not good for Jews when Christianity was all dominant, as in medieval culture; it was also not good for Jews when secularism was all dominant, as in twentieth century Russian Communist culture.

The demand for balance of power, for multiple sources of authority, gives a more powerful thrust to the ideal of living in two worlds. In this model, the world of Judaism is not reduced to accommodate to the other world, rather, it is recognized as an independent world with values of its own. The new cultural condition has opened up some promising educational opportunities but it calls for sophisticated educational approaches. Judaism must become even more independent, more intelligently critical of the surrounding culture, so that it can shape the other world and not just accommodate to it. There now exists a much greater openness - intellectual, spiritual and philosophical - to create these multiple worlds. Before post-modernity, the two leading

options were either that true Judaism is nothing but the best values of the modern - therefore, modernizing Judaism is the answer - or that Judaism was against modernity. Post-modernity enables the articulation of a critical approach in which the Jewish values offer a basis for independent judgment. Judaism becomes a source of criteria that may modify the alternate position, and vice-versa. The situation is much more open. There are dangers, but the open-endedness is also empowering to educators.

### **Judaism in a Post-modern World - the Risks**

Despite the new situation in which the two worlds are now more equal, one should not make light of the risks that remain in taking a post-modern approach. The fact is that modernity remains the dominant force for the majority of the world, especially in the part that is developing and preoccupied with 'making it' rather than controlling the new culture. Therefore, there is the risk of what de Tocqueville, in his classic study of the United States in the 1840s, *Democracy in America*, called the tyranny of the majority. People are intimidated, although not necessarily consciously, by the fact that a larger number holds the other position. In democracy, majorities rule not just because they have more votes, but because they carry a certain moral force. The minority tends to feel that if all those other people think differently, then the minority position must be wrong. Then, precisely because there is a new sense of intercourse between two equal cultures, the individual is more easily awed by the fact that larger numbers are on the other side.

There is another danger. Even though the emerging position is that there are two worlds of equal value and import, often the Jewish world is financially or socially or culturally treated as the secondary world. In the United States, people are excited when an item is reported in *The New York Times*; that is a sign of importance. If, however, the matter gets reported in one of the Jewish papers, it is not quite as important. We still live with that second-class self-image. I remember my shock when I discovered in the 1960s that at Yeshiva University - the heartland of Orthodoxy and Torah U'Madda - institutional salaries were inversely related to the centrality and the primacy of Torah. YU's Albert Einstein College of Medicine, which was essentially all secular, paid the highest salaries. Going down the list, Yeshiva College's salary scale paid next to the lowest, because the college addressed the undergraduates, the most Orthodox group. The lowest paid teachers were in Rabbi Isaac



Elchanan Theological Seminary; they were the *Rashei Yeshiva* (traditional Talmud teachers). If Yeshiva University established Torah U'Madda as its motto and built its identity on the integration of the two worlds, and in fact made the Torah the centerpiece of that enterprise, then the *Rashei Yeshiva* should have been the highest paid faculty, not the lowest. The fact that they received the poorest compensation exemplifies one of the inherent dangers of integration, i.e., second-class status for the Jewish world.

There is also what I call the “bifurcation” danger. Since we live in two worlds, we risk allowing ourselves, both as individuals and as educators, to say things in one world that are not credible in the other. The English educator, Ronald Goldman (not Jewish), did a series of studies of the two worlds as it affects English Christian religious education. In many ways, his studies describe a phenomenon equally applicable to Israeli, Australian or American Jewish education. There is an apocryphal story of a student whose biology teacher happened to be a volunteer, teaching in the church where he was a member. One Sunday morning in Sunday school, the teacher taught the student the book of Jonah. About a month later, in the biology class, while talking about whales, the teacher said in passing that no human being could survive being swallowed by a whale. After class, the student asked the teacher why he taught the story of Jonah in Sunday school so well that the student really believed it, but debunked it in the biology class. The teacher responded that in a church, a whale can swallow a human and then spit him out alive, but not in university. Therein lies the danger of the bifurcated worlds in Goldman’s research; the criteria of fact and truth were so different in the world of religious education and of the university as to give rise to a dangerous side effect. The student could isolate religious truth as being credible – but only in the hothouse of church and religious school. Since most of life took place away from that oasis, it was easy to bracket religious truth and leave it behind in its own world.

As Jewish educators, we are sometimes shocked when students who have gone through twelve years of high level Jewish education – eight years of elementary day school and four years of high school – can totally break with the whole system within a week after showing up in college. One asks: how that can be possible? After twelve years, in good schools, with good educators? But the student’s response is a reflection of bifurcation. The student need not deny the twelve years spent in that primary world. The student merely interprets



that the message was rooted and valid only in the cultural ecology of that place. In university, those facts and interpretations are not credible. For example, in many yeshivas, evolution is dismissed. Sometimes the dismissal is backed by the fact that the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who insisted on a literal reading of the Creation account in Genesis evolution, is a graduate of the Sorbonne. But at the university, the credibility of evolution is universal and overwhelming. Shocked by the cognitive dissonance, the student “switches” the cultural reference point, leaving the Torah values and authority claims behind in the yeshiva world.

The danger of the bifurcated world is especially acute when the teacher gets away with passing on a message that is not credible outside the walls of the *Bet Midrash*. The students will leave, not denying what they have learned but placing it in a box so that it does not impact on the rest of their lives. Bifurcation threatens to rob the two worlds of their combined strength; the educator loses the advantages of their coherence, the fact that together the two cultures can create a total environment in which the two value systems can create a symbiosis in developing a *mentsch*. The Torah and religious identity are much stronger when the Jewish civilization can present itself as an interpretation and guide to all aspects of living in the world and not just as a separate self-contained world. This makes it clear that Judaism is not just a religion but is a total culture, a set of values and a nationality. The presence of two integrated worlds is tremendously positive in presenting Jewry as a contemporary living community. Bifurcation threatens to undo all these advantages.

### **Judaism in Post-modernity - the Opportunity**

If we widen our response to the two-world challenge and opportunity, we can envision the day school as the opportunity to create one integrated overall framework for the two worlds. Judaism and Jewry seek to perfect the world. Until that ideal is achieved, the Torah method is to create islands, models of perfection, mini-worlds which serve as exemplars from which we can draw guidance and inspiration to transform the broader world. The classic Jewish idea is to create a microcosm in which the Torah values which should permeate all of society are modeled; within this microcosm, Jews exemplify the perfection that some day will be achieved in the broader world. The day school gives educators the opportunity to create a world which can embody the holistic holy community which is our dream for the

world. By creating such a world, the principal truly can walk in God ways; even as God creates perfect worlds, so can the Jewish educator be a creator of perfect worlds-to-be.

The classic model of the perfected world was the *Bet Hamikdash*. In this holy place life was totally triumphant, as it will be some day in the rest of the world. This was the place where God's presence was almost visible, as it will be some day in the Messianic age. In the *Bet Hamikdash* there was never war or suffering; there was no oppression. The Temple was a place where only those "whose hands were clean of sin and whose hearts were pure" could come.<sup>14</sup> Even as Temple visitors were on their best behavior morally, so all those who visited this model world were to become inspired to go out and transform the rest of the world to be like it.<sup>15</sup>

What the Temple did for space, Shabbat day does for time. The world will some day be perfect seven days a week. Until then we create a one-day, "artificial", mini-world. For this one day, everything is prepared in advance. Since everything is already achieved, Shabbat becomes a day of being, of self-fulfillment and self-expression, a day of relationships and of family. On Shabbat there is neither oppression nor slavery – the slave goes free on this day, as does the animal. Having created a mini-world of perfection for one day we go back into the rest of the week and try to transform daily life and bring it closer to the ideal.

The day school has the chance to become that mini-world which will represent the balance and blend of the two-worlds. The most effective element in communicating values is the creation of a total environment, an environment of immersion. The day school can create a total Jewish environment in which everything can be shaped Jewishly. This means that the secular studies can also be marked by Jewish history and Jewish images. Within these precincts, there can be a total immersion in the Hebrew language and/or Jewish culture. The school can create a sphere in which Israel lives.

In the school total environment, the educator can create a community; the Rav calls it a covenantal community. A covenantal community is marked

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<sup>14</sup> Psalms 24:3-4.

<sup>15</sup> Of course, the reality fell short. Since it was not serving as a model, the prophets declared that it deserved to be destroyed.

by commitments of love to each other. Here discipline grows as a result of the relationship and is not merely imposed from above. The principal can take the lead in creating a community in which every student is treated like a full member of a covenantal community. The driving force is human dignity and the presence of God. These principles will be expressed in the way the adults listen to a child, in the way students are respected, in the way each person is helped to develop his/her *tselem elokim*, image of God. If the community created in the day school is a model of Judaism at its best, it can become a very powerful example and inspiration to the students. Even when they leave and have to wrestle between the two worlds in order to integrate them, the students will have had the experience of a unified world in which Judaism provided a total environment. They will have internalized a sense of community in which the Jewish role models were on par with their secular colleagues and in which as much energy was invested in the Jewish curriculum as in the secular studies. It is critical that the school standards of credibility and proof are able to stand up outside of this environment and be credibly maintained when the student enters university or the larger society. To achieve this level of development, the school must start with the student.<sup>16</sup>

The educator imitates God in three ways, according to Soloveitchik. First, as indicated above, the principal is a creator of a world. The school should be a universe that shows Jewish values at their best, that shows how the two worlds relate in a positive way. Second, like God, the educational leader must exercise *tsimtsum* (= self-limitation). What makes covenant possible is that God puts a limit on God. God does not do it all but invites humans to take a central role as partner in perfecting the world. This is what *brit* (= covenant) celebrates. God self-limits and invites humans to be co-creators of the universe, and as true partners humans have rights. This includes the dignity of even arguing with God.<sup>17</sup> According to the Rav, both parties entering a covenantal relationship possess inalienable rights which may only be surrendered by mutual consent. The human (and God) in covenant

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<sup>16</sup> Again, I would refer educators to an idea of the Rav, that we are called to 'create images' of God and in the process to walk in God's ways, e.g., imitate God in creating and nurturing dignified humans capable and desirous of being partners with God in perfecting the world.

<sup>17</sup> For example, see Genesis 18 and Exodus 32-34.

experiences “freedom, reciprocity, and equality.”<sup>18</sup> If the principal makes the day school into such a covenantal community – in imitation of God – then the student will experience a dignity that anticipates the Messianic world promised by Judaism and modernity. Note that human rights and dignity are not just bestowed by the authority of the commanding principal or the commanding God; they are intrinsic and inherent in the student’s humanity, the *tselem elokim*. *Tsimtsum* in a school setting is the act of self-limitation in which the administration makes room for the dignity, not only of the colleagues on the staff, but of the students and their representatives.<sup>19</sup>

Last, but not least, in covenant, says the Rav, there are mutual responsibilities and reciprocal rights. In other words, the covenantal relationship is not merely transactional so that each party gives and gets; rather the relationship is transformational. Each side recognizes that it is not their particular needs which stand at the center, but the needs of the well-being of the covenantal community. All partners are participatory, responsible, and can make a contribution. Contrary to the popular understanding, covenant limits power – even God’s – inasmuch as the authority cannot merely issue orders and expect that they will be followed. In actual practice, the ability to share the burden actually lightens it. Two are better than one, says Kohelet. Two sides together are better at making one world.

The mini-world, which the principal has the unique opportunity to create, is a model, an ideal circumstance of living the process of negotiating the two worlds. Whether the underlying philosophy is one of integration, separatism or confrontation is less important. Students who have had this experience will be able to bring it with them even when they go into a different world. They will be equipped with a vision of how to change the larger world so that it comes to approximate their ideal. They will grasp that Judaism has an important and dignified role to play in the vision and process of perfecting the larger world. Ennobled and enabled by their educational experience, students can bring this vision of the two worlds together to help forge an ideal society for the Jewish people and for humanity. ■

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<sup>18</sup> “The Lonely Man of Faith,” in *Tradition* 7:2, p. 29.

<sup>19</sup> In my home community of Riverdale, the SAR Academy is all about the development of the child. The student is given a maximum degree of choice, of dignity, of participation, of being listened to, of being respected as a unique individual. To accomplish that requires *tsimtsum* on the part of the educator.

## Addenda

### *On balancing the need to expose our children to the larger world while protecting them from its negative influences...*

Each school and every individual can have a different response to this question. It is possible that now, even more than at the beginning of the modern period, the outside exposures are so radical that they justify separating from that world in order to protect our own values. This was the *haredi* argument at the beginning of the modern era; the argument may be more valid today than ever before.

That having been said, this is the counsel of weakness. I do not live a *haredi* lifestyle nor have I practiced it in my own educational philosophy. I am convinced that the shift from the inside world seen as a primary and positive and an outside world which was secondary and inferior, is irreversible. The outside world is so powerful, the media and communication are so universal and penetrating, that it is impossible to separate and call the general culture the outside. If you keep television sets out of your house it may be a little easier to segregate, but not that much easier. There are TVs playing in storefronts, or your children's friends will have them. In 2003 I saw a story in the papers that there were complaints in Bnei Brak that people were buying VCRs. People justified these purchases on the grounds that they wanted to play the videos of their wedding. However, the Rabbis complained - once families had a VCR in the house it was just a small step to bring in other less legitimate tapes. The same holds true for the Internet. In 2005, leading Rabbis of the *haredi* community, prohibited connecting to the Internet - because on the Internet everything is available. It is increasingly impossible to imagine that one can segregate, or permanently keep the child sheltered from alternatives to the limited *haredi* world in which they are raised. Ultimately, there is no choice but to learn how to deal with the exposure to the alternate world.

A century from now, it will be clear (I believe) that the only viable approach to the risks of exposure to outside values is the inoculation method. As a child you are inoculated, i.e., exposed to particular bacteria - in a limited, controlled way - to help build immunity. By the time the child grows up he/she can withstand full exposure to the many bacteria and pathogens because the immune system has been stimulated by past exposure (= inoculation method). The danger to children who are raised in protective environments

is that the first time they run into these diseases they are highly vulnerable as they have no immunity and no resistance. The same is true in culture, values and religion. We must make difficult choices of how soon, to what extent and in what forms we mix and expose our children, but in the long run there is no escape from this method.

A classic example lies in male-female relationships and sexual ethics. In my lifetime I have witnessed the change in societal values, including the ideology of sexual freedom, sexual license, breakdown of limits, proliferation of pornography, etc. Understandably, the reaction - even in the modern Orthodox community in which I live - has been the emergence of a variety of segregationist solutions. The *yeshivot* seek to keep men and women apart as long as they can. In the general society children are engaging in sexual activity before they are twelve years old, so the desire to keep them apart as long as possible is understandable. However, I do not believe that separation works. In the end, students who are educated in a gender-segregated environment often internalize sexual ethics as unavailability - which is a highly vulnerable system when they enter the world of university or business. The ethic which can stand up in the general world is one built on seeing the other as a human being created *betselem elokim*, as the image of God. The other in the image of God has an equal dignity not to be exploited sexually. She/he has a right to be known and not to be casually taken for granted. She/he is entitled to full respect, which implies that sexuality reflects and expresses a relationship of intimacy. There is a real danger that a segregationist sexual ethic can result in viewing the other as a sex object or as a strange Other - rather than as a *tselem elokim*. Such a sexual ethic may operate under circumstances of separation but often breaks down when the genders interact freely.

Again, the immediate logic of segregation is compelling, but the tactic is not viable for the long-term. Even assuming that individuals can be kept separate until they go off to college or even to post-college, what will happen to them then? Does anyone believe that we can segregate the genders indefinitely? Rather, we need to and can prepare students now. We can do that by carefully controlling the mix and exposure rather than by separating the sexes. Then, possessing an internalized value system of *tselem elokim*, our students can filter out the promiscuity and exploitation and constructively absorb the egalitarian and mutual ethic which is modernity at its best.

***On whether there is inherent goodness and value in the secular world...***

I believe that contemporary civilization is one of the great cultures of all time; that is why it is so appealing. The greatness of the culture embodies some of the finest Jewish values as well. Human dignity is a Jewish value. I mentioned earlier the Rav's assertion that *tselem elokim*, the image of God, human dignity, underlies all the laws between human beings, and my belief that it underlies all laws, even ritual laws. In light of this, women's equality constitutes a major breakthrough. Judaism has to learn, and should learn, from the general society on this matter. We can argue legitimately on specifics. In the end, will women be equal and identical or will there be different roles for men and women? (This second view is my position.) But the essential value of equality is positive and truly Jewish. Living among monogamous Christians enabled Rabbeinu Gershom (960-1028) to uphold the Biblical ideal of monogamy while the Sephardic Jews living among Islamic polygamists did not act accordingly. Similarly, the modern upgrading of women's status (or of other outsider groups) paves the way for an upgrading of Judaism's internal culture in these areas.

Of course, I do not mean to imply that there is nothing bad in the secular world. Rather, the modern world offers a very broad spectrum of freedom, often without or with very few limits. That excess is unhealthy. The growth in human health, human dignity, human choice – are all, in my judgment, positive developments. However, such developments create a greater need for limits to keep them healthy. This is what *brit* is all about. *Brit* requires that God self-limits. Even when God instructs humans, the Lord gives the freedom to say 'no'. Similarly, God calls humans and gives them the freedom to modify, improve, co-create. (That is the language that the Rav uses: to co-create Torah.) We need to bring covenant to regulate and maintain the best qualities in the modern world even as we learn from that world. Healthy freedom involves choices and limits, including self-limits. Covenantal limits may grow out of a relationship with God or with my fellow human beings. In marriage we exercise fidelity. Even though we are sometimes offered alternative pleasures and these opportunities may be very tempting, still the relationship and commitment create limits on freedom. The secular world needs our help to develop healthy limits. To the growth of a divorce culture and spreading infidelity, Jews should offer a model of covenantal marriage.



*On multiculturalism and rise of anti-Semitism in multicultural countries...*

..Anti-Semitism and multiculturalism would appear to be incompatible. I personally believe that anti-Semitism grows in a medium that communicates that the Other has no right to be fundamentally different. In other words, the Jew is rejected because the Jews have not joined the rest of society. Modern anti-Semites ask: Why, in a world of universal humanity, do Jews insist on being a distinctive family? They must be conspiring to take advantage and hurt the others.

One reason America has the lowest incidence of anti-Semitism in the history of Diaspora, is that America truly became a pluralist, multicultural country. When the United States started as a Protestant country, when the Protestants settled America and everyone else was their guest, there was serious, indigenous anti-Semitism. Today's America truly sees itself as a constantly changing nation of nations, made up of shifting immigrant groups, etc. Thus, no one group is really the host. That development was the key to the decline of anti-Semitism.

If, indeed, there is a rise in anti-Semitism in multicultural countries in Europe - maybe it is because the country is multicultural only in theory. Sometimes, as a result of some residual guilt as to what a country did to its native populations and cultures, or out of guilt at standing by during the Shoah, a country preaches multiculturalism. However, in the end the population does not truly accept the idea that there is a right to be different. That underlying non-acceptance creates fertile ground for the growth of anti-Semitism.

All things being equal, multiculturalism is still the best hope of overcoming anti-Semitism, even in Europe. A lot of the anti-Jewish antagonism in France reflects the much stronger tradition in that country that every citizen needs to become a Frenchman. The French have more difficulty accepting diversity of cultures; they have this problem not just with Jews, but with every group. Napoleon offered the Jews emancipation, but made clear that in return that Jews should not oppose intermarriage. Indeed he thought they possibly should give up *kashrut* and all ritual rules that separated them. In all fairness, we should add that a good measure of the resurgent anti-Semitism in France and in Europe is growing in the still religiously marginalized, economically deprived and socially ostracized Moslem population.



... Perhaps one can offer another explanation for the phenomenon of growing anti-Semitism in a society proclaiming multiculturalism. When the Jews were first liberated from Egypt, they thought that freedom simply meant that they were no longer slaves. In practice, freedom initially was interpreted as anarchy. In the ex-slave's mind, he who is no longer a slave need not get up in the morning and go to work. If there was no water, the Israelites blamed Moshe and God. When a free person gets up in the morning and discovers that there is no water in the house, he/she goes to dig for water. If there was no food he/she would go out and collect food for the family. But the mentality of a former slave is that as a slave one had to work all the time; now, however, freedom means the right to be irresponsible. Slaves developed an ethic of slave sexuality. The master would rape the women any time he wanted, so there was no possibility to develop an ethic of monogamous responsibilities. Indeed, the Midrash comments that when some Jews in the desert discovered that being free meant that they could no longer sleep around, they cried.<sup>20</sup>

In many Western countries, Moslems, feeling themselves to be outsiders, with multiculturalism granting them the right to speak out, they express "freedom" in a form of anti-Semitism. Some black nationalists did the same in the 1960s in America. After winning new levels of freedom, they expressed their feelings, that they no longer feared the other, in the form of racism against whites or by becoming more anti-Semitic... Such developments must be challenged. This type of outburst does not reflect true multiculturalism; this development merely substitutes one form of abuse for another form of abuse of the other. For an oppressed minority to be allowed to act out irresponsibly as recompense for past suffering is the worst possible ethical psychology. True multiculturalism requires learning to respect variety; it is not meant to cover for formerly oppressed people to misbehave toward others. Some feminists turned women's liberation into an attack on family. Some newly liberated gays argued that promiscuity is the true expression of untrammelled homosexuality. These are classic misreadings of freedom. Freedom requires that one stop all discrimination. Freedom bestows choice, but the choice must be used to respect others and not to oppress. A mature free person exercises responsible self-control and shows respect for the dignity and rights of others. This is the antithesis of anti-Semitism.

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<sup>20</sup> See Rashi on Numbers 11:10.

***On young people who grew up in a modern Orthodox world and shifted into the haredi community...***

The phenomenon of people having been exposed to all these choices only to choose a *haredi* option is related to the world-wide upsurge of fundamentalism. Humans never had this level of choice, i.e., such unlimited freedom before. Open-ended freedom is frightening. We now know that if there are no limits in a society, the process leads to destruction and mass murder, to a breakdown in values and the unleashing of disintegrative forces. Take, for example, women's liberation. It is a great movement. Still, does anyone doubt that liberation is at least partly connected to the rise in divorce or in the rise of rejection of parenting? For every social change - even improvements - there are prices to pay; sometimes the extreme forms of good movements inflict real damage on good institutions. Even without such known historical side effects, psychologically, many people fear that choice will unleash disaster. Fundamentalism represents the belief that when people are given choices, they will exercise them irresponsibly. For example, when women are given the choice, they will not choose to be wives or mothers; given freedom they will choose to be everything but family partners. In order to protect the institution of the family (and what could be more essential than family?) fundamentalists insist that we must choose - to give up our choice.

I understand that logic and I do not make light of it. If it were true that giving up the right to choose was the only way to sustain such fundamental good values as family, then maybe that is the price we have to pay. However, I respectfully disagree with this claim. Fundamentalism, and the choice of *haredi* way of living, assumes that given freedom, many people - if not most - will make the wrong choice. While I recognize that many people will err in their judgments, I still believe that a majority will pick the healthy version of freedom. Indeed, I believe that more people will choose the best values under an open democracy than will in an imposed fundamentalism or socially dominant *haredi* society.

Educationally speaking, the model of covenant indicates that God has chosen to respect human free will and free choice. The model of *brit* was established by the Jewish religion thousands of years ago. In covenant, God promises to never again coerce humans to do the right thing. After the Flood, God promised never to use *force majeure* to assure that humanity honors

the moral law. The fundamental concept behind *brit* is that God is willing to take the risk of human behavior. God trusts that, given freedom, humans will in fact choose not to reject or to abuse that freedom. God believes that humanity will ultimately choose the right way...

In the history of *brit*, with the passage of time, God intervenes less and less openly, and gives humans more and more freedom. I believe that we are living through the climax of that process. In this era, God does not strike you dead for sin; God does not stop the rain if a people do not obey. Genuine freedom is scary. One fully understands the people who react against expanded freedom by creating cultural or societal alternatives, in which choices are more limited and society is more authoritatively structured. In the end, I believe, human dignity is expressed maximally in freedom and choice. Human dignity will impel more people to choose the right way. This is the great unfolding adventure - and the great educational challenge - of our time.

***On developing an integrated identity in a post-modern world...***

Everything said about values applies to Jewish identity. Jewish identity in relation to a general identity - as a human being or as an American - is in a parallel situation to Jewish heritage in the relationship of the two worlds. After a long period during which Jewish identity was molded in the image of the general population, there is now a greater willingness and ability to enable interaction between the two identities on a more equal basis. The key is to integrate a Jewish identity that has enough breadth and vision to incorporate the best of the general culture to which Jews are exposed. When Jewish identity is dependent on the belief that "*goyim are goyim*," i.e., inferior, then it is vulnerable when people discover that *they* are not *goyim*. *They* are human beings; *they* are ethically attractive; *they* are physically and mentally beautiful. At this point, if superiority/inferiority is what we have taught our students, then we risk the danger of losing them. The category of *tselem elokim* must be applied to all humans. Where saving a life is equated with saving a whole world, we must refer to all lives, as in the Yerushalmi (=Palestinian Talmud), and not as the Babylonian Talmud,<sup>21</sup> which limits the adage to saving a Jewish life. The educator must invoke a broader reading in which the Torah cares about every human life, or we lose all our moral capital. An integrated Jewish identity would

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<sup>21</sup> Sanhedrin 37a.

recognize the full dignity of a gentile, of a Christian, of a non-Jew. There is no need to put the other down in order to assert Jewish dignity.

Acknowledging the value of all human life in no way implies that one's family does not come first. Denying one's family would violate the principles of true freedom and true equality. The primacy of family not only can be defended; it must be offered as the healthiest moral position. Furthermore, recognizing the *tselem elokim* of the gentile does not require dismissing Jewish distinctiveness. If done right, a dynamic balance between Jewish distinctiveness and universal humanity can be maintained. Thus our aim is to foster a Jewish identity which integrates the best values of the general culture and gives a person the ability to criticize and modify the other values as is appropriate, without losing our own distinctive values. Working out these details would take a lifetime. The school is the ideal place where such an identity can be modeled and taught.

***If post-modernity is a reaction to modernity, what will be the reaction to post-modernity?***

Some traditional observers are concerned that post-modernity will lead to the breakdown of all values and to total relativism. I would like to believe that this emergent culture will lead to pluralism. Pluralism is the antithesis of relativism. A pluralist does not make absolute claims, i.e., that I have the only truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, and that nobody else has truth. A pluralist affirms possession of the truth, including the right to reject and/or criticize and argue with those who have other views. Still the pluralist respects the fact that there may be other truths that other people have which are also true. Some of those truths may even contradict my truth. We have to learn how to live with the truth behind both truths even though they are in disagreement.

Pluralism is an absolute position that knows its limitations. By *tsimtsum*, a pluralist leaves room for other values or cultures without yielding his/her own convictions or the right to disagree with and/or criticize the other. Pluralism requires a higher level of internal conviction so that one's convictions are not undermined by allowing for the existence of other valid but alternative truths or systems. This enables believers to function at a higher level of choice. I believe that this level of internalization is what the prophet Yirmiyahu foresaw. The prophet said that the day will come when

*brit* will be renewed and based on what is written in one heart<sup>22</sup> rather than being an imposed *brit* whose authority is based on the inadequacy of the other religion or value system.

***On how a community based on tradition grapples with creating post-modernity...***

One of the beauties of post-modernity is the expanded role that a tradition can play. In modernity, any tradition started with a handicap. Modernity promoted religions and values as ‘new and improved’. The fact that something was new was a major advantage and tradition was old. In post-modernity, by contrast, the fact that you have a tradition which precedes modernity is now a source of prestige. Such a tradition is perceived as a source of potential dignity and value. The value added of post-modernity is that you can draw upon this ancient tradition to make the present even richer. However, enrichment only works if you are able to incorporate the new world into the framework. If you cannot be credible in the new environment, then the tradition becomes a handicap. In post-modernity the traditionalist can be very traditional, maybe more traditional than in modernity, but credibility requires preparedness. The tradition must show the capacity to integrate and be open to the presence of many options in the culture.

The fact is that the *haredi* world has embraced technology, along with many other elements of modernity. For example, despite the best efforts at denial of feminism, women’s education in the *haredi* world has been fundamentally transformed. They, too, have had to integrate some elements of the new world. Interestingly, this adds to the appeal of *haredi* culture.

When the tradition loses its monopoly, with alternatives circulating freely, the tradition is no longer the exclusive resource. The tradition is recognized as a tradition rather than as some timeless eternal truth. People have thought the strength of tradition is enhanced when its authority is taken for granted, when people think that it is the way it has always been and that that is the way it always will be. That approach is becoming less viable, because people constantly see the alternatives around them. Loss of the state of self-evidence is a source of weakness for the pure *haredi* position.

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<sup>22</sup> See Jeremiah 31:33.

However, even the pure *haredi* position is not pure anymore. That is the point of Haym Soloveitchik's now famous, classic article<sup>23</sup> - that even in the most traditional society, the heritage is no longer assumed to be an unchanging *magisterium*, but rather the tradition as we have chosen it. In many cases, people will modify or move from one aspect of the tradition to another in order to uphold the tradition - authority often becoming more stringent in the process. Ironically, that stringency reflects an act of choice, to live a coherent, traditional position. In the long run, I would argue that such conscious adaptation, this commitment to tradition is, in its own way, more powerful than the unself-conscious acceptance of the authority of the past.

Conscious adaptation of a tradition seems like an oxymoron, but post-modernity allows for mixing and matching. For example, take my wife Blu Greenberg's model of Orthodox feminism, which many people say is also an oxymoron. In an integrated way, one can use a very powerful, traditional family model, and yet suffuse it with choice and individual freedom - and work for an upgrade in women's dignity. The old either/ors are less credible now. It is possible to make a most interesting mix of sources and authority principles at every step along the way.

*On schools as microcosms of an ideal society...*

I repeat: principals have a remarkable opportunity, even if it is very hard to accomplish. It is not enough to proclaim that Jewish studies and general studies have equal value. The school must put its money where its mouth is and pay the Judaic teachers on par. Of course the first goal should be to get all the teachers a salary comparable to that in the public school system or the best private school system. That, in itself, is no small challenge because there is always a shortage of money. The principal has the responsibility to provide for the material well-being of the teachers and students alongside their psychological, cultural, or religious well-being.

The principal can shape the world of the day school by picking teachers who respect *tselem elokim*, whether they teach in the Jewish Studies department or in the General Studies department. Through proper choices of teachers, one increases the possibilities for integration. The principal plays a crucial

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<sup>23</sup> "Rupture and Reconstruction: the transformation of contemporary Orthodoxy," Tradition 28:4.

role in filtering ideas and in guiding the processes of the school. Of course, the principal does not have one-hundred percent freedom, nor is a principal all-powerful. One should not want to be. The administration can create a covenantal environment in which people are committed in mutual love and to sustain each other. Then the school becomes a place where discipline grows out of a sense of covenant and does not simply serve as a functional tool to keep the students passive or make life easier for the teacher. In a model environment discipline emerges out of a real sense of mission - to create human beings in the image of God within an ideal society. Life in such a total environment is so moving and so meaningful, that when students go into the broader world they will want to make that world resemble the world of their school.

At the risk of being overdramatic, I have to admit that increased dignity was one reason why I came to love and appreciate the modern world. When I stepped out of the internal Jewish world and went to Harvard, the first time I walked into a seminar my teacher looked at me and said, "Mr. Greenberg, would you please read that text?" In the yeshiva, mostly they called me 'Greenberg,' occasionally 'Yitzchak,' but no one ever called me Mr. Greenberg. I knew that this teacher who called me Mr. Greenberg was, in fact, a university professor who had won a Pulitzer Prize, but that did not matter. At that moment, he was treating me like I was an equal. Frankly, I would have preferred it to be the reverse - that my memories from yeshiva were that they called me Mr. Greenberg and that in Harvard they did not show the same respect - so that would I miss my yeshiva more and wish that Harvard could be more like it.

This is a very important opportunity - to create a society in which you actually shape an entire world. This is the chance to generate a real sense of community, in which the students deeply believe that the authorities really care that they exist. They are convinced that the teachers think about them, their welfare and their world. When Moshe, our older son twisted his knee and tore his cartilage, his fellow students at the SAR Academy skipped recess to stay with him. They came back to the classroom and brought him food; they called him at home when he did not show up in school. In other words, they showed a real sense of community. If you build that model, they will identify with the whole world of Judaism. The Jewish world will be for them the one world in which people really care, in which people really treat

them as a *tselem elokim*. In the Jewish world, children may be half or a third the age of the adults and not nearly as educated, but the adults really listen – not just hear, but really listen. In such a world, students will listen to the adults more and the discipline will truly emerge from a sense of being in a covenantal community.

There are endless ways to create a world in which values are coherent. Again, we have a lot to learn from the secular culture. If you can create that ideal blend in your school, when they go to secular culture, a) they will appreciate it, b) they will not be swept off their feet by it, and c) they will think, “How can I bring this total secular world closer to the world I learned about and experienced in day school?”

Of course, a day school is not the whole world; it is only a mini-world. Still I know that although Shabbat does not last all week, I would like to make the world look more like Shabbat. I would like to make the Jewish people a little closer to Shabbat. That is your opportunity, and your mission.

### *Final thoughts*

...These are all good questions. I wish that there were time to respond to each in depth. Truthfully, you will not find full answers to most of these questions except by the work you do for the rest of your lives. People remember Hillel’s famous statement of the basis of Torah, what you do not want the other one to do you, do not do to the other. People forget that Hillel continued with the instruction: “go study [and apply] the rest.” All these issues require a lifetime of application and wrestling.