קרן מנדל
Mandel Foundation

חותם שלמה Educational Eclectics

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Essays in memory of Shlomo (Seymour) Fox
by Graduates of the Mandel Leadership Institute

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Detail from *The Last Supper* by Leonardo da Vinci

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Editors
Shmuel Wygoda and Israel Sorek

כתר

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About the Mandel Foundation

"The hallmark of our philanthropy is our commitment to invest in people with the values, ability and passion to change the world."

Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel

The Mandel Foundation was established by Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel, of Cleveland, Ohio. Its primary mission is to help provide outstanding leadership for the nonprofit world.

The Foundation supports leadership education programs in its own institutions and at selected universities and organizations.

The Foundation has these areas of priority: Leadership, Management of Nonprofits, Higher Education, Jewish Education & Continuity, and Urban Neighborhood Renewal.

The Mandel Foundation's approach to philanthropy is characterized by a conviction that exceptional leaders, professional and volunteer, are the critical factor in contributing significantly to community and society. Such leaders are guided by a powerful vision of the future that is illuminated by clear purposes, inspired by profound ideas, and energized by imaginative resolutions to today's challenges.

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Preface

Shmuel Wygoda and Israel Sorek

He was a man of contradictions who reconciled within himself seemingly incompatible principles and contents: establishment and anti-establishment; tradition and renewal; a meticulous planner and at the same time an audacious improviser; the University of Chicago as well as the Jewish Theological Seminary and Yeshiva Rabbi Chaim Berlin; Israel and the Diaspora; philosophical inquiry and feverish practical activity; penetrating rationalism and sensitivity to the other. The list goes on. Truth, for him, was always larger than any particular position, and even when he made a decisive choice in a matter, he recognized the truth inherent in other perspectives and refused to ignore it. He earned the moniker the *Marrano haredi*, although he never tried to hide his beliefs and practices. On the contrary, he moved like a wizard between the opposite, indeed sometimes contradictory, poles of the magnetic field he created and into which he attracted his followers. This is how he was able to conduct productive and meaningful discourse with scholars from every shade of the contemporary Jewish ideological spectrum, bringing together learned atheists and haredim, secular Zionists and Reform, Conservative and Modern Orthodox Jews. He engaged them all in collective debates that sometimes lasted for years. In the factious and divided reality of 20th century Jewish existence, his outlook on life, on Jewish life in particular, contained a unique and inspired message that for us, his students, pointed out a path to follow.

This is how Seymour was in his life and in his death. A few days before he died, we learned that he was planning to reduce his administrative activities at the Mandel Leadership Institute, which he had conceived, founded, and led. His closest students hoped that he would finally be able to devote his attention to the areas he was most passionate about, especially teaching and writing. Indeed, his associates and students urged him to expand his involvement in areas related to his teaching and his practice, such as educational leadership, curriculum and the philosophical basis of educational practice. We hoped that the

time had finally come for us to enjoy more intimately his sharp wisdom, his remarkable grasp of the world of general and in particular Jewish education and, above all, his radiance as he taught, argued, disagreed and criticized, sometimes piercingly, but always with the aim of challenging his students and listeners to ask the most basic questions: How do you know? Is this what was intended? Can you see any alternatives? What are the necessary ideological and philosophical implications of each and every approach? Many of us, his former students (today teachers and lecturers), secretly hoped for a return of old times. We yearned to meet Seymour again as we had first known him at the Jerusalem Fellows and the School for Educational Leadership programs, where we had gathered from various geographic and ideological regions to expand, illuminate and round out our worlds.

No doubt, part of this joy had to do with the camaraderie that was formed year after year in the institutions he founded, primarily the Jerusalem Fellows and the School for Educational Leadership. In Israel and elsewhere, social reality is divided, and the places where men and women of different backgrounds and ideologies can strike up a relationship are few and far between. But at the Jerusalem Fellows and the School for Educational Leadership such bonding was natural, even expected. Even if the fellows persevered in the beliefs and opinions they brought with them to the encounter, the ideas that emerged from the extensive, open, deep, stormy and stirring clash had nothing in common with narrow-minded clinging to prejudices and beliefs.

Was all this intellectual brainstorming, pure and simple? For some of us, yes; for others, the experience forged a new way of life that enabled us to swim against the tide.

The first meeting with Professor Fox was often difficult, challenging and liable to undermine one's self-confidence – the kind of meeting that leaves one feeling shaken. If we presented our principles with (excessive) confidence, Seymour would suddenly ask: "Is that so? Perhaps we could look at things differently?" He would not relent, asking away, wondering, honing, seeking to get to the bottom of the issue. Some of us were taken aback by his style, others tried to defend their views, but we all seem to have agreed about the value of the method. The exercise, which would continually shift and take on new forms, was intended, first and foremost, to instill in us the seriousness required of the educator in the educational act. Seymour insisted that education was a clinical profession, and like every clinical profession, it must be based on a detailed and well-argued platform, drawing on the content of many fields, each of which must be mastered on its own and in its combination with the others.

New names began to be heard with increasing familiarity, and soon a personal relationship developed with well-known figures in Jewish education in the United States: Saul Lieberman, Ralph W. Tyler, Louis Finkelstein, Joseph J. Schwab, Abraham Joshua Heschel, Rabbi Isaac Hutner, Robert Maynard Hutchins, Louis Ginzberg, Bruno Bettleheim and others. These were his mentors, those who had shaped his multifaceted personality. To us, his students, these names were bathed in an aura of splendor, and Seymour was the torchbearer who passed on the flame of enlightenment from their generation to ours. Through him we met some of the most exalted figures in education, and were exposed to their ideas and actions. Slowly, we developed a common language, the type of professional-educational language that is often sorely lacking among both junior and senior educators. Seymour introduced us also to the foremost personalities in Israeli education, some of whom became our permanent mentors, including Nathan Rotenstreich and Nechama Leibowitz. From week to week, class to class, session to session, the complexity of the educational field became more apparent, as did the need to understand and integrate ideas from a vast range of fields of knowledge before every educational decision and act. We recall one particular session in which Seymour introduced the ideas of the educational sociologist, Dan C. Lortie. In his book, *Schoolteacher*, Lortie cites another educational sociologist, P. W. Jackson, who calculated that in an average lesson a teacher makes well over two hundred decisions. Having presented this statistic, Seymour added: "You realize, of course, that every one of those decisions can elevate or, God forbid, crush each of the students in the class. Teaching is a critical responsibility, no less so than that of a brain surgeon, except that in the educational arena the teacher is responsible for a larger number of students."

Seymour knew and taught many facets of education, but his approach was unique primarily because it was truly innovative, a quality so often absent in the public at large and among educators in particular. He would share and analyze his failures with us, so that we might jointly learn from them. In so doing, he made us feel at ease discussing our own difficulties and failures. Just as he knew how to cast doubt and waver, when necessary, he was also able to summarize and condense, to weigh and decide.

Shortly before graduating from the Jerusalem Fellows program and going to Montreal to head a school, one of the fellows asked to meet with Seymour and four of the others to discuss the basic challenges of a new principal, specifically what he should try to avoid in a country and educational reality that were foreign to him. After the fellows

presented their opinions, Seymour jumped in with a concise lecture that was something of a summary of our three years of studies and training, including a series of practical dos and don'ts. From his clear and articulate presentation, it was obvious that these were issues he had reflected upon deeply, that he had spent years refining these ideas. As he finished, we stood in awe and amazement, and the principal-to-be turned to him and asked: "Why did you wait until this meeting to articulate your approach so systematically and succinctly?" "There's a time for everything," answered Seymour, adding an educational twist to Ecclesiastes: a time to learn and a time to take action, a time to consider and a time to take a stand, a time to deliberate and a time to decide.

After concluding our studies, we returned to the field and went our own ways. For most of us, the encounter with reality raised new issues and challenges we couldn't have anticipated earlier. At times the situations demanded immediate and practical attention, but at others they involved fundamental issues that we wished to discuss with Seymour. We weren't necessarily looking for clear-cut solutions, but rather sought to examine together the complexities of our profession, the discrepancies between theory and practice in education, and to arrive at new ways of dealing with the challenges we were facing. We knew, however, that in every such debate, Seymour would have raised alternative questions, which would force us to think differently, and spread before us a broader and more complex picture. Therefore, when he decided to cut back on his activities at the Mandel Leadership Institute, we rejoiced in anticipation of the opportunity to consult with him more frequently on a range of issues in general and Jewish education.

Sadly, fate denied us this privilege. A short time after this announcement we learned about the sudden death of our teacher. Although over three years have passed since then, many of us are aware that hardly a day passes without us quoting one of Seymour's sayings, without asking, "What would he say in such a case?" or, as Ami Bouganim writes at the beginning of his article in this book, finding that "Suddenly you respond like him, you even hear his voice creeping into yours and speaking through you."

With the approach of Professor Fox's 75th birthday, it was decided to publish a collection of essays in his honor, authored by his colleagues and by his students, graduates of the Jerusalem Fellows and of the School for Educational Leadership, the two programs that were in many respects the jewels in the crown of his educational work. The book of essays by his colleagues was published in two volumes: מעשה בחינוך (Studies in Education) in Hebrew, and *Educational Deliberations* in English. The

publication caused Seymour both great pride and some embarrassment – pride for the public acknowledgement, appreciation and affection that were expressed in the volumes, and embarrassment because of his humble nature and consistent refusal to occupy center stage. Indeed, despite being determined, vigorous and, at times, tough, Seymour was a "behind the scenes" man: he did not establish the Ramah Camps, but upgraded them and turned them into an extraordinary educational enterprise; he advised many ministers of education but deliberately avoided all media exposure; and when he founded the Jerusalem Fellows and the School for Educational Leadership, he insisted on conscripting public leaders, researchers and colleagues like Arie Dulzin, Walter Ackerman and Mordecai Nisan. Seymour knew that the collection of essays was in the works, and the honor that was about to be bestowed upon him made him somewhat uneasy. All in all, however, he was truly happy, and we will long remember the evening when we celebrated the publication of the double volume.

Plans for another volume of studies by graduates of the Mandel Leadership Institute were not neglected. The writing and editing of the articles was a lengthy project, and after Seymour passed away it was decided to continue the project and publish this book in his memory.

We wish to express our heartfelt gratitude to the Mandel Foundation, under whose auspices this volume is published; to Annette Hochstein, Seymour's long-standing colleague, President of the Mandel Foundation-Israel, who supported this project through all its stages, including those times when we wavered in our resolve and our spirits fell; to Noa Padan, who was the life-force behind the book and labored day and night to complete the job. Our warmest thanks and appreciation to Avi Katzman, who read, corrected, honed, interpreted and suggested – always in his characteristically modest way; to Vivienne Burstein, who edited the English portion of the book with skill, care and devotion; to Rachela Levanon who assisted us greatly in bringing the book to print; to Sharon Etgar, who designed the cover; to the employees of Keterpress Enterprises who added their professional imprint; and last but not least, to the authors of the articles, who sought to express their gratitude to their illustrious and beloved teacher, and to the reviewers of the articles who devoted themselves to sustaining the quality of the book. May all be blessed.

The articles in the book are a living testimony to the relationship between Seymour and his students. The first section contains articles and interviews that analyze, each from its own perspective, Professor Fox's contribution to the field of education and express the various ways in which he influenced his students. The articles that follow focus on areas

related directly or indirectly to topics in general education and Jewish education, in which his influence is clear, either in the subjects of the articles or in the thought processes reflected in them.

Outside readers may wonder about the logic in the collection of articles. It seems to us that no such question would arise in the minds of those who knew Seymour, who would have found it entirely natural to present an article about the dawn of Jewish education in the U.S. alongside a philosophical inquiry into the dialogical encounter and an exploration of the multifaceted nature of teaching and the impossibility of arriving at consensus around a single definition of the teacher's role. By the same token, an article about teaching Jewish Studies in Russia also goes hand in hand with one about prejudices in the professional development of music teachers in Israel.

The English title of this book is *Educational Eclectics*. For the Hebrew version, however, we eagerly accepted Avi Katzman's suggestion of חותם שלמה (literally, *Shlomo's Seal*) as a title that both suited the contents of the book and honored Seymour's memory. In some ways, the book seals a glorious chapter, but at the same time displays the signet, the indelible imprint Seymour has left on so many of his students.

Many teachers teach, and some are even remembered by their students years later, but only a few leave a legacy of this type, stamped with such a unique seal. Such was our teacher, Professor Shlomo Fox. Such was Seymour.

The Components of Ethnic Identity: A Cross-Cultural Theory and Case Study of Jewish Student Activists[1]

Erik H. Cohen

Introduction

General Theories of Identity Formation

Early research into ethnicity primarily documented cultures that researchers believed were on the road to extinction (Clark, Kaufman and Pierce 1976). However, the beginning of the 21st century has seen both the resurgence of ethnicity around the world and greater contact between cultures through tourism, mass media and migration. Identifying the components of ethnic identity and the role of external influences are among the most difficult tasks for researchers in the field. This article looks at the multi-dimensional nature of ethnic identity and how it functions in the post-modern world. A representative sample of books and articles that deal most directly with the specific questions raised in this article has been selected and is not meant to be inclusive.

The formation of personal and group identity are closely related, parallel processes (Phinney 1990). An individual must establish an identity in relation to his/herself, and in relation to family, peers, community and nation (Erikson 1976; Cohen, A. 1994). Identity synthesis requires a balance between exploration of new roles and ideas and commitment to traditions and values received from family and society (Marcia 1966; Dashefsky 1976; Erikson 1976; Marcia 1980;

1 I would like to extend my thanks to: The Student Department of the WZO and the World Union of Jewish Students who commissioned the data collection for this study; Prof. Paul Ritterband, Dr. Zvi Bekerman, Dr. Mordechai Bar-On, Dr. Shlomit Levy, Dr. Eynath Bar-On Cohen, Michael Rukin and Bluma Stoler for their invaluable help during the preparation of this article and in focusing the exploratory aspects of this study; Allison Ofanansky for the help in collecting the material for this manuscript and her editing assistance; Ruth Rossing and Rachel Kraft-Elliott who helped with the English editing of this manuscript; Itamar Cohen for his help in designing the cognitive maps.

Head 1997). Ethnic identity seems to follow a process of formation similar to that of social identity (Marcia 1966; Erikson 1976; Kelman 1977). Ethnicity is dynamic, changing with individuals' experiences as they mature (Cooper et al. 1998).

The basis of ethnic identity includes a sense of belonging to one group as distinguished from others, attitudes towards one's ethnic group, and extent of involvement in the group (Gordon 1964; Tajfel and Turner 1979; Phinney 1990; de Vos 1995). Early empirical studies of identity used responses to various items to form a single indicator of group cohesion versus assimilation. In more sophisticated works, researchers took into account the multivariate nature of ethnic identity and grouped items into related categories (Segalman 1966; Lazerwitz 1973; Bubis and Marks 1975; Banks and Gay 1978).

Though most scales and typologies of ethnic identity deal only with intrinsic aspects of identity, extrinsic influences must also be considered (Appadurai 1990, Massey et al. 1997). The relationships between an ethnic group and the surrounding society may be as important as the cultural content of the group itself (Barth 1969).[2] Even the most insulated communities are heavily influenced in terms of language, cultural norms, and values. The interaction between the intrinsic and extrinsic creates the almost limitless number of faces of identity. External values can become so thoroughly internalized that members come to accept them as part of their own culture. Various aspects of identity (religion, attachment to homeland, language) may be differentially emphasized based on values gleaned from the surrounding culture.

Ethnic Identity in the Post-modern Age

A surfeit of choices, the hallmark of the post-modern era, has made the development and maintenance of personal and group identities increasingly confusing (Berger 1979; Sarup 1996, Kahane 1997). "Erikson saw society as being relatively static and what an adolescent had to do was identify an appropriate niche in it. By comparison the task for the adolescent today is to find a way of joining something which itself is changing," (Head 1997, p. 20). Although some writers claim that, "Postmodernism ... declares the death of cultural authenticity" (Mikics 1993, p. 297), the resurgence of cultural and ethnic movements

2 The examples of groups in the manuscript leave open the question of whether dominant nationalities are ethnic groups. It seems that the literature we cite *does not* consider dominant nationalities to be ethnic groups. If this is so, Jews are an ethnic group everywhere except in Israel! Nevertheless, one of the main contributions of the present theory is to hypothesize the phenomenon of ethnie or of nation as multi-dimensional.

throughout the world indicates that cultural authenticity may have changed, but it has not disappeared (Suleiman 1996). Additionally, the wide variety of identity options available to youth characteristic of the post-modern era may be constricted for members of minorities in certain societies (Phinney 1990).

Jewish Student Activists

The population in this case study is students who hold positions of responsibility in Jewish organizations on university campuses from 30 countries. This population is appropriate for several reasons. Due to their unique history of maintaining a distinct identity through centuries of Diaspora while simultaneously adapting to their host cultures, the Jews are a classic example used in studies of ethnic identity, and there is an abundance of available information related to them (Phinney 1990; Smith 1991). Student activists in particular have a strong sense of their own ethnic identity. Though this population is not necessarily representative of their peers, they are at the core of the community and from their ranks will come many future leaders. Thus, their attitudes towards Jewish identity are significant, if not typical of less-involved young people. Additionally, the respondents vary along only two variables (country of residence and gender), allowing for a cross-cultural comparison in which other significant variables (age, denomination, level of education) are basically equivalent. Since Israel was not among the countries considered, these activists are all members of a minority ethno-religious group in their home countries.

A Preliminary Typology

Theoretical Basis for the Components and Structure

After a thorough study of existing scales, typologies and theories of identity, I developed a preliminary order of nine components, concepts that appear repeatedly in the literature, and which were borne out by my own years of research in the field. These nine components formed the basis of a first draft of a theory of ethnic identity. Attitudes, the various ways in which individuals may define themselves as members of a particular group, are emphasized over behaviors. Though these components will be present in the makeup of any ethnic group, some will be more important than others for a given group. Members of different ethnic groups, as well as members of the same ethnic group living in different host societies, will formulate their ethnic identities differently.

Birth: Kinship is perhaps the most basic and widely recognized component of identification (Dashefsky 1976; Keyes 1976; van den Berghe 1978; Roosens 1989; London and Chazan 1990; Smith 1991; de Vos 1995, Levine 1997; Horowitz 1998; Sharot 1999, among many others). Birth is the cornerstone of a definition of ethnic groups as "[t]hose human groups which entertain a subjective belief in their common descent" (Weber 1968, p. 385). Although the actual genetic basis to claims of common ancestry among ethnic group members is widely disputed, the subjective perception of being an extended family is a strong binding force for many people (Gladney 1998).

Commitment: In a review of 70 empirically-based articles on ethnic identity conducted since 1972, commitment was found to be one of the basic requisites for an actualized ethnic identity (Phinney 1990). It is one of three basic psychological processes necessary for group socialization (Moreland, Levine, and Cini 1993). Commitment to a group or organization may be based on shared values, an awareness of the costs of severing ties, or a feeling of desire or obligation to remain a member (Allen and Meyer 1990; Meyer and Allen 1997; Lømsø 2000). This emphasis on commitment seems to be at odds with sociological discussions of the self in a post-modern era, with its ever-shifting values and ideologies (Fekete 1987; Tong 1989; Gergen 1991; Mikics 1993). However, the availability of choices itself may make commitment to a tradition a more active and conscious decision. Exploring the dialectic between commitment and choice seems to be an essential part of a study of ethnic identity today.

Culture: Ethnic groups may be defined by belief in a shared culture or cultural traits (Roosens 1989). Culture is such an integral part of ethnicity that the two terms are often used interchangeably in everyday language. In an anthropological sense culture is "the meanings which people create and which create people as members of societies" (Hannerz 1992, p. 3). Though the external trappings of culture (food, art, clothing etc.) are the most visible, there are other aspects, such as modes of thought or social order which have a deeper influence on identity (Hannerz 1992). In terms of identity, "[c]ultural traditions of thought influence how the self perceives itself," (Hewitt 1984, p. 6) and "[c]ulture provides the content and meaning of ethnicity" (Nagel 1994, p. 162).

Loyalty*:* A desire to be loyal to a tradition passed down through generations binds people to ethnic or religious groups. An emotional

call to be loyal to one's people is often employed by political leaders to mobilize groups (Roosens 1989). Loyalty has been found to be a main source of a community's vitality and stability (Torres 1996; Chávez and Guido-DiBrito 1999; Hartford Institute for Religion Research 2001). As choices for identity multiply, so do the possibilities for conflicting loyalties (Eriksen 2001).

Education: Ethnic identity and cultural or religious education are closely related, as education is a means of instilling and directing feelings of identification. Education is essential to a group's functioning and continuity (Dashefsky and Shapiro 1974; Adams 1981; Horowitz 1998). Ethnic identity education includes both formal schooling and informal types of learning (Henze 1992; Fox and Scheffler 2000). As members of an ethnic minority integrate and assimilate, more intentional and formal education replaces what may no longer take place in the home and neighborhood (Resnik 1996).

Choice: Until recently, some sociologists considered a defining trait of an ethnic group to be *involuntary* membership (Isajiw 1974). In many parts of the world today, however, identity has become "subjective and voluntary, as distinct from the objective and communal, if not compulsory, association of an earlier time" (Elazar 1999, p. 40). A growing number of people experience more than one religious or ethnic identity during the course of their lives (DellaPergola 1999). "Modernity means that the given is removed, that choice is unavoidable," (Cohen and Horencyzk 1999, p. 6).

Religion: Sharing ideas and values is critical to any group's cohesion, and religion often provides this structure of beliefs (Levine and Moreland 1991). The relationship between religion and ethnicity is complex and the subject of much debate (Dashefsky and Shapiro 1974; Smith 1991; Sarup 1996; Jacobson 1997; Horowitz 1998). Some groups who may be racially identical divide themselves along religious lines. Alternatively, co-religionists may be members of different races, ethnicities and cultures.

Relationship to a homeland: Ethnic groups often identify with an ancestral homeland, whether or not the majority of their members live there (Adams 1981; Griffen 1981; Smith 1991; Sarup 1996). Ways of identifying with a 'mother country' differ according to history and circumstance (Gold 1984). Even for the descendants of immigrants

with no intention of returning to their ancestors' country of origin, participation in events related to the home country are markers of ethnic identification (Strickan 1984). A homeland can be any place which instills a feeling that the land belongs to them and they to it (Smith 1991). The modern phenomenon of 'diaspora tourism' has altered the perceptions of and relationship to the homeland of both the tourists and the existing indigenous population (Kronish 1983; Appadurai 1990; Bruner 1996; Jacobson 1997; Wood 1998). The creation of the State of Israel made the question of relationship to a "homeland" a major aspect of contemporary Jewish identity (Herman 1977; Nitzan 1992; Gorny 1994).

Reaction to prejudice: Ethnic identity may be embraced from within or imposed from without (de Vos 1995). Imposition of identity in the form of discrimination and prejudice often causes victims to bond together to create a positive identity for themselves (Simpson and Yinger 1972; Reisman 1979; Sarup 1996; Castells 1997; Le Coadic 2000). Warfare and conflict provide heroes and symbols around which groups rally (Smith 1991). Barriers to integration force minorities to embrace their own religion, language, culture and values. The French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre claims that anti-Semitism is the most important element in the existence of the Jews (Sartre 1965).

A Structure of Components

The complex inter-relationships between these components could be better understood through a structure representing an organization of the components. Based on previous research and the Facet Theory of Louis Guttman, possible structures were explored in preparation for the empirical study. The components, or sub-groupings of components, could be presented in one of three possible models described in Facet Theory:

Simplex model*:* Components of ethnic identity are ranged in sequence from one end of a continuum to the other, for example from the personal to the communal; or from the secular to the religious.

Modular model*:* The components are arranged from the center to the periphery, for example from the general to the specific, represented as a series of concentric circles.

Polar model*:* "[E]ach element of the facet corresponds to a different direction ... emanating from a common origin" (Levy 1985a, p. 74). Each

has its own distinct status, interrelated with but not dependent upon the others, with opposing concepts on opposite sides of the structure (Levy and Guttman 1976; Levy 1990). The polar model has been found to most accurately describe the relationship between areas of life (health, education, work, etc.) (Levy and Guttman 1975; Levy 1985a; Cohen, Clifton and Roberts 2001). The multiplicity of the ethnicity components seems to parallel the "areas of life" paradigm. I therefore expected to find this type of structure among the components.

Methodology

From this preliminary order of components, I designed a question which was included in an international survey of Jewish student activists. Two of the components, relation to homeland and reaction to prejudice, were phrased to be more specific to the case of Jewish identity. The questionnaire item was formulated as follows:

Would you say that you are Jewish: (circle as many possibilities as relevant)

1. By birth	4. By loyalty	7. By religion
2. By commitment	5. By education	8. In relation to Israel
3. By culture	6. By choice	9. In reaction to anti-Semitism

It is important to point out that the activists responded to each of the items according to their own understanding and definition of them. I was less interested in the interpretations of the terms than in ascertaining whether or not these students consider loyalty, commitment, religion etc. a fundamental part of ethnic identity.

The Research Population and Field Work

The comprehensive questionnaire contained a wide variety of questions on demographics, background, education, attitudes and behaviors related to identity. The leaders of national and regional Jewish organizations distributed the questionnaires to students holding positions of responsibility. Every Jewish student organization known to us was contacted, in order to include all geographical, ideological, religious and organizational facets of the student activist population.

In 1995 I collected 625 valid questionnaires from student activists in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Bolivia, Bulgaria, Chile, the CIS, Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, El Salvador, France,

Georgia, Germany, Holland, Hungary, India, Mexico, New Zealand, Scotland, South Africa, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom, Uruguay, Uzbekistan and Venezuela. In 1996 I collected an additional 415 valid questionnaires from student activists in the United States and Canada, for a total of 1040.

Data Analysis

In order to consider multiple variables for multiple sub-populations, and to present the results in a usable form, I employed multi-dimensional analytic tools. I first calculated the correlation matrix for the nine components using a regression-free coefficient of correlation, the Monotonicity Coefficient (MONCO) (Guttman 1986, pp. 80-87). The advantage of using the MONCO correlations, as opposed to the more widely recognized Pearson's correlation coefficients, is that the MONCO enables us to recognize non-linear correlations, which, in general, more accurately reflect a complex subject such as attitudes towards ethnic identity (Amar and Toledano 1997).

The MONCO correlation matrix was then analyzed using a process known as Smallest Space Analysis (SSA)[3] which graphically represents the correlations between variables on a schematic map in such a way that strongly correlated variables are close together and weakly or negatively correlated variables are far apart (Guttman 1968; Canter 1985; Levy 1994). The resulting map reveals distinct and continuous regions of correlated data, interpreted according to the theoretical basis of the study. Items in different regions may be closer to each other than ones within the same region (Lingoes, Roskam and Borg 1979).

The relationship of sub-populations to the general structure can be examined by introducing external variables (Cohen and Amar, 1993; 1999). In this study, the relationships to the structure of identity of sub-populations defined by gender and country of residence are considered. The external variables were created as binary 'dummy' variables. Each respondent is recorded as positive for the country in which he or she lives, and as negative for the remaining twelve countries. The same process was used to create dummy variables for gender. These dummy

3 SSA and many other Guttman data analysis techniques are available in the Hebrew University Data Analysis Package (HUDAP). HUDAP was written by two mathematicians, Reuven Amar and Shlomo Toledano, under the mentorship of the late Louis Guttman. HUDAP can be purchased through the computer center of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The same map could be obtained using any multi-dimensional scaling program, such as ALSCAL of SPSS. It is not my intention to champion any one technique but, rather, to use one of several appropriate techniques in order to analyze the data.

variables can then be introduced into the SSA map. The map is 'fixed' so the structure of the original map is not affected. The computer program takes into account the correlation between a single external variable and the matrix all of the primary variables, placing the external variables on the map one by one. The correlations between the external variables are not considered, and the external variables are not taken into account when placing the primary variables.

This methodology allows for an objective analysis of subjective data. The activists' responses to the questionnaire are subjective and influenced by their individual opinions about religion, culture, commitment etc. The structure of the data obtained through the SSA, however, is objective (Levy 1985b) and can be replicated with different data sets. The results of this questionnaire-based sociological approach can be understood in the context of findings from anthropological studies of similar populations. The combination of sociological and anthropological approaches broadens and deepens our collective understanding of this issue (Newman and Benz 1998).

Results

Demographics and Basic Attitudes towards Israel and Judaism

The demographics and educational backgrounds of the student activists are shown in Table 1. Only countries with 20 or more respondents were analyzed. Significant differences between students from the various countries are immediately apparent on variables other than age. The vast majority of university student activists were between the ages of 19 and 23, with less than 20% either older or younger than this bracket.

Most of these Jewish student activists reached university with a strong Jewish educational background and a history of community involvement. In order to establish religious affiliation, the questionnaire offered five categories: Orthodox, Conservative (traditional), Reform, 'just Jewish,' and secular. The response 'just Jewish' offers the respondent the opportunity to refuse to assume a denominational label without rejecting religiosity altogether.

The respondents' self-definitions were accepted at face value. They do not necessarily reflect any particular set of behavior or beliefs, and the boundaries between denominations vary greatly in the different countries. A South African and an American who share the same behaviors and

Table 1: Number of student activists participating in this survey, by country (all figures are percentages except for the number of respondents from each country)

	US	CA	UK	SA	AU	FR	BE	HO	CI	BU	AR	ME	VE	OT	TO[1]
Number	370	45	147	74	41	88	22	20	27	21	38	42	34	71	1040
Male	45	43	55	46	41	56	68	70	37	38	53	76	74	49	51
Female	55	57	45	54	59	44	32	30	63	62	47	24	26	51	49
Ashkenazi	90	93	91	94	89	30	86	100	100	5	86	29	55	82	79
Sephardic	10	7	9	6	11	70	14	0	0	95	14	71	45	18	21
Orthodox	21	18	51	70	46	5	0	28	0	0	3	26	12	6	25
Conservative	40	45	16	11	14	56	59	28	4	0	23	58	53	27	33
Reform	18	3	14	0	11	12	5	0	4	0	11	3	0	5	11
Secular	7	8	1	11	8	2	5	11	12	0	11	0	0	11	6
Just Jewish	13	26	18	7	22	25	32	33	80	100	51	13	35	51	24
Attended Jewish Day School	48	82	48	74	76	20	73	30	33	5	50	74	85	34	50
Attended afternoon Hebrew School	55	29	20	39	17	9	32	15	4	5	29	24	26	27	34
Attended Sunday School	52	13	74	0	49	60	9	55	11	52	55	45	29	42	47
Participant in Jewish youth group	82	80	84	92	80	81	82	75	96	86	89	88	88	77	83
Feel very close to Israel	37	36	37	16	48	44	45	32	11	19	21	22	15	24	33
Been to Israel	71	81	81	84	73	83	86	80	64	100	59	88	88	65	76
Plan to live in Israel	13	9	20	6	11	11	9	17	28	12	9	3	3	12	12

1 **Key**

US	United States	HO	Holland
CA	Canada	CI	CIS
UK	United Kingdom	BU	Bulgaria
SA	South Africa	AR	Argentina
AU	Australia/New Zealand	ME	Mexico
FR	France	VE	Venezuela
BE	Belgium	TO	Total
OT	Other		

attitudes in regards to the Jewish tradition might define themselves as affiliated with different denominations. For the purposes of this article, it was the self-identification that was of importance, not the specifics of regional definitions of the denominations.

The apparent paradox of individuals who feel the least close to Israel being those most wanting to live there can be understood by what it means to be a Jew in the former Soviet Union. The desire to leave their birthplace is not necessarily related to any real feelings of connection to Israel.

The results of this survey disprove a common assumption in traditional Zionist ideology, which predicts that leaders will come from the alienated periphery of the Jewish community. On today's campuses, the leaders of Jewish organizations come from the core of the Jewish community.

Components of Jewish Identity

This is a population strongly identified with Judaism. In every country, 80% or more of the respondents agreed with the statement in the questionnaire, 'I am proud to be Jewish.' I wanted to understand what it means to 'be Jewish' for this wide range of individuals, and whether any differences could be observed in the definitions of Jewish identity among activists throughout the Diaspora. Table 2 shows a breakdown by nationality of the percentages of activists who indicated each of the nine items as a component of his or her Jewish identity.

Almost all the respondents in every country identified themselves as Jews by birth, and most by culture. Beyond that, the responses vary widely. For example, 90% of the students in Mexico identify themselves by religion, while in Bulgaria, fewer than a quarter does. In Holland, three-quarters of the student activists consider themselves Jewish in relation to Israel, while in Belgium, only 14% chose this option. Though the data presented in the table show much about the character of the national sub-populations, the multi-dimensional analysis presented below allows us to understand the more significant structural implications of these figures.

As with the denominational self-definitions, these responses are not compared with any related behaviors. The students' own subjective definitions of themselves as Jews are accepted. For example, the Jewish Community Center in Mexico City, one of the largest in the world, serves only one kosher meal a week, yet almost all the respondents from Mexico identify themselves as Jewish by religion. This attitude in and of itself is significant in understanding this sub-population, independent of any apparently contradictory behaviors.

Table 2: Components of Jewish Identity, by Country

'Would you say that you are a Jew by...?' (percentages answering positively)

	US	CA	UK	SA	AU	FR	BE	HO	CI	BU	AR	ME	VE	OT	TO
Number	370	45	147	74	41	88	22	20	27	21	38	42	34	71	1040
Birth	94	98	95	91	98	88	73	95	96	90	71	90	85	80	91
Culture	77	91	83	65	85	74	50	65	70	67	58	79	68	61	74
Religion	72	87	82	68	88	51	50	75	33	24	47	88	85	65	70
Commitment	69	76	72	70	63	45	50	70	33	76	63	45	62	32	63
Education	62	76	65	57	71	66	73	35	19	24	55	83	82	46	61
Choice	63	62	65	57	71	28	18	25	44	57	61	43	24	34	54
Loyalty	63	76	59	68	59	35	32	40	30	24	13	40	59	42	54
Relationship to Israel	53	49	48	50	73	49	14	75	63	43	47	55	68	39	51
Reaction to anti-Semitism	38	33	33	43	46	30	5	15	78	38	37	36	53	41	38

Table 3: Correlations Matrix of Components of Jewish Identity

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Jewish by birth	1 |	100	45	48	46	49	20	52	25	37
Jewish by commitment	2 |	45	100	67	76	67	74	65	56	40
Jewish by culture	3 |	48	67	100	76	75	62	64	68	49
Jewish by loyalty	4 |	46	76	76	100	66	67	69	63	57
Jewish by education	5 |	49	67	75	66	100	57	71	61	42
Jewish by choice	6 |	20	74	62	67	57	100	51	50	38
Jewish by religion	7 |	52	65	64	69	71	51	100	47	36
Relationship to Israel	8 |	25	56	68	63	61	50	47	100	77
Reaction to anti-Semitism	9 |	37	40	49	57	42	38	36	77	100

A Structure of Jewish Identity

(i) The correlation matrix

Table 3 shows the correlation matrix for the nine components. Coefficients of correlation may range between -100 (perfect negative correlation) and +100 (perfect positive correlation). All of the correlations, without exception, are positive. That is, identification with any one of the nine items is positively related to identification with each of the others, though to varying degrees. We can therefore say that this set of items is conceptually integrated (Guttman 1981, p. 23), verifying them as basic components of identity. Four of the items have a correlation of 40 or greater with all of the others. These are commitment, culture, loyalty and education, which can be said to form the backbone of Jewish identity. Interestingly, though the correlations are very high, none of them actually approaches a perfect correlation of 100. All are below 80. Therefore, though they are strongly linked, each retains independence and represents a distinct facet of Jewish identity, related to but not identical with any of the others.

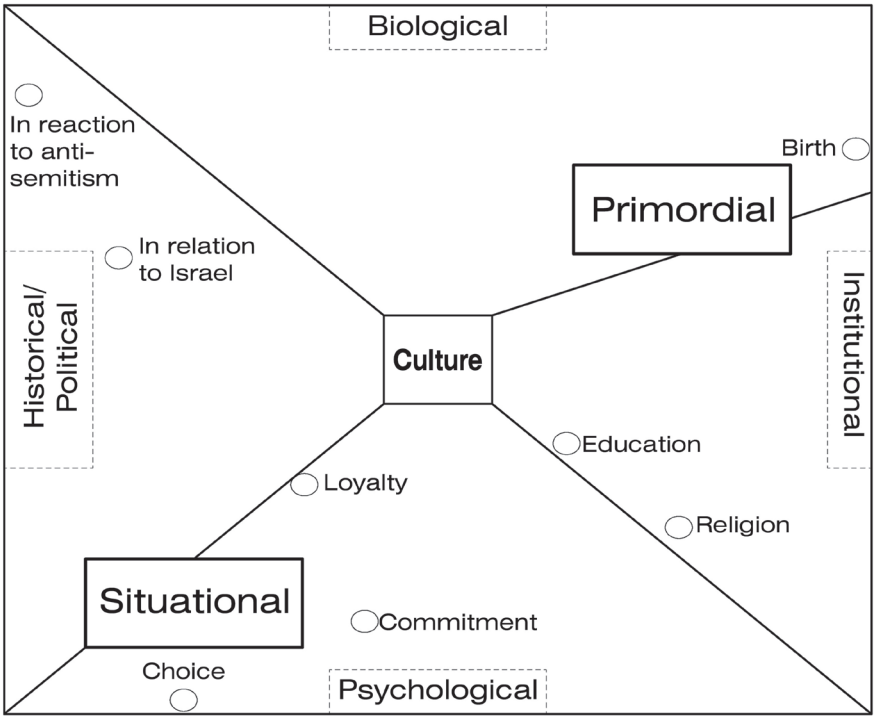
'Jewish by birth', though chosen by the largest number of respondents, is the *least* correlated with the other items. Most of the respondents agree that one who is born into the Jewish people is a Jew, regardless of any other beliefs or actions. The lowest correlation in the matrix is between birth and choice, representing two opposed attitudes towards ethnic identity, which can be imposed from without or embraced from within (de Vos 1995).

(ii) The Smallest Space Analysis

The complex inter-relationships between these correlations can be seen more clearly in the SSA map shown in Figure 1. I was able to find a structure to this data in only two dimensions. Since, by definition, a structure for any set of *n* data points could be found in *n-1* dimensions, the lower the dimensionality necessary to recognize a structure, the stronger it can be said to be.

The structure is polar, with regions emanating from a central point, verifying the basic structure of the theoretical typology. Culture is the central item. As can be seen in Table 3, culture has a coefficient of at least .48 with all other items. All of the other elements have at least one correlation coefficient lower than this. Due to this high inter-relation with the other components, the computer program attempts to place it equidistant from each of the others, forcing culture to the center of the map. Culture is a kind of meeting point of many components: public

Figure 1: Jewish identity components cognitive map
Space Diagram for Dimensionality 2. Axis 1 versus Axis 2.



and personal, family and national, received and chosen, biological and historical. In this sense, "culture is not 'out' nor 'in' but in-between" (Bekerman 2001, p. 465).

Around the central point of culture, we can recognize four distinct regions. In the upper left-hand section are two items: 'In reaction to anti-Semitism' and 'In relation to Israel'. These correspond to the political and historical aspects of identity (see for example Sartre 1965; Scott 1995; Rex 1995; Castells 1997). Moving clockwise, the next region contains only one component, birth, representing the biological and most primordial aspect of identity. In the lower-left-hand corner is a region that includes the items religion and education, the transmitting institutions of the tradition. The last region contains the components of choice, loyalty and commitment. These are psychological aspects of identity (see Wheelis 1959; London and Chazan 1990; Arnow 1994).

The biological region falls opposite the psychological region, representing the dichotomy between fate and free will; what the individual inherits at birth versus what he or she chooses on the path to adulthood. The historical/political region lies across from the institutional

region. This opposition can also be understood as a fate versus free will dichotomy, but on a community or even national level rather than an individual level. Political and social factors such as anti-Semitism or the various historical events concerning the State of Israel present a context in which identity must be worked out. Basic values, knowledge and ritual practice are generally given to individuals or a community through the frameworks of religion and education.

Given this structure, the map also represents two major schools of thought that have developed among scholars in the field of ethnicity studies. The first views ethnicity as *primordial*, an emotional and natural part of a person's makeup, and the second sees it as *situational*, a system created in response to political and social realities (Geertz 1963; Barth 1969; Roosens 1989; Smith 1991; Scott 1995). The right-hand side of the diagram, the biological and institutional components, represents the primordial aspects of identity. The left-hand side of the diagram, the political/historical and psychological components, represents the situational aspects.

Country of Residence and the Structure of Jewish Identity

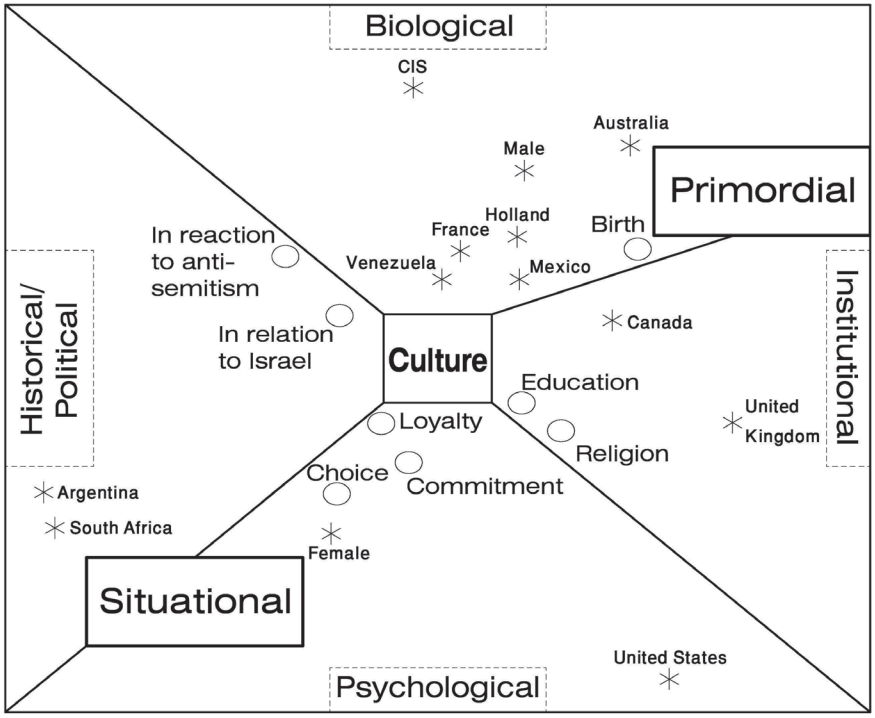
Using Figure 1 as a frame of reference, it is possible to examine sub-populations in relation to this structure of identity. The country in which students have been raised and educated has a profound influence on their identity as minorities within the larger culture (Baumann 1999). One scholar of Muslim societies commented, "[t]here are as many Islams as there are situations that sustain it", (al-Azmeh 1993, p. 1). The same sentiment can be applied to Judaism and other ethnic or religious groups whose members live in many different nations.

In Figure 2 sub-populations of activists, distinguished by country of residence and gender, have been plotted as external variables. It should be noted, that even groups appearing near each other in the map are each responding to distinctive historical circumstances and surrounding political cultures. It is beyond the scope of this article to examine in detail the reason for the placement of each group. Rather, we are looking at general trends in attitudes towards Jewish identity.

Students from the US are at the far edge of the map, in the psychology region. This was the only national sub-group placed in the psychology region, highlighting the unique direction taken by the largest Jewish population in the Diaspora. A large percentage of the Jews in the United States are unaffiliated and individuals who have taken it upon themselves to be leaders in Jewish organizations are likely to view this involvement as a proactive statement of loyalty and commitment (Gordin and

Figure 2: Jewish identity components cognitive map with nationality and gender as external variables

Space Diagram for Dimensionality 2. Axis 1 versus Axis 2.



Ben-Harin 1990). Jews in the United States have been influenced by the Protestant idea of religion as personal and voluntary, rather than communal and obligatory (Cohen and Horenczyk 1999; Baumann 1999).

Though the psychological components seem to be the predominant ones defining US Jewish identity, we should also note that these student activists were placed close to the institutional region, and far from the center of the map (culture). With minimal ritual practice in most American Jewish homes, and rising rates of intermarriage, much knowledge which forms the basis of Jewish identity is received in educational settings outside the home. Jewish education in the United States is almost entirely affiliated with one of the various religious denominations. Neither the Zionist movement nor the secular, socialist movements, common among Eastern European Jews before World War II, produced a network of schools in the US. In addition, though religious plurality is accepted in the US, distinctive ethnicity is less popular (Cohen, S. 1997), causing most US Jews to view Judaism primarily as a religion.

In contrast to the US students' solitary placement in the far corner of the psychology region, six national sub-groups (Australia, CIS, France, Holland, Mexico, and Venezuela) were placed in the biology region, and Canada was placed close to the border of this region, reflecting the widespread belief that one is a Jew first and foremost because one is born a Jew.

In the former Soviet Union, ethnicity was literally stamped on one's passport and there were few opportunities to learn about or participate in Jewish religion or culture (Goldstein and Goldstein 1997; Ritterband 1997). In France, ethnic loyalties are considered incompatible with allegiance to the secular state (Schiffauer et al. 1993; Baumann 1999). One is born Jewish, but is French by education, choice and 'civil religion' (Bellah 1966). Like the Mexican and Venezuelan students, they are a minority in a Catholic country.

We can recognize a group of six national sub-populations (Belgium, Canada, France, Holland, Mexico, and Venezuela), close to the center of the map. This reflects the emphasis placed on culture rather than on religion by the non-Jewish majority in each of these countries (Elkin 1980; Elazar 1999), which has influenced the ethno-religious identity of the Jews living there. It also indicates a balanced attitude towards identity. As with the placement of the culture component itself, equivalent correlations with all the components push an external variable into the center of the map. The students in these groups are not strongly influenced by any one component, but by a combination of them all. This may be contrasted with the placement of the US students at the periphery of the map. This finding supports the results of another study on attitudes towards Israel, in which youth from Canada, France and the UK were in the center of the map, showing a balanced image of Israel, while the youth from the US were again in the far corner, showing a strongly romanticized image of Israel (Cohen, E.H. 2001).

Two other groups of opposing attitudes may be noted. Bulgaria, South Africa and Argentina are at the far edge of the historical/political region, as opposed to Belgium and the UK, which are close to the tradition-transmitting institutions of religion and education. The placement of South Africa is one of the most surprising results of the analysis. Most of the South African Jewish community define themselves as Orthodox, with a high rate of enrollment in Jewish day schools. One would expect to find their identity linked to religion and education. Their placement in the region representing historical and political circumstances replicates a finding in a previous study done on the Jewish identity of staff members in informal Jewish organizations (Cohen, E.H. 1992; 2004). Perhaps the

radical changes South Africa has experienced over the past decade have pushed historical events to the forefront. This finding will need to be verified in future studies to determine whether this is a lasting picture of South African Jewish identity, or a response to a temporal political situation.

The placement of Bulgaria and Argentina in this region was more predictable. Neither one of these communities is particularly orthodox (Eisenberg 1995). Indeed, religion seems to play a relatively small role in their Jewish identity, as seen in table 2. The responses of the activists to questions pertaining to religious beliefs and behaviors reflect this. Political and nationalistic issues, such as responding to anti-Semitism and supporting Israel, are stronger bonds for members of these communities than religion or religious education.

The United Kingdom, which is at the far edge of the region defined by religion and education, is known as being a traditional community with a high level of affiliation with Orthodox synagogues and enrollment in Jewish schools. In this country, loyalty to one's ethnic or religious group is paramount (Schiffauer et al. 1993; Baumann 1999), and group identification coalesces around religious and religious-educational institutions. Canada and Belgium are placed in the same region as the UK, but, as mentioned above, significantly closer to the center of the map.

Gender and the Structure of Identity

The female students are in the psychology section, affiliated with the situational aspects of identity factors, while men fall in the region of biology, indicating a more primordial attitude towards identity. These findings are understandable in the context of Jewish religious obligations of men and women. A Jewish male's identity is impressed on him before he is old enough to have any say in the matter, by his *brit milah,* his ritual circumcision. The circumcision itself symbolizes the principle that Jewishness is transmitted with the seed (Ostow 1976).

Since a woman does not have such a graphic stamp of membership as the *brit milah* and is exempt from many ritual obligations incumbent on men (such as participation in a *minyan* and putting on *tefillin*), her identification with Judaism seems to be more personally motivated.

In contrast to this, according to traditional Jewish law, the children of a Jewish woman are automatically Jews, while those of a Jewish male are not. Thus, while a man has no choice in what he receives (the *brit milah*) he does have a choice, by virtue of who he marries, as to whether or not he passes on his Judaism, placing even his choice in the region of biology.

We must be cautious in interpreting the findings here concerning the way gender influences one's relationship to the structure of ethnic identity because of the uneven distribution of male and female activists among the survey population. The placement of the male activists in the biological region could be a reflection of the biology-influenced Jewish identity in nations where males predominate in leadership positions (see table 1). A future study with a sample population selected specifically with gender-balance in mind, could clarify these preliminary findings.

Discussion

The findings of this case study uphold the preliminary set of components and the expectation of a polar configuration. The SSA allows us to refine the typology by distinguishing the four regions and the placement of culture at the center of the map. It also gives logical direction for adding new components or deleting redundant ones.

The biology region, with only a single component, best expressed the Jewish identity of seven sub-groups (six nationalities, plus male students). It seems, therefore, that this category needs to be further fleshed out. To this end, I conducted a subsequent literature review, and would propose adding three components to this region, to be tested in a future study. These are endogamy, the family and language.

***Endogamy*:** Rates of intermarriage are used by sociologists as indicators of levels of group commitment (Grebler, Moore and Guzman 1970; Alba 1976; Reitz 1980, Blau, Beeker and Fitzpatrick 1984; Romano 1988; Spickard 1989; Rimor and Katz 1993). Jews in mixed marriages have been found to be far less involved in Jewish life and to be more distant from the group in every measurable indicator of Jewish identity (Bubis and Marks 1975; Winer, Seltzer and Schwager 1987; Cohen, E.H. 1991; 1999). As minorities assimilate, intermarriage rates climb (Mayer 1985; Kosmin et al. 1991).

***Family*:** Family is the "traditional incubator of identity," (Feingold 1999, p. 169) and the home is the primary place where the values, customs, and beliefs that make a culture distinctive are passed from generation to generation (Banfield 1958; Vecoli 1964; Howe 1982; London and Chazan 1990; Goldberg 1999; Prell 1999). During adolescence, the peer group may briefly take precedence but for most of one's life, "...the family is the primary in-group for almost everyone's identity," (London

and Chazan 1990, p. 12). Families with children are generally more actively involved in communal life than single people or couples with no children (Himmelfarb 1982; London and Chazan 1990). Number of children in a family has been used as an indicator of the degree to which the parents are attached to a religion or a traditional culture (Ritterband 1992).

The transmitting institutions region contains two items, but neither of these is close to the biology region, indicating perhaps a missing component. I would propose adding language as a basic component of identity, a transmitter of culture closely related to the family.

***Language*:** "Language is the people rendered audible," (Fishman 1997, p. 332). Language maintenance is necessary for ethnic maintenance and it is a fundamental element of any self-recognized ethnic group (de Vries 1990; Castells 1997), though an ever-increasing number of native tongues are passing into extinction (Dwyer and Drakakis-Smith 1996). In some cases it is the single feature that distinguishes one group from its neighbors (Tabouret-Keller 1997; Castells 1997). The importance of language in ethnic identity can be recognized in the vehemence with which oppressed peoples attempt to preserve or resurrect their language and with which conquerors or colonizers attempt to suppress or ban native tongues (Smolicz 1981), though it is often undervalued by scholars of ethnicity (Teleky 1997). "Language supplies the terms by which identities are expressed" (Tabouret-Keller 1997). The common phrase 'lost in translation' applies to culture as well as to literature, and styles of expression or even basic concepts may be lost or altered when the native language ceases to be used. (Hawana and Smith 1979; Rosenstein 1985; Hoffman 1990; Bayme 1994; Gorny 1994; Bekerman and Silverman 1997).

Based on this case study and other surveys on ethnic identity which I have conducted, I would propose several changes in the psychology region of the structure. That only the students from the United States were located in this region reflects this group's unique attitude towards identity. It may also, however, indicate missing or inaccurate components in the region, as psychology is undeniably an important aspect of identity. To this end, I would suggest two changes, to be tested in future studies: (1) deleting the component "loyalty" and (2) adding the component "hope".

Loyalty and commitment had a correlation of 76, one of the highest in the matrix. Their strong correlation, conceptual similarity, and placement in the same region, lead me to suggest that the component "commitment"

would be sufficient to cover this aspect of identity. In consumer studies, it has been determined that, "loyalty is a behavioural measure while commitment is a psychological measure" (Org-Mārg 2002). If this holds true for ethno-religious identity, it is logical to exclude the loyalty component, since in this study I chose to examine cognitive rather than instrumental aspects of identity.

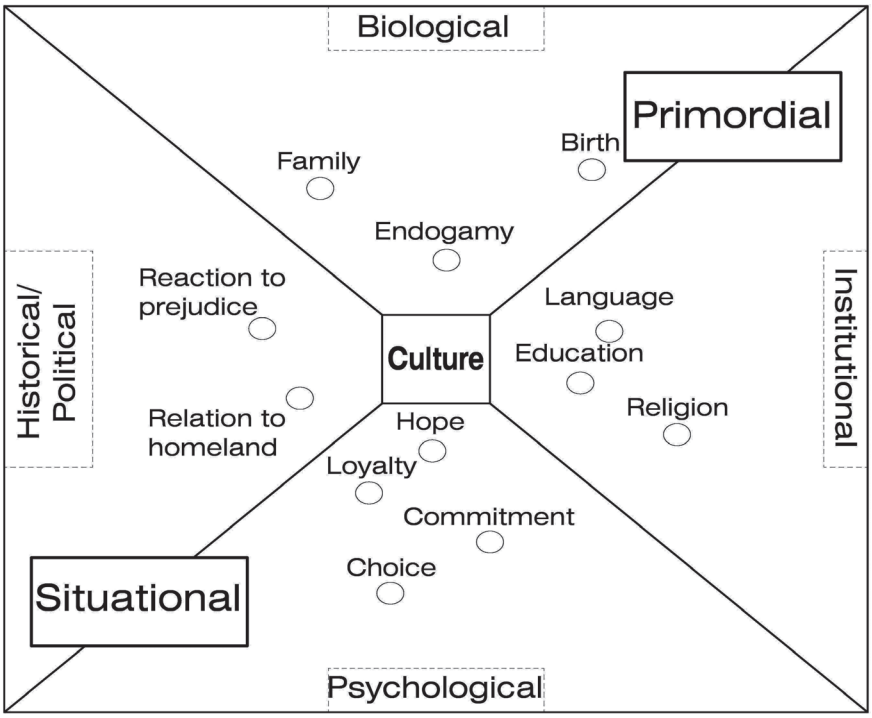
The component "hope", I believe, would add a needed aspect to the psychology region, perhaps one which would describe the psychological attitude towards identity of more traditional individuals.

Hope: The ethnic identity of groups, particularly oppressed minorities, is often based on the hope of a better situation for their people (Franklin 1982; Madsen 1998; Haskins 1999) and has been proposed as a primary element of the identity of persecuted peoples (Benjamin 1997). Hope for a paradise after death is a strong motivation for continued participation in religious communities (Obayashi 1991; Coward 1997). Hope, based in religious faith and the support of communities, has begun to be linked to a variety of indicators of quality of life (Johnson 2002). Folklore is replete with stories of overcoming great odds to eventual triumph, such as the Uncle Remus stories told by slaves in the United States and the David versus Goliath theme in Jewish tradition. In Jewish identity since the Holocaust, the creation of the State of Israel, and the subsequent decades of warfare, hope and despair are intertwined (de Saint-Cheron and Wiesel 1990; Elias 1998). A "marriage of cynicism and hope" is proposed as an answer to the difficulties of interpersonal and inter-group communication "in an era marked by social diversity and the absence of a compelling, consensually embraced meta-narrative" (Arnett and Arneson 1999, p. xxi).

Conclusion

In this article, I tested a preliminary Ethnic Components Theory against a set of empirical data from a survey of Jewish activists on university campuses around the world. A multi-dimensional analysis of responses to questions on ethnic identity found the same basic structure as was anticipated by the theory. The structure was recognizable in only two dimensions, a strong verification of the theory. The polar structure consists of two sets of oppositions; biological versus psychological and historical/political versus institutional, with culture as the hub around which the other regions are arranged. The structure also represents

Figure 3: Schematic Diagram of Revised Ethnic Components Theory



the differentiation between primordial and situational types of ethnic identity.

A schematic diagram of the revised Ethnic Components Theory is shown in figure 3.

The placement of the component "hope" near the center was based on a study of staff members in Jewish informal educational settings which included the option "hope" as an answer to the question "I consider myself Jewish by…" (Cohen, E.H. 1992; 2004). Due to the inclusion of affective symbols, a different type of structure was found in the SSA of that study, but the component "hope" was near the components culture, commitment and reaction to anti-Semitism. None of the components of language, family, or endogamy have yet been included in a survey of this type and their placement within their respective regions is speculative. The placement of each of these new components needs to be determined through an empirical study.

By overlaying the various sub-populations by country of residence on the map of this basic structure, we see that although all the students

surveyed are strongly affiliated with the Jewish community, the nature of their relationship to that community varies widely. The success with which the typology was able to guide this study of Jewish identity is encouraging. I hope that it will be used as a theoretical basis for the comparative study of ethnic identity. Future studies, which may use a representative sample of these twelve components, will give a better understanding of which components are most essential to the structure of identity.

In this study, I focused on cognitive processes involved in self-identification. For a fuller understanding of identity, the affective and instrumental aspects will have to be considered also. In a study of staff members of informal Jewish educational program in seven Diaspora countries, which looked at both cognitive factors and affective symbols of identity (Cohen, E.H. 1992; 2004) a parallel affective region was found for each of the cognitive regions.

Studies of other populations can attest to the extent to which these findings are applicable to the field of ethnic identity at large. If a number of groups can be shown to understand their own ethnicity along the conceptual lines of this structure, it will be a valuable tool in cross-cultural analyses. Studies will need to be carefully constructed since the components may represent divisions that are foreign to a given culture, for example, a distinction between religion and culture (Weber 1997). Nonetheless, each may function as a distinct, though related, aspect of identity. As more information about the external influences on ethnic identity is gathered, the structure may be adapted and expanded.

Ethnic identity has gained importance in the wake of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the large-scale migrations and the many ethnic conflicts that have marked the turn of the millennium. Given its social and political import, it is crucial that we better understand how people view their own ethnicity. It is hoped that the components and structure outlined in this article will be a useful tool in this quest.

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Jewish Studies in the FSU: From Scholarship to Social, Cultural and Educational Construction, Regeneration and Growth[1]

Simon Parizhsky

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to suggest a theoretical argument and a practical vision for translating the achievements and resources of Jewish Studies in the Former Soviet Union (FSU) into educational "philosophies" and curricula, as well as into innovative cultural and social practice. I will put forward and try to demonstrate the following central thesis and suggest ways of its practical implementation: **Existential, social and educational translations of academic Jewish Studies in the FSU can provide a principal key to envisioning contemporary Russian Jewish culture and to regenerating it.** This thesis emerges directly from my understanding of the intellectual and social development of Soviet and post-Soviet Jewry, as well as from my interpretation of its current situation. For this reason my argument will begin with an analytical description of the relevant social and cultural milieus from both a historical and contemporary perspective.

I will try purposefully to re-examine and even undermine common basic assumptions in the discourse of educators and policy-makers on FSU Jewry. Much of this discourse includes an explicit or implicit notion of Russian Jewish identity as a "tabula rasa", a notion which sees the endeavor of their Jewish education as "filling an empty space", or in *haredi* terms an "empty vehicle [*agala reika*]". Religious narratives readily absolve Russian Jews of any responsibility for their "unorthodox"

1 The paper is based on a project prepared for the Jerusalem Fellows program of the Mandel Institute in 2002.

cultural identity and praxis by treating them according to the Talmudic dictum as "captured children [*tinokot she-nishbu*]". It is precisely this basic assumption of "pure Jewish deficiency" that this paper questions.

Mapping their historical development and contemporary milieu will provide the necessary background for a "qualitative" exploration of the cultural attitudes and frames of mind of modern Russian Jews. I will attempt to portray certain socio-cultural "profiles" and "ideal types" of Russian-Jewish identity that emerge from that background. For the most part, this portrayal will be based on close scrutiny and "strong" interpretation of literary sources (poems, interviews, etc.) that I will treat as cultural testimonies. This kind of exploration should provide us with a deeper understanding of "who Russian Jews really are", an understanding that is indispensable for locating the main problems in contemporary Jewish culture and education in Russia.

I will consider different existent approaches to constructing and regenerating Russian-Jewish culture and try to explain the particular difficulties each encounters in achieving its goal. I will argue that almost all attempts at Jewish renewal in the FSU are seriously hindered by the enduring difficulty of Jews in Russia and the "larger Jewish world" (Israel, the USA and Europe) to communicate in a "common Jewish language". I propose two principal interrelated reasons for this "failure of dialogue":

- International Jewish organizations and their educational efforts more often than not fail to relate to the cultural "otherness" of Russian Jews as a positive factor, to consider them equal partners in Jewish renewal and to meet their authentic concerns and aspirations.
- Russian Jews more often than not lack articulated and informed visions of Jewish life, culture and education that are based on intimate knowledge of and profound insights into Jewish civilization (with all its temporal and spatial diversity). Without a strong "Jewish cultural Self", their relations with the "larger Jewish world" are largely unequal and dependent. At best, these entail "importing" this or that Jewish ideology.

After analyzing existent options of cultural regeneration and their shortcomings, I will introduce and defend my central thesis, namely that academic Jewish Studies in the FSU could be a crucial resource for successful cultural construction and growth. I will also rely on my understanding of the role played by the humanities, universities, scholars and intellectuals in cultural construction, as well as on a normative vision of the Russian-Jewish intellectual. I see this intellectual as a model of

"double acculturation" and as a principal agent of cultural creativity and change. I seek to demonstrate that efficient use of this resource can catalyze major changes in Jewish life in the direction of greater independence, creativity and authenticity, thereby transforming Russian Jewry into a full-blown and equal part of the Jewish world.

Background: Trends and Developments in the Life of Post-Soviet Jewry

A brief historical enquiry[2] reveals that the infamous isolation and repression of Jewish life during the various phases of the Soviet regime notwithstanding, there existed several Jewish movements with distinctive ideological trends. Some of these movements were tolerated, supported or even sanctioned by the authorities to a certain point. However, sooner or later all of them inevitably came to suffer ferocious repression, censure and ideological warfare by the state. It is not only bitterly ironic but also profoundly indicative that since the collapse of the Soviet regime in the mid-'80s, and particularly during the late 1990s and early 2000s, we have witnessed a steady decline in intellectual effervescence among Russian Jews. Below I shall offer explanations for this significant phenomenon.

One of the distinctive Jewish ideologies of the early Soviet period was **Jewishly-motivated socialism and communism**, a more or less direct heir of the Bund and other pre-Revolutionary movements that had different approaches to the "Jewish problem", from assimilationism (Social Democrats), to autonomism (Bund) and Zionism (Po'alei Zion). After the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, many members of the Jewish socialist parties in Russia joined the Communist Party and its *Yevsektsiya* (Jewish Department), when the Party's pre-Revolutionary theory of assimilation as the solution to the Jewish problem was significantly modified. The new Soviet Jewish ideology of the 1920s and early 1930s was based on a national and territorial solution under the new conditions created by the "dictatorship of the proletariat". The main Party slogans and programs of that period were "productivization" of the Jewish population, Soviet-Jewish territorialism, and the development

2 See bibliographical survey in: Yelena Luckert, *Soviet Jewish History, 1917-1991: An annotated bibliography,* New York: Garland, 1992. Some of the major historical surveys are: Schneier Levenberg, *The Enigma of Soviet Jewry; Historical Background*, Hull, UK: Glenville Group, 1991; Zvi Yechiel Gitelman, *A Century of Ambivalence: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union, 1881 to the present*, New York: Schocken Books, 1988; Nora Levin, *The Jews in the Soviet Union since 1917: Paradox of survival*, New York: New York University Press, 1988.

of a Yiddish culture that would be "socialist in content and national in form." However, active Jewish participation in the socialist and communist movement in Russia was eventually brought to an end. Most of the Jewish socialists who were opposed to the Bolsheviks were forced into exile. The legal Po'alei-Zion party was closed down in 1928 and *Yevsektsiya* was dissolved in 1930. The Jews who had held prominent positions in the Communist Party were ultimately purged from the Party hierarchy, either between 1936 and 1939 or between 1948 and 1953.

One cultural movement directly linked with Jewish socialism was **Soviet Yiddishism,** which sought to develop a flourishing secular Jewish culture (literature, theatre, music) in the Soviet Union. The belief that there was a bright future for secular Yiddish culture in the Soviet Union became widespread the world over during the 1920s. This belief attracted authors such as David Bergelson, Leib Kvitko, David Hofstein, Moshe Kulbak, Peretz Markish, Der Nister and many others to the Soviet Union. Soviet Yiddish theater, led by Granovsky and Mikhoels, flourished up to the late 1940s. For the first time in its history, Yiddish became an official state language in Byelorussia and the Birobidgan region. Significant achievements were recorded in Yiddish linguistics, literary history, historiography and demography. However, towards the late 1930s, official Soviet ideology gradually abandoned the idea of developing Jewish culture and Jewish institutions and returned to its original conception of total Jewish assimilation. Most Jewish cultural institutions, including all Yiddish schools, were closed down and a trend of restricting the number of Jewish cadres was instituted. During World War II emerged a period of relative freedom of expression, within which Yiddish authors were permitted to express their emotions at the catastrophe that was destroying millions of their people. Yet by the end of 1948, all remnants of Yiddish cultural activities were destroyed in the Soviet Union. Most of the Yiddish authors were imprisoned and accused of anti-Soviet and Jewish "nationalist" activity. In August 1952, the most prominent among them were executed.

Despite the dissolution of all Jewish communal organizations in 1919, the confiscation of their properties, closure of *hadarim* and *yeshivot*, and conversion of synagogues into clubs, workshops or warehouses, semi-official and underground **Orthodox religious communities** still continued to exist. These tried to preserve traditional halachic Judaism in its various forms. Among them, **Chabad** – whose leader, J. Schneerson, was imprisoned and expelled in 1927 – was the most committed and prominent. These waning communities suffered from constant persecution under communist anti-religious policy and subsequent state

anti-Semitism. Synagogues were increasingly shut down, religious books were not printed and the baking of *matzot* was often proscribed. However, underground religious activity continued, often motivated by national sentiment, and manifested itself in increasing mass gatherings of young Jews, mostly non-religious, in and around synagogues in Moscow and other large cities on Simhat Torah and on the High Holidays.

The latest Jewish movement in the Soviet Union, which became known worldwide, was the **dissident Zionism** of the so-called "Refuseniks", whose mission was the struggle for the right of Soviet Jews to emigrate. In the late 1960s, tens of thousands of Jews began to apply for exit permits to go to Israel, but only a few achieved their goal. In consequence, hundreds of Jews, many of them of the younger generation and in the large cities, began to voice their protest, sending letters and petitions to Soviet leaders and international organizations. Young Jews organized themselves to study Hebrew and many of them celebrated Israel's Independence Day openly or clandestinely. This movement gave much impetus to the worldwide struggle and support for Soviet Jewry. Nevertheless, it is important to note that most of the Jewish population in the Soviet Union was unaffected by these movements, having undergone a rapid process of assimilation as a result of modernization, official ideological pressure and the Holocaust – the last annihilating the remnants of the still more traditional communities in former *shtetls* of the Pale.[3]

This process of assimilation continued up to *Perestroika,* which influenced and stimulated Jews to move in two principal directions: **massive emigration** to Israel and other countries (mostly the USA), on the one hand, and **cultural renewal**, on the other. The years 1986-89 witnessed a vigorous "grassroots" growth of associations for Jewish culture, Hebrew classes, religious communities, Sunday schools and other cultural and educational institutions. However, the economic, social and political instability of the late 1980s and early '90s strongly encouraged the "exodic" tendency and brought about the biggest wave ever of *aliya* and emigration from the FSU. For a while it seemed that post-Soviet Jewry had finally and irretrievably made up its mind to leave,

3 See the almost immediate response of the *haredi* writer, Moshe Sheinfeld, in his "A Time of Assembly" (*Diglenu*, Summer 1945): "Ruinously, White Russia and the Ukraine fell to the enemy and the destroyer, and together with over a million Jews from these districts [Scheinfeld had written earlier in the article that the Jewish spark was never extinguished there, and in better conditions might well have been rekindled and conquered hearts], the hope was shattered that Russian Jewry would renew its days of glory." (Quoted in M. Friedman, "The Haredim and the Holocaust," *The Jerusalem Quarterly* 53, Winter 1990, p. 95)

and international Jewish organizations mobilized their efforts to facilitate the exodus and provide urgent welfare relief for those left behind.

Towards the mid-1990s this situation began to change as it became evident that a major part of the Jewish population, especially in the large cities, was going to remain in the FSU. International Jewish organizations (the JDC, the Chabad movement and others) began to concentrate their activity and resources on building Jewish communities all over the FSU, in order "not to lose those hundreds of thousands of Jews for the Jewish people." As a result of the joint efforts of these bodies and local Jewish activists, hundreds of Jewish day schools, *Ulpanim*, libraries, cultural and community centers, religious congregations, youth and student movements, kindergartens, family programs and welfare organizations were established.

However, this impressive growth of Jewish organizations has had two important limitations: a) it has not reached the overwhelming majority of Russian Jews, and b) it has not been accompanied by comparable intellectual, cultural or spiritual regeneration. Several explanations can be suggested for this:

- Most "ideal types" of Russian (Soviet) Jewish identity (to be discussed in detail below) do not presuppose active cultural, communal or educational expressions. Jewishness is regarded, rather, as an indelible in-born quality and not as something which requires cultivation or outward expression.
- State and vulgar anti-Semitism which had caused Jews to confront (primarily negatively) and be concerned about their Jewish identity, ceased to play as prominent a role in public life. In the liberalized post-Soviet society, the negative awareness of Jewish identity was often replaced by a sense of the irrelevance of ethnic or religious particularism and of indifference to it.
- In the wake of broken continuity, post-Soviet Jewry had very few resources for cultural regeneration. Newly emerging educational and cultural services could not compete with those existing in the non-Jewish urban environment. Even more detrimental in these conditions, the efforts at Jewish renewal had to combat the negative popular image of Jewish culture as parochial and lowly that was shared fully by most of the Jewish intelligentsia.
- Foreign organizations which mobilized considerable resources and came to assist Russian Jews in their cultural renewal (the JDC, the Jewish Agency, the Chabad movement, etc.) found no articulated local Jewish conceptions, ideologies or educational visions. They thus had to bring in "imported" content, which failed to attract a significant

proportion of the Jewish population to organized Jewish life, and in many cases even discouraged them from it. Inadvertently, this development also encouraged and perpetuated extreme dependence on the financial support, organizational infrastructure and ideological agenda of international Jewish organizations, which has hindered the equal dialogue between Russian Jewry and "the larger Jewish world".

- By the mid-1990s, a great number of local Jewish activists who might have contributed to a cultural and spiritual regeneration had made *aliya*. The general situation of post-Soviet Jewry was thus complicated by a drastic depletion of leadership.

In order to extricate Jewish cultural construction in the FSU from the commonly held internalized image of a **Russian Jew whom the joint efforts of American Jewry and the State of Israel should rescue from assimilation and bring back to the fold of Jewish identity**, Russian Jewish cultural-educational leaders need to undertake a creative search for their own ways of being Jewish in the FSU. Such a search would enable them to establish an equal dialogue with the rest of the Jewish world, as well as with their own social and cultural environment. Below I shall present a picture of the cultural genealogies and profiles of modern Russian Jews as a background to the presentation of my vision of the steps necessary for the renewal of Soviet Jewish life.

Two Portraits

The general overview of the development of Soviet and post-Soviet Jewry presented here in large brushstrokes hopefully contributes to mitigating the simplicity of the various "tabula rasa"-like views of this Jewish population noted in the previous section. It demonstrates that in spite of an almost hermetic isolation from the rest of the Jewish world, Soviet Jewry had its share of turbulent ideological and cultural movements. Its life was replete with intensive inner struggles with questions of Jewish identity. Seventy years of Soviet regime strongly and sometimes tragically affected the social, cultural and personal development of the Jews, but did not stop or blot it out completely. By the time *Perestroika* enabled Soviet Jews to renew intensive contacts with the Jewish world, it became apparent that this prolonged period of relatively autonomous development had taken them to a very different place from that of the largest Jewish communities in the world, those of Israel and the United States. This place was different but by no means empty.

In order to obtain a more in-depth grasp of this cultural and social reality, it is crucial to examine the dominant personal attitudes and narratives arising from and within this historical context. The two portraits I will present relate to very different historical and social milieus and very dissimilar types of Jewish identity. They were purposefully chosen not as generalized images but as highly individual (and even idiosyncratic) ones. One of the considerations which directed the choice of these two portraits was chronological, given that they reflect generational ruptures and continuities between the pre-War period (1920s-30s) and the post-War period (1950s-60s). The portraits are also very different in their positions in relation to Jewish commitment and affiliation: one may be characterized as a strong centrifugal relationship, the other as indifferent. These two images do not represent the full spectrum of Soviet Jewish identity in all its variety and complexity. My aim is to disclose certain characteristic traits, features and marks on the "tabula" of FSU Jewry, features that serve as guide-posts for those who seek to examine this Jewry more closely and to provide it with a sense of direction and a notion of what to look for.

This aim impelled me to privilege methods of pointed qualitative probing over extensive "dredging up" of large masses of empirical data. I believe that such a qualitative inquiry is indispensable and complements the generalized historical approach.

Eduard Bagritsky: Poetics and Politics of Jewish Self-Hatred

Edya Dzyubin was born in Odessa in 1895 and died of asthma 39 years later in Moscow as Eduard Georgiyevich Bagritsky, a Soviet poet renown for his revolutionary verses that speak in the romantic tradition. The son of a poor Jewish family of tradesmen, Bagritsky learned land surveying at a technical school. He enthusiastically welcomed the Revolution of 1917, served in the Civil War as a Red guerrilla and also wrote propaganda poetry. The rigors of war left Bagritsky in ill health, and he turned to writing as a full-time career. After his death, his wife was "suppressed" and put into a labor camp by Stalin. His son Vsevolod, also a talented poet, was killed near Leningrad during WWII.

Bagritsky belonged to a large group of Jewish writers from Odessa who gave literary expression to the Russian Jews' love affair with revolution. Eduard Bagritsky, Isaac Babel, Valentin Kataev, Yuri Olesha, Ilya Ilf and Yevgeni Petrov, each in his own way, dealt with the central issue of their turbulent times – the rise of the brave new world and the ruin of the old, traditional one.

All of them wrote in Russian and considered themselves part of the new Russian literary community, but nevertheless paid much attention to particular Jewish embodiments of the revolution. The ideological message of their work was largely coherent with the official policy of the communist party and its *Yevsektzia* (Jewish Department). They urged Jews, tragically (and sometimes comically) caught between the old and the new, to reject the old parochial and petit bourgeois world of their forefathers and join the common enterprise of the Soviet people to create a new better world. In this world, particularistic ethnic or religious identities chaining human beings to their dejected past would become largely irrelevant. Bagritsky and his fellow writers exerted a profound influence on the Jewish masses, not least because the new rulers saw literature as one of the most efficient instruments of propaganda and granted the literati lavish state support. As discussed above, in the 1920s and, to a far lesser degree, in the 1930s, there still existed a number of competing ideological and cultural trends and attitudes among Soviet Jews (Jewish socialism, labor Zionism, autonomism, Yiddishism). Among these, the trend represented in Bagritsky's portrait was by far the most powerful since it was backed by the full might of the state, en route to Stalinist totalitarian rule.

Bagritsky touched on the "Jewish theme" in several of his major poetic works. Most prominent among these is the figure of commissar Kogan in his revolutionary epos, *Duma pro Opanasa* (1925), and a Jew-Revolution love-affair in his posthumously-published long poem *Fevral* (1936). But his most existentially poignant and telling treatment of the "Jewish theme" can be found in his short poem entitled "Origin" (*Proiskhozhdenie*, 1930)[4]:

ORIGIN
I forget – in what kind of sleep
I trembled first with fevers still to come…
The world shuddered…
A star, as it raced, lurched
And splashed the water in an azure bowl.
I tried to clasp it. But slipping through my fingers
It darted away like a red-bellied fish.
Some rusty Jews over my crib
Crisscrossed their beards like crooked swords

4 Э. Г. Багрицкий. Стихотворения. Ленинград, «Советский Писатель», 1956, my translation.

And all was in disarray…
All as it shouldn't be…
A carp tapped at the window,
A horse twittered like a bird, into my palms a hawk fell dead
And there skipped a tree…
… And onwards my childhood went.
They tried to parch it with unleavened bread.
And to deceive it with the glow of candles.
They shifted the Tables of Law up close to it –
A cumbersome gate impossible to swing.
Always Jewish peacocks on ancient sofas
And Jewish cream in jugs turning sour,
My father's crutch and my mother's headscarf,
All murmured in my ear:
O wretch, O wretch!
And only in the night, and only on my pillow
My world was cosseted from being cleaved with beards.
And little by little, like copper pennies,
Water dripped from the kitchen tap,
It shuffled to thunderclouds
And sharpened a streaming blade of jet.
But, pray tell, how could it worship the expansive flowing world,
This Jewish unbelief of mine?
They instructed me: roof is roof.
And stool is stool. The floor is crushed dead with boots,
You have to listen, see and understand,
Depend on this world as on a table.
But the termite with its clockwork precision
Is already gnawing at the foundations' essence.
But, pray tell, how could it worship fixed firmness,
This Jewish unbelief of mine?
Love?
Sidelocks devoured by lice,
A collarbone jutting out on one side
And pimples… herring on the lips
Neck's horse-like curve –
Parents?
Growing ancient in the twilight,
Hunchbacked, knobby and barbaric.
They hurl at me, those rusty Jews,
Their long-haired fist.

Open, throw open the door!
There outside trembles
Foliage gnawed by stars,
Dull moon swims in a pool,
A crow cries out, who does not know his kin.
And all the love,
That turns up at my encounter,
And all the epilepsy
Of my kinfolk,
And all the lights
That make my dusks,
And all the trees
That slash my face –
All this rears up across my path,
Their anguished lungs whisper to me in whistles:
Outcast! Take your meager belongings,
Curse and scorn!
Get out!
From my cot I part:
To go away?
I will!
Tant mieux!
I spit on it!

A close reading of this poem sheds some light on the origins of a particular type of Soviet Jewish identity. The narrative of the poem is the genealogy of apostasy and of the spiteful resentment of one's own familial heritage and cultural identity.

Bagritsky wrote the poem at the age of thirty-five, already well established as one of the major Soviet poets. His *recherche de temps perdu* does not evoke any nostalgic yearning for the old – it evokes nothing but the sickening repulsion of all five senses: *rusty*, *crooked*, *old*, *sour*, *devoured by lice*, *pimples*, *herring on the lips*, *horse-like*, *twilight*, *hairy*, *gnawed*, *epilepsy*, *hunchbacked*, *coarse*, *anguished lungs*.

It is framed by two fateful events: coming into the world and leaving the Jewish environment. The birth could and should have been a blessing, a true Nativity, but everything went wrong when the terrifying "rusty Jews" leaned over the cradle with their "crooked swords", obviously performing a ritual which would leave the boy with Cain's mark of damnation. Jewishness is perceived by Bagritsky as an inscrutable and inexplicable malediction, an inalienable curse of "otherness", of an existence "in disarray", an as-it-shouldn't-be reality.

From the very beginning of the poem, the sheer intensity of the poet's hatred of every cultural embodiment of Jewishness and his repulsion towards the Jews is overwhelming. All the blaring judgmental descriptions of Jewish childhood inevitably bare the trace of his later "extraneous" position and fervent endorsement of internationalist communist ideology.

The initial after-birth trauma, "the lurching of the star", was followed by a brief period of infancy full of Chagallean fantasy and imagination, too soon depressed, "parched", "deceived" and shut out by the "cumbersome gate" of formal religious education and the quiet tyranny of a petit bourgeois home. Freedom of mind and imagination were banished to the realm of dreams. Unrefined parental instruction resulted only in the constant sense of guilt.

As soon as the parochial world loosens its grip on young Bagritsky, he breaks away and leaves for good, spitting and slamming the door. It looks like an escape from a nightmare into the *groysse breite velt*, but something in the poem makes one uneasy with this "happy end". It does not take long to realize that this "something" is the haunting refrain of "this Jewish unbelief of mine". Even in the great wide world he is not able to divest himself of "Jewish" attitudes and sensibilities; the "ghetto" proves to be internal, and Jewishness – inalienable and irreversible.

Bagritsky's conflicts and tensions and the similar ones of his contemporaries were much less relevant for subsequent generations of Soviet Jews. After the Holocaust and Stalinist repressions, there was not much left to hate – neither religious education nor a traditional household. Most of the post-War assimilated Soviet Jews had never seen a traditional "sword-bearded" Jew. Nonetheless, as we shall see in the second of the two portraits, Soviet Jewish identity had strong aspects of continuity. Thus, even many decades later, many of the following landmarks of Bagritsky's self-defying and self-denying Jewish identity continued to constitute part of the "Soviet Jewish heritage". These include:

1. Jewishness as defined by birth, not by choice
2. Jewishness as inalienable and irreversible
3. Jewishness as the inexplicable curse of "otherness"
4. Jewishness independent of embodied Jewish culture
5. Jewish culture as parochial and miserable, as opposed to European civilization
6. The existence of certain inherent "Jewish" traits and attitudes (e.g., "this Jewish unbelief of mine")
7. Jewishness that will never do you any good

It is important that those who consider the majority of Russian Jews to be completely assimilated and devoid of any "Jewish identity" take care not to ignore this type of negative self-image of Jews, this highly traumatic existential experience of a "Jewish fate".

Joseph Brodsky: In the No-Man's Land

Joseph Brodsky was born in Leningrad in 1940. He left school at the age of fifteen, and worked in a morgue, a mill, a ship's boiler room and on a geological expedition. During this time Brodsky taught himself English and Polish and began to write poetry. He was exiled from the Soviet Union in 1972 after serving eighteen months of a five-year sentence in a labor camp in northern Russia. After his exile he moved to America. Celebrated as the greatest Russian poet of his generation, Brodsky authored nine volumes of poetry as well as several collections of essays, and received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1987. He died of a heart attack in 1996 in his Brooklyn apartment.

Brodsky is almost unanimously considered to be the greatest Russian poet of the post-War period. His popularity, steadily growing since the late 1960s, reflects not only recognition of his virtuosic mastery of language and poetic form, but also an appreciation of his ability to express the cultural and political sensibilities of the post-War Soviet intelligentsia striving for freedom and independent thinking. His message of stoic estrangement from ideological pressure of the regime and courageous defense of individual freedom and intellectual integrity was in no way addressed specifically to Jews. But in two major respects it inadvertently had to do with Jews.

The first is mainly demographic and sociological. By the 1950s-60s, the Jewish population in the Soviet Union consisted largely of urban intelligentsia. The processes of modernization and social mobility, which began in Russia even before the October Revolution of 1917, were greatly accelerated by the Soviet assimilationist policy, industrialization of the Soviet economy and the final displacement of the surviving Jewish population of the former Pale of Settlement after the Holocaust. Thus a very significant proportion of the Jewish population was part of the socio-cultural group which comprised Brodsky's audience.

The second respect is the deep-rooted isomorphism of the cultural and political dispositions of the Jew and the intellectual (or *intelligent*) under Soviet regime. This isomorphism found the most concentrated expression in the often quoted line from Marina Tsvetaeva's *Poem of the End* (1924): "In this most Christian of all worlds, the poets are Yids."

When Brodsky was asked in 1995 by the Jewish-Polish intellectual, Adam Mikhnik, to comment on this line, he said: "…one can't be jealous of their position. They are aliens to people around them."[5]

The contemporary Russian-Jewish anthropologist, Alexander Lvov, devoted a significant part of his recent study, "A la recherche de Russian Jew", to an analysis of the relationships between Soviet Jews and the Soviet intelligentsia as phenomena "which are possible to distinguish but impossible to separate.":

> So, the Jew looks into the mirror and sees an intellectual there. And only having identified himself with this intellectual, he sees that it is a Jew who is behind the looking-glass. In this perpetual motion he is blessed with something he is never able to reconcile with – his self-identification.[6]

Many of Brodsky's most significant literary influences – Mandelshtam, Pasternak, Slutsky, Samoilov, Selvinsky – were of Jewish background, as were most of those who belonged to his immediate artistic environment in the Leningrad of 1950s-60s – Rein, Gordin, Kushner, Neiman, Dar and Oufland. He himself never defied his Jewishness, almost boasting to Mikhnik: "I am Jewish, one hundred percent. One cannot be Jewish more than I am. My father, my mother, no doubt about them. Without any foreign blood."[7]

On the other hand, he never wholly identified with Judaism, writing a poem for each Christmas and never being assertive about his religious identity. D. Weissbort, Brodsky's friend and translator, puts it this way: "While it is sometimes suggested or claimed that Joseph had rejected Judaism, that, whatever his family origins, he was a Christian, as far as I know he neither embraced Judaism nor denied it. He was 'a bad Jew', as he put it."[8] This "bad Jew" stance was often manifested by Brodsky in public statements:

5 Z Josifem Brodskim o Rosji rozmawia w Nowim Jorku Adam Michnik, Magazin (Dodatek da "Gazety Wyborczej"), no. 3 (99), 20.02.1995, s. 6-11. English translation available by Dmitry Gorelikov, "Conversation of Joseph Brodsky with Adam Mikhnik", http://zaraza.netmedia.net.il/Nossik/Brodsky/dialog.html

6 Alexander Lvov, "A la Recherche de Russian Jew," «Еврейская школа» № 1-2, 1996, с. 173-214. The quotation here is my translation of the original Russian. An alternative English translation is available at http://www.cl.spb.ru/alvov/rusjeng.htm.

7 Z Josifem *Brodskim* o Rosji rozmawia w Nowym Jorku Adam Michnik // Magazin (*Dodatek* do "*Gazety Wyborczej*"), no. 3 (99), 20.02.1995, s. 6-11

8 Daniel Weissbort, "On Joseph Brodsky," *Jerusalem Review* 4 (2001)

> – Is it true you converted to Christianity?
> – That is total nonsense! I do not have time to spare for it. I am a bad Jew. I think a person should identify himself in more precise terms than race, faith or nationality. First you have to ask yourself if you are a coward, a liar or a decent man. One's identity must not depend on external criteria.[9]

I believe, however, that since Brodsky was a poet par excellence and not a publicist, it is to his poetry that we must turn for a condensed expression and symbolic embodiment of his complicated and ambiguous relationship with Judaism and Jewish culture. Characteristically, we do not have much choice in this matter. The only poem directly addressing the issue was written by Brodsky at the age of eighteen and reflects the tensions and conflicts of his formative years. His friends remember him reading it at artistic gatherings in the early 1960s, which testifies to the fact that it was not, as is sometimes claimed, marginal or incidental.

The Jewish cemetery near Leningrad.
A crooked fence of rotten plywood.
And behind it, lying side by side,
lawyers, merchants, musicians, revolutionaries.

They sang for themselves.
They accumulated money for themselves.
They died for others.
But in the first place they paid their taxes, and respected the law,
and in this hopelessly material world,
they interpreted the Talmud, remaining idealists.

Perhaps they saw more.
Perhaps they believed blindly.
But they taught their children to be patient
and to stick to things.
And they did not plant any seeds.
They never planted seeds.
They simply lay themselves down
in the cold earth, like grain.
And they fell asleep forever.
And after, they were covered with earth,

9 Interview with Helen Benedict, *Antioch Review* 1 (Winter 1985)

candles were lit for them,
and on the Day of Atonement
hungry old men with piping voices,
gasping with cold, wailed about peace.

And they got it.
As dissolution of matter.

Remembering nothing.
Forgetting nothing.
Behind the crooked fence of rotting plywood,
four miles from the tramway terminus.[10]

In this poem, Brodsky expressed the existential perplexity of his generation in the face of its failure to connect meaningfully to its Jewish past.

One of the central conflicts of Russian-Jewish identity symbolically expressed in the poem is participation in, perpetuation and impregnation with ("lay themselves like grain")[11] the urban European Russian culture ("Leningrad"), while staying away from or even hostile to "grassroot" Russian-Orthodox, "Asian", "barbaric" sensibilities ("never planted seeds"). Brodsky once made a very characteristic remark to the famous Polish-Jewish dissident Adam Mikhnik:

> A cute beard, pince-nez, passion for (Russian) people?? Long conversations about Russia's fate at the suburban dacha??? Neither I nor my colleagues have ever considered ourselves as "intelligentsia", at least for the reason that we have never discussed Russia, its fate or its people among ourselves. We were more interested in Faulkner and Beckett. What would happen to Russia?? What would its fate be?? What is its purpose?? To me, all that ended with Chaadayev and his definition of Russia as a failure in the history of mankind.[12]

The Soviet Jewish *intelligent* found himself idealistically defending the boundaries of cosmopolitan Western civilization (city limits, "terminus")

10 'The Jewish cemetery near Leningrad' is taken from "From Russian with Love: Joseph Brodsky in English, Pages From a Journal 1996-97" by Daniel Weissbort. Published by Anvil Press Poetry in 2004.

11 A visual metaphor of *diaspora*, which literally means "dispersing the seeds".

12 Z Josifem *Brodskim* o Rosji rozmawia w Nowym Jorku Adam Michnik // Magazin (*Dodatek* do "*Gazety Wyborczej*"), no. 3 (99), 20.02.1995, s. 6-11

against vulgar materialism, nativism and "soil and blood" nationalism. His cultural identity was defined by this frontier. Said Brodsky in another interview:

> I don't like pompous expressions like "protecting culture". But there is still a feeling somewhere deep inside you that you should somehow protect the culture from idiots, safeguard its fundamentals. Each of us had such profound sentiments, not so much a pathos as an ethos of defense. We defended culture in the most general sense of the word, not Russian or Jewish culture, but Civilization against barbarians.[13]

The tragic paradox and the painful conflict of such an identity was the fact that Brodsky's own Jewish past turned out to be outside the stronghold ("miles away from the tram terminus"), dead and decaying. Jewish culture which had not fully become part of Western civilization (symbolized in the poem by the "Talmud", not the Bible) could not be framed as "high culture". This brought about attitudes ranging from self-hatred (Jewishness considered to be a species of grassroot barbaric nationalism and thus a sworn enemy) to Freudian "repression" resulting in a pathological state of amnesic obsession ("remembering nothing, forgetting nothing"). Brodsky does not hate his forefathers as did Bagritsky, he even tries to feel a certain empathy. He tries to connect, which could be seen in the act itself of visiting the cemetery, but the existential rupture ("miles away") between rootless "elevated culture" ("Leningrad") and "uncultured, parochial origins" ("Jewish cemetery", *shtetl*) does not allow for a meaningful connection. It leaves him standing perplexed in a no-man's land, and this same perplexity is a crucial clue to understanding the world of at least some contemporary Russian Jews.

Some of the principle features of post-War Russian-Jewish *intelligentsia*, as reflected in Brodsky's literary testimony, may be summarized as follows:

1. Being born a Jew is hardly relevant for one's cultural or religious identity.
2. Jewishness is likely to strengthen the feelings of alienation and estrangement from Russian nationalistic sentiments.

13 Interview with David Bethea, 24-25.03.1991 partly quoted in David M.Bethea, *Joseph Brodsky and the Creation of Exile,* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994.

3. Estrangement from the "barbaric" aspects of official Soviet culture and society is expressed in embracing the high cosmopolitan Western culture and not the Jewish one. Jewish culture is a thing of the past, parochial and largely irrelevant to a modern intellectual.
4. It is almost impossible for a Soviet Jewish intellectual to connect meaningfully to the Jewish past.
5. Sociologically, there is a very significant overlap between the terms "Soviet Jew" and "*intelligent*" ("cosmopolitan intellectual").

Comparing Brodsky's position to that of Bagritsky, generational ruptures are evident alongside obvious continuities. Brodsky's generation was disillusioned with socialist and communist ideals compromised by the bitter experience of Stalinist totalitarianism. The Jewish "romance" with the revolution was over. The combined effect of the Nazi Holocaust and Stalinist rule had brought the final destruction, disintegration and dissolution of an embodied Jewish culture. Bagritsky's urge to extricate himself from the old parochial environment was tragically fulfilled for the next generation, which could relate to that environment only as a vanished world of the past, the only symbol of which is the cemetery. At the same time, the "brave new world" built on the ruins of the old, proved to be even more oppressive and suffocating for Brodsky than it had for Bagritsky. While Bagritsky was able to influence the masses because of state support for his cause, Brodsky's message was suppressed and persecuted by the regime which took offence at his struggle for individual freedom. While Bagritsky defied his Jewish identity in favor of universalist communist ideology, Brodsky's alienation was two-fold – he was alone in a "no man's land", unable to connect either to the irreversibly lost Jewish past, or to the dominant official Soviet culture.

This double estrangement was embodied in the figure of a cosmopolitan intellectual whose identity is based on the constant struggle for personal and artistic freedom. Thus, the post-War generation of Soviet Jews continued to embrace Bagritsky's framing of Jewish culture as antiquated, parochial and irrelevant. But they did not hate it as passionately, both because it had already become a matter of a distant past and because it no longer presented a hostile alternative to the new romanticized dominant ideology. The ethos of the new generation was no longer universalist collectivism but liberal cosmopolitan intellectualism. Brodsky's position was not idiosyncratic. It seemed to be a constitutive ethos of a whole "class" of urban Jewish intelligentsia, many or most of whom had no inkling of Brodsky's existence but nevertheless shared many of his sensibilities.

However, Brodsky's "ideal type" was not the only variation of Soviet Jewish identity of this period. It should be mentioned that Jewish underground dissident groups appeared in the 1960s among the same class of Jewish intelligentsia. These groups passionately embraced religious or secular Zionist ideology as an alternative to the communist one and many of them began their world-renowned struggle for the right to emigrate (*Otkaz*, Refuseniks). The old "Bagritsky" type, that is people who denied and defied their Jewish origins while totally complying or identifying with official Soviet ideology, also continued to exist.

However, I privilege Brodsky's narrative over that of a Refusenik for two reasons. First, the Jewish underground consisted of several hundred individuals, while millions belonged to the class of assimilated Jewish intelligentsia, described above. And second, the identity-type represented by Refuseniks is hardly relevant for the exploration of contemporary post-Soviet Jewry since almost all left for Israel as soon as they had the opportunity, in addition to the fact that given that their identity was largely dependent on the struggle against the Soviet totalitarian regime, after *Perestroika* it lost much of its raison d'etre.

Preliminary Conclusions: a cultural profile of 20th-century Russian Jewry

In the above section I tried to provide some primary signposts for an understanding of the elusive, fluid, changing, heterogeneous reality of Jewish life in the FSU. In regard to the "cultural profile" of contemporary Russian Jews, I suggest that the two portraits presented have four common elements which seem to organize the various and often very dissimilar types of Russian-Jewish identity described above.

The first is **Jewish discontinuity**. Whether in the form of Bagritsky's revolutionary negation of the Jewish past of his fathers, or in the form of Brodsky's perplexity and existential sense of disconnectedness from the vanished Jewish world and its irrelevance to a modern urban intellectual, Russian Jews do not consider themselves direct heirs of the traditional world of pre-Revolutionary Eastern European Jewry. As David Roskies would say, they do not seem to have "a usable Jewish past".

The second common element is **intellectualism**. As discussed, "a Jew" had become almost synonymous with "an intellectual" in the 20th-century Soviet state. Soviet Jews represent an extreme example of the Jewish=intellectual symbiosis, not least because all other "material" or "embodied" social, religious and cultural channels of expressing Jewishness were closed by communist dictatorship. This also produced an almost hermetic isolation from the larger Jewish world outside.

The third common element is **identification with "high" European culture**. The content of the above-mentioned intellectualism was not at all Jewish but, rather, European or even cosmopolitan. Russian culture is included in this identity only in its sublimated "westernized" form. Jewish culture is not considered sufficiently elevated and thus worthy of serious consideration by a modern cosmopolitan intellectual. The thorough Russian-European acculturation of Soviet Jews usually goes along with no less of a total Jewish "deculturation".

The fourth element is **framing Jewishness as an in-born quality which does not presuppose cultural manifestations or halakhic definitions.** Being a Jew is a curse for Bagritsky and a source of alienation for Brodsky, but neither thinks of a Jew as one who practices Judaism, speaks a Jewish language or belongs to a Jewish community. The fact of being a Jew is indelible, on the one hand, and indifferent to matters of culture and religion, on the other. Thus "a communist Jew" for Bagritsky does not mean a synthesis of Jewish culture with communist ideals; and for Brodsky "Christian Jew" is no oxymoron, because Jewishness and culture, Jewishness and religion, Jewishness and ideology, Jewishness and community belong to totally different "orders of existence".

Soviet Jewry has thus found itself in a very different place from that of many other Jewish communities in the world. It is a community that shares certain common notions about Jewishness which are not at all held in common by the rest of the contemporary Jewish world. One would be hard-pressed to find a Russian Jew who thinks of his Jewishness in terms of a nation (as do many Jews in Israel), a religion (as do many Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Jews all over the world), a spiritual quest (as do many "new age" Jews), a community (as do many American Jews) or even an ethnic culture (as do Yiddishists and quite a few other secular Jews around the world). This disjuncture renders the dialogue of any of the above with post-Soviet Jews especially challenging for both sides. At the same time, such a dialogue, if undertaken with a great deal of sensitivity, open-mindedness and respect for the otherness of each side, could prove to be revelatory and most fruitful for all.

Three Approaches to Jewish Renewal in the FSU

As I argued above, since *Perestroika* the efforts of Jewish renewal in the FSU have been facilitated and largely dominated by international Jewish organizations. However, these efforts have thus far had very

partial success. Quantity-wise, they have not succeeded in reaching the overwhelming majority of FSU Jews, and quality-wise, they have not brought about sufficient intellectual and spiritual vitality to imbue numerous newly established Jewish institutions with vibrant visions of Jewish life. Earlier, I suggested that one of the principle reasons for this lack of success is the enduring "failure of dialogue" between Russian-speaking Jews and the rest of the Jewish world. Responsibility for this failure cannot be placed entirely on the "external" side of the dialogue. Nonetheless, the cause of Jewish renewal would be well served if international organizations and their educational efforts were to recognize and respect the cultural "otherness" of Russian-speaking Jews and engage with them as equal partners in an effort that addresses this Jewry's authentic concerns and aspirations.

The qualitative portrait of Soviet and post-Soviet Jewry presented above, against the historical-social background of the main trends and developments in the life of the community, provide the necessary grounding for considering different existent approaches to constructing and regenerating Russian-Jewish culture and explanations for the particular difficulties each of them encounters in achieving their goals. There are a number and variety of competing approaches to Russian-Jewish renewal, but I will focus on the three most influential ones.

One major approach sees Jewish renewal in terms of building Orthodox religious communities. By far the most committed, prominent and powerful adherent of this approach is Chabad Hasidism, though there are also minor attempts of other Hasidic and "Lithuanian" Orthodox movements to establish synagogues and educational institutions in the FSU. I will also mention and briefly analyze the failure of an additional "player" in the religious arena, non-Orthodox Jewish movements, to exert considerable influence on Russian Jews.

The second major approach is represented mostly by the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), as well as by direct partnerships of FSU Jewish community institutions with the Federations of their sister-communities in US. This approach brings to the FSU a model of American Jewish community in an effort to facilitate and empower the local Jewish population to organize itself in a voluntary non-denominational community.

The third major approach is inspired by the (mostly secular) Zionist ideology and is represented in the FSU by two major Israeli agencies – the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI) and *Lishkat ha-Kesher*, the latter being closely associated with the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs (with its embassies and consulates), as well as with the Israeli Ministry of Education.

Below I shall analyze the ways in which each of these approaches relates (or fails to relate) to the characteristic features of Soviet and post-Soviet Jewish identity. My basic assumption here is not a "market study" one. I do not claim that the only task of Jewish educational, cultural or communal organizations is to adjust themselves to popular tastes and to serve them. On the contrary, I believe that these organizations should be driven by passionate visions of Jewish life which could attract adherents, while challenging and changing the existing notions of what is possible. At the same time, I also believe that no vision can speak to people's hearts and minds without relating to their present attitudes and frames of mind, without speaking in their language, and without granting primary recognition to their present identities. As we shall see, the last point has proved the most challenging for various Jewish trends, movements and ideologies which have tried to take hold in the FSU.

The Orthodox Model (Chabad)

Chabad Hasidism is presently the most influential religious movement in the FSU, reaching out to hundreds of communities, running synagogues, yeshivas, day schools, kindergartens and community and welfare programs. In the last several years it has been considerably strengthened by winning the political support of the Russian authorities. A clear expression of this support was the way in which the Chabad Rav Berl Lazar, aided by these authorities, emerged triumphant in the ferocious struggle for the still-controversial post of Russia's Chief Rabbi. Nevertheless, Chabad has failed to influence numbers of FSU Jews, whose communities and organizations are numerous but mostly small and isolated. It has failed, despite missionary and messianic ambitions, to become the heart of Jewish life in most FSU cities.[14]

Anyone engaged in Russian-Jewish renewal invariably embarks on a search for a usable Jewish past. In this regard, and despite current **Jewish discontinuity**, Chabad does have something substantial to offer. It can position itself, with a certain amount of legitimacy,[15] as the most "authentic" of all existing approaches to Jewish revival, laying claim to continuity with one of the Russian Jewish "pasts". Chabad's sacred genealogy, its history and its geography are all deeply rooted in Eastern Europe, mostly in Byelorussia, but also in St. Petersburg and other cities.

14 The one remarkable exception seems to be Dnepropetrovsk (Ukraine).

15 The claim that Chabad is the only legitimate heir of the pre-Soviet and early Soviet Jewish religious communities is frequently used in Chabad's legal suits for the return of nationalized synagogues, libraries and other property.

During the entire Soviet era, the Orthodox movement (Chabad) was in fact the only movement which continued to struggle courageously against all odds. Thus, Chabad "owns" the only approach which can make claims not only to the construction, but actually to the re-construction of its model of Jewish life.

While most of the Chabad leaders in the FSU are foreigners who sometimes feel much more at home in Brooklyn or Kefar-Chabad than in the Eastern European milieu and speak Russian with a thick American or Israeli accent, they frame their way of life to today's assimilated Russian Jews as a return to the ways of their grandfathers and great-grandfathers. Through such framing, the initial sense of strangeness could have given way to a commitment to reconstituting severed generational continuity. However, this relative advantage is rarely used effectively by Chabad. It is more often than not left unstressed and unarticulated in its educational curriculum and public agenda, not least due to the above-mentioned foreign origins of many Chabad rabbis and yeshiva teachers.

The second characteristic feature of modern Russian Jewry, **intellectualism**, is a potential strength that Chabad seems also to have failed to realize. Historically, Chabad-Lubavitch has usually been defined as the most intellectual of Hasidic movements. The focus of Chabad learning, its most important seminal text, is a sophisticated and intellectually challenging mystical-philosophical treatise called *Likutei Amarim (Tanya)*, written by the founder of the Lubavitch dynasty, Shneour Zalman of Lyady (1745-1813). One of the first Chabad enterprises after *Perestroika* was to prepare and print the Russian translation of this incredibly difficult book. Being the first primary source in Jewish thought available to Russian-language readers,[16] it almost automatically became a bestseller. It might potentially have become the basis for a serious intellectual dialogue between the Russian Jewish intelligentsia and the world of traditional Jewish learning and wisdom, but, for a number of reasons, this did not happen. *Tanya* alone, isolated from the whole complex of Jewish classical sources – Tanakh, Midrash, Talmud, medieval Jewish thought, philosophy and Kabbalah – could not support such a dialogue, being in itself barely comprehensible. Further aggravating the situation was the steady shift of priorities within Chabad from Jewish learning to missionary activism, messianic ideology and political power-struggles. Rather than developing a serious Jewish learning curriculum for Russian Jews, Chabad offered them its uncompromising ideological side containing a catechism of correct

16 Maimonides' "Guide of the Perplexed", for example, still awaits its full Russian translation.

answers, which was a far cry from the intellectual quest so crucial to Russian-Jewish identity.

Identification with "high" European culture was an element of Soviet and post-Soviet Jewish identity which posed a direct challenge to Chabad's approach. Chabad was unable to relate to this identification in a positive way: dialogue or synthesis of Jewish and European civilizations was unthinkable because of Chabad's extremely particularistic and exclusivist worldview. Thus, Chabad offers the contemporary Russian Jew only one choice: to renounce Russian-European culture and embrace exclusivist Jewish particularism. In order to become "a good Jewish Jew", you have to discard your previous cognitive and axio-normative universe and "start anew". Chabad is no Modern Orthodoxy; it does not afford any type of genuine dialogue between Judaism and Western modernity. You can not be both a Chabadnik and a modern Western intellectual. The incompatibility is both cognitive, i.e., dogmatic versus critical thinking, and axiological, i.e., you can not be a European humanist and simultaneously believe that Gentiles do not possess a Divine soul.[17] It is little wonder, therefore, that confronted by such an ultimate choice (especially without a serious possibility to explore what exactly this Jewish particularism has to offer), the overwhelming majority of Russian-Jewish intelligentsia prefers adherence to high European culture and loses all interest in Chabad Judaism (which in many places is the only religious option). While difficult to estimate numerically, it appears that in the last fifteen years, the number of Jews Chabad has succeeded in winning over does not surpass the number it has succeeded in alienating.

In terms of the fourth feature of Russian Jews – **framing Jewishness as an in-born quality which does not presuppose cultural manifestations or halakhic definitions**, the dialogue with Chabad is ambiguous. On the one hand, there is a certain similarity between the Chabad conception of "a Jewish spark" present in every Jew, irrespective of his religious observance, community affiliation or cultural identity, and the Russian-Jewish commonplace of Jewishness as an indelible in-born quality. Chabad recognizes the Jewishness of every Jew no matter how assimilated. On the other hand, this approach is unappealing to the basic sensibilities of many Russian Jews who find the axiomatic relatedness of Jewish genes and Chosenness, irrespective of participation in a covenantal community, to be dangerously close to racism. Chabad itself sidesteps this problem by insisting that the "Jewish spark" is just a potential for Chosenness which could be actualized only through a

17 See *Likkutei Amarim (Tanya)*, end of Chapter 1 (folio 6 in standard Lubavitch editions).

life of commandments within a covenantal community. Without this actualization, the fact of being born a Jew is itself of little essential value.

Most Russian Jews, however, do not think of their Jewishness in terms of something which needs "actualization". To resist actualization while accepting the essentialist "Jewish spark" ideology of Chosenness would mean for them embracing quasi-racist views. Thus, Chabad confronts them with a dilemma: to actualize their in-born Jewishness by embracing *halakha* and religious community, or else to renounce the idea of the Chosen People. A number of factors, partly described above, usually impel them towards the latter choice.

While continuing to consider their Jewishness to be an in-born quality, Russian Jews usually do not believe that this makes them inherently Chosen and, even less so, exclusive possessors of a Divine soul. For them it is more of a genealogical peculiarity, a kind of genetic "condition" you can get both from your Jewish mother or your Jewish father, or even your Jewish grandparents. Their notion of "who is a Jew" is genealogical, but not exclusivist like that of Chabad. In fact, many Russian Jews do not understand and are even repelled by the way Chabad "filters out" children who have only a Jewish father (or grandparent) from its Jewish schools and educational programs. Without sharing Chabad's commitment to *halakha,* they do not identify with its practice of Chosenness and are not so eager to "use" their Jewishness (those who can) as an entry-pass to what, in their eyes, is an exclusivist club based on the notion of in-born superiority.

To summarize, Chabad does not (and sometimes can not) have much success in relating positively to the "otherness" of Russian Jews. It has a strong vision of Jewish life, but without a "dialogical" dimension, it is inevitably reduced to dogmatic ideology. As such, it not only has very limited appeal, but quite frequently also strengthens negative images of Jewishness among Russian Jews.

In addition to Chabad, there have been several attempts of non-Orthodox Judaism to take hold in the FSU. While sharing many of Chabad's disadvantages, Reform Judaism shares none of its relative advantages (historical continuity, intellectualism and primary "Jewish spark" egalitarianism). It does not have sufficiently strong historical roots in Eastern Europe, nor does it possess any record of a heroic struggle against Soviet anti-religious restrictions. Thus it does not offer post-Soviet Jews any version of a usable local Jewish past. Yet one of the principle reasons for its lack of success is that its activities have been perceived from the very start as nothing more than a missionary attempt to win Russian Jews to a distinctly American religious movement.

The American Community Model (JDC)

Between the early 1920s and into the late 1930s, the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) was sporadically allowed by the Soviet authorities to become engaged in relief efforts for Soviet Jews, but in 1938 it was finally accused of Jewish and American propaganda and expelled. It returned to the FSU immediately after *Perestroika,* mostly with a mandate for urgent rescue and relief operations – distributing food packages and later developing an entire infrastructure of welfare organizations, called under the generic term "*Hasadim*". Towards the mid-1990s, the JDC became seriously engaged in Jewish education (mostly informal) and community-building. At present, the JDC supports hundreds of welfare organizations, JCCs, kindergartens, libraries, and Hillel youth clubs all over the FSU. Its main goal is to facilitate, encourage and empower the local Jewish population to organize itself as a voluntary non-denominational Jewish community. More than ten years have passed and this goal is far from being reached. Moreover, the dynamics are not very encouraging. According to different estimations, during the entire last decade no more than 10% percent of the Jewish population in the large cities (where the Jewish population of the FSU is mostly concentrated) has been involved in any Jewish communal activity, and the percentage does not seem to be growing. This means that despite generous financial support, the model of the Jewish community offered by the JDC has not succeeded in inspiring the overwhelming majority of FSU Jews. I believe that analyzing the way this model relates to the four characteristic features of Soviet and post-Soviet Jewry will help us to understand at least some of the difficulties it faces.

Does the JDC provide a serious response to the problem of **Jewish discontinuity**? Does it offer its own version of a usable Jewish past? Here the JDC finds itself in a kind of bind. The image of an autonomous religious-ethnic community could have been projected onto the image of the pre-Revolutionary *shtetl* and the claim could have been made that what happens now is a revival of the historically "authentic" Jewish life in Russia. Yet this past seems largely unusable for the modern urban population which seems to construct its Jewish identity in contradistinction to the negative image of *shtetl* parochialism. Thus, the JDC's American model of modern urban Jewish community is seen as a totally new construction which does not try to mobilize the support of cultural or social memory.[18] However, I believe that without this support,

18 Remarkable exceptions are Michael Beizer's books on the history of Leningrad's Jewish community and synagogue buildings in the FSU, sponsored by the JDC.

without a serious search for a usable Jewish past, without the construction of common memory, all JDC efforts at community building will continue to have very limited success. This community model is more than often negatively identified with memories of Soviet collectivism or with the popular image of *shtetl* parochialism.

The JDC does not seem to have found a way to relate positively to the second element in the post-Soviet pattern of Jewish identity – **intellectualism**. Framing Jewish culture and education more as communal services and less as a part of vibrant and intellectually challenging urban environment does not invite Russian Jewish intelligentsia to a meaningful intellectual or spiritual quest. While one of the central institutions in the traditional Eastern European community was the *beis-medresh*, and while the synagogue is the spiritual center of contemporary American Jewish community, the kind of community being built by JDC in Russia offers neither a *beis-medresh* nor a synagogue as a parallel center of Jewish learning. The JDC seems still to be guided still by the "tabula rasa"-like view of Russian Jewry and an excessive reliance on familiar American models. The simple transplantation of those community models to the post-Soviet environment seems to reduce them to social, political and welfare functions at the price of serious intellectual and existential dialogue with Jewish texts and practices.

JDC's position is also ambiguous in relation to the third characteristic feature of post-Soviet Jews, i.e., their **identification with "high" European culture**. On the one hand, it brings to Russia a distinctly "Western", liberal model of Jewish community that co-exists very well with modern American culture and society. On the other hand, there is a certain dissonance between American and European culture as they are perceived by the Russian Jewish intelligentsia. The JDC primarily brings to the FSU such central elements of American-Jewish culture as communal solidarity, denominational identity, social commitment and voluntarism, while in the eyes of Russian Jews, "high" culture is primarily literature, art and science. Thus a Russian Jewish urban intellectual looking for Jewish "high culture" as he understands it has little chance of finding it in social- and welfare-oriented Jewish community frameworks.

Finally, post-Soviet Jewry's **framing Jewishness as an in-born quality which does not presuppose cultural manifestations or halakhic definitions** is one of the main challenges facing the JDC vision of Jewish life. A Russian Jew does not feel the need for a community framework in order to be a Jew. The American imperative of manifesting one's identity in social action, donations for various Jewish causes, synagogue attendance or Jewish religious education, is

foreign to the very constitutive core of the post-Soviet Jewish "frame of mind". To date, the JDC has hardly succeeded in fully acknowledging and breaching this fundamental dissonance. In order to do so, it needs first to grant legitimacy and recognition to the "otherness" of Russian Jewish identity, facilitate Russian Jews in articulating their own visions of contemporary Jewish existence in Russia, and enter into an equal transformative dialogue with them.

The Zionist Model (Jewish Agency for Israel [JAFI] and Lishkat ha-Kesher*)*

As discussed, Zionist ideology was not completely absent from the Soviet Jewish landscape. After having been strictly banned and suppressed in the early 1920s, it reappeared in the 1960s in the form of underground "Refusenik" activities. From that time and until the final fall of the Soviet regime, almost the entire Jewish world was mobilized to help Soviet Jews in their struggle for the right to emigrate. After *Perestroika*, efforts to encourage and help post-Soviet Jews to make *aliya* were officially institutionalized and became fully legal and legitimate in the eyes of the authorities. JAFI offices and Israeli Cultural Centers were established in many major FSU cities. The joint efforts of these and other Zionist agencies facilitated the largest ever wave of emigration to Israel in the late 1980s and early 1990s, fueled by economic and political instability in the FSU.

However, from the mid-1990s it became clear that the exodus of Soviet Jewry would not be total. While continuing to focus on immediate help for those who decided to make *aliya*, Zionist agencies started to think about the future of the remaining Jews in the FSU and to devote much attention to Zionist education and youth programs. Jewish day schools were established by the Israeli Ministry of Education, others (including many Orthodox schools!) were gradually transferred to its auspices. At present, JAFI runs a network of *ulpanim* and youth activities in addition to repatriation offices and, in alliance with the Israeli Ministry of Education, largely controls the Jewish day-school network in the FSU, while *Lishkat ha-Kesher* runs several Israeli Cultural Centers in the big cities. However, all these activities meet with serious difficulties in achieving their goals. The mass emigration of the early 1990s and the much smaller but steady flow of *aliya* today are not the result of successful Zionist education, but a function of the political and economic situation in the FSU. The best evidence for this are the tremendous ideological, educational and cultural challenges of absorbing Russian *aliya* in Israel. Zionist ideology, which, in the last two decades, has been going through a fundamental crisis in Israel itself, has not succeeded in

capturing the hearts of many post-Soviet Jews. I will try to suggest some reasons for this by analyzing the way this ideology relates to the cultural "profile" of Russian Jewry put forward above.

Jewish discontinuity. Zionism was one of several modern Jewish movements originating to a very great extent in Eastern Europe and Russia in particular. It had an ideology based on a radical interpretation of the Jewish condition in the Diaspora and a vision of a new Jewish culture. Appeal to these historical and cultural aspects of Zionism alone could have made it relevant for present-day Russian Jews, providing them with a sense of historical continuity and cultural actuality. Unfortunately, Zionism is represented in the FSU almost exclusively as the official ideology of the State of Israel with all the negative connotations of this (i.e., "ideological brainwashing") for the former Soviet citizens. In place of a serious discussion of Diaspora life, Zionist educators usually simply display implicitly negative attitudes towards it. To date, JAFI and *Lishkat ha-Kesher* have largely failed to offer Russian Jews a usable Jewish past.

Intellectualism. Being mostly represented as State ideological dogma and not as an intellectually-challenging cultural and political movement struggling with the fundamental problems of national and individual existence, Zionism tends to fall into the category of pure "ideology" in the eyes of the Russian Jewish intelligentsia. As such it is deemed unworthy of becoming a subject of serious intellectual exploration and dialogue. Despite its prolonged control over formal Jewish education in FSU, the Israeli Ministry of Education has not succeeded in developing an appropriate curriculum for Russian-language Jewish and Zionist education. Hebrew is taught in Ulpanim and in Jewish day schools in a purely instrumental way and not as a language of a 3,000-year-old culture. This is far from the vision of the New Hebrew Culture once so passionately debated on this same ground by the Russian founders of Zionism. Thus, Zionist institutions have not succeeded in transcending their pragmatic function as a "transit station" on the way to Israel and do not provide Russian Jews with serious opportunities for learning and intellectual dialogue.

Identification with "high" European culture. While Zionism as a cultural movement looks favorably on dialogue with European civilization and is largely based on a creative tension between national particularism and universal humanism, being presented in a simplified ideological form it is often perceived by Russian Jews as a kind of backward Asiatic nationalism incompatible with the enlightened European spirit. Israeli culture is mostly presented in the FSU Zionist frameworks in its shallow popular forms and not as "elevated" art, literature and scholarship. All

this contributes to the indifferent or even disdainful attitude of Russian Jewish intelligentsia to Zionism and Israeli culture as phenomena which do not deserve a place in their cultural universe.

Framing Jewishness as an in-born quality which does not presuppose cultural manifestations or halakhic definitions. In this regard, there is a great deal of agreement between institutional Zionism's definition of "who is a Jew?" and that of Russian Jews. The working definition of a Jew adopted by all Israeli organizations and programs in the FSU as one who is entitled to *aliya* by the Law of Return, accords very well with the sensibilities of most Russian Jews. Nonetheless, Zionist institutions are not able to support this working definition with an articulated and inspiring vision of secular Jewish culture in the State of Israel, and even less so in the Diaspora. This situation clearly has much to do with the enduring crisis and confusion about Jewish culture, education and identity in Israel itself. Thus the "Jews of the Law of Return" are mostly fated to remain "hollow Jews" with no imperative to participate in the regeneration and construction of Jewish culture.

In analyzing the three main approaches to Jewish renewal in the FSU, I focused on the way each of them a) relates to characteristic Russian Jewish cultural attitudes, and b) responds to specific challenges to the regeneration of Jewish culture embodied in them. I focused on the difficulties encountered by the three major approaches due to their lack of attention to the problem of Jewish discontinuity and their inability to offer a usable Jewish past. Chabad hagiography, the autonomous *shtetl* community or the Zionist movement in pre-Revolutionary Russia cannot be easily integrated into the present or future of post-Soviet Jews. The search for a usable Jewish past demands hard and committed educational, cultural and ideological work. It is impossible to reinvent Jewish culture without a collective vision that somehow integrates past, present and future.

I also argued that all three approaches have not been able to respond positively to Russian-Jewish intellectualism. All of the approaches analyzed confront Russian Jews with ready-made answers without paying much attention to the fact that Russian Jews may not have asked *their* questions yet. In place of an existentially engaged intellectual quest and dialogue, they mostly offer an abridged and adjusted variant of a Jewish ideology, be it Chabad's messianic Hasidism, American communitarianism or State Zionism.

None of the analyzed renewal strategies have succeeded in developing a vision that would view Jewish civilization in terms of "high" European culture. Neither Chabad's extreme particularism, nor the JDC's popular

"*Yiddishkeit*-ism", nor Israeli agencies' superficiality seems able to offer a beneficent cultural medium for Jewish renewal in the FSU.

Finally, none of the approaches succeed in relating to the Russian Jewish sensibilities regarding the question of 'Who is a Jew?' and in offering a vision that would inspire such an identity to transcend its passive "in-born" minimalist disposition. Chabad's treatment of the issue alienates the majority of Russian Jews as extremely particularistic and incompatible with their humanistic sensibilities; the JDC's liberal communitarianism that predicates Jewishness on voluntary participation in a community contradicts their sense of Jewishness as an in-born personal existential condition. Russian Jews need to derive personal meaning from their Jewishness before they possibly can or will want to join into a Jewish community. As for the Zionist's "Law of Return" approach, while succeeding in aligning with Russian Jews' sensibilities on this matter, it largely fails to offer a meaningful secular cultural embodiment of Jewishness.

In light of this analysis, I submit that any alternative approach to Russian Jewish cultural regeneration cannot avoid addressing the above issues. Its measure of success will depend on the measure of its response to them. Below I will present some basic ideas and guide-lines for such an alternative approach.

Towards an Alternative Approach

After having analyzed the major existent approaches to cultural regeneration and their shortcomings, I will now introduce and defend my central thesis, namely that **existential, social and educational translations of Jewish Studies could provide a crucial resource for successful Jewish cultural construction and growth in FSU**.

I understand Jewish Studies as being *the study of the religion, languages, literature, history and culture of Jews by methods of the relevant human sciences (philology, history, philosophy, anthropology, sociology etc.).* However, my notion of the possible social and cultural implications of such study is much wider than the disciplinary limits of pure academic science. I believe that under certain conditions (which I will explicate below) and as a part of a broader social and cultural vision, academic Jewish Studies can become an important "laboratory" for Jewish cultural construction.

The field of Russian-language academic Jewish Studies, mostly in the FSU, but also in Israel, is far from an imagined reality. At the end of the

19th–beginning of the 20th century, St. Petersburg and, to a lesser extent, other major Russian cities, became important centers of Jewish Studies under more or less direct influence of Western European *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. It was at this time that great individual scholars (Kokovtzov, Khvolson, Harkavy, Gunzburg, An-sky, Gessen, Dubnow), public institutions (Gunzburg Oriental College, Historical-Ethnographical Society and Jewish University), journals (*Evreiskaya Starina* and others), encyclopedic projects (*Evreiskaya Encyclopedia*) and publishing houses flourished and greatly influenced the Jewish intellectual atmosphere. Jewish Studies were an integral part of the far-reaching social, political and cultural transformations experienced by the Jewish population in the Russian Empire, playing a central role in the intense search for new forms of Jewish social life, culture and education.

In 1917, revolution and subsequent communist rule put an end to this renaissance. In the late 1920s, classic Jewish scholarship was finally banned and eliminated. The only scholarly niche for Jewish Studies which survived until the late 1940s was the study of Yiddish literature and folklore and even that under the strict ideological surveillance of the Stalinist regime.

The revival of Jewish Studies in Russia began even before the final collapse of the Soviet regime. Study of Hebrew, Jewish history, classical texts, literature and local history became one of the forms of Jewish underground activities often closely connected to Refusenik circles. It is not surprising, therefore, that very soon after *Perestroika,* Jewish universities were established first in St. Petersburg, then in Moscow and Kiev. Since then, Russian-language Jewish Studies have developed into a full-fledged arena of Jewish universities, academic centers at State universities, international conferences, publications, research projects, student and high-school activities, postgraduate programs, libraries and archives. These frameworks also engage a whole community of high-school students, undergraduate, graduate, postgraduate students, as well as university teachers and professors.

However, Jewish Studies in the FSU have not yet become a major factor in Jewish renewal for a number of reasons. During the first years of their existence, the newly established institutions of Jewish Studies invested most of their efforts and scant resources in securing recognition and legitimacy for the field itself, developing the curriculum, training faculty and strengthening their academic reputation. At the same time, while supporting specific Jewish Studies projects, the major international Jewish organizations (Chabad movement, JDC, JAFI, *Lishkat ha-Kesher*), did not consider Jewish Studies to be a core element in their

approach to Jewish renewal. Thus the development of Jewish Studies in the FSU for the last decade has been more unaffected by and independent of imported Jewish ideologies than other domains of Jewish culture and education. Cooperation with extraneous academic institutions was based on equal partnership with already existent FSU academic centers and universities. Yet Jewish Studies have remained largely an autonomous field, accumulating much Jewish knowledge and expertise, but generally isolated from cultural and educational practice outside of its institutional walls and exerting hardly any influence on the life and culture of Russian Jews outside of them.

I believe that the creation of efficient mechanisms of interaction between academic Jewish Studies and cultural-educational practices together with the translation of the achievements and resources of Jewish Studies into educational visions, curricula and cultural initiatives could provide a major impetus to Jewish renewal in the FSU. This renewal would produce greater independence, creativity and authenticity in Russian-Jewish life and would transform Russian Jewry into a full-fledged and equal part of the Jewish world. I also believe that Russian-language Jewish Studies as an academic field, and the community it has created, are currently sufficiently strong, developed and established to embrace the mission of making a major contribution to Jewish cultural construction and growth.

How do Jewish Studies address the challenges of Russian-Jewish cultural attitudes and behavior and what are their chances of success?

Jewish discontinuity. Jewish Studies, with their intellectually open and impassioned engagement with the cultural heritage of the past, can become a crucial resource for reclaiming and reinventing a usable Jewish past. Moreover, by disclosing a rich variety of historical forms of Jewish culture, Jewish Studies significantly broaden the horizons of "what is Jewishly possible", thus empowering creative efforts at envisioning new forms of Jewish culture. Jewish Studies can also offer Russian Jews a usable past of Jewish learning and scholarship from ancient times up to the 20th century, both in Russia or in Eastern Europe and elsewhere in the world.

While academic historical research alone does not construct cultural memory, I believe that in certain "existentializing" social, cultural and educational settings and conditions, it can "revolutionize" existing cultural patterns. Sholem's studies of Kabbalah and Buber's works on Hasidism, to take just two examples, provided many Jews of the 20th

century with a radically new version of a Jewish past and influenced the development of modern Jewish culture.

Intellectualism. Jewish Studies is a cultural practice that is not guided by dogmatic ideology or communal commitment, but sees itself as a purely intellectual quest. It does not provide ready answers, but encourages exploration and valorizes intellectual openness and integrity. This practice meets many of the sensibilities and aspirations of the urban Jewish population in FSU. Jewish Studies also frame Judaism mostly as a culture or civilization and tend not to reduce it to religion or ideology, thus inviting Russian Jews to dialogue freely with it and does not confront them with an immediate and unambiguous choice of loyalty to *halakha*, community or Jewish State. At the same time, the main challenge facing the Jewish Studies approach is the danger of its remaining in the ivory tower of intellectualism without taking responsibility for the social, cultural and educational implications of intellectual interests. This danger might be averted by complementing the positive relationship of Jewish Studies to Russian-Jewish intellectualism with a normative vision and ethos of a committed Russian Jewish intellectual that I will put forward below.

Identification with "high" European culture. By presenting Russian Jews with the ancient and modern treasures of Jewish sacred texts, exegesis, religious thought, theology, philosophy, mysticism, Hebrew grammar, poetry, secular literature, travelogues, history, music, art, ethnography, political theory, etc., Jewish Studies can "elevate" the status of Jewish culture in the eyes of Russian Jews to one comparable to "high" European culture. Jewish Studies do not reduce Jewish culture to ultra-Orthodox messianic ideology, as does Chabad. Neither do they reduce it to the *'Hava Nagila' Yiddishkeit* one finds in JDC community institutions, or to popular Israeli ideology and culture as do Israeli agencies.

Jewish Studies unveil deep-rooted interactions and interdependencies between European and Jewish civilizations; they do not demand the renunciation of either one of these interrelated cultural universes, but rather support and encourage a dialogue between them to an extent far greater that any other approach. It is true that looking back at some of the major *Wissenschaft des Judentums* scholars, there is the danger of Jewish Studies becoming an enterprise of providing Jewish civilization with a "noble burial", turning it into a fossilized object of disinterested academic inquiry and ignoring its existence as a contemporary living reality. Here again the danger may be thwarted by linking academic inquiry into the ancient treasures of Jewish civilization with a

normative vision of a socially-committed and culturally-engaged Jewish intellectual.

Framing Jewishness as an in-born quality which does not presuppose cultural manifestations or halakhic definitions. An approach based on academic Jewish Studies relates ambiguously to this characteristic. On the one hand, engagement in such studies implies a cultural definition of Jewishness: a Jew is one who is versed in Jewish languages, literature, history, etc.[19] This view seems to contradict the in-born culturally-disembodied sensibility of many Russian Jews. On the other hand, this definition can have a large appeal to Russian-Jewish intelligentsia since it is very inclusive (more inclusive by far than even the "Law of Return"). The confluence of this inclusiveness, a usable Jewish past, and an intellectual quest and "elevation" of Jewish culture, coupled with the role-model of a contemporary Russian-Jewish intellectual (see below) can encourage many post-Soviet Jews to change their "minimalistic" view of Jewishness.

Jewish Studies, more than any other approach, relates positively to the cultural "profile" of Russian Jews, but academic research alone can not fully address the challenges of social, cultural and educational regeneration and growth. In order to do so, academic Jewish Studies needs at least two complementary approaches: it must, a) suggest a vision of Jewish life, and b) devise ways and mechanisms of translating scholarship into culture and education. I will now provide a general outline of such a vision, and then suggest ways of implementing this Jewish Studies approach towards the overall objective of cultural regeneration.

Vision of a Russian-Jewish Intellectual

All Diaspora cultures and their educational endeavors define and understand themselves through their relation to the majority host culture. Perpetuating the culture of an ethnic or religious minority involves the conscious adoption or construction of particular models of existence within the larger society. Such models provide ideological guidelines as well as fundamental cognitive and normative assumptions for the community's educational efforts. Education, i.e., the purposeful engagement of individuals and groups in processes of socialization and acculturation, is conditioned by a complex social system, the patterning

19 See M. Silverman's interviews with Moscow Jewish Studies students (unpublished manuscript, 2001)

of knowledge, power, economy, etc., and it is thus crucial to examine the way positions of a "cultural other" can emerge, establish and perpetuate themselves within that system.

I will argue that the intellectual, that person who cultivates knowledge while articulating a consistent axio-normative stance towards culture and society, plays an important role in establishing patterns of cultural critique and taking responsibility for its educational expression. I will also analyze the possible dispositions of modern Jewish intellectuals towards the majority culture, and put forward a normative vision of the Jewish intellectual as a model of "double acculturation". An important feature of this type of Jewish intellectual is her ability to articulate "otherness" in the language of the cultural majority while basing it on critical commitment to the "quality of life" of her cultural and social environment. This should clarify and highlight the role of Jewish intellectuals in the Russian-Jewish context.

What are some of the main features of Russian-Jewish Diaspora intellectuals, and possibly of other Diaspora and Russian-Israeli intellectuals? Paul Mendes-Flohr begins his essay on Jewish intellectuals (mainly in the context of 20th-century Germany), by asking a relatively familiar question: how may one explain the disproportionate number of Jews among modern Western intellectuals – "individuals of critical dissent and cognitive originality"[20]? They may be easily enumerated: Marx, Freud, Kafka, Schoenberg, Benjamin, Adorno, Arendt, Celan, amongst others.

Mendes-Flohr argues, inter alia, that due to their peculiar position in European culture, acculturated Jewish intellectuals of modern times constituted the archetype of the "intimate stranger", the "stranger within". On the one hand, they had become "insiders" in majority culture ("more German than the Germans"), while on the other hand, socio-political circumstances (primarily social exclusion) did not allow them to forget their "otherness" and thwarted the progress from acculturation to assimilation. Especially significant for the present analysis is that these circumstances enabled those individuals to look at society and culture from a position of detachment, a necessary perspective for an intellectual.

The limitation of this theory is that all the intellectuals analyzed by Mendes-Flohr belong to the category for which I. Deutscher coined

20 Paul Mendes-Flohr, "The Study of the Jewish Intellectual: A Methodological Prolegomenon," in Mendes-Flohr, *Divided Passions*: *Jewish intellectuals and the experience of modernity,* Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991, p. 23

the term "non-Jewish Jews",[21] whose extent of European acculturation stands in inverse relationship to their participation in the Jewish cognitive universe, to their command of Jewish languages, texts and practices. Is this inverse relationship inevitable? Is another type of Jewish intellectual possible, one whose "otherness" would arise not from his social exclusion but from his belonging to an alternative cultural world with its own contrasting cognitive and axio-normative orientations? Could we learn something not only from Marx and Kafka, but also from figures like Buber and Levinas?

Let us consider alternative sources of cultural "estrangement" that might keep the residual otherness of the acculturated Jewish intellectual in place, even without social exclusion. Are there other factors aside from anti-Semitism that could keep highly-acculturated Jews from assimilation? One of the hypotheses suggested by Shils in this matter[22] posits that full integration into a culture is a process that is much more extended and complicated than would seem at first glance. Full mastery of language and cultural codes does not lead automatically to existential identification with the "charismatic", "primordial" core of the dominant culture, to participation in the "soul of the nation", as the Romantics called it. Indeed, while the Russian-Jewish *intelligentsia* has been fully integrated into what might be called "high European Russian culture", in most cases they have retained significant estrangement from Russian folk culture, from popular forms of Orthodox Christianity imbued with residual Slavic paganism, and from the "soil and blood" ideology of Russian nativism. In fact, the Russian-Jewish *intelligentsia* is a stranger to many of the components that presumably constitute the mystic communion of the "Russian soul".

Imagining, therefore, a somewhat different figure, not a "Russian intellectual of Jewish extraction", but a "Jewish intellectual in Russia", a Russian "Jewish Jew" (to take Deutscher's phrase in a different direction), such an intellectual would be at once integrated into the majority culture, committed to its flourishing and concomitantly maintain a critical stance towards it. However, the source of his dissent would not be his social exclusion (anti-Semitism), but would be derived from a contrasting Jewish civilizational cognitive and axio-normative perspective.

This "twice-acculturated" intellectual would be at least bi-lingual, not

21 See I. Deutscher, *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1968.

22 See E. Shils, "Charisma," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, 1968, Vol. 2: pp. 368-90, cited in Mendes-Flohr, p. 45.

in the instrumental semantic sense of the word, but in the sense of being able to articulate his "otherness" in terms of each of the two cultures. Thus his intellectual critique would be based not simply on an "outsider perspective", but on a particular "embodied" cultural perspective. Here I am not speaking of a simple cumulative broadening of the individual's cultural horizon, of just adding a little "Jewish knowledge" to her erudition, or of adding a few volumes of Judaica to her bookshelf. As Rosenzweig said: "to possess a world does not mean to possess it within another world which includes its possessor."[23] One doesn't simply make room in one's existing world for Judaism.

Metaphorically speaking, this implies the ability to see things both in straight and inverse perspective, the ability to write from right to left in the left-to-right world (and vice versa), to live and express oneself in the language of contrasting and interacting cultural systems. (It is precisely that diasporic duality, or multiplicity, which defines Jewishness for T. Lessing, who criticized the German Jews in these words: "Your duality has died, and so have you."[24])

Conditioned by such double acculturation, both sides of the dialogue – in our case the Russian and the Jewish – are creatively and critically revised: Russian cultural perspectives invite reflection on the polyphonic character of Jewish civilization, on its implicit premises, biases and blind spots. For the Jewish intellectual, Diaspora existence means creative manifestation of his position as the "intimate other" for both the host society and the Jewish State.

The most difficult part of this "art of being the other" is the constant temptation to reduce the dialogical relations to those of negation, hegemony or compartmentalization.[25] The main challenge facing a Jewish intellectual in the Diaspora is how to transform his nomadism, his protest against erasing difference, his undermining the "natural" bond between language, nation and territory, his commitment to text as the privileged place of questioning, and other axio-normative dispositions, into responsive and responsible critique of the majority culture, on the one hand, and into no less radical and no less critical

23 F. Rosenzweig, "It is Time: Concerning the Study of Judaism," in Franz Rosenzweig, *On Jewish Learning*, New York: Schocken Books, 1955, p. 29f

24 Theodor Lessing, "Jewish Self-Hatred," in *The Jew in the Modern World: A documentary history*, 2nd ed., New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1995, p. 238

25 Terminology derived from M. Silverman, "Modes of Present-day Israeli-Jewish Relationship to the Traditional Religious Culture of the Jewish People" (Hebrew), in M. Bar-Lev & N. Gover (eds.), *Judaism and Humanism – Issues in Israeli Education* 6, Jerusalem: Israeli Ministry of Education, 1996, pp. 18-39.

commitment to different manifestations of Jewish culture, based on "generational connection and its attendant anamnestic responsibilities and pleasures."[26]

The possible implications of such an ideal of Diaspora intellectual-cultural construction and education are manifold. One of these is the influence of such bi-lingual "cultural heroes" as role models who legitimize responsible cultural dissent and positive manifestations of otherness. They could be regarded as an embodiment of such central values as moral responsibility for and fundamental solidarity with the society in which they live, as well as taking full responsibility for critiquing it from a contrasting cultural perspective. In this regard the other kind of "strangely-intimate" relations – to the State Israel as a particular sovereign ("majority rule") embodiment of that contrasting culture – is of crucial importance for such a critique to be accountable.

Another implication is the participation of these intellectuals in public discourse and deliberation on cultural and educational issues, visions and goals. While I am far from arguing that this figure of a Jewish intellectual should stand as the exclusive image of "an educated Jew" directly guiding educational practice, I do argue that intellectuals who are able to articulate normative visions in terms of both majority and minority cognitive traditions would be indispensable for establishing serious social and educational discourse.

Finally, in addition to providing role models by embodying values and normative orientations, and to enabling educational discourse by conceptualizing cultural difference, Diaspora Jewish intellectuals (as portrayed above) must necessarily be directly concerned with crucial curriculum issues of Jewish education, i.e., the way in which languages, history, literature, religion, State of Israel, etc. should be taught. Nurturing a "class" of Diaspora Jewish intellectuals is thus of primary importance, particularly for those communities – like those of the FSU – whose foremost challenge is construction and regeneration in the social, cultural, and educational realms.

Above I have tried to demonstrate that an approach to Jewish cultural regeneration in the FSU based on Jewish Studies is well suited to the characteristic features of contemporary Russian Jews and can be driven by a social and educational vision of a new Russian-Jewish intellectual. In this section I will discuss how this conceptual approach can be translated

26 See D. Boyarin & J. Boyarin, "Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity," *Critical Inquiry* 19 (Summer 1993), p. 701.

into reality by outlining the ways in which some of the principle mechanisms of interaction between academic scholarship and cultural-educational practice can be built, as well as offering suggestions for policy and implementation.

Establishing public and professional discourse on visions and models of Jewish life in the FSU

One of the necessary conditions of successful cultural construction is intellectual and ideological effervescence, a serious public and professional discourse on competing models of the individual and social ideal of the "good life". Such vigorous discussions on the crucial issues of Jewish national, political and cultural life and education in Russia took place at the end of the 19th – beginning of the 20th century. Jewish socialists, Zionists, autonomists, assimilationists and religious Orthodox – politicians, rabbis, writers, scholars, thinkers, journalists and teachers – all offered and defended their own vision and model of Jewish life. Hebrew-, Yiddish- and Russian-language newspapers and journals, books and booklets, leaflets and proclamations, public lectures and meetings, congresses and conferences, committees and associations – all served as arenas of existentially engaged and socially committed debate. Social, cultural and educational practice were directly connected with this discourse on values and goals, for example, the intense debate on *the* Jewish language (Hebrew or Yiddish?) which had direct implications for Jewish education and cultural life before and after World War I.

In contrast to this earlier era, one of the main problems of the contemporary post-Soviet period is the lack of serious public and professional discourse on visions, models, values and goals of Jewish education and social-cultural life. Despite the existence of a number of local Jewish Russian-language newspapers and journals as well as numerous web-sites, and despite the fact that congresses, conferences and seminars on Jewish culture and education are held more or less regularly, the most fundamental ideological and conceptual issues are hardly addressed. This dearth of serious engagement is largely due to two factors mentioned in the introduction – the predominance of "imported" ideologies which offer Russian Jews ready-made answers, on the one hand, and Jewish discontinuity and the deculturation of Russian Jews, their lack of a "strong Jewish cultural self" on the other. Without Russian Jews asking *their own* questions about possible models and visions of Jewish life and education in the FSU, there can be no genuine cultural regeneration.

As argued above, university Jewish Studies centers and programs are among the very few places in the FSU where a community exists, united by a common intellectual quest to reclaim Jewish heritage and expressing interest in the cultural manifestations of Jewishness. Many in this community are able to ask *informed* questions concerning contemporary Jewish culture and education *based on profound knowledge of Jewish civilization*, its languages, literature, intellectual and social history, art, etc. This community can serve as a crucial resource for establishing genuine discourse on models and visions of Jewish renewal.

However, two main obstacles lie on this road to cultural regeneration: this community's lack of social commitment, on the one hand, and its relative isolation from cultural-educational practice, on the other. In order to improve this situation, (a) the self-understanding of the academic community must be influenced and ultimately transformed by inspiring its inner discourse and ethos with the vision of a committed Russian-Jewish intellectual explicated in the previous section; and (b) providing *institutionalized outlets* for this community's social, cultural and educational potential.

Thus, in order to establish the above mentioned public and professional discourse, "spaces of discussion and deliberation" must be created, *forums* with Jewish Studies scholars and intellectuals as central participants – resource persons and articulators. Their expertise in Jewish civilization in all its temporal and spatial variety can provide such forums with a broader notion of both a usable Jewish past and a future perspective of "what is Jewishly possible". Their command of both "inner Jewish language" and the cultural language of the host majority society, their ability to express their Jewish "otherness" in terms of Russian culture, as well as their Russian-Jewish "otherness" in terms of Jewish and Israeli culture, can be crucial for establishing genuine dialogue with Russian culture, Diaspora Jewry and Israel. Of primary importance is their ability to articulate ideas stemming from different cultural environments, to conceptualize difference and to mediate dialogue.

Such public and professional forums may take different forms and operate on different levels, including:

- *Regular "think-tank" seminars in the practical philosophy of Jewish education in the FSU.* This forum should consist of a number of leading Jewish Studies scholars and academic intellectuals who have sufficient social, cultural and educational commitment to participate in the joint process of articulating, discussing, developing and revising their own visions of "the educated Jew" or the "Jewishly acculturated

Russian Jew". The resulting conceptual statements and practical philosophies would provide the necessary basis for broader public and professional discussions as well as practical experimentation and implementation. The conceptual language and ideas formulated at such seminars could become an important resource for educational and cultural institutions in developing their own practical visions of Jewish culture and education.[27]

- *Jewish Studies scholars and academic intellectuals as board members and research-and-development facilitators in FSU Jewish educational, cultural and communal institutions.* At present, the overwhelming majority of local policy-makers, executives, professionals and lay people in FSU Jewish communities have not had any consistent Jewish education. There is a blatant gap between Jewish knowledge and regular cultural and educational praxis, primarily because such praxis is often guided by fragmentary, superficial and one-dimensional pieces of information, reaching FSU Jewish communities mostly from abroad. Concurrently, university studies in Jewish civilization, which have flourished over the last decade in the FSU, have accumulated knowledge without exerting much direct influence on cultural and educational practice. This gap might be bridged by inviting committed Jewish Studies scholars and academic intellectuals to serve as board members, resource persons and facilitators in Jewish day schools, Sunday schools, kindergartens, cultural centers, camps, welfare organizations, community councils, etc., thereby enabling them to become important agents of change within these institutions. Local community institutions would thus be freed from excessive dependence on the ideological agendas of international Jewish organizations and empowered to devise their own clearly-defined holistic notions concerning Judaism and Jewish culture, their own intrinsic ways of being Jewish. Such a development would also enable more equal and substantive dialogue with "the larger Jewish world".
- *FSU and international conferences, seminars and colloquia in Jewish culture and education.* In order to overcome the relative isolation of the academic world of Jewish Studies from that of social, cultural and educational practice, the opportunity should be

27 The model for such a forum was suggested and implemented by Seymour Fox and Daniel Marom in their "Educated Jew" Project, which included I. Twersky, M. Greenberg, M. Brinker and others. The resulting publication is *Visions of Jewish Education*, edited by Seymour Fox, Israel Scheffler and Daniel Marom, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

provided for scholars, intellectuals, professional educators, policy-makers, teachers and all those involved in FSU Jewish revival to meet and become engaged in a common discourse. Jewish Studies scholars can not only contribute to such a discourse through their conceptual articulation and cultural mediation, but would also be able to examine and revise their ideas in consequence of their encounter with the practical experience of teachers and community workers. International forums would contribute to FSU Jewry's continuous and meaningful dialogue with various models, educational conceptions, cultural trends, ideals and ideologies of Jewish life in Israel and the Diaspora. Cultural-educational forums such as CAJE in North America and LIMMUD in the UK have much to offer as conceptual and practical models, albeit not as models for direct transplantation into the FSU environment. Jewish Studies playing a more pronounced role could be one of the characteristic features of such forums in the FSU.

- *Journals, the internet and other media as arenas of public and professional discourse on Jewish culture and education.* Books, journals, the internet and other media can play a major role in cultural construction. At present there are several Russian-language academic journals in Jewish Studies, an academic Judaica publications series at "*Gesharim*" publishing house, and several other smaller academic publications. Two purely professional journals in Jewish education (*Evreiskoe obrazovanie* and *Novaya evreiskaya shkola*) were published in the last decade. Each of the agencies representing the three major "imported" approaches to Jewish renewal – Chabad, JDC, JAFI and *Lishkat ha-Kesher* – has its own journals and newsletters, mostly as ideological tribunes. However, a kind of media that would create an arena of serious intellectual discourse on central issues of Jewish social life, culture and education – that would be neither purely academic or professional, nor totally populist or ideologically subservient – is important to establish. This would serve as an important outlet for the social, cultural and educational potential of new Russian Jewish intellectuals. In describing this possible media, I have in mind such models as the North American *Prooftexts,* the Polish *Midrasz* and the Israeli *Teoria u-Vikoret* or *Alpayim* (among others). This niche is at present utterly empty in the FSU, and filling it can contribute considerably to bridging gaps between academics, professional educators and lay Jewish intelligentsia, and can become an important vehicle for a common quest for a new Russian-Jewish culture.

Scholarship into the classroom: Developing curricula for Jewish education in the FSU

I noted above the failure of the major existent approaches to Jewish renewal to devise or properly develop a consistent curriculum for Jewish education in the FSU. This failure stems from their inability to relate seriously to the four "commonplaces" of all educational thought as defined by J. Schwab – *the subject matter, the teacher, the learner and the milieu.*[28] Ideological agenda rather than subject-matter expertise, excessive reliance on *shlikhim* (emissaries) at the expense of local teachers and educators, "tabula rasa"-like views in place of a close exploration of the learner and his cognitive, normative, social and cultural world – all these have largely prevented the development process of an adequate curriculum from taking place.

Jewish Studies in the FSU can become a crucial element in a proper new curriculum development process. In the theory of curriculum development elaborated by J. Schwab, there are five collaborators or "bodies of experience" indispensable for this process:[29]

1. subject-matter expertise, scholarly materials and discipline (provided by academic scholars)
2. knowledge of the learner (provided by psychology, sociology, anthropology, etc.)
3. knowledge of the milieu, the community (provided by cultural anthropology, sociology, etc.)
4. the experience of teachers
5. the curriculum specialist (articulating, enabling, facilitating and establishing the discourse)

Clearly, Russian-language scholars in Jewish Studies should be the primary source of subject matter expertise in such curriculum-development teams, being cautious to avoid the common dangers mentioned by Schwab: scholarly dominance which can overawe the curriculum development group, imposing the character and structure of the scholarly discipline on the curriculum, as well as the not infrequent arrogance of specialism.[30]

28 See Joseph J. Schwab, "Translating Scholarship into Curriculum," in Seymour Fox and Geraldine Rosenfield, (eds.), *From the Scholar to the Classroom: Translating Jewish Tradition into Curriculum,* New York: Melton Research Center for Jewish Education, Jewish Theological Seminary, 1977, pp. 10-11.

29 Ibid., pp. 2-5

30 See J. Schwab, p. 5.

As to the knowledge of the learner and the milieu, Jewish Studies scholars should cooperate with their colleagues in the departments of psychology, sociology and anthropology in order to organize the necessary research. Their participation as mediators is necessary because of the intercultural nature of such exploration, since qualitative research presupposes an insider/outsider cultural perspective which, in most cases, necessitates the cooperation of a psychologist, sociologist or anthropologist with a Jewish Studies expert.

Schwab clearly demonstrates that the central figure of the curriculum development group is the curriculum specialist who should organize, facilitate and mediate the discourse between the four principle "commonplaces". The qualifications of such a "middleman" are very complex and include the ability to translate very different bodies of knowledge and experience into a common language of curriculum deliberation. The profile of such a specialist includes profound training in Jewish Studies and in Education, as well as other human and social sciences. At present there is hardly any place outside the university centers/programs in Jewish Studies and Jewish Education where such interdisciplinary training and deliberation can possibly take place. These centers could also serve to establish continuous dialogue with the Israeli Ministry of Education and academic institutions on curriculum development issues.

Scholarship into culture: Informal education and cultural initiatives

In order to break the hermetic "bubble" of academic Jewish Studies, one has to create places where the resources of scholarship may find existentially-engaged and culturally-committed manifestations. Without disturbing the disciplined university routine and without compromising the academic status of Jewish Studies centers, one may create affiliations between them and institutions engaged in informal education and cultural initiatives outside of them. These would enable students, faculty and the general public to encounter Jewish culture not only on intellectual and disciplinary levels, but also as creative activities addressing emotional, aesthetic, ethical and social aspects of education. This should encourage framing Jewish culture not only as an object of academic study and research, but also as a living creative process. Contemporary cultural practices could also contribute to fostering a "minimal density" Jewish culture for congregationally-unaffiliated faculty, students and the general public not necessarily involved in academic Jewish Studies. I will briefly describe but a few of such possible projects:

a) ***Beit-Midrash***[31] is the traditional arena of "wrestling" with Jewish (and non-Jewish) texts, including textual study and interpretation in *chavrutot* (small groups), as well as general "democratic" discussion. It could become a methodological testing ground for different approaches to studying Jewish texts. Interpretative languages of visual art, music and theater could significantly broaden the possibilities of textual interpretation and complement the disciplinary approach to the "sources" with a culturally embodied one.
b) ***Art seminars, workshops and expeditions***[32] can establish mutually fertile dialogue between scholars and artists which would encourage the cultural engagement of the former and give deeper insights into Jewish civilizations to the latter.
c) ***Informal education for youth and high school students***[33] could be an important educational and social outlet for university Jewish Studies centers and programs. Informal education could enable an intellectually-challenging and existentially-engaged encounter of youth and high school students with Jewish culture. Such an encounter should include not only studying the heritage of Jewish civilization, but also contemporary interpretation of different aspects of that civilization through art and creative activities. Informal education could also offer young people models of cultural identity that would serve them in an informed quest for meaningful relationships with the Jewish Diaspora, the State of Israel and their immediate social environment. These programs could also play an important social role in creating a community united by a common intellectual quest and creative cultural practices. Programs might include seminars in Jewish culture, Judaica camps, high school electives, "Sunday College" in Jewish Studies, educational expeditions to the former Pale of Settlement, etc.

Towards a multi-level integrated system of Jewish education in the FSU

One of the main shortfalls of contemporary Jewish education in the FSU is the excessive differentiation and even isolation of its various components from one another: formal from informal, children from youth, youth from adult, Jewish subjects from general ones, Israeli

31 At the beginning of the 1990s, there was a Beit Midrash at Petersburg Jewish University.
32 There have been several successful attempts at such seminars at Petersburg Jewish University in cooperation with the Hebrew University and the Center of Jewish Art in Jerusalem.
33 Informal educational activities have been developing gradually in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

educators from local ones, academic programs from communal ones, universities from schools, etc. I believe that quality education is only possible as part of a continuous system of cooperation between academic scholarship, universities, educational theory, monitoring and research, teacher training and methodology, teacher experience, formal and informal education, child, youth and adult education, cultural milieu and community, as well as many other components.

In light of this, the predicament of FSU Jewish education is especially challenging. I will illustrate it with the example of Jewish day schools. Jewish schools in Russia exist simultaneously in two educational systems – Russian and Israeli (and/or Jewish Orthodox), being accountable to both the Russian and the Israeli Ministries of Education. Thus, as Russian schools, they should be in continuous negotiation with Russian science, academic scholarship, universities, educational theory, teacher training institutions, curriculum standards, pedagogical approaches, pre-school institutions, cultural milieu and community, on the one hand. On the other hand, as Jewish and Israeli schools, they should relate to academic Jewish Studies or traditional Jewish learning, Israeli educational theory and traditional Jewish pedagogical approaches, Israeli curriculum requirements, and the cultural and social milieus of the State of Israel and Diaspora Jewish communities. Thus the success of Jewish education in the FSU depends to a great extent on continuous dialogue and cooperation both within and between these two systems. I believe that *academic Jewish Studies in the FSU, with their educational and cultural outlets, can play an important integrating role within this system, as well as becoming the crucial link between the Russian academy, educational theory and practice, culture and society, on the one hand, and their Jewish-Israeli counterparts, on the other*. Such links exist in part today, but there are still a set of partnerships and collaborations to be established. Below I list several examples of such existent or potential "integrating" Jewish Studies/Jewish education projects:

- ***Teacher-training programs***. At present, Israeli centers training teachers for the FSU are working without much coordination and cooperation with Russian Jewish Studies, educational theory, curriculum requirements, cultural milieu and community. Integrated Russian-Israeli teacher training programs would greatly contribute to building a much more accomplished and efficient system of Jewish education in the FSU.
- ***Partnership of Israeli academic and educational agencies with FSU Jewish Studies in developing curriculum for Jewish education in the FSU.***

- ***Intensive faculty development for university centers/programs of Jewish education***. The "translation" of academic Jewish Studies into education and culture is an entire theoretical-practical professional field that calls for programs for faculty development. Such programs should be aimed at both academics with an educational "eros" and vision-sensitive practitioners.
- ***Monitoring, research and publications in Jewish education*** should be an integral part of the multi-level and international system of Jewish education in the FSU. These activities are directly affiliated with university centers of Jewish Studies in Russia and Israel.

General Conclusion

The historical and contemporary socio-cultural background of FSU Jewish life, qualitative enquiry into the principal patterns and profiles of Soviet and post-Soviet Jewish identity, as well as the critical analysis of the major existing approaches to Jewish cultural construction and regeneration have led me to consider an alternative (and in some respects complementary) approach based on academic Jewish Studies. This approach sees Jewish Studies as an indispensable element in contemporary Jewish education and a necessary condition for Jewish cultural growth in the FSU, but it is not sufficient in itself. I have emphasized the importance of complementary mechanisms and methodologies of "translating" academic scholarship into social, educational and cultural practice. I have also suggested a vision of a socially-engaged and committed Russian-Jewish intellectual which can inspire the academic community to transcend the limits of "cold" academia and become actively involved in educational and cultural construction. Finally, I have described possible means of implementing this approach in today's reality.

I offer below, as a postscript, an allegory from Russian folk wisdom on the 'text' of the thesis I proposed above:

In Russian folk-tales, there is a narrative commonplace of a hero who must bring his lover back to life. In order to do this, he must sprinkle the body first with "dead water" and only after that with "live water". Any omission or reversal in this procedure brings about perilous failure. Making metaphorical use of this image, I would like to claim that at the present stage of the Russian-Jewish narrative, the "dead water" of

academic Jewish Studies, coupled with the living waters of existential engagement, is a necessary condition for the creative regeneration of Jewish culture in the FSU.

First Stirrings: Jewish Education, American Style, 1776-1880

Gil Graff

Writing at the close of the 20th century, Jonathan Sarna, the generation's pre-eminent historian of the Jewish experience in America, noted that the history of Jewish education in the United States has received scarce attention. He suggested that "by carefully studying that history…we would be in a much better position than we are now to build securely for the future."[1] Similarly, Michael Zeldin has aptly noted that "histories of education can help policy makers in education transcend the present moment and see beyond today's immediate issues….They can provide perspective on the relationship of actions to aims and purposes…."[2] To the extent that books and articles have treated themes or eras in the history of Jewish education in the United States, far greater attention has been devoted to the period 1880 and beyond, than to Jewish education in the first century of the American national experience. Inasmuch as the Jewish population in the United States grew from 2,000 to 250,000 from 1776-1880, and escalated to 4,000,000 between 1880 and 1925, the focus on "beyond 1880" is not surprising.

Yet, examination of the period 1776-1880 in the history of Jewish education is highly instructive. Such matters as responsibility for the provision of Jewish education, curriculum and instruction, the appropriate settings for Jewish education, and the impact of acculturation were very much at play during this century. Moreover, though far greater numbers of Jews came to American shores in the ensuing decades, existing frameworks of thought and institutional development could not but influence the continuing development of Jewish education in the United States.

1 Jonathan D. Sarna, "American Jewish Education in Historical Perspective," *Jewish Education* 64:1 & 2 (Winter/Spring, 1998), p. 19.

2 Michael Zeldin, "The Promise of Historical Inquiry: 19th Century Jewish Day Schools and 20th Century Policy," Los Angeles 1987, p. 2, American Jewish Archives SC-13885

This paper looks at aspects of the history of Jewish education in the United States, 1776-1880, a century in which Sunday schools, day schools and the nation's first rabbinical school were established. In hindsight, one looks for compelling visions of Jewish life embedded in these and other strategies of Jewish education devised in the era. As Ecclesiastes wisely advised: "Let the living take it to heart." (7:2)

Charting the Course in the Early National Period, 1776-1840

As the American colonies declared their independence on July 4, 1776, two thousand Jews were among the more than three million Americans about to launch a new national saga. Nearly half of these Jews were associated with one of the five congregations established during the colonial period in New York (Shearith Israel), Newport (Jeshuat Israel), Savannah (Mikveh Israel), Philadelphia (Mikveh Israel) and Charleston (Beth Elohim), each of which followed the Sephardic ritual.[3] The early Jewish colonists were, primarily, of Spanish and Portuguese ancestry, stemming from ex-Marrano or Western Sephardic stock.[4] While, by 1720, Ashkenazim constituted a majority of the small, colonial American Jewish population, the first congregation to follow the Ashkenazic rite (Rodeph Shalom, in Philadelphia) was not established until 1802.

Throughout the colonial and early national periods, congregational life was led by volunteer trustees and non-ordained religious functionaries.

3 These congregations were synagogue-communities, each a Kahal Kadosh (holy community) - "an all-embracing institution that both controlled every aspect of Jewish life and commanded allegiance from every Jew dwelling or sojourning within its ambit… It promoted group solidarity and discipline, evoked a sense of tradition as well as a feeling of kinship towards similarly-organized synagogue-communities throughout the Jewish world, and enhanced the chances that even small clusters of Jews, remote from the well-springs of Jewish learning, could survive from one generation to the next." Jonathan D. Sarna, "From Synagogue-Community to Community of Synagogues: A Turning Point in American History," Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University, 1990. Sanctions such as fines, loss of synagogue honors and denial of burial rights became less and less effective over time, and the "synagogue-community" eroded in the early 19th century. Synagogues came to represent diversity rather than unity in American Jewish life. See Sarna, Ibid.; and Leon Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue, 1820-1870*, Hanover, N.H.: Brandeis University Press, 1992.

4 See Marc D. Angel, "The Sephardim of the United States: An Exploratory Study," *American Jewish Year Book* (1973), Vol. 74, pp. 77-138. While the homeland of these immigrants had, at one time, been Spain or Portugal, they had since moved on to the Netherlands and England. It is estimated that, in 1700, the Jewish population of the colonies numbered two hundred and fifty. Jacob R. Marcus, "The American Colonial Jew: A Study in Acculturation," in Jonathan D. Sarna (ed.) *The American* Jewish *Experience, New* York: Holmes and Meier, 1997, p. 7. Trade and family ties reinforced connections among the scattered Sephardic colonists.

Indeed, the first rabbi to settle in the United States did not arrive until 1840.[5] While Jews acquired burial grounds, built synagogues for public worship and established mechanisms for aiding the poor, education was not regarded as a communal responsibility. Tutoring in Hebrew language, prayers and Torah (primarily reading and translating) was provided for a fee, most commonly by independent teachers. On occasion, congregations would contract with an instructor to provide education to indigent children. In 1761, Chazzan Isaac Pinto of Shearith Israel in New York translated prayerbook passages into English because Hebrew was "imperfectly understood by many, by some not at all."[6] Nonetheless, the synagogue provided companionship with fellow Jews, a place to worship (when one was so moved), a place to celebrate life cycle events, access to kosher meat (for those who sought it), assurance of proper burial and the opportunity to give or receive charity. Moreover, the Jewish congregation was, for Jews, a parallel of sorts to the established churches which were a part of colonial American life.[7]

As the colonies became a nation, the most prominent Jewish religious figure of the generation was Gershom Mendes Seixas.[8] Born in New York, in 1745 to a Sephardic father and an Ashkenazic mother, Seixas served as Chazzan (non-ordained "minister") of Shearith Israel (known today as the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue) from 1768-1776 and, again, from 1784-1816.[9] During the British occupation of New York,

5 The first ordained (Orthodox) rabbi to settle in the United States, Abraham Rice (1840) spent a frustrating period in the pulpit in Baltimore, eventually leaving his post to open a dry goods store. He declared: "I do not want to have anything to do with Jews." Jacob R. Marcus, *The American Jew: 1585-1990*, New York: Carlson, 1995, p. 95. A sympathetic biography of Rice has been written by I. Harold Sharfman, *The First Rabbi*, Malibu, CA: Pangloss, 1988. In the absence of local rabbinic scholars, halakhic (Jewish legal) inquiries were, in the early decades of the American Republic, sent by Sephardim to London's Bevis Marks Synagogue and by Ashkenazim to British Chief Rabbi (1802-1842) Solomon Hirschell. Lance J. Sussman, "Jewish Intellectual Activity and Educational Practice in the United States: 1776-1840," Cincinnati, 1978, AJA Small Collections-12167.

6 Quoted in Jick, p. 8.

7 Abraham Karp, *Jewish Continuity in America*, Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama, 1998, pp. 18-19. Though ritual practices were observed by Jews haphazardly, the *congregation* operated in accordance with traditional norms. Thus, for example, Philadelphia's Mikveh Israel employed a "Shabbos goya to keep the fires going in winter and the candles lit on the Sabbath. The candles themselves were carefully made of kosher wax." Edwin Wolf and Maxwell Whiteman, *History of the Jews of Philadelphia*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1957, p. 141.

8 For a biographical sketch of Seixas, see Jacob Rader Marcus, *The Handsome Young Priest in the Black Gown,* Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1970.

9 In addition to conducting public worship, Seixas periodically delivered sermons - an innovative practice at the time. One of his extant sermons relates to the phenomenon of the Sanhedrin convened by Napoleon, "for what purpose, or what their business will be, we can

Seixas relocated to Philadelphia, where he served as minister of Mikveh Israel, 1780-1784.

Congregation Shearith Israel, at which Seixas received his education (under the tutelage of Chazzan Pinto) and which he served as religious leader, conducted an all-day school from 1755-1776 and, intermittently, through the early decades of the nineteenth century.[10] The aim of this initiative was to provide both Hebrew and general studies under Jewish auspices, as an alternative to secular training under non-Jewish, sectarian auspices.

For a number of years, Chazzan Seixas served as the school's principal religious instructor. His contract of 1793 included the provision that he teach students "to read the Hebrew language and translate it in English…."[11] It was further stipulated that "G. Seixas shall not exact any extra pay for a scholar who shall arrive to be Bar Mitzvah but shall be obliged to teach him everything requisite according to the capacity of such scholar."[12] Rosters of the names of students enrolled indicate that girls as well as boys were among the school's students.[13]

In the early national period, almost all schools in New York City (as elsewhere) were religious in character. "Common pay" (i.e., private) schools generally assumed the religious identity of their headmaster; charity or "free schools," supported by churches, could draw funds from the state. Through a bequest, Shearith Israel established a charity school named Polonies Talmud Torah.[14] Starting in 1811, the school achieved equal footing with the Protestant and Catholic schools in the city, benefiting from state financial assistance.[15] Shearith Israel joined

not pretend to say." *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, no. 27 (1920), pp. 140 ff., reprinted in Paul R. Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (eds.) *The Jew in the Modern World*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1980, pp. 124-125. On the saga of the Napoleonic Sanhedrin, see Simon Schwarzfuchs, *Napoleon, the Jews and the Sanhedrin,* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979; and Gil Graff, *Separation of Church and State: Dina de-Malkhuta in Jewish Law*, *1750-1848,* University, Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1985, pp. 71-94.

10 Doniel Zvi Kramer, *The Day Schools and Torah Umesorah,* New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1984, p. 4. The minute-book of Congregation Shearith Israel notes that "on the 21st of Nisan, the seventh day of Pesach (1731), the day of completing the first year at the Synagogue, there was made codez (concentrated) the Yeshiba called Minhat Arab." Alexander Dushkin, *Jewish Education in New York City,* New York: Bureau of Jewish Education, 1918, p. 449.

11 Archives of the American Jewish Historical Society, Lyons Collection, P-15, Box 2.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid. See, e.g., roster of March 8, 1795.

14 See (undated) *History of Shearith Israel*, Archives of the American Jewish Historical Society, (New York) I-4, Box 1.

15 Joseph L. Blau and Salo W. Baron, *The Jews of the United States, 1790-1840: A Documentary History,* New York: Columbia University Press, 1963, Vol. 2, pp. 445-446.

with Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist and Catholic churches in strongly advocating state aid of church schools.[16] This lobbying effort was in response to challenges from the nondenominational New York Free School (forerunner of the Public School Society), which wanted all state money to flow to its institutions. Indeed, in New York, state support of religiously sponsored charity schools continued until 1825. Over the ensuing decades, throughout the country, public schools were, gradually, to achieve a monopoly over state funding of education.

Shearith Israel's inability to maintain a school on a continuing basis was less a function of the level of state financial support than of an apparent disinclination of its members to enroll their children. This may, in part, have been a function of the lack of educational leadership on a sustained basis. For example, when Emanuel N. Carvalho,[17] a well qualified teacher who had come to New York from London, served as the school's headmaster, 1808-1811, there was a well subscribed, full day instructional program. When Carvalho moved to Charleston, the school experienced years of intermittent openings and closings, depending on the availability and ability of teaching personnel.[18] A poignant call to congregants from three trustees early in the 19th century, conveys a sense of the frustration of those endeavoring to maintain the school:

> In order to make your children truly virtuous you must rear them in the strict principles of our holy religion, and this cannot be

16 See Jonathan D. Sarna, "The Jewish Experience in American Public and Private Education," in Marshall J. Breger and David M. Gordis (eds.), *Vouchers for School Choice – Challenge or Opportunity?* Boston: Wilstein Institute of Jewish Policy Studies, 1998, pp. 131-136. The petition of Congregation Shearith Israel to the Legislature of the State of New York to maintain state aid to religious schools (1813) is reprinted in Jonathan D. Sarna and David G. Dalin (eds.), *Religion and State in the American Jewish Experience*, Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997, pp. 86-88. The original can be found in the archives of the American Jewish Historical Society, Lyons Collection, P-15, Box 13.

17 Carvalho was a pioneer American Jewish educator in publishing a text called "A Key to the Hebrew Tongue," for instructional purposes. The thirty-two page pamphlet included the letters of the Hebrew alphabet with different vowels accompanying them. Isolated Hebrew words and their English translations, and verses and portions of verses from the Bible with their English translations, comprise the majority of the work. The closing section of the publication presents the grammar of the Hebrew language. Benjamin L. Yapko, *Jewish Elementary Education in the United States: Colonial Period to 1900* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, American University, 1958), pp. 111-112. Carvalho's text was, however, primarily written for adults (including Christians) studying the language.

18 Not until 1895 was there to be a school established (Gratz College) under Jewish auspices with the training of teachers its special object. Julius Greenstone, "Jewish Education in the United States," *American Jewish Yearbook* 5675 (1914-1915), Vol. 16, pp. 104-105.

> efficiently done without they understand what they are saying when addressing the deity….
> Education generally speaking is the first thing which ought to be pursued in life, in order to constitute us rational, how much then is to be expected from having in addition thereto, a complete and full knowledge of the Hebrew language being that in which all our prayers are read. Yet notwithstanding this, it is with regret that it is perceived few, very few indeed, are concerned about it.[19]

Over time, it became the purpose of the Polonies Talmud Torah to provide religious instruction to children of the poor; as a charity school, it qualified for state aid at such times as it provided general education as part of its program. The more affluent members of the community engaged private tutors.[20] In Charleston, home to the largest population of Jews in America in the early 19th century, the Jewish community allocated no funds for a school – parents had to rely, exclusively, on private tutors.[21] Savannah's Mikveh Israel offered no congregationally-sponsored religious education before 1853.[22]

With a modest population, rapid acculturation, and a negligible educational infrastructure, Jewish learning in the early national period was at low ebb.[23] Memorization of prayers, translation of a limited number of passages from the Torah and indoctrination were the core instructional foci. In terms of general education, however, as one American Jew wrote in 1811: "The children receive every advantage which is necessary to enable them to be well informed and honoured citizens of their country."[24]

19 Archives of the American Jewish Historical Society, Lyons Collection, P-15, Box 13.

20 Jacob Hartstein, "The Polonies Talmud Torah of New York," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 34 (1937), p. 130.

21 Eli Faber, "The Formative Era of American Jewish History," *American Jewish History* 86:1 (Autumn, 1993), 20. On the Jews of Charleston, see Charles Reznikoff, *The Jews of Charleston,* Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1950 and James Willian Hagy, *This Happy Land: The Jews of Colonial and Antebellum Charleston*, Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama press, 1993.

22 Saul Jacob Rubin, *Third to None: The Saga of Savannah Jewry,* Savannah, GA: Mickve Israel, 1983, p. 112.

23 In 1789, the Newport congregation reported that no one was able to read from the Torah and that the weekly Torah portion had to be read from a printed text. Wolf and Whiteman*, The History of the Jews of Philadelphia*, p. 132. One of the few learned Jews in the early national period, Manuel Josephson, stipulated in his will (February 24, 1796) that his Hebrew books (which included a library of rabbinic literature) be sent to his brother in Hamburg. It did not appear that there was any "call" for such works in the United States! Sussman, "Jewish Intellectual Activity," 17.

24 Blau and Baron, Vol. I, p. 93.

Rebecca Samuel, a young Jewish woman living in Petersburg, Virginia, wrote a letter (in Yiddish) to her parents in Hamburg, describing her view of the condition of Jewish life in the new nation:

> Dear parents,… Jewishness is pushed aside here. There are here [in Petersburg] ten or twelve Jews, and they are not worthy of being called Jews. We have a *shohet* here who goes to market and buys *terefah* [nonkosher] meat and then brings it home. On Rosh Ha-Shanah [New Year] and on Yom Kippur [the Day of Atonement] the people worshipped here without one *sefer Torah* [Scroll of the Law], and not one of them wore the *tallit* [a large prayer shawl worn in the synagogue] or the *arba kanfot* [the small set of fringes worn on the body], except Hyman and my Sammy's godfather.
>
> You can believe me that I crave to see a synagogue to which I can go. The way we live now is no life at all. We do not know what the Sabbath and the holidays are. On the Sabbath all the Jewish shops are open; and they do business on that day as they do throughout the whole week. But ours we do not allow to open. With us there is still some Sabbath. You must believe me that in our house we all live as Jews as much as we can.[25]

Rebecca looked forward to moving to Charleston, with its more substantial Jewish community.

The old guard of colonial days had, indeed, become deeply acculturated. Arthur Hertzberg notes that "there is little doubt that before 1800 less than half of the grandchildren of the early Jewish settlers remained Jews. We know from precise genealogical tables that one-third of the grandchildren of those who remained Jews in the time of the Revolution had left the community by 1840."[26]

With escalating immigration of Jews from German lands, 1820-1840, a dozen new synagogues were established, bringing the total of formally organized Jewish congregations in the United States to eighteen by 1840.[27] In each case, congregants established and governed their synagogue affairs with autonomous determination as to ritual and organizational

25 Abraham J. Karp, *A History of the Jews in America*, Northvale, NJ: J. Aronson, 1997, pp. 23-24.

26 Arthur Hertzberg, *The Jews in America; Four Centuries of an Uneasy Encounter,* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989, p. 56.

27 In addition to the 5 colonial congregations, Richmond Jewry had established a congregation in 1791.

procedures. By and large, at least in the public arena, efforts were made to emulate the practices of the old country. Throughout the early national period, J.R. Marcus observes, "It was the firm conviction…that all forms of education were the responsibility of the family, not the religious community."[28]

Emergence of Sunday Schools

As public, non-sectarian schools became increasingly pre-eminent, many Christian Sunday schools, initially established by benevolent societies to provide poor children with general as well as Christian religious educational opportunity – and to keep them off the streets on Sunday – became strictly religious institutions. By 1838, there were 8,000 Christian schools of this genre in the United States.[29] Consistent with this trend, American-born Rebecca Gratz (1781-1869), member of a prominent Jewish family of merchants and community leaders in Philadelphia, aided in founding the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society (1819) and the Hebrew Sunday School Society (1838). Rebecca Gratz was convinced that religious instruction for all Jewish children was imperative, particularly in the face of Christian proselytizing. She acknowledged the inspiration for her model of the Christian Sunday school movement, noting that "we have never yet had a Sunday school in our congregation and so I have induced our ladies to follow the example of other religious communities."[30]

One month after securing the approval of the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society for this initiative, the Hebrew Sunday School opened with 50 students and 6 teachers (including Gratz, who served as superintendent). The volunteer faculty consisted of women respected for their moral character and intelligence. Financial support came from the FHBS, private donors and Mikveh Israel (the well established Sephardic congregation). Parents who could afford to do so paid $2 per year, and an annual appeal was held at a festive public exam.[31] Gratz's Philadelphia-

28 Jacob R. Marcus (ed.) *The Jew in the American World: A Source Book*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996, pp. 147-148.

29 Jacob R. Marcus, *United States Jewry, 1776-1985*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989, Vol. 1, p. 390.

30 Jick, 62.

31 Dianne Ashton*, Rebecca Gratz: Women and Judaism in Antebellum America*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997, p. 145.

based efforts benefited from the assistance of the Chazzan of Mikveh Israel, Isaac Leeser.

Leeser (1806-1868) had emigrated from Westphalia to Richmond, Virginia, at the age of eighteen. His Jewish education ended during his adolescence, and he attended the gymnasium of Muenster for two and a quarter years, prior to his emigration. Leeser's uncle in Richmond had married a relative of the Seixas family, and this connection served as an entrée for Leeser to the better established Jews in the community. Leeser assisted the Chazzan at Richmond's Sephardic congregation, Beth Shalome, and worked to achieve mastery of the English language. By 1828, he was able to publish two articles in the Richmond *Whig* responding to a defamatory article against Jews and Judaism. In 1829, this twenty-three year old German Jewish immigrant was elected chazzan – chief religious functionary – of Philadelphia's Sephardic congregation Mikveh Israel, testimony to Leeser's ability as well as to the paucity of well trained candidates for such positions.[32]

In 1838, Leeser published a *Hebrew Reader* for students. Soon after the opening of the Sunday school, he authored a *Catechism for Younger Children* (1839). Commenting on the Sunday school phenomenon, Leeser observed that,

> some prejudice was at first manifested by various persons, who fancied that they discovered an objectionable imitation of gentile practices in this undertaking, forgetting that it is the first duty of Israel to instil knowledge of divine things in the hearts of the young, and this institution was eminently calculated to bestow this necessary blessing alike upon rich and poor without fee or price. It is but seldom that so noble an aim has been sought after, begun solely for the glorification of our Maker and the well-being of his people; it is therefore gratifying to record, that this unfounded prejudice has nearly died away, and one cannot give a better evidence of the fact, than that now fully one hundred children are enrolled, and what is more, that nearly all attend whenever the weather is at all favorable, and this despite the great distance which many of the scholars and teachers have to walk, living as they do in almost every part of the city and suburbs.[33]

32 For an excellent biography of Isaac Leeser, see Lance Sussman, *Isaac Leeser and the Making of American Judaism*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995.

33 Blau and Baron, Vol. 2, pp. 448-449.

A sense of the ambience, values and program of the Sunday school is conveyed in the recollections of Rosa Mordecai, great niece of Rebecca Gratz, and a student at her great aunt's Sunday school:

> The room in which we assembled was a large one with four long windows at the end. Between the centre windows was a raised platform with a smaller one upon which stood a table and a chair. On the table was a much worn Bible containing both the Old and the New Testaments (Rev. Isaac Leeser's valuable edition of the Hebrew Bible had not then been published), a hand-bell, Watts' Hymns, and a penny contribution box 'for the poor of Jerusalem.'
>
> Here Miss Gratz presided. A stately commanding figure, always neatly dressed in plain black, with thin white collar and cuffs, close-fitting bonnet over her curled front, which time never touched with grey, giving her, even in her most advanced years, a youthful appearance. Her eyes would pierce every part of the hall and often detect mischief which escaped the notice of the teachers.
>
> She was extremely particular to instill neatness and cleanliness. A soiled dress, crooked collar, or sticky hands never escaped her penetrating glance and the reproof or remedy was instantaneous.[34]

Leeser noted that "the example set in this city was followed in New York and Charleston about the same time; and there, as well as here, the superintendence and teaching are in the hands of the ladies."[35]

As is evident from Rosa Mordecai's description, Jewish Sunday schools reinforced the middle class values of public schools and Protestant Sunday schools: obedience, order, punctuality, cleanliness and self-discipline. This Americanizing emphasis was directed at the growing immigrant population. While, as Leeser intimated, some German congregations considered Sunday schools a "distasteful imitation of Protestantism,"[36] by 1845, Jewish Sunday Schools had been established in additional communities, including Richmond and Cincinnati.[37]

34 Rosa Mordecai, "Recollection of the First Hebrew Sunday School," in Jacob R. Marcus, *The Jew in the American World*, pp. 153-154.

35 Blau and Baron, Vol. 2, p. 449.

36 Avraham Barkai, *Branching Out: German-Jewish Immigration to the United States, 1820-1914,* New York: Holmes and Meier, 1994, p. 103.

37 Yapko, 78.

In the preface to his *Catechism for Younger Children*, Leeser acknowledged his indebtedness to a work by Dr. Eduard Kley of Hamburg titled *Catechismus Der Mosaischen Religion* (1814). Notwithstanding the fact that Leeser championed Jewish traditionalism in practice throughout his career, and Eduard Kley was among the founders of the (Reform) Hamburg Temple,[38] Leeser affirmed: "I would not detract the least from the merits of this learned and eloquent man despite of his errors; and I gladly admit that my labour was much abridged, by having so excellent a guide as he has furnished…."[39] A sense of the style and content of the book can be gleaned from its opening lines:

> Q. What is religion?
> A. Religion is the knowledge we have of God, and the duties we owe in obedience to His will.
> Q. What do you mean by saying, "I believe in God?"
> A. I believe that everything I see around me, the trees, the flowers, the earth, the water also the sun and the moon, and the thousands of bright stars that shine so beautifully in the sky, were made by the "great Creator" whom we call "The Almighty God."[40]

The catechism moves from religion in general, to the "Mosaic Religion" in particular, affirming the divine origin of the Torah and its correct interpretation by the sages (hence, the enduring imperative of both the moral and ceremonial law), and concludes with Maimonides' thirteen principles of faith. Leeser's Hebrew Reader, "Designed as an Easy Guide to the Hebrew Tongue, for Jewish Children and Self-Instruction,"[41] devotes 23 pages to the development of skills for Hebrew reading, with the ensuing 25 pages applying those skills to such recurring prayers as *adon olam, shema, ma tovu, modeh ani,* the opening paragraph of *birkat ha-mazon* and *yigdal*. While the work was reprinted a number of times, in his preface to the 1856 (fourth) edition, Leeser lamented that though

38 See Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz, 145.

39 Isaac Leeser, *Catechism for Jewish Children, Designed as a Religious Manual for House and School,* Philadelphia: Sherman, 1839, Preface vi. On the writing of catechisms in Western Europe during the nineteenth century, see Jacob J. Petuchowski, "Manuals and Catechisms of the Jewish Religion in the Early Period of Emancipation," in *Studies in Nineteenth Century Jewish Intellectual History*, Alexander Altmann (ed.) Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964, pp. 47-64.

40 Leeser, *Catechism for Jewish Children*, p. 1.

41 Isaac Leeser, *The Hebrew Reader: Designed as an Easy Guide to the Hebrew Tongue, for Jewish Children and Self-Instruction*, Philadelphia: Sherman, 1838.

the book "has met with approbation, still the sale has been very slow, the demand for the various schools being quite small."[42]

Even as he expressed the highest regard for the work of Rebecca Gratz and her assistants, Leeser urged the establishment of an all day Jewish school for two basic reasons. First, it was impossible to achieve Hebrew literacy in "extra" hours, "and I tell you, without in the least qualifying my assertion, that without an adequate knowledge of the Hebrew, sufficient at least to understand the Scriptures and the ordinary prayers, no Jew can allege that he has acquired that knowledge which is all in all to him. A Hebrew not to be a Hebrew in language when this is within his reach, is an absurd proposition which requires no argument to illustrate."[43] Second, the public or private schools were, in Leeser's view, essentially Christian. "[W]e are in great error if we suppose that Christian teachers do not endeavor to influence actively the sentiments of their Jewish pupils…."[44]

Moreover,

> I deem it even of doubtful expediency to have the reading of the Bible, out of what many call (non) sectarian version, enforced, though the book used should be without note or comment; for, as soon as a particular Bible-version is chosen, the favoured society using this translation in their churches have the advantage over all others who reject it, and the persons who make the selection at once designate by virtue of the power vested in them for other purposes, a question in which the consciences of many are concerned, a prerogative not granted by any lawful authority existing in the state, which professes not to have any right to

42 Ibid., fourth edition, 1856.

43 Isaac Leeser, "The Testimony," An Address Delivered Nisan 5611 (Philadelphia, 1851). On an earlier occasion, Leeser had described this challenge in *The Occident* in the following terms: "On one day of the week, in some congregations, the ladies give instruction in Catechism, in Bible Questions, and Scriptural Recitations, to such as are willing to come; they have no means of compelling a regular attendance, and several of the teachers have generally to be absent also, from some cause or other. Unfavourable weather, also, not rarely interrupts the exercises, and if holydays beside intervene, there may be several weeks consecutively that no instruction can be imparted. And then, above all, though it be so desirable that the Hebrew language shall be taught, there is no time to teach it, should there be even a sufficient number of competent instructors within reach; the two or three hours ever week are barely enough to impart the elementary rudiments of the principles of religion, without which knowledge not the smallest child should be suffered to remain; and how then shall the Hebrew be taught at the same time?" Leeser, "A Plea for Education," *The Occident*, IV:2, (1846), p. 64.

44 From Isaac Leeser, "Jewish Children Under Gentile Teachers," in *The Occident*, Vol. I, p. 411 (1843).

> prescribe what religion is to be adopted by the citizens, and, consequently, what religious books are to be regarded by all to be authentic.[45]

As to concern that a Jewish day school might divert time from general education,

> we will admit for argument's sake, that by this (religious) study the hours to be devoted to grammar, history and other sciences should have to be diminished: still can this be called a loss? For let us ask, what do you want to teach by sciences? Certainly nothing more, than to give to the young correct views of life, and enable them to judge with propriety of things to be hereafter presented to them. So is grammar, to enable them to speak and write with propriety; history, to inform them of the acts of past ages, and to give them examples of good men to be imitated and wicked ones whose deeds should be abhorred; and so with other things. Now we demand, Is religious knowledge not something which is to become useful to children hereafter? Is it not calculated to enable them to judge with propriety of many subjects of the highest importance? If you then call sciences the ornament of life, religion surely is far more, it is the essential element of our existence; and hence it is a science above all to be acquired with diligent study.[46]

Where it was impracticable to conduct day schools, supplementary education should be strengthened (hence Leeser's support of Rebecca Gratz's initiative), and parents should keep close watch and "must not suffer on any account, that the young Israelites should be instructed in matters of religion belonging to another creed…."[47] Leeser observed that "few indeed can be found who give not some schooling to their children, and many spend large and liberal sums to teach them whatever is instrumental and useful, and not infrequently give extravagant prices for mere useless accomplishments, that they may not be a whit behind the spirit of the age. And yet these very parents find it impossible to pay for the religious education of their children, as though every thing should be taught but the word of the Lord."[48] Leeser acknowledged that

45 Isaac Leeser, *Discourses X*, pp. 140-141, Philadelphia, 1867.
46 Leeser, *Discourses III*, (1841), pp. 310-311
47 Leeser, "Jewish Children Under Gentile Teachers," p. 413.
48 Leeser, *Discourses III*, p. 320.

the wealthy "exclusives" would not be the first to send their children to Jewish day school (preferring, rather, to mingle with better classes of Christian society), but "let them only see that they [the Jewish day schools] are well conducted; that order and decorum reign among those who frequent them; that there are those in attendance whose friendship and acquaintance will be a source of comfort to their fellow-scholars in after [post-school]-life: and our word for it, they will soon learn to forego their silly prejudices…."[49]

It was not until the period 1840-1860 that a significant number of Jewish day schools serving German-speaking Jewish immigrants were to be established. This development responded to the needs of a substantial wave of immigrants arriving shortly before public education became pre-eminent.

In an incisive article on American Jews and public education, Lloyd P. Gartner demonstrates that, though ostensibly non-sectarian, mid-nineteenth century public schools were clearly Protestant in orientation.[50] It was this reality which led to a Catholic offensive against the monopoly on public funding in support of education in the City of New York which, by the 1840s, had been achieved by the non-denominational, but obviously Protestant, Public School Society. Though the Catholic effort did not succeed in securing funds, in 1853 the Public School Society was absorbed by the New York City Board of Education – presumably, a step in the "desectarianization" of state funded education.

As public schools entered what was to be a period of steady growth, and as fledgling Jewish Sunday schools and all day Jewish schools were established to provide institutional frameworks of religious instruction for a growing Jewish population, an era of heightened immigration began. Jewish immigration was, of course, part of a larger phenomenon. Between 1790 and 1870, the U.S. population grew from four million to forty million, largely as an outgrowth of waves of immigration. While Jews had experienced growth from two thousand to fifteen thousand, 1776-1840, the ensuing generation represented the first mass migration of Jews to the new nation. In the decades preceding the Civil War, scores of new synagogues and Jewish schools were to be established as more Jews settled in the United States and, in many cases, moved west. With this growth in population came expanded Jewish educational initiatives.

49 Leeser, "A Plea for Education," *The Occident* IV:3 (1846), p. 114.

50 Lloyd P. Gartner, "Temples of Liberty Unpolluted: American Jews and Public Schools, 1840-1875," in Bertram W. Korn, (ed.), *A Bicentennial Festschrift for Jacob Rader Marcus*, New York: Ktav, 1976, pp. 157-189.

Educational Currents in the Era of Heightened German-Jewish Immigration, 1840-1880

During the period 1840 to 1880, the American Jewish community grew from 15,000 to 250,000, primarily bolstered by the immigration of Jews from German-speaking lands. German Jews spread though the length and breadth of the expanding nation and, with their geographic diffusion, the number of congregations grew from 18 to 277 by 1877.[51] As in the period of Sephardic pre-eminence, congregations typically progressed from establishing a burial society, to forming a synagogue and, only later, providing some form of Jewish education.

In 1847, Bohemian-born Isaac Mayer Wise, who had arrived in the United States but one year earlier and was serving as rabbi of Beth El Congregation in Albany, New York,[52] wrote a letter to the *Allgemeine Zeitung Des Judenthums*, published in Leipzig. In it, he effusively described the rapid growth of Jewish communities throughout the United States. He observed that new congregations were being established everywhere. In each case, a small number of Jews would organize, "furnishing a room for worship, buying a Sefer Torah [a Torah scroll], and appointing a Chazan [Cantor]... But if one returns to such a congregation after two or three years, one is sure to find a fine building on an elegant street, bearing the inscription: Synagogue for the Children of Israel."[53]

In the realm of Jewish education, Wise's observations were not as effusive. After noting that in most communities there was no Jewish

51 Naomi W. Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation: The German Jews in the United States 1830-1914*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1984, p. 39. In addition to establishing new congregations, German Jewish immigrants established a broad range of social, cultural and charitable organizations. One of the earliest of these organizations was B'nai Brith (1843). As other American societies, it provided for local lodges, coordinated by district and national bodies. As in the first generation German Jewish synagogues in America, German was the language used by most lodges in the early decades. B'nai Brith offered its members typical lodge benefits, giving loans to the needy, assisting the sick, burying the dead and aiding widows and orphans. Like other Americans, German Jewish immigrants and their American-born children established a myriad of agencies, from burial societies to a Jewish Colonization Association for removing immigrants from the eastern seaports. Although synagogues still engaged in charity, by the mid-nineteenth century "their control over that area was permanently broken." Ibid., p. 121.

52 Wise had received some yeshiva training and the equivalent of gymnasium education. For information on the life and thought of Isaac Mayer Wise, see James G. Heller, *Isaac M. Wise*, New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1965; Sefton D. Temkin, *Isaac Mayer Wise,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

53 Isaac Mayer Wise, "The New American Jew: American Jewish Life as Seen from Albany, New York, September, 1847," translated (from German) by D. Sefton, Albany NY: Congregation Beth Emeth, 1977.

school of any kind, he described three types of schools, one type of which he felt held great promise.

> In a few [communities] the Chazan teaches Hebrew reading and has the children read a little in various catechisms, and frequently the miracle occurs that a boy learns to render the Neginah [chant] and a few chapters of Chumash into German.
>
> In other congregations they have introduced a phantom affair called a Sunday School. There religious instruction for children is imparted each Sabbath or Sunday by good-hearted young women. What fruits these few hours can bring forth hardly necessitates further description…
>
> I am greatly pleased to be able to draw your attention to a young vigorously-flourishing 'Hebrew-English Institution' in New York, and to others in Albany, New Orleans and Cincinnati where Hebrew, English and German instruction is carried on zealously and with the best results by qualified teachers.[54]

A similar sense of mid-19th century Jewish educational realities is conveyed by the son of Rabbi Bernard Illowy, a champion of Jewish traditionalism in the U.S. in the 1850s and 1860s. Writing of his father's rabbinic career, Illowy relates that he

> always held it as a matter of first importance that the children of his congregants should be taught Hebrew, the Bible, and the tenets of their faith, and where no schools existed, he established them, as in Syracuse, in Baltimore, in New Orleans, in Cincinnati. In these institutions all the branches of instruction of the public schools were taught by a full corps of competent teachers besides having Hebrew, the Bible, and the principles of the faith (Leeser's *Catechism* was the text-book chiefly used for this) in the curriculum.
>
> For the same reason, and because in this way children could be reached, who for one reason or another did not attend the congregational school, he introduced the confirmation on Shabuot… Six months before Shabuot the class began its work, instruction in Bible history, in the tenets of the faith and its ceremonials, in the ceremonial laws and in the prayers.

54 Ibid. Though, in this early analysis, Wise promoted the day school – indeed, he established one in Albany – he was later to become a proponent of Sunday schools.

> Boys who had not learned to lay Tephillin were taught to do so and were impressed with the necessity of doing so every morning.[55]

By the 1850s, seven Jewish day schools had been established in New York, with similar schools in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Chicago, Boston, Albany, Cincinnati, Detroit, Essex County, New Jersey, Pittsburgh and Washington, D.C.[56] A typical such school was the one organized by Kehillath Ansche Maariv Congregation (KAM), in 1853. The school was patterned on similar schools in Germany, where the curriculum included general studies supplemented by instruction in Jewish religion, Hebrew prayers and Bible reading in German translation. In addition to English, at KAM German, arithmetic, geography, drawing and singing, prayers and readings from the Pentateuch, as well as catechism relating to Jewish religion and history were part of the curriculum. The common school branches were taught by non-Jewish instructors, with a rabbi or cantor responsible for Jewish studies.[57] The commitment of the German Jewish immigrants to maintaining German culture is reflected in the fact that of the seventeen mid-nineteenth century Jewish day schools with extant curricular information, *all* schools included German.[58]

Several private boarding schools teaching Jewish and secular subjects also operated in the middle of the nineteenth century.[59] The creation of this variety of day schools reflected their founders' interest in the Jewish education of their children, an interest in preserving German culture and concern about sectarianism in public schools. Nonetheless, the intensive Hebrew education envisioned by Leeser was not a paramount interest in all day schools. An alumna of an 1860s Cincinnati day school, recalled the following:

55 Henry Illoway, *Sefer Milkhamot Elohim: The Controversial Letters and the Casuistic Decisions of the Late Rabbi Bernard Illowy, Ph.D.,* Berlin: M. Poppelaver, 1914, pp. 16-17.

56 Alvin Schiff, *The Jewish Day School in America,* New York: Jewish Education Committee Press, 1966, pp. 25-26; Eduardo L. Rauch, *Jewish Education in the United States: 1840-1920* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, 1978), p. 49. For lists of and newspaper references to the many Jewish day schools and boarding schools functioning in the 1850s and 1860s, see Floyd S. Fierman, *Sources of Jewish Education in America Prior to 1881,* El Paso, Texas, 1960, pp. 130-140.

57 Schiff, p. 25.

58 Zeldin, "The Promise of Historical Inquiry", p. 9.

59 Among the finest of these private schools was the one operated by Max Lilienthal in New York. See Hyman Grinstein, "In the Course of the Nineteenth Century," in Pilch, p. 39.

> A schoolhouse was in the annex of the synagogue which most all of the children of the members of the congregation attended. We were taught English and Hebrew. The Chumish I could not understand, and told my beloved father I could not see why it was taught us [in Hebrew] and please to have the teachers do away with it. As he was president of the congregation then, he brought it before the board, who quite agreed with me, and I was very happy after it was removed from our studies.[60]

In the 1840s, Hebrew literary associations, maintaining libraries and conducting lectures, were founded in several cities. During the 1860s and 1870s, a new type of organization – the Young Men's Hebrew Association (YMHA) – was established in a number of communities (the first YMHA had been organized in Baltimore in 1854, but suspended its activities between 1860 and 1868). The YMHA aimed to foster improved knowledge of the literature, history and doctrines of Judaism. The "Y" often included a library of Jewish reading matter, and offered lectures and classes for young men and women in Jewish history and Hebrew language.[61] "Y"'s thus met the need of young adults for a congenial social and intellectual milieu.

Those Jews who had, by mid-century, become economically secure, recognized the importance of Jewish education as a means of protecting immigrant youth against missionary activity directed at them. Thus, Hebrew Free Schools were organized in the 1860s by the joint efforts of several New York congregations to combat the lure of Christian missionary schools which had been opened in poor neighborhoods populated by large numbers of Jewish families. Similarly, Jewish "Y"s introduced gymnasia and sports as a counter-influence to Christian missionaries, and in imitation of YMCAs.

While in the development of American Jewry the period 1840-1880 was, primarily, an era of German Jewish settlement and institution building, a trickle of Eastern European Jewish immigration was already apparent by the 1850s. In 1857, Pesach Rosenthal established a Talmud Torah (supplementary Hebrew school) for the instruction, free of charge, of poor children attending New York City public schools. Rosenthal's school enjoyed an excellent reputation in the Eastern European ghetto.

60 Jacob R. Marcus, (ed.), *The American Jewish Woman: A Documentary History,* New York: Ktav, 1981, p. 173.

61 Abraham P. Gannes (ed.), *Selected Writings of Leo L. Honor*, New York: Reconstructionist Press, 1965, p. 36. For a history of YMHAs, see Benjamin Rabinowitz, *The Young Men's Hebrew Associations (1854-1913)*, New York: National Jewish Welfare Board, 1948.

This school was, in the 1880s, to become a communally supported Talmud Torah known as Machazikai Talmud Torah.[62]

Although Sunday schools had proliferated by the 1860s, the lack of well qualified teachers (most instructors were young volunteers) combined with the acculturation and diminishing interest of many second generation families, gave rise to growing concern about the efficacy of these schools as vehicles of religious instruction. A sense of this malaise is conveyed by Professor B. A. Abrams, Assistant Superintendent of Schools in Milwaukee, who offered this assessment in 1880:

> Let's admit it openly: how many of the teachers who assist our preachers with the administration of the religious schools deserve, in reality, the name teacher? How many of them possess, besides some smattering of the Hebrew language, the abilities which would enable them to be in charge of a religious education of those entrusted to their care? The logical result is lack of respect for the teacher and an aversion against instruction and the school.
>
> But even the activity of the best teacher cannot be fruitful if he has to fight against the indifference in the home. It is a strange fact that parents who take great care to see to it that their children attend public school regularly and punctually keep the very same children at home for nonsensical reasons, since it is only Sabbath School that they are missing. A mere whim of the child, a party, a music lesson, are often considered important enough to justify an absence from religious school.[63]

Acculturation and Reform

The German-speaking Jewish immigrants of the mid-nineteenth century did not, in the main, think of their congregations as particularly denominational. The absence of rabbinic leadership or a well-developed religious communal structure, the quest for economic and social advancement and the local milieu affected the course of Jewish religious practice. As sociologist Charles Liebman describes it:

62 Grinstein, "In the Course of the Nineteenth Century", p. 49.

63 Document cited in Lloyd Gartner (ed.), *Jewish Education in the United States*, New York: Teachers College Press, 1969, pp. 99-100.

> The absence of a religious elite meant that the traditionalist immigrants were especially susceptible to a breakdown in the religious consensus. To a greater extent than ever, the folk now set their own standards independently of the elite. The traditionalist immigrants were certainly not irreligious, nor did they wish to conceal their religious identity. But they did desire to be accepted and integrated into American society.[64]

It was in the latter half of the 19th century that Reform Judaism took root in the United States.[65] Michael Meyer, the great historian of Reform, attributes the rise of the Reform movement at mid-century to both Germanizing and Americanizing trends. The first generation of Jewish immigrants from German-speaking lands was, in the main, from small towns and villages; they came in search of economic betterment. Meyer observes that though poorly educated, they were traditionalists in their public ritual, if not in personal practice.

> Only in the 1840s and 1850s did a significant number of relatively more educated and affluent Jews make their way to the United States. Some of them had gained acquaintance in Germany with at least a moderate reform – a more decorous synagogue, vernacular sermons, and a slightly abbreviated ritual. This second generation of German immigrants sought in America the same kind of ritual with which they were familiar in Germany, even as the earlier generation had sought to replicate their particular minhagim (customs), whether of southern or northern Germany, in the United States. The desire of the later immigrants for modifications in the traditional service now encountered similar wishes on the part of those earlier settlers who had taken root in America and looked to reforms as a channel of religious Americanization. When religious leaders, familiar with the theory as well as the practice of the Reform

64 Charles Liebman, "The Religion of American Jews," in Marshall Sklare (ed.), *The Jew in American Society,* New York: Behrman House, 1974, p. 234.

65 The first stirrings of reform were expressed in 1824, when 47 members of Beth Elohim in Charleston petitioned for changes in the Orthodox ritual. The petition asked that a weekly sermon be instituted, that the service be abridged and that a portion of the prayers be recited in English. Rebuffed by congregational authorities, a number of the petitioners organized "The Reformed Society of Israelites." Although the Society disbanded in 1833, Beth El itself installed an organ in 1840 and, in 1841 its more traditional members seceded and formed a new congregation, Shearith Israel. See Charles Reznikoff, *The Jews of Charleston*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1950, pp. 126-141.

> movement in Germany, came to America, they found a lay impetus for religious reform already present.[66]

The first ordained rabbi to be invited by an American congregation to move to the United States to assume a congregational pulpit was the Reformer David Einhorn (1809-1879), in 1855. Einhorn had actively participated in the Reform rabbinical conferences at Frankfurt and Breslau in 1845 and 1846, advocating German as the preferred language of religious expression over Hebrew, and urging a vision of messianic redemption as against a redeemer.[67] In his inaugural sermon at the Har Sinai Verein in Baltimore, Einhorn included a message on Jewish education, emerging from the Reform outlook:

> Shall we imbue our youth, free among free men, with a Judaism that would perpetuate the barriers between Israel and other peoples, isolate the Jew from the rest of mankind, and oppose with its hopes and aims the mighty current of modern life? Shall we attempt to bring them to synagogues where mediaeval laments resound, where prayers are intoned for our return to our ancient land, for the restoration of the sacrificial cult, and for the erection of Israel into a kingdom? Do this, and we shall have only indifference and contempt, if not positive hatred, for that for which we have sought to win their love. There is only one way to reach our high aim and that we will follow. We will point out to our children the world-redeeming power, the ever widening significance of the Sinaic teaching which is ever enduring; the changeable character of its outward forms; the glorious triumphs it has achieved outside of the house of Jacob; the unparralleled [sic] sacrifices its preservation has cost; the wonderful vitality with which it has marched on… [A]nd, finally, the mission of our scattered people to carry the Law of God to all peoples and all climes.[68]

Though Einhorn sketched the ideological position which was to characterize American Reform by the time of the 1885 Pittsburgh

66 Michael A. Meyer, "America: The Reform Movement's Land of Promise," in Jonathan D. Sarna (ed.), *The American Jewish Experience*, New York: Holmes and Meier, 1997, p. 61.

67 For a biographical sketch of David Einhorn, see Kaufmann Kohler, "A Biographical Essay," in idem (ed.), *David Einhorn Memorial Volume*, New York: Bloch, 1911, pp. 403-455.

68 David Einhorn, "Inaugural Sermon," translated by C.A. Rubenstein, Baltimore, 1909, pp. 15-16.

Platform (authored by his son-in-law, Kaufmann Kohler), it was Isaac Mayer Wise who was the institution-builder of the movement. As Isaac Leeser had established, in 1843, a monthly journal (*The Occident and American Jewish Advocate*)[69] as a platform to express his religious views and educational agenda, so did Isaac Mayer Wise launch an English language weekly called *The Israelite*, in 1854, as a platform for reform. While of divergent views, each of these protagonists called for some form of union among the growing number of American congregations.[70]

After decades of efforts aimed at organizationally linking the growing number of congregations in the United States, Wise succeeded in forming a "Union of American Hebrew Congregations" in 1873, with 34 participating synagogues. At first only midwestern and southern congregations affiliated with the Union, but eastern seaboard congregations joined within a few years. While earlier efforts at creating and maintaining an institution of higher Jewish learning for the training of rabbis had not been successful,[71] the Union, in 1875, sponsored the establishment of the Hebrew Union College for the training of rabbis. The College, based in Cincinnati, with Isaac M. Wise as its president, was to endure and grow. Though Wise had once imagined the possibility of a "Minhag America" – an "American Way" among the Jews of the U.S. (indeed, he published a siddur of that title – which omitted references to the restoration of Jews to Israel – in 1857), the UAHC and the HUC were destined to become organizational frameworks of American Reform Judaism.[72] These institutions were to play significant roles in shaping

69 Leeser's Journal was known overseas as the "voice" of American Jewish traditionalism. The Archives of the American Jewish Historical Society (P-20) include a letter to Leeser from Dr. Mendel Hirsch, son of Samson Raphael Hirsch, who served as Dean of the (Orthodox) Samson Raphael Hirsch Real Schule in Frankfort am Main. The letter, dated January 5, 1858, indicates that Dr. Hirsch has been approached by a number of English families regarding enrollment of their children at the school and proposes that Leeser promote the institution in the *Occident*.

70 One of the more successful such efforts was the creation, in 1859, of a national Jewish defense organization, "The Board of Delegates of American Israelites," in response to the Mortara Affair. Records of the Board of Delegates of American Israelites can be found in the Archives of the American Jewish Historical Society, I-2.

71 Isaac M. Wise had, in the late 1850s, organized Zion College in Cincinnati, an experiment which ended within a year. In 1867, the Board of Delegates of American Israelites and the Hebrew Education Society of Philadelphia opened Maimonides College in Philadelphia. The school was launched with three students and did not grow over time. It closed its doors in 1873. In 1868, Temple Emanu-El of New York opened a theological seminary which operated with limited enrollment for a few years. Hyman B. Grinstein, "In the Course of the Nineteenth Century," in Pilch, pp. 42-44.

72 The beleaguered state of traditionalism by the 1860s can be sensed from the remarks of

Jewish educational life within hundreds of congregations and schools in the years ahead.

Embracing the Public School

The ideal of public school education had, as earlier noted, become prominent in the Jacksonian 1830s. While democratic thinkers looked to the spread of knowledge as a basis for equalizing the distribution of power, people of means and more conservative outlook saw public education as a measure against social disintegration – particularly at a time of escalating immigration. As public, non-sectarian education became prevalent, and was perceived as superior in resources and academic excellence to what was available in the fledgling Jewish day schools, the full day Jewish schools closed, one by one (often becoming Sunday schools).[73] Describing Jewish educational institutions in Cincinnati to the United States Commission of Education (1870), Isaac Mayer Wise – at one time a proponent of day schools – summed up the emerging perspective of most American Jews: "It is our settled opinion here that the education of the young is the business of the State, and the religious instruction, to which we add the Hebrew, is the duty of religious bodies. Neither ought to interfere with the other. The secular branches belong to the public schools, religion in the Sabbath schools, exclusively."[74] While sharing with Wise a commitment to religious reform, Rabbi Bernard Felsenthal of Chicago urged a different course in the sphere of Jewish learning:

Rabbi Bernard Illowy, a Bohemian-born, European trained Orthodox rabbi who had arrived in the United States in 1853, and served as rabbi in a number of communities (including Philadelphia, Syracuse, Baltimore, Cincinnati, St. Louis and New Orleans). Speaking in 1862, he lamented: "[W]e must acknowledge to our own shame, because it is an undeniable fact, that since the downfall of the Jewish monarchy there has been no age and no country in which the Israelites were more degenerated and more indifferent towards their religion than in our age and in our country…. Yes, run through the streets of all our large congregations, and seek…whether you can find ten men… who still adhere faithfully to the faith of our fathers." Quoted in David Ellenson, "A Jewish Legal Decision by Rabbi Bernard Illowy of New Orleans and Its Discussion in Nineteenth-Century Europe," in David Ellenson, *Tradition in Transition*, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989, pp. 105-6,

73 With regard to the immigrants' interest in the preservation of *German* culture, public schools in some areas of high German immigrant population included German in their curricular offerings. Indeed, German Jews were among the German language teaching corps.

74 U.S. Commissioner of Education, Report, 1870 (Washington, 1875), 370 quoted in Gartner, *Jewish Education in the United States*, p. 86.

> In a Sabbath school where the Jewish children assemble once weekly, this given goal cannot be reached, especially when, as is the case in the American cities on account of the Jews having settled en masse, these Sabbath schools are overcrowded and pedagogic personnel and facilities do not exist in adequate quantity. One must review daily the subject matter of Jewish education, if it is to be paralleled by deeper teaching. Sabbath schools are [only] a command of necessity. Yes, Jewish day schools! Or many more day schools, in which the pupils will have the opportunity to acquire for themselves the desirable Jewish learning.[75]

Notwithstanding this case for Jewish day schools, by the 1860s all New York Jewish day schools had closed, as had such schools in Cleveland, Detroit, Cincinnati and Newark, New Jersey. Not long after 1871, a school opened by the Hebrew Education Society of Philadelphia in 1851 under Isaac Leeser's inspiration, dropped general studies and confined itself to Jewish studies after public school attendance (Leeser died in 1868). Several Jewish day schools had functioned in Chicago, the last of which shut its doors in 1874.[76] None of the Jewish day schools established during the period under consideration survived through the 1870s.[77] Having embraced public education, Jewish leaders and the press kept close track of sectarianism in the schools to ensure that schools remained religiously neutral.[78]

It is estimated that, in 1880, there were 40,000-50,000 Jewish children of school age in the United States. Of this number, no more than 15,000 received some type of Jewish education in Sabbath school, typically two days a week (Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning) or through private lessons.[79] "Sabbath school" was generally of three to five years' duration. The curriculum consisted of Bible stories, religious thought (through catechism) and a few Hebrew verses used in worship. Commonly, the rabbi served as Superintendent, and volunteers taught the classes.

75 Bernard Felsenthal, "Jüdisches Schulwesen in America" (Chicago, 1866), excerpted in Gartner, Ibid., pp. 83-84.

76 Lloyd Gartner, "Temples of Liberty Unpolluted: American Jews and Public Schools", in Bertram W. Korn (ed.) *A Bicentennial Festschrift for Jacob Rader Marcus*, New York: Ktav, 1976, p. 166.

77 Schiff, p. 27.

78 Cohen, p. 92.

79 Hyman Grinstein, "In the Course of the Nineteenth Century," in Judah Pilch (ed.), *A History of Jewish Education America*, New York: American Association for Jewish Education, 1969, p. 45.

In a paper on "Pedagogics in the Sabbath-School," presented in 1880, Moses Mielziner, professor at the HUC for more than two decades, reported that of 118 congregations affiliated with the UAHC (representing more than 40% of the then existing congregations), only 12 did not have a Sabbath school.[80] Mielziner observed that "it is the aim and object of our Sabbath-schools to impart to our children the necessary knowledge of the doctrines, the history and institutions of Judaism, to make them firm in adherence to our religious community, susceptible of religious devotion, strong for life's struggles and temptations, and conscious of their duties as men, citizens and Israelites."[81] Accordingly, a Sabbath school student, between 9 to 14 years of age, should become grounded in and knowledgeable of "the religious and moral doctrines of Judaism, biblical and post-biblical history, Hebrew reading and translation… and (a curricular enhancement urged by Mielziner) religious song."[82] A tall order for perhaps 800 hours of elementary school education! In the sphere of Hebrew language education (an area of learning in which Mielziner, a European-educated Talmud scholar, was a master), even the optimistic Mielziner could propose nothing beyond the rudimentary skills of mechanical Hebrew reading and translation.

Isaac Mayer Wise contemplated five years of religious school instruction, with Bible the school's principal textbook. Affirming that Hebrew is essential to the presentation of Judaism and to a correct understanding of the Bible, Wise averred that "the Hebrew language must be the principal study in Hebrew religious schools, to occupy two-thirds of the time; and the balance to be equally divided between Catechism and History."[83] Having initially supported the creation of day schools before embracing the model of public schools for general education, with part time religious instruction in Jewish schools, Wise remained committed to a substantial "core curriculum."[84]

Wise captured the prevailing sensibilities of American Jewry in the 1870s in declaring: "Judaism, in its doctrines and duties, is eminently humane, universal, liberal and progressive; in perfect harmony with

80 Moses Mielziner, "Pedagogics in the Sabbath-School," in Ella McKenna Friend Mielziner, (ed.), *Moses Mielziner,* New York, 1931, p. 118.

81 Ibid., p. 120.

82 Ibid.

83 Isaac Mayer Wise*, Judaism: Its Doctrines and Duties*, Cincinnati: Office of the Israelite, 1872, p. 4.

84 It is instructive to compare Wise's 1861 text, *The Essence of Judaism*, Cincinnati: Bloch, 1861 with its revised version (1872) *Judaism: Its Doctrines and Duties*. Though Wise had opted for the Sunday School framework for religious studies, his curricular expectations remained unchanged.

modern science, criticism, and philosophy, and in full sympathy with universal liberty, equality, justice and charity."[85] One hundred years after the founding of the American nation, the country's 250,000 Jews, primarily immigrants or descendants of immigrants from German speaking lands, had a keen sense of belonging, abetted by the conviction that Judaism and Americanism were eminently compatible. Indeed, Jewish education was not merely Jewish, it was, concomitantly, an expression of American ideals.

By 1880, several elements of an approach to Jewish education had emerged. Jewish education was a voluntary matter of parental responsibility to be satisfied by engaging a private tutor or enrolling one's child in a part time religious school – most typically, a synagogue-connected Sabbath school. Public schools were seen as the appropriate setting for children's general education, though they needed to be vigilantly monitored for religious teaching – the synagogue or church, argued Jewish leaders, was the proper locus for Bible study.

There was not a professional cadre of Jewish educators. Sunday school teachers were, chiefly, volunteers, with limited knowledge of Jewish sources (hence, for example, the title of Wise's manual, *The Essence of Judaism for Teachers and Pupils, and for Self Instruction*). As for the rabbinic superintendents, no rabbi had yet been trained and ordained in America. Leeser the traditionalist and Felsenthal the religious reformer represented the minority view that the basic texts of Judaism required time on task that extended significantly beyond the bounds of possible attainment in a part time religious school.

In a memorial presented to George Washington in his capacity as President of the Constitutional Convention, Jonas Phillips, a leading member of Shearith Israel of New York, had asked that there be no religious discrimination under the federal constitution which was being drafted. He added: "I solicit this favor for myself, my children and posterity, and for the benefit of all the Israelites through the 13 United States of America."[86] One century later, Jews in America were flourishing. If, however, Judaism and Americanism were so much at one, what was to make Judaism distinctive and compelling? What was, and who would teach, the "essence" of Judaism? Could or should Hebrew language be taught or emphasized? What was an "educated Jew?" Though not, yet, framed in such terms, these questions were already in evidence as a new

85 Wise, *Judaism: Its Doctrines and Duties*, pp. 3-4.

86 Quoted in David DeSola Pool, "George Washington and Religious Liberty," New York, 1932, p. 4.

wave of mass migration began, a tidal wave which would see American Jewry grow from 250,000 in 1880 to 1,000,000 by 1900 and 4,000,000 – more than 3.5% of the American population – in 1925. One hundred twenty years after 1880, with the Jewish population at 5,200,000 – 2% of the American population – these questions remained.

‘The Pure Engage in the Study of the Pure’: The Child’s Introduction to Bible Study

Howard Deitcher

The study of educational initiation rites provides a unique lens through which to examine a culture and thereby explore how it views the world as well as the values, beliefs and attitudes that it attempts to transmit to the next generation. From a variety of historical and halakhic sources we know that within the Ashkenazic Jewish tradition, it was an established custom to begin the boy’s Bible study with the book of Leviticus.[1] This practice is an expression of a host of philosophical, theological, social, and psychological considerations in traditional approaches to teaching and learning. In the course of this paper, we shall examine these considerations within their wider historical and social contexts, and reflect on the educational principles that they represent. Finally we will attempt to map these principles within the world of educational theory, maintaining that this understanding will enable us to better comprehend educational practice to this day.

The origins, logic and acceptance of the custom in Jewish history

The custom of beginning the child’s Bible study with Leviticus is well documented and ancient, and seems to have existed already in the First Temple period. During the First Temple, the Priests assumed responsibility for the education of the young boys (Jeremiah 18:18; Ezekiel 7:26; I Kings 2:7), and it appears that the role of these schools

1 Leviticus Rabbah 7:3, *Mahzor Vitry* p. 645; Menachot 110a; Megillah 31b; Taamit 27b; Klei Yakar commentary on Lev. 1:1; Tanhuma, Zav 13.; Dov Sadan, *The Cycle of Times*, Tel Aviv: Masada, 1964, (Hebrew) p. 179; Nathan Morris, *The Jewish School*, Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1928; Simcha Assaf, *Toldot HaChinuch b’Israel*, vol. 1, Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1954, (Hebrew) p. 3; Eliezer Mein Lifshitz, *Ketavim*, Vol. 1 Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 1947, (Hebrew) pp. 357-358.

was to train the next cadre of Priests. According to Grinetz, the first formal schools were established by the Priests in order to educate their youngsters in the laws of sacrifice, purification, etc.– duties that were an integral part of their work in the Temple – and thereby prepare these youngsters for the future roles that they would fill.[2] It is intriguing to note that this practice corresponds with the accepted norm in the medieval European schools, where "schools and schooling were confined to the tonsured, to the clerics, and the religious."[3]

From a variety of sources it appears that as soon as a young boy learned the alphabet, he was immediately thrust into the world of Torah study. To this end, special scrolls (*megillot*) were prepared for these youngsters and served as the boys' initial biblical texts.[4] Most sources agree that the age of this initial schooling was 5 or 6. The study of the alphabet and the scrolls usually lasted a year, at which point the syllabus shifted to studying the biblical portions according to their order in the synagogue ritual. The pedagogical rationale that guided this practice maintained that the boy would complete this initial study of the Bible by the age of 13, corresponding to the age at which he reached mitzvoth, and thereby complete his elementary education.

The contents of these 'special children's scrolls' raises a host of questions and concerns. Bacher claims that these megillot already existed in the Second Temple period and originated in Jerusalem where the sons of the priests learned, and that the purpose of these scrolls was to initiate these boys into the world of the priestly rituals within the Temple.

Morris convincingly argues that before the destruction of the Second Temple and for a short period thereafter, these scrolls contained the stories from the beginning of Genesis through the Deluge. After the destruction, the contents of these scrolls were changed so as to include the first eight chapters of Leviticus focusing on the laws of sacrifices. An additional source supporting this claim and establishing its rootedness in the life of the time appears in the story that discusses Rabbi Akiva's plunge into the world of Torah study. The Mishna records that after mastering the alef-bet, Rabbi Akiva's first piece of Bible study included the first chapters of Leviticus.[5]

2 Yehoshua Meir Grinetz, *"Vayikra*," *Hebrew Encyclopedia*, Vol. 8, p. 307

3 P. Aries, *Centuries of Childhood: A social history of family*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962, p. 141.

4 Gittin 60a; Vayikra Rabba 7; Soferim 5:9; Avot d'Rabbi Nathan 6:2; Grinetz, op. cit, Nathan Morris, *Toldot HaChinuch shel Am Yisrael*, Tel Aviv: HaAretz Publishers, 1960, (Hebrew).

5 Abot d'Rabbi Nathan 6:2

In explaining the reason why this practice spread so quickly after the destruction of the Second Temple, Morris argues that the loss of the Temple extinguished all sense of hope in the hearts and minds of the people. A strong fear arose that sections of the Torah dealing with the rituals of sacrifice would be forgotten and any attempts to instill hopes of rebuilding the Temple would be in vain. Therefore the practice was introduced to imbue young children with a love for and knowledge about these biblical verses, thereby eternalizing the memory of the Temple and rekindling hopes that in the foreseeable future, Temple life would return.[6] We shall examine this point in greater depth at a later point in this paper.

An additional source highlighting the acceptance of this tradition is Rashi's commentary in Hullin where he argues that the legal Midrashic work on Leviticus is called Sifra (the known book) because it was the book known to all, thereby assuming that the book was learned at an early age.[7]

The study of the first verse from Leviticus is also documented in the earliest preserved Hebrew alphabet primers from the Cairo Geniza. Likewise, the JTS manuscript of the Mahzor Vitry includes a torn alphabet primer with the first verses of Leviticus. The Mahzor Vitry was prepared by Rabbi Simcha Vitry, a student of Rashi, and he wrote the following:

> And when he (the young boy) is introduced to Torah learning through a study of the book of Leviticus, and he is taught to move his body as he studies, and when he reaches the portion of 'The laws of the world' (Leviticus 3:17) he chants it as part of the public service and a festive meal is prepared in his honor.[8]

During the Middle Ages, the child's introduction to Bible study evolved into a rite of passage, with a designated ceremony that re-enacted the 'giving of the Torah at Sinai'.[9] Most agree that the ceremony took place on Shavuot, to emphasize the connection to the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. A minority opinion claims that the ceremony sometimes took place in the month of Nisan during the spring, when the weather was 'neither hot nor cold'.[10] Although there are three accounts of this rite in the

6 Morris, *The Jewish School*, p. 172
7 Rashi commentary on Hullin 66a
8 Quoted in Assaf, *Toldot HaChinuch b'Israel*, cf. Vol. 1, p. 2
9 Ivan Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996; Lifshitz, *Ketavim*, pp. 357-358; Dov Sadan, *The Cycle of Times*, pp. 179-185
10 Assaf, *Toldot HaChinuch b'Israel*, Vol. 1, pp. 2-3

Machzor Vitry, the Sefer Ha'Rokeach and the Sefer Assufot, the overall structure seems to be common to all. The ceremony marked the child's induction into the world of Torah and was joyfully attended by a large group of friends and family. The ceremony had three main components that correspond to Van Gennep's classic stages of the rites of passage – *separation* from a previous situation, a *transition* or liminal passage between stages, and *incorporation* into the new phase of life.[11] Marcus believes that the Ashkenazic initiation rite illustrates Van Gennep's schema in the following way: The child leaves home (separation), goes through the streets of the town, and when seated on the teacher's lap undergoes the rite of initiation (transition), after which the teacher leads the boy to the river (incorporation).[12] In order to generate a festive atmosphere, parents came adorned with special jewelry and watches, and special foods were prepared for the occasion. As Lifshitz described the ritual:

> On entrance to the Heder, presents were given to the children, the parents were invited to attend the celebration, and an interesting ceremony took place. One child was appointed the 'makshan' (questioner), and the hero of the day, standing on the table, answered his questions which went somewhat as follows:
> 'What is your name, child?'
> 'I am no longer a child, but a young man who has begun the study of Chumash in a propitious hour.'
> 'What is humash?'
> 'Humash is five.'
> 'What is five? Five cakes for a cent?'
> 'No, the five books of the Torah that God gave to Moses.'
> 'And what book will you study?'
> 'I will study Vayikra that deals with sacrifices.'
> 'Why do you want to study about sacrifices?'
> 'Because sacrifices are pure and I am a pure Jewish child. Let therefore the pure come and busy themselves with the pure.'[13]

From a variety of historical sources, it is clear that this practice continued in the *hadarim* of Russia and Poland, and is still followed in certain *haredi* schools to this day.[14] It should be noted that some historians claim

11 Arnold Van Gennep, *Rites of Passage*, London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1960
12 Ivan Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood*. p. 75
13 Lifshitz, *Ketavim,* p. 358
14 Eliezer Ebner, *Elementary Education in Ancient Israel*, New York: Bloch, 1956; Sadan, *The Cycle of Times*; John Cooper, *The Child in Jewish History,* Northvale: John Aronson, 1996

that there were in fact two traditions to this practice. One tradition began the child's introduction to Bible study with the book of Leviticus and studied the entire book, while a minority opinion claims that the tradition began with a strong ceremonial study of the first verses of Leviticus and then continued with studying the weekly portion.[15]

The dominant perceptions about children and childhood that existed in the larger European milieu

In attempting to understand the ancient practice of introducing the child to the Bible through the book of Leviticus, it is helpful and informative to explore the social norms and practices of the general society in relation to the normative perceptions of childhood. It is generally accepted that in the late Medieval period, childhood was considered to be "a period of profound importance for the formation of a sound character, the development of intellectual skills, and the acquisition of a staunch religious faith."[16] But this claim must be tempered by the fact that this perception evolved over an extended period of time. In his classic work on the history of childhood, *Centuries of Childhood*, Philippe Aries claims that until some time around the twelfth century, European society did not see childhood as a distinct period of development. Aries bases his claim on the fact that Medieval art did not know childhood or did not attempt to portray it, and this reflects an inability to comprehend that such a distinct period of life has certain demands and needs. No doubt the discovery of childhood began in the thirteenth century and its progress can be traced in the history of art in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. But the evidence of its development became more plentiful and significant from the end of the sixteenth century and throughout the seventeenth. Aries further argues that a similar phenomenon can be seen in the type of dress that was recorded during these periods as well. As soon as the child abandoned swaddling bands, he was dressed just like the adults. In the seventeenth century, however, the child, or at least the child of means, whether noble or middle class, took on a form of dress that was reserved for his age group. This can be witnessed in the plethora of child portraits painted at the beginning of the seventeenth century.[17]

15 Sadan, *The Cycle of Times*; Lifshitz, *Ketavim*, p. 359

16 Linda Pollock, *A Lasting Relationship – Parents and Children Over Three Centuries*, Hanover: University Press of New England, 1987, p. 203

17 Aries, *Centuries of Childhood,* p. 50

Similarly, children’s pastimes, including playing musical instruments and games, seem to indicate no difference between children and adults in the Middle Ages. In 1600 the specialization of games and pastimes did not extend beyond infancy: after the age of three or four it decreased and disappeared. From then on, the child played the same games as the adults, either with other children or with adults.[18] Children were viewed as miniature adults and participated fully in adult life. Although there are conflicting reports about the mortality rate of children, it is generally agreed that close to 75% of children died during the first five years of life,[19] and one in four of the surviving children would die before the age of nine.[20]

According to Aries, the modern western conception of childhood began to develop during the sixteenth century with the rise of the middle class and its demand for formalized education for its sons. In the Middle Ages the apprenticeship system was the main conduit of education and preparation for adult life. Children of all social standings were sent into other families’ homes. During the fifteenth century the idea of education began to be encapsulated in formal schooling. This shift reflected the parents’ increasing attachment to the child, as middle class parents preferred to keep their children close to them. At first, this shift towards sending children to school rather than apprenticing them affected only boys, who were sent to school in order to give them and their families the opportunity for upward mobility.[21]

The modern concept of house also plays a role in understanding perceptions of childhood, and therefore we note the fact that the modern house did not become the norm among the richer classes until the eighteenth century. Rooms became separated and specialized – hence, “private life thrust into the background in the Middle Ages, invades iconography, particularly in Western painting and engraving in the sixteenth and above all in the seventeenth century”.[22] It was at this time that the child assumed a new status and importance. By the eighteenth century the child became the centre of the family and the family structure was defined more definitively and blatantly.

It should be noted that certain prominent historians of childhood raise some concerns about Aries’ theory of childhood development in

18 Ibid., p. 71
19 Martin Hoyles and Phil Evans, *The Politics of Childhood*, London: Journeyman, 1989
20 Pollock, *A Lasting Relationship*, p. 12
21 Aries, *Centuries of Childhood*; Hoyles and Evans, *The Politics of Childhood*
22 Aries, *Centuries of Childhood,* p. 347

the sixteenth century. They claim that perhaps the changes that we have observed in the iconography (which is the main source of evidence that Aries introduces) have nothing to do with the history of childhood but, rather, with the history of art. Furthermore, the texts that Aries refers to were produced by an elite group of literate and powerful men who had little if any contact with children.[23] A different school of thought maintains that throughout history, children were regarded in a special light, and were thought to require a special type of pedagogy that would be most suitable for the period of their development.[24] This belief maintained that children could be molded in the right way while young and malleable, that they were particularly open to outside influences and, therefore, that their education should reflect these limitations and possibilities. The young child was considered weak, tender and vulnerable. His total innocence was all pervasive, and, therefore, he was not able to distinguish between good and evil, right and wrong. In addition, because of his vulnerability, the young child needed to be treated with special care and attention in order to protect him from permanent damage. The popular belief was that "a light blow to a tender branch causes it more damage than a deep cut to a mighty tree-trunk."[25] Young people were to be dutiful, respectful and not to waste valuable time. Discipline was enforced not only by external forces, but rather, their consciences were also open to education. The development of a system of internal discipline was encouraged since this was seen as a more effective means of socialization than the mere obeying of parental commands.[26]

In the Christian world, there was a deep concern that children would go to hell, and this motivated parents to teach their children about sin and death. "As children were considered to be innately sinful, the only way to escape perdition was to induce them to strive for salvation from an early age. Death could strike at any time and the young must be made ready"[27]

Aries claims that to every period of history, there corresponded a privileged age and a particular division of human life: 'youth' is the privileged age of the seventeenth century, childhood of the nineteenth, adolescence of the twentieth.[28]

23 Rex Stainton Rogers and Wendy Stainton-Rogers. *Stories of Childhood: Shifting Agendas of Child Concern*, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992
24 Pollock, *A Lasting Relationship,* p. 203-205
25 Shulamith Shachar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, London: Routledge, 1990, p. 99
26 Pollack, *A Lasting Relationship,* p. 207
27 Ibid., p. 203
28 Aries, *Centuries of Childhood,* p. 32

Understandings of Childhood in Jewish Sources

In examining the status of childhood in the Jewish world during the Talmudic period, we are struck by the Mishna's claim that "children's breath is free of sin," which was certainly a more positive and supportive perception of the importance of children than that of the Greeks and Romans. This mirrors a similar Christian motif in the Middle Ages which claimed that children are as pure as angels.[29] Shachar cites the case of an author of a manual for priests that expresses the view that a child under 7 is innocent and free of sinful lust. The author writes that priests should inform their flocks that boys and girls who have reached the age of 7 should no longer sleep in the same bed. In other words, children under 7 can sleep together without being tempted to sin.[30] Perhaps one of the most telling stories describing the Rabbis' perceptions of childhood appears in Ecclesiastes Rabbah:

> R. Samuel b. Isaac taught … the seven 'varieties' mentioned in Ecclesiastes correspond to the seven worlds that a man beholds. At age one he is like a king, seated in a litter while all hug and kiss him. At two and three he is like a pig sticking his hands in the gutters and all that he finds he puts in his mouth. At ten he (the child) skips like a kid. (Ecclesiastes Rabbah 1:2)

This Midrash presents the various stages of childhood as portraying the innocence, sense of curiosity and joy that are associated with the childhood years. At age one, the child assumes a central role of attention and love, drawing together the community of adults who seek to hug and kiss him. As he matures to age two, the child is portrayed as crawling on all fours, and being driven by a sense of curiosity to explore the world around him. It is clear that in his attempt to learn more about this world, the child will inevitably creep into places where he will soil himself. However, it doesn't appear as if the Rabbis castigate this adventure; rather, this is a natural and healthy stage of learning and development that is to be encouraged and monitored. The final stage of childhood occurs at age ten, when the carefree child, full of innocence and replete with hope, skips like a kid at play.

In reflecting on the place of children in the rabbinic literature, Cooper argues: "According to the evaluation of the Rabbis, children were the

29 Shachar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages,* p. 17
30 Ibid., p. 101

most important social group in society for perpetuating the study of the Torah and the continuity of the Jewish people; and in the ancient world it is difficult to find another nation among whom children were so admired and highly rated as the Jews."[31]

At the same time, childhood was still regarded as a state of imperfection; to occupy oneself with minors was considered degradation.[32] Rabbi Dosa's comment in the Ethics of the Fathers echoes this attitude from the Rabbinic period: "Morning sleep and midday wine, and children's talk, and attending the house of assembly of the ignorant put a man out of the world."[33]

We believe that understanding this perceived imperfection of childhood helps clarify the crucial role that education played in the young boy's development. Numerous are the rabbinic sources emphasizing the primacy of educating the young children in the ways of Torah, but suffice it to quote the classic Talmudic source: "What does God do in the fourth quarter (of the day)? He sits and instructs the schoolchildren."[34] In determining the ultimate goal of this Torah education, Josephus states that the Torah "also commands us to bring those children up in learning and to exercise them in the laws, and to make them acquainted with the acts of their predecessors, in order to [obtain] their *imitation* of them, and that they may be nourished up in the laws from the infancy, and might neither transgress them, nor yet have any pretense for their ignorance of them."[35] At a later stage in this paper, we shall discuss how this educational goal of imitation presents a convincing rationale for the boy's initiation into Torah study through the Book of Leviticus.

Dissenting voices about the custom of beginning the boy's education with the book of Leviticus

Returning to our discussion of the practice of introducing the child to Bible study through the book of Leviticus, we revisit Cooper's claim that this practice was the norm through the beginning of the twentieth century in the East European Hadarim. At the same time, however, there were dissenting voices about the educational wisdom of this practice.

31 Cooper, *The Child in Jewish History*, p. 72
32 Shlomo Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Community*.,Vol. 2. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971, p. 174
33 Ethics of the Fathers 3:14
34 Avodah Zarah 3b
35 Josephus, Contra Apion 2:26

Although it is clear that this practice was widespread and deeply rooted, notable criticism was raised about its pedagogic wisdom. Already in the sixteenth century, the Maharal of Prague expressed deep concern about the negative impact of this practice. He claimed that the educators of his time abdicated their educational responsibility by teaching the book of Leviticus, as this teaching did not provide a firm and solid educational base for the child's intellectual development. Vociferous criticism was also voiced by Haskala ideologues, poets and educators who questioned the educational appropriateness of this practice, [36] some expressing deep concern and outright contempt for it.

Moshe Leib Lillienblum, a towering figure in the Zionist movement, recorded the following in his autobiographical work:

> In that year I commenced my Bible study. The reader will understand by himself that although my studies began with the book of Leviticus, I didn't have the cognitive ability to comprehend the following terms: Tabernacle, Sacrifices, etc. But this hanger was strapped around the neck of my teacher, and therefore what could he do? If he (teacher) would have taught a different section of the Torah – he would have rejected (the importance of) the 'small aleph' in the word 'Vayikra' (as it appears in the Torah) as it is the 'small aleph' that teaches us (according to Tradition) that we teach the young child the book of Leviticus.[37]

Lillienblum is clearly protesting the accepted norm of commencing Torah study with the book of Leviticus, arguing that the material is not relevant for a young child and certainly cannot effectively engage his imagination. At the same time, Lillienblum absolves his teacher (who happens to have been his grandfather) of any blame, as he was bound by the strictures of the tradition that dictated this norm.

Another form of protest against this practice appears in the writings of H. N. Bialik. In contrast to Lillienblum's criticism that emanated from the child's perspective, Bialik focuses on a father's concern that his son's education will be harmed by introducing the youngster to Torah study through the book of Leviticus. In a children's story entitled "Bereshith", Bialik tells a legend about a pious Jew who amassed much

36 Mendele Mocher Sefarim; M.L. Lillenblum, *Autobiographical Writings*, Jerusalem: Bialik Press, 1970, (Hebrew)

37 Lillienblum, ibid., p. 82. See also Shlomo Maimon, *The Life of Shlomo Maimon*. Tel Aviv: Bialik Publishing, 1913, p. 22, (Hebrew)

wealth but, to his deep chagrin, was not blessed with any children. As he and his wife grow older, they pray to God and decide to donate the bulk of their wealth to a great Torah scholar. For this they are granted a son and this child becomes the focus of their lives. The story continues to unfold:

> As the boy turned five, his father took him and placed him on his shoulders, and brought him to the Rabbi's home and said:
> - 'Rabbi, I have brought my son. Teach him Torah and educate him about the mitzvoth.'
> The Rabbi replied:
> - 'Let the boy be blessed before God. Let the boy sit with my students and be one of them, and God will enlighten his eyes and open his heart to the Torah."
> And the father asked:
> - 'And with which book will my son commence his studies?'
> The teacher replied:
> - 'With the book of Leviticus, as it is the practice for all children.'
> The father said:
> - 'No dear Rabbi, he will commence his studies with the book of Genesis, because the beginning of this book is about praise and glorifying the Ruler of the world, the Creator of the heavens and the earth and all their host. Let the child read this book and know the greatness of God's creations and how awesome is the glory of His world.'
> And the Rabbi complied with the father's request and taught the boy the book of Genesis.
> … And the boy grew and developed well, and he was handsome and good-willed, logical and perceptive, and he learned the book of Genesis and his heart was taken with the lessons that he learned and he discussed them always.[38]

The elderly couple praying to God for a son, coupled with the pious nature of the old man, is clearly intended to draw the analogy with the biblical figures of Abraham and Sarah. In that sense, Bialik is attempting to level criticism of the practice from within the fold; it is not some Maskil demanding radical religious change from outside the Halachic framework. The protest was conceived and initiated by a pious, believing Jew who wants to imbue his son with a love of God and a deep appreciation of the Creator and Ruler of the world.

38 H.N. Bialik, *All the Writings of H. N. Bialik*, Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1938 p. 368, (Hebrew)

The underlying principles behind this custom

As we have seen, the practice of commencing the young boy's study of Torah with the book of Leviticus was widely accepted in the Jewish world. An obvious and puzzling question focuses on the rhyme and reason of this practice and the underlying educational principles that guide it. "Educationally considered, one could hardly find a more unsuitable beginning for young children, especially when compared with such a book as Genesis with its natural appeal to the youthful imagination. It may therefore be taken for granted that there must have been a very strong reason for the introduction of such a practice."[39]

What, then, was the 'very strong reason'? In addressing this question, we shall examine a series of five diverse and competing explanations which mirror different perspectives of child development, learning and instruction, and pedagogical wisdom as they appear at different points in Jewish history. We will attempt to map these rationales within the context of prominent educational theories that continue to impact the world of educational research and practice to this day. A deeper analysis of these theories is beyond the scope of this paper and will be pursued in future studies.

1. Understanding the Child's Development and Process of Maturation

We open our discussion with a well-known Midrash that typifies a prominent rabbinic understanding about the nature of children and childhood.

> Rav Assi said: Why do young children commence [their Bible study] with the book of Leviticus, and not with the book of Genesis? Surely it is because young children are pure and the sacrifices are pure; so let the pure come and engage in the study of the pure. (Leviticus Rabbah 7)

In analyzing the deeper meaning of this Midrash, there appear to be three underlying principles that are assumed about the young boy's development and its pedagogic implications.

1. This Midrash assumes a sense of *developmental naivety,* a sense of purity of heart, as illustrated by the Mishna's claims that "children's breath is free of sin".
2. A second principle regards the child's mind as '*tabula rasa'* waiting to be imprinted, and thereby shaped and molded by the wisdom of the

39 Morris, *The Jewish School*, p. 23

teacher. The young boy has a limited inventory of life experiences and knowledge and, as a result, this becomes the most natural and age-appropriate time to teach him these laws (Tanhuma 14). The Rabbis believed that developmentally the age of six was the appropriate point to initiate this learning and, thereby, introduce him to the world of Jewish law. "Before the age of six do not accept pupils; from that age you can accept them and stuff them like an ox" (Baba Bathra 21a).

3. A third principle first appears in the Mishna Hagigah 2:1 and is elaborated in the writings of several prominent pedagogues from the twentieth century. Rabbi Eliezer Meir Lifshitz, a prominent religious Zionist educator, argues that the reason for beginning the child's Bible study with Leviticus instead of Genesis was based on pedagogic considerations.[40] He claims that the Rabbis opted for Leviticus because of their inherent fear about the consequences of teaching a young boy the 'difficult stories' about jealousy, temptation, murder, and sexual issues that arose from stories like: The killing of Abel; The drunkenness of Noah and Lot; The rape of Dinah, etc.[41]

This inherent educational concern is well formulated in the opening pages of Shlomo Maimon's autobiography where he relates that at the age of 6, his father introduced him to Torah study through the book of Genesis: "At the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." The young Shlomo interrupted his father with the following question: "Father, and who created God?" In reflecting on the impact of this incident on his religious upbringing, Maimon questions the educational wisdom of beginning a young boy's education with these 'theologically loaded stories'.[42] In responding to the query of why, in fact, Maimon began his Bible study with the book of Genesis, Sadan suggests that the boy's study program with his father differed from the formal study program he pursued with his teacher. In this case, Shlomo's father taught him Genesis, but in his formal schooling, he most certainly began with the book of Leviticus.

Reflecting on the dilemma raised by Maimon, we are struck by its similarity to the issues and concerns raised by modern theoreticians. In examining the research on children's religious development in state schools in England, Ronald Goldman, one of the pioneering thinkers on religious development in children, argues the following:

40 Lifshitz, *Ketavim,* p. 357
41 See also Chaim Leshem, "Teaching Leviticus," *Hatzofe*, Passover, 1955
42 See also Sadan, *The Cycle of Times*, pp. 182-184 for similar concerns.

> In the last years a considerable amount of data has been added to our knowledge in terms of the thought, attitudes and behaviours of children. What it reveals is that the Bible is not a children's book, that the teaching of large areas of it may do more damage than good to a child's religious understanding, and that too much biblical material is used too soon and too frequently. What it also confirms is that the content and methods used in religious education are out of step with educational practices in other subjects.[43]

In summarizing the research literature on children's theological thinking in Bible study, Kenneth Hyde concludes that this developmental process follows the general Piagetain model of cognitive development. In fact, chronological age was significantly related to religious thinking, and "this supported Ronald Goldman's contention that children under the age of ten or eleven were unable to formulate the abstract concepts needed for an adequate theological idea of God, and formal instruction about it was not advantageous."[44] Hyde's remarks clearly echo the concerns and apprehensions that are voiced by the Mishna as well as by Shlomo Maimon, and raise to the fore the on-going debate between the competing schools of thought with respect to understandings of the child's cognitive development.[45]

2. National-Religious Sentiments

A different understanding of this practice focuses on the nationalist and religious yearnings to instill a sense of hope and promise about rebuilding the Temple. The Temple symbolized the penultimate manifestation of autonomous Jewish life, and establishing the link between introduction to Torah study and the rebuilding of the Temple was therefore critical. Thus Ebner argues: "In the opinion of this author, the practice to begin the study of the Bible with Leviticus is based upon nationalistic-religious sentiments that crystallized in the era following the destruction of the Temple and the state. The leaders of Jewish life were anxious to lead the people away from despair and resignation by holding out to them the promise of future glory. The Temple would be rebuilt and the priestly service reinstituted. In the meantime the attachment to Israel's past

43 Ronald Goldman, *Readiness for Religion*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977, p. 7

44 Kenneth Hyde, *Religion in Childhood and Adolescence*, Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1990, p. 33

45 For a review of the competing schools of thought, see Karin Murris, "Can Children Do Philosophy?", *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 34:2, (2000).

eminence had to be kept alive."[46] This practice was one of numerous formal attempts to shape the religious, social and domestic life of the Jews that began after the disastrous Roman wars.[47]

In order to appreciate the critical educational role that this practice played in imbuing the young student with a sense of hope, we must examine the enormous educational challenges that faced the Rabbis after the destruction of the Second Temple. Neusner argues that before the destruction, there was a common 'Judaism' in the land of Israel and it was by no means identical to what we now understand as rabbinic Judaism. "The common religion of the country consisted of three main elements, first, the Hebrew Scriptures, second the Temple, and third, the common and accepted practices of the ordinary folk – their calendar, their mode of living, their everyday practices and rites, based on these first two."[48]

With the destruction of the Temple, which had served as one of the primary unifying elements in shaping Jewish life, the foundations of the country's religious-cultural life were erased. The gravity of the change is brilliantly portrayed in the following classic rabbinic story:

> After the destruction of the Temple, the perushim (ascetics or separatists) who would neither eat meat not drink wine became numerous in Israel. Rabbi Joshua met them and inquired: 'My sons, why don't you eat meat?' They replied 'Shall we eat meat when the continual sacrifice, which used to be offered every day on the alter, is no longer?' He then asked: 'Why don't you drink wine?' They responded: 'Shall we drink wine, which used to be poured on the alter as a libation, and is no longer?' He said to them: 'Even figs and grapes should not be eaten because from them they used they used to bring the first fruits on the Azereth (Pentecost); bread we should not eat, because they used to bring two loaves and the bread of the presence, water we should not drink because they used to pour libations at Sukkoth (Tabernacles).' The perushim were silent. Rabbi Joshua said to them: 'Not to mourn at all (for the destruction of the Temple) is impossible. To mourn excessively is impossible. But thus the Sages have said: "A man plasters his house, but leaves a little bit unplastered as a memorial for Jerusalem"' (Sotah, end, see a different version in Baba Bathra 60b).

46 Ebner, *Elementary Education in Ancient Israel*, p. 78
47 Morris, *The Jewish School*, 1928, p. 91
48 Jacob Neusner, *Understanding Rabbinic Judaism*, New York: Ktav, 1974, pp. 11-13

Several customs were introduced to imprint the memory of the Temple on the minds of the young students. These included Rabbi Johanan b. Zakkai's ordinance to repeat the service of the Lulab for seven days (Mishna, Rosh HaShana 4:3) as had been the custom in the Temple, as well as the custom that on the night of the Seder, unleavened bread was eaten together with herbs "in memory of Hillel at the time of the Temple" (Pesachim 115a). This educational goal of instilling a sense of memory lies at the heart of the practice of beginning the young boy's education with the book of Leviticus.[49]

As we ponder the daunting educational challenge of transmitting Jewish memory, we are struck by the unique historiographic approach that was adopted by the Rabbis. In his classic work *Zakhor; Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi argues that although Jews are a people steeped in history, neither their remembrance of the past nor the meaning they affixed to it was dependent on historical records. "For historiography, an actual recording of historical events is by no means the principal medium through which the collective memory of the Jewish people has been addressed or aroused."[50] Rather, memory and meaning were created and maintained through two channels: *ritual and recital*. In order to establish rituals and recitals that would impact generations to come, the Rabbis consciously sought to identify those elements that could foster a sense of 'collective memory'. In discussing the nature of collective memory, Halbwachs stresses the need for each cultural group to develop a memory of its own past that sets it apart from other traditions and will allow it to recognize itself over time. In arguing his case, Halbwachs distinguishes between history and collective memory, whereby history is the product of a scholarly scrutiny of past records, that does not reflect the sociopolitical realities of that time, whereas "collective memory is an organic part of social life that is continuously transformed in response to society's changing needs."[51]

In his formative book entitled *The Legendary Topography of the Gospels in the Holy Land*,[52] Halbwachs coined the term a "presentist approach" to describe the phenomenon whereby the interests, aspirations, hopes and

49 See also Shaya Cohen, "The Temple and the Synagogue," in Truman G. Madsen, *The Temple of Antiquity*, Utah: Brighton Young University Press, 1984 for an understanding of the emerging tension between replacing the Temple service with prayer in the synagogue.

50 Hayim Yosef Yerushalmi, *Zakhor; Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, New York, Schocken Books, 1989, p. 5

51 Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, New York: Harper & Row, 1980, p. 78

52 Maurice Halbwachs, *The Legendary Topography of the Holy Land,* Paris: University Press of France, 1941, p. 241, (French)

beliefs of the present shape the understandings and interpretations of the past. As a result of this presentist approach, pilgrims from different historical periods constructed images of the Holy Land that were very different from one another. At the same time, as Barry Schwartz correctly notes, we must not falsely lose sight of historical continuity. "Given the constraints of a recorded history, the past cannot be literally construed; it can only be selectively exploited."[53] In that sense, collective memory continues to evolve as it navigates a path between history and changing social, political and psychological needs.

In her intriguing work entitled *Recovered Roots*, Yael Zerubavel adopts Schwartz's model and focuses on how collective memory has shaped modern Israeli national traditions. Zerubavel claims that "a wide range of formal and informal commemorations fuels the vitality of collective memory. Holiday celebrations, festivals, monuments, memorials, songs, stories, plays and educational texts continue to compete with scholarly appraisals of the past in constructing collective memory."[54]

Zerubavel's expansion on Yerushalmi's understanding of the instruments that shape collective memory, beyond ritual and recital, is relevant to our understanding and appreciation of the importance of introducing the young boy to Bible study through the book of Leviticus. In addition, the inherent value of educating for the rebuilding of the Temple assumes a new level of historical importance.

3. The Analogy Between Children's Study and Sacrifice

Further research into the rationale behind this practice forges a fascinating connection with an ancient belief that "a young child's study of Torah is like a pure sacrifice with redemptive power as a form of vicarious atonement for the rest of the Jewish community".[55] The boy's initiation into Torah study reflects a belief that when the child studies Torah, he is in fact performing a service that will help the larger community atone for their sins. As we noted above, the Midrash claims: "Rav Assi said: Why do young children commence [their Bible study] with the book of Leviticus, and not with the book of Genesis? Surely it is because young children are pure and the sacrifices are pure; so let the pure come and engage in the study of the pure (Leviticus Rabbah 7)." In commenting on

53 Barry Schwartz, "The Social Context of Commemorations; A Study in Collective Memory," *Social Forces, 61*, (1982), p. 393

54 Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995, p. 5

55 Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood*, p. 94

this passage, the 13th Century British Library manuscript of Mahzor Vitry adds the following:

> Why does the boy conclude (his first text from the book of Leviticus) with the verse 'you must not eat any fat or blood' (Lev. 3:17)? The Holy One, blessed be he, said… It is on account of the children whose fat and blood is reduced over words of Torah. I consider this as though they sacrificed them to me.[56]

A similar motif appears in a nineteenth century description by Reuven Asher Broidts of a Bible initiation ritual that took place in Lithuania:

> Why did they have you stand on a table?
> Because I have begun to study Bible.
> And what portions did you study?
> The book of Leviticus – to teach us that a Jew is commanded to sacrifice himself for his beliefs and for his God.[57]

Understanding the initiation practice of starting Bible study with Leviticus compels the modern reader to appreciate the important influence exerted by the Christian motif of child sacrifice. "[T]he child sacrifice motif had special meaning in Ashkenazic Judaism and it resonated with the new high-medieval European Christian image of the child Jesus as Eucharist."[58] The idea that a Jewish child who studies the Torah is like a sacrifice consisting of blood and fat offered on the Temple alter is understandable within this cultural context. The Jewish child is symbolically sacrificed as a form of vicarious atonement. As Marcus argues, "The commentary at the end of the Mahzor Vitry reflects an awareness of the Christian notion of the child sacrifice in the eucharist and is yet another part of a Jewish social polemic in the initiation ceremony. In addition to the honey cake's representing a Jewish equivalent to the eucharist, the emphasis on the child's fat and blood reinforces the argument that it is the study of Torah, not belief in Jesus, that brings salvation, and that Judaism, not Christianity, is true."[59]

Further examples of establishing a link between childhood study and sacrifice appear in the Talmudic passage that claims "The world exists

56 Mahzor Vitry, ed. Horowitz, p. 630
57 Reuven Asher Broidts, "Two Ends," as quoted in Sadan, *The Cycle of Times*, p. 184.
58 Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood,* p. 94
59 Ibid., p. 101

by virtue of the breath of small schoolchildren who study the Torah in elementary schools. Just as sacrifice sustained the world in the days of the Temple, so the breath of small children does now (Berachot 63b)."

In elaborating on this point, Ivan Marcus claims that certain features of the initiation ceremony bear a striking resemblance to medieval Christian motifs. Marcus asserts that the Jewish teacher holding the young child on his lap is reminiscent of the Christian image of the Madonna nursing her child, while the Jewish boy's eating cakes of honey inscribed with Hebrew letters countered the "eucharist loaf" in Christian ritual. Medieval Christians understood the eucharist rite "as a child sacrifice in which one eats Christ as a small boy". According to Jewish tradition, the young were taught the book of Leviticus in line with the belief that a pure child studying the Torah was analogous to a sacrifice offered on behalf of the people.

4. The Education of the Priests

During the First Temple period, the Priests were regarded as the "Guardians of the Torah" (Jeremiah 2:8), and they assumed responsibility for teaching the people the laws of the Torah (Jeremiah 18:18, Ezekiel 7:2). As Bacher, Grinetz, and others have argued, the custom of beginning Bible education with Leviticus seems to have originated in Jerusalem where the vast majority of young students were the sons of Priests and there was a practical need to teach these boys the laws of sacrifices, the Priestly gifts and all the other areas of work in the Temple. In that sense, the custom was rooted in an attempt to provide practical training for the young priests. As formal schooling expanded and was made available to the wider population, this custom remained firmly rooted and other explanations were cited, which appear to ignore the original explanation for this practice.[60]

In exploring this rationale of why Leviticus was the boy's first book of study, we gain insight into some of the underlying philosophical orientations about how best to initiate the young boy into the world of Priestly life. In so doing, we are struck by its similarity to models of learning that have been suggested by philosophers of education. These theories have been organized and categorized according to basic understandings of reality, human nature, knowledge and consequently instruction. For example, Israel Scheffler[61] discusses three models of

60 Grinetz,, op. cit., p. 307; Lifshitz, *Ketavim,* p. 359

61 Israel Scheffler, "Philosophical Models of Teaching," in *Harvard Educational Review* 35:2, (Spring 1965), p.131-143

instruction, while Zvi Lamm distinguishes among the initiative, molding and developmental "logics in teaching".[62] It appears as though the aforementioned explanation is clearly an *imitation model*, where the young boy is introduced to Bible study via the practical teachings that he will need to acquire in order to fulfill his future role as a priest in the Holy Temple. The child's teacher is thereby designated as the agent responsible for inculcating patterns of normative behavior, and the pedagogical approach addresses the long-term needs of the child within the larger social structure.

5. Primacy of the Halakhah

There is, however, an alternative rationale for this custom. Its hypothesis is based on the assumption that it is more important for a Jew to know how to behave and what to do, than to know the background and makeup of his/her universe.[63] Thus, for the religious Jew, the halakhah is the instrument which allows one to reach true spiritual redemption.

The ideal of the halakhic individual is the redemption of the world not via a higher world but via the world itself, via the adaptation of empirical reality to the ideal patterns of halakhah. A Jew who lives in accordance with the halakhah shall find redemption. A lowly world is elevated through halakhah to the level of a divine world.[64]

Unlike other religious traditions, where key religious texts focus on the theological, doctrinal, or supernatural matters, traditional Jewish literature consists of legal treatises that blur the common distinction between the secular and holy. These texts are the Jew's blueprint for living; they mold identity and direct behavior. Thus it seems only natural that the child's first exposure to a biblical text should focus on a book of Jewish law, the book of Leviticus. In fact, the book of Leviticus is labeled "the one that is saturated with many halakhot,"[65] which according to the Maimonidean classification of the mitzvoth, includes 247 of the commandments. In other words, almost half of the mitzvoth are listed in this book, ranging from the sacrificial ceremonies of the Temple, to social interactions in the marketplace

62 Zvi Lamm, *Conflicting Theories of Instruction; Conceptual Dimensions*, Berkeley: McCutchen, 1976.

63 David Zvi Hoffman, *Sefer Vayikra Meforash*, Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 1939, p. i., (Hebrew); Louis Ginzberg, *Students, Scholars and Saints*, Lanham: Univesrity Press of America, 1985, p. 23

64 Joseph B. Soleveitchik, *Halachic Man*, trans. Lawrence Kaplan, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1983, pp. 37-38.

65 Genesis Rabba 3:5

and relations with one's non-Israelite neighbors.[66] These halakhot underlie the foundation of Jewish life, and, therefore, these laws form the foundation of Jewish education.

This theory maintains that the book of Leviticus was selected as the first piece of Bible to be studied because this book cultivates a sense of the primacy of the halakhah in Jewish life. By adopting this approach, the child clearly understands that Judaism "is the law which the Jewish nation … received from God's hands at Mt. Sinai and ordains to its members."[67]

Upon closer examination, we note that the underlying principles of this educational approach bear a striking resemblance to a theological doctrine of the Israeli religious thinker, Isaiah Leibovitz:[68] "From all [that] we have discussed, it behooves us [to acknowledge] that religious education is nothing other than education [for the performance of] the mitzvot. If we are speaking here not of 'religiosity,' but of the Jewish nation, we cannot evade the fact that the meaning of the original historical Hebrew concept of religiousness is observance of mitzvot."[69]

In a consistent and persuasive manner, Leibovitz adopts a deontological approach to Jewish education. In Judaism, the fulfillment of the mitzvoth is an end in itself, not a means to a larger ideal.[70] A religious Jew is one who accepts the historical and classical norms of Judaism, namely, the halakhah. Therefore the ultimate goal of Jewish education is to initiate the student into this cultural norm. "Religious education is none other than the imposition of the yoke of the mitzvot, even though it is obvious that study and observance of the mitzvot do not exhaust [the ends of] the Torah."[71] Thus this approach would dictate that the child's first exposure to the biblical text focus on the centrality of halakhah via the study of Vayikra.

Further, Leibovitz argues that teaching about the observance of mitzvoth has a certain educational appeal, unparalleled in its educational

66 For a discussion of the many categories of laws in the book of Leviticus, see Nehama Leibowitz, *Studies in Vayikra*, Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization, 1980, pp. 167-182.

67 Issac Breuer, "Religion and Nation," quoted in Michael Rosenak, *Commandments and Concerns,* Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1987, p. 136.

68 For a more extensive examination of Leibovitz's educational and theological thinking, see Rosenak, *Commandments and Concerns,* pp. 133-136. Rosenak classifies Leibovitz's approach as symbolizing a form of "explicit religious thought." This classification has proved most helpful in our presentation.

69 Yeshayahu Leibovitz, "*Hinukh L'Mitzvot*," in *Yahadut, Am Yehudi, U'Medinat Yisrael*, Jerusalem: Schocken Publishers, 1979, pp. 58-59, (Hebrew)

70 Leibovitz, "*Mitzvoth Ma'asiyot,*" in ibid., pp. 15-17

71 Leibovitz, "*Hinukh L'Mitzvot*," p. 59

impact. Its goal is nothing less than a major transformation of human behavior – a daring and revolutionary objective. Halakhic norms and dictates are radically different from those prevalent in western society – herein lies the strength and motivating force of this approach.[72]

Finally, according to Leibovitz, the acceptance of the yoke of the motzvot is an expression of freedom, which allows the person to develop a keener sense of inner religiosity.[73] When students struggle with the intricacies of the halakhah, they give expression to the way that the Jewish people lives out its existence and defines its place in the modern world.

By studying the laws included in Leviticus, the child assumes a place in the larger Jewish community, becoming a full member of the nation that defines its identity by the code of behavior it follows. Ultimately, the young child's first exposure to the world of Torah is via the biblical book that most directly reflects the world of the halakhah, the book of Vayikra.

The boy's initiation rite into the world of Bible study is saturated with symbolic, cultural and historical meaning, and provides the modern reader with a glimpse into the educational wisdom of Jewish life and practice.

72 Ibid., p. 60

73 Ibid. See also Michael Ohana, "The Status of the Holy Scriptures in the Religious Educational Thought of Yeshayahu Leibowitz," in M. Frankel and H. Deitcher (eds.), *Understanding the Bible in Our Times; Implications for Education*, Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 2003, pp. 159-171.

Binding and Teaching: A Meditation on the Right to Educate

Marc J. Rosenstein

As a rabbinical student, I first began to examine the history of education in the Reform movement, and was struck by what I call "the problem of generations": I understood the ideology of autonomy in Reform Judaism to mean that ideally, the Reform Jew chooses, out of the whole repertoire of mitzvot, those practices that are meaningful for him/her, that meet his/her spiritual and intellectual needs. In order for this autonomy to be fully operative, a deep and broad traditional education is necessary, so that the individual can make the decision as to what to choose and what to reject, based on knowledge and experience. However, historically, such an education was generally received only by Jews growing up in a traditional, pre-Reform community. Whether one examines the first generation of Reformers in Germany, or the first generation of immigrants from Eastern Europe in North America, who left their traditional upbringing to join Reform synagogues, one finds a significant disparity between the experience of the first generation and that of their children. Once the first generation had made their choices, they tended to institutionalize them and incorporate them into the education – both formal and non-formal (i.e., at school and at home) that they provided for their children. Thus, for example, a father who made the thoughtful choice to abandon the mitzvah of putting on tefillin was highly unlikely to teach his son the practice so that the son would have the freedom to choose whether to maintain or discard it.

This "problem of generations" has also been an important factor in the development of Israeli culture. From the days of the Second Aliyah through the mass immigration from North Africa in the 1950s and '60s, many Jews from traditional communities arriving in the Land (and then the State) of Israel did not – could not or would not – pass their educational experience on to their children, the New Jews of the renewed Jewish national state. Zionism was a revolution against the traditional mode of Jewish life, the substitution of national identity for a religious one. Therefore, there was no point in the New Jew studying Gemara,

or learning how to pray. On the other hand, it was always understood that the legitimacy of Zionism as the successor to or fulfillment of Judaism depended on rootedness in the Jewish past. Somehow, parents and educators expected the new generation to carry forward their revolutionary consciousness, rooted in the tradition yet rejecting it. Needless to say, this was a difficult if not impossible challenge. Therefore the hand-wringing by parents and educators over the alienation of the younger generation from traditional sources began early in the 20th century and has continued unabated in the popular press and in a succession of blue ribbon committees to the present. For a hundred years, the educational system – and indeed, the culture at large – of the *Yishuv* and the State have been wracked by ambivalence regarding the status of traditional texts and practices in Israeli identity and the educational implications thereof.

Thus, the Zionist revolution, like the Reform revolution before it, carried within it a paradoxical danger of self-destruction. Both revolutions were indeed revolutions, seeking radically to redefine the nature of Jewish life and identity; and yet both depended for their legitimacy on continuity with the Jewish past. Both laid on their educators the daunting task of perpetuating revolutionary consciousness, of institutionalizing the unique experience of the first generation so that every succeeding generation would somehow re-experience it. "In every generation each person must see himself as if he had been redeemed from Egypt…"

The fleeting, one-time nature of revolutionary consciousness is a well-known phenomenon in various contexts, and is intuitively obvious. A classic discussion of the role of education in the different phases of social change (reactionary, revolutionary, consolidating) is that by Wallace, who places the intuitive conclusion described above into a systematic framework and explains its logic.[1] In the dissertation I wrote during my years as a Jerusalem Fellow, in the close educational orbit of Prof. Fox, I came to the understanding that in societies in the process of change, there is an inherent tension between two definitions of education: the Aristotelian approach, which sees education as preservative of the existing order, as reproducing the adult generation in the new generation, so that society and culture will remain stable and the parents' generation can see their values and beliefs and customs carried on into the future; and the Platonic approach, which sets out an ideal vision, a perfected society toward which the educational endeavor must strive. Thus, the Aristotelian view is conservative, while the Platonic view seeks to use

1 A. Wallace, "Revitalization Movements", *American Anthropologist* 32, 1956

education as an instrument of change, as a tool for realizing the adult generation's as-yet unfulfilled dreams.

I suggest that these two different understandings of the nature of education are not only products of different historical circumstances reflected in the dominant directions in family and school education, but that they actually dwell together in every society and indeed in every parent. On the one hand, continuity is important to us. In some sense, it is our immortality. We want to see the structures, the values, the fortunes we created live on after us through our children. We want our children to carry on our selves. Therefore, we must educate them to be like us. Just as biological reproduction is designed primarily to create a replica of the parent in the offspring, so our educational endeavors aim to create a social, cultural, behavioral replica of the adult generation in the filial generation.

On the other hand, rarely are we convinced that this is the best of all possible worlds. We carry within us a vision of utopia and a catalogue of the realities we would like to change. We say, and we mean it, that we want our children to live in a better world than we do. Thus, we see our education of them as a way to foster in them skills and traits and values that will enable and empower them to realize our utopian vision. We are trapped in the muck we inherited and made. But we can, perhaps, educate our children towards redemption. Thus, we see education as a means of social change, as a way to cause the next generation to be better than ours.

There is, of course a contradiction here in what we do as educators, and in how we think about it. Do we want our children to be like us, or better than us? How can we count on them to improve the world, if we are their role models? It is common to say that we want to educate the next generation to be free of the prejudices, hatreds, and violence that have characterized our generation – yet if it is we who are doing the educating, isn't that expectation a bit exaggerated if not internally contradictory? And at the same time, another common and constant motif in discussions of education and generations – in America, in Jewish education, and in Israel – is that of disappointment with the young generation who have somehow lost the values we hold dear: hard work, family, tradition, excellence, social concern, intellectual integrity, etc.

Thus we are haunted by a constant disappointment that we have failed to reproduce ourselves – and by a constant illusion that we will be able not merely to reproduce ourselves, but to do so with improvements. This twofold frustration is a constant theme in educational deliberations and writings in the American Jewish community as well as in Israel.

Upon further reflection, it occurred to me that perhaps the problem of generations is not only a modern issue, limited to the generations experiencing the rapid change that has characterized the past two centuries. Maybe it is not only the re-formed Jews of Europe and America and the New Jews of Israel who have had to struggle with the dilemma of continuity vs. change. I would suggest that there is evidence, much earlier in our history, that this is a deep theme that runs through our entire history; indeed that is fundamental to our very identity.

We find in the rabbinic literature a number of sources that express a tension between the authority of parents and teachers, between the father and the *rav*. For example:

> **Mishnah, Baba Metzia 2:11**
> [Between returning] his own lost article and his father's – his own takes precedence; between his own and his teacher's – his own takes precedence; between his father's and his teacher's – his teacher's takes precedence; for his father brought him into this world, but his teacher, who taught him wisdom, brings him into the world to come. If his father is wise (a scholar), then his [loss] takes precedence [over the teacher's]. If his father and his teacher are carrying burdens, first he removes his teacher's burden, then his father's. If his father and his teacher are imprisoned, he redeems his teacher first, then his father. But if his father is wise, he redeems him first.

The discussion in the Gemarah and in various other sources suggests that while the argument that "his father brought him into the world, but his teacher… brings him into the world to come" is generally accepted, it arouses some discomfort, as it is dissonant with the virtually unconditional and paramount obligation of honoring parents. Perhaps the rabbis, having brought about a revolution in Jewish identity by placing the process of the Oral Law and the authority of its creators at the center of Jewish existence, were struggling with the tension between the institutionalization of their revolution (i.e., their authority to interpret the law) and the biblically mandated and morally obvious authority of biological parents. The Jewish society envisioned by the rabbis was very different from that described in the Bible, both with respect to certain fundamental beliefs (e.g., the world to come), and with respect to the basis of legislative authority. At the same time, without continuity with the biblical experience, the rabbis' vision would lose its legitimacy. Thus the biblical emphasis on the sanctity of the biological line could not be

simply ignored or overruled – but neither could it be left in its position of unchallenged dominance.

In a sense, this tension can be seen as expressing the Aristotelian-Platonic division described above: education as reproduction (the priority of parents) vs. education as a means for realizing a vision of a better world (the priority of the rabbi, as teacher of God's law). While the initial statement in the Mishnah gives clear preference to the rabbi, later interpretation seems to indicate an unwillingness to hold with such an extreme formulation – and that indeed, the ideal situation is where the father is also the rabbi – that is, where there is congruity between the preservation of the status quo and the endeavor to realize utopia. In other words, we seek to reproduce a reality which includes within it the striving for utopia – a status quo perpetually illuminated by the star of redemption.

Of course, the Bible itself raises questions about the centrality of biological status, in a number of episodes. For example: Esau is both first-born and the favorite of his father. By nature and tradition, to him belong the birthright and the blessing. It should be an open and shut case. But the Torah suggests that there are other considerations that outweigh nature and tradition. Isaac is blind to these considerations. He knows only the way things are always done. There is a conflict between this way and the vision of the better world God wants to further. Rebecca understands this conflict and very cleverly seeks to bridge it by blurring the differences between the twins. Jacob becomes hairy; Esau becomes weak. Is Isaac really blind, or is he going along with Rebecca's revolution?

Jacob and Esau, Rachel and Leah, the elevation of Joseph and later of David, in these cases – as in many folk tales from around the world – there is a tension between natural, biologically-determined authority and the authority that arises from personal qualities or divine intervention. Time and again, it is the youngest son who, against custom and tradition and the "natural order", gets the girl, the treasure, and/or the scepter. Clearly, there is a need deep within us (or at least within the majority who don't happen to be first-born sons) to believe in the freedom to rise above biological determinacy, to achieve status by intellectual or spiritual means. However, this need carries within it something that is destabilizing, even threatening. It is revolutionary. So while it is the stuff of inspiring tales, social structures remain the same, the hierarchy stands firm, fathers rule, oldest brothers get the inheritance.

Perhaps the "problem of generations" is a problem for all generations;

perhaps it is not only modern educators (and parents) who must struggle with the tension between liberation from the past and continuity with it, between the natural order, the carrying forward of the tradition, and the vision of a new and better order. It seems to me that this conflict may be inherent in the human condition, in the nature of human societies and their built-in aspiration to continuity across generations.

The biblical account of the almost-sacrifice of Isaac seems a nightmare tale about the conflict between a father's hope of reproducing himself – and a commandment, by a God who is by definition good, that will dash that hope in the service of an incomprehensible vision. I suggest that the episode of the binding of Isaac needs to be seen not as an isolated trial, but in the context of Abraham's biography. Examined this way, it becomes a story not only about tragic faith, but about the educational dilemma of conservation vs. utopian vision. To explain what I mean, I submit the following "midrash:"

> *Some time afterward, God put Abraham to the test. He said to him, "Abraham," and he answered, "Here I am." And He said, "Take your son, your favored one, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the heights that I will point out to you."*

And Abraham said in his heart:
I don't know You very well yet. My discovery of You is still fresh, and while I know I am on to something powerful, I am still groping to determine the outline of Your nature, Your expectations. And I must say, there are aspects of what I am encountering that are very troubling. I respect Your justice, and remember our conversation about the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah as an important moment of enlightenment for me. I came to understand that while Your ways must remain, ultimately, a mystery – that my understanding of the equations of justice, of right and wrong, reward and punishment in the world can never fully fathom Yours – still, there is a general structure that I can make sense of, most of the time. I realize that Your having given us freedom seems to limit Your power, and allows our evil the space in which to exist and even to flourish. I realize that nature obeys laws that are absolute, even when they seem to clash with the principles of justice You have established for humanity. In other words, I have learned, in just a few years of study and contemplation, to reconcile Your omnipotence and goodness with the existence of evil and suffering in the world.

What I am still struggling with is Your seeming antagonism to family; or is it just to my family? Remember, my first encounter with You was when You ordered me to leave my father's house and land, and set off on my own. On the one hand, I have to admit that You were right: once I came to know You and Your demands, I could no longer live in the society in which I had grown up. You were the spirit that drove my rebellion against the values of my environment, against everything I had learned from my family and society. The dissonance was too great. Even before I left I was already a stranger, an outsider. On the other hand, this commitment to You and Your commandments has doomed me to a life of loneliness. Being born again with You as father was a romantic idea for a young man. You provided me with escape to a new world, to vast horizons, to the powerful attraction of absolute justice, to the glimmer of greatness. Through You I could leave behind the decadence and decay of the culture of the past, and become a great, new nation. Only later did I discover the price I would have to pay for this glorious vision. Building my future with You meant losing my past. My parents may have been misguided, but I loved them. My childhood may have been in an impure environment, but my childhood memories, my parents' home were not devoid of humanity, of love, of – and here's the paradox – whatever it was that made me discover You. So my faith in You may be unswerving and proud, but it is bound up with a certain sadness, a sense of loss that is always with me. With my rebellion, a piece of me was lost. Forever.

Know too that this sadness is not only for my own loss, but for that of my parents. Among the animals, immortality is in the germ cells, in the infinite chain of transmission of deoxyribonucleic acid. As humans, however, we see ourselves living on in the constructions of our minds, in values, in the meaning we find in our experiences. Therefore, we are not satisfied with the physical continuity of biochemical replication. We expect something more. We expect our children to bring forward not only our molecules, but our beliefs, our understanding of the world and how it should be. Thus, when I allowed myself to be adopted by You, I cut off my parents' hope for immortality through me. I carry their genes, but all that they cared about I have rejected and abandoned. When they die, their dreams will die with them, for I have denied them their fulfillment. Because of You.

Oh, I know that rebellion against parents is a given of human existence. I know that my experience is not unique; however, that knowledge is small comfort when I think about my parents and myself, crying in our loneliness on either side of the great divide that separates us. Moreover, if my parents' tears are also an expression of hopelessness

and frustration due to my refusal to carry on their values and culture, then mine are by the same token an expression of guilt for having cut them off.

So I guess there is ironic justice in Your support of Sarah's demand that Hagar and Ishmael be sent off to die in the desert. I got my comeuppance. Just as I left my father's house and my father, cutting off his immortality, so I cast my son out, cutting off my own immortality. What exactly is the point You are trying to make by tearing away the bonds between me and any kind of continuity, before or after? That faith transcends blood, transcends family, transcends love? That to be committed to You and Your law means setting aside my humanity completely? The last of the words of the last of the prophets, some day, will speak of "turning the hearts of the parents to their children and the hearts of the children to their parents," while I, the first of the prophets, am to be denied both parents and children?

My understanding of the possibility of evil even in the world created by a good God will allow me to accept suffering caused by this evil. Let kings come against me with all their might, let me suffer plague and famine. I will protest, I will fight with all my strength – but I will understand that there is a cosmic logic that ordains my suffering. However, the loneliness, the despair of love and of immortality that I suffer now, more painful than the injuries of war or nature, are not decreed by that logic. They seem, inexplicably, to be the consequences of my adoption by You. If this is the nature of Your jealousy, it burns and it consumes, and leaves... nothing. Nothing for You; nothing for me.

I know Ishmael will live. That much faith in You I have! You are an expert on water miracles. I am sure that he and Hagar will not die of thirst, that they will find safety and a future. But I will not be part of that future. Beyond germ cells, nothing of me will live on in Ishmael. All that will be left for me is longing; all that will be left for him is the freedom of the desert. He will not be bound or buoyed by my discoveries, my beliefs, my hopes, my doubts. Perhaps he will become a great nation. So what? Do You think that all we men care about is the multiplication of our genes? Ishmael, I suppose, will experience what I experienced: no past, no history, the freedom and the pain of starting from scratch. Loneliness. He will make his own way, like I did. I had hoped for a better fate for him – and through him, for me. I envisioned a family, stability, continuity, traditions organically passed down from parents to children, grandchildren, happiness, immortality. Now, I have You, and Ishmael has... freedom? infinite possibilities? whatever he finds or makes of the future? the lonely howling of the wind in the desert?

And now this. As great as my doubt and anger might be, I never would have thought that the metaphor of Your burning jealousy is to be taken literally.

Before we go ahead with this project, I want to tell You what I had intended. I wanted Isaac to grow up in a loving home, permeated by values I have learned from You: the sanctity of life, the requirement of justice, the necessity of compassion. I wanted him to carry forward the faith that I have discovered and its explication and application in human life. I wanted him to replace me as Your representative when I am no longer here. I wanted him to take over from me the burden of Your law. I wanted to imbue him with zeal, with the fire of belief. I wanted to help him become, like me or even more so, committed to You above all else and to repairing this world. I wanted to teach him what I have learned. I wanted to educate him. That is what it means to me to be a parent. Generativity.

Am I driven, in this desire to mold my son to my ideal of the one in whom I will live on, by instinct? by idealism? by reason? Is there any parent, anywhere, in any culture or religion, who is not driven by this same need?

At the same time I have to admit that this drive sometimes makes me uncomfortable. If I succeed in transmitting to my son a commitment to the values I hold dear, I fear I am setting him up for great suffering. Unsuspecting, he will absorb my enthusiasm for You and Your law, finding in it, as I do, joy and fulfillment and meaning. Then one day, he will discover the price for such commitment. As he moves through a world fraught with evil and cruelty, his goodness will make him a constant target. I shudder when I think about the taunts and stones, the expulsions, the gas chambers, with which the world will respond to his carefully tended innocence. I weep when I imagine him slogging forward through history, bloody and broken, his eyes shining with faith – the faith with which I imbued him.

Could it be that I am sacrificing my son to my own desire for immortality? Consider: if I were to stifle my impulse to educate him, to create in him my replacement, he would be free of my dangerous enthusiasms, free to blend in, to go with the flow, to choose his own less demanding path – or in any case, a path that would be his own, a life in which he would be responsible for his own suffering. What right do I have to bind him to the value system that has been revealed to me? What cost is it fair for him to pay for my desire for immortality?

It seems I am trapped: my only two options are to abandon my son, leaving him free and leaving me with no continuation – or to

educate him and thus sacrifice his safety and happiness to my desire for continuity.

Ah, so the reality is more complex than the narrative! It's not just a case of Your suddenly commanding me to take Isaac up the mountain and sacrifice him. Rather, it is by my accepting Your way and seeking to educate Isaac in it that I am *choosing* to sacrifice him. This story is about an impossible dilemma, between commitment and freedom, between the love that binds and the love that lets go, between life for its own sake and life for the sake of an idea. Now I understand the story, but somehow I feel that future readers won't.

No, the test is not what it seems at first: the question You are asking is whether I am sufficiently committed to Your law to be willing to pass it on to Isaac knowing the risk to him this transmission may entail. Will I bind him in cords of responsibility and obligation, of innocence and idealism, and wait, hoping against hope that the knife will be stayed, that a scapegoat will materialize in time, each time? Do I have the right? Do I have the courage? Do I have the certainty that my way – Your way – is right? If I love him, perhaps I should hand him a jug of water and give him a shove, telling him to run for his life. Then he would be redeemed, but the world would not.

Maybe that's the point. Educating our children is not only an egotistical sacrifice, on the altar of our own need for immortality, but also an altruistic one, on the altar of the ideal of a redeemed world.

You win. I cannot bring myself to let go, to cut the cords, to turn away so Isaac can wander off into a thicket and get lost to me and to You, the way I wandered off from my father's house. We will go up, the two of us, together, bearing knife and fire – and, in spite of everything, hope.

The Paradox of Jewish Education

Michael Gillis

Means and Ends

Seymour Fox taught us, or rather inculcated in us, the notion that the development of theory is the most practical need of Jewish education:

> It may appear frivolous to suggest philosophical discussion when 'the house is burning,' but I believe that such deliberation is ultimately the quickest, most effective way to extinguish the fire and rebuild.[1]

Fox shows how a failure to consider the philosophical underpinnings of educational practice in the name of a superficial practicality leads to ineffective education. Lacking clarity of vision and a coherent set of objectives, there is no rational or effective way of deciding on the appropriate educational aims. The result of this failure is that Jewish education takes the form of a kind of *bricolage* which makes do with what comes to hand from the practices of general education and what remains from traditional forms of Jewish educational practice. This crude eclecticism at the level of practice fails to identify the ways in which these practices have embedded in them philosophical and theoretical assumptions which are incompatible.

> It [Jewish education] cannot borrow educational means from one system and aims and objectives from another and expect that this match will be successful except by mere chance.[2]

This view rests on another basic tenet in Fox's thinking on education: educational means are never neutral. Means and ends are related in

1 Seymour Fox, "Toward a General Theory of Jewish Education," in David Sidorsky (ed.), *The Future of the Jewish Community in America*, New York: Basic Books, 1973, pp. 260-270

2 Seymour Fox, "Prolegomenon to a Philosophy of Jewish Education," in *Kivunnim Rabim – Kavanna Ahat,* Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1969, p. 148, (Hebrew)

complex ways and need to be considered together. Inconsistencies and contradictions are often overlooked, even in the day-school where the entire curriculum is devised under one roof.

In this essay I will attempt to make use of these insights to suggest that an inconsistency is embodied in the very structure of Jewish education as a concept. I call this inconsistency a paradox but it may be that this is too optimistic a formulation. Paradox implies an inconsistency which is only apparent and which can, on a deeper level, be resolved. It may be that the conflict embedded in the very concept of Jewish education is but one further expression of the conflicts engendered by the encounter of Judaism with modernity.

The term "education" connotes different things in different settings and different periods. It sometimes has the sense of rearing, bringing up and initiating the young into the life and culture of adult society.[3] The primary aim of such education is the transmission if not the reproduction of culture.[4] In modern times, however, education has come predominantly to refer to the provision of those cognitive tools that will enable the new generation precisely to avoid reproducing their elders. In this view, a good education enables the learner to reflect critically on received ideas and to generate new ideas, new knowledge and new culture. This second vision of education rarely appears without traces of the earlier transmissive model. The independent thinking, which is the ideal of education, generally takes the form of a reflection on an existing tradition of knowledge and culture deemed to be worthy of consideration and continuation. At the same time this education will avoid sanctifying tradition or granting it too much authority.[5]

Education conceived as liberation from mere authority is the dominant sense in which education is understood in the western world. This has become the case through a long process that has its roots in

3 R.S. Peters notes how the word "education" was historically even used to refer to the training of animals. He cites one reference in the OED with respect to the keeping of silkworms and this as late as the nineteenth century. R.S. Peters, "Aims of Education: A Conceptual Inquiry," in R.S. Peters (ed.), *The Philosophy of Education*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973

4 This reflects not only a traditional Jewish view of education but also that of Hellenistic society in which paideia came to refer not only to education but the cultural ideal of the society as a whole. See H.I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, London: Sheed and Ward, 1956, p. 98.

5 The reproductive element in education is never effaced entirely. In "Democracy and Education", John Dewey, who is hardly a conservative philosopher of education, emphasizes the function of education as transmission. He argues that social life can only exist by virtue of a successful communication and transmission of its ideals, norms and practices. See John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An introduction to the philosophy of education*, New York: The Free Press, 1966, Chapter 1.

Renaissance humanism and the Protestant Reformation, which privileged the individual reader of the Bible as opposed to the authority of church tradition. It was finally established through the Enlightenment, which placed human reason above the authority of tradition. The primary aim of education became the cultivation of individual judgment rather than the transmission of group norms and ideals. The tension between the purpose of education as the initiation into a tradition and its purpose as empowering the learner to critique and even overthrow the tradition, is a recurring theme in the philosophy of education. The responses to what may be called, "the paradox of education" vary from emphasizing initiation at one end of the spectrum to emphasizing the primacy of developing the capacity for critical thinking at the other, with various harmonizing approaches in between.[6] With this understanding of education there may be said to be a fundamental tension in the very idea of Jewish education. "Jewish" implies a process of cultural reproduction and transmission, while "education" implies opening that tradition to critique, which necessarily puts the tradition at risk. This may be said of any kind of parochial education, but the tension is experienced in different ways and in different intensities by diverse religious traditions. Liberal strains of Protestantism and Reform Judaism may not feel any tension at all, while some elements of Islam see here the grounds of a fundamental conflict which allows no compromise. It is experienced as an inner conflict by adherents of varieties of modern Orthodox Judaism that seek to find some synthesis or equilibrium between existential commitments to both the claims of the tradition and modernity. Perhaps the most obvious focus of such conflicts and the attempt to resolve them without abandoning either the claims of tradition or modernity, is the discussion within the Modern Orthodox community of the status and role of women.[7] While the tension is experienced in many aspects of life, I argue here that not only is this tension felt with particular sharpness

6 At the conservative end, we can cite Yehezkel Kauffman, "The Transmission of Values as the Aim of Education," in H.Y. Roth (ed.), *On Hebrew High School Education in the Land of Israel*, Jerusalem, 1939 (Hebrew). Kieran Egan discusses incompatible educational paradigms as the root of the failure of education in his *The Educated Mind*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997, pp. 9-32. Zvi Lamm also points to the effects of such conflicts, but in more radical terms in his *Conflicting Theories of Instruction: Conceptual dimensions,* Berkeley, Calif.: McCutchan, 1976. Israel Scheffler and Richard Peters take a more harmonizing position. See for example R.S. Peters "Education as Initiation," in his *Authority, Responsibility and Education,* London: George Allen and Unwin, 1973, pp. 81-107.

7 See for example, Tamar Ross, "Modern Orthodoxy and the Challenge of Feminism," in *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, Vol. XVI: Jonathan Frankel (ed.), *Jews and Gender: The Challenge to Hierarchy*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 3-38.

in the educational sphere, but that the very structure of education in the modern sense makes the conflict inescapable.

The Enlightenment Tradition of Education

The modern sense of education has its roots in the Enlightenment and we take Kant as its representative. Kant's thoughts on education combine a fearsome stress on duty, discipline and obedience with the overriding requirement to cultivate the freedom of those being educated.[8] Children need to be trained by discipline to restrain their urges, to pursue good ends and, above all, to obedience to the commands of duty entailed by the categorical imperative. But however strict an upbringing Kant advocates, the child is not merely to be socialized or made to obey in a servile manner. Of ultimate importance is that the child learn to think. Only a thoughtful person is capable of acting according to rules because the rules that Kant has in mind are not a set of externally imposed requirements but are rather the maxims internally generated by reason that should guide correct behavior.

Of particular relevance here are Kant's views on religious education. In an ideal world children would be kept away from religious ideas and practice altogether, as the theological ideas underpinning them are anyway incomprehensible to children. Given that such isolation is not practicable, they must be taught something of God. Kant thought that the idea of God that should be imparted to children is as lawgiver, where the law that he gives is the moral law of reason. The association of religion with the particulars of religious observance is to be avoided, except in as much as these are the aids to people in cultivating obedience to the moral law.[9]

Rousseau's Emile is indeed educated in isolation from society. Keeping him away from organized religion becomes possible in the imaginary scenario of the book. Like Kant, Rousseau asserts that children cannot understand religious ideas: "The great evil of the deformed images of the divinity which are drawn in the minds of children is that they remain there all their lives."[10] Rousseau argues that the precepts of any particular religion are of no importance and so the young should

8 Immanuel Kant, *Kant on Education*, trans. Annette Churton, Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1992, p. 27

9 Ibid., p. 112

10 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile or On Education*, trans. Allan Bloom, New York: Basic Books, 1979, p. 259. Kant, *Education,* p. 114.

not be indoctrinated in them but rather kept away from them until their rational faculty is sufficiently developed to choose a religion on the basis of reason.[11] Rousseau relates the story of a pious Swiss woman who resolutely refused to teach her child anything about religion. The child could only observe that God was referred to with ultimate reverence and devotion. Kant similarly refers to the constant use of God's name in religious talk as taking God's name in vain. He suggests that God's name should be pronounced but seldom and then with great reverence. He cites the case of Newton who "never pronounced the name of God without pausing for a while and meditating upon it."[12] For Rousseau what is good in religion must be universal, the rest being merely opinion and cultural trappings. Kant is of the same view: "in spite of the diversity of religions, religion is everywhere the same…".[13]

A later expression of this overall tendency is J.S. Mill's "Inaugural Address at St. Andrews". Religious education, Mill says, is really a matter for families in the rearing of their children. Public (by which he means institutionalized) education should teach about religion and its history but not advocate any religious or, for that matter, any anti-religious position. He suggests that those who strongly advocate and those who strongly deprecate the place of religion in education have not "sufficiently freed their minds from the old notion of education, that it consists in the dogmatic inculcation from authority, of what the teacher deems to be true." For Mill, then, such dogmatic teaching is the opposite of what education ought to be.[14]

The heritage of the Enlightenment is the idea that education ought, above all, to cultivate the rational judgment of the student. This creates difficulties in the early years before the rational faculty is fully developed. In these years damage control is the order of the day, with the young kept away from arbitrary and dogmatic notions that can be unlearned only with difficulty. One logical consequence of this education is the effective banishment of religion from the scene of education except as the abstract expression of reverence for ultimate concerns, such as the moral law in the case of Kant. Religious education becomes an oxymoron unless religion is conceived in the universal terms which Rousseau and Kant suggest.

11 Rousseau, *Emile*, p. 260.
12 Kant, *Education,* p.114
13 Ibid., p.115.
14 John Stuart Mill, "Inaugural Address at St. Andrews," in John Robson (ed.), *Collected Works Vol. XXI: Essays on Equality, Law and Education*, Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1984, p. 249

Democracy and Mass Education

A further crucial element in this development is the concept of democracy. Rousseau's Emile is a well-to-do young man who receives the undivided attention of an individual tutor. In the twentieth century, we find education extended to all members of society not only as a means of vocational training but, at least officially, as a means of cultivating the minds of all citizens. In the past, not all members of the educated elite believed in this possibility and many feared that all that mass education could provided is a vulgar distortion of real education that is worth less than nothing.[15] Democracy is seen by some as bringing a threat of philistine mass culture and the obliteration of excellence and greatness that can only be cultivated by an elite. In this view, liberal education is then seen as a necessary antidote to the dangers of a mass society.[16]

It is above all John Dewey who recognized not only that real education for all is an outcome of a democratic mode of thought but also that it is necessary for the maintenance of democracy. Democracy implies for Dewey the need to cultivate the aristocracy of everybody. There can no longer be different kinds of education for different kinds of people, for masses and for the elite. This was a reality that Dewey embraced. Even where education persists as a cause and marker of class distinctions, most public pronouncements on education focus on equality of opportunity and access. It is easy to forget that in late nineteenth and early twentieth century America, when Dewey began his career, mass education at the high school level did not exist. In 1900, only ten per cent of Americans between the ages of fourteen and seventeen were in high schools.[17] When education is mass education, it is no longer possible to cultivate an educated elite who can be trusted with dangerous knowledge while the masses are kept on the straight and narrow path with a vocational education that also cultivates obedience to authority. The elitist tradition, which we can trace back to Plato and earlier, assumes that the masses are to be controlled by the inculcation of myths. Such an attitude is to

15 See John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and prejudice among the literary intelligentsia, 1880-1939,* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993. Charles Dickens's novels provide many examples of ambivalence regarding the educability of the masses. See, for example, the pernicious effects of a little learning in *Our Mutual Friend*.

16 See Alan Ryan's account of Dewey's polemic with Robert Hutchins in Alan Ryan, *John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism,* New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1995, pp. 276-283.

17 David Tyack and Larry Cuban, *Tinkering Towards Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995, p. 47.

be found in the Jewish philosophical tradition as well, particularly in the thought of the pre-eminent Jewish rationalist, Maimonides.[18] If real education is confined to an elite whose responsibility towards the masses can be relied upon, it need not pose a threat to religious beliefs and institutions. The form of mass education in democratic societies precludes such elitist solutions.

Diverse Experiences of Religious Traditions

I have already referred to the diverse ways in which the tension between religion and education is experienced in different traditions and in different cultural settings. In particular I noted above the connection between Protestant ideas about the accessibility of Scripture and the development of autonomy as an educational ideal. In contemporary discussions of religious education, it is possible to find some liberal Protestant educators entirely embracing the principle of overriding individual judgment and autonomy. In one discussion of religious education in such schools in Australia, the writer comments: "Many young people are now more unwilling to accept religious and moral teachings as valuable simply because they come from religious authorities…the classroom, with its compulsory attendance, remains a public forum where respect for the individual's freedom and privacy remain paramount…The overall faith commending stance of a church school is contextual; but this does not imply any attempted imposition of faith or religious teachings." The writers then find a theological justification for this liberal stand: "Most theological understandings of Christian faith presume that by nature it cannot be imposed."[19]

No less significant is the way Christian education has long combined a classical ideal with a Christian ideal. The combination of religious faith with a humanistic classical education allowed for the development of the tradition of the university in which academic freedom and religion could coexist. The modern university, whether the ancient universities of Western Europe or the liberal arts colleges of North America, generally owe their establishment to religious auspices.

18 The extent of the conflict between Maimonides the rabbi and Maimonides the philosopher is a subject of controversy among scholars. See Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing,* Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1952; and David Hartman, *Torah and Philosophic Quest*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1976.

19 Marisa Crawford and Graham Rossiter, "The Secular Spirituality of Youth: Implications for Religious Education," *British Journal of Religious Education* 18:3 (Summer 1996)

For much of Jewish history in Europe, persecution, language, religion and culture isolated Jews from intellectual currents in the wider society. The exposure of Jews to Enlightenment notions of education was experienced as a more severe conflict because it tended to come all at once and was accompanied by general cultural dislocation.

One important distinction that is often made between the Jewish and Christian traditions is the relative unimportance of particular beliefs in Judaism. Scholars of Jewish thought differ as to how far this point may be taken, but in general it can legitimately be said that traditional Judaism has given priority to action in the carrying out of the commandments of the Torah over the question of the precise beliefs an adherent must maintain. The expression of godfearingness in traditional Judaism is the extent to which the individual is meticulous in observing the commandments of the Torah in public and in private. The language of commandment is crucial. To fulfill a commandment is to do what God demands of the individual and it is obedience to these demands that is the measure of religiosity. It is precisely this law-like nature of Judaism that is criticized by St Paul in the Christian tradition and by Kant in the Enlightenment tradition. Kant asks how obedience to such heteronomous demands can be considered moral at all.

Jewish education in a traditional framework is above all the cultivation of an inclination to obey the *mitzvot* (commandments). A form of education that fails in this, fails in a central and crucial respect, even if it can claim success in others. This does not entail mere behaviorism. The actions ought to be accompanied by an awareness of their being the fulfillment of commandments. At the same time the tradition does validate actions that lack such a consciousness, in the belief that correct action can lead to correct orientation. Jewish education, which puts the fulfillment of the commandments as its first priority, cannot but be heteronomous and thereby in constant conflict with the autonomous nature of education in the modern sense we have explored.

Sources on education in Jewish tradition use two terms, "*hinukh*" and "*talmud torah*." The first of these terms refers to initiation through practice into the Jewish religious way of life. It has almost nothing to do with formal education and is principally the obligation upon parents to have their children observe the commandments (Shabbat, prayer, dietary laws, etc.) even though they are below the age of majority when they become personally obligated. *Talmud torah* refers to schooling in the texts of the tradition and the methodology for their interpretations, itself the most valued of all the practices into which the young are to be initiated. While initiation and schooling are elements within the modern

concept of education, they do not include what we have seen is an essential part of modern education, i.e., the development of autonomous reason and the cultivation of the personal autonomy of the individual.

This characterization of traditional Judaism and Jewish education is, however, mistaken in that it conceives of the Jewish tradition as a set of precepts to be blindly obeyed as a computer follows the dictates of its program. Such an understanding is wrong because it fails to take account of the central role of interpretation in Jewish tradition. This interpretation is often of a singularly free kind and can even have the effect of radically altering or even subverting its text.[20] Furthermore, there is not a precept for every occasion and there are many spheres in which the individual must find the right way to act without a specific commandment. The tradition is also conscious of the possibility of formally fulfilling the requirements of the commandments and yet being a morally inadequate person. There are also no clearly stated normative requirements when it comes to ideas and beliefs. Finally, the actual content of a traditional Jewish education is not at all inimical to a mode of challenge and questioning. Higher Jewish education was less concerned with the inculcation of behavioral norms, which was left to the home and the community, and much more with the development of intellectual excellence in the analysis of classical texts, the Talmud in particular.[21]

With all these important qualifications, however, the element of inculcation of obedience to the *mitzvot* remains the overriding priority without which even the highest expertise in Talmudic dialectic loses its religious value. The acceptance the "yoke of the kingdom of heaven," or the "yoke of the *mitzvot*" is the first aim of Jewish education. Ideally, however, this acceptance becomes the willing act of a free person.[22]

When Jews lived in traditional societies, these *mitzvot* formed the structure of the life of the community. Obedience to them was experienced as something self evidently required. This was the meaning of being Jewish and to abandon them would be to enter into a state of non-being or betrayal. I will not recount here how the processes of enlightenment, emancipation and them emigration shattered this reality. The responses

20 See Moshe Halbertal, *Interpretive Revolutions in the Making: Values as Interpretive Considerations in Midrashei Halakha*, Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1997, (Hebrew)

21 See Moshe Halbertal and Tova Hartman Halbertal, "The Yeshiva," in Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (ed.), *Philosophers on Education*, London & New York: Routledge, 1998.

22 The classic expression of this paradox is the midrashic interpretation of the statement of the Children of Israel: "We will do and we will obey (literally, 'hear')" as meaning, we undertake to do even though we have yet to hear. There is here an exercise of free choice to accept extreme heteronomy.

to them are well known, ranging from the radical traditionalist resistance and isolationism we have called ultra Orthodoxy, to the assimilation of Judaism to humanist and universalist ideas in Reform Judaism. Classical Reform Judaism was opposed above all to blind obedience to ritual *mitzvot*. In between are various modes of accommodation in forms of modern Orthodoxy and Conservative Judaism and it is on these that I wish to focus my discussion as they attempt to combine a view of *halakha* as normative with an openness to ideas and approaches derived from modern western culture. The question here is not the coherence of these ideologies but rather how they bring to the fore the general tension between education as such and the heteronomous claims of normative Judaism. The difficulty in squaring this particular circle helps explain such phenomena as the decline of a centrist Modern Orthodoxy in North America and the justified anxiety of Modern Orthodox families in Israel that their children will not maintain a religious life-style.[23]

Educational ideals need to be expressed in every dimension of education. For example, an education that makes democratic values central cannot merely teach about democracy in civics classes. All parts of the curriculum need to give expression to the ideal of democracy. Democratic values need to be reflected in the informal structure of the school, in the way teachers talk to students, in the discipline policies and in the system of school governance. It is not possible to isolate one sphere of education from another. A scientific education that cultivates questioning and emphasises rational procedures of evidence and verification is not forgotten at the laboratory door. Critical approaches to education have shown how educational institutions often fail in this respect and how a "hidden curriculum" can undermine the declared aims of the school.

Jewish education has suffered acutely from such a hidden curriculum when it has combined the traditional ideals of the commandments with a commitment to a notion of education that implies free questioning, the struggle to find reasons.

23 "Modern Orthodox" with a capitalized "M" refers to that element within Orthodox Judaism that sees in modernity positive elements which are valued in themselves and which are to be incorporated within an Orthodox way of life. Central among these elements is the value of secular learning both in the sciences and the humanities.

Israel Scheffler and the Enlightenment Tradition of Education

I will use the work of Israel Scheffler for evidence of the continuing impact of the modern concept of education. He may legitimately be taken as expressing a philosophy of education that is the contemporary heir of the Enlightenment tradition. He is a philosopher of education who insists on the value of intellectual and moral traditions. He is far from suggesting a radical opposition between autonomy and tradition and thus choosing him as an example is not a loading of the dice against tradition as such. Scheffler also has the special significance of being not only an academic philosopher but also one whose own education included a serious engagement in Jewish learning. How he combines his commitment to philosophical inquiry with his valuing of Jewish tradition provides a test case of my thesis.[24]

Scheffler defines teaching as "an activity aimed at the achievement of learning, and practised in such manner as to respect the student's intellectual integrity and capacity for independent judgement."[25] Scheffler deflects criticism of Dewey by noting that, "in the matter of emphasizing the free judgement of the child as against fixed adult curricula imposed from above, Dewey is simply the spokesman of a fundamental philosophical tradition of the West."[26] The cultivation of the free judgment of the child is made the central goal of education and this is acknowledged as the expression of an ancient tradition of education going back to Socrates. For Scheffler the notion of rationality is central. Teaching, as opposed to indoctrination, is an activity in which the teacher is called upon to give reasons for what she says and the student is invited to question these reasons on the basis of reasons of his own.

It would, however, be a misunderstanding of Scheffler's position to imagine that he conceives of the exercise of rationality as the purely formal activity of applying some set of logical rules. No less important is

24 Israel Scheffler gives us a fascinating account of his own Jewish education in his *Teachers of My Youth: An American Jewish Experience,* Dordecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995. I will return to this memoir later in this article.

25 Israel Scheffler, "Philosophical Models of Teaching," in idem, *Reason and Teaching*, London: Routledge Kegan and Paul, 1973, p. 67. Scheffler distinguishes between "teaching" and "education". Teaching always has the elements of both deliberate activity and respect for the mind of the learner. Education as such does not preclude indoctrination, while teaching does. An indoctrinating education is not one for which Scheffler has any respect, so it is legitimate to exclude it here.

26 Israel Scheffler, "Concepts of Education: Reflections on the Current Scene," in *Reason and Teaching*, p. 63

the concrete context in which reason is used. What is a good reason cannot be detached from the context of a field of inquiry or practice. Within a field, what are considered good reasons may undergo important changes. Rationality is therefore embodied in traditions of human knowledge and inquiry.[27] Tradition plays an important part in Scheffler's thinking as he stresses the importance of the traditional disciplines in education as the embodiments of human knowledge and inquiry with their particular practices of rationality. He makes a similar point with respect to moral education. Moral education cannot simply be the cultivation of moral reason. Moral reasoning must be developed against the background of a tradition of moral behavior and inculcate a pattern of adherence to such norms.[28]

At the same time as tradition has a vital part to play in education, the role of teaching is to put the tradition at risk: "A system of schooling that does not place the world in jeopardy in the process of schooling is, accordingly, not providing them with an education."[29] Education is a constant calling into question of the received canons and traditions of knowledge and values, even as it is founded on a respect for them. In this there is no fundamental difference between Scheffler and other prominent rationalist philosophers of education such as R.S. Peters and Michael Oakeshott. This tendency in the philosophy of education is not without its critics. From the left, it has its detractors who criticize its pretensions to objectivity and disinterestedness while being blind to questions of power. These critical approaches require that education put the world in jeopardy in a more radical way. From the right, its critics regard the cultivation of individual judgment as secondary to the requirement that education expose the learner to the best that has been written and thought, as embodied in authoritative canons. Education of this more conservative kind would inculcate a readiness in students to doubt their own conclusions before those of the text.[30]

Scheffler applies this notion of education as a constant putting of the

27 Scheffler, "Philosophical Models of Teaching," pp. 78-79

28 Israel Scheffler, "Moral Education Beyond Moral Reasoning," in *In Praise of the Cognitive Emotions*, New York: Routledge, 1991, p. 99

29 Israel Scheffler, "The Concept of the Educated Person," in V.A. Howard and Israel Scheffler (eds.), *Work, Education and Leadership*: *Essays in the philosophy of education*, New York: P. Lang, 1995, p. 85

30 For such critical approaches, see the writings of Paulo Friere and his disciple Peter Mclaren, or the feminist critique of Jane Roland Martin, "Excluding Women from the Educational Realm," *Harvard Educational Review* 52:2 (1982). For the argument from the right, see Leo Strauss, "What is Liberal Education?" in idem*, Liberalism Ancient and Modern*. New York: Basic Books, 1968.

world at risk specifically to the notion of a code of conduct: "For moral education, as distinct from moral training, requires the disposition to probe into the principles underlying the code of conduct to which one is attached by training. To provide a student with a moral education means promoting his power to rethink the very code we are inculcating in him. We are risking our own code in the process of teaching it."[31] This is a vivid expression of the norm of modern education which brings to the fore the tension between such education and the norms of the Jewish tradition.[32] There is a branch of Jewish thought which is concerned with the reasons for the commandments, and there are often strong differences between different schools of thought over these reasons. But while the reasons are always at risk, the code of the commandments itself remains sacrosanct.

Teachers of His Youth

Having used Israel Scheffler as one voice of the modern notion of education, it is of great interest to study his account of his own Jewish education. Scheffler's Orthodox immigrant parents went to great lengths in difficult circumstances to secure an excellent Jewish education for their son. He gives us an account of this education that is vivid and moving. His educational memoir can, however, be read as a playing out of the tensions I have been discussing. From his elementary school years, Scheffler longed for someone to relate to the subject matter of Judaism in a systematic or philosophical way. The roots of this longing lie in the situation of being uprooted from the Old World and transplanted into the New World that was the experience of his teachers, his parents and the religious culture in which he was to be educated. What in a traditional context can simply be taken for granted, becomes subject to question when the context is alien. Scheffler's teachers could not help him because they had no philosophy of reconciliation and were themselves enduring the same gnawing conflicts. There is particular pathos in the story of Scheffler's first real teacher, "Mr. Savage", who is a faithful teacher of the tradition and the Hebrew language even though it emerges that he

31 Scheffler, "The Concept of the Educated Person," p. 85

32 R.S. Peters stresses the importance of moral codes and the inculcation of moral habits in developing the moral personality. Ultimately, however, the aim is that the learner should develop moral principles with which she can potentially criticize and revise existing moral codes. There is no disagreement between Scheffler and Peters on this point. See R.S. Peters, "Reason and Habit: The Paradox of Moral Education," in Israel Scheffler (ed.), *Philosophy and Education*, 2nd edition, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1966.

no longer believes in or lives a traditional life. Throughout, Scheffler is confronted by the lack of harmony between the two worlds in which he moves. When he transfers from public school to Jewish day-schools, the two worlds coexist in the curriculum in the same classroom but without intellectual contact between them. Scheffler's most biting criticism is of the ideological pretensions of Yeshiva College, which he compares to the muddle-through approach of the Rabbi Jacob Joseph School which he previously attended: "Nothing explicit in the way of a philosophical critique of science or religion was offered, no coming to grips with the specific doubts, arguments, and charges of the opposing camps was ever attempted. R.J.J. had had no educational philosophy and pretended to none; the Yeshiva had none either, but called it 'synthesis'.[33]

It is clear that Scheffler was developing an untraditional understanding of Judaism from a very early stage. In high school he enjoyed the subject matter but not the teaching. He recounts how he enjoyed putting his teacher of Codes (i.e. Jewish law or halakha) on the spot, and comments that he was "repelled…by the thought that every jot and tittle of the traditional Codes was assumed by him to have normative force."[34] The language here is somewhat prejudicial but it indicates that even with years of higher Jewish education in an Orthodox setting, he had moved away from an Orthodox view of the tradition.

A decisive influence was Mordecai Kaplan whose rationalist and naturalistic approach to Judaism led to the overthrow of Scheffler's "naïve Orthodoxy". Texts were not to be read literally. The tradition is to be reviewed by the light of modern scientific, moral and philosophical insights. For Scheffler this was the way of synthesis that he had sought. Unlike many of his contemporaries who were Jewishly far less literate than he, Scheffler's enlightenment does not lead him to reject his Judaism but to reinterpret it. He argues that there is no inherent conflict between the particularism of loyalty to a tradition and the universalist demands of philosophy.[35] Reflective critical thought, which is universal, must take its concepts and subject matter from some existing order or historically inherited material. Critical thought remains the arbiter, but it exists in a dialectical relationship to the products of tradition.[36] At the end of his educational autobiography, Scheffler offers an interpretation of Judaism and a defense of the value of ritual in particular which he sees as a set of

33 Scheffler, *Teachers of My Youth*, p. 121.
34 Ibid. p. 111
35 Ibid., p. 14
36 Ibid., pp. 176-177

symbolic practices. He is conscious that this interpretation is one that his teachers would not have accepted.

Scheffler's synthesis is made possible by a decisive shift in favor of a philosophical worldview. The authority of the tradition is subject to the claims of philosophical critique: "...our independent conceptions of truth, morals, logic, and evidence must take precedence over the inherited text as it stands."[37] The commandments have lost their commanded status. It is striking to juxtapose Scheffler's interpretation of Judaism with that of the Israeli scientist, theologian, and philosopher, Yeshayahu Leibowitz. For Leibowitz the commandments are not rituals at all. Ritual implies that the actions involved are expressive of some human social need. For Leibowitz, the religious value of the commandments is only in obedience to them as service of God. This rather stark formulation is, despite appearances, a modern understanding by which Leibowitz wishes to put the commandments beyond the reach of philosophical or historical debate. While this position is unrepresentative of Jewish traditional thought in the vehemence of its opposition to all instrumental explanations of the commandments, it nevertheless does express the irreducible nature of the commandments as commandments.[38] This is the cardinal point, which Scheffler cannot include within his synthesis.

Scheffler's vision of Jewish education resolves the heteronomy-autonomy conflict firmly in favor of autonomy, but this vision brings educational challenges of its own. If the particular is the cultural context on which the universalizing power of critical reflection is brought to bear, there is a need for a richly present Jewish culture to be reflected upon. This was palpably there for the young Scheffler but what is to happen for those individuals and whole generations whose Jewish culture has become attenuated to the point of near-disappearance? Scheffler is aware of this difficulty, commenting that "Contemporary Jewish education has the task of creating the very society of which it should be a reflection."[39] No less demanding is the insistence that Jewish education include philosophy; a critical reflection on the tradition and its texts as they are studied. This philosophy is not a single, once and for all, attempt at reconciliation, as in nineteenth century neo-Orthodoxy or the "synthesis" of Yeshiva College, but a continuing dialogue with changing and plural outcomes.

37 Ibid., p. 176

38 See, for example, Yeshayahu Leibowitz, "Religious Praxis," in Y. Leibowitz, *Judaism, Human Values and the Jewish State*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992, p.16.

39 Scheffler, *Teachers of My Youth*, p. 173

For Scheffler, living a life informed by the practices of the Jewish tradition makes sense as a means of organizing experience and meaning in a particular way. An individual's concepts of truth and right have superior status, but these do not emerge from nowhere. They arise in the process of a dialogue with tradition. Values we hold and the way we express them arise out of a cultural context and that context cannot be replaced by a set of entirely abstract ideas. The tradition which a Jew has by inheritance (and by implication any inherited religious or cultural tradition) can be a rich resource for the living of a good life and for education. What this tradition is not, is a revealed source of truth with a priori authority over us. Natan Rotenstreich draws a useful distinction between "substantive" and "existential" attachments. "The former are ab origine relationships; that is, they are binding by reason of their origin. The latter are post factum relationships, likely to be formed out of feeling or sentiment or even practical considerations."[40] Scheffler's attachment to Judaism is of this post factum type.

Scheffler's need for a reformulation of Jewish educational ideals can be seen as a response to what I have described here as a structural opposition between the modern concept of education and the educational demands of traditionalist Orthodoxy. Scheffler's commitment to the values of tradition is made subordinate to the demands of the rationalist autonomy, which is the wellspring of his philosophical outlook.

None of this is news to many Orthodox educators or their liberal and secular opponents. Ultra-Orthodoxy was always hostile to the forces of the Enlightenment and saw in education the inevitable battlefield on which this culture war was to be fought. Those who responded by the challenge of modernity with a call to reform also focused on education, with the more radical taking the view that modern education cannot be reconciled with traditional normative Jewish life. There are those, however, who occupy a middle position and seek some reconciliation of the two worlds and the two educational ideals. In the nineteenth century, some German neo-Orthodox thinkers believed that in some profound ways, Kant's philosophy confirms the insights of Judaism.[41] In the twentieth century, this trend has its heirs in the Modern Orthodoxy which Scheffler found so wanting as an educational philosophy. The educational question cannot be divorced from its cultural setting. In

40 Natan Rotenstreich, *Tradition and Reality: The Impact of Modernity on Jewish Thought*, New York: Random House, 1972, p. 118.

41 See David Ellenson, "German Jewish Orthodoxy: Tradition in the Context of Culture," in Jack Wertheimer (ed.), *The Uses of Tradition,* New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992.

nineteenth century Germany and in the New York of Scheffler's youth, Orthodoxy was on the defensive. Some kind of accommodation was not only a matter of choosing a philosophy but indeed was the only credible strategy for the survival of Orthodoxy. Remarkably, in the years since the Holocaust this defensive stance of Orthodoxy has all but disappeared and with it the credibility of the ideology of "centrist" or "modern" Orthodoxy.[42]

One manifestation of this collapse is the way some apparently Modern Orthodox educators espouse quite extreme traditionalist positions, albeit still couched in the style of modern educational discourse. Moshe Ahrend of Bar Ilan University's School of Education, for example, has written extensively on Jewish education in an open society. He argues by radically opposing the traditional Jewish world view to that of modernity. His characterization of modern society as hedonistic, materialistic, unprincipled and vulgar makes it quite easy to exalt the heteronomous values of traditional Judaism.[43] The educator is to bring his students to see the relative values of the religious and secular world views and this, together with the power of the educator as role model, will bring the student to choose traditional Judaism.

Other educators approach the dilemma while maintaining a respect for both modern culture and the tradition. Michael Rosenak attempts to find a "translation" of even the most intractable of traditional concepts so that they can have significance for people of quite divergent theological and ideological positions. First among these is the idea of "Fear of Heaven". He successfully shows that this notion is far subtler than the quaking subservience the secularist may assume it connotes. At the same time the discussion he creatively simulates between diverse educators ranging from the traditionalist to the secularist to show that they can all appropriate the notion of "Fear of Heaven," can be read as emphasizing the differences between them rather than connecting them. That all the participants may feel able to appropriate the term may simply be a matter of homology rather than translation, with each meaning something quite different by the same terms. This may be described as something like

42 Jonathan Sacks has been a consistent critic of the hyphenation of Orthodoxy with modernity. His critique is striking for its wide-ranging use of modern scholarship in a variety of fields. It thus enacts what it seeks to question – the fruitful interaction of Judaism and the general culture. See, for example, Jonathan Sacks, *Tradition in an Untraditional Age; Essays on Modern Jewish Thought*, London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1990.

43 Moshe Ahrend, "The Meaning of Teaching Jewish Studies in the Modern Age," in idem, *Jewish Education in an Open Society: Landmarks*, Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2000, (Hebrew)

the reverse of Ernest Gellner's description of how modern cultures may converge and come to share a common language semantically even if the actual languages they speak differ phonetically.[44] In the case of "Fear of Heaven" we have a common language phonetically which is actually not a common language semantically. Far from providing a shared paideia, as Rosenak suggests, the diverse uses of the term "Fear of Heaven" may serve to stress the divergence of educational ideals. I suggest that Rosenak lays too much stress on the language, which is less important than what the language means.[45] A similar point is made by Jonathan Sacks who describes the condition of the Jewish people as "Babel inverted" in which an apparently shared language preserves the illusion of Jewish Unity when in fact the words and terms have lost their shared contexts and meanings.[46]

Conclusion

In the construction of a philosophy of Jewish education, my comments have been largely negative. I have sought to emphasize the structural difficulties that lie in the way. At the same time, I do not think we need wait for a philosophy in order to pursue an educational style that is not sectarian, that is open to the diverse experience and creativity of humanity, and that recognizes the significance for Judaism of the contact – in harmony and in conflict – with cultures, beliefs and philosophies from outside itself. The maintenance of a traditional approach to learning and religious practice can continue alongside the presence of all the elements of a liberal education with fruitful points of contact and integration. It is also important to recognize that there are ways in which these two sides of a Jewish education are in conflict with one another.

I conclude with a vignette from Scheffler's memoir that seems to come from a more innocent and more open world. Scheffler describes an art class in the Orthodox school on the Lower East Side that he attended at the age of 14:

44 Ernest Gellner, *Nationalism*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1997, p. 47

45 Michael Rosenak, *Roads to the Palace: Jewish Texts and Teaching*, Providence: Beghahn Books, 1995, pp. 91-144. I hope soon to attempt a more complete critique of Rosenak's many contributions to the questions discussed in this paper.

46 Jonathan Sacks, *One People? Tradition, Modernity and Jewish Unity*, London: Littman Library, 1993, pp. 3-6

> But even I, far as I was from orthodox extremism, was surprised at the time to see what our art teacher had chosen as our first drawing model. It was a large photograph of the facade of Notre Dame in Paris. There we were, all the pupils and instructor wearing "kipot", some of the more orthodox children among us with curled sidelocks as well as kipot, bent over our desks, intent on rendering the cathedral details accurately, while our teacher circulated amongst us, making a suggestion here, a correction there. After a while my own surprise was dissipated. It seemed a perfectly sensible thing for our class to be learning to draw the magnificent façade, and involved not the least whisper of a defection from Jewish faith or loyalty. R.J.J. had again taught us, without preachments but by active juxtaposition alone, that we were heirs to two worlds, not one, and we were going to have to live with both.[47]

A traditional education which relishes opportunities for such "active juxtaposition" may serve better than a surrender to isolation and sectarianism on the one hand, or philosophical reduction on the other. Jewish education will remain a theoretical paradox, but in reality a situation can prevail which is rich in possibilities, both Jewish and educational.

47 Scheffler, *Teachers of my Youth*, p. 88

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