Review Essay

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Looking to the Future of Jewish Education

JEFFREY SAKS AND SUSAN HANDELMAN (EDS.)
Wisdom From All My Teachers: Challenges and Initiatives in Contemporary Torah Education.
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Wisdom From All My Teachers is an excellent resource for veteran teachers, pedagogues just cutting their teeth, administrators, and just about anyone who has a vested interest in Jewish education. It provides an arena for twenty educators, some just starting in the field and others established experts, to creatively address a variety of pressing issues. Their explorations are well thought out, engaging, and, by and large, compelling. The wide variety of topics skillfully chosen and arranged by the editors, Jeffrey Saks and Susan Handelman, will ensure that any education professional or lay person will find appealing and informative articles that are relevant to his or her concerns.

The book opens with two penetrating essays, one by Dr. Norman Lamm and the other by R. Aharon Lichtenstein, which address foundational issues in Jewish education. Dr. Lamm discusses the value of "knowing" versus that of "learning" and embraces the value of the struggle of the learning process: "success [in education] should be mea-

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sured not by our students' gain in knowledge but by their desire to learn more" (22). R. Lichtenstein also addresses the value of the process of learning in his discussion of the motives and objectives of *harbaẓat Torah*. Since these authors address the topic of education in abstract terms, those readers interested in practical matters might prefer to skip to the more pragmatic articles that are found later on in the book and then return to the earlier, more theoretical ones. This review essay will focus on a sampling of the articles that address curricular issues and teaching techniques, although the other articles are worthy as well.[1] The order of articles in this review, as well as the categorization of topics, differs from that in the book.

The anthology focuses on certain curricular subjects significantly more than on others. Talmud receives broad treatment (it is the main subject of six articles), Tanakh an abbreviated one (as the focus of two articles), and Jewish philosophy is mentioned almost peripherally (just one article).

Talmud and Halakhah

The articles discussing Talmud address didactic techniques as well as curricular issues. Yitzchak Blau argues compellingly for the organic inclusion of *aggadah* in Talmud curricula. He offers many reasons for doing so, both theoretical—to show the student that *aggadah* is an intrinsic part of the Talmud—as well as practical—to provide students who struggle over talmudic reasoning with subject matter more accessible than complex halakhic *sugyot*; the *aggadah* can be used as a resource to discuss personal and theological issues in the classroom.

Blau provides seven cogent examples that demonstrate how *aggadot* can be taught so as to engage issues important to many day school students. For example, he shows how a discussion regarding the experience of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai and his son R. Eleazar upon emerging from their twelve-year stay in a cave can be developed to address a variety of subjects that concern the day school student: the meaning of Shabbat, the use of leisure time, the struggle between scholars and laypeople, and the increased intensity of some students returning from *yeshivah* study in Israel.

Blau concedes the difficulties inherent in such an approach to *aggadah*. One of the most formidable is the reluctance of *rabbeim* to sacrifice time devoted to Halakhah, another is the difficulty of finding appropriate passages and explanations of them. He handles the first

problem by arguing that by ignoring *aggadah*, we fail to "introduce our students to the totality of Torah" (305). He also stresses that teachers can use *aggadah* as a springboard for important classroom discussions—discussions that teachers often conduct in any case.

The second problem is a bit thornier. The teacher must have a very careful eye to pick out the more "applicable" *aggadot* from the sea of the Talmud. In addition, although some of the explanations of the *aggadot* are ones that students might very well think of by themselves, many require the teacher to turn to texts that are normally not used to prepare a class in *Gemara*. Blau suggests a few texts and tools that one might use to choose and prepare appropriate *aggadot*. He also proposes that teachers jointly produce a corpus of *aggadot* that could be used in the classroom—a suggestion worthy of follow-up in order to enable teachers to implement his proposal.

Both Doniel Schreiber and Yoel Finkelman discuss the "Brisker derekh" in their contributions, albeit for differing reasons. Schreiber presents an extensive and detailed analysis of the Brisker *derekh* and how it applies to today's students. He presents a survey of various techniques used in this method of study and discusses the pitfalls of the "misconception and misapplication of, and preoccupation with, the Brisker method" (248), such as the abandonment of practical halakhah and disparagement of other methods of learning. He then suggests ways of improving the application of the method to make it an effective way of teaching today's Talmud students.

Finkelman discusses the dangers of trying to "recreate Volozhin" by teaching toward a climactic *ḥiddush* instead of developing students' skills and their ability to learn on their own and think for themselves. He presents some solutions—for example, preparing assignments that develop skills and are challenging but can realistically be completed by students, and re-educating students about what European *yeshivot* really were like. But he admits that his prescriptions are not perfect in today's educational environment. Although not addressed by this article, there are parallel problems, I believe, that arise in the learning of Tanakh and philosophy. Considerable effort must be invested in this issue to ensure a new generation of laypeople with solid and sophisticated Jewish textual skills instead of a vaguely recollected knowledge of a series of great *ḥiddushim*.

Gila Ratzersdorfer Rosen addresses the role and the types of *ḥavruta* study. She uses the Talmud itself as a source for a distinction between empathetic and aggressive styles of learning, which she then applies to the question of whether the learning style of women differs inherently

from that of men. Among other possibilities, she suggests that women may nurture the gentler method of study practiced by Beit Hillel, as opposed to the more combative, analytical technique of Beit Shammai. She also sketches an alternative scenario, in which because of the "particular character" (262) of women entering the field of Talmud study, "any possible impact of [creating a gentler form of learning might] be erased" (262). By presenting this scenario, Rosen risks reinforcing the stereotype of the aggressive, strident female who chooses to learn Talmud. She certainly does not intend to convey this impression, and it is unfortunate given her extensive contributions to women's Talmud study.

Responding to a perceived crisis in teaching Talmud—namely, that though it is the subject which absorbs more time than any other, it is the one liked least by students, according to one study and much anecdotal evidence—Avraham Walfish presents a thoughtful set of proposals to invigorate Talmud instruction in day schools. He recognizes that today's modern Orthodox students often do not automatically accept the authority and relevance of the Talmud, but he believes that "it is possible to teach Talmud in a manner that fosters a sense of obedience to divinely sanctioned authority" (267). He encourages teachers to do so using a variety of methodologies, principally by teasing out the text's underlying values, detecting its literary features, and grasping its hermeneutical principles. He explains his suggestions fully, providing a variety of illustrations which make the techniques fairly easy for a teacher to adopt. Unlike Gidon Rothstein (whose views on overhauling the curriculum will be discussed later), Walfish advocates a set of proposals which will enable Modern Orthodox *yeshivot* to continue their current emphasis on Talmud study, but in a new way and hopefully with more success.[2]

No less important than the study of Talmud in day schools is the application of Halakhah within the yeshivah environment. Joel B. Wolowelsky addresses this in his important and incisive article concerning the role of *pesak* in religious counseling. Peppering his account with personal stories, Wolowelsky brings up an issue that, although not often discussed in a public forum, concerns teachers who form advisory relationships with students. Yeshivah students often seek the counsel of teachers regarding personal problems; the best advice teachers can offer sometimes diverges from what the formal *pesak* would be in that situation. Some teachers are resolute in sticking to the theoretical letter of the law—for example, by insisting that a student observe all aspects of *Shabbat*, even when it generates discord in the unobservant family.

Instead, Wolowelsky argues, they ought to temper their advice with an eye to helping the student in the long run—perhaps by sharing in the activities of the family—leading to a more enjoyable and long-lasting experience. The student should not be encouraged to conform strictly to the demands of Halakhah if doing so would impede the student's religious/social/emotional development.

Wolowelsky notes that "*pesak* and religious counsel are not the same thing, and the halakhic rules are different for each" (180). To be sure, he by no means throws Halakhah to the wind. He provides the opinion of R. Yehuda Amital as a basis, he cautions that the teacher should not always default to the permissive and he calls for proper training of religious counselors. The last issue is of utmost importance, as Orthodoxy has unfortunately repeatedly seen the dismal consequences that can result from entrusting young people's emotional and psychological development in the hands of those who possess only halakhic training. The value of Wolowelsky's contribution lies in his articulating and validating what many teachers intuitively feel but fear to act upon: namely, the difference between *pesak* and religious counsel.

Tanakh

The articles focusing on Tanakh are excellent presentations full of practical examples. In an essay predicated on and laced with personal experience, Erica Brown points out that people—especially, though certainly not exclusively, those without a strong Jewish education—are so imbued with the values of modern society that they have difficulty relating to some of the most basic concepts of Judaism, such as submission and sacrifice. She asserts that since teachers "are busy contextualizing religious concepts within ancient history or thinning out the words so that they achieve neutrality, we fail to transmit the religious dignity that this language conveys" (216).

Brown is convincing in her depiction of the pervasive challenge—"how to be true to the contextual reality and the religious significance of the text while not alienating the student for whom these texts are inaccessible and possibly offensive"—as a problem related to the interpretation and misinterpretation of religious language. She suggests that "Jewish educators present a religious vocabulary that introduces and defines theological concepts instead of shying away for them" in order to "provide religiously committed individuals with another means of interpreting experience" (226). Although Brown focuses on teaching

Tanakh to adults, the challenge also faces those teaching any aspect of Judaism to younger students.

The only other article in the collection dedicated to the study of Tanakh is Hayyim Angel's skilled investigation of the interplay between text and faith. Like Brown, Angel discusses texts concerning Abraham. He presents a variety of ways to use text analysis as a gateway to *hashkafic* analysis. For example, in his examination of several of Abraham's interactions with God, including some which seem to impugn Abraham's faith, Angel urges the teacher to show students that some disagreements between commentators reflect "a meta-textual debate" and to "utilize the opportunity to explore the religious positions of the commentators themselves" (195-96). For example, pointing out Ramban's willingness to ascribe significant shortcomings to the Patriarchs is crucial in helping students put the commentaries that they read into perspective. While discussing a different text, Angel suggests that in addition to analyzing an explanation on the basis of its relationship to the text, students "should appreciate how attitudes toward faith motivated a large number of commentators to seek alternate explanations" (198). In another section, he maintains that "students should be shown which arguments [of commentators] are text-based, and which arise primarily from religious concerns" (204).

Angel's suggestions are not revolutionary; many teachers already employ such techniques. What distinguishes the essay is its skillful presentation of the paradigm, providing sensitive analysis of the Abraham narratives that teachers who already analyze exegetes in this manner can use to refine their methodologies. The article is organized in a way that can be more easily replicated and adapted by the reader who wishes to learn a new technique. At regular intervals, Angel provides summaries to neatly categorize the position of the various exegetes, which immensely increases the lucidity and utility of the article.

Maḥashavah

As was mentioned earlier, *maḥashavah*, Jewish thought, is the main topic of only one piece. In it, Moshe Simkovich aims to alleviate the tension many modern Orthodox students feel in their often bifurcated lives, as well as to create a more seamless conception of Judaism in the modern world. Toward this end, he urges that high schoolers study the philosophy of a giant of the twentieth century, the Rav, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik. Simkovich argues that the "best way" to help students suc-

cessfully integrate a dual curriculum and "unify what much of the Orthodox world understands as an irresolvable dialectic between the holy and the mundane" (356) is to study the Rav's life and thought. His suggestion is based on the thesis that since the Rav and Rav Kook differ from other thinkers in "their awareness of the need to conceptualize and elucidate Torah in the vocabulary and modes of thought that the modern world comprehends" (347), these modern thinkers—in contrast to medieval ones—are the ones who can address the "modern person's way of understanding the dynamics of personal change" (348).

Simkovich is clearly correct that we must equip our students with the theological and philosophical tools needed to function as modern Orthodox Jews. He is also correct that imparting the Rav's ideas is utterly crucial in this endeavor. Furthermore, he is incisive in calling attention to the Rav's stress on the experiential facets of Judaism as distinct from the behavioral and intellectual ones; and he suggests ways to convey this "lonely experience" (352)—for example, by teaching the Rav's personal history. Of course, having students experience an emotional and vibrant Judaism through co-curricular activities such as *ḥagigot*, *miẓvah* projects and *Shabbatonim* can be equally, if not more, effective at conveying this experience. But the Rav's philosophy, I would say, furnishes the intellectual framework within which the significance of such activities can be understood and appreciated.

Notwithstanding this large area of agreement, I am concerned over the prospect that the Rav's philosophy will be asked to carry burdens it was never designed to bear. For example, students who have experienced a loss or who feel bewildered by the seeming injustices of the world or who are tormented by accounts of the Shoah may feel a desperate need for a logical solution. Turning naturally to the Rav, some of them might have trouble dealing with the Rav's proscription against asking the "why" question (why does evil occur? Why did the Holocaust happen?). In such a case, the teacher must legitimize the question and provide plausible theodicies for the students to explore—precisely the approach that the Rav labored to replace.

Let me suggest another example. Many high school youth, like many adults, are aware of and feel challenged by the regnant secular theories: from the theory of evolution to biblical criticism to the materialistic account of mind. These youth want answers, logically compelling ones; they want to know how Orthodoxy in the modern world can rationally sustain itself in the face of such powerful challenges. In contrast, as the opening pages of *The Lonely Man of Faith* make clear, the

Rav did not try to produce answers to these challenges. The reconciliation of faith and reason is simply not the Rav's project.[3] On the contrary, his aim was to provide a religious phenomenology—descriptions of religious consciousness—an enterprise to which the logical reconciliation of Torah and *madda* is largely irrelevant.[4] The Rav seems to have dealt with some of the challenges by an act of faith and an appeal to religious experience—a "solution" that some high school students might have difficulty internalizing and emulating. Recognizing that there are students looking for proofs and logical solutions, teachers may find themselves turning to other thinkers to fill the need.[5]

Now, it must be appreciated that these examples point up not the weakness of teaching the Rav's philosophy but its strength. For, if teachers succeed in the main task Simkovich demands of them—namely, conveying religious experience as opposed to what the Rav would regard as "scholastic forms of thought, intellectual contact, and cold logic" (see the quotation on p. 342)—students will find that the power and vividness of their experience will cause doubts to melt and questions to vanish. The value of studying the Rav, in other words, is precisely that he teaches us so passionately to look past logic and to summon reserves of a different kind: experience, inner faith, spiritual strength. My earlier examples suggest only that some students may be incapable of appreciating this approach, and they will require a more intellectualized form of Judaism—which necessitates their teacher's dwelling upon thinkers other than the Rav.

It might be proposed—though Simkovich does not say this—that the Rav's thought should be the exclusive, rather than primary, focus of a high school *maḥashavah* curriculum. I think that this is a mistake for reasons that go beyond the point I have already made.[6] True enough, as Simkovich says, one should not refuse to teach the Rav's ideas because students may not have the appropriate background; but at the same time the Rav's ideas are quite difficult to appreciate in a vacuum. Thus, the Rav's ideas on Zionism and evil are best understood by studying Rav Kook as a foil; and his enthusiastic endorsement of technology and scientific research can best be appreciated by means of a contrast to R. Eliyahu Dessler, who did not share this endorsement. Even in a course focused on the Rav, therefore, it is best to include others' thought in the curriculum.

These concerns should not eclipse the fact that Simkovich presents excellent suggestions for teaching the Rav's philosophy and successfully refutes many common objections to teaching the Rav's ideas at the high

school level. I am sure that the curricula he is developing—utilizing a variety of the Rav's own works and focusing on prayer, Zionism, Torah study and response to modernity—would provide excellent resources for teachers in teaching the Rav's complex and profound works.

Maḥashavah is also discussed, although peripherally, in the essays by Asher Friedman and Yael Wieselberg. Both discuss the relationship between moral development in Jewish education and, respectively, Hasidic philosophers and Maharal.

Friedman's article creatively weds common-sense principles of education to Hasidic philosophy. He shows how certain kabbalistic concepts provide metaphors or models for learning and teaching. Thus, *ẓimẓum* can be applied to the teacher's need to relate to the level of the students (123-24); and the kabbalistic concept of *raẓo va-shov*, falling back and surging forward, can be a model for recognizing the actual state of the student on the one hand and helping a student reach his or her potential on the other (118-22). Wieselberg offers an interesting analysis of the thought of Maharal and provides innovative ways to look at contemporary educational issues from Maharal's perspective. For instance, Maharal's opposition to *pilpul* implies that today's students should be taught the basics instead of complex constructs (an idea echoed by Finkelman), and that *ḥokhmah* is a stepping-stone to awe of God.

Devising Curriculum

While several of the articles already examined make suggestions for curricula, the essay that addresses this subject most directly and comprehensively is Gidon Rothstein's. Rothstein advocates a complete rethinking of what should be taught in day schools. He explains that he chooses to focus on curriculum rather than pedagogy because "many of our efforts are doomed to failure by virtue of what we choose to teach students, not how we go about teaching them" (323, n. 1).

In counterpoint to the standard current curriculum, Rothstein insists that students should be taught only texts for which they are "linguistically prepared" and especially those that they will encounter as adults (334). Using these criteria, among others, he arrives at a curriculum composed of:

(1) Mishnah instead of *Gemara*: Rothstein advocates this for at least the first years that students learn the Oral Law, but implies that this could be the program through eleventh grade.

(2) All of *Ḥumash*, using Rashi primarily and other commentaries sparingly (and even those might be studied orally), along with *Torah Temimah* (for the relevant sections of *Torah she-be'al peh*, as Talmud is not studied directly at this point), *Sefer ha-Miẓvot* and *Sefer ha-Ḥinnukh.*

(3) The *Siddur*—not only understanding the *siddur* itself but also addressing "philosophical and experiential issues" (335) as well as practical topics that relate to prayer.

(4) Those portions of *Nakh* that are read as *haftarot* and *megillot.*

(5) Hebrew language, as *Ivrit-be-Ivrit* instead of as a stand-alone class.

Although Rothstein's arguments are thought-provoking and passionate, I believe that some of his ideas are flawed. For example, I commend him for advocating the intense study of Mishnah, which is often shunted aside in favor of *gemara* study, but disagree with his assertion that studying Mishnah exclusively would prepare students to study *gemara* better than the study of the *gemara* itself would. True, many of the terms and arguments used in the Mishnah and *gemara* are similar, but his claim is implausible—there are skills and a knowledge base needed for the study of *gemara* which cannot just be picked up from learning Mishnah, even a Mishnah class with the occasional bit of *gemara* thrown in.[7] In addition, Rothstein argues that since learning four *mishnayot* a day would allow students to finish half of *Shas* by the time they enter twelfth grade—much more than they'd cover while learning *gemara*—time can be taken from learning Oral Law (which, in Rothstein's curriculum, means Mishnah) and be used for other subjects. I agree that it is worthwhile to take a look at the way time is allocated in *yeshivot*, and concur that there is a compelling argument for not spending as much time on Oral Law as other subjects. But Rothstein's equating of X amount of *Gemara* with the same X amount of Mishnah is akin to comparing running a mile up Mt. Everest with running the same distance on a flat track. One can plausibly argue that less time should be spent learning *gemara*, but not that learning three *mishnayot* with commentaries is covering the same amount of material as learning those same *mishnayot* with the *gemara* and its commentaries.

In the realm of Tanakh, Rothstein's proposal for the study of Nakh would create gaps more severe than the ones he is trying to fill, which undermines his entire conception of the Tanakh curriculum. Rothstein does touch on a fundamental debate: should the curriculum focus on those portions of a book of Tanakh that best characterize that book, on

the parts that are most likely to capture the interest of the student or on those that the student will read later on? Happily, there sometimes is a confluence of these elements, for example in the book of Jonah. According to Rothstein's program, students would learn the story of Joshua's being chosen as leader but would skip most of the conquest of Canaan; they would read of Samson's birth but not of his later heroism. They would study numerous chapters of Isaiah, many of which touch upon the same themes but might seem tedious to students (an outcome that is anathema to Rothstein); but they would learn none of Ḥaggai, which students generally find extremely relevant and exciting. Students would also not learn many chapters fundamental to Judaism, such as the entire book of Job and the story of the destruction of the Temple (at the end of Jeremiah and Kings). Rothstein is a bit caustic at times, asking, for example, whether "[s]chools that regularly allow students to graduate who have not yet fulfilled even the minimal requirement of *Talmud Torah* [by knowing the text of *Ḥumash*] might want to reconsider their barometer of success." I am not certain that his curriculum would necessarily lead to religiously knowledgeable adults who are comfortable with their Judaism—another barometer of success.

Implementing Torah u-Madda

Several of the articles in the collection touch on issues of *Torah u-Madda*. Shalom Carmy's rich article stands out in its advocacy of using *madda* to enrich the teaching of Torah. Carmy demonstrates how knowledge of liberal arts can help the teacher create more interesting and insightful classes in Torah, even providing insights that could not be gained otherwise. (His very choice of title—"The Manufacture of Sulphurous Acid: On Wisdom as a Catalyst in Torah Study"—is itself a demonstration of his technique.)

Carmy adduces a plethora of examples. He uses W.H. Auden's poetry to render R. Yoḥanan's famous explanation that the missing *nun* in *Ashrei* is an intentional omission "more plausible" (80). He uses Melville to shed light on the book of Jonah, modern economic theory to explain talmudic law, and the 1954 World Series to illuminate an argument of Moses. Despite Carmy's claim that his list of examples provides only an "artificial cross-section of the interface between the humanities and Torah study" (86), his examples are masterful illustrations of the technique he advocates, showing how the humanities not only enliven a classroom, but elucidate the material.

Carmy acknowledges the most technically problematic aspect of his approach—the necessity for a teacher to become well enough versed in the humanities to use this method effectively. His solution is, essentially, to get cracking, to "ease into your teacher career to avoid being overwhelmed from the start" (88),[8] to work hard at acquiring the necessary knowledge. He warns against using shortcuts and pre-packaged "nuggets of humanistic insight and erudition" (88), as the student would discern that the teacher was neither knowledgeable nor passionate about liberal studies. These demands might seem to render Carmy's suggestion a brass ring, a glittering goal that is all but unattainable. Few teachers are sufficiently well-versed in the humanities to use this method as effectively as he does. His demands should not, however, cause teachers to despair. I believe that most teachers with a reasonable liberal-arts education can employ this method effectively, as long as Carmy's caveat is minded and teachers rely on that which they know with surety.

Beverly Gribetz offers a forceful depiction of the pedagogic possibilities of using historical methods and data to teach Talmud. She anticipates and answers a number of the objections that have been raised to this endeavor. Because it contains many threads of thought, the article demands the reader's concentration; but it is a rewarding piece. (The reader would be well served to follow her discussion with a *gemara Pesaḥim* opened to the correct page.) The extended example Gribetz uses to illustrate her point (the case of the questions at the Seder) is fascinating, and whets the reader's appetite for analyses of other *sugyot* in which the technique could be replicated. Like Carmy, Gribetz demands considerable general knowledge from the teacher who wishes to use her method. For this reason it would be valuable if, perhaps as a future project, Gribetz were to prepare an extensive guide to the resources through which a teacher could acquire the broad knowledge base in history needed to reproduce her technique.

Yet another example of an article that exemplifies a commitment to *Torah u-Madda* is R. Chaim Brovender's far-ranging essay on art and aesthetics. He offers a practical analysis of the pros and cons of incorporating fine arts into the *yeshivah* curriculum and explains his rationale for their inclusion. In particular, the study of art can play the role that, according to Maimonides, miracles used to—namely, providing an entry point for people to come to love of God. He concludes his article with an articulate discussion of two of Vermeer's paintings.

I believe that this technique, though unconventional, can be extremely effective when applied with skill, although I have some concern

that fewer students would appreciate the method than he thinks. In addition, like Carmy and Gribetz, R. Brovender demands a great deal of teachers: in this case, they must be well versed in the fine arts. But in the end his approach could give rise to productive collaborations between art teachers and Judaic studies instructors and could provide students with a dynamic example of *Torah u-Madda* in action.[9]

Steve Bailey's discussion of Lawrence Kohlberg's view of the Just Community is an impressive study in the application of "*madda*" theories of psychological development to issues of Jewish education. Although I am skeptical of the prospects for achieving success with the wide-scale implementation of the Kohlbergian system Bailey advocates, he does present an interesting argument in favor of doing so. He attempts to resolve many of the problems inherent in the adaptation of the Kohlbergian model to a Torah-centered school,[10] as clearly Kohlberg's model cannot be adopted wholesale to govern a day school environment. After all, the Just Community, with its emphasis on student-established rules and regulations, cannot by its nature accommodate the dicta of Halakhah. Bailey argues that the Kohlberg model must be modified to set the Halakhah as a set of absolute, unwavering principles—just as Kohlberg himself modified his ideal model, which allows the members of the community to set all regulations, so as to enable administrators to unilaterally set policy on safety issues.

Bailey attempts to demonstrate, using the LA-based Shalhevet High School as a case study, that the Just Community is "the most promising model" for "[creating] a school community, within the confines of a pluralistic society, that is designed to influence the moral development and ethical behavior of its students such that they are more likely to integrate Judaism and Jewish moral values into their everyday lives . . ." (157-58). This is quite a sweeping claim which, I think, demands more testing and investigation, especially with regard to comparisons to control groups and articulation of desirable outcomes. The latter should include religious outcomes in addition to the Kohlbergian values that Bailey has already studied.[11]

Scope of the Book

Women are significantly represented among the contributors—six of the twenty are women. Nevertheless, the high percentage of articles focusing on Talmud study, and the relative dearth of essays that discuss Tanakh, skew parts of the book towards schools that focus on co-ed or male edu-

cation. Most girls' schools, and even co-ed ones that separate the sexes for Torah study—in the US as well as in post-high school *yeshivot* in Israel—focus on Tanakh study more than Talmud. Yoel Finkelman presciently addresses this issue in a concluding note, which briefly addresses women's Israel programs. Interestingly, Finkelman, who discusses the problem of men's *yeshivot* trying to recreate an idealized shiur focused on *ḥiddush* at the expense of the development of textual skills, points out that since women's programs are relatively new entities without significant precedent and basis, they are less burdened by the pressure to "recreate Volozhin" and have therefore often been more able to present an effective curriculum to teach Talmud skills (379-80).

The essays reflect the professional backgrounds of the various contributors, and is therefore geared generally to day school education, with the strongest focus on issues pertaining to the high school classroom (although, to be sure, attention is also paid to the Israeli post-high school experience). Pre-school education is outside the book's scope, and Erica Brown is the only author to specifically discuss adult education. Also, the volume is clearly aimed at an audience that highly values *Torah u-Madda*; it would be inappropriate for and, indeed, probably rejected by those who, in Beverly Gribetz's words, "regard Jewish learning as self-contained" (310, n. 22). Imagine, for example, how the articles written by Carmy and Gribetz would be received by someone who saw no value in a liberal arts education (see pp. 75, 293)!

Despite these inevitable constraints, *Wisdom from All My Teachers* is an effective presentation of, in the words of its subtitle, some "Challenges and Initiatives in Contemporary Torah Education." The issues are important and eminently worthy of discussion, and the book opens up fresh and different ways to think about them. Saks and Handelman note correctly in their introduction that "the much-needed reforms in Jewish education will come through involving all those entrusted with this work" (11). I recommend the book to educators in the strongest of terms. And yet, it is precisely my high regard for the book that compels me to conclude with some sobering personal reflections on the way such materials are used—or not used—in our educational environments.

Some Personal Observations

I hope that by publishing this book, ATID (Academy Torah for Initiatives and Directions) will become in America, as it is in Israel, a force in the struggle to professionalize the craft of Jewish education. Despite its innovative seven-year project of financing fellows, the influence of ATID

generally stops at the shores of the Mediterranean, as a large percentage of the fellows stay in Israel rather than crossing the Atlantic to implement ideas.

ATID has begun to broaden its focus, however. It organized Yeshivat Moriah's middle school project to deal with the problem of daily *tefillah*, and held a conference last year in New York, "Creative Spirituality: Jewish Education and the Arts," to shed light on an important aspect of Diaspora education. Too few *yeshivot* were represented at this conference—indeed, too few *yeshivot* have strong creative art programs. But it did open up an important topic for discussion. A one-day conference cannot make a broad, far-reaching impact on educators, but it can organize a focal point for creative thinking.

The book—thanks to the number of articles dedicated to the year-in-Israel experience, the fact that it is written in English, and the fact most of the articles address curricular issues faced in the Diaspora—can have enormous impact on Diaspora education. Of course, those articles that suggest new models—such as Gidon Rothstein's proposal to completely overhaul the curriculum and Steve Bailey's advocacy of a school set up as a "Just Community"—will probably not effect real change anytime soon. Their authors probably aim to sensitize the educational community to begin thinking of reevaluating, and eventually changing, current policies. Other articles can make a more immediate impact—but only if they can be brought to the attention of not only of administrators and policymakers (many of whom I know have seen the book) but also the teachers in the trenches. Unfortunately, those ideas that appeal directly to teachers—and certainly to parents and other interested laypeople—will probably not significantly enter the mainstream discussion of Jewish education unless a special effort is made to introduce them. I recommend that ATID work with day schools to introduce the book to teachers, perhaps through discussion books, mentoring programs, department meetings, pamphlets, in-services, and so on. It would be a shame for a book of this quality to go unnoticed by the very people who could use it most.

I believe that a major factor in the lack of impact that such works may have is that, in general, there is limited formal discussion of Jewish education among the rank and file Jewish educators. Significant inroads have been made in the last few years—for example, the Lookjed listserv (created by the Lookstein Center) and an expanded program at Yeshiva University's Azrieli School of Jewish Education have promoted and stimulated meaningful dialogue. However, the fact remains that many, and perhaps most Jewish educators, even among those that have some professional training, do not keep abreast of new ideas in the field. One

reason for this could be that there are limited readily available teaching resources. Many general studies teachers regularly attend conferences; there they learn new techniques, brush up on old ones, and, perhaps most importantly, network with other educators to exchange ideas about pedagogy and curricula. In contrast, among my peers who are Judaic studies teachers, a few have attended one conference in the past decade, and only a minority are familiar with the interesting journal *Ten Daat*. Although many schools do include administrative periods in teachers' schedules, some friends have told me that they have so many periods to teach and so few administrative ones that they cannot network with their colleagues.

It is in this arena that ATID, AMODS (the Association of Modern Orthodox Day Schools), BJEs, Azrieli and, crucially, the schools themselves have stepped up to the plate and can achieve great success. In publishing *Wisdom from All My Teachers* and by organizing conferences and programs such as the Yeshivat Moriah prayer project, ATID has demonstrated that it is able to play a major role in the Diaspora, creating materials that could be distributed within schools, reaching as wide an audience as possible.

Generalizing from my own experience, teachers are pressed for time and are not always technologically savvy. Still, making materials accessible, in print as well as in electronic form, and creating opportunities for educators to regularly discuss vital issues, would go a long way toward introducing worthwhile ideas into our schools. Otherwise, those ideas, I fear, will become just one more casualty in the graveyard of good proposals that never made it into the classroom.

Notes

1. I have in mind Dodi Tobin's important study of aspects of the post-high school year-in-Israel experience and its psychological and emotional ramifications (for the students and for their families), as well as Yael Unterman's insightful discussion of the need for *yeshivot* to re-evaluate the way they teach morality and the way they relate to students who struggle with "personal and existential" (169) issues.
2. Another essay on techniques for teaching Talmud, the one by Beverly Gribetz, will be discussed below in the section "Implementing Torah u-Madda."
3. See the opening sentence of *The Lonely Man of Faith* (New York, 1992),1: "It is not the plan of this essay to discuss the millennium-old problem of faith and reason." And see also p. 7:

> I have never been seriously troubled by the problem of the Biblical doctrine of creation vis-a-vis the scientific story of evolution at both the cosmic and the organic levels, nor have I been perturbed by the confrontation of the mechanistic interpretation of the human mind with the Biblical spiritual concept of man. I have not been perplexed by the impossibility of fitting the mystery of revelation into the framework of historical empiricism. Moreover, I have not even been troubled by the theories of Biblical criticism which contradict the very foundations upon which the sanctity and integrity of the Scriptures rest.

4. See David Shatz's introduction to his *A Reader's Companion to Halakhic Man*, found on the website of the Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik Institute, www.rav.org, pp. 6-15. See also Shatz, "The Rav's Philosophical Legacy," *Jewish Action* 53, 3 (Summer 1993):32-36; and Moshe Sokol, "*Ger ve-Toshav Anokhi*: Modernity and Traditionalism in the Life and Thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik," in *Engaging Modernity*, ed. Moshe Z. Sokol (Northvale, NJ, 1997), 149-65. Both Shatz and Sokol contrast Rambam and the Rav by saying that Rambam sought to reply to all the major challenges of his age, while the Rav did not (see Shatz, 33 and Sokol, 162).
5. It is difficult to think of who among the major rabbinic *ba'alei maḥashavah* of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries could fill the curricular need I have described. The bulk of the work of reconciliation in the sciences (to cite just one area) has been done by scientists like Nathan Aviezer.
6. Since this anthology is a forum in which only the contours of a curriculum can be suggested—it is not the place to set out the seminar's exact contents—it is difficult to determine from Simkovich's article precisely what the seminar would include. He may well believe the focus on the Rav should be primary but not exclusive. He does not preclude the study of other thinkers, and he clearly sees relevance in the philosophy of Rav Kook and others. Nonetheless, at times his suggestions seem to limit the arena of study to the Rav. In any event, I merely wish to note one consideration, not mentioned by Simkovich, which would expand the range of thinkers covered—even in a curriculum that focuses on the Rav.
7. Knowing the identities of various Amoraim, understanding how to parse the Aramaic and basic familiarity with the way commentaries such as the Tosafists and Rashi interact come to mind.
8. Incidentally, heeding this advice would also help alleviate a slew of other problems, such as ineffective discipline and poor classroom preparation, which often ensue from overwhelming new teachers with a teaching load that is too heavy.
9. This thesis becomes more difficult to apply when students ask, as they surely will, about the value of much modern art. Teachers should be prepared for this objection.
10. Specifically, he parries the objections raised by Barry Chazan.
11. In addition to the surveys already conducted measuring moral values such as dishonesty, cheating and respect for people and property, a longitudinal study is underway to determine how effectively Shalhevet High School teaches moral values in the long term.