



## Reframing Jewish Day School Education Worldwide

In June 2006, the Melton Centre will host an international conference on the subject: **Reframing Jewish Day School Education Worldwide: The School in the Community ~ The Community in the School.** The conference is being organized in partnership with the Joint Distribution Committee, the Education Department of the Jewish Agency for Israel, and the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education (PEJE), and will be chaired by Dr. Alex Pomson.

The purpose of the conference is to provoke new ways of thinking about the social functions of Jewish day schools, both externally, in terms of their role within the larger Jewish community, and internally in the relationships and commitments they cultivate among children, parents and professionals. An important element in the conference will be an attempt to derive insights from a comparison of all-day Jewish schools in different cultural and national contexts, including the Former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Latin America, Australia, Great Britain, France, Israel and the United States.

For more information, please see the conference website at <http://melton.huji.ac.il/upcoming-con>, or write to [mmarko@mscc.huji.ac.il](mailto:mmarko@mscc.huji.ac.il)

## BRACHOT

The Hebrew University's Dean of Students has announced that the Melton Centre has once again received a student valuation of 100% satisfaction with the administrative services provided. Brachot, and thanks, to Ms. Hinda Hoffman and Ms. Eti Gershon-Cohen for their splendid work.

## Shifting Paradigms in Israel Education

By Dr. Alick Isaacs

Dealing with Israel in Jewish education is not a new idea. What have changed are some of the assumptions that educators make about the meaning and the significance of Israel in the contemporary Jewish world. Traditionally, Israel education was dominated by the Zionist paradigm that focused on the State of Israel as the solution to the problems of Jewish identity in the modern world. Zionist education saw the establishment of the State of Israel as the culmination of an ideological agenda that was broad enough – in terms of its historical meanings and its implications – to provide an analysis of almost every aspect of Jewish life, religion and culture. It is this analysis that has dominated the treatment of Israel in Jewish education ever since.

The Zionist paradigm is premised on three primary assumptions: a) the Jewish people are a nation that has its historical roots in the land of Israel, and whose collective future is destined to culminate in the life of a modern political state in the land of Israel; b) anti-semitism and assimilation (as well as other religious, cultural and moral ills) are products of the unhealthy condition of the Jewish people as a nation in the Diaspora; and c) Zionism revives the mystical and religious – as well as the national and historic – connection of the Jewish people to the land. This reconnection is the life source of a renaissance in Jewish culture, history and sociology.

The Zionist analysis of Jewish history and culture has, amongst other things, shaped the choice of curricular materials for the teaching of Israel. Many aspects of Jewish culture and history that are of importance in the Jewish world today, both inside and outside of the State of Israel, have been left by the wayside.

The Melton Centre has recently developed an educational model that attempts to contend with the estrangement of young Jews abroad from Israel by expanding the range of subjects considered relevant and appropriate to the teaching of Israel. The method we propose suggests a much broader treatment of the concept of Israel. At different times and places, Jews have attributed many meanings to the concept, some of which have not featured in Zionist education. These interpretations

(including some more generally associated with Zionist ideology) provide students with a much wider ownership of the notion of "Israel". Broader understandings of Israel allow for Israel to feature more prevalently in all disciplines of Jewish learning. Depending on the school, its interests and areas of expertise, the concept of Israel may surface in the teaching of the full gamut of Jewish Studies: Bible, Rabbinic Literature, Halakha, History, Jewish Thought, Literature, etc. However, the key question that this study stimulates is that of how to relate to Israel today.

For example, in the teaching of Jewish history, our approach suggests that teachers should approach the texts of the past with questions that do not rely on a priori assumptions about the ultimate directions of Jewish history. Historical thinking should not end with an evaluation of an event's contribution to some large narrative of Jewish survival or demise, but rather should contend with the cumulative meanings of isolated events in the past whose remnants (sources) we seek to understand and interpret. To this we should add an introspective or reflective dimension whereby the student is enabled to see him or herself as an interpreter. This method is designed to encourage teachers and students to raise questions about how they evaluate and understand the events of the Jewish past, and to compare them with their experiences in the present. It is here that the central role of Israel as a defining feature of the contemporary Jewish world, comes into play. In considering Jewish culture in the world today, students are invited to engage in a comparison between Jewish issues as discussed in texts, and these same issues as they are played out in the living contemporary State of Israel. Our purpose is not to convey a message about Israel or even simply a love of Israel, but, rather, to engender meaningful interaction between Jews in the Diaspora and in Israel.

*The Melton Centre has launched an educational project on Teaching Israel in all Jewish schools in Australia.*



## Sustained Peace Educational Efforts for Social Cohesion and Co-Existence

In June 2005, the Melton Centre hosted an international conference on *Sustained Peace Educational Efforts for Social Cohesion and Co-Existence in International Conflict and Post-Conflict Societies*, in which nineteen scholars from Northern Ireland, South Africa, Cyprus, Canada, Nigeria, Rwanda, the USA and Israel participated. Papers at the conference (organized in conjunction with the Harry S. Truman Institute of the Hebrew University and Stranmillis University College of Queens University of Belfast), presented the most recent theoretical advances in the field; analyzed the social, cultural, political, historical and economic contexts within which peace and co-existence education develops and must be critiqued; probed into the epistemology that nourishes its development and the practices that characterize its implementation; reflected on the variety of educational contexts in which it is practiced; and considered central issues raised by these educational efforts with regard to self and group identities. The papers presented at the conference will be published by Pelgrave-MacMillan in 2006.

The conference was made possible by the generous support of the Alan B. Slifka Foundation.

We would also like to thank the Swiss Center for Conflict Research, Management and Resolution, the Hebrew University, the Israel National Commission for UNESCO, and the Israeli Foreign Ministry: Division for Cultural and Scientific Affairs.



## Melton Centre International Advisory Board

The International Advisory Board of the Melton Centre met in Jerusalem in early November. The meetings opened with a festive dinner at which Prof. Yaacov Bar Siman-Tov spoke on "Disengagement: The Day After". Over the next



Prof. Steven Kaplan, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities (front center), with members of the International Advisory Board and Melton faculty

2 days, the Board received updates on recent activities at the Centre and discussed plans for future initiatives – including a proposal to establish a multi-year Research Seminar on Critical Issues in Jewish Education – with senior Melton faculty. They discussed the challenges facing Jewish education today with Dr. Alex Pomson and Melton students Ryan Hess (PhD), Ronit Charust (MA) and Michal Itzkowitz (Revivim); met with Prof. Steven Kaplan, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, and Mr. Alan Hoffmann, Director General of the Department of Jewish Zionist Education of the Jewish Agency; and hosted a cocktail party/discussion forum at which Mr. Gordon Zacks, Chair of the Board of the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School Corporation, was the guest of honor.

## The Max M. Fisher Prize for Jewish Education in the Diaspora

Each year the Pincus Fund for Jewish Education awards the Max M. Fisher Prize to two outstanding educators who have made a significant contribution to the field. Both Prize recipients in 2005 are educators closely affiliated with the Melton Centre.

Genia Janover is the principal of Bialik College in Melbourne and is a visionary leader who helped build Bialik into one of the leading schools in Australia. In accepting the Prize, Genia thanked the Melton Centre for its lead role in developing innovative educational projects for the Jewish Studies faculty at Bialik.

Henny van het Hoofd is in charge of educational services for Jewish schools in Amsterdam and has done exceptional work in teacher training

and curricular development. Henny is a graduate of the Melton Centre's Senior Educators Program (Class of 1989) and remains in close contact with the Centre to this day.



Ms. Henny van het Hoofd and Ms. Genia Janover receiving their awards

## Senior Educators Program

This year, 14 educators from the USA, Australia, Chile, Argentina, France, Hungary, Russia and Israel are participating in this program. These educators filled key positions in schools, community centers, synagogues, and tertiary education in their home countries. In October, the Melton Centre launched a new Senior Educators Virtual Community website for current participants and graduates of all of Melton's Senior Educators Programs. The site will host activities (for example, the current forum on Chanuka); profile one senior educator per month who will moderate discussions on selected topics (currently Ms. Sarah Peters Mali on 'Judaism and Sexual Ethics'); and feature an 'Expert of the Month' from among Melton's faculty who will address issues in his/her field raised by educators (currently Dr. Nava Nevo

on 'Hebrew as a Second Language'), a resource center, bulletin board, Beit Midrash, and more. The site can be accessed at <http://kingdom.msc.huji.ac.il/melton/sites/center/login.php>



Senior Educators on tiyul near the Dead Sea

## Academic Programs and Opening the School Year



○ Dr. Jonathan Cohen, Prof. Ruth Gavison and Rabbi Ya'acov Medan

The 2005/06 academic year opens with 9 new students beginning the doctoral track, 32 new MA students and 22 new Revivim students, bringing the total number of doctoral students under Melton faculty supervision to 33, the quorum of MA students to 121, and of Revivim students to 90. Thirty-six graduates of the Revivim program are presently working in the field as teachers of Jewish Studies in the secular Israeli State School system, and the Centre continues to provide them with on-going guidance and assistance. There are currently 27 members of faculty (including adjunct faculty) teaching courses in Melton's different programs, of which 6 are Melton graduates or final-stage doctoral students.

For the 2005/06 year, the Melton Centre has awarded substantial fellowships to the collective amount of \$75,000 to outstanding PhD and MA students, thereby allowing them to devote the greater part of their time to their studies. This sum represents a significant increase over the funds the Centre was able to allocate for this purpose last year, and we are very grateful to the members of Melton's International Advisory Board for their sustained efforts on behalf of our Scholarship Fund.

On November 16th, Melton Centre students and faculty celebrated the opening of the 2005/06 academic year. The evening consisted of a study program focused on the question of "Is Co-Existence Possible Between Religious and Secular Groups within the Jewish People?" that is addressed in the Gavison-Medan Covenant. In the first part of the program, the large quorum of participants divided up into study groups, each focusing on a key issue addressed in the Covenant, including the Points of Departure and Guiding Principles of the Covenant, the Pros and Cons of the Covenant's Stand on Marriage and Divorce, Population Registration by Religion and Nationality in Israel, the Law of Return, the Status of Shabbat in Israel, and the Question of 'Who is a Jew?' and its Implications in Israel

and the Diaspora. In the second part of the program, the forum was privileged to be addressed by Professor Ruth Gavison and Rabbi Ya'acov Medan, authors of the Covenant, who also responded to focal questions raised by each group. The evening is highlighted in the 'Activities and Conferences' section of the Gavison-Medan Covenant website.



## Library News

The Melton Library and Pedagogic Centre for Jewish Education, the Education Library and the Social Work Library amalgamated in July 2003 to form a unified library on the Mount Scopus campus, as part of the Libraries Authority.

The Melton Library and Pedagogic Centre houses one of the most comprehensive collections of publications and multi-media materials in the field. Especially notable are the huge collection of Doctoral dissertations from Israel and abroad, and the comprehensive collection of textbooks for the Jewish Studies curriculum of the Israeli school system.



### The library offers the following services:

- Rapid location of materials by means of an on-line catalog that lists all items in the collection – including articles from journals and edited volumes – indexed by author, title and subject. Last summer the catalog was put onto a new platform, Aleph 500, which is part of the unified catalog of all libraries at the Hebrew University.
- On-line database of research and academic literature on Jewish Education, which is constantly updated. Library staff have recently compiled a list of researchers in Jewish Education that includes their research projects and fields of interest.
- Media center: The library has been renovated and its technological facilities enhanced to facilitate individual and group viewing of the substantial audio-visual collection.
- Databases: Authorized readers have access to a huge collection of databases, not only on Education but also on related topics in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences.



Specialized reference librarians are available to assist students, researchers and instructors, both in the library and on-line, and library orientation and database acquaintance courses are offered as part of Melton students' curricula.

The library may be accessed at <http://meltonlib.huji.ac.il> as part of <http://educlib.huji.ac.il>

### The Program for Senior Educators from the Former Soviet Union *By Prof. Shaul Stampfer*



Ten years on and over 150 graduates later, the Melton Program for Senior Jewish Educators from the Former Soviet Union is a program that works. How do we know it works? Because we have seen participants before and after. We have

seen how they have taken on new responsibilities and undertaken new initiatives – and they have told us that their participation in the program helped them do so. Even without these personal testimonies, a survey of Jewish education in the FSU confirms that a very significant share of the innovative projects have been undertaken by Melton graduates who also comprise a large proportion of the responsible educational leadership.

Of course, a program that is made up of two periods of three months of study in Jerusalem, intensive as it may be, does not transform an educator and certainly does not create one. The program is successful because the men and women who participate in it come with commitment, experience and knowledge – and because they return to their communities with even more! In today's realities, there is no place in the world with more Russian speaking specialists in Jewish Studies – and committed Jews – than in Israel. When this rich lode of manpower is combined with the educational resources of the Melton Centre, one can anticipate some significant results.

The program offered to the participating educators is a rich one. They study classic Jewish texts – from classical and very not classical approaches. They are exposed to the latest historical research, to modern Israeli literature, to various aspects of Holocaust studies, to Jewish thought and customs, to new methods of teaching and to the world of Jewish art. But perhaps most important of all, they learn about the rich variety of contemporary approaches to things Jewish and their study that they barely knew existed. However, the participants do not come empty handed, nor are they in Jerusalem only to receive.

Concurrent with their studies, each undertakes to prepare a major educational project with

the guidance and assistance of a personal tutor (Russian speaking) in their area of specialty. The results have been breathtaking! Given the opportunity to combine their talents and drive with the resources of Jerusalem and the Melton Centre, they have come up with some of the best educational programming done in Russian. They have written programs on education for family life, integrating art and folk dancing into education, educational tourism, and the use of films in Jewish education together with more traditional topics such as effective methods of teaching Hebrew, guides to the study of the Bible, a practical program for integrating Zedaka into school programs, and much more.

The program works because of the quality of the participants as well as the high level of their teachers. The groups are small (maximum twelve in a group) and each educator's individual needs – be they professional or personal – are attended to. For example, one group included a blind educator who was given time off to take part in a special Hebrew University program for the visually impaired. He returned home knowing more about Bible, Talmud, modern Jewish thought – and how to use a computer adapted for the blind!

The program also works because it is constantly being adjusted. In recent years, far more attention has been given to Holocaust study

than was previously the case, and among our graduates are some of the leading field activists in Belarus and Ukraine in Holocaust education. While this had not been a central component of the curriculum, we have now taken advantage of the large number of Holocaust experts in Jerusalem to create a significant program in this area. Here, as well, the emphasis is on individual initiatives and the identification of needs and tools rather than on passing over standard programs. We have also introduced a new Beit Midrash program to encourage individual study, onto which a framework for creative art work has been grafted, making Jewish study a truly multidimensional experience.

The need for the Melton Program is as great today as it was ten years ago, and we are very grateful to the David and Inez Myers Foundation and the Jewish Agency for their continued support of the program. Working with enthusiastic educators from Jewish institutions all over the FSU is a privilege, an honor, and a great deal of work. However, seeing the results is our greatest reward. We do not provide answers; rather we help to provide the means of developing these answers. It is by working together that we have gotten to where we are.

*Professor Shaul Stampfer has been director of the Program for Senior Educators from the Former Soviet Union since its inception.*



○ The first group of Principals from the FSU and Program faculty