

STUDIES IN JEWISH EDUCATION

*Volume V*

EDUCATIONAL ISSUES AND CLASSICAL JEWISH TEXTS

## STUDIES IN JEWISH EDUCATION

Volume V (1990)

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The Centre for Jewish Education in the Diaspora of the Hebrew University, founded in 1968, was renamed in 1976 in honor of Samuel Mendel Melton, in acknowledgement of an endowment in perpetuity. The Centre's activities include research and teaching in Jewish education, training and continuing education of personnel for Jewish educational institutions in the Diaspora and the development of curricular and teaching material for these institutions.

THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM

*The Melton Centre for Jewish Education in the Diaspora*

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Volume V

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JERUSALEM, 1990

THE MAGNES PRESS, THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY

©  
By The Magnes Press  
The Hebrew University  
Jerusalem 1990

ISSN 0333-9661  
Printed in Israel  
Typesetting: Onit Computer Services Ltd., Jerusalem

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## PREFACE

In March 1987, the Melton Centre for Jewish Education in the Diaspora, at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, hosted an international conference on the theme of "Studying Classical Jewish Texts in the Elementary School." The conference was attended by academicians and practitioners from Israel, the United States, Canada, France, Switzerland, England and Argentina. The fifth volume of *Studies in Jewish Education* is based on papers presented at this conference and other articles on related topics.

Classical texts are a central component of an elementary school child's educational experience. In Jewish education, the classical Jewish texts must occupy a coveted place of honor and primacy, and serve as the vehicle for introducing the learner into the mystique and fascination of Jewish culture. When studying a classical Jewish text, the child confronts certain social, psychological, theological and philosophical questions of paramount importance to his/her overall development.

To date, in Jewish education, our ability to forge an educational translation of these texts or to grasp the child's understanding of these materials has been limited.

This collection of scholarly materials is an attempt to meet this challenge by examining the implications of possible approaches that could be applied in the Jewish classroom. By no means does this volume claim to provide conclusive answers to the educational issues being discussed. Rather, it is intended to serve as a catalytic agent in raising these questions for educational deliberation within an academic framework.

This volume has been divided into three main sections, according to subject matter. The first section deals with philosophical and ideological issues related to the study of classical Jewish texts. Professor Moshe Greenberg discusses the centrality of the Hebrew language in Jewish education in general, and its implications for textual study in particular; Professor Nechama Leibovitz poses a series of basic questions which confront the teacher of Bible in his/her attempt to formalize a suitable approach for Bible education. The last paper in this section was submitted by

Professor Jacobus Schoneveld, who attempts to identify certain educational guidelines and approaches which flow from the philosophical works of the French thinker, Emanuel Lévinas.

The second section focuses on developmental issues which must be addressed in teaching classical texts to children. Professor Fritz Oser submits a theory of faith development which aids the educator in selecting those texts and issues which would be most appropriate for religious teaching. In a similar vein, Rina Rosenberg reports on a study conducted with Israeli children on their understanding and appreciation of prayer; Dr. Alvan Kaunfer integrates the study of *midrash* with theories of cognitive development and discusses the educational implications of this educational field. Professor Gareth Matthews challenges, in his article, the Piagetian theory of stage development for evaluating moral developments in religious education. Finally, Dr. Howard Deitcher examines the way in which the young Bible reader understands the complex nature of the biblical figure and how this addresses larger philosophical and theological issues.

The last section in this volume examines specific pedagogic issues of teaching classical Jewish texts to children. Marla Frankel outlines a typology for reading comprehension as it relates to biblical literacy; Kathy Green discusses *midrashic* interpretation as a form of biblical exegesis and then proceeds to offer an approach for its inclusion in the Jewish school curriculum; and Dr. Dvora Koubovi addresses the subject of literacy therapy and its application for teaching Bible to young children. In the final article, Dr. Steven Brown focuses attention on the centrality of media materials as a critical factor in teaching classical Jewish texts, and shows how this medium can serve as a form of commentary to the biblical text.

Several people have played a central role in bringing this project to fruition. Ben Mollov devoted much time and energy to guiding this volume to its publication. Our thanks to Yael Oberman who assisted in the English editing. Marla Frankel shared the chairmanship of the 1987 conference, and Elaine Matlow and Noa Barkan were responsible for its administrative coordination. Professor Seymour Fox and the Jerusalem Fellows afforded me the opportunity to take advantage of the resources of the program and to devote my time to the initial research of this project. Finally, Alan Hoffmann, director of the Melton Centre for Jewish

Education in the Diaspora at the Hebrew University, encouraged us to pursue this project from its inception and must be thanked for his help throughout.

Howard Deitcher

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# INTRODUCTION

## JEWISH TEXTS, EDUCATION, AND IDENTITY: INSEPARABLE

Abraham J. Tannenbaum

The study of traditional Jewish texts is perhaps the single most critical and engaging activity in Jewish education. Students spend the greater part of their classroom time delving into this source material, much of it ancient, some of it recent, in order to gain a better understanding of their heritage and how it relates to them both in profound and in routine ways. Jewish educators are deeply aware of the importance of textual study in the curriculum, and it was their concern and their children's needs that were addressed by the 1987 Conference on Jewish Texts, sponsored by the Melton Centre at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. More than 20 educators and psychologists were invited to Jerusalem from widely scattered sites, mostly in North America and Israel, to attend a series of meetings in which some presented and all discussed the papers that appear in the present volume. These statements range in substance from the philosophical to the pedagogical and from the original to the traditionally derivative interpretation of textual sources in educational contexts. All are intended to bring a fresh perspective on issues that are as old and vital as Jewish education *per se*.

Self evidently, the goals of textual study, and the means of attaining them, vary in accordance with the Jewish ideals, values, observances and aspirations of parents who want their children to be exposed to these texts and of the educators responsible for teaching them. Although the present volume targets a readership that is diverse in its religious and cultural colorations, it cannot possibly cover the entire spectrum. Variations in such matters are so wide that it would be naive to recommend a single set of principles and practices for all schools, or even for a majority of them, to follow. This fact was made clear to me during a single 24-hour period, part of which was spent in flight to Israel on my way to this conference, and part of it at the opening sessions soon after my arrival.

Aboard the plane, and sitting quite close to me, was a group of bearded and befrocted *Hasidim* conversing animatedly in Yiddish, a language of learning and instruction which, incidentally, deserves more attention than it sometimes gets at conferences on Jewish education. For hours they spoke reverentially about their *Rebbe* and his wisdom and about what they regarded as the holy texts which usually kindle his passion and inspiration. Then, in relatively short order, I arrived at the Jerusalem Conference and experienced something akin to culture shock. It was as if I had been transported to another milieu, dramatically different from the *Hasidic* enclave I had just left. Beginning with the opening lectures and discussions, and continuing throughout the conference, "wisdom" was subtly substituted by "cognition," a cooler, more easily describable and measurable concept. And talk of "holiness," "passion," and "inspiration" was all but absent in general deliberations on texts, being replaced by concerns about children's intellectual development and the readiness levels at which they can process certain moral and academic content in text-based curriculums for Jewish schools. How unlike the perspectives on childhood held by my *Hasidic* planemates (and probably by others, too) who seem to consider the young mind as some kind of vessel for receiving, retaining, fermenting, and fomenting ideas.

Neither the *Hasidim*, with their strict ritual observances, nor their co-religionists of the opposite, liberal persuasion, for that matter, would subscribe to many of the thoughts expressed at the conference and in the present monograph. Conversely, the conferees would probably reject a number of educational principles that are welcome in either of the two groups. Targeting *both* extremes in the hopes of striking a balance for the in-betweens is also impossible simply because they are poles apart in their approach to Jewish texts, so much so that in such matters they probably resonate more harmoniously with philosophies of some non-Jewish sects than with each other. Yet they share a basic stake in Jewish education and use some of the same texts, albeit in sharply dissimilar ways, to achieve their separate goals. It is therefore important to realize that even though this volume is not meant for all segments of Jewish education, those who are excluded from its intended readership are also committed to working with texts in their schools, and the way they do their job

should not be subjected to ridicule or caricature. Instead, they should be viewed as likely participants in other, equally serious, conferences designed to yield publications with other kinds of content, meant for other kinds of audiences interested in textual study.

### Conceptual Orientations to the Texts

Perhaps the strongest underlying message in this volume is that Jewish books are central to Jewish life as well as to the education which vitalizes it. They serve their readers as "surrogate parents" by nurturing, enlightening, and inspiring them, just as biological parents do with their offspring in the best of families. Small wonder that Jewish people are known as "Children of the Book." Small wonder, too, that participants at the conference treated the text with so much ardor and deference in their discussions and in their papers.

Conferees approached textual material in at least five ways. Some were concerned with what may be called the *context of the text*, or how to understand and appreciate it on its own terms, without compromising whatever nuances and inferences its author could have intended. Others dealt with the text from the *child's vantage point*, taking into account his/her level of development and how it affects comprehension and appreciation of existing content or the creation of new textual material. Others, still, emphasized the *vantage point of the teacher* whose own interpretation may be idiosyncratic, but argued that it deserves a place in classroom study even if it revises the context or ignores the child's eye view of the text. There was also a good deal of attention paid to the *variety of teachers' roles in Jewish education*, ranging from the academic to the spiritual, including variants between these extremes, and how the different roles can be enacted with help from the texts. And finally, there were those who applied what may be called *phenomenological values perspectives* in which text was used to trigger, reinforce or re-define personal belief systems concerning Judaism in general and Jewish education in particular, without pretending to be faithful to the text in the original or in a modified form.

The various orientations to textual content overlap to some extent, but for clarity's sake it is best to consider them as if they

were mutually independent approaches.

### Context of the Text

Some participants concentrated on the need to explore the text objectively in depth, to extract its endless riches, and to avoid using it as a pretext for personal invention. They felt that teachers and students should bend their own intellects to the meaning and meaningfulness of textual content even if it sometimes seems strange or elusive. This requires an unrelenting search for interpretative insights into subtleties which are inherent in the material itself and which can be discovered through penetrating analysis of the text as well as a study of previous commentaries on it.

The rational approach to the text operates at several levels of complexity, as reflected in Benjamin Bloom's hierarchical cognitive taxonomy. At the lowest, simplest level of the six-tier pyramid is *knowledge* acquisition, or the absorption of ideas in the text through reading, understanding and remembering. The next tier refers to a deeper *comprehension* of the text, or a comprehension of deeper textual material. The third level of complexity is an *application* of the text to related issues in real life or in other texts. This is followed by skills in *analysis*, or the ability to break down the text into basic elements and to see subtle relationships among them. *Synthesis* relates to the creation of *hidushim*, or the process of combining textual knowledge in order to generate relationships and the discovery of contextual ideas that had never before been revealed. Finally, the highest form of mental processing is *evaluation* of the text's appropriateness for solving particular problems, depending on the internal content and external interpretations of that content.

Educators have to build toward higher levels of cognition from lower levels. Synthesis and evaluation cannot be achieved without prior knowledge and comprehension, any more than buildings can be constructed from the top down. As gratuitous as such an observation may be, there are classrooms where foundational mastery is neglected in favor of higher level thinking skills, a situation in which children's failure in both is virtually guaranteed.

The text is not just filled with ideas to be mastered and appre-

ciated; it also contains a treasure of human values and behavioral codes which are sometimes stated explicitly, but more often so deeply implicit that the reader has to apply profound emotional sensitivity in order to discern and be moved by these hidden messages. On occasion, however, it may be necessary to delay teaching either the affective or intellectual content of the text when children are not yet developmentally ready to be edified by one or the other. Even then, some would argue that readiness considerations should not easily deter a teacher from exposing children to ideas, on the grounds that young minds may be able to understand more than adult testing methods can reveal.

### **The Vantage Point of the Child**

One frequently sounded theme at the conference had to do with the need for teachers to focus their attention not only on the text but also on the child's preparedness to deal with it meaningfully. In its original form, Jewish textual content was addressed to adults, not to children; yet the intention was for people of all ages to study the texts, ready or not. But what can be accomplished at the elementary, or even high school, level when the material seems clearly above children's heads? Is it necessary to dilute, or modify, or even postpone the coverage of a text until children are of an age when they can grasp its full meaning? Or should faithfulness to the text in its original form be the only consideration, regardless of the child's degree of maturity?

Both sides of the issue were debated forcefully by the conferees. Some argued that universal principles of child development have been handed down through Piagetian and Kohlbergian theory and research and that the Jewish educator should be thoroughly aware of these principles before designating the scope and sequence of a curriculum. They charged that children are frequently introduced to some textual material too early in their stages of cognitive and moral development and could not possibly understand its message in the original. According to them, the only way such content could be taught is either in simplified form during the early school years or at a later time when there is no longer doubt about the learner's readiness.

Others challenged the veracity or relevance of theory and research on human development, and argued that young children deserve more credit for their insights than Piagetians and Kohlbergians seem to acknowledge. They believe that nobody knows for sure to what extent young children's failure to share their comprehension of a textual idea represents a lack of readiness or a lack of vocabulary for communicating their true insights in terms that adults can understand. Teachers should therefore not be quickly deterred by developmental considerations from exposing children to textual material that may appear too difficult for them to appreciate fully. Even if only partial appreciation is possible at a young age, it may be easier to achieve full understanding when the text is reviewed, rather than encountered for the first time, in later years.

Or so the argument went.

A few conferees were frankly uncomfortable with what they considered dangerous side-effects of stage theories in human development. They worried about whatever happened to "the child as father of the man," whose innocence, spontaneity, and unjaded view of the world may provide the best possible perspective on ideas promulgated in Jewish texts. Adults seem far more inhibited, disciplined, and predisposed to narrow interpretations. And yet, stage theory can create the impression that the movement from childhood to adulthood is a steady, predictable climb to the top of the intellectual mountain, the only place where peak experiences are possible. Children are at too low a level to achieve such a peak experience; they have to wait and be patient as the inevitable processes of growth help them climb higher and higher toward the top.

Whether children should be viewed as underdeveloped or underestimated in their appreciation of ideas remains an unanswered question until there are enough research data to answer it.

### **The Vantage Point of the Teacher**

When a teacher picks up a Jewish text that has fallen to the floor and kisses it, he/she conveys an attitude toward the document for children to notice, interpret and emulate. Of course, teachers vary in their veneration of textual material. They also

approach it from different intellectual perspectives. There are those who adhere faithfully to the context of the text and lament the fact, as they see it, that we are no longer a text-obsessed people and are in danger of vanishing for lack of real literacy in the documents that express our heritage. Their orientation is fairly "strict constructionist," reminiscent of the view taken by *academic* artists who try to represent reality faithfully with profound insight and appreciation. Nechama Liebovitz exemplifies such artistry through her deep mastery of text and the ingenious associations she can draw among textual sources and their commentaries.

Some teachers can be compared to *spontaneous* artists who represent reality in various ways by rendering their own images of what exists out there without distorting it beyond recognition. Thus, for example, they may express their visions of a chair through any number of its structural or functional properties and yet maintain an unmistakable impression of "chair." Similarly, the spontaneous teacher shares Louis Finkelstein's view that:

The text is at once perfect and perpetually incomplete, that like the universe itself it was created to be a process rather than a system, a method of inquiry into the right rather than a codified collection of answers, that to discover possible situations with which it might deal, and to analyze their moral implications in the light of its teaching is to share the labor of divinity. These are inherent elements of Rabbinic thought dominating the manner of life it recommends.

In short, the text has to retain its full integrity, except that the individual — namely, the teacher and eventually the student — adds a personal vision to make the text more complete than before and to highlight its dynamic character, thus venerating what it may become as much as what it already is.

Finally, there are teachers who take a *divergent* approach to the text, much in the same manner that some expressionist artists use outer reality as a stimulus for projecting personal images through their art. In other words, texts function as a kind of Rorschach ink blot to help flush out teachers' and students' deepest emotions, values, sensitivities and intellectual powers. It is not uncommon, therefore, for divergent oriented teachers to

have children create their own "*midrashim*", or to use the Purim story and its tradition of *mishloach manot* as a means of influencing students to adopt a world view of brotherhood and sisterhood in which generosity is a way of life. This need to look inwardly for inspiration may be a response to the wounds inflicted upon us by the outer world. As Ruth Lee Sallinger says, "we are a generation decimated, cut down, and cut off from what was historically ours in the transmission of Jewish learning. We are, however, also a generation blessed by our own efforts, by our own scholarly contributions, and by our avid consumption of the fruits of Jewish learning which we ourselves have planted."

A different way of expressing the tension between traditional Judaism and today's world at large is expressed from a liberal, unrestricted perspective, by Michael Zeldin.

First and foremost...schools must articulate the role that the Jewish textual tradition plays in their religious outlook. If Torah is not the revealed word of God transmitted through Moses, then what authority does it have over the lives of liberal Jews?

Concerning the second responsibility of the schools, Zeldin asserts that:

In addition to such a philosophical analysis, the very nature of Liberal Judaism calls for a sociological inventory of the realities facing liberal Jews. The essence of Liberal Judaism has always been to provide a response to the dialectical tensions created by the struggle to remain faithful to the spirit of Jewish tradition while simultaneously responding to changing social realities.

Here, then, is the dilemma faced by Jewish educators today: how do they deal with the traditional text while facing a contemporary world that ignores or attacks it as a cultural anachronism? The divergently oriented teacher responds in a projective manner to resolve the conflict or to rise above it.

Since texts are so important in Jewish tradition, it is no wonder that the various sects in Judaism train their educators to approach textual material in different ways. Traditionalism requires an academic treatment which is searching, enlightening, erudite, and above all, sensitive to the sanctity of every word and

even letter. The adaptive minded encourage their teachers to practice spontaneity in their religion and in their instruction by expecting mastery of the text while acknowledging that it is in a constant state of evolution, subject to changeable interpretations by those who study and teach it. Even more divergent from allegiance to the literal text are freer thinkers who operate on the premise that *Torah* is not a product of Revelation and that texts should be used to help formulate Jewish responses to the current and ever-changing human condition.

A few conferees seemed to advocate a neutral, objective view of the three approaches to texts. They intimated that children should be exposed to all three, or at least familiarized with them, as a way of revealing the nature of sectarianism in the Jewish community. Presumably, students would then be allowed to make their own choices with full understanding of the alternatives and their implications. Such an overview without commitment may be especially appealing to parents who want their children to receive an education in which the school either poses no threat to the Judaic orientations at home or offers clear alternatives to these traditions without bias.

### **The Classroom Roles of the Teacher**

Those who reflect on the dynamics of classroom life, or what goes on between teacher and student rather than what goes on in their heads and in their hearts, will quickly realize that the teacher plays at least four distinctive roles as a professional. All of them were mentioned at one time or another during conference discussions, although there was an occasional tendency to see some of them as conflicting or incompatible.

One role is that of the teacher-as-scholar-and-interpreter, a person who can lead students through the pathways of logic implicit in the text or inspired by it. One conference discussion revolved around children's reluctance to face the difficult and unfamiliar challenge of developing higher level thinking skills that are implicit in Jewish texts, when the "other" curriculum, namely general studies, is often treated superficially and is therefore so much less demanding. These comments revived my own memories of having invited a prominent secular educator to visit an Orthodox day school in Miami Beach. This turned out to be

quite an eye-opener for him, partly because, although he is Jewish, he does not have much of a Jewish educational background. We walked into a class of pre-adolescents who were trying to make sense out of a particular principle in the Talmudical tractate, *Kiddushin*. The topic under investigation was the textual statement about the responsibilities of a father to teach his child how to swim. This elicited an obvious question from the teacher, to wit: "Why does the text single out swimming instruction in preference to so many more critical skills?" One child responded with a long disquisition on the symbolic nature of swimming. He saw life itself as a vast ocean, trackless, and infested with predators and obstacles. A parent's job is to guide the child in how to "swim" safely in such daunting "waters." This, of course, is not the intent of the text but to my guest it was an astounding display of interpretative freedom and imagination which he confessed to have rarely witnessed in social studies classrooms. The stimulation of metaphoric and creative thinking is therefore an important, fairly commonplace feature in the Jewish school.

A second role for the teacher is that of a disciplinarian, not just in the sense of maintaining law and order in the classroom, but more importantly, in helping children discipline themselves to understand and appreciate their cultural traditions; to formulate and clarify a belief system and its consequent behavior code which, in turn, is rooted in Jewish tradition. Teachers are not just fountainheads of intellect; they are also role models who communicate a way of life through their expressed feelings, loyalties, affiliations and values. Too often, children learn to accept teachers as intellectual machines dispensing knowledge and the challenge of ideas, and little else. What teachers live for and what they are willing to die for remain a mystery to their students and sometimes even to themselves.

Related to the need for teachers to reveal themselves as multi-dimensional human beings, not just scholars, is their role as spiritual models who are often inspirational and always paragons of virtue and morality. Most Jewish schools are either independent religious centers or educational extensions of synagogues, where spirituality is always part of the *raison d'être*. Even in non-denominational Jewish schools, one of the biggest priorities in teacher qualifications is the need to exemplify virtuous personal conduct in and out of the classroom. The teacher may not

compromise in matters of honesty, integrity, justice, kindness and social sensitivity, and he/she must remain totally free of any breath of scandal. Children of all ages are keenly perceptive in recognizing character strengths and weaknesses in the adult world, especially among their mentors. Successful teaching, therefore, is not just a matter of skill and artistry; it is a way of life.

Finally, the teacher represents a bridge between the past and the future in Jewish history. He/she helps children understand and appreciate the timeless traditions of their people, primarily through the study of texts and through the kinds of personal lives they lead. The various denominations in Judaism interpret these traditions differently, but all expect the teacher to be the primary conduit of their views and are well aware that they can only keep their messages alive beyond their own generation by educating children to follow in their footsteps and eventually to make their own paths without ever forgetting from whence they came. Only those who possess their own sense of peoplehood and its destiny should be allowed to transmit it to young students.

### **Phenomenology in the Teacher's Perspective**

Every teacher brings a personal values orientation toward the text and toward the children who study it. What came through clearly in the conference discussions was the degree to which the phenomenological fields of the participants differed in their placement of the text and the child. Some advocated "the centrality of the child" and the need to accommodate textual material to his/her needs as a person growing up in a particular time and place. This is a popular view in education and society generally, although there are those who would argue that the more popular theories of human development have caused laymen and professionals alike to view the child either as an inadequate or incomplete being who reaches maturity (interpreted as perfection) only in adulthood. Despite such demurral, the 20th century may go down in history as the era of the child, who is now a cherished member of the human family after being victimized in Western society by neglect and hostility for so many generations. Having achieved such a prominent place in the teacher's phenomenal field, the child virtually dictates, through his/her

psychosocial attributes, exactly what and how he/she should be taught at school. In short, the text is there to serve the child in the growing process.

Conferees who emphasized the "centrality of the child" encountered others who were more in tune with the "centrality of the text." They felt that the text deals with universals which should not be simply adjusted to individualities of children or adults but should rather be allowed to communicate messages for every individual to internalize. For them, the century of the child may or may not pass into history, but the text carries messages that are perennial in every generation for young and old alike.

### **In Conclusion . . .**

The foregoing overview of ideas presented at the "Jerusalem Conference on Jewish Texts" is intended to record something of the spirit of discussions and writings shared by participants. The reader can quickly and quite accurately judge that the topics were wide-ranging as were the points of view pertaining to nearly every topic. Yet there was unanimity in appreciation of the text as the backbone of curricula in Jewish schools. There was also agreement on which texts deserve major attention, especially in the early years of schooling. And finally, even though conferees came to the meetings with different sectarian convictions, they all recognized and appreciated the same set of high standards relating to person-to-person behavior advocated in the texts. In other words, the conferees shared common ground while protecting separate turfs, all of which were fertile with ideas worthy of harvesting during the conference and for a long time afterwards.



*Section I*

*PHILOSOPHICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL ISSUES*



## ON TEACHING THE BIBLE\*

Moshe Greenberg

I'm going to speak about a series of questions on the value of teaching the text of the Bible to students whose language capability is weak. Let me read the questions that were submitted to me by the teacher of such a class: "How important is it that we teach Bible in Hebrew? What should be the relationship between teaching biblical Hebrew and the regular Hebrew classes? What method should be used to teach biblical Hebrew? What should be the relationship between text teaching and content teaching in Bible classes?"

Whenever a teacher is confronted with this sort of a dilemma, he/she has to decide what to do. The problem this teacher is facing is that he has a text which has multiple values. One of the values is Hebrew Language. Another is the substance of the text, the content of the text. These two values cannot both be achieved at the same time. The extent to which the teacher achieves instruction in biblical Hebrew, is the extent to which he/she sacrifices content. To the extent that content is enriched, the Hebrew suffers. In such a situation you have to decide which of the two values you are going to promote in the class. Then you have to accept the consequences of your decision. The dilemma is related to a policy decision that may not be up to the individual teacher. The entity, the faculty, may have a position on this. Obviously, that is the first question that has to be resolved. Time is too short to have them both, and if you try to have them both, without any doubt you are going to fall between the two.

Now I would like to proceed on the resolution of the dilemma that says that in *Prozdor*, the class in Bible should be a class in the *Hebrew Bible*. That means that teaching the Bible in its original language is a preeminent value. If that decision is made, then what are the consequences that follow? One has to forego, to a very considerable extent, the ideas, and one has to stress, in

\* Presentation made at a meeting of the *Prozdor* faculty, December 12, 1976. *Prozdor* is the high school division of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

his/her teachings, the advantages of reading the Bible in Hebrew. It has to become clear to the student that reading the Bible in Hebrew has advantages which in themselves are a compensation for the fact that the class is not going to be one in philosophy. That there are compensations for reading the Bible in Hebrew is the argument that has always been made since the beginning of the effort to revive Hebrew as a language and to make Hebrew the language of instruction for Jews. What is the basic idea we have always heard? We have heard that Hebrew is the only proper vehicle for the culture and the cultural cargo that the Jews have produced. The argument is, that as soon as you translate the cultural cargo to any other language, you lose essences. It is up to the teacher of Hebrew Bible to prove that point. The only way to prove it is to analyze and to try to consider the peculiar advantages of the Hebrew in any particular segment that you are teaching. For example, there are multiple meanings in the Hebrew version of a passage which any translation has to simplify, and as you render it into English or German or any other language, you immediately thin, reduce and diminish the overtones, the connotations and the echoes of the passage. This is something that you, as teachers, understand since you know Hebrew very well, but the student does not. For him/her these multiple meanings do not exist at all or they exist only latently. Your job is to evoke them. Your goal should be to make *explicit* to your students the advantages of the study of the Hebrew text. There is absolutely no reason to expect that your students perceive anything that is left implicit.

Once you attain the very elementary stage of teaching the definition of a word or phrase, you ought, as quickly as possible, to open the student's mind to the richness of the cargo that this text carries. What are some ways of doing this? One way is to contrast interpretations of the text. There is scarcely a biblical text which is so univocal that it hasn't been seen as containing different meanings. Your selection of texts should minimize the number which are univocal. A univocal text is, for instance, Ezra's list of those who returned from captivity. It can only mean one thing: you have names of families and you have numbers and cities. The text may not be sound here and there, but once you have a sound text, it is a univocal text. Almost as univocal are the blueprints of the Tabernacle. Once you puzzle out what the

meaning of the term "cubit" is, you know that four is four and a cubit is maybe the distance from the elbow to the end of the outstretched middle finger and there is not much room for interpretation. I assume that the number of such texts that you study is small.

On the other hand, once you get into a narrative and the narrative contains dialogue or human beings interacting and motives arise, then you enter into the realm of ambiguity and multiple meaning. It has been my experience that in such texts there is hardly a unanimity of interpretation. Moreover, once you get out of narration and into poetry, prophecy or psalms, then you enter maximal ambiguity, maximal openness to the variety of interpretation which has made those texts absorb meaning almost endlessly throughout the ages. Psalm texts, to take an extreme example, and prophetic texts, to take a slightly less extreme example, have never been finally closed. They are endlessly open to interpretation. I'm not suggesting for a moment that you convert the lesson into a trip through the ages with a text, though now and then that is not a bad idea. With a passage that has had some decisive or crucial significance for thought, it can be a good idea to devote an entire lesson to a journey through the ages in interpreting that text.

But I am not speaking about such a special case. I am speaking about the normal case of the non-univocal text. Most of these texts are, on the face of them, ambiguous. How can you concretize and bring to the fore this ambiguity? There are two very ready-to-hand ways. One of them is to excerpt from the commentators. If you have an hour for teaching, you should be able to cover about 10 verses, or you can try to get through a paragraph, something that is a unit. As preparation for teaching that unit, read as a minimum *Mikraot Gedolot*. If you are teaching *Nevi'im Rishonim*, then you have *Rashi*, *Radak*, and the *Mezudot* on the page. If you are teaching the Pentateuch, you have *Ramban*, *Rashi*, *Ibn Ezra*, and sometimes you have the *Rashbam*. Don't go any further than that. Excerpt two or three examples on one or two passages. You have to be minimal with this or you will never finish. Try and select examples which will maximize, in the student's consciousness, the advantages of studying the text in Hebrew. That is how they will come to understand why they have to spend all this time in Hebrew. Of course the excerpt

from the commentary should also be simple, as far as possible. You can't take a *Rashi* passage that is 10 lines long if you're going to spend your whole hour on 10 lines of Hebrew text. You could take part of an excerpt, a part of a part. Contrast two of the commentators, perhaps *Rashi* and *Ramban*, on the same passage. Nechama Lebovitz's material is often very useful for this although you have to watch out that you don't get caught up in her objective which is really to contrast the richness of the mind of *Rashi* with that of *Ramban*. That is not what I am talking about. I am talking about the richness of the Hebrew Bible and not the richness of the commentators. Excerpts should be minimally removed from the plain sense. Each should be an obvious attempt to elicit plain sense from the text, though they differ.

Another device that should be used as freely as contrasting commentaries is contrasting translations. There is no reason to hide the fact that the native language of your students is English and that in English there are many recent, excellent translations of the Bible. One of the ways to bring out the infinite advantage of the Hebrew is to first take two new translations and praise them to the students, "a panel of the greatest experts worked years, etc. Here is the *New English Bible*, here is the American translation of the Catholics, here is the Revised Standard Version." Then contrast them. I am not saying contrast six translations. In one lesson you might contrast the new JPS translation and the *New English Bible* translation on a particular verse. Attempt this only at the *end* of the lesson; this will be the fruit. After you have puzzled out the meaning without the translations and you have prepared some kind of tension, you've prepared the student for the exercise in translation comparison. Now you can weigh the translations with them; now you have made your students superior to the translations. If you've done your work right, they will be in a position to judge translations. What greater satisfaction can they have than this little taste of power at being above the translators, of being in the workshop of the translator, of being able to assess what was done and render some kind of judgement on it? This is the basic value of teaching the Bible in Hebrew – to instill in the student the sense that there is an advantage that cannot be gained any other way than doing this work in Hebrew. To give a student this taste of achievement is to

help him/her appreciate what all those people who are "supposed to be learned" are so excited about; what makes them so curious about this book called the Bible; why it is an object of constant search and study.

What I've just covered is the general policy to be followed in a class that has decided to pursue the study of the text in Hebrew, having foregone the study of the so-called ideas which are, even in the best circumstances, an enemy of the careful study of the text. Now I would like to discuss techniques for a class which is weak, a class which has 10 verses in front of it and will find those 10 verses heavy going. Here the basic aim should be to remove the obstacles from the reading of the text *prior* to reading it. The experience of reading the text should be as far removed from an agony of pitfalls and slipping and falling and stopping and explaining — as far removed from that as possible. If you've got 50 minutes, as much as 30 of them might well be spent in removing the obstacles from the path of students as they read the text. How do you do that? You do that by a maximum use of the blackboard and of oral work. You don't even look at the text until you have gone through all the oral preparation. For example, as preparation, you scan the paragraph you intend to teach for difficult constructions or words. Arrive in class early and list them on the blackboard, preferably in the order in which they are encountered in the text. Sometimes the difficulty will be a single word and all you care about is the definition. You can write the Hebrew word and the English definition next to it. If you want to make further remarks about that word, make them orally. You have a phrase, a measurement, a weight, etc. But you have prepared the blackboard before the class begins. Go over all these difficulties orally, making further use of the blackboard to parse a verb or deal with any other difficulty. Go through the list and get rid of all these major pitfalls and obstacles in the text. Then tell the story orally in Hebrew while the students listen. In your telling, incorporate as much as you can of the blackboard material, pointing to it as it is mentioned. This is the students' first encounter with the story. You can take some time after you have told the story and ask questions to see if they have gotten the main gist of it. Do some oral work, incorporating the material that you have on the board. You have now removed the main obstacles and tried to give them a preliminary taste of what they

are going to see in the text. They should have the sense that it is not going to be another one of those dull, long sessions where they don't understand every other word and you have to stop and talk about it. Then, in the last 10 or 15 minutes, open the text and you, the teacher, read the text to them while they follow (especially if it is near the beginning of the year) because any students that you call on will not understand a thing they are saying. They will be so nervous about getting the reading right that they will expend all their energy on the right realization of the written text. So you read the text while they follow. After the 10 verses are over, if any time is left, you can entertain some more questions on the passage. This is the general outline of the procedure that I've found works at the university level with adults whose linguistic ability is nevertheless very weak.

The first reaction to this sort of procedure on the part of some is, "Aren't you taking all the excitement away, you've told the whole story, what's left when you get to the end? It will all be boring." Just the opposite! The most exciting thing that a beginner student can experience is understanding. Say you are in a German class. The student has a book open to the original text of Goethe which he/she really wants to learn. The teacher explains Goethe and gives a half-hour preliminary talk on one of the acts of Faust, or one of the scenes in one of the acts. Then in the last part of the lesson the student opens the book and by golly he/she has read that whole of Goethe and understands every word of it! That's boring? That is what he/she came for: to be able to achieve some sense of mastery over Goethe. If the student was only interested in the story, he/she could have read it in English. The aim was not to understand the general gist of the story of Goethe. The aim was to read Goethe in his own language and see the way he puts the words together. To be able to do that and have some sense of achievement of power over the text, that is the highest truth of language learning at anything but the advanced level. So don't be afraid that you will be boring the students during the last stage. These students, to the extent that they are weak, are craving some experience of ease and familiarity with this text, a feeling that they are able to get on top of the text. If every session with you ends with that little taste of being on top of it, "I really can do it," you won't be boring them.

There *are* paragraphs of 10 verses which are made for suspense. Occasionally there is nothing wrong with allowing a suspenseful point to be arrived at under the students' own power after you've removed 90% of the obstacles and left 10% that you feel they can overcome. So don't go through to the end of the passage. Stop and say, "What's going to happen next? I'm not going to tell you. You'll find out when you open the book." You play a game like that with them. I play games constantly with university students. I can tell you that there is absolutely nothing wrong with playing games at any level of teaching, with any age. Recently, at my age, the same was done to me in a course in the army. On the eve of an examination, the instructors divided us adults, men between 30 and 50, into three teams and put us through the paces of this very serious course by a competition between the three teams. An officer would ask a question and the first group that had its hand up got points, etc. We all played it with perfect good will. So don't feel that there is anything demeaning about a well-conceived game. But it does have to be well-conceived. In the university setting I frequently examined the level of performance of the class in the session after I had given them homework. In the next session, I opened my book (they didn't open theirs) and started reading. I stopped and called on a student who had to give the next word. I went around the whole class in this fashion. The context of the missing word was very clear. If the student knew the story, he/she knew the word. I did that time and again to university students. This showed that I was serious and that I really expected them to know the material. Devising such games whose obvious purpose is to give the students a proficiency in the text which is not merely mechanical, but a good linguistic proficiency, will only be appreciated by students.

**Question:** In the long run, after a student has gone through 3 or 4 years of this type of Bible study and presumably is not going to study any more Bible, will he/she have gotten the best that we could have given him/her from the Bible classes?

**Professor Greenberg:** Yes, if you also have another forum in which you could discuss things that are connected with the Bible but are non-linguistic or non-narrative. There are some general questions that arise, perhaps about the truth content of the Bible.

Questions about the truth content, obviously, are not going to be handled in 10 minutes in the regular Bible course and not necessarily even by the same teacher. That is a decision that has to be made within the institution itself. If the teacher him/herself wants to deal with it, then he/she should devote a session to it. If the teacher has altogether 30 sessions a year, perhaps 5 sessions may be devoted to these other matters. The exact number has to be worked out and decided upon. One thing is clear to me: if there is a sacrifice of this sense of the unique value of the language, then you have missed perhaps the only occasion where the students are going to be able to get an understanding of that fact. I believe in the linguistic uniqueness of the Hebrew Bible. Out of 30 sessions, I am not willing to give up more than 3 or 4 sessions to anything else than that.

**Question:** Why is your program so linguistically focused?

**Professor Greenberg:** It is linguistically focused because we are talking about a text, every verse of which is charged. But the class will not be merely linguistic unless you make it that. The aim of the reading of the few verses is to arrive at the multiple overtones of the text which are to be realized in the two devices I have described. At the very least such a lesson will be interpretative. You will have gotten beyond the level of mere word matching to the judgemental and interpretative level. You can't have a more satisfying experience than that.

## HOW TO READ A CHAPTER OF TANAKH\*

Nechama Leibovitz

Let me begin with two introductory notes:

The topic which I formulated in the title seems to me, now that I see it printed on the galley sheets, to be unparalleled frivolity – not only for the reason that it is not up to me to teach people how to read a chapter in *Tanakh*, since I have not been entrusted with the keys to this book; rather, because it is doubtful, in general, whether an individual can establish a reading process for the many. Shouldn't each individual attempt to establish his/her own reading, a reading suitable to his/her spirit and soul? Just as it comprises a unique and one-time phenomenon in this world, shouldn't his/her reading of *Tanakh*, his/her understanding of the text, be a one-time phenomenon – uniquely his/hers – and not an imitation of something else which once was?

Ludwig Strauss taught us, according to the formulation of Nathan Rottenstreich, that true reading is "the completion of the work (of literature), as though it were taken from the potential to the actual." Reading a poem is "a reproduction which the reader accomplishes by means of his voice and soul." After these words it is even more understandable how difficult it is for one person to teach another to read, since the responsibility for rebuilding the book anew belongs to the builders themselves according to the instructions of the book, and by means of the material of their voices and souls, in which they differ one from the other just as their appearances differ.

If, in spite of this, we are still trying to teach reading, our justification is that the instructions given to the builder (that is the architect's blueprint with all its clauses, words and letters) be precise, objective facts which command respect. It is towards the understanding of these letters, words and clauses and to the acceptance of their authority that we wish to lead the reader, and this is what our teacher Ludwig Strauss taught us in his lectures.

\* From: Leibovitz, N. (1954). *Nefesh va Shir: In Memory of A. L. Strauss* (pp. 99–104). Jerusalem.

A second note: I learned to read *Tanakh* from our great medieval commentators, *Rashi*, *Ramban* and *Rashbam*, and from their successors who, to a certain extent, followed in their footsteps — such as *Malbim*, and the author of *Ha'amek Davar* (Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin). Even if they are far apart in their approaches and exegetical methods and distant in their basic approach from the exegesis of Ludwig Strauss, in any event they and Strauss have something in common, something which I regard as very important to teach: the seriousness with which they relate to the written word, to every word; not only to the big word filled with deep significance and loaded with religious-ideological explosiveness, such as *kedushah*, *mishpat*, *zedaka*, *hesed ve'emet* or *segula*, but even to the *vav hachibur*; this serious attitude, this intense attention is directed not only to the gravity of the words but even to their sequence, to the sentence structure, repetition, parallelism, to everything written — and unwritten.

Allow me to bring a quotation from a modern exegete who was quite far from modern poetry or belles-lettres, but who nevertheless had something to say about correct reading of poetry, which is close to what we learned from Strauss. Regarding the verse in *Vayelekh*, "And now, write this song for yourselves," (Dt. 31:19), there is a disagreement among early exegetes whether "this song" refers to the song of *Ha'azinu* (Dt. 32) or whether the entire Torah is referred to as a song or poem.

In siding with those who say that "this song is an allusion to the entire Torah," the author of *Ha'amek Davar* (*Kidmat Ha'Emek*) writes:

How can the whole Torah be called a poem when it isn't written in the language of poetry? Rather, we must say, perforce, that it has the nature and unique properties of poetry. As everyone knows, the poetic idiom differs from narrative prose. In poetry, the subject is not described as fully as in a prose narrative, and marginal notes are required to explain that this verse refers to this, and that verse to that. This is not homiletics, but the nature of the poem, even a simple one. It is also well-known that someone who knows what brought this idiom about appreciates the poem all the more than one who doesn't... This is the nature of the Torah in which not all stories are told in full

detail; rather, it requires notes, interpretations, and linguistic analysis. All this is not *derash* (homiletics) but the *peshat* (contextual meaning) of the verse.

After these two prefatory notes I shall now try to read a chapter of *Tanakh*. I have chosen a section of that long narrative complex in *Bereshit* which is spread over three sections — *Vay-eshev*, *Miketz*, and *Vayigash* — that remarkable story whose every step is marked by a duality of human and divine activity; human activity which is motivated by natural, emotional impulses which can be explained naturally by human psychology, and the divine providence which accompanies every step, directing it towards its own goal. It appears as though human beings are sending and being sent according to their own needs; going, stumbling, falling, arising, climbing up the staircase — only to fall down and start up again. We shall see, however, that it is God who is sending, leading, humbling, elevating and seating among princes. We shall deal with the story of Jacob's dispatch of Joseph, "... and he sent him from the valley of Hebron" (37:14), until its conclusion with the words of Joseph to his brothers after they, too, were dispatched after him to Egypt, "You didn't send me here; God did" (45:8).

Before we get into the details of the story and into its structure, let us look at its entirety, as though from a great height, and attend to one single point: What does Joseph say — in his own words — from the day he leaves his father? If we review the entire story, we shall discover that from his encounter with his brothers in Dotan, and throughout his ordeal in the pit and his sale, the text tells us nothing of what he says, as though he were struck dumb. Likewise during his descent to Egypt, his sale to Potifar, his service in his master's house, and his gradual elevation — he never opens his mouth. He is already fine-featured and handsome, he already has unchallenged control of his master's affairs — and still he doesn't speak.

Only at the moment of the greatest test, when he struggles with desire — after giving his reasons to his master's wife in terms comprehensible to her — does he conclude with the words "... and I shall have sinned to God" (39:9). Later on we shall hear him, locked up in jail, say to the messengers of his deliverance, provided by divine providence, "... verily God has interpretations" (40:8). And finally, at the great moment of his release from

prison, having shaved and changed clothing, standing before Pharaoh who demands his "expert" interpretation of his dreams — for the purpose of which expertise his release from prison was expedited — his very first words are "not I, but God, will address Pharaoh's situation" (41:16).

It is with great attention that we must read the first part of Joseph's lengthy speech in response to Pharaoh and in interpretation of his dream:

- (v. 25) What God is doing he revealed to Pharaoh
- (v. 26) The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good sheaves are seven years; it is all one dream.
- (v. 27) And the seven lean, bad cows which emerged next are seven years, and the seven withered, wind-beaten sheaves, will become seven years of famine.
- (v. 28) This is as I have informed Pharaoh; that which God is doing he revealed to Pharaoh.
- (v. 29) Seven years are approaching, (years) of great prosperity throughout Egypt.
- (v. 30) They will be followed by seven years of famine and the prosperity will be forgotten throughout Egypt, and the famine will destroy the land.
- (v. 31) The prosperity will be unknown by force of the subsequent famine which will be very great.
- (v. 32) The twofold repetition of Pharaoh's dream (signifies) that the matter has been prepared by God, and God is hastening to effect it.

If we examine the structure of this speech, in all its parts, we see that it is:

v. 25  
 26–27  
 28  
 29–30–31  
 32  
 33–34–35–36

We see that from the beginning of his speech and between each of the parts of the dream interpretation, Joseph mentions and repeats the One doing the action; the One who prepares the

plan and hastens to effect it. God's name is repeatedly emphasized in the last verse even in opposition to the rules of biblical syntax. In the same verse, and without a change in subject, there is a repetition of the subject, "...the matter has been prepared by God, and God is hastening to effect it!"<sup>1</sup>

We have seen, then, how Joseph, at every moment of trial or transition, carries the name of God as a flag and repeatedly emphasizes, in an idolatrous world: to Whom does man sin? Who interprets people's dreams? Who foretells future events? and Who declares and does?

All this is without analytical explanation, just by means of the repetition of a word. Pharaoh, too, understood the allusion, since in his response he said, "Can there be found a man so possessed of the spirit of God?" (v. 38) And a second time, "After God has informed you of all this..." (v. 39).

We will now select for the purpose of careful reading and observation, chapters 42-43 which also begin with missions. Three times Jacob sends away a son or sons; three times Jacob is the initiator, and the responses differ from one emissary to the next.

The first time, Jacob sends Joseph to his brothers (unaware that in doing so he is sending Israel to Egypt), saying, "...your brothers are pasturing in Shechem, go and I shall dispatch you unto them" (37:13). (This, by the way, is how God sends Moshe to take His people out of Egypt: "Go and I shall dispatch you unto Pharaoh" (Ex. 3:10)). The second time he sends his sons (sans Benjamin) to Egypt to obtain provisions. The third time he sends them, now — without options — including Benjamin, to "the man" who demands his appearance.

1 An example of an abundance such as this of God the doer, we find in Exodus 2:23-25, in those same three verses which provide a transition from slavery to redemption — the moment of, "It is a time of trouble for Jacob, and from it he will be rescued." To wit, "After many days, the King of Egypt died, and the children of Israel relaxed from their bondage and cried out; and their cry ascended to God from their bondage. And God heard their cry and recalled... and saw... and knew." However, the repetition of His name is for an explicit purpose: The God who, until now, has been hidden and His actions concealed, now appears in all His glory and grandeur, "In a mighty hand and upraised fist," to act upon history. This appearance upon the stage of history appears to us here in this five-fold repetition of His name in the brief cycle of two and one-half verses!

Only the first time, however, do we hear the response of the one being sent, "And he said to him, 'I am ready (*hinneni*)'" (37:13). This very *hinneni* reminds us of another mission, incalculably more difficult than the one before us, namely the mission of the *akedah*, at which it is stated, "...And He said to him - 'Abraham'; and he said - 'I am ready (*hinneni*)'; And He said 'Take your son'..." (21:1).

Yet the *hinneni* (of Joseph) differs from every other *hinneni* in the Torah, including that of the *akedah*, because *hinneni* invariably follows the calling of someone's name like the answer to a roll-call, as though saying, "I am present; I am listening; go ahead and speak." Our *hinneni* though, appears after all the details of the mission are given, and it seems to be superfluous since the two have already spoken to each other. This I have learned from *Rashi* who says of *hinneni*, "It indicates humility and asperity (that he went)...in spite of the knowledge that his brothers hated him." This teaches us that this was no mere *hinneni* of a roll-call, but one of self-sacrifice, of devotion, since it was uttered not before he knew what was asked of him, but after. Our Sages already sensed the gravity of this *hinneni*, and said in *Bereshit Rabbah*: "This word Jacob would remember though it ate him up inside. Jacob would say, You knew your brothers hated you, and yet you replied '*hinneni*'" (84:13).

On the occasion of the second mission, Jacob says to his sons, "...here I have heard that there are provisions in Egypt, go down and obtain some so that we will live and not die" (42:2). In this case neither the sender nor the ones being sent are hampered in any way, so there is no need for response nor for agreement. Nor is there a need for a greeting or even a blessing.<sup>2</sup>

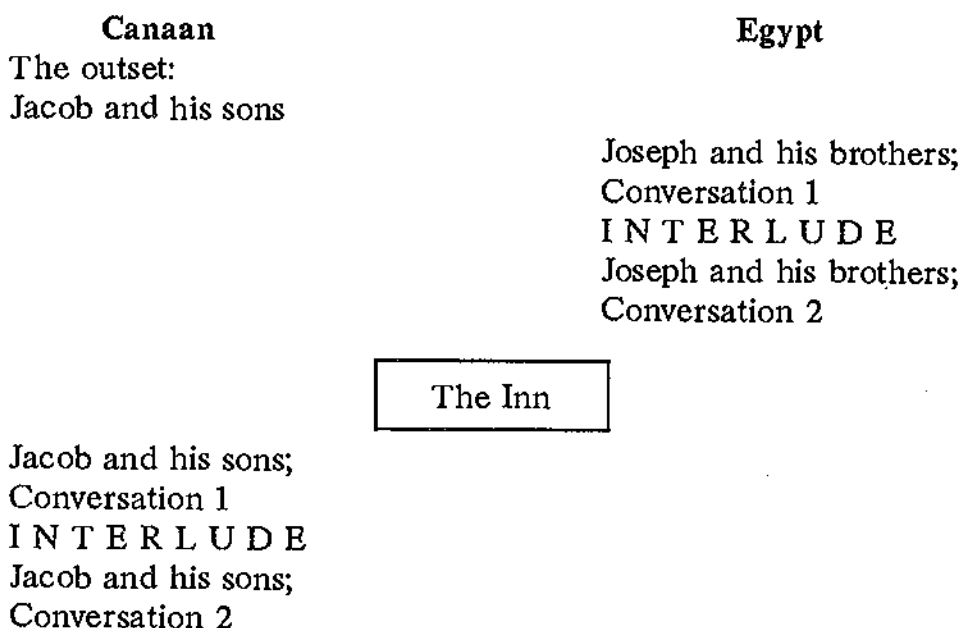
2 Just how much the Bible is concerned about extra words can be seen from the paucity of cases in which people greet each other upon leave-taking. David takes leave of his son Absalom (who is going, ostensibly, to Hebron to fulfill a vow he took while residing in Geshur, while in reality, he goes to foment rebellion) with the words, "Go in peace" - tragically ironic words. "In peace?" Rather to war and treason. And again: Elisha replies to the Aramean general whose leprosy he had cured, regarding his strange offer (which we know so well) to worship the God of Israel in his foreign land, and to atone for worshipping the gods of Amram in Beit Rimmon by means of the small amount of the soil of Eretz Yisrael - two donkey loads - which he would take with him, with the words, "Go in peace" (2 Kings 5:19;20). There is neither consent nor opposition here to his suggestion, rather, "Go in peace," leaves the soil of Israel to its inhabitants, and to those who worship its God.

Here the gravity of the parting is expressed in the blessing at its conclusion, "And may *el-shaddai* grant you favor before the man" (43:14). We must pay attention to the order of the words in the verse. It is not like the blessing of Isaac, "And may God give you the heavenly dew" (27:28) in the order of verb-subject, rather it says, "And may *el-shaddai* grant you favor before the man..." with the subject at the very beginning of the sentence, in order to clarify and emphasize: We have done all we could, everything humanly possible; double payment, presents from the fruits of the Land (of Israel), and now we have only His divine help on which to rely, "And may *el-shaddai* grant you favor..."

Let us turn now, to the overall structure of the brothers' first visit to Egypt and their return to their father, in chapters 42 and 43:1-14.

The story is like a play being performed upon two stages: Canaan and Egypt. We start at the former, the brief conversation between Jacob and his sons in Canaan and then we move over to Egypt. The first conversation between Joseph and his brothers (42:7-15), in which he accuses them of spying, concludes with his severe demand that they all be imprisoned in Egypt while one of them goes home to bring Benjamin. This is followed by the interlude of the three-day imprisonment, then another conversation between Joseph and his brothers ending, this time, with the imprisonment of Simeon while the others return home. We move back to Canaan, except that this time there is a brief and frightening scene at the inn on the way (verses 27-28), about which we shall speak later. We continue our journey and arrive in Canaan. Again there is a preliminary conversation between the father and his sons which concludes with Jacob's abject refusal to send Benjamin. "My son shall not descend with you, for his brother is dead and he is left alone, and if an accident were to befall him upon the way... you will have terminated my old age in eternal anguish" (42:38). Once more we have a lengthy interlude, because no response is possible. Yet, "The famine was severe in the land" (43:1). Now, after the interlude, after they have "finished eating the provisions," comes a second conversation between Jacob and his sons in which the elderly man breaks down and sends Benjamin, and once more the scene shifts to Egypt.

This diagram will emphasize the structure of the chapter:



It appears that we have a detailed, intentional, symmetrical structure in both halves of the chapter. (There is an interesting and intentional structure, different from this one, and yet symmetrical, too, in the second visit in chapter 43:15 ff., and chapter 44, but it is not of our concern here.) If we study the conclusions to the four conversations we will see the specific nature of each one, as well as the nature of the final verse, "before the curtain comes down," at the end of Joseph's second conversation (42:22) and of Jacob's second conversation (43:14).

Let us now examine elements from the first six verses of chapter 42:

1. And Jacob said to his sons: Why do you look upon one another?
3. And Joseph's twelve brothers went down to buy corn in Egypt.
4. But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with his brothers.
5. And the sons of Israel came, among others to buy corn.
6. And Joseph's brothers came, and prostrated themselves upon the ground before him.

We see that the same subject, the ten brothers, is referred to by Scripture by different epithets: the sons of Jacob, Joseph's

brothers, Benjamin's brothers, the sons of Israel, and, again, Joseph's brothers. Our commentators took note of the allusions contained in these variations. Jacob speaks to his sons and dispatches them, but the moment they hear the name "Egypt" Scripture prepares them and us for the encounter with Joseph (see *Rashi* on v. 3!). Benjamin is not sent with his "brothers" (rather than "the sons of Jacob"); although they are all brothers, Jacob, once again, discriminates between them. To Egypt there descends a tribe, and in the eyes of the Egyptians they are neither "Joseph's brothers" nor "Benjamin's brothers," but "the sons of Israel" — to use their official name. In the presence of the officer of Pharaoh, (i.e. Joseph), however, it is "Joseph's brothers" who bow down, thereby fulfilling his first dream.

This is an important rule, one to which we must pay attention while reading, as our predecessors have already noted. Not only from the perspective of the speakers, but from the perspective of Scripture, too, the epithets describing a man will vary, intimating important issues, relationships and ideas. Let us take another brief example:

*Gen. 14:*

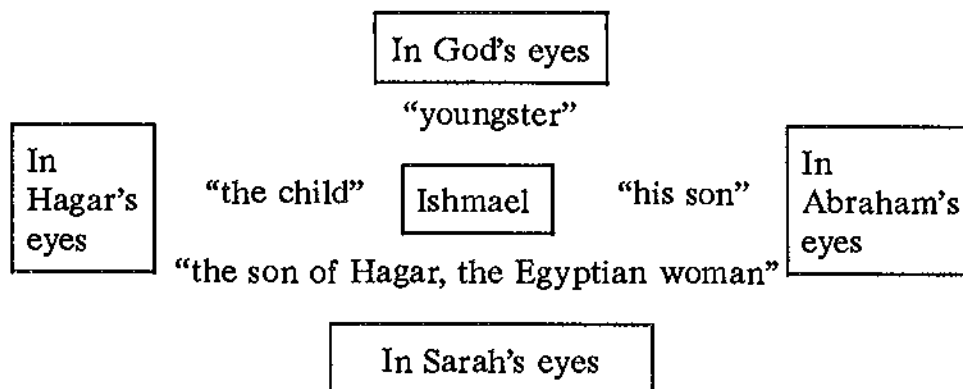
- (v. 12) And they took Lot, Abraham's nephew, and his possessions, and they went.
- (v. 14) And Abraham heard that his brother had been captured.
- (v. 15) And he retrieved his brother Lot, and his possessions, too.

A second example; *Gen. 21: 9–20*:

Ishmael is not referred to by name even once, only by epithets indicating how people related to him.

- (v. 9) And Sarah saw the son whom Hagar, the Egyptian woman, had borne to Abraham, playing.
- (v. 11) And Abraham was greatly angered regarding his son.
- (v. 14) And he took bread, and a water-skin, placed them upon Hagar's shoulder, along with the child...
- (v. 15) And she cast the child down beneath a bush
- (v. 16) Saying: Let me not witness the child's death
- (v. 17) And God heard the youngster's voice.
- (v. 20) And God was with the youngster.

Perhaps it is worthwhile to clarify this by means of an illustration:



Here we see how the epithets vary, and how they symbolize the subjective attitudes of the people surrounding him: In Sarah's eyes he is Hagar's son; in the eyes of Abraham — his son; to his mother — a child (he remains her child, her little one, even after he had grown up); yet in the eyes of God, who hears his voice "wherever he is," he is a youngster, a young man.

\* \* \*

In conclusion we will select yet another point from the initial encounter between Joseph and his brothers and what ensued thereafter.

Three times the feeling of guilt, the recognition of sin, crops up in the brothers' words.

The first time is in the second conversation after Joseph has released them from their three-day incarceration. "We are guilty regarding our brother whose agony we saw when he pleaded with us and we ignored him; this is the reason for the trouble which besets us" (42:21).

As far as I know, *Ramban* was the first to call our attention to how Scripture often delays reporting what someone said as opposed to citing his words in their proper chronological place. In Chapter 37 we are told nothing about Joseph pleading from within the pit. Despite the fact that *midrashim* and *aggadot* have ascribed to him pleas and arguments (above all, the *Sefer haYashar*, and lately, Thomas Mann in the chapter, "Joseph Calls out From the Pit," in his book, *Joseph and His Brothers* (1934), in the text itself — from the moment he leaves "the man" who

points him towards his brothers — he is only an object of their activities and he doesn't utter a single word. Only now (in 42:21) do we hear for the first time of his crying, not from Scripture itself, but from one of those expressing remorse who now hears the plea he ignored then, "...when he pleaded with us — this is the reason for the trouble which besets us."

It has been spoken of at length in the commentaries, why, first after three days in jail, after their release, after the Egyptian has softened his position and agreed to send them home and keep one prisoner rather than nine — why only now do the guilt feelings arise, the memory of what they have done to their brother? Why not during the three long days they have sat in jail in fear of not returning home but of remaining in jail (all but one) until their brother (Benjamin) came? Aren't three days in jail, three long days, an appropriate opportunity for remorse and repentance?

Of all the answers which have been given to this question the one which is most satisfactory is that of Rabbi Yitzchak Arama in his book *Akedat Yizhak*, that, only now that they see that they are going to return to their father minus one of their number (recalling that once again ten went out but only nine are returning), and that once more they will have to account for the absence of one brother — now the association with "our brother whose agony we witnessed" arises before their eyes in full clarity and they see the crime and its punishment as reciprocal; *midah kenegged midah* ("this is the reason...").

They feel their guilt even more keenly a second time, however at the inn, "And he said... my money was returned in my pouch, and they said, fearfully, one to another. What has God done to us?" (42:28)

Even though in the Talmud (*Ta'anit* 9a) the young son of *Reish Lakish* interprets this verse as blasphemy against God (explaining it, homiletically, according to the verse in Proverbs 19:3, "Man's folly will pervert his way and his heart will take up anger against the Lord") — in any event we can see from the context that this is not blasphemy but, once again, a confession. And yet it is a significant advance over their first expression of remorse. Then, too, they recognized the connection between what they had done and what was now happening to them ("... he pleaded with us... the trouble which besets us") but the address is miss-

ing: Who fashioned the connection between what they did and what was done to them? Here at the inn, "when their hearts went out," they found the address, "What has *God* done to us?"

However, there is yet an additional heightening of the clarity of their recognition and a deepening of the pain of remorse in a third place, after the goblet is found. "And Judah said, 'What can we say to my lord in self-justification? God has discovered your servants' sin; we are servants of your lordship, we and the one with whom the goblet was found'" (44:16).

Judah knows that neither they, nor "he with whom the goblet was found," stole it. He knows that false accusations are being leveled against them here, and he knows they have been arrested for a crime they did not commit. Rather, that is not what he is confessing (although the Egyptian lord is expected to understand) — he is confessing to the crime which was uncovered not by the Egyptian but, "God has discovered your servants' sin," and that is why we are prepared to accept any punishment and any verdict.

This ambiguity in Judah's speech was developed in the *Midrash Rabbah* as follows:

"What shall we say to my lord" — regarding the first moneys;

"What shall we speak" — the second moneys; "How can we be justified" — regarding the goblet.

"What shall we say to my lord" — regarding the incident with Tamar;

"What shall we speak" — of the incident with Reuben and Bilhah; "How can we be justified" — with respect to Shechem and Dinah.

"What shall we say to my lord" — what shall we tell our father in Canaan about Joseph; "What shall we speak" — of Simeon; "How can we be justified" — with Benjamin (92:9).

The *midrash* interprets our verse three times, giving three interpretations to "my lord":

"My lord" — the Egyptian lord seated before him;

"My lord" — our Lord in heaven who knows our guilt;

"My lord" — our elderly father in Canaan, to whom we have sinned.

Three times the *midrash* plies its homily, and it lists nine sins, informing us that they were expressing remorse not for a solitary act, but as genuine penitents who saw their sins and guilt before

them every which way they turned, as expressed in the words of the psalm on repentance, "My sin is always before me" (51:5).

After they had arrived at this degree of remorse for their sins, Joseph could reveal himself to them shortly thereafter.

### References

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## NEW MEANING IN THE ANCIENT SOURCES

Jacobus Schoneveld

Finding new meaning in the ancient sources (Schoneveld, 1976) is the challenge facing teachers charged with the task of the day-to-day interpretation of the Bible to modern Israeli youth. A great part of this younger generation has lost the moorings of Jewish tradition. They live in a Jewish state that is still under attack for being Jewish. They are called to defend this state, to protect it, to improve it, to live in it as a Jewish state. But what does being Jewish mean to them? Is it only an accident of history to be accepted as an apparently inescapable fate, or does being Jewish have intrinsic meaning and substance? Can it be accepted as a significant identity or even as a vocation?

As a Christian theologian sent by the Netherlands Reformed Church to receive a better insight into Jewish life in the State of Israel, I was, on the one hand, astonished by the general acceptance of the Bible in Israeli education, even among those sections of the population that considered themselves secular, non-religious, or even anti-religious. On the other hand, I was struck by the relatively small role which Bible-teaching plays in the Orthodox Jewish community in comparison with the teaching of the Talmud and the Oral Torah in general. Looking for a term that best describes the role of the Bible in Israel and Israeli education, the most appropriate one I could find was "source." Moshe Avigal (1956), a veteran Israeli educator said: The *Tanakh* is our mother and we are her spiritual sons...it is the source of our human and national essence" (p. 612). Ahad Ha'am (1947) maintained that the Bible had become an essential part of the Jewish national "ego" and that the national personality of the Jewish people could not be imagined without it.

The relationship between modern Jewish identity and the Bible is perceived in a number of ways, and the Bible functions in a variety of ways as a source of Jewish identity in the present.

First the Bible may serve as a source of Jewish identity because it is viewed as the *norm* to which the modern Jew subjects him/herself. This is clearly the case in Orthodox Judaism, where the Bible is normative in conjunction with the Oral Torah.

Therefore, in the Orthodox tradition, Bible teaching exists in the shadow of the teaching of the Oral Torah.

Second, the Bible may be a source in the sense of providing confirmation or support to the modern Jew concerning his/her life in the present. Faced with the perplexities and uncertainties inherent in life in the State of Israel, the modern Jew looks for analogies, prototypes and symbols in biblical sources. Thus, Israelis may see themselves as reliving the biblical past.

Further, the Bible may be understood as a source insofar as the modern Jew regards it as his/her great national classical literature, rich with artistic, cultural, moral and spiritual value. It is a root-document that remains a *challenge* to him/her in the present. The Bible is thus used in education as an important tool for the formation of the student's personality through an honest, non-coercive confrontation with its contents.

Finally, the Bible may be used by the modern Jew as a source of *information* about the early stages of the history of the people of Israel.

In whatever way the Bible may be viewed by the modern Jew, it is indispensable, because Jewishness in the present is bound up with the story recorded in this ancient source.

The main hero in this story is the One, called by several names – God, JHWH, the Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, Rock, King, Father, etc. It is He who has called the father of the nation, Abraham, and his descendents to enter into a special relationship with Him; He who has liberated this nation from slavery; He who has given commandments to mold its life and behavior; and He who has led it into the Land of promise, thereby opening the prospect of a national and individual future.

For the Orthodox Jew, life has meaning and purpose if lived and dominated by this story. One lives it in the present, in the unbroken chain of tradition transmitted and received from generation to generation. The stream of tradition flows in unbroken continuity from its ancient source, the Bible, though it absorbs other influences in the course of time. To many, this tradition gives a deep sense of orientation, security, and stability, and may attract people suffering from lack of all three.

The majority of Jews in Israel have undergone a process whereby the biblical saga has ceased to be *their* story in the strict sense of providing meaning for their lives. The command-

ments and promises of the principal hero, God, no longer possess plausibility for them and no longer dominate their lives, thought and behavior. The stream of tradition no longer passes through the landscape of their lives. Secularization has brought about the end of the control of the normative tradition over increasing areas of thought and action, which are now within the sphere of autonomous human control. God has thus become redundant.

While it is true that many people have moved beyond tradition, it is also true that many have moved beyond modernity. They are not interested in joining the onslaught upon religion and religious tradition nor upon the story which shaped this tradition. They are modern in the sense that tradition has lost its plausibility for them. Yet, they are faced with a vacuum that has not been filled with new content. Tradition was attacked in the name of human autonomy, but the problematics of this autonomy became more and more evident: humanity has demonstrated its capacity to destroy itself as well as the world.

A recognition of the loss of meaning and values has led some to consider the return to tradition. For the majority of those however, who have moved beyond tradition and modernity, such a return is not a viable option. Pervasive secularity poses special problems for Jewish identity, as indicated by the social psychologist, Simon N. Herman (1970):

The religious decline poses the question as to what can be the strength and durability of a secular Jewish identity. Religion and ethnicity are so closely interwoven in the Jewish identity that any tendency towards their separation raises serious problems. (p. 199)

These problems are revealed clearly in the teaching of the Bible in secular Israeli education. Mordechai Segal (1959), the compiler of the famous collection of biblical stories from which the name of God was deleted, complained about a cultural anomaly in secular education. Alienated from, or even opposed to religion, secular Israeli education should have eliminated most of biblical literature from its teaching program, because of its inherent religious character. That however would have meant cutting the connection with the foundation of Jewish identity. In teaching the Bible, the secular Jew who does not accept revelation and the existence of God as faith assumptions, must

confront the task of speaking about God in a relevant way.

It should be noted that this is a distinctively Jewish problem, foreign to Christians. A secular Christian is indeed a contradiction in terms, if secular refers to one who no longer accepts the story that lies at the basis of Christian faith, and no longer believes in Christ. A Jew, however, would appear to remain a Jew even if he/she no longer believes in the God of Israel nor observes His Torah, because his/her Jewishness does not derive from a decision, either taken by him/herself (except if he is a proselyte) or his/her parents, to belong to the Jewish people. He/she is born as a Jew, whereas according to an ancient Christian saying "*Christianus fit, non nascitur*" (one is made a Christian, not born one).

It would be presumptuous to suggest a solution to this dilemma, with which many have struggled. Martin Buber (1952) has described the situation as the eclipse of God. God's face is hidden from us in the present; perhaps in the future it will reappear. This may mean that now is not the time to try to discover the biblical God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of Moses and David, of Isaiah and Jeremiah and of Job, the God of the Sages and the Teachers (including, in my conviction, Jesus of Nazareth and Saul of Tarsus). In this time of the hiding of the Face we should not insist on its revelation to us. But we have Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Moses and David, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Job, the Sages and the Teachers. It is reported how they communicated with the God of the Bible, how this determined their life, their way of thinking and acting and how their whole personalities, their teachings and rulings were thus shaped. The Lord used to speak to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend. If we cannot get access to the Lord, let us at least concentrate on His friends, on those men and women whose lives were shaped by their God. If biblical theology is not possible, except as an esoteric discipline, unintelligible to secularized outsiders, let us then concentrate on biblical anthropology. Let us study the men and women the Bible presents to us, their view of life, their interrelations, the society they formed or aspired to form. Their hopes for the future may be the foundation for a relevant understanding of the Bible. We may not understand these figures when they speak of God, but we may grasp their intentions when we know their actions, their behaviour, their

words and teachings.

We have to be aware of the fact that they, or the biblical authors, cannot speak of God except in human language, as it is said: *הַתּוֹרָה דְּבָרָה בְּלִשׁוֹן אָדָם*. Speaking thus of God they necessarily speak anthropomorphically of him, they borrow terms from the way they perceive "anthropos." In recounting their meeting with God they draw on their understanding of what a human being is or ought to be. Such anthropomorphic features by which God is described in the Bible are thus legitimate sources for an inquiry into the biblical vision of men and women into biblical anthropology.

From an educational point of view, it is, however, not sufficient to develop a biblical anthropology. The student who studies the story underlying his/her very identity is not helped by information about biblical anthropology if he/she does not know how to translate its meaning for the present. This not only applies to the secular Jew, but also to the religious Jew who accepts the tradition of his/her ancestors. He/she, too, lives in a world affected by secularisation, is challenged to account for his acceptance of this tradition and his/her desire to be guided by it in his/her life in the modern world.

If, therefore, a distinctive anthropology, or anthropologies, can be distilled from the biblical sources, it is extremely important to translate them into options which offer meaningful interpretations of reality and valid attitudes towards life in the present. Biblical anthropology must thus be transformed into a contemporary anthropology able to satisfy — in the case of Jewish people — the search for meaning of a person living as a secular or religious Jew in the world of today. Close cooperation is necessary, therefore, between the biblical scholar and the philosopher. Both must be engaged in teaching the Bible to the next generation.

At this point it may be useful to turn away for a moment from biblical anthropology and call upon contemporary philosophers who are involved on the one hand in a contemporary philosophical quest analysing fundamental structures of human existence, and who have been influenced and shaped by the Bible on the other hand. In considering the place of the Bible in Jewish life and education, the philosophical anthropology of the French Jewish philosopher, Emmanuel Lévinas (born 1906) is especially sig-

nificant. Lévinas (1963) stated in a biographical sketch that his life had been shaped by the Hebrew Bible from his early childhood in Lithuania, and later on by Pushkin, Tolstoy and the Russian revolution of 1917. He has lived in France since 1923. From 1928 to 1929 he lived in Freiburg where he studied phenomenology under Husserl and Heidegger. His philosophy is a continuous confrontation with Husserl and especially Heidegger. Lévinas developed an alternative to Western philosophical tradition, drawing attention to dimensions of human existence neglected or ignored by this tradition but which have been preserved in biblical thinking. He has formulated his insights in contemporary philosophical concepts, and has made his anthropology plausible to modern people. This is of great significance. Lévinas' anthropology may help modern people overcome an apologetic attitude towards an allegedly primitive biblical vision of life and the world, and enable them to articulate this vision as a valid and relevant alternative to world views which underly modern Western culture especially since these are increasingly revealing their deficiencies.

Let us now consider Lévinas' understanding of human existence and point to aspects of the biblical vision which seem to correspond to it. Lévinas' main thesis based on his works, *Totalité et Infini*; *Essai sur l'Exteriorité* (1965) and *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà l'essence* (1974), is that in Western philosophy, which is based on the principle of *Cogito ergo sum*, the Self stands in the centre and does not recognize the independent reality of the Other but rather, reduces it in one way or another to the Self. The Self, the Ego, asserts itself in what Lévinas with a Greek word calls *arche*, which means beginning as well as leading principle. The Self takes possession of itself both through its perception of the world, converting the chaos of phenomena into a cosmos of images and representations, and through self-perception, as human consciousness establishes its identity within the ever-changing stream of time. Through concepts and language the world is drawn into the realm of the Ego that always encounters itself even in that which is other as it turns the other into its object. Self and world participate in one totality of meaning in which the Self takes the lead. There is, however, another dimension of reality, unrecognized by Western culture, which is exterior to and independent of the human person, not

subject to perception, consciousness or knowledge. This is a reality that is in close proximity to the person but nevertheless absolutely exterior to him. It does not appear as object, eludes coordination in space and time, and may not be grasped by the categories of reason. Moreover it is not subject to the *arche* of consciousness which seeks to overcome the strangeness between itself and the other by placing it into a totality of meaning.

This utterly Other refuses to be tamed or domesticated by being represented as an image, a concept, a symbol or an idea. It remains in an absolute sense "Other" and as such affects and afflicts a person directly in an an-archic way, i.e. without the mediation or regulation of the *arche* of human consciousness. The person is obsessed by it and is unaware of its origin. The Other disturbs and unsettles, and interrupts a person's ontological control of things, leaving him unable to objectivate that which has hit him. He is never "ready" for it; the Other invariably makes him lose his balance. This grip of the Other on a person is indicated by Lévinas with terms like obsession and persecution. In actual life, Lévinas says, my relation with my neighbor, my fellow in my proximity, reflects most adequately this reality of the Other.

Human consciousness itself testifies to the independence of the Other by the fact that it can conceive the idea of the Infinite, whose content, however, by definition cannot be conceptualized. This idea signifies the impact on us of that which cannot be grasped by our consciousness but rather strikes us as utterly other than ourselves. The idea of the infinite is indeed the revelation of the Infinite. It represents itself first of all in and through the face of another person which is the epiphany of the Infinite. The face of the Other, in its nakedness and vulnerability, refuses to be made an object by the Self. It persecutes, accuses, obsesses me. I am struck by the Other on a deeper level than my self-awareness, for which the duality of the relation between I and myself is characteristic.

In self-awareness the reciprocal pronoun "myself" is an accusative following the nominative (and the initiative) of the I that comes first as the *arche* of consciousness and takes the lead. That layer in me, however, that is exposed to the Other is called the realm of the Self, the soul. It is the irrevocable concrete identity and individual subjectivity of a man or woman enclosed in his or

her own skin and body. It is placed in the accusative as in a primordial situation before there can be any question of putting itself in the nominative. *Me* is the first reality, not *I*. The Self is here subject in the literal sense of being subjected to what strikes it. This is absolute passivity, not in the sense of the passivity of dead matter, but of the vulnerability of a living body. The Self is here accused, persecuted, obsessed by the other. By being persecuted, the Self is withdrawn into itself, not in order to reflect on itself, but to be empty, to be the absolute simplicity of what it is in itself. A man or a woman in this absolute passivity that precedes the *arche* of ontological openness and receptivity, is, according to Lévinas, adequately described as creature, rather than as human being. "Being," especially in philosophical phenomenology, presupposes that one has the power to *be*, whereas "creature" implies this utter *passivity*.

The passive Self ("*Me*") is exposed to the Other who accuses, persecutes and obsesses it. This is the absolutely Other who intrudes upon me. I cannot master, control or objectify him. Therefore, I experience a temptation to kill him, to eliminate him, but his face that faces me contains the commandment "Thou shalt not kill!" The Infinite, that which cannot be thought and is completely out of reach of the human mind, but which is evident in the idea of the infinite in human consciousness, appears to me in the face of another person. As Lévinas (1965) has stated:

The infinite paralyses my power by its infinite resistance to murder. This hard and insurmountable resistance shines in the face of the Other, in the total nakedness of his eyes, without defense, in the nudity of the absolute openness of the Transcendent. It is the resistance of that which has no resistance — the ethical resistance (p. 173).

The epiphany of the face stirs up the temptation of murder as the imagined possibility of measuring the Infinite, i.e. the immeasurable, by total destruction. At the same time, the purely ethical impossibility of this temptation and this attempt is evident. The only alternative is to allow the Other to accuse me. Then I become responsible not by a free act but as having no choice. I am forced into responsibility for the other as he makes me his hostage: I cannot but take his place and substitute myself for him.

Only then the passive Self that is in the accusative ("Me") turns into an "I," moves into the nominative, and becomes conscious of itself and of the world.

The confrontation with the face of the Other, not human self-awareness, is the basic fact generating human consciousness. Moral consciousness precedes and makes possible psychological and theoretical consciousness. Experiencing the Other is the fundamental experience which is the condition of objective experience both as self-awareness and world-awareness. Lévinas presents a philosophical anthropology which gives account of the pre-philosophical experience of human responsibility, of being "one's brother's keeper." At the beginning does not stand *Cogito ergo sum*, but *Respondeo ergo sum*. If, in Western culture, anthropology is based on the autonomy of the human person, this anthropology is based on "hetero-nomy" in this very special sense that the *nomos* (law, norm) is placed upon me by the other. If, in Western culture, humanism is based on the principle that man is the measure of everything, Lévinas speaks of an *humanisme de l'autre homme* (humanism of the other human person). Generally a person is considered responsible in so far as he/she is free. Lévinas says that responsibility is anterior to freedom, and that freedom is based on responsibility.

Although Lévinas speaks in the language of the philosophical phenomenology of Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre and others and is in constant discussion with them, his philosophy received its basic inspiration from Jewish sources, among them the Bible. Having been an educator for many years as director of the teachers' training college of "L'Alliance Israélite Universelle" he pleads strongly for a "Hebrew Humanism" based upon the Bible and rabbinic Judaism, claiming that they contain a wisdom as necessary to today's world as the Greco-Roman heritage. This humanism, Lévinas (1963) says, is present in a literature and a civilization animated by a monotheism which does not lead people to a private appointment with a consoling God, but relates the divine presence to justice and to human efforts. Vision of God is moral action. This optics is ethics. The Bible enlightened and accentuated by the commandments of the great rabbinic era that preceded and followed the destruction of the Second Temple and brought a very old and uninterrupted tradition to its fullness, does not lead us to the mystery of God, but to human tasks.

"*Le monothéisme est un humanisme*," he says, varying a book title of Sartre. The books in which this humanism is inscribed wait for their humanists.

Lévinas' anthropology grasps important structures and characteristics of biblical anthropology. I have tried to demonstrate this by analyzing the first chapters of the Book of Exodus in a paper entitled "The Hebrew Bible – Common Source for Jews and Christians in an Age beyond Tradition and Modernity" (Schoneveld, 1983). In it I reached the conclusion that the categories of Lévinas' anthropology indeed fit the biblical story. The deliverer figures in the first chapters of Exodus (the midwives; Pharaoh's daughter; Moses who saves a Hebrew man and later the daughters of the priest of Midian; God who hears the sighs and the cries of the Israelites) are compelled to act because they are challenged and unsettled by others who are in distress. The appearance of the Other in his vulnerability, rather than the cosmic order, determines human action and behavior. Thus an essential distinction from ancient Near Eastern religiosity emerges.

It should be clear that Lévinas has not developed his anthropology from the Bible and that it is not a commentary on the Bible. It is a contemporary philosophy, which draws attention to dimensions of reality neglected by the Western philosophical tradition. I believe that some of these dimensions are represented in the Bible and that there are remarkable parallels between biblical anthropology and Lévinas' anthropology. It is clear, however, that one must be careful with facile comparisons.

As an example of such a parallel I would like to point to the biblical word *nefesh* (usually but misleadingly translated as "soul"), following Hans Walter Wolff's book *Anthropologie des Alten Testaments* (1973). Etymologically the word *nefesh* indicates the throat or gullet as the organ of greedy intake of food, which indicates want and desire. It can also designate the throat as the organ of breathing or panting. Thus *nefesh* refers to the acts of desiring, aspiring, craving, yearning, etc., as well as to the seat of emotions and feelings. Indicating the organ of the vital needs necessary for survival, *nefesh* can also stand for life itself. From there the meaning can develop to a living being, individual, or person, even if such a person has died: *nefesh met* may mean a corpse. *Nefesh* can be used without the adjective *met* (dead) in

this connotation. A further step is a use of *nefesh* that is hardly distinguishable from our personal or reciprocal pronoun. Wolff summarizes his findings as follows:

Reviewing the wide field of associations in which the *nefesh* of man and man as *nefesh* is seen, we notice that man is here first of all characterised as an individual thing, that by itself has neither acquired life nor can sustain it, but is in vital craving bent on life. The throat as the organ of the intake of food and as the organ of breathing and the (meaning of *nefesh* as) neck as an especially vulnerable part of the body illustrate this reality. Denoting man first of all in his need and greediness, *nefesh* indicates his emotional irritability and vulnerability. The connotation of vitality that also applies to animals, has essentially contributed to *nefesh* meaning a person or an individual that can be counted. From this the extreme meaning of corpse can follow. *Nefesh* is never a carrier of specifically spiritual activities. (p. 47)

Comparing the semantics of the word *nefesh* in the Hebrew Bible with Lévinas' anthropology, there seems to be a strong resemblance of *nefesh* to that aspect of human existence that Lévinas describes as the passive and vulnerable Self enclosed in its own skin and exposed to the Other.

The biblical word *nefesh* seems to indicate this aspect of human life that in its vulnerability precedes any self awareness or initiative. It points to a reality of human existence which is ignored or played down in Western philosophy which stresses autonomy and freedom of the human person and his/her creativity and control. It is a reality that is adequately described by the word creature and is expressed in Genesis 2:6:

Then JHWH God formed the earth creature, dust from the earth, and breathed into its nostrils the breath of life, and the earth creature became a living *nefesh*.<sup>1</sup>

1 Translation by Phyllis Trible (1978). She has translated *ha-adam* as earth creature in order to preserve the association with *adama* (earth) and to point out the pre-sexual nature of *ha-adam* in these verses of Genesis.

The earth creature as *nefesh*, a living thing as precarious and vulnerable as the human throat, is enclosed in itself and alone. That is the primordial reality of human existence which, later in this story, is pronounced "not good" (v. 18). It is only the beginning however. It awakes from its deep sleep (v. 21) and passivity, when the Other, the *ezer ke-negdo* (succour as its opposite) is brought to it. Now the history of humanity can begin.

Another example of a possible agreement between biblical anthropology and Lévinas' anthropology which translates biblical wisdom into modern terms may be found in the Hebrew concept of blood in the sense of bloodshed (*dam, damim*) and blood guilt. It plays a major role in the fourth chapter of the Bible, in the story of Cain and Abel. Cain confronted with the Other, with Abel, or in Lévinas' terms, obsessed by him, tries to murder him. He discovers, however, that he cannot get rid of him, because "the voice of your brother's blood is crying from the ground." Murder does not silence the obsession by the Other. The only way is to become "one's brother's keeper."

Throughout the Hebrew Bible the prohibition of shedding the blood of another human being and even of animals appears:

You must not, however, eat flesh with its life-blood in it. But for your own life-blood I will require a reckoning; I will require it of every beast; of man too, will I require a reckoning for human life, of every man for that of his fellow men! Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in His image did God make man. (Genesis 9:4-6)<sup>2</sup>

With regard to the blood of the other person, that is the other as *nefesh*, as a living creature with his needs and vitality, there is an absolute limit to human autonomy, spontaneity and self-realization.

This theme of the blood of the other person runs like a red thread through the David story. Faced with the defenseless Saul who sleeps in a cave or in the army camp, David is aware of the limit put upon his ambitions which have divine approval. He is aware that he cannot kill Saul and assume that the opportunity is

2 Translation taken from, *The Torah* (1962). Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America.

God-given. In the story of David, Nabal and Abigail, David is saved from shedding blood. The blood of Uriah, however, weighs heavily upon him. On his deathbed David is haunted by the blood that Joab has shed. He is cursed by Shim'i as a man of blood. According to the Book of Chronicles, David is not allowed to build the Temple because he has shed blood. By contrast, the ideal king hailed in Psalm 72 is one for whom the blood of the poor and oppressed is dear.

It seems to me that Lévinas speaks of the face of the Other in its total exposure and defenselessness. He expresses the moral concept reflected in the term *dam* or *damim* as it is used in the Bible. He indicates the vulnerability of the Other which is at the same time his absolute inviolability. God enters the picture as the transcendent One who claims blood from the hands of those who shed it. The blood of the other person represents the Infinite. It calls us to be our brothers' and sisters' keepers. The Infinite is the Other, and humanism is not based on human autonomy, but upon the humanism of the other person.

Bible education today should strive to discover the implicit anthropology of the Bible. Its message and its wisdom should be unveiled for the present secular generation which has moved beyond tradition and modernity and searches for new meaning. This meaning is hidden in the ancient sources of the Hebrew Bible which lie at the basis of both the Jewish and the Christian traditions.

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*Section II*  
***DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES***



## **RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT: FOUNDATIONS, STAGES AND CONSTRUCTS**

**Fritz Oser**

The core of the developmental theory of religious judgement is as follows: with age-related growth, the relationship between a person and an Ultimate Being becomes (a) more autonomous, more differentiated and more universal, and (b) more connected, more integrated and more idiographic. The basic activities likely to let this Ultimate Being-Man-relationship emerge are (1) coping with situations of contingency (2) attempts to make meaning out of one's life (3) interpreting religious messages and (4) praying, or inner meditation. From these activities we may, through research, infer both the form (structure) and content of religious consciousness or of religious judgement at a given developmental stage.

If we conceive of a developmental hierarchy of qualitatively different stages, we need to develop both a theoretical framework and a research program aimed at validating this framework. The theoretical framework suggests that there is a fundamental logic of religious growth and the research program aims at providing an appropriate methodology of measuring structures. Let us begin with the logic of religious development.

### **Changing Quality of the Relationship Between Man and Ultimate Being: Structural Core Elements**

I would like to analyze two cases which each imply different conceptualizations of the relationship between human beings and an Ultimate Being.

1. A young man meets a girl and falls in love with her. Plans for marriage are made. The experience fills him with happiness, and he understands that this is a gift which is God-given, that he is part of a divine plan and that his openness has ultimately led to the grace of this deep relationship. In his prayers he thanks God for supporting his life, his actions, his decisions, his readiness to take on responsibilities and commitment.

2. A woman in mid-life loses a child to cancer. She is desperate; she feels she has done everything possible to save her child. She queries the concept of divine plan and has growing doubts about God's immanence in this world. Still she hopes that death is not final and prays for trust in the mystery of death and for the strength to accept what has happened to her. Sometimes in her inner being she fights with her God, reproaching Him for having left her alone. In her prayers she asks how He can allow people to suffer so much. Sometimes she feels, however, that everything must be as it is, and believes that there is something meaningful within every destiny and in each course of action taken by human beings.

These two situational sketches demonstrate the existence of the same structure in two different people's religious thinking. The elements of this structure are (a) a concept of a unique divine plan which ultimately makes all things meaningful rather than of an Ultimate Being intervening directly in this world and (b) interpretation of events as being linked to an ultimate force which stands behind the free spirit and the autonomous rationality of man with trust that in the long run there will be a solution to every problem, though not necessarily in the way we initially wish, because the transcendence of God informs all of man's immanent activities in this world. Both situations reflect belief in the free will necessary to stand up to the situations of life, to show commitment and at the same time to see that this also means a deeper relationship with an Ultimate Being – a relationship which is mediated, in this world, through experiences with human beings and with nature.

Comparison of the two structurally equivalent forms of religious judgement (which in the scheme outlined below would be classified as Stage 4, i.e. fairly mature forms of religious thinking) leads to the question of what religious consciousness is and how it can be defined.

The relationship with an Ultimate Being is, in the first place, not defined by means of an *a priori* definition of the Ultimate Being but rather by focusing on the relationship itself. Since this relationship is constituted by dynamic, interactional activity (coping with contingencies, giving religious meaning to a situation, interpreting religious messages and praying) it must be possible

to understand it in terms of psychological categories. This means that the quality of the relationship between man and Ultimate Being has an explanatory function and that we elicit it with a descriptive method.

When we describe these two Stage 4 examples which represent a common structure based on an analysis of further utterances, although the contents differ significantly, two things follow: first we can say that the structure is holistic; it has its own self-regulatory power which is used to solve problems of life through religious categories. On the other hand, we have to question how such forms of thought were generated; how this structure developed; what was prior to it and what will follow after the decline of this line of thought. Thus the basic question is whether there is a pattern of development (i.e. does development follow a regular order) and on what grounds a natural necessity for patterned growth should be assumed.

In order to answer these basic questions we must empirically identify how subjects perceive the relationship between humans and an Ultimate Being. Our analysis shows that the following criteria are important in the respective statements offered by subjects:

#### *Transcendence versus Immanence*

The subject who finds him/herself in a life situation which stimulates religious interpretation, asks how the Ultimate Being might intervene in the world, in man's life and in society as a whole. At a lower judgemental stage there is no coordination between the two dimensions. (Either God intervenes directly or He does not intervene at all, either He is inside or outside our world.) At a higher stage there is a growing notion of reciprocal relationship. Transcendence is conceived of as always emerging indirectly, namely, through man's positive behavior: through his life style; through situations in which revelation can be heard; by commitment to the welfare of others; in freely determining a course of action, and through understanding that one's own being is supported by a rational divine plan.

*Freedom Versus Dependency*

People, cast into a world in which they daily experience natural limitations, often take solace in the notion of "dependency" on the decisions of an Ultimate Being. At a lower stage, in religiously significant situations, subjects see the dependency as immediate; conversely, a person's freedom is also given directly by the Ultimate Being. The higher the stage of development, the more both dimensions are seen as complementary; we become free through experiences of dependency, and we are dependent because we know that it is the relationship which gives us freedom.

*Trust Versus Fear*

There is a fundamental religious belief that if you have trust in your Ultimate Being, your life will be saved and meaningful. Nonetheless, we experience fear of death and we suffer sickness, ruptures in life and loneliness. Such experiences have to be somehow coordinated with this underlying trust. We achieve an equilibrium between these poles if we come to understand that it is precisely the experience of fear which provides a basis for trust and that trust in an Ultimate Being grows in the course of coping with anxiety.

Four additional polar dimensions will not be addressed in detail: (4) the Holy versus the Profane (5) Hope versus Absurdity (6) Eternity versus Ephemerality and (7) Functionality Transparency versus Opaqueness.

In constructing a developmental theory of religious consciousness we did not ask subjects, "Do you trust or do you fear; do you believe (and in what), or what do you think about dependency on God?" This manner of inquiry wouldn't have taken us beyond the surface of knowledge or belief. Rather we attempted to analyze how people deal with concrete situations which in themselves have a kind of archetypical character, which for instance refer to questions of theodicy, destiny and freedom of choice, death and eternal life, mystery and hidden forces, good and bad luck, etc. In questioning subjects about such situations we indirectly refer to the seven polar dimensions mentioned above.

Thus we use these dimensions: (a) for describing the dynamic relationship between human beings and an Ultimate Being (b) in order to stimulate religious thinking through questions which indirectly serve to elicit the subjects' cognitive-religious structures

(see for instance the question of whether it is God's will that something particular happened) and (c) in order to describe an empirical stage hierarchy of religious consciousness.

### **The Logic of Religious Development**

A comprehensive description of the developmental hierarchy of the stages of religious judgement would require spelling out each of the seven polar dimensions for each of the five stages separately, in order to prove that they form a structured pattern or a distinct quality that we can then call a "stage." Limited space does not allow for more than a very rough outline which aims to provide a basis for the subsequent discussion of the developmental logic.

- Stage 1: There is an Ultimate Being who protects you or sends you something hurtful, and dispenses health, illness, joy or despair. The Ultimate Being influences you (and all other living beings) directly. The will of the Ultimate Being must always be fulfilled, otherwise the relationship is broken.
- Stage 2: The Ultimate Being's will can be influenced by prayers, offerings, adherence to religious rules, etc. If one cares about the Ultimate Being, and passes the tests He sends, He will act like a trusting and loving father, and you will be happy, healthy, successful, etc. Humans can influence the Ultimate Being or they can fail to do so, depending on their needs and their free will.
- Stage 3: The individual assumes full responsibility for his/her own life and for matters of the world. Freedom, meaning and hope are linked to one's own decisions. The Ultimate Being is apart. He has His own field of action. The Ultimate Being's wholeness encompasses freedom, hope and meaning which are different from the human type. Transcendence is outside the individual but represents a basic order of world and life.
- Stage 4: The individual continues to assume responsibility, but wonders about the conditions necessary for the mere possibility of bearing responsibility. Here an indirect mediated relationship with an Ultimate Being has

come into existence. The individual sees commitment as a means of overcoming lack of meaning, hope and absurdity. Transcendence is now partly internal (immanence) – the Ultimate Being becomes the condition for the possibility of human freedom, independence, etc., via the divine plan.

Stage 5: The Ultimate Being inhabits each human interactional commitment, but at the same time transcends it. Life becomes a symbol of His presence. The Ultimate Being becomes apparent in history and in revelation. Transcendence and immanence interact completely. This total integration makes universal solidarity with all human beings possible. The “realm of God” becomes a cipher for a peaceful and fully committed human potential, which creates meaning not in options detached from the world but rather in truly social perspectives.

A careful analysis of these stages reveals that the succession rests on a logical progression and on related changes in autonomy and connectedness, differentiation and integration, and universality and uniqueness of thought.

At Stage 1 the interactional quality is one-sided; just as a child in many daily situations depends on its parents, so the human being relates to the Ultimate Being. At one particular moment there is total hope, at another there is downright despair. The integration variables are completely separated from the differentiation variables.

At Stage 2 there is a shift: the subject now perceives means for influencing the Ultimate Being and thus introduces security measures for his/her own well-being. There is a presumptive connection between e.g., a deeper love for God and a more secure knowledge of what He does if we do all we can for Him. Life becomes more calculable because the behavior of the Ultimate Being seems to depend on us and on our deeds, rather than on His arbitrary decisions. God's actions and our actions are seen as connected.

At Stage 3 the two realms are perceived as being independent and generally in a state of “peaceful coexistence.” In this more differentiated view, each human being can ultimately act independently of a religious or metaphysical power, but there is

dependency in other areas such as spiritual growth, love, secrets of nature and hidden forces. Stage 3 is the stage typical to members of so-called "youth religions," and certain forms of atheist thought may also spring up at this stage. Because the subject's thought must go from the concept of a direct influence administered by the Ultimate Being to the concept of a mediated relationship, he/she needs this intermediate stance of separating things from one another (similar to the period of detachment which children must go through with their parents, which occurs hopefully without dissolving the relationship entirely).

At Stage 4 a mediated and correlational relationship with the Ultimate Being emerges anew, more equilibrated than ever. After the individual has begun to realize the secularity (differentiation) of the many domains of life, he/she integrates the Ultimate Being into his/her life in a new fashion: whatever one does or experiences, there is always an unexplained aspect which makes no sense without reference to the existence of the Ultimate Being. He becomes the metaphysical *a priori* of man's freedom in a life of dependency. There is the notion of a final plan for everything, a kind of "universal O.K."; in the final analysis we have divine security.

At Stage 5 there is complete complementarity in all dimensions. There is no profane without the holy, no holiness without the profane, no hope without absurdity and no absurdity without hope. The divine is completely transcended by man and is no longer conceived of as divine security (holy plan). Every person becomes a unique contributor to and participant in divinity, and it is understood that the divine is universal through man's universal connectedness. ("God became man" is the absolute and universal cipher of a lived Stage 5 relationship.)

This increasingly integrative relationship and conjointly increasingly autonomous handling through the experience of a deeper bond -- is the developmental logic of the stages of religiosity. From "The Ultimate Being does it..." to "The Ultimate Being does it, *if*..." to "The Ultimate Being *and* man do..." to "Man does because the Ultimate Being *is*..." and finally, to "Man does through an Ultimate Being's doing which functions through man's doing..." is a lengthy process which, like every course of development, has its gains and losses. The gains are knowing and living with the presence of the Ultimate Being, the losses are

inevitable bereavements such as loss of the security provided by strong systems (i.e. organized religion) and even by revelations so long as they stem solely from outside of man. At Stage 5, revelation is continued by man, there is no other ordering of life, no other security than belief. This is clearly expressed in a statement of Tillich (1980) to which I would like to subscribe, "To be religious means to question passionately the meaning of life and to be open for answers even if they trouble us. Such a position makes religion something universally human, even if this is not the usual meaning of the word 'religion'" (p. 8).

#### *Some Remarks on Research Methodology*

For our research purposes we primarily utilize the semi-structured ("clinical") interview method as designed by Piaget. We believe that putting people into standardized situations while still giving them extensive opportunity to reveal their thinking yields the following advantages:

1. The probe questions can be structured according to an underlying theory;
2. The subjects' answers can be compared in a clear and reliable manner;
3. It is possible to construct a scoring manual for classifying responses subjectively, yet validly;
4. In order to understand the developmental core we can use prototypical answers as criterion judgements for matching specific stages (Oser & Gmünder, 1984);
5. Dilemma stories stimulate in-depth reasoning rather than the expression of simple beliefs. They help to uncover real religious thinking, including explanation and justification of subjects' assumptions. The interviewing allows for inference of judgemental competences: the subject can be pushed toward his/her optimal reflective abilities;
6. On the basis of the scoring manual a method for stage calculation can be devised (RMS = Religious Maturity Score) which is easily comparable to other psychological measures.

Three dilemma stories are used in our recent research:

1. The "Paul-Dilemma" which contains a promise made to God while the subject's life was in peril and explores the question

- of whether the promise must be kept after rescue;
2. The "Theodicy-Dilemma" which describes terrible events that befall a person and asks whether that person should still attempt to believe in God and to live with Him;
  3. The "Chance-Dilemma," in which probability calculation is opposed to the assertion that luck is a gift of God and a sign of His grace.

### **Validation of the Stage Concept -- Outline of a Research Program**

Our research focused on three different, though connected aims: (1) to validate our concept of religious judgement development across various samples; (2) to develop and evaluate educational intervention in order to stimulate religious consciousness, and (3) to explore the effects of changes in religious judgement on other constructs (criterion validity).

#### *Religious Judgement Development Across Various Samples*

The construct "religious judgement" was scrutinized and validated by a study in a medium-sized Swiss town, the assessed independent variables being age, sex, religion and social status; the sample size was  $N = 112$  (Oser & Gmünder, 1984). Several hypotheses could be confirmed, i.e., that there is a clear age-related trend in religious judgement development and that variables related to religion and sex do not influence this development significantly.

The hypothesized consistency of structures is supported by congruent findings on the basis of different dilemma stories (cf. Oser & Gmünder, 1984, pp. 181 ff.). The hypothesis that religious judgement does not depend on social class and educational training had to be dismissed as it does depend on these, in terms of the stages achieved.

Overall, this study indicated that stages of religious judgement can in fact be conceived as "structured wholes" and that the results are not contrary to the notion that the stages actually follow an invariant sequence.

A study conducted by Dick (1982) addressed the question of universality: can our religious judgement stages also be found in

a non-Judeo-Christian context? Dick interviewed Hindus and Jains in Rajasthan (India), Mahayana-Buddhists near the Tibetan border, as well as two samples in Rwanda (Africa) who practiced ancestor-worship or were members of a Christian missionary group. Dick used the "Paul-Dilemma" in adaptations of the respective socio-cultural contexts. All samples show a significant age trend. Unfortunately the samples were too small and too specific to allow for truly cross-cultural comparisons. Thus the definite empirical support for the hypothesized universality of our stages must still be presented.

Given the conviction that having to cope with the contingencies of life is implicit in being human, regardless of religious beliefs, Achermann (1981) investigated the thinking of 50 declared atheists. Data allowed for a description of types that display some remarkable similarities to the religious development stages: determination from outside (in this case, society etc.) and fatalism at the one pole, self-determination via social commitment at the other. We do not take this as proof that our stages account for non-religious thinking as well (this study wasn't even cross-sectional and thus not suited to identify any kind of development, for that matter), but the structural congruences remain noteworthy.

In an additional study, von Brachel and Oser (1984) interviewed 50 subjects, equally distributed according to age, sex and religion, about their perceptions of their own religious development. Contrary to an initial hypothesis it is not the short-term critical event that gives rise to a transition of thought; rather, people report phases of change in life (e.g. leaving home, their first jobs, marriage) as being responsible for abandoning former lines of thought and constructing new visions of world and God. Another major finding of this study partially supported the developmental theory. Most of the subjects were well aware that in the past they had thought about religious issues and related to God differently than at the time of the interview. Insofar as they reconstructed their own former modes of religious thinking, no elements emerged that did not fit in with our stage descriptions — the descriptions of stages prior to subjects' current stages.

Additionally, various psycho-historical explorations attempted to utilize the religious judgement stages as a frame of reference in analyzing the genesis of thought in personalities who were

well-known not only for their work but also for a highly mature religiosity. For the time being three such studies have been completed: on Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (Hager, 1987), on Rainer Maria Rilke (Bucher, 1985) and on Martin Buber (Brumlik, 1985, utilizing Erikson's model of ego-development as well as our stage model). These studies show the feasibility of reconstructing the stages of religious consciousness (in the sequence described by the theory) in written material. Further analyses of this kind seem necessary to allow for empirical statements regarding the question of a terminal point in structural development. This latter question defines the focus of another study – still in its beginnings (cf. Oser, Althof & Bucher, 1986) – which will attempt to explore the common features of thought in subjects intuitively considered as wise and experienced.

### *Educational Studies*

Oser & Gmünder (1984, p. 261) hypothesize that religious content – especially when presented in textual form – is assimilated in a fashion isomorphic to the structure of religious judgement. Empirical support for this hypothesis was adduced by a study of the understanding of parables from the New Testament exhibited by children at different levels of moral judgement development (Bucher, 1987a; Bucher & Oser, 1987b). Bucher (1987a, b), who postulated a 4-stage model, claimed to describe and explain the development of understanding with regard to parables not only in the Bible but in literature in general.

These results seem to be of special significance for any kind of religious teaching which works with text material. They provide strong indicators that students assimilate religious texts to structures of understanding which are qualitatively different from those of adults. Unidirectional transmission of theological commentaries is not sufficient, because either students don't understand them (and consequently reject them) or they reinterpret them according to their religious reasoning level. This can be clearly exemplified by reactions to the parable of the workers in the vineyard who were paid the same wages regardless of how long they had worked during the day. When children at lower stages of religious maturity were asked if the master's behavior in the story could be understood as an example of God's behavior,

subjects answered, full of indignation, "no," i.e. How could this man be like God? Doesn't God reward people according to their performance and punish them according to their failures (bipolar reciprocity)?

In a large-scale intervention study (Oser, 1987a) with 7th grade students, religious judgement developments could be effectively stimulated. The average increase after 2 1/2 months of intervention amounted to more than half a stage. The treatment included (a) the discussion of religious dilemmas (real-life conflicts as well as dilemmas taken from religious texts), combined with a systematic stimulation of higher stage patterns of argumentation, and (b) a metareflection on the discussion process. There is clear evidence that this kind of educational method (both treatments) is apt to provoke not only exchanges of opinion but also inner confrontations which in the long run disrupt the given stage of religious judgement and give way to structural transformations.

Another study, conducted by Schildknecht (1984), is situated in a similar context. This study investigates the development of competence in moral and religious argumentation. The concept of "transactive discussion" is guided by the prior work of Berkowitz and collaborators (1987). Results show a clear age trend in the degree of transactive modes of dialogue, i.e. in the degree of cross reference to the partner's arguments. In middle childhood no elements of "transactive discussing" are displayed whereas in adolescence (14 through 17 years) 25% of the statements can be categorized as transactive. On the basis of these data Oser, Althof and Berkowitz (1986, 1987) developed a preliminary model of levels of argumentative logic.

Finally, Klaghofer & Oser (1987) carried out a study of the "religious climate" in families. In this study a questionnaire for assessing the religious atmosphere in families is constructed and the factors are analyzed. The authors found two dimensions: (a) religious handling of contingencies and religious activities in the family; and (b) religious discourse in the family. Further analyses of the general family atmosphere and of patterns of educational behavior adapt well to both of the scales.

### Religious Judgement and Other Domains of Development

The relationship between religious and moral judgement (as conceived by Kohlberg, 1981, 1984) has been of particular interest. The study of Gut (Oser & Gmünder, 1984) yields discrepant results with respect to a widely accepted thesis, namely that moral judgement development emerges prior to religious judgement development. Twenty-four subjects proved to be at a higher level of moral judgement and 16 subjects displayed parallel reasoning levels in both domains. Contrary to the stronger hypothesis, however, — i.e. that moral judgement development is a necessary (but insufficient) condition for the development of an "isomorphic" religious judgement stage — 10 subjects were more mature in religious than in moral reasoning. Oser's (1987a) results supported Gut's findings. On the other hand a study conducted by Berkowitz & Caldwell (1987) did support the stronger hypothesis. More refined research is needed, as discussed by Oser & Reich (1987).

Another research project compared religious judgement stage and the "world view," i.e. ontological and "cosmogonic" aspects of thought (Fetz & Oser, 1985) for 56 subjects, aged 5 to 20. Among younger children an "archaic" view of the world, a marked polarity of top and bottom (heaven and earth) and a concept of finiteness of world were the essential features (Fetz, 1985). In terms of cosmogony, most of these children showed artificial patterns of interpretation; they assumed that in the beginning of the world God produced — in craftman's style — things of nature, like mountains and trees, and even artifacts like high buildings, etc. (see Piaget, 1926/29 for a discussion of artificialism). These children had a literal understanding of the biblical Genesis, and at the same time displayed low stages of religious judgement. After going through a hybrid stage (and apparently not before the age of 11) a differentiation of biblical and scientific belief systems took place: from then on, "sky" and "heaven" could be understood in the scientific and in the symbolic and religious senses, respectively.

## **Lifestyle Development and Religiosity: Continuity and Discontinuity**

### *Two Possibilities of Investigation*

Development is a lifelong enterprise. With respect to the logic of Piaget-type general cognitive development, extensive analyses of progress in adulthood have been conducted (see the discussion of knowing levels in Campbell & Bickard, 1986).

We aren't yet equipped with such analyses in the domain of religious development. We do not yet know what are the environmental influences on developmental shifts, we do not know enough about the subjective necessity of progress through our stages, and we don't know to what degree the understanding of societal value systems helps, or is a condition for understanding the evolution of developmental processes. The general cognitive development of a child is embedded in a societal system in which cognitive functioning is a most important aspect of life. It was not always like this. In "olden times" the religious functioning of society was of much more importance because it warranted the continuity of the social order (Berger, 1970).

Why then should a study of religious development across the life span be of significance? In terms of methodology there are two possibilities of investigating the mechanisms of growth in moral judgement: interventional studies and assessment of natural development. Interventional studies may stimulate transformations of thought and give substantial explanations as to why these changes came about. Our intervention with secondary school classes used a quasi-experimental design with two different treatments, stimulating a decentration process and a metareflection of the results of interaction. (The findings of this large-scale investigation are presented in my forthcoming book, *Wieviel Religion braucht der Mensch?* – "How Much Religion Does Man Need?") The second approach to investigating the mechanisms of growth is through observation and/or analysis of *natural development*; a basis for analysis can for instance be provided by biographic interviews.

### Stage Transformation as Life Event: A Model

We conducted one basic study attempting to investigate relations between religious stage development and life experiences. For this purpose our interviewing procedure included several steps. We first assessed the current level of religious judgement by means of our standard interview (Paul dilemma). The next steps were retrospective. We hypothesized that a subject at a given stage has passed through a number of religiously relevant crises, leading to stage transformations. Theoretically, we thus expected some kind of correspondence between critical life events and structural transitions. We assumed the following 4-step model with regard to structural transformation (see von Brachel & Oser, 1984):

1. The subject's cognitive structure — equilibrated so far — is confronted with problems in such a way that they can no longer be processed in an adjusted manner. The structure goes into a state of disequilibrium, indicated by cognitive contradiction, a sense of overtaxation and insecurity in the subject's patterns of thought. Employment of mechanisms of defense can be a temporary reaction.
2. An increasing disintegration of the former cognitive structure takes place; new elements are recognized, which call for processing and integration. Inconsistencies in the subject's cognitive functioning result, because problems are being resolved by utilization of different structural patterns. This is indicated by the fact that the subject stresses the relativity of opinions and wavers between various beliefs, opinions and approaches to problem resolution.
3. A period of integrating new elements follows. The former structural elements gain a new valence and change their relative position. The new elements are considered more valuable, the subject makes a shift in focus, stresses the importance of the new knowledge, holds it apart and tries out the new mode of thought.
4. Finally, the new structure is transferred to other issue areas and this process is further tested and strengthened.

### Thinking Back: Five Patterns of Restructuring Former Religious Orientations

Our research sample included 48 subjects, equally divided according to sex and religious affiliation. The age groups were 11/12, 15/16, 19–21, 24–26, 37–45 and 55–62. Since we plan a longitudinal follow-up study, the results of this investigation have not as yet been published. I'd like to present, however, some summarized findings and a case example from the preliminary report (von Brachel & Oser, 1984).

It is worth noting that we experienced the well-known difficulties of retrospective research. Some of our individuals claim their thinking has not changed at all since their childhood. Other subjects recalled distinct former styles of thought to different degrees. Nonetheless, what was recalled was highly significant to us: not one subject described religious orientations which would not fit into our stage scheme, and no subject reconstructed a stage of religious thought that was above his/her current stage.

It was possible to distinguish five patterns of reconstructing former religious orientation (which we describe in terms of stages) and critical events or periods of life:

1. *Reconstruction of many stages and transitions.*

These subjects tended to be at a higher stage. They tended to work in a profession promoting a conscious confrontation with matters of religion and morality. They tended to describe their life history not in terms of crises but rather in terms of "intellectual growth." These subjects also tended to be older and Catholic.

2. *Reconstruction of one prior stage and transition.*

This was a very common pattern. The subjects were primarily younger. They tended to be at Stage 3, i.e. the transition relating to autonomy issues; contextual influences played a significant role. The transition tended to be more marked with respect to Catholics than to Protestants.

3. *Reconstruction of one prior stage, but not of a transition.*

This is a second standard type which occurred at Stage 2 as well as Stage 3. These subjects tended to be older. Their life histories displayed conventional features and didn't allow for too much intellectual exposition. This type was found among Protestants more often than among Catholics, especially at Stage 3.

4. *No reconstruction of former stages and transitions; "I always thought like that"*

These subjects showed reluctance to answer questions, feeling it an intrusion into their private lives. Moreover, they expressed a very normative viewpoint: "being in a crisis" is socially undesirable. This type was found among "well-established" subjects for whom it seemed part of their life style to display a clearly ordered view of the world. It was also found among "petty bourgeois" with a marked distance from both the church and religious issues.

5. *Low stage, no transitions reconstructed, but many crises in life.*

These subjects were characterized by marginal life circumstances. They tended to be older, more often female than male, and more often belonged to the lower social classes.

One of our hypotheses had been that a person who has experienced various structural transformations will be very competent at problem solving and will actually have coped successfully with a number of crises in their lives. There is no clear evidence as to the validity of this hypothesis, at least not on a general and abstract level of analysis. Subjects obviously distinguished between "life crises" and "transformations of thought (structures)." They associated the latter with "new thinking," "becoming more mature," etc., whereas the notion of crises in life was related to "difficulties," "emotional problems," etc. Typically, subjects did not see a pronounced relation between those two dimensions. This allows for different interpretations: perhaps structural transformations are not actually connected with situational factors of influence; perhaps a process of redefinition has taken place (omitting influential factors; attribution of only positive – "non-crisis" – factors in a transformation that subjects came to interpret as progress).

## Two Case Studies

For a closer look at life histories and of cognition I will present some interview excerpts. Here, as a first example, is a portion of what was related to us by a Protestant woman who believed that she had not changed much during the course of her life. At the

time this woman was 18 years old, at Stage 4 of religious judgement.

*Interviewer (Int):*

What do you think your answer to this story (Paul dilemma) would have been previously?

*Subject (Sub):*

I think it would have been the same. Not in each detail, but on the whole. Many things have contributed to my way of thinking; things that I'm doing, perhaps, in the course of my religious training. There have been influences at home too. But essentially I hope I would have answered in a similar way.

*Int:* You said spontaneously that Paul should keep his promise, to stay true to his own character. That's been the most important reason you've given. And you stated that religiosity gives strength for self-realization. Do you think you would have argued like this, say, 5 or 10 years ago?

*Sub:* Even 10 years ago, I'm quite certain I would have. Possibly, then I wouldn't have been able to express it very well. On the other hand... Looking back has something dangerous about it. But no, I would have given the same answer at least: he should keep his promise.

It is clear that this person believed in the unchangeable inner foundation of (her) religious judgement; she didn't think there had been major transformations of thought during her life history. On the other hand, she did remember influential and even shaping factors in her life.

*Sub:* There's been much that rested on experiences primarily.

*Int:* I beg your pardon...

*Sub:* On experiences, friends, for example, that it's useless to say things just to give a better impression; that it doesn't pay to lie, because then you cheat yourself.

*Int:* Do you mean that in those days your moral reasoning used to be much more concrete? You would have used words like "self-realization"?

*Sub:* Being true to oneself, that emerged in the relationships with friends... but not the other thing. As to God and such, there have been no changes. It took a long time, indeed, until my relation to God... I always did pray with

my mother but she never said anything like, "if you do this, God will punish you." I never heard such things. The same was true with regard to sin. So I wasn't impressed when the teacher talked about the Bible; that wasn't important to me then, and it isn't important nowadays. What's important to me is my direct relationship with God. I perceive God in terms of other human beings who also want to realize their own potential. But I do believe that religious education has an influence. In my family, only God plays a role in our prayers. It's always been direct, not via Jesus or Maria. Well I guess this direct reference to God is typically Protestant. That never bothered me. I believe it's one form of faith among many different ones.

This person was aware of the connection between inner development and educational influences, but couldn't articulate it clearly. We found this to be true in many cases.

Let us now look at the responses of another subject (Catholic) who was aware of the religious development he had undergone. He was 20 years of age and reasoned at Stage 2.

*Int:* Could you tell me whether you always thought that way, or if, and how, your thinking has changed?

*Sub:* Well, previously, about the time I was a fifth-grader, I certainly was very sure that it was God's intervention and not accidental. Education plays a role, doesn't it? In those times we had more religious training and used to go to church every weekend. We prayed with our mother every evening. It isn't that way any more.

*Int:* Could you say more precisely how you would have seen the situation (part of the Paul dilemma questioning) at that time?

*Sub:* I would have thought that God's hand came down from heaven, invisibly, and manipulated something in his car, his brakes, so that something went wrong and he had an accident.

*Int:* So you would have imagined direct intervention.

*Sub:* Yes, in a sense.

This young man showed clear awareness that at one time he had perceived religious issues distinctively and was able to present an explanation for the changes in his views.

*Sub:* By this time you are better able to see injustice in the world, aren't you? You are confronted with other people who don't attend church, who don't believe in God, and still they enjoy their lives. You begin questioning yourself.

This man had an intuitive awareness about what had caused his cognitive transformation. The old scheme didn't allow for a personally appropriate conception of the world anymore. Contrary to his Stage 1 beliefs, there could apparently be well-being without belief in an omnipotent God and there could be injustice in spite of the work of the supposedly almighty God.

The interviewer then asked him to explain the character of this transformation.

*Int:* If you look back, how long did this change in thinking take? Did it happen suddenly or over a longer period?

*Sub:* A longer period. Two or three years.

*Int:* And how did you feel during this time? Did you violently reject your old way of thinking? Did you think, "What an idiot I have been to believe in all that"?

*Sub:* No, there was only slow change.

*Int:* Some kind of disassociation from yourself?

*Sub:* I think so. I didn't go to church once a week anymore, I no longer had religious instruction. Slow changes.

*Int:* So, there hasn't been a strong kind of crisis?

*Sub:* Not at all. It happened automatically, in a way.

This subject had an eminent interest in the dissolution of the old, restricting structure. He knew that step by step he had superseded his prior religious world view, without being able to locate the transition in particular life events. At the time of the interview the former structure had made way for a new cognitive-religious conception, which still was in a phase of construction and stabilization.

It is a fascinating enterprise to study transformational processes across the life span. Even if the biographical interview method (which of course is not more than a substitute for longitudinal observation and questioning) cannot definitely support the strong claims of the theory (that if a person is at Stage 4, there must have been three periods of structural transformation); I am convinced that this kind of inquiry provides at least partial

possibilities for uncovering elements in structural transformation that may be able to explain some of the laws governing religious development – regularities in the very process of restructuring modes of thought, and influences of outside social realities. Surely there is still a lot of work to do, but we must not start from ground zero. Nipkow's book, *Ohne Gott aufwachsen* ("Growing Up Without God"), for instance, provides a basis for further research. This author introduces the social context as an important determinant of the transformation process, and the concrete shape of this determinant is not the same as it was 30 or 50 or 100 years ago. The differentiation of life spheres, according to Max Weber, didn't exclude the religious systems, and this changed the conditions for the individual's growth in the area of religiosity. Our study is just another small contribution to an understanding of what is actually occurring when people develop towards religious maturity in our "postmodern" times.

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# THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT OF PRAYER IN JEWISH-ISRAELI CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS\*

Rina Rosenberg

## Introduction

The psychology of religion was readmitted into the ranks of academic psychology as a legitimate discipline only quite recently. In parallel, a limited cease fire was achieved between the heretofore warring disciplines of psychology and religion. This was largely due to a change in emphasis concerning the basic assumptions, the type of phenomena investigated, and the research method used by the psychology of religion. The emphasis on what could be termed religious behavior, coupled with the claim that the concepts used to analyze religious behavior should be the same terms used for any discussion of *learned* social behavior (Beit Halahmi, 1973), served to mitigate the disrespect towards the discipline on the part of formal psychology on the one hand, and the great mistrust of psychology on the part of religion, on the other. However, currently, no more than a quarter of a century since the intellectual cease fire took place, we are now facing similar problems. True, we are no longer dealing with crude reductionism. That is largely passé. But the return to the study of religious *thinking*, especially that which is anchored in structural stage theory, recalls the problems of the normativity of religious belief, of grading it on a scale of stages, and of evaluating it as mature or immature.

Two main streams can be discerned in modern empirical research concerning the development of religious thinking (within the cognitive-developmental or structural-genetic theoretical framework): the "orthodox Piagetians" and the "neo-

\* This research was undertaken under the guidance of Prof. Kalman Binyami of the Department of Psychology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and with the support of the Israeli Ministry of Education, the Marshall Foundation, the Israeli "PAYIS" Project, the Levine Center of the Psychology Department of the Hebrew University, the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture and the National Foundation for Jewish Culture.

Piagetians" (or "Kohlbergians"). The first group (especially active in the sixties but who continue to this day) orthodoxly apply the theoretical framework and methodology of Piaget to the area of religious thinking, dealing mostly with the developing understanding of biblical texts and particular religious concepts (the concept of God, prayer, etc.). They describe developmental stages in Piagetian terms (i.e. concrete/abstract, undifferentiated/ differentiated, magical thinking etc.). Within this group, undoubtedly the most influential and controversial study was Goldman's (1964). His assumption is that, "religious thinking – is a short form of expressing the activity of thinking directed toward religion – not a term meaning separate rationality" (p. 4).

Goldman went farther than simply describing the development of discreet religious concepts as he claimed to have uncovered more general stages of religious thinking. His study, which was to have shed light on the reasons for the poor results of the religious education in English schools, examined children's understanding of Bible stories, focusing particularly on certain concepts such as that of God, divine justice, miracles and others. In addition he traced the development of how children perceived the nature of the Bible and its authority, the Church and the concept of prayer.

At first Goldman named his stages *Pre-religious*, *Sub-religious* and *Religious* but in later publications (perhaps in response to the heavy criticism) he changed them to the following formal stages:

1. *Intuitive Religious Thinking* (up to 6–7 yrs.) in which the child's lack of experience and readiness for logical religious ideas leads him/her to misinterpret religious concepts and teachings. His/her thinking is unsystematic and fragmentary and his/her conclusions are therefore illogical and inconsistent.
2. *Concrete Operational Religious Thinking* (9–13 yrs.) in which logical thinking about religion is limited by the concrete, i.e. the visible, the tangible, etc. and by the child's experience. Religious concepts are thus understood in that way. God is grasped as anthropomorphic, and the Bible as miraculous, but no abstract, symbolic, spiritual interpretation of it can be handled properly.

3. *Formal Religious Thinking* (from 12–13 yrs) in which there is an appreciation of the parabolic and metaphorical nature of much of the religious narrative and of the symbolic nature of the religious language.

Goldman concluded, on the basis of his findings, that children should not be taught Bible stories before they reach the Formal Religious Thinking stage. He pointed to early teaching as the main reason for the failure of religious education, because, according to him, pre-formal thinking children are not capable of understanding what he assumes to be the true (abstract) message of the Bible stories (parables). Too early teaching, claims Goldman, brings premature crystallization of (distorted) concepts which inhibits later learning.

Goldman's study, and even more so, his pedagogic conclusions, raised a storm of controversy in the literature and prompted a number of additional studies, some of which demonstrated development within and beyond adolescence, e.g. Godin (1964, 1968), Haws (1965), Hilliard (1965), Hawkins (1966), Mathews (1966), Alves (1968), Cox (1968), Cliff (1968), Hyde (1968), Richmond (1972), Peatling and Laabs (1975), Peatling, Laabs and Newton (1975), Ballard (1975), Tamminen (1976), Peatling (1977), Hodge and Petrilo (1978), Francis (1980), and Casanyi (1982).

Criticism focused largely on the theological aspect of the study, but also included some methodological reservations especially with regard to interpretation of the data and the logical connection between the results and his far reaching conclusions.

The second group, the neo-Piagetians or "Kohlbergians" (Fowler et al, Oser et al) apply Kohlberg's model and methods of studying moral development to the study of religious thinking. Their work is a turning point in the field. Its scope is much wider, spanning the whole life cycle. Not content with formal stages in strict Piagetian terms, they describe religious stages ("hard stages" in their terms) which, they claim – unlike Goldman – are not merely the reflection of thought in general applied to a different content area, but rather are unique, *sui generis*, universal stages in the strict use of the term. This implies that religious thinking (or faith) develops through a fixed order of hierarchical structural (as opposed to content) stages which are universal (not culture bound). They parallel stages of ego, and moral-social development.

While the "Kohlbergians" conceptual framework is more far-reaching in scope, the earlier "orthodox Piagetians," especially Goldman, have methodological elements worth preserving, particularly regarding techniques for interviewing young children.

### *The Concept of Prayer*

Although prayer as a religious activity is very common among children, there has been surprisingly little research into it. The few studies that have appeared can hardly be said to form a sound corpus that allows for easy replication and comparison. Goldman (1964) himself noted about this part of his investigation: "Profiles of the major stages of childhood and adolescence in terms of prayer are difficult to construct with equal clarity due to great diversity and problems of assessing the material. The outcomes are somewhat over-simplified" (p. 190).

Most of the existing studies belong to the "orthodox Piagetian" group employing the Piagetian theoretical framework and methodology. Generally their findings demonstrate "Piagetian" stages in the development of thinking about prayer. Of all the aspects of prayer studied, it seems that the concept of the efficacy of petitionary prayer, i.e., when and how prayers are "answered" or "not answered," shows the clearest development with age. The content of children's prayers (as a separate category — not pertaining to the efficacy of prayer), on the other hand, shows much less pronounced developmental trends. For example, Long, Elkind and Spilka (1967) noted that whereas younger children's petitions tended to be egotistical (5–9 years), the prayer content of older ones (10–12 years) leaned more to the personal and individual on the one hand, and to the objective, general and less egotistical on the other, but these findings were global impressions, as compared with their more rigorous findings about other aspects of prayer.

Goldman (1964) found a similar trend in his sample. He then attempted to find a more defined developmental order in the "quality" of the content of prayer. The results were scaled, but no sequence of prayer in what Goldman considered "quality" (from crude, materialistic and egocentric prayer to more refined, spiritual and altruistic prayer) was found.

Thouless and Brown (1965) and Brown (1966) adapted, for group administration, the method that Godin and Van Roey (1959) derived from Piaget and asked a group of Australian girls aged 12 to 17 about their belief in the efficacy and appropriateness of petitionary prayer over a set of situations roughly scaled for moral acceptability (from prayers to avoid discovery of "unjustified" theft, to prayers for saving of a human life). They found that the belief of the appropriateness of praying in a given situation, i.e. which petitions are worthy, does not relate to differences in age, unlike the belief in the direct causal efficacy of petitionary prayer which does.

In a later cross-cultural study (Christian adolescents from New Zealand, Australia and America), Brown (1966) confirmed these findings, adding that the belief in the direct causal efficacy of prayer is influenced by the perception of its appropriateness.

Long, Elkind and Spilka (1967) differ from the others in that they concentrated on the formal aspect of the development of the prayer concept, studying it as they would other concepts, with no apparent interest in its religious significance. Thus, as opposed to the other investigators, they characterized the three major stages which emerged from their investigation in formal terms:

1. A global, undifferentiated concept of prayer (5-7 years) where "the child had only a vague and indistinct understanding of the meaning of prayer. Although he/she had a dim awareness that prayers were somehow linked with the term 'God' and with certain learned formulas ('Now I lay me down to sleep'), there was little comprehension of the meaning of prayer in the adult sense" (Elkind, 1971, pp. 674-675).
2. A concrete, differentiated concept (7-9 years) where "prayer was now conceived in terms of particular and appropriate activities (verbal requests). While this understanding of prayer was correct and was sufficient to differentiate prayer from other activities, it was also concrete. That is to say, at this stage children never thought beyond the mechanics of prayer to its cognitive and affective significances, which to the older child and to the adult, are the essence of prayer" (Elkind, p. 675).
3. An abstract, differentiated concept (10-12 years) where "prayer came to be understood as a kind of private conversa-

tion with God involving things not talked about with other people . . . a sharing of intimacies and confidences in which petitionary requests are of only secondary importance" (Elkind, p. 675).

The other studies, cited here, all with a strong orientation to Christian religious education, were more concerned with content than with form. Their focus was on the belief in the efficacy of petitionary prayer. On the whole, they point to a decline with age in the belief in the direct efficacy of prayer.

Goldman (1964) discerned four stages in the development of the concept:

1. Magic/moral stage (6-9:4 years), when children believe prayers are answered automatically, and if they are not answered it is because of the general bad behavior of the praying child.
2. Semi-magic/semi-moral stage (9:4-12:3 years), when children believe that prayers are answered through intermediaries such as doctors, who act in the material world, and are not answered when the content of the prayer is inappropriate, i.e., egotistical or trivial.
3. Religious concepts stage (13 years - ), when the efficacy of prayer is still explained through its results but in a more rational manner, by putting the emphasis on the spiritual effect of prayer on the person him/herself. Non-answered prayers are explained in terms of "the natural refusal of God to respond to unnecessary, unsuitable or unbelieving prayer" (p. 180).
4. More advanced religious concepts stage "... a few get to an advanced level of ideas in maintaining that no certain knowledge of the efficacy of prayer is available, only reasoning by probability or by conviction and faith" (p. 184). Unanswered prayers are explained through "God's will... His willingness to work only at a spiritual level and to conform to his own spiritual laws" (p. 188).

Godin and Van Roey (1959), Thouless and Brown (1965) and Brown (1966, 1968) explain the decline they found with age in the belief in the efficacy of prayer on the basis of the development of thought. Brown speaks of the "decentering" of thought from a "magic mentality" (where words are considered as effective as actions) through an egocentric substage (Brown) or sacramental

mentality (Godin and Van Roey, Thouless and Brown), where prayers are no longer thought of as causing a change in reality but rather as having a different function.

Like Goldman (1964), Brown (1966) noted a development from the belief that all prayers are answered automatically, through a belief that if prayers are not answered it is because of the praying person's deeds, his/her attitude and the content of the prayer, to a belief that if prayers are not answered it is because of God's will.

Common to these studies are their definite normative assumptions and their consequent lack of differentiation between the theological, psychological and ontological levels — e.g., the assumption that the belief in the efficacy of prayer is psychologically immature, does not fit reality and is therefore theologically inadequate (a transition from "is" to "ought"). Thus Brown (1968) expresses dissatisfaction with the fact that while perceptual processes decenter (become less cognitively ego) around the age of 12, the belief in the causal efficacy of prayer does not decenter completely even at the age of 18. He blames failure in education for the persistence of this belief, which he sees as a sign of egocentric thinking, i.e., a potentially harmful distortion of reality.

Although these investigators did not make as strong or emphatic a claim for the universality of their stages as their successors (Fowler, 1981; Oser, 1979), nor did they consider the stages "hard" (a fixed sequence of hierarchal stages which are universal) some of them do imply that the stages are universal, in the sense that they are derived from universal human cognitive development and can be found across specific religious teachings. Thouless and Brown (1965) and later Brown (1966) claimed that their studies show a decline with age in the belief in the causal efficacy of prayer across religious affiliation (Catholic, Anglican and Protestant) and across cultures (U.S., Australia, New Zealand). What remained constant with age but varied with religious affiliation was the belief in the appropriateness of petitional praying in certain situations, i.e., when these petitions are worthy of prayer, are moral, etc. However, in a subsequent study, Brown (1968), upon modifying his methodology, did find differences between Catholic and Anglican adolescents in the belief in the causal efficacy of prayer as well.

Obviously the "hottest" issue in the study of developmental

religious thinking today is the question of universality vs. cultural/religious specificity. Currently the claim to the universality of religious development is being challenged. Consequently the importance of detailed study across cultures is clear. Very little is known about Jewish children's and adolescents' religious thinking. Prayer as a particular religious concept and activity is central in Jewish religious practice (Orthodox Jews pray three times a day) and therefore it is worth studying.

What was surprising in Thouless and Brown's (1965) and Brown's (1966) findings is, that although they note a decline, in adolescence, in the belief that prayers are efficacious, nevertheless a majority of adolescents (between 67% and 91% in different groups) reported that they continued saying petitionary prayers. Why is it that they continue?

Part of the answer to this apparent contradiction may be found in the methodology. Brown divided the answer to the question regarding the belief in efficacy into two categories, "yes" and "no." In the "yes" category he included only absolute unreserved "yes's" while the "no's" included all the reserved answers (maybe, depends, etc.) as well. Realizing that these reserved answers, which referred to the conditions under which prayer is efficacious, contained important information as to how the effect of prayer is perceived, Brown (1968) later did examine them, and came up with the important distinction between "direct causal efficacy" of prayer, meaning a change in the physical world, and "non-specific efficacy," which refers to a spiritual influence on the praying person him/herself. It seems that in exploring children's thinking as to how they view the conditions under which prayers are "answered" or "not answered," all the "if's" and "but's" are very promising.

The present study, which is exploratory in nature, aims to investigate this issue in a specific population for which we have found no previous studies: Jewish Israeli children and adolescents. Two sub-populations will be compared: "religious"<sup>1</sup> or observant children, as defined by their attendance at a religious state school, and "non-religious" or non-observant children, those attending non-religious state schools. The education and way of

1 The adjective "religious" as it is used by Jews refers to both belief and observance of a religious way of life (rituals, religious code of behavior, etc.).

life of these children and adolescents vis-a-vis religion differs significantly enough to warrant comparison.

The aims of this exploratory investigation are:

1. to study empirically Israeli Jewish children and adolescents' thoughts about the concept of prayer in general, and spontaneous petitionary prayer in particular;
2. to examine the possibility of the existence of an age-related sequence or stages in the development of the prayer concept;
3. to examine whether there exist differences between religious and non-religious children's and adolescents' concept of prayer.

### The Study

For this exploratory study, 180 children between 1st and 10th grades, in both religious and non-religious schools, were individually interviewed in a semi-structured (or semi-clinical) interview. The children, 50% boys, 50% girls were in alternating grades between 1st and 10th. Because preliminary data analysis showed no gender differences, that factor was dropped. The individual interviewing of the pupils began in the second part of the last trimester of the school year. As it was not possible to finish the demanding endeavor of interviewing 180 pupils before the end of the school year, it was decided to continue with the same sample after the summer vacation (when the pupils were already in the next grade). This was done in preference to interviewing children who had just entered the sample grade and would therefore be almost a year younger than the corresponding children interviewed at the end of the previous school year. The pupil's grade at interviewing time was noted, therefore the same age group may have been divided among two grades. This explains the differences in the grade age grouping between the religious and non-religious subjects as will be seen later.

Following Goldman (1964), as a standard stimulus, a picture was shown to the subjects, of a boy or a girl, approximating the age of the subject, praying at the Western Wall, the surviving outermost western wall surrounding the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. This is a place where people come to pray and supplicate, and so it evokes associations of spontaneous petitionary prayer. (Goldman's stimulus picture was of a child kneeling at his

bed praying before going to sleep. An attempt to simply translate this to a Jewish scene – child sitting on his bed praying – did not generate the desired response. The religious children associated the stimulus with the reciting of the “Shema” the night prayer, while the non-religious children could not identify with the picture at all). The showing of the picture was preceded by two questions about prayer in general (“What is prayer?”, “Why do we pray?”) and followed by an interview. The questions were partly an adaptation of Goldman’s (e.g. “Does what the boy/girl asks for in prayer ever come true?”, “How does he/she know?”, “Do some of his/her prayers not come true?”, “Why do you think some don’t come true?”), and partly specially constructed to fit the particular population of this study (e.g. “Will a non-observant Jew’s prayer be received?”, “Will a non-Jew’s prayer be received?”, “Will a wicked man’s prayer for his sick mother be received?”)

The data gathered were extremely rich, but the analysis at this stage has been limited mainly to four questions of different weight:

(1) Why do we pray? (2) What do we pray for? (3) Are prayers answered? and the main question (4) What are the conditions necessary for a prayer to be answered? This fourth question constitutes the bulk of the investigation.

In this presentation, we deal mainly with the fourth point – the conditions necessary for a prayer to be answered.

## Results and Discussion

A content analysis of the individual interviews yielded five different content areas into which explanations concerning why and when prayers would be answered, fell:

1. *A HOW*: This refers to the praying person’s behavior and stance in the praying situation itself, i.e., how he/she behaves while praying: How he/she prays.
2. *B WHO*: Who prays – the characteristics of the praying person and his/her deeds.
3. *C WHAT*: What are the contents of the prayer: moral aspects, functional aspects.
4. *D THE RECEIVER*: The conception of God’s will and judgment.

5. *S SUBJECTIVE-REFLEXIVE*: Prayer as a reflexive, subjective matter, referring back to the praying person him/herself.

These content areas are not in themselves an innovation. They were referred to in the earlier studies cited up to this point. However, a finer analysis showed sub-categories *within* each content area. These could be viewed as a change in the structure or conceptualization development with the same content area, from concrete peripheral elements to abstract integrated conceptions.

*Content Area A HOW* This refers to the praying person's behavior and stance in the praying situation itself, i.e., how he/she behaves while praying: How he/she prays.

- A<sub>1</sub>* a) Reference to concrete pragmatic elements external to the essence of prayer. For example:  
 "If you say amen."  
 "If you wear a skullcap your prayer will be answered, if not, it doesn't matter how much you say, it won't."
- b) Reference to the quantity of prayer or to the way of saying the words. For example:  
 "The more people pray, the more prayers go to God."  
 "A wicked person would yell and ruin it for others (God will hear less)."
- c) General behavior around praying time. For example:  
 "If you pray nicely."  
 "If you play in the middle, your prayers won't be answered."
- d) Adherence to religious code in reference to the HOW of praying. For example:  
 "Depends if you bow down at the right place."
- A<sub>2</sub>* Internal attitude to prayer, not outward behavior but an inner feeling, a willingness, a real intention to pray, or the intense wish to ask. For example: "If he prays, but in his heart he is thinking of something else, or if he says in his heart 'I don't want to pray,' his prayer won't be answered."  
 "If she prays willingly, and asks with great intensity and fervor."
- A<sub>3</sub>* Prayer as a need of the soul – its essence, with intentionality towards the receiver of the prayer and to its content. For example:

"Unless I pray at the peak of my ability, He is not with me.  
There's no partnership. But when I pray the hardest I can,  
I come nearer to Him."

A later comment will deal with the relationship between this category (and two other ones) and petitionary prayer.

### *Content Area B WHO*

The characteristics of the praying person him/herself, and his/her character or deeds as conditions for the prayers to be answered.

$B_1$  A specific religious transgression or bad deed ruins the praying person's chances of having his prayer fulfilled. For example:

"A non-religious person's prayer won't be answered because he rides to the synagogue on the Sabbath."

"If he has just hit (another child), his prayer won't be answered."

$B_2$  a) A generalized concept of a pious person, as opposed to a wicked person. The pious person's prayer is always automatically accepted; the wicked one's almost never. For example:

"There are those (pious ones) whose prayer is always answered."

b) A comparable generalized conception of Jew and Gentile.

$B_3$  Habitually doing good deeds or observing commandments as a condition for having prayers answered. For example:  
"If she always observes the Sabbath, her prayer will be answered."

"A non-Jew, if he does good deeds and helps the poor, his prayer will be answered."

$B_4$  Faith and deeds as an integral concept, as a factor favorable to being answered.

$B_5$  Faith alone of the praying person. For example:

"It doesn't matter what religion (he has), it depends on (his) faith."

"Each one decides on his own faith (then his prayer is answered)."

*Content Area C WHAT*

The content of the prayer and the connection to its efficacy. This has two sub-categories: (1) moral issues, and (2) issues pertaining to the perception of "division of labor" between God and man.

- C<sub>1</sub>* Immoral, harmful petitions, i.e., to harm another, as opposed to "good" petitions.  
 "He (the praying child) does not understand that prayers can cause problems to others."
- C<sub>2</sub>* "Important" useful prayer, petitions for assistance in improving one's character and behavior, as opposed to trivial, material petitions. The correct timing of the prayer helps. For example:  
 "(A petition) not to be wicked. God hears everywhere."  
 "Prayers to win the lottery – no, more spiritual things, perhaps."  
 "There are prayers (petitions) that should be fulfilled later."
- C<sub>3</sub>* Altruistic petitions and those for the well-being of the community (or mankind in general) have a better chance.  
 "Prayers for others, not for his own benefit. If you think of another, it might help."  
 "(Petitions) that are answered most frequently are the general ones – for the whole of the Jewish people, freeing of Jews from Europe and from the Arab states."
- C\** Functional distinctions between the area of God's activity and that of man.
- C\*<sub>1</sub>* A simple division of labor between man and God. Content of prayer to God should correspond to His area of activity. For example: Candy (God won't bring it); a lunch bag (the child himself should go and buy it); bread (yes, corresponding to the blessing over bread).
- C\*<sub>2</sub>* Petitions that are considered logical absurdities: For example: "I'm here and pray that at this moment I'll be in America."  
 "What is difficult to fulfill, that I'll be home at this moment (won't be answered). God can do it, but the child shouldn't feel that somebody flies him."
- C\*<sub>3</sub>* Relations should be within the framework of realistic expectations of man's possibilities.  
 "The part that is not fulfilled is because people can't execute it and God can't add to their ability."

"If it is logical it can be fulfilled. That the Jewish people survive and overcome their enemies, if they are capable of it, can be fulfilled. You pray for the chance."

#### *Content Area D THE RECEIVER*

This refers to the perception of God's will and judgment as influencing fulfillment of prayer.

- D*<sub>1</sub> Conception of an arbitrary will of God and limitations on His ability to do things. For example:  
 "God doesn't want (to fulfill the petition). He does what He wants. It depends on His mood."  
 "Maybe He has nothing left (to give)."
- D*<sub>2</sub> God's will as unexplained, but not arbitrary as in *D*<sub>1</sub>.  
 "God will decide."
- D*<sub>3</sub> God as judging man (an individual or mankind in general) before answering a prayer, taking into account different elements such as heavenly grace, God's intention to educate man, timing, etc. Some examples:  
 "Not everything can be fulfilled, otherwise man would think that he does it – all this shows that only God can decide."  
 "God can pity the wicked."  
 "God might fulfill it in a different generation."
- D*<sub>4</sub> God's will as beyond our understanding. Here there is a clear formulation of human limitations in understanding God's way.  
 "There are considerations in fulfilling prayers. I cannot understand all of them."

#### *Content Area S SUBJECTIVE-REFLEXIVE*

This refers to prayer as a subjective, reflexive category, affecting the praying person him/herself.

- S*<sub>1</sub> The praying person, because he/she believes, explains certain occurrences as answers to his/her prayer. For example:  
 "Waiting to see the results and then religious people think, it is because of prayer."
- S*<sub>2</sub> Prayer as psychological support, help, catharsis and encouragement to act. Some examples:

"Even if he didn't get what he wants, it is enough to tell someone what's bothering you."

"If she thinks her prayer will be heard, and believes, she might have enough strength to do things by herself"

S<sub>3</sub> Prayer as an end in itself, as education, growth for the soul.

"There is a bond with God and that's the goal of prayer."

"Educates (trains) the personality (soul) and gives spiritual strength to man."

Content analysis was treated in two different ways:

1. A simple frequency count of both content areas and their categories which sketch age trends. This allows for comparison with the other studies where the same method was used.
2. The principal method of data analysis of this study, the Guttman-Lingoes Multidimensional Scalogram Analysis (GL-MSA I), a non-metric method which would give a picture of the development of the prayer concept with all its components (categories) taken simultaneously.

Two methods of counting were used for the general content area and the specific categories which make them up:

1. Mention or non-mention by the pupil of a content area and its categories. This allowed for computing the number of subjects who mentioned each one of the content areas and categories. It is assumed that this measure is an indicator of the accessibility for use of each content area and category for each age group.
2. Frequency of mention. Each mention of a content area by a pupil and its categories is counted, even when a subject mentions them more than once. It was assumed that this measure is an indicator of the salience of the category in the subject's thinking.

Both methods of counting (1) and (2) yielded similar frequency curves. Therefore, in the discussion of results, only the first method is used. The second counting method was used for another purpose to be discussed later.

*Content Areas*

The investigators who spoke of children's perception of the conditions influencing efficacy of prayer (especially Goldman and Brown) determined that differing emphasis on what we named "content area" is what constitutes development with age. If we translate Goldman's findings into our scheme, we would see that their first stage corresponds to our Content Areas A (attitude, posture and behavior in the praying situation) and B (background data of praying person). Their second stage corresponds to our Content Area C (content) and in the third and fourth stages the determining considerations are our Content Areas D (God's will) and S (subjective interpretation). Brown speaks generally of a passage from A to C to D.

How does the Israeli population compare with the earlier findings? Figure I, shows the distribution of the content areas in the different age groups for religious and non-religious subjects according to percentage of subjects mentioning content areas.<sup>2</sup>

*Content Area A:* The praying person's attitude, posture and behavior in the praying situation. Among the non-religious subjects from age group I to age group II note the decline and then a plateau; among the religious subjects the curve is U-shaped. The highest age level among the religious makes reference to this aspect of prayer just as did the youngest age group with a certain decline in the middle level.

*Content Area B:* Characteristics and deeds of the praying person. This is the most frequently mentioned content area across the entire sample. It is interesting to note that while the non-religious subjects showed a decline of mention with age (9th grade is the cutoff point), among the religious subjects there is continued reference to this content area. (It is important to note that the older religious subjects are heterogeneous as some of the students study in a regular state religious high school while others study in a Yeshiva — a less liberal, boys-only, more highly observant combination high school-pre-seminary.) It is predominantly the high school yeshiva students who continue to refer to

2 The division into age groups was derived from the MAS I, to be described later.

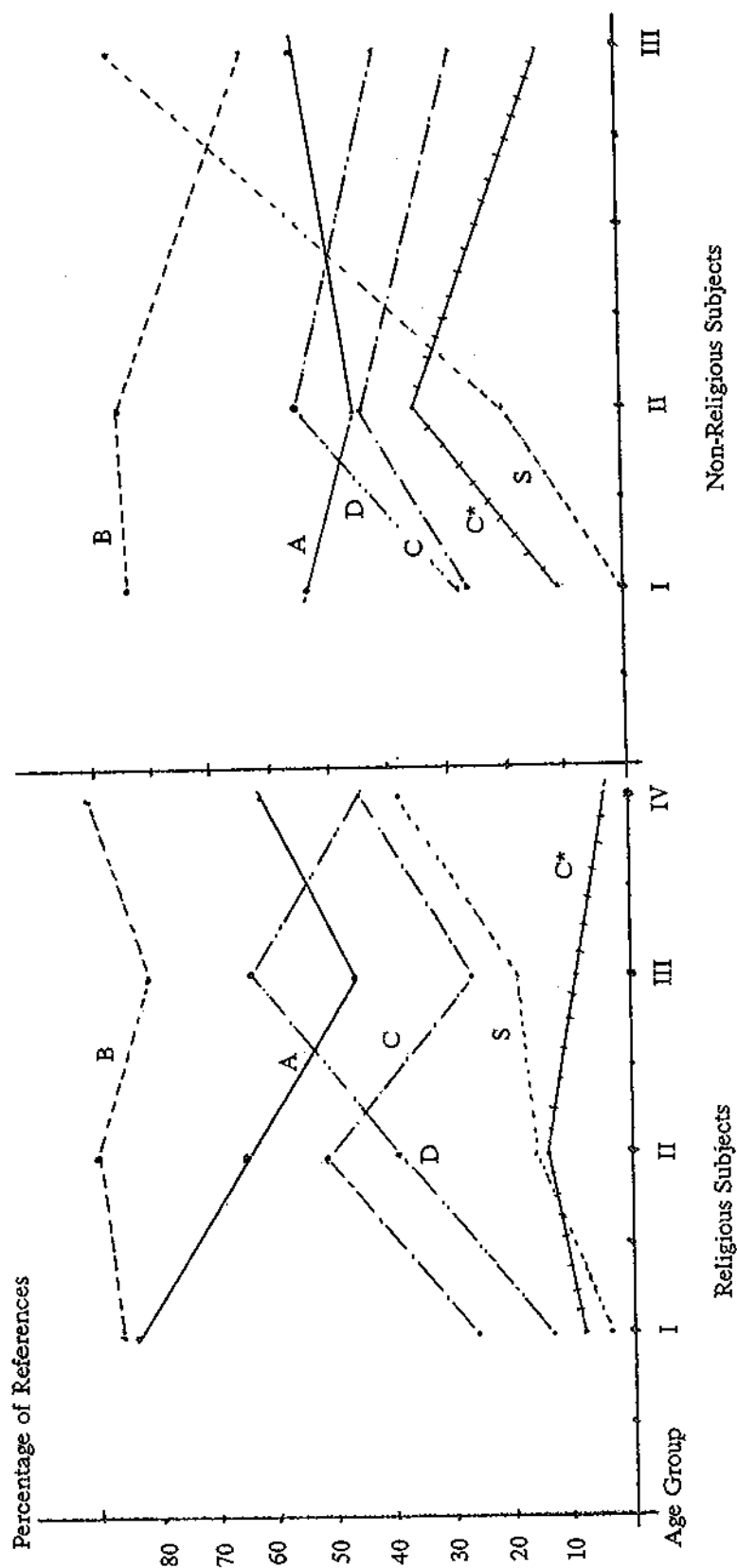


Figure 1:  
Content Areas: Frequencies of References According to Age Groups

characteristics of the praying person as affecting the efficacy of prayer.

*Content Area C:* The content of prayer. The second age group of both the religious and non-religious subjects mentions this category most frequently, although the references are fewer among the non-religious subjects. The oldest religious age group mentions it as well.

*Content Area D:* Perception of God's will and judgment. This factor plays an increasingly important role with age, the peak being age group III for the religious subjects, followed by a slight decline. The non-religious subjects begin to mention it earlier.

*Content Area S:* Prayer as subjective-reflexive. In this content area the linear correlation with age is the most obvious. Both religious and non-religious subjects start to mention it only in 4th grade, with the peak at the highest age group of both. However, as opposed to the non-religious subjects, among the religious ones this content area does *not* replace others, but accompanies them.

At first glance, from the standpoint of the earlier researches, the results might seem to suggest that the religious, largely Orthodox, population is less religiously mature than the non-religious one, since they continue to use *content areas* mentioned by the younger age groups. However, a closer look at which of the *categories within* each content area are mentioned by the two populations, sheds a different light on the problem. Figure 2 shows the distribution of the categories within each content area among the different age groups of religious and non-religious subjects.

*Content Area A* – Attitude, posture and behavior in the praying situation.

Category  $A_1$  – external elements – appear most frequently in the first age level (1st, 2nd and 3rd grades) religious and non-religious, and then decline and disappear completely in the oldest age group for both religious and non-religious subjects.

Category  $A_2$  – “inner” attitude – reaches its peak between 4th, 5th, and 6th grades in both religious and non-religious subjects and then declines somewhat. In the oldest religious group it reappears.

Category  $A_3$  – prayer as a human need – begins to appear for both groups only in 5th grade and reaches its peak in the oldest age groups.

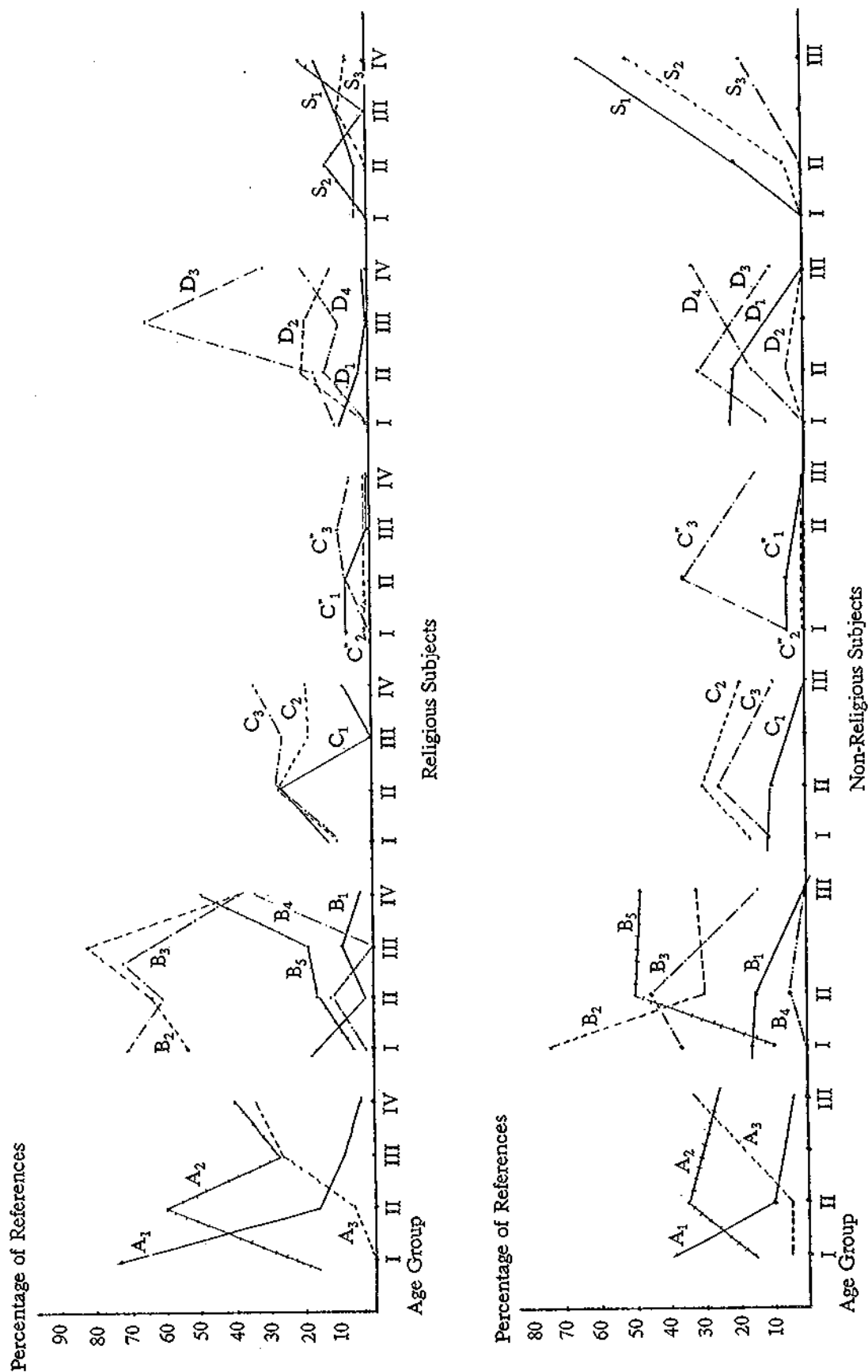


Figure 2:  
Categories: Frequencies of References According to Age Groups

*Content Area B – The praying person.*

Category B<sub>1</sub> – “a specific act” – has a very low frequency altogether. The kindergarten children, who were interviewed but not included in the final sample, mentioned it frequently. In the religious group it disappears after the first age level, and among the non-religious after 4th grade (second level).

Category B<sub>2</sub> – “the righteous and the wicked” – appears at the highest frequency in the first age level, both religious and non-religious, reaches its peak in the second level, and then declines in both groups.

Category B<sub>3</sub> – “good deeds, commandments” – reaches its peak in the second age level, both religious and non-religious, then declines in two steps.

Category B<sub>4</sub> – faith and deeds – appears only in the older religious group in 8th grade and reaches its peak in the 9th–10th grade.

Category B<sub>5</sub> – faith of the praying person – is similar to B<sub>4</sub>, but at a higher frequency.

*Content Area C – Content of prayer.*

Category C<sub>1</sub> – good/bad petition – has a low rate of reference frequency. It peaks within the second age group of the religious subjects. Later it disappears.

Category C<sub>2</sub> – non-trivial materialistic petition – appears mostly in the middle age group among both religious and non-religious subjects.

Category C<sub>3</sub> – altruistic prayers – increases gradually among the religious subjects until it peaks within the oldest group. Among the non-religious subjects, its frequency of mention is very low, with the exception of the middle group.

Category C\* – Apart from c\*<sub>3</sub> in the non-religious population, the c\* content area appears with extremely low frequency.

*Content Area D – The will of God.*

Category D<sub>1</sub> – the arbitrary will of God, His limitations – hardly appears at all in the religious subjects; only a few mention it in the youngest age group. Among the non-religious subjects it is mentioned more frequently, especially in the first two age groups. In the oldest age group it disappears.

Category D<sub>2</sub> – the will of God unexplained – appears essen-

tially only among the religious subjects. It first appears and peaks within the second age group and then declines.

Category  $D_3$  – God's judgment and considerations – appear first in 3rd grade, peak in 8th grade, and then decline. The second age group of the non-religious subjects (4th–6th grade) mentions it more frequently than the other two age groups of these subjects.

Category  $D_4$  – God's will, incomprehensible – makes its first appearance in isolated cases in the second age level and then gradually increases until it peaks in 10th grade in both groups.

*Content Area S* – Prayer as subjective and reflexive. This content area is the one most obviously age-linked. It appears only in the older group, (both religious and non-religious), and even then with low frequency.

Category  $S_1$  – subjective explanation after the fact – appears more frequently in the non-religious group, starting in the second age level and increasing in the third.

Category  $S_2$  – prayer as catharsis, psychological help, support – begins to appear with low frequency in the second age group of the religious subjects and increases somewhat at the highest age level, where it also appears among the non-religious with a greater frequency.

Category  $S_3$  – prayer as a goal in itself, as improving (training) the soul – appears only in the oldest age group.

We see that the differences between age groups are expressed in the preference for more complex and abstract categories within content areas (e.g. moving in Content Area A, How, from  $A_1$  – concrete, pragmatic elements external to the essence of prayer, to  $A_2$  – internal attitude, to  $A_3$  – prayer as a need of the soul) rather than in the preference for one content area over another. Content areas do not disappear with age. Among the religious subjects, this pattern is more evident than among the non-religious subjects at the older age levels who tend to refer to just one content area (Area S – prayer as subjective reference). This content area is unique in that it appears in the older age levels only, but while in part of the older non-religious group it tends to replace other content areas, in the older religious group it tends to accompany them. Thus the religious group relates to the subjective-reflexive aspect of prayer, but it does not give up

the other aspects of it as expressed in the other content areas. Its distinction from the younger age groups who refer to the same content areas is in the categories it chooses to express its views. The older age groups relate to categories that are unique in that they are abstract and complex.

#### *The Interrelation of the Components of the Prayer Concept*

So far, we have traced the development of each one of the components – the content areas and categories – separately. In order to get a first comprehensive picture of the development of the prayer concept with all the components taken together simultaneously, we used the Guttman-Lingoes Multidimensional Scalogram Analysis (GL-MSA I) program. It is particularly suitable for qualitative unordered data, certainly for an exploratory study of this nature, as it is useful for describing typologies when a large number of items and profiles are involved. Zevulun (1978) states: "(The MSA I) permits the depiction of studied objects while making full use of the original data in their raw form and revealing relations that exists among them..." (p. 237).

The MSA I is a non-metric technique for presenting a set of qualitative variables through a series of partitions of Euclidean space. The purpose of the program is to find the smallest space into which it is possible to map whole profiles, with all their components, taken together simultaneously. A profile is a set of categories taken from each one of the variables. They are then mapped into contiguous zones in such a way that each profile is represented by a point on the space that was formed. As it is possible to have identical profiles for different subjects, the number of profiles is not necessarily equal to the number of subjects. The closer two profiles are in the diagram, the greater the similarity between them. Similarity here refers only to the components of the profiles based on contiguity with no *a priori* premise of and order or relationship within the variables, between them or in the profiles.

The contiguity coefficient is the measure of the extent to which contiguity regions have been created. It takes into account both the number of "deviating" points, those that do not conform to the contiguity condition and the extent of the deviation. The contiguity coefficient can range from +.10 in a perfect contiguous

zone division, i.e. where the regions of the categories are clear cut divisions separated by "simple" lines to -.10 where there are no contiguous zones. The coefficient for the religious group was 9.76 and 9.31 for the non-religious group (usually a coefficient of .90 is considered satisfactory).

### Profiles

The basic score (profile), for each subject was obtained by regular content analysis procedure, and was composed of the frequency of each one of the content categories in his/her protocol. Interjudge reliability was obtained by comparing two judges' evaluation of 120 protocols. In 86% of the cases there was full agreement.

To obtain the MSA I profiles on the basis of the basic score, the subject was assigned the major category which characterizes his/her entire protocol for each one of the content areas. This was done in one of two ways:

1. A "pure" case: When the frequency of that category is higher by 2 or more than the other categories in that content area, e.g. if there are 1  $A_1$ , 3  $A_2$ , and 1  $A_3$  in the protocol, the subject's category for Content Area A would be  $A_2$ .
2. A "mixed" case: When the difference between the frequency of categories for each content area is less than 2, a mixed category would appear in the profile, e.g. if there are 1  $A_1$ , 2  $A_2$ , 0  $A_3$  in the protocol the subject's category for content area A would be  $A_{1,2}$ . This process was repeated for the rest of the content areas until each subject was assigned a profile with one value (a pure or mixed category) for each content area.

### *The Religious Subjects*

Figure 3 shows the partition of MSA I item No. 1: Class, for the religious subjects.

According to Figure 3, the space is partitioned into four areas which are made up of four age levels.

*Age level I:* 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade. The zone is relatively "pure" with few "invasions" from other areas.

*Age level II:* 4th grade — a separate group located quite apart from the younger group. The profiles need to be examined to explain the distance.

*Age level III:* 5th–8th grades. This is the most heterogeneous group with “invasions” especially from the oldest group. There is a small subgroup closer to the oldest group.

*Age level IV:* 9th–10th grades. This group is clearly apart from the other groups, but is composed of what seem to be two clusters.

We see, then, that the sample does divide according to age, i.e., that there is a difference between children's conception of prayer at different ages. In order to get a picture of what this differential concept consists of, it is possible to construct the characteristic profile of each age level by tracing the partition of the age item on each one of the content area items.

The resulting profiles for each age level are the following. Categories in parentheses are of low frequency.

*Group*

Age group I	(1–3rd grade)	A <sub>1</sub> B <sub>1</sub> (B <sub>2</sub> )
Age group II	(4th grade)	B <sub>mixed</sub> C <sub>1</sub> (C <sub>3</sub> ) (D <sub>3</sub> ) (S <sub>2</sub> )
Age group III	(5–8th grade)	1. A <sub>2</sub> B <sub>1</sub> B <sub>2</sub> (C <sub>3</sub> ) D <sub>2</sub> D <sub>3</sub> (D <sub>4</sub> ) 2. (A <sub>2</sub> ) (B <sub>mixed</sub> ) (C <sub>3</sub> ) (D <sub>4</sub> ) (S <sub>1</sub> )
Age group IV	(9–10th grade)	1. A <sub>2</sub> B <sub>2</sub> (B <sub>4</sub> ) (B <sub>5</sub> ) C <sub>3</sub> D <sub>4</sub> S <sub>2</sub>

The partitions of the zones of the content items give an idea of what it is that sets apart one age level from the other (e.g., the distancing of Age group II from Age group I) and the apparent closeness of some others (e.g., youngest age group to the oldest). It is the refraining from mentioning some content areas altogether (C-D-S) that brings the youngest age group close to some of the oldest profiles, but of course the different way the two age groups referred to the common content areas (using different categories) sets them apart. The second age group, 4th grade, mentioned a variety of content areas in their own combination which also sets them apart. Those who referred to S were pulled closer to the oldest group.

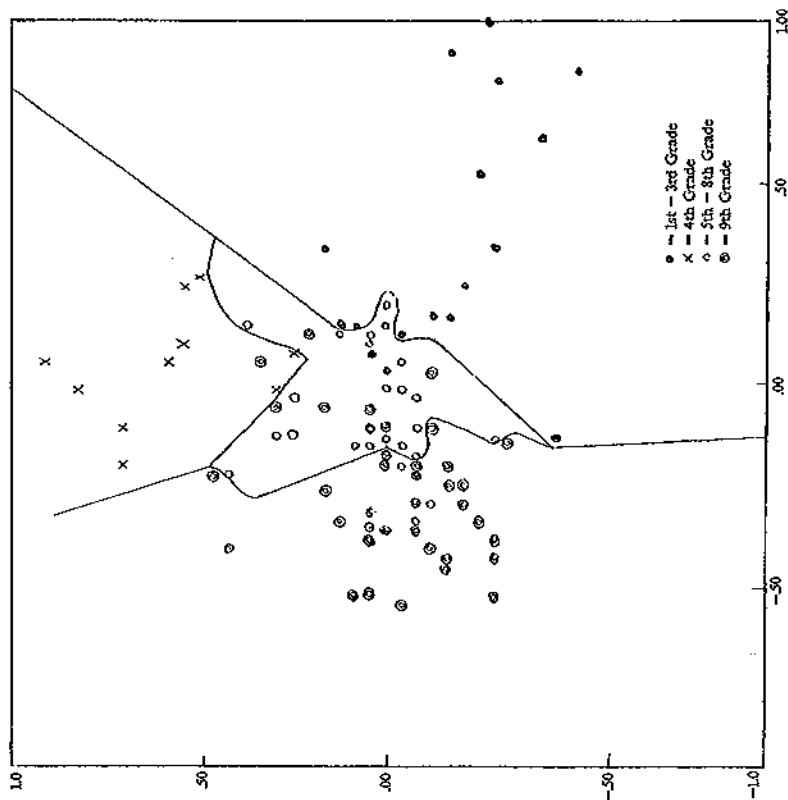


Figure 3:  
Partition of MSA I Item 1: Class (Religious)

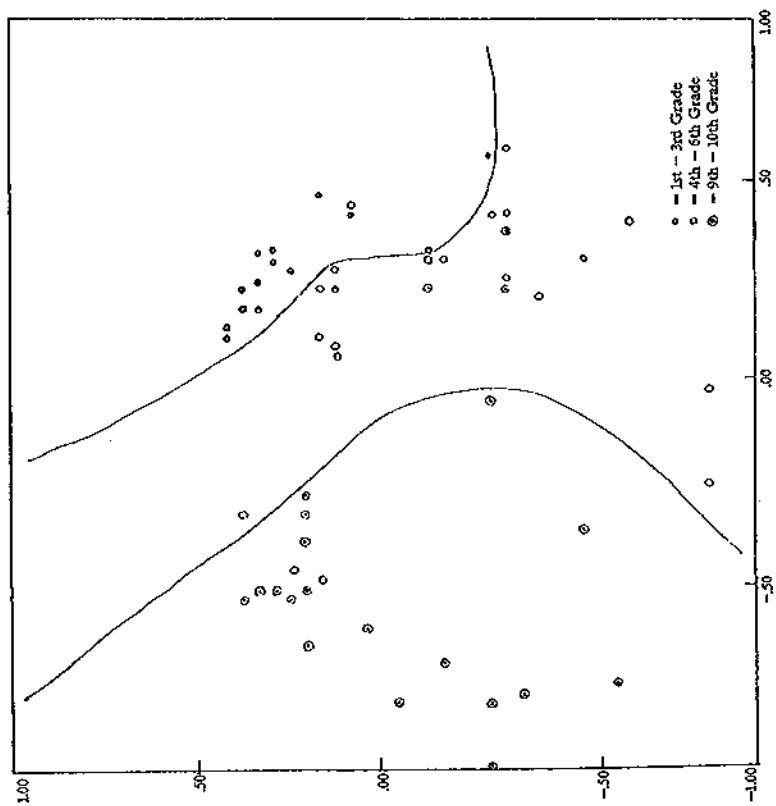


Figure 4:  
Partition of MSA I Item 1: Class (Non-Religious)

### *The Non-Religious Subjects*

Figure 4 shows the partition of item MSA I No. 1: Class for the non-religious subjects. The space is partitioned into three contiguity zones, i.e. age levels.

Age group I	(1-2nd grade)	(A <sub>1</sub> ) (B <sub>3</sub> ) B <sub>1</sub> (C <sub>1</sub> ) (D <sub>1</sub> )
Age group II	(4-6th grade)	A <sub>2</sub> B <sub>2</sub> C <sub>2</sub> D <sub>2</sub>
Age group III	(9-10th grade)	1. (C <sub>3</sub> ) (D <sub>4</sub> ) S <sub>1</sub> 2. A <sub>3</sub> B <sub>4</sub> C <sub>3</sub> (D <sub>mixed</sub> ) S <sub>2,3</sub>

Here the closeness of Age groups I and III is in the non-usage of certain categories. The second subgroup in the oldest group is placed at a distance because they mentioned a variety of content areas using "higher" categories.

Two tracks of development can be traced in this group. The first evolves from a narrow profile with one category (A<sub>1</sub> or D<sub>1</sub>) through a more complex profile with middle categories A<sub>2</sub>, B<sub>2</sub>, D<sub>2</sub>, etc., to a narrow profile once again, made up mainly of S. The second follows the same pattern at the beginning, reaching at the highest age group a more complex profile using a variety of content areas but with "higher" categories (low, left).

### AGE PROFILES - SAMPLE RESPONSES

The following are abstracts of sample responses in each age group:

*Age Group I* - (1st-3rd grade religious, 1st-2nd grade non-religious)

*Why do we pray?* "To thank God who helps us all the time. We thank God for giving us food - thanks instead of money."

*Forgiveness* - "She<sup>3</sup> says in her prayers that she won't do bad deeds any more, will help old people, will help her mother, she asks God to forgive her for not helping her mother (not so much afraid of punishment)."

*Petition* - "She prays for peace, that there will be no war and if, God forbid, there will be a war, then the girl will stay in Israel, and if the Egyptians win, they won't take her to be a slave."

For the youngest children, as we have seen, the concept of prayer is not very complex. *How* we pray is very important in

3 "She" or "he" refers to the child/adolescent in the stimulus picture.

the mind of the young religious child — i.e., pragmatic elements, especially religious ones: "If he wears a skullcap and fringed garment, it (the prayer) will be accepted, if not even if he says everything — no." This is a continuation of the youngest children's (kindergarten) ideas: "If he peeks while saying 'Hear O Israel' (the verse is said with a hand covering the eyes), his prayer will not be accepted, or if he doesn't have a good voice, God won't be able to hear so well and won't know what to bring." Specific religious customs regarding how to pray, e.g., not moving while saying certain prayers, might spoil the chances if not kept: "If a wicked person doesn't feel like saying part of the prayer, he disturbs the others, pushes them, hurries them on or tickles them so that they move when it is forbidden to do so."

The characteristics of the praying person himself are less salient in these children's minds. The closer they are to the older age group, the more salient these characteristics become. The younger ones, if they mention deeds at all, speak of specific good or bad deeds without distinction between moral or religious ones. "If he does something wrong, especially in the middle of prayer, it won't be fulfilled" or "a non-religious person's prayer might be fulfilled if he says it during the week, but not on the Sabbath because he rides in a car" (it is forbidden to travel on the Sabbath).

Content hardly plays a role. When it does, it is dichotomized between good petitions and bad (harmful) ones. "If she asks for food — sure she'll get it. But He won't let Egypt invade Israel, even if they pray."

The quantity of prayer is also important and has a direct proportional influence: "If 10 children pray, she (the sick person being prayed for) will get well faster. Fewer people, say, five, it will take longer (for her to get well)." As for the one who receives the prayer, the children's concepts are obviously anthropomorphic. "God doesn't want to fulfill bad petitions. He doesn't want to do evil. If He does evil, people will say that it's not worthwhile being His friend." Anyway, He has limitations, according to some of these children. "He can't bring her candy, He can't get into the supermarket." "That, she can buy by herself." "What can He do? He can build the Holy Temple again." "He can give her straight teeth, not crooked ones..."

*Age Group II* – 4th grade religious, 4–6th grade non-religious  
 The religious children of this age group understand prayer as a religious act taking the place of sacrifices in the Holy Temple and “to thank God who created us and gave us many things – brains, food, clothes, etc.” According to the non-religious group “people pray because they believe in God or want to believe in Him” or “in order to honor God – they read the Bible and afterwards want to honor God.”

Although in this particular sample only a very few non-religious children, beginning in the 6th grade, stated unequivocally that they do not believe in God, skepticism as to the direct efficacy of prayer does appear at times as a result of life experience in both groups: “Once I prayed the whole night that, let’s say, my bad tooth would get better and it wasn’t fulfilled, so I went to the dentist.” The 6th graders of both groups often express the two possibilities without deciding between them. “A person who believes and trusts in God, if it happens (a petition is fulfilled) will say it’s from God, a non-believer won’t think it came because of God – rather reality caused it.”

Petitions at this stage are usually concerned with some form of difficulty or problem: “To protect my father in the army, that he will come back safely” or: “That the Jewish people will be free and all nations will not be at war... that all nations will have a good government.”

This somber attitude is reflected in the way the children perceive the conditions for the efficacy of prayer. Once free from “perceptual immediacy”, i.e. being bound to concrete, pragmatic elements, which are external to the essence of prayer (e.g. wearing a skullcap, the tone of voice in prayer), the children now point to the content of prayer as important: “They should be prayers that are not silly and are useful... if he asks for a free house, he won’t get it because he lives in order to study and work and he shouldn’t have it so easy.”

The deeds of people which are understood to have a decisive influence on reality in general are perceived to play an important role in the efficacy of prayer in particular: “If the mother did a lot for the child and was good, God will make her recover (after the child prays for her). But if she was good only when company comes and when they go away she starts yelling and complaining, God won’t help her.” In this vein it appears that God is also

influenced by pressure groups: "More people asking makes an impression, more influence on God."

The children's growing ability to take into account more than one relation at a time is expressed in the breadth of the profile which is now more complex, mentioning various content areas as conditions for the efficacy of prayer. Sometimes these elements are in conflict. Then the final decision is in the hands of God, whose point of view the "concrete operational" child can now take, because of his/her ability for the first time to see to see things from the other's vantage point. Rules are important in these children's thinking, and general law is perceived as immanent in the universe. Every phenomenon has a cause. Thus they begin to perceive God, the final judge as to whether the prayer will be accepted, not as acting arbitrarily, as the younger children did, but rather as acting according to just rules. They cannot always clearly formulate a body of rules as do their elders, but they can name some of them. For example, mutuality is very important in these children's thinking: "After all the bad things he did, after he didn't keep the laws of the Torah, he comes and asks for favors?!"

It is important to note how the concepts children use have a special meaning for them – different from the adult conception: "If the child believes in God, that means he respects Him. Then God will respect him back and fulfill his petitions." Here "belief in God" is understood as a behavior which brings as a reward the fulfillment of the petitions. Obviously, the existence of God is not in question for this child. Another example is the use these children make of the common Jewish religious concept of "intentionality" (*kavanah*) in prayer. For them it means "to ask real hard" or "to really really want what you ask for."

Most surprising were the polytheistic ideas of some children in the non-religious group. Apparently they interpreted what they have learned about the existence of other religions to mean that "each religion believes in a different god," therefore there are many gods. One child expressed it so: "Each religion has its own god. The Jewish people have God and the Christians have Holy Mary, so that the non-Jew should not always come to God because He won't help him. If he is Christian he should go to Holy Mary, she'll help him..." Another child answered the question whether the prayer of the non-Jew is answered by saying:

"Maybe there is an Allah or something like that, so if He really exists then it is fulfilled. If there really is a god besides ours, it is fulfilled."

*Age Group III* – 5th–8th grade religious (there is no comparable non-religious group, as the non-religious subjects divided up differently in the MSA I.)

The intermediate group is the most heterogeneous, sensing the abstract element of prayer but often not being able to express it. "I can't explain it, I know it inside of me – petition, thanks to God." Those closer to the oldest age group express it so: "When a person has a problem, and can't express it in words, he has prayer" or "She expresses her feeling towards religion to her God, maybe thinks who He is" or "When you pray you think of service to God and try to be close to him."

Petitions tend to be for the community, the people, or mankind: "She feels she should pray that miracles should happen to others, not even herself, but to family and friends if they are in a bad situation, for Jews in the Diaspora, that there should be no wars."

Conditions that determine the efficacy of prayer are very complicated and include almost all of the content areas. Still, man's deeds are important and so is reciprocity in one's relationship with God, which includes the possibility of influencing Him. The child is aware of the complicated nature of the question and tries, like a juggler, to balance the various categories in his/her answer, all in what seems like Talmudic reasoning: "The wicked man's prayer for his mother won't be accepted – it is like punishment, he did something bad so he gets punished in return. His mother won't be well, but it might be that it is not so serious, let's say a test, and he prays only that he should do well, even if he is wicked, he might succeed. To succeed in a test, if you are a good student, is no big deal. His prayer for this small thing might be accepted, but not for the big thing... The little thing is not something special for him and he won't be very happy because of it."

Among all these complicated elements, it is finally God who decides according to the following criteria: (1) God's preference for good people: "He doesn't like wicked or wild people." (2) His activities: "God deals with big things." (3) His attributes: God is usually compassionate. "Maybe He'll have mercy, seeing that he

wants to repent with all his heart.”

They try to understand His ways: (1) retribution according to deeds; (2) answering prayer in order that repenters will continue in the good way; (3) presenting trials for man “...When he doesn’t want from inside to repent, only now, so that his mother will get well and afterwards he’ll continue doing wrong...so God presents him with a trial. He might make his mother well (and see if he really repents). Just like during the war, people used to swear that they would put on phylacteries daily (a Jewish ritualistic practice) if they return safely. That is how God behaves with him.”

*Age Group IV* – 9th–10th grade religious, 9th–10th grade non-religious

What sets this group apart from the others most clearly is the adolescents’ valuation of prayer as important in itself and as having a great effect on the praying person him/herself for a variety of reasons depending on the adolescents’ beliefs. Obviously, this view is based on the ability of the adolescent to see his/her thoughts, feelings and personality as objects of his/her thinking. Those who negate the existence of a transpersonal being to whom one might pray, view prayer as a psychological need: “Every person has the need to believe – it is connected to hope and it is called different names – nature, God, their father, but finally it is an illusion” and “Those religious people who believe and pray, do it out of habit, desperation or weakness – they have a dependency.”

The “non-conventional” believer talked of “a personal God who is like a friend” and “when he suffers, the fact that he opens himself up and talks to someone who can help him – that is the help.” Or: “Prayer helps (the person himself) to realize things. It is another factor that allows him (psychologically) to realize his/her hopes.”

The relativistic attitude of many of these adolescents is interesting and in line with Kohlberg’s findings on moral development. Take for example this adolescent’s view, “There are people who have an ideal or something that not everyone believes in, it is not necessarily (our) God. You can take something particular, believe in it and talk to it. The thing that counts is the degree of faith, not the specific religion. There is no such thing as a wicked

person, he does what he decided for himself in his faith."

Characteristic of adolescents are the seeming contradictions which were less apparent in the more unidimensional development presented by Goldmann, Elkind and Brown. Alongside this "high" talk are the petitions themselves which again are very personal and apparently mundane (especially when compared to the altruistic petitions of the younger children). "(I pray for) success on a test, or if I go out with a girl, that the romance will succeed."

The religious youth usually place great importance on prayer. "It is a great thing for me. I have the privilege of going to pray before Him." For them prayer is "a common language between myself and the Lord, a way to communicate and bond with God. That is what brings me closer to God – the worship of the heart." Especially it is meant to "remind me that there is a God and that one should pray to Him. You are living because of Him – to thank Him that the whole world exists, especially that the Jewish people still exist after all the wars that have befallen them."

Yet these adolescents still believe in the efficacy of prayer and also attach some importance to other content areas. For example, they accept the importance of formal prayer and see a dimension of holiness to it. They also accept the importance of the praying community as an abstract entity. "The revelation of God is in the praying community – there is also holiness in the community." This is obviously different from the younger children's idea that the more people praying the better because of the increase in number of prayers, or because it is a larger pressure group.

The concept of a "great, pious man" is particular to religious adolescents. This is a man of especially deep faith, greatness both in learning and wisdom, and an especially pious way of life. His prayer has a better chance of being answered.

But finally these religious youth see the fulfillment of prayer as part of God's plan and direction of the world that they cannot understand: "These are God's considerations, I cannot reach His level, His presence fills the world. (The plan) is within His conceptual forms. I cannot reach it."

## Discussion and Conclusion

A more specific level of data interpretation — that which goes beyond the use of general developmental psychological categories — may be more problematic. As was mentioned in the introduction, avoiding a theological bias in the psychological interpretation of the data is difficult.

It seems that research in cognitive religious development usually chooses one of two basic methods for interpreting the empirical material:

1. Description and analyses of the religious content in formal structural Piagetian terms, as in other areas. This can be done in two ways: (a) a description of the form of thinking about religious content (concrete/abstract, vague/differentiated, etc.) or the type of reasoning (transductive, syncretistic, etc.). For example, "prayer is some words you say in church" is concrete thinking, while "prayer is personal communication with God is abstract thinking; (b) characterizing the content of belief by the thought mechanism believed to underlie these beliefs (animistic, artificialistic or magical thinking etc.). For example, "If I pray hard I'll get it (the bicycle)" is magical thinking.
2. A description of religious stages in line with the Kohlberg model. Intuitively it seems that these methods of interpreting data — 1<sub>a</sub>, 1<sub>b</sub>, and 2 — because of their increasing focus on content as opposed to form — form a scale of increasing probability of contaminating psychological considerations with theological or metaphysical ones. (It seems that even the "purest" form — restricting oneself to pure structural/formal description — has its hazards. Long, Elkind and Spilka's [1967] apparently quite neutral work was criticized for what was considered a biased questionnaire [e.g., Where do prayers go, "to pray *for* something"]).

Goldman (1964), for example, apparently realizing this problem, and confronting his critics, wrote that his work, especially the application of his findings to educational programs, is probably less fitting for religious fundamentalists, who would not agree even with his interpretation of the data.

The researcher is thus faced with a dilemma. The "pure" structural Piagetian analysis of religious thinking is inherently of

limited interest. Beyond confirming basic Piagetian thought structures as applied to yet another realm, they fail to describe the "real stuff" of religious development. On the other hand, the *a priori* application of proposed "universal" religious stages (Oser et al., 1979; Fowler, 1981) seems premature. The current state of our knowledge, with the controversy about universal vs. cultural-specific stages far from settled, calls for meticulous empirical study of different religious cultures, leaving the data open for later interpretation.

In this study, a clear development of the prayer concept with age was found. Also, a difference between the two populations, the religious and the non-religious, was seen. Part of the non-religious group was more similar to the non-Jewish groups reported in the literature discussed above, in that certain content areas tended to replace others with increase in age, i.e., the efficacy of prayer was conceived more as a subjective-reflexive matter than as influenced by attitude, characteristics and conduct of the praying person, and content of prayer. The religious group (and part of the non-religious group) had a totally different pattern. Content areas did not disappear with age, but rather the level of their conceptualization changed. Efficacy of prayer was perceived as very complex. This distinction between the content of belief and the form of expressing it is indispensable for understanding religious development.

The non-religious subjects tend to develop concepts of prayer through substitution, where disappearing concepts are replaced by others, while the religious ones develop their concepts through integration, where earlier concepts are assimilated into more complex concepts.

It seems that the non-religious subjects, being far more distant from Jewish tradition and practice, are conceptually closer to the general *Zeitgeist* of Western culture, while the religious ones have more culture-specific conceptions. It would be interesting to compare these religious subjects with orthodox groups in other religions.

This difference is, of course, open to interpretation. Some may argue that the mere fact that the oldest religious age group still refers to efficacy of prayer as influenced by the attitude of the praying person, by his characteristics, by the content of prayer and by the will of God, is a sign of immaturity and is similar to

the youngest children's conception. On the other hand, the MSA I showed that these older pupils' concepts are actually far different from those of the younger ones. Whereas they do refer to the same content areas, the older pupils use different categories altogether, abstract and complex categories that are not found among the pupils in the younger age groups. It seems that, for some religious concepts, young children have a basic intuition which later develops in its form and conceptualization, while other concepts (or content areas) only come later.

Yet the difference between content of belief and the level of expressing it cannot simply be ignored. In 1971 Godin commented that, although three levels of interpretation of religious development studies could be discerned – the verbal, the epistemological and the religious – it seems that in most cases the differentiation between the epistemological and religious dimensions has not been maintained. It is obviously legitimate within a specific theology to pronounce as inadequate a certain belief (as, for example, the possibility of causing a change in external reality). But when a claim to universality is made, we are no longer dealing with religious criteria. In the case of the earlier studies of the development of prayer (e.g., Brown, 1966, 1968; Goldman, 1964), the claim was that there are stages of cognitive development in respect to the conception of prayer. These described stages are not only empirical, but are also meant to be epistemological, and as such have a claim to normative growth towards greater proximity to the truth. (That is certainly true when certain beliefs are characterized as magical, animistic or artificialistic thinking.)

In order to establish a claim of epistemological stages concerning prayer, we need to set up criteria to judge the truth about prayer and conceptions of its efficacy. Do we have such criteria? Is it possible to do so universally?

Godin (1971) further states: "The relation between magic mentality and religious mentality is very complicated. These two types of mentality are so bound up with each other that only within the context of an organized religion in a specific culture is it possible to name a form of prayer 'magic' or 'religious.'" So it is with regard to petitionary prayer. Godin does admit that it is possible to express it in a highly developed philosophical mode as well as a simple spontaneous one and is willing to accept as

legitimate some attitudes favorable to petitionary prayer that are expressed in a highly developed way. The focus is on form as opposed to content. However, he claims (as a religionist, obviously) that even if we are willing to accept petitionary prayer as legitimate, we are bound to "purify" it from elements springing from magical mentality and superstition. Psychology, he claims, can help us to point out and understand this type of mentality.

What is obvious from this particular study and the other developmental ones discussed here is that the strongest empirical support for the stage claim is always in the pre-formal level or lower stages. It is then that the known assimilation processes (those that we have been able to discern) are most obvious and they distort all abstract material in a similar predictable way. The structure overwhelms the content. This is true, of course, for religious content as well. This is why, in the lower stages, the similarity among different cross-cultural groups is the greatest, and the essence of psychological vs. theological (or moral) interpretation is less problematic.

Perhaps what happens later is that when the assimilatory processes cease to be so alien to the world of the adult, i.e., when formal thinking is achieved, and the adolescent is capable of understanding and expressing abstract theological contents, whether formal or informal, the problem of "pure" psychological interpretation of the data becomes more complicated. We did see that with regard to prayer. The adolescents could express conceptions opposed to their own (but not *lower* psychologically) and reject them. The problem is, of course, whether determining the ontological status or the religious status of such views is within the realm of psychology.

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## DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES IN THE TEACHING OF MIDRASH

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Although developmental psychological studies abound, classroom teaching is seldom analyzed critically from the point of view of the child's development. Teaching, being a practical day-to-day enterprise, deals primarily with what works successfully in the actual classroom setting (Lieberman & Miller, 1984). If students seem to grasp the concepts being taught, and if there is good, lively discussion in the class, then the conclusion is most often drawn that the students have understood what the teacher intended to transmit.

In the Jewish classroom, the child is often presented with rather sophisticated religious content, such as biblical texts. However, there are few empirical studies of actual classroom data from a developmental perspective, analyzing students' ability to understand this material. There is consequently little solid basis for deciding which types of texts may be appropriate to children of various ages, or for judging to what extent children of different ages are able to understand them. Selections of material and assumptions about the learning process are conjectural at best.

The present study attempts to apply the results of relevant research in developmental psychology to classroom data in the area of *midrash*. The goal is to draw some conclusions about the developmental issues involved in teaching *midrash* which may have wider implications for other areas of teaching religious texts.

The application of developmental psychology to the field of education has been problematic. As Egan (1981) cautions, attempts to generalize implications from developmental psychology directly to the educational situation often result in unwarranted conclusions or in such vague statements as, "one should not expect the young to understand very abstract concepts" (p. 18).

\* The author wishes to thank Wendy Garf-Lipp, Andrea Ilse, and Marcia Kaunfer for providing classroom data for this study.

Another problem is that developmental psychological studies have focused on theoretical questions which are framed outside the context of the classroom. Even when such studies are motivated by educational questions, researchers have looked at data gathered from carefully controlled experimental situations rather than from actual classroom interaction.

Although the data used in the present study is anecdotal, selections are based on information gathered from actual classroom discussions and assignments. It is hoped that a careful and judicious application of developmental studies to actual classroom data will represent a new direction in educational research.

### The Area of Study: Midrash

The special focus of the present study is on developmental issues related to *midrash*, which is a literature composed largely of interpretations, stories, legends, analogies, and parables. The methods used in *midrash* reflect what Isaac Heinemann (1970) calls "organic thinking." Organic thinking is characterized by a non-abstract mode of cognition which seeks to concretize abstract philosophies and ideas into specific, concrete forms. Telescoping of events, anachronisms, identification of anonymous characters, play on words, and the use of stories and parables, are some of the techniques characteristic of *midrashic* literature. It might be assumed that organic thinking, which attempts to concretize the abstract, reflects the developmental stage of young minds. However, this assumption is untested.

*Midrash* has been taught in a day school in Rhode Island for five years; however, the actual results of teaching *midrash* have not been analyzed from a developmental perspective. An attempt was made, therefore, to explore the question of whether *midrash* was age-appropriate to the grades in which it was taught, and to determine the extent and depth to which students understood the *midrashim* that they were studying. Teachers had used two methods in conveying *midrash*: one was production of "*midrashim*," the other was analysis of traditional *midrashim*. The production of "*midrashim*" included assignments of writing a "*midrash*" to "fill in" a part of the biblical story which was missing. Such assignments included, for example, asking students to tell what Abraham might have been like as a little boy, or how

he felt when he went to sacrifice Isaac. Another "*midrash*"—producing technique was the use of synectics to explore *midrashic* analogies (Kaunfer, 1980). Synectics, from the Greek term for metaphor, is a technique for developing creative thinking by the use of metaphors and analogies. Students might have been asked to explore, in discussion, in writing (or in both), how the Jewish people are like "the dust of the earth," or how the Israelites were like "a sheep caught between a shepherd and a wolf." Such synectic analogies were based on actual *midrashic* analogies (*mashalim*). Synectic exercises sometimes included "being the thing" in order to further explore the aspects of the metaphor.

Teachers receiving what they deemed to be "interesting" and "creative" responses did not look critically at the students' level of understanding. The intention here is to explore that issue from a developmental perspective and to draw not only some conclusions about the teaching of *midrash* but also some more general implications about the teaching process and developmental issues.

#### *Developmental Issues Relevant to Midrash*

Several developmental issues were delineated as being relevant to an analysis of classroom data on the teaching of *midrash*. The theory of cognitive development expounded by Piaget and his colleagues has served as a framework for other areas of child development. Specifically, those areas include developmental studies in metaphor and symbol, story, empathy, and religious thinking. These topics were deemed most relevant to the style and methods of *midrash*. Some general characteristics of the child's thinking in each of these areas were then derived as a basis for analyzing the student data.

Some of Piaget's major observations on cognitive development are basic to other areas of development. He characterizes the child's thinking from about age 2 to 7 as pre-operational. Thought at this stage is not reversible or systematic. The child only sees one aspect of a problem and assumes that an isolated feature is central. As the child enters the stage of concrete operations, he/she is able to reason both inductively and deductively on a limited scale. The child can now put two or more aspects of a situation together; he/she has a notion of reversibil-

ity and of conservation. He/she now begins to master classification, relations, time, space, and quantity. However, he/she is limited in that he/she concentrates on relating things which are perceptually visible or tangibly present. Not until the stage of formal operations is the child able to manipulate mental constructions independently of perceptual givens and concrete data. At this stage, the child can reason hypothetically and propositionally. To a child in the stage of concrete operations, the statement "suppose coal were white," would evoke the answer "but coal cannot be white," since he/she cannot conceive of a mental construction not borne out by reality. However, to the formal operational thinker, such a hypothesis could be accepted as the basis for further mental manipulation and testing. At this stage several factors can be combined and recombined in a systematic way.

Such developmental cognitive characteristics parallel growth in other areas. The ability to create and understand metaphors and figurative language has been the subject of much recent research. Howard Gardner, who has been one of the leaders in this field of study, indicates a paradox in the child's understanding of metaphor (Gardner, 1976, 1982). On the one hand, young children seem naturally able to produce vivid and creative metaphors. On the other hand, children at a young age cannot interpret given metaphors in a mature, figurative way. Gardner distinguishes between two types of metaphors: visual, or sensory metaphors which focus on physical resemblance; and psychological-physical metaphors which compare psychological characteristics to physical objects. For instance, a young child's metaphor that the wave was like a little girl's hair being combed, or a bald head that was spoken of by a child as a "barefoot head," seem at first glance to be clever and sophisticated metaphors from children. But these young children's metaphors are invariably only visual or sensory metaphors. This explains why children will misinterpret physical-psychological metaphors before age 10. If the child under age 6, is told that the prison guard was a rock, he/she will respond with a magical interpretation that somehow the guard turned into stone. At the next "metonymic" stage (age 6--8) the child will focus on one aspect only -- the guard's muscles were hard. Finally, beyond age 10, the child will be able to compare different domains and relate psychological intransigence to the physical properties of a rock.

Other studies of metaphoric understanding (Billow, 1974) show that the comprehension of a complex metaphor which has several comparisons reflects the same developmental growth as Piaget demonstrated in class inclusion. One-to-one correspondence in the concrete operational stage parallels the understanding of one-to-one corresponding metaphors. Such comprehension of metaphors focuses on one aspect of a comparison (e.g., the metaphor, the nose was a pickle, is explained by a young child focusing on one common, concrete aspect such as that they both are bumpy); whereas proportional, complex metaphors which have two or more comparisons (e.g., spring is a lady in a new coat), cannot be manipulated mentally until the stage of formal operations. Likewise, proverbs which are removed from concrete reality (e.g., make hay while the sun shines) cannot be comprehended until this stage. These later complex comprehensions seem to parallel Piaget's conclusions that proportionality is a characteristic of formal operational thinking while simpler one-to-one classification is characteristic of concrete operations.

Richardson and Church (1959) describe the difference in development of metaphoric understanding as the distinction between *literal* meaning — taking words at face value, and *figurative* meaning — explaining a metaphor or proverb using words outside of the statement given. Figurative understanding seems to come only after age 10.

Aside from figurative and metaphoric language, story telling was also central to the data we were studying. Scarlett and Wolf (1979) suggest that children at the end of the pre-school years begin telling stories which maintain the boundaries of story context and narrative sequence. However, it is only later that children master elements which are key to the understanding and interpretation of stories, demonstrated by their use of language outside of the strict story boundaries.

Miller (1979), who studied conflict as a central aspect of narrative, concludes that children 7–10 years old continually try to explain away conflict in story. Only at the age of about 10 and beyond do children see characters being locked in mutually exclusive conflict. This criterion of conflict understanding is a key to the analysis of children's stories in the present study. Gardner (1982, p. 179) quotes a study in which first to third graders cannot grasp the motives of characters and the nature of their goals.

Only at age 11 could students end a tale appropriately with a firm grasp of character motivation. Development in the ability to interpret a story thus seems to parallel the understanding of metaphors and cognitive abstractions, moving from a dependence on specific literal facts at hand to the ability to conceptualize plot, conflict and character.

Empathy, which is sometimes defined as the imaginative transposition of oneself into the thinking and feeling of another, or, succinctly, experiencing *you* in *me* (Dymond, Hughs, & Raabe, 1952; Hornstein, 1976) would be an additional significant factor in the child's ability to appreciate the feelings and motivations of characters, and would be important in assessing his/her ability both to produce "*midrashim*" which require such empathy (e.g., How did Abraham feel when he went to sacrifice Isaac?), as well as to understand *midrashim* which capture the emotions and thinking of a character.

There have been some attempts at finding developmental patterns in empathy as a function of age (Burns & Cavey, 1957). At age 11, children seem able to articulate the thoughts and feelings of others. Prior to that, children confuse their own feelings and impute them to others ("egocentric empathy," according to Burns and Cavey). Further study in this area is necessary to derive more exacting information and useful distinctions. However, it is interesting to note that the development of empathy seems to parallel other areas of development, such as the child's ability to assume the perspective of others. Piaget's spatial studies (Piaget & Inhelder, 1967) suggest that the child is not able to distinguish the viewpoints of others (e.g., construct a model of a mountain from the viewpoint of a different side) until he/she is about 10 years old. These parallels among areas of mental development may provide some useful basis for the present analysis.

*Midrash* is not only a literature consisting of figurative language, story and empathy; it is also religious literature. In that aspect, it is important to investigate stages of religious development and religious thinking. Goldman (1964) attempts to define three states of religious thinking which closely correspond to Piaget's stages of cognitive development:

Up to about 7/8 years: pre-operational, intuitive thought;  
About 7/8 to 13/14 years: concrete operational thought;  
13/14 years onwards: formal operational thought.

Goldman concludes that most Bible study is inappropriate to the first two stages since it involves religious and theological concepts which are misinterpreted by the child. For example, when asked how the Red Sea split, children at the pre-operational stage gave typically literal, physical explanations (e.g., God pushed it aside with his hands). Stage 2 answers reflected semi-physical and semi-logical explanations characteristic of concrete operational thinking (e.g., the wind blew the water), yet the child could not then explain why the wind did not also blow the Israelites away. Only in Stage 3 did the child offer a natural or symbolic explanation which was consistent with abstract thinking (e.g., it was a normal tide, or the details of the story are not exactly literal; the writer merely wanted to be more vivid). Goldman's conclusion that such religious literature should not be taught until high school presents a wider challenge to the teaching of *midrash*, which will be addressed in the final section of this study.

Fowler takes a broader view of both developmental psychology and religious thinking (which he calls "faith") in his book *Stages of Faith* (1981). His description of Stage 1 (Intuitive-Projective Faith) and Stage 2 (Mythic-Literal Faith) are most relevant to the present study. Stage 1 (ages 3-7) is characterized by a rich range of images filled with fantasy. The child at this stage is uninhibited by logical thought. Images that are created represent both protective and threatening powers in one's life. Stage 2 (ages 10-13) is characterized by the ability to create coherent narratives. Thus the child at this age is particularly attentive to mythical stories of origins and adventures, though he/she is not yet able to step back from the stories and conceptualize them; meaning is "trapped" in the narrative. Drama and myth are ways of giving meaning and coherence to experience. Fowler's focus on fantasy in Stage 1 and on myth in Stage 2 are suggestive of categories appropriate to children's understanding of *midrash*. It is important to note that in Stage 2, the child is able to grasp meaning from the myth, although his/her analytic conceptualization of it and its symbols are not yet developed.

### Analysis of Data

The following represents a selection of children's responses to actual classroom questions related to *midrashic* study. The material will be analyzed in the light of the foregoing theories and studies, with the purpose of seeing, from a developmental point of view, how the students understand the *midrashim* they are creating or interpreting. The survey will progress chronologically through the grades in order to discern whether there is any developmental progress as a function of age.

The first sample is from a Hanukkah discussion with first graders (age 6). The teacher begins the lesson by telling the story about the finding of a single-day's supply of pure oil in the Temple, and its miraculous burning for eight days, instead of only one. Also discussed is the *midrash* which explains the eight days of Hanukkah as commemorating the fact that the Maccabees found eight spears in the Temple and lit lamps on the eight spears. The teacher then asks the children to give their own explanations as to why there are eight days of Hanukkah. She records the following responses: "8 inches of oil in the pitcher;" "eight doors on the Temple;" "eight rooms in the Temple;" "eight idols;" "eight steps;" "eight Syrians alive after war;" "war was eight days;" "Judah slept 8 hours;" "wall around the Temple 8 feet high."

All of the responses mention isolated, concrete objects. None are related to any former response, or to any notion of an "explanation" of the holiday in a generalized or symbolic sense. The focus of many of the responses is on one isolated object (something found in the Temple), rather than on any factor which might be integrated into the entire story. All of the responses are in terms of an item rather than in terms of a story or developed narrative as the oil and spear story are. At this level there is no attempt to offer an explanation which encompasses a wider symbolic idea of the holiday in the same way as the oil story implies the idea of miracle and the spear story implies the notion of peace and victory. Instead, the thought processes are basically pre-operational. Where there might have been a coherent narrative, there are only isolated and unconnected single-aspect objects which lack any inter-relationship. The focus is on physical aspects of the Hanukkah tale which are offered as the "explanation," but there are no signs of an integrated interpretation or

figurative meaning. Students at this level seem content to relate to details of the plot of the story, not to search beyond the details of the plot of the story for a more integrated whole.

A second example comes from a third grade class (8-year olds). The lesson focuses on the simile in the Torah: Abraham's descendants will be "as the dust of the earth." After exploring the metaphor in a synectic exercise, the teacher asks the students to write how the Jews are like the dust of the earth.

Justine writes:

A Jew is like the dust because a Jew gets pushed around a lot and so does dust. A lot of people don't like Jews and kill them and dust never really was alive. We also could say that dust just gets stepped on and dies like that.

Noah writes:

The Jews are spread all over the world. Jews live in almost every country. Bad people have always tried to get rid of the Jews but they have never been able to, because the Jews are like dust of the earth. No matter how much you try, you cannot get rid of dust.

Clearly, here is a development from isolated words to fuller explanations which demonstrate limited deductive reasoning. However, note that Justine's logic breaks down in her explanation of Jews being killed. She then has a difficult time finding the parallel. Dust is not "killed" but was never alive. Then there is an afterthought which suggests that dust could be "killed" by being stepped on. The animistic explanation as well as the faulty logical argument suggest the beginning of deductive and inductive reasoning characteristic of the concrete-operational stage.

Noah's argument follows more logically to its conclusion. However, his comparisons as well as Justine's all relate to physical rather than psychological attributes. Neither suggests, for example, that the Jews feel oppressed (as the actual *midrash* does), but oppression is explained in a physical sense of "killing" or "getting rid of." In that sense these examples conform to Gardner's study of metaphor. Each child has produced a metonymic metaphor where the focus is on one aspect of the object and there is not yet a mature generalized or psychological explanation. These are examples of the concrete operational level of logic with undevel-

oped deductive reasoning and a focus on concrete and physical aspects.

Other examples come from a fourth grade class, and they are particularly interesting because there is an attempt at explaining the symbolism in a given *midrash*. The *midrash* relates that when Sarah was alive, the door of her tent was always open, the candle was always lit and the fragrance of fresh bread was always present. When Sarah died, the door was closed, the candle went out and there was no longer bread. But when Isaac brought Rebecca to his home, the door was opened, the candle lit, and the bread returned.

Students were asked to explain what they thought the *midrash* means. Note what Justine writes a year after she wrote her explanation of the "dust of the earth":

The *midrash* means to me that Sarah was so wonderful and a good person that she invited guests and had the flap of her tent open all the time so guests knew that they were welcome. She always had candles burning from Friday to Friday. She always had the wonderful smell of *challah* in her tent. Avraham must have been happy having a wife like her. I wonder how Yitzchak liked having a mother like her.

Justine seems to have progressed. She no longer displays the faulty logic of an eight-year-old. Her first statement reflects an attempt at generalization. However, her description of hospitality does not yet represent a fully developed abstract concept, but instead is framed strictly in terms of facts at hand in the story, "that she invited guests and had the flap of her tent open." There is not yet a full conceptualization that the details of door, candle and bread all represent the hospitality of Sarah and that her death brought a change in the entire tone in the household, which returned only with the coming of Rebecca. Justine offers a partial explanation of Sarah's hospitality but she interestingly ignores the meaning of Rebecca's coming, and adds instead an unrelated comment and question about how Abraham must have been happy with Sarah, and how Isaac liked having her as a mother. Though Justine offers a more fully developed story narrative than she was able to produce a year earlier, there is still an absence of generalizations which take into account the complex-

ity of the symbols and the parallels between Sarah and Rebecca.

One student in that class, Tovia, was a year older than the others (11). It is interesting to compare his explanation of the *midrash* with Justine's:

I think the *midrash* means that because Sarah died, there was no one to greet visitors, so God put out the light, took away the smell of bread and closed the tent flap. When Rivkah came to marry and live with Yitzchak, God saw that she was fit to continue Sarah's work of welcoming guests to the tent, so he opened the curtain, relit the light and the smell of bread returned. After Yitzchak saw this, he knew that Rivkah should live in Sarah's tent to continue Sarah's work.

Tovia's explanation displays a further development over Justine's explanation in several significant ways. He is able to account for the parallel between Sarah and Rebecca, which is the main point of the *midrash*. In addition, Tovia is able to take the curtain, light and bread as a single unit rather than as separate symbols. The point that Rebecca continues Sarah's work of welcoming guests is generalized. However, Tovia's explanation has several elements which prevent it from being fully conceptually abstract. First, he cannot see the dimming of the light, the closing of the door and the absence of bread to be actions possible without a specific agent. Therefore, Tovia must add that it is God, not mentioned in the *midrash*, who does these things. Secondly, Tovia is still tied to the specific factual detail contained within the story limits, except for his reference to God as agent, which is out of bounds, so to speak. He does not generalize the symbolic story using terminology outside of the specific story examples (e.g., Sarah's death brought an end to an era of hospitality which only returned with Rebecca, who was as warm and hospitable as she).

The following examples are instructive particularly in relation to the notion of conflict within a narrative as described by Miller (1979). Although the child age 7-10 sees the conflict situation, he cannot accept it as final and searches for some way out. Fourth grade students (age 10) were assigned to write how they thought Abraham felt when he was asked to sacrifice his son:

Here I am going to kill my son in the morning. What am I,

crazy? I feel very bad because I'm going to die soon and so is Sarah and if Yitzchak dies nobody can pass on to the world that there's one God, so this time I might not listen to God. Well, good bye, I'm getting kind of tired.

Notice how the child goes through the conflict situation building up to the ultimate conflict that there will be no one to pass on the message of one God (it is interesting that the conflict is not his human love for his son vs. God's demand). Then the child is unable to accept the idea that the conflict can remain unresolved, so he finds two "ways out" – not to listen to God this time, and to sleep. This is a typical response reported by Miller.

Another child in the class, a year older than the others, deals with the conflict in a different manner:

I feel terrible, but God is my only life. I really don't want to kill Yitzchak, my only son, but I have to. I just don't understand why God would want Yitzchak as a sacrifice. That breaks the whole covenant, but God is the leader and I have to follow God.

This student articulates both the conflict between love of his son and God's command, as well as the fact that God is breaking his covenant. However, unlike the first student, he leaves the conflict unresolved. He admits that, despite the equally negative alternatives, Abraham must carry out God's command. Here is a clear development in ability to comprehend narrative conflict.

The issue of empathy development is illustrated in the next examples. As indicated earlier, Burns and Cavey (1957) distinguish imputed feelings characteristic of younger children from empathic, inferred feelings. Students (age 10) were asked to write about how they would feel towards Sarah and Isaac, if they were Ishmael who was exiled from the house.

One boy writes:

I feel that Sarah had no right to tell me what to do. She is not my natural mother. I was only having fun. She overreacted. I don't think she was fair.

Although on the surface, this example seems to reflect an ability to empathize with Ishmael's feelings, on closer examination it is evident that the student is really projecting his own feelings

upon Ishmael. This particular student often feels that he is wrongly accused of misbehavior and has often given the explanation that he is only doing it in "fun" and that the teacher is unfair. He has apparently transferred his own feelings of unfairness from the teacher, who is not his real mother, to Sarah, who was not Ishmael's real mother. Such personal identification seems common in writing stories where the student is asked to relate how one of the characters feels. Another student clearly writes about his home situation of sibling rivalry, "He (referring ostensibly to Ishmael) can walk around and gurgle and everyone laughs. When I do it everyone thinks I look ridiculous."

Bettelheim (1977) suggests that such personal identifications with stories of sibling rivalry and rejection by a mother-substitute are therapeutic to the young mind. Indeed, they may be; however, true empathy — identification with the feelings of the other — is certainly not reflected when the child so strongly imputes his or her own situation into the story.

The following example (Ishmael is supposedly speaking about Abraham) shows a lesser personal identification with the characters in the story and more of an inferred empathy:

Avraham is okay, but he talks too much to God. Last night he almost came in and threw me out. I think he's trying to hide something, and I don't like it. Avraham does not want me around though he says he loves me.

This student is able to infer the feelings of Ishmael as well as Ishmael's perspective on Avraham (a double empathic inference). Though the description of feelings is choppy and undeveloped, this student is able to associate feelings of suspicion (e.g., "I think he's trying to hide something, and I don't like it") with those of rejection and love. However, the description of these empathic feelings is still not conceptualized or generalized in a manner characteristic of older children. It lacks fuller reasons and motivations behind the character's actions and feelings. What remains, then, is an example of partial inferred empathy.

## Discussion

One of the significant educational conclusions that can be drawn from these anecdotal analyses is that students may not be

responding to teachers' questions and to subject matter as a teacher would superficially assume on a surface level. Teachers who collected the foregoing responses felt that these were good examples of children's understanding of *midrashic* assignments. It is important to analyze such classroom responses to see how the responses may actually have been on quite different levels of thinking from what the teacher or educator assumed.

Moreover, it was necessary to modify the initial assumption that the concrete form of *midrash* might indicate that *midrash* is parallel to the thinking of young minds. Upon closer examination, it became obvious that although the forms and literary techniques of *midrash* may be concrete, the ideas behind them are abstract. Being a literary composition produced by adults, it is not surprising that *midrashim* present, in concrete garb, highly abstract philosophical and theological messages. Thus the Hanukkah oil story may be a concrete narrative form, but its point is one of abstraction — God works in history through miracles. The story of Sarah's tent may contain concrete symbols — door, candle and bread — but its point is abstract; Sarah's hospitality and the "tone" of her household were dominated by her presence. Certainly the crisis conflict of Abraham sacrificing his son may be one of the most difficult philosophical-theological dilemmas in the Bible, though dealt with in *midrash* in the concrete format of dialogue and drama. The abstract notions behind these *midrashim* present problems in understanding for the young child.

Apparently, children's responses to *midrashim* reflect the developmental level of their age groups. The Hannukah *midrash* is seen in terms of isolated and disjointed story details by the 6-year old. The metaphor of dust of the earth remains concrete, and the reasoning and metaphoric levels of student's responses are characteristic of the under 10-year old. Interpretations of Sara's and Rebecca's tent remain tied to the specific details of the story, as student narratives themselves reflect the story boundary limits of the middle-grade child. Empathic attempts at identification with characters often retain a projected feeling mode which borders on total identification with psychological concerns in the child's own life.

These analyses might lead one to the conclusion drawn by Goldman (1964), that biblical and symbolic religious literature is

totally inappropriate for the elementary school child. Goldman argues that if the child so distorts the theological and symbolic meaning of such biblical stories as the burning bush and the splitting of the sea, then the religious educator must conclude that such material is inappropriate for these age groups. This challenging argument could be applied to *midrash*. Perhaps the study of *midrash*, which requires the young student to understand figurative language, symbolic stories, empathic dialogues and philosophical messages, is not appropriate to his/her developmental stage, which views such abstractions with characteristic concretizations and literalism. Superficially, at least, there appears to be some truth to Goldman's argument that such literal misunderstanding at a younger age level could further hinder more abstract and symbolic understanding at a later age, because the child becomes trapped in the literal interpretations of the story which are the legacy of youthful, premature study.

A closer look at this question, however, leads to other impressions. Although students clearly interpret the stories, metaphors and symbols of *midrashim* in the thought modes characteristic of their age group, there are other factors to be considered. For example, Justine's and Noah's metaphoric productions may be limited by their concrete modes of thought, but neither gives a grossly erroneous interpretation. Perhaps the context of classroom discussion, synectic exercise, student interchange and teacher refinement have helped to produce a concrete, but appropriate, interpretation for that level. In these samples, there seems to be some insight into the notion of the persecution of Jewry or of Jews being scattered. These are reasonably sound ideas to learn, though they are based in concrete images and focus on single aspects alone. Has the child learned a "wrong" idea, as Goldman or Gardner might suggest? In many of these cases the answer is probably "no." Has the child grasped the idea on an adult abstract level? The answer again is "no."

Though the Sarah-Rebecca *midrash* may have been bound to the story detail for the 10-year old, and though he/she is not yet able to give a propositional generalization which reaches beyond the individual concrete symbols, the responses quoted do seem to have indicated a grasp of the beginnings of correct concepts. Sarah is hospitable — though hospitality can only be viewed at this level as manifested in concrete acts. Though the student

cannot yet explicate the parallel with Rebecca, he/she can generalize that Sarah is a "good" wife and mother. These are reasonable nascent concepts which a teacher can refine in the context of class discussion, without fearing the miseducative results of teaching such stories, as is implied by Goldman (1964).

To what do we attribute the difference between the present conclusion and Goldman's? First, there is the issue of the *context* of the classroom. Donaldson (1978) and others have shown the significance of context in Piagetian studies. Although in a purely experimental situation a child may give one response, given another context he/she may give a response which does not seem to be completely on the same cognitive level. Here too, in the context of the classroom, though many of the characteristics of a certain developmental stage remain, there seem to be some directions toward concepts which at a later stage will become abstract.

Secondly, Goldman takes the most difficult theological questions to "prove" his case. Both the burning bush and the splitting of the sea are examples of supernatural miracles which he asks the child to explain. Granted, the child cannot explain such difficult questions satisfactorily. These however are also difficult for adults to explain — and some of the naturalistic answers Goldman offers as "higher" level thinking are open to disagreement as to whether they are preferred explanations and if they are anything but "literal" interpretations. For example, Goldman does not ask in his study what a fifth grade teacher asked about the burning bush. The teacher did not ask children to explain how it was possible for the bush to be burning but not consumed; but the teacher asked what does the fire in the bush symbolize? The students were able to respond — God. How is fire like God? Again concrete, but appropriate answers — "fire is powerful, so is God," "if you come too close to fire it can burn you; if you get too close to God He will punish you." Goldman may have been asking the child the "wrong" questions.

Thirdly, the assumption that a child understands a story or metaphor only when able to explain it, may be faulty. There are other levels of understanding stories in a meaningful way. Bettelheim (1977), for instance, shows that the symbolism of fairy tales may have deep meaning to children at different ages because it helps them to resolve, through fantasy, psychological con-

flicts which face them. Bettelheim clearly states that the meaning of the fairy tale to the child does not emerge through the child's analysis of the story, but through more subtle, direct meanings which speak to the child's psychic conflicts.

Similarly, Fowler (1981), who is quite aware of the cognitive limitations of children, sees mythic stories as suggesting direct meaning to children ages 10–14. The child cannot step back from stories and reflect upon them, but rather, meanings are "trapped" in the narrative. Though the children cannot yet draw conclusions from these stories about the meaning of life, they "can be affected deeply and powerfully by symbolic and dramatic materials. The new capacity or strength in this stage is the rise of narrative and the emergence of story, drama and myth as ways of finding and giving coherence to experience" (p. 149).

Stories can be extremely important to students in ways which are not reflective. This investigation has shown that identification with characters in the Bible may provide opportunities for children to "play out" their own situations of sibling rivalry, feelings of unfair treatment and the like. In addition to such obvious psychological involvement, stories may represent to children, images of moral behavior, of goodness, or of meanness, which may be useful in their constructions of the world and in dealings with their own inner conflicts and moral development. Even though cognitively such narrative understanding may deal in concrete opposites and lack a fully developed sense of conflict in narrative, direct meanings of the story may transcend cognitive understanding of it. Fowler (1981) likewise suggests that for younger children, "being in parables" and playing out the identifications and symbolisms of parable stories may be helpful to the development of images in the first intuitive stage of faith. Even though the child cannot abstractly express the symbolism of the parable, such "being in parables" is helpful and not miseducative as Goldman (1964) suggests.

Parents and teachers should create an atmosphere in which the child can freely express, verbally and nonverbally, the images she or he is forming... Dr. Jerome Berryman's approach to the use of parables with children ("being in parables with children," he calls it) provides an extremely helpful model... (Fowler, 1981, p. 133).

Gardner (1982) concludes similarly that the child's inability to abstract and analyze metaphors appropriately does not mean that educators should avoid introducing metaphor at this young age. On the contrary, he encourages parents to use metaphor during the literally oriented years because he is "increasingly convinced of the importance of metaphoric process in the life of the individual" (p. 166).

The key educational point here is that *the ability to analyze is not the same as the ability to understand or appreciate on other levels of personal meaning to a child*. Just because young children are unable as yet to analyze a story in an abstract mode, and conceptualize and reflect upon its meaning, does not mean that the story itself fails to relate to their inner conflicts and emotional growth. Children indeed often give appropriate, albeit concrete, responses to questions about a story's meaning.

### Conclusions

This study has revealed some important developmental patterns in children's interpretations of Bible and *midrash*. The study has also raised some significant issues in relation to the teaching of *midrash* in the classroom context. First, teachers and curriculum designers may be assuming that their young students understand the material on a more abstract level than is actually true. Further developmental studies of actual classroom data, more systematically gathered, would be an invaluable contribution to the field of education, in helping to alert teachers and curriculum designers to how students are actually understanding the material at hand.

Secondly, it appears that the context of the classroom and the role played by the teacher may produce responses which are not only appropriate to the material, but which may be stepping stones to further developmental understanding of ideas within the literature. This conclusion has far-reaching implications about the significance of the role of the teacher and of the classroom context in developmental studies of education. Again, the pure experimental approach to studying developmental issues related to education (such as metaphor, story development, empathy and religious thinking) may be insufficient for describing the complex results of learning in context.

Finally, it is mistaken to conclude that since children understand symbolic religious literature as concrete literalism, it should, therefore, not be taught. On the contrary, not only do children grasp reasonably valid meanings when they are presented in a classroom learning context, but they are also able to grasp stories and their meanings on a level other than cognitive analysis. Such levels may be valuable to their inner conflicts (Bettelheim, 1977), to their religious development (Fowler, 1981), and to their appreciation of metaphor and figurative language (Gardner, 1982). It is hoped that this initial study of developmental issues in the teaching of *midrash* through anecdotal data will spur further studies of actual classroom interactions from a developmental perspective.

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## MORAL DEVELOPMENT AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Gareth B. Matthews

The *preconventional* level is the first of three levels of moral thinking... While the preconventional child is often "well-behaved" and is responsive to cultural labels of good and bad, he/she interprets these labels in terms of their physical consequences (punishment, reward, exchange of favors) or in terms of the physical power of those who enunciate the rules and labels of good and bad.

This level is usually occupied by children aged 4 to 10, a fact long known to sensitive observers of children. The capacity of "properly behaved" children of this age to engage in cruel behavior, when there are holes in the power structure, is sometimes noted as tragic (*Lord of the Flies*, *High Wind in Jamaica*), sometimes as comic (Lucy in *Peanuts*) (Kohlberg, 1968, p. 25).

According to the most influential theory of moral development we have, namely, that of Lawrence Kohlberg, young children, long after they have passed through their first years of schooling, are still only pre-moral agents. At Stage 1, the stage referred to in the quotation above and labeled by Kohlberg as "the punishment and obedience orientation" (1971, p. 164), the child is supposed to think that the "physical consequences of an action determine its goodness or badness regardless of the human meaning or value of these consequences" (*ibid.*)

In the quotation with which I began, Kohlberg claims that the absence of any real understanding of morality in children 10 years old and younger is "a fact long known to sensitive observers of children." At the risk of disqualifying myself as a "sensitive observer of children," I must say that I have often been impressed by how even a very young child, say, a 5 or 6-year-old, may have such an acute sense of fairness as to serve as the conscience for a whole family. Again, it has sometimes struck me that a young child may have such a finely tuned feeling for others as to be able to insert a deft comment to defuse someone else's

unkind remark, or to share a toy or piece of candy when a play-mate is unhappy.

This is not to suggest that children are morally better than adults; that certainly isn't so. Not only can children be morally good, they can also be mean and cruel, self-seeking and cowardly, dishonest and ungrateful (just as adults can!). In fact, *Lord of the Flies* does not really disturb us because it depicts children as pre-moral agents. Rather, it upsets us because it forces us to recognize the possibility of real evil in the heart of even the most innocent members of the human race.

The tests Kohlberg devised to locate subjects in his stage scheme have been refined over the years. They can now be administered with the justified confidence that scoring is standard and reliable. Moreover, anyone who has studied those tests, or reflected seriously on the moral dilemmas on which they are based, will be confident that they do indeed measure some morally significant capacity. How can it be, then, that even the young children we know to be capable of great moral sensitivity, or, on the other hand, of significant immorality, are classified by Kohlberg's scheme as essentially pre-moral agents?

The answer is, I think, that what Kohlberg's interviews test, and what his theory focuses on, is only one aspect of moral development. From time to time, Kohlberg and his associates have admitted as much. Here, for example, is a revealing comment from a recent monograph written by Kohlberg and two of his associates:

Following Piaget's lead, Kohlberg (1983) thought that justice reasoning would be the cognitive factor most amenable to structural developmental stage analysis insofar as it would clearly provide reasoning material where structuring and equilibrating operations (e.g., reversibility) could be seen (p. 92).

This passage reveals a developmental psychologist in the Piagetian tradition, hankering after some developmental process that can be identified by a standard testing instrument and which will be "amenable to structural developmental stage analysis." Reasoning about justice in moral dilemmas, as the vast Kohlbergian literature proves, provides just such a reliably testable and age-related sequence of responses.

Yet amenable as these responses are to Piagetian theorizing, what they reveal does exhaust the domain of morality. Perhaps it exhausts that part of the domain most amenable to Piagetian theorizing. But that is another matter.

What aspects of morality are overlooked by Kohlberg's theory and ignored by his tests? Natural candidates for overlooked aspects are other virtues besides justice.

Carol Gilligan, in her influential book, *In a Different Voice* (1982), has maintained that Kohlberg overlooks the virtue of care, or compassion. She has coupled that claim with the provocative suggestion that boys in our society are expected to concentrate on developing skills for handling the universal rules of justice, whereas girls are encouraged to focus, instead, on developing care and concern for concentric circles of, first, immediate family, then friends, then neighbors, etc.

The Gilligan suggestion might explain reports that, according to Kohlberg interviews, women are more likely to get "stuck" on the middle stages of the Kohlberg scheme than are men. According to Gilligan, women, even as adults, are expected to be more care-oriented than men, whereas men are more oriented to universal rules. (For an assessment of this as an empirical claim, see Walker (1984).)

The Gilligan critique is clearly important. Whether or not her suggested gender-correlations are borne out in further research, her claim that Kohlberg's approach leaves out an important virtue is significant.

Though I certainly welcome Gilligan's critique of Kohlberg, I, myself, think we should go much further. Once we have gotten beyond the idea that justice is the sum of morality, we should include other virtues besides justice and care, or compassion, in our account of morality, and of moral development. Courage, for example, is also a virtue, and it is not reducible to either justice or compassion. Loyalty is also a moral virtue. So is honesty, and so are modesty and generosity. An adequate theory of moral development should explain how we come to understand what these virtues require, and how we develop the capacity to act in accordance with them.

Virtues and vices, such as justice and cowardice, and types of immoral or moral action, such as lies and acts of care and concern, make up what we might call "moral kind." Moral develop-

ment, one could say, includes increasing one's capacity to recognize, appreciate and act in recognition of the various moral kinds.\* We do this, I suggest, by coming to share, appreciate and act according to, paradigms of the various moral kinds.

A young child's first paradigm of courage may be a case of not crying when the nurse sticks a needle in one's arm to give one a vaccination. A paradigm of fairness may be an episode in which pieces of cake are distributed at a birthday party so that everyone present gets one. A paradigm of honesty may be a case of admitting that one spilled jam on the tablecloth, even though that admission will likely bring punishment as a response.

An interesting and important thing about these paradigms is that they stay with us through life. To be sure, we accumulate more paradigms of, for example, bravery as we grow older, including more sophisticated paradigms than the simple one of not crying in the doctor's office. There is the example of facing the ridicule of a jeering crowd. And there is the trial of trying to live an up-beat life in the face of terminal illness. Still, important as these later paradigms are to our moral development, they do not replace the early ones; the early ones remain, and they remain important.

As we grow up, our understanding of each moral kind develops along several different dimensions. First, as I have already indicated, we enlarge the number and variety of our paradigms. Second, we undertake to isolate the relevant features that the various paradigms share, so as to be able to give some kind of an account of the nature of the moral kind they represent. Third, we come to appreciate something of the range of nonparadigmatic instances that, though they do not fall squarely within the moral kind, are nevertheless important borderline cases. And fourth, we learn how to adjudicate conflicting moral claims that arise from natural competition among the moral kinds.

Let us take as an example of a moral kind, not a virtue, or even a vice, but rather a *prima facie* immoral act, namely, lying. How might moral development proceed with respect to lying?

\* For a somewhat fuller discussion of the theory of moral development sketched here see, Matthews, G. B. (1987). Concept formation and moral development. In J. Russel (Ed.), *Philosophical perspectives on developmental philosophy* (pp. 175-90). Oxford: Basil.

A central paradigm of lying in our culture is a case of falsely denying that one has disobeyed some authority figure, say, a parent or teacher, so as to be able to escape punishment. For example, one denies to one's mother that one took a cookie from the cookie jar, or that, wanting to play "grown-up," one played with Father's meerschaum pipe and dropped and broke it. Taking the cookie after Mother had said not to, and playing with Father's pipe after he had forbidden it, were wrong things to do. Denying that one did either of these things could be a further wrong. This sort of case remains central to our grasp of what lying is, even after Mother, Father, and teacher cease to be central authority figures, and even when denying misdeeds becomes only one kind of important case.

Someone may object that I am making a naive mistake of the sort that Socrates' unlucky interlocutors are always making in the early Platonic dialogues. An *example* of lying, even a paradigm example of lying, is not, as Socrates wanted us to recognize, *what lying is*. Only one who can actually define 'lying' in a correct and informative way, my objector may argue, really knows what lying is. And only such a person, the objector will continue, has actually succeeded in isolating the moral kind, lying.

To this objection I have a double reply. First, it is an open question whether any of us can give an entirely satisfactory definition of 'lying' (No wonder the early Platonic dialogues end in perplexity!) Still, most of us have quite a good, working grasp of what lying is. Therefore, having a working grasp of what lying is, is something distinct from being able to give an entirely satisfactory definition of 'lying.' It can consist, I suggest, in having a basic understanding of central paradigms of lying.

Second, Socrates' procedure in the early Platonic dialogues would not work unless his interlocutors (and his readers!) could test suggested definitions against their own intuitions. Thus Socrates, in Book I of the *Republic*, rejects Cephalus' definition of 'justice' ('telling the truth and paying your debts') by asking, rhetorically, whether one should return a weapon to its owner if, in the meantime, the owner had gone mad. Readers are expected to answer, confidently, "No." But on what basis can we give that answer if we have, as yet, no definition of 'justice'? Clearly such testing of suggested definitions, by trying out possible counter

examples, is a futile exercise, unless we already have a working grasp of the relevant moral kind. I suggest that having such a grasp may consist simply in having a basic understanding of central paradigms.

Piaget (1948) claims that children, quite early in their lives, can recognize a case of lying quite well, though the best they can do at explaining what a lie is, is to say something like "Lies are naughty words." Here is the way Piaget puts the point:

It should be noted in the first place that no mere verbal confusion is here at work. The child who defines a lie as being a "naughty word" knows perfectly well that lying consists in not speaking the truth. He is not, therefore, mistaking one thing for another, he is simply identifying them one with another by what seems to us a quaint extension of the word "lie" (pp. 141-2).

My suggestion is that the way in which such a child might, as Piaget claims, "know perfectly well that lying consists in not speaking the truth," is through a rudimentary grasp of paradigms. And indeed the contextual construal of "Lies are naughty words" to mean, for example "saying something naughty the way I did this afternoon" might yield a reference that could be used to latch onto a core paradigm of lying.

According to the account I am presenting, moral development takes place across at least four different dimensions. First, there is the dimension of paradigms. A case of making up a story to escape punishment is a good first paradigm for lying. A case of telling an untruth to gain advantage may be a second paradigm. (Leah claims, disingenuously, not to know what time it is, so that she can watch the remainder of her TV program.) Conspiracy to circumvent authority could be a third. (Ben tells the teacher he didn't see who left the banana peel on the floor, though he really saw Sam do it. Ben, although no friend of Sam's, doesn't want to be thought of as the one who tells the teacher.)

A second dimension of moral development is that of success in isolating defining characteristics. In the effort to define "lying" one can begin with the definition, "saying something naughty the way Sara did"; "telling a falsehood" is a better definition; "telling a falsehood when you know better" is a further improvement;

"saying something false in an effort to deceive someone" is still better.

We need to recognize, however, that none of these definitions, not even the last, is entirely satisfactory. Let us consider specifically the last candidate ("saying something false in an effort to deceive someone"). Suppose, now, that you want to get my friend, Arthur, into difficulty. You want me to corroborate your story that Arthur called the supervisor a "prig." In an effort to protect Arthur, I may deny your story, even though I know it to be true. My idea may be that you cannot get Arthur into difficulty unless I, the only other person present on the relevant occasion, corroborate your account. You may be quite well aware that I am denying your story so as to protect Arthur. The supervisor may have good reason to think this too, but be simply unable to take any action unless someone will corroborate your story. So I can succeed in lying to protect Arthur without actually deceiving anyone, in fact, without even having the intention of deceiving anyone.

It is possible that someone can come forward with a definition of 'lying' that fits all our important intuitions and is also informative. I don't know whether anyone can or not. My point is that no one *needs* to be able to offer an entirely satisfactory definition in order to have a working grasp of what lying is. For a rudimentary grasp of what lying is, one need only have a basic understanding of one important paradigm.

A third dimension of moral development concerns the range of cases that fall under each moral kind, as well as those that count as borderline cases. Is it lying to write a check when you know there are insufficient funds in your account to cover the check? If so, what about writing a check when you are not sure, or only hope the check will be covered? Can a photograph lie? What about wearing a sweatshirt, or tie, to get other people to think you went to a given school or university?

A fourth dimension of moral development concerns conflicting, or apparently conflicting, moral claims. Sometimes, it seems, lying is not really naughty; sometimes it may even be one's duty. Perhaps it is my duty to lie to save somebody's life. But can it be my duty to lie to save someone grave embarrassment? What about lying as a way of getting what is only rightfully mine?

All this suggests a very traditional picture of moral develop-

ment — although it is one that had gone out of favor among professional philosophers until a decade or so ago. It is a picture that derives from Aristotle. This picture invites us to identify virtues and vices and to see the child as developing virtues, both by modeling adult moral behavior, and by following explicit adult instructions. ("Tell the truth!" "Don't cry when you go to the doctor's office!" "Cut up the birthday cake so that everyone gets the same size piece!")

According to this traditional picture, a child's very first efforts to model adult moral behavior will not qualify as fully moral behavior. For example, the child's first truth-telling behavior is not really an expression of honesty. Nor is the very first attempt not to cry when something is about to hurt, an expression of courage. Only when we act from, in Aristotle's way of putting it, a "firm and settled disposition" do we have a serious claim to be acting from honesty, courage, or whatever the relevant virtue may be. By repeatedly doing what an honest or brave person does, one comes to act honestly, or bravely, from a firm and settled disposition; then one is an honest or brave person.

Still, telling the truth in challenging circumstances is being honest on that occasion, whether or not the action is an expression of honesty in the agent. Even basically dishonest people are sometimes honest, in the sense that they say what a really honest person would say in such circumstances. And even a child who has not yet developed a firm and settled disposition to tell the truth may do the honest thing on a given occasion. There is thus an important continuity between the child's very first efforts to act morally and the actions of a fully mature moral agent.

So far I have mentioned four different dimensions of moral development; but in fact there are more. For a religious person there is the dimension of understanding how God is related to morality. In the Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions, God is often said to be the source of morality. More specifically, morality is often thought to rest on God's commands. One objection sometimes lodged against this idea is that it seems to deny moral autonomy to the human individual. A mature religious person needs to work out a response to this objection.

Some philosophers have even argued that the morality of a sincerely religious person is necessarily infantile. Patrick Nowell-Smith (1974, pp. 577–91) tries to defend that position. A central

part of his reasoning can be surmised from the following quotation. (I should explain that, though Nowell Smith directs his criticism in this passage specifically against Christians, it applies equally well to Jews and Muslims.)

For some Christians the fundamental sin, the fount and origin of all sin, is disobedience to God. It is not the nature of the act of murder or of perjury that makes it wrong; it is the fact that these are transgressions of God's commands. On the other hand, good acts are not good in themselves, good in their own nature, but good only *as* acts of obedience to God... charity itself is held to be good *only because* God has told us to be charitable. It is difficult not to see in this a reflection of the small child's attitude towards his parents and the other authorities from whom he learns what is right to do. In the first instance little Tommy learns that it is wrong to pull his sister's hair, not because it hurts her, but because Mummy forbids it. (p. 584)

I myself do not think that a religious believer who supposes that God's commands underlie morality need be morally infantile. But certainly maturity in moral development is not achieved simply by religious devotion. God's commands need to be interpreted to be understood. For us moderns, part of the interpretation needed, concerns working out the bearing on biblically-based morality of, say, a utilitarian concern with maximizing happiness, or of the Kantian injunction to treat humanity, whether in one's own person or in that of another, as an end and not merely as a means. In a religiously mature person, the need to work out such connections is not a threat to the authority of biblical morality; on the contrary, it is part of what a mature recognition of the authority of biblical morality requires.

As for utilitarianism, it should come as no surprise to find that at least one recent commentator, Saul Lieberman (1963), identifies utilitarian reasoning in a 10th-century discussion of a Talmudic dilemma first posed as part of an interpretation of *Leviticus* 25:36. Lieberman writes:

Two people in a waterless desert. One of them has in his possession an amount of water sufficient to sustain himself, but not enough for both of them. Under such con-

ditions it is proper that the water be assigned to the one more useful to mankind. (p. 126)

Whether Lieberman is right about the 10th-century discussion, or whether the 10th-century rabbi is right about the *Leviticus* passage, I shall not try to say. My point is that a modern reader may need to set a traditional discussion like this in the context of modern ethical theories in order to understand and appreciate the tradition.

As it is with utilitarianism, so is it also with Kantianism. Although Kant's theory is also a modern theory – or perhaps I should say, precisely because Kant's theory is an influential modern theory of ethics – a modern religious person may need to connect Kantianism in some meaningful way with biblical morality. Thus one should not be surprised to find that *Meir Loeb ben Yehiel Malbim*, rabbi to a congregation of Russian Jews in Kant's Königsberg just after Kant's own lifetime, should have interpreted *Leviticus* 19:18 as a form of Kant's "Categorical Imperative" (Simon, 1975, p. 50).

A related issue finds its classical expression in Plato's dialogue, the *Euthyphro*. In discussing the suggestion that 'piety' might be defined as the 'God-loved,' Socrates asks, "Do the gods love piety because it is pious, or is it pious because they love it?" (*Euthyphro* 10a2–3). Applied to divine-command theories of morality, the question becomes "Does God command something because it is right, or is it right because God commands it?"

Religious thinkers who grasp the first horn of this dilemma and maintain that God commands X because it is right are sometimes called "theological rationalists." They seem to have to allow that there is a standard of right and wrong independent of God, and thus that God's commands do not really underlie morality.

Religious thinkers who grasp the second horn of this dilemma and maintain that X is right because God commands X are sometimes called "theological voluntarists." They have to suppose that nothing is, in and of itself, moral, or immoral, not even, for example, causing innocents to suffer, or loving one's neighbor. If God had commanded us to hate our neighbors and maximize the suffering of innocents, those things would have been our duty.

The issue between theological rationalism and theological voluntarism is discussed in university courses in the philosophy of religion. But it can also arise in the study of Torah, even with

young children. Any child who reflects much on the haunting story of Abraham trudging up Mount Moriah to sacrifice Isaac will have confronted it. And any teacher who undertakes to discuss the implications of that story with children must also confront it.

\* \* \*

Maturation along what I am calling the religious dimension of moral development calls for philosophical reflection. One might suppose that such reflection is beyond the capacity of young children. But that would be wrong.

In my book, *Philosophy and the Young Child* (1980), I document the claim that young children, children as young as 3 or 4 years old, may naturally make comments, raise questions and even engage in reasoning that adult professional philosophers can recognize as philosophical.

Although such natural philosophizing among children seems to disappear, perhaps to go underground, by age seven or so, it can be deliberately elicited in older children. In my book, *Dialogues with Children* (1984), I report on the results of going into a class of 8½ to 11-year-olds and deliberately provoking a philosophical discussion. I came to the class each time with the beginning of a story that raises some philosophical question and, after reading the story to the children, I asked them how it should go on. I taped the discussions that followed and came back the next week with a continuation of the story that incorporated as much as possible of the children's own discussion.

When I was in Jerusalem, in March of 1987, for the conference on "The Study of Jewish Texts in the Elementary School," I tried a similar technique with a group of ten third-graders in a local school — the Efrata Religious Elementary School. This time I brought story-beginnings that concerned the relationship between God and morality — the specifically religious dimension of moral development. The discussions that resulted might serve as an example of one way in which children might be given an opportunity to develop along the religious dimension of moral maturity.

One of those story-beginnings I brought to Efrata School raises a question as to whether God can really be conceived as a moral agent, in particular, whether God is bound by his promises.

"Do I have to?" asked Jacob.

"You promised," said his older sister, Rachel.

"But I didn't know then I'd be able to go swimming today with David," said Jacob; "I'd much rather do that than go shopping with you. Get one of your friends to go with you."

"Look, Jacob, everybody has got to keep a promise. Even God has to keep His promises."

"Only if He wants to," said Jacob; "God doesn't have to do anything He doesn't want to."

"Then He can't make promises," replied Rachel; "It's as simple as that. A promise is something you are required to keep, whether you want to or not."

"But God is completely free," insisted Jacob; "He can always do whatever he wants, no matter what. Just ask the Rabbi."

"Look Jacob, even God is not completely free," said Rachel with great emphasis; "either He can make a promise, as it says in the Torah He did to Noah, Abraham, and Moses, and then He's not free to go back on the promise, or, as you say, He can't really make promises at all. Either way, there's something He can't do. Nobody's completely free."

Jacob wished he knew what he could say to get back at Rachel. She was always trying to beat him in an argument. He knew he was right that God is completely free. But he didn't know how to answer Rachel. The Rabbi would know. But Jacob thought it would be better if he could think of a good answer himself.

The discussion that followed the reading of this story beginning was, as I had anticipated it would be, extremely lively. The children tried out several different responses to the problem the story raises. Here are excerpts from what they said:

"God never promises. He doesn't talk to us."

"God did promise things to Moses."

"That's because Moses was a great man. We're not like that..."

"God is all the things in the world. He makes promises and He doesn't make promises. He's nice and He's not nice. He's stupid and He's not stupid ..."

"He hasn't talked to us for a thousand years. So who knows what He's like anymore ..."

"God has to stick to His promises, but man doesn't."

Me: "So, God is not completely free?"

"Yes and no."

"In the middle."

"Sometimes."

Me: "When is God free to do whatever He wants?"

"When He hasn't promised."

"Whenever God made promises to the Israelites, He always fulfilled those promises."

"That's because He wanted to fulfill them. If God doesn't want to do anything, He doesn't have to do anything ..."

There was much more in what the children said, but I thought I saw enough in this to put together a completion of the story that many might find satisfying. To bring the story to some kind of closure, I decided to emphasize the last child's remark in the partial transcript above. It has seemed to many philosophers and theologians who have thought long and hard on these matters that a supremely powerful agent would be one who could do anything He wanted. If His goodness prevented Him from *wanting* to do anything evil, then that would certainly be no limitation in His character or personality. Nor would His inability to do anything evil be a limitation in His power, so long as that inability rested only on his inability to want to do anything evil.

Related reasoning is to be found in St. Thomas Aquinas' *Summa theologica*, in the following passage:

Now it is true that the Philosopher says that God can deliberately do what is evil. But this must be understood on a condition, the antecedent of which is impossible — as, for instance, if we were to say that God can do evil things if He will. For there is no reason why a conditional proposition should not be true, though both the antecedent and consequent are impossible ... (1a q25 a3 ad 2)

Acquinas' idea is that it is impossible for God, because of His perfection, to will to do evil things. You can say, if you like, that God could do evil things *if He wanted to*. That whole conditional statement would be true, Aquinas suggests, even though both its antecedent and its consequent are themselves impossible. But since 'God can deliberately do what is evil' is by itself impossible, it would surely be more straightforward simply to deny that God can do evil...

Parallel reasoning applies to the question of God's being able to break a promise. You could say, if you wanted to, that He could break a promise if He wanted to. But on the assumption that, because of His perfect faithfulness, He could never want to, it would be more straightforward to deny that He can break a promise.

Here is what I brought to the class at our second meeting:

Jacob decided to keep his promise and go shopping with Rachel.

The next day Jacob told his friends about the argument he had had with Rachel. He asked them to help him think of a good thing to say to win the argument.

His friend, Ben, said, "God never makes promises. He doesn't even talk to us."

"He promised things to Moses," insisted Sam.

"That's because Moses was a great man," answered Ben, "we're not like that."

"What you could say," suggested Lev, "is that God makes promises and He doesn't. He's everything — a promise-maker and not a promise-maker, nice and not nice, stupid and not stupid."

"At least you have to admit," put in Sam, "that when God made promises to the Israelites, He always kept them."

"That's because He wanted to," said David. Suddenly Jacob got an idea. He knew what he would say to Rachel to win the argument! "I'll see you guys later," he said to his friends, and ran home.

"Rachell" shouted Jacob as he burst through the front door.

"What?" answered Rachel.

"Do you remember that argument about whether God is completely free?" asked Jacob.

"Yeah, so what have you figured out?" responded Rachel, skeptically.

"You said nobody's completely free, not even God. You said either God isn't free to make promises, or else He is, and then He's not free to break them. Right?"

"Yes," said Rachel.

"Well," Jacob went on triumphantly, "God is completely free to do anything *He wants*. The thing is that people sometimes promise to do things they later don't want to do – the way I promised to go shopping with you and later didn't want to. But God *always wants* to keep His promises. So He is completely free to do anything He wants and yet there is no danger He'll break a promise. Anything He promises is something He'll want to do."

"That's pretty clever," admitted Rachel. "Thanks," said Jacob and smiled, as only someone can, who has just won an argument with his older sister.

The children at Efrata School seemed satisfied with my attempt to summarize our discussion together in a completion of the story. They were pleased to recognize their own contributions in the speeches of Jacob, Rachel, Ben, Lev, Sam and David. They made it clear to me that they thought there was more to say on the topic. (I agree.) But they were willing to let things rest temporarily at the closure I had identified and emphasized.

As is typical from my experience of such discussions with children, I had the feeling we were, in a way, re-inventing the history of philosophy and theology. And yet things always come out a bit differently, too. Thus, for example, I was reminded by the child's remark of the passage in Aquinas, although, of course, the parallel was not exact.

As is also typical of my experience, I felt the children in that

class were helping me think freshly about a problem I care about as I was helping them with an issue they might find puzzling. In my experience, sessions with children don't go well unless I feel in myself some real sense of puzzlement and some genuine excitement in coming upon a new insight, or a fresh way of stating an old one.

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The responsibility a religious educator bears for the moral development of children includes what falls to that of any teacher, whether religious or secular. Bible stories, like secular literature, and like real-life experiences, can provide memorable paradigms of moral kinds. Those paradigms need to be absorbed, reflected on, and made one's own. A good teacher, whether religious or secular, will help students to reflect on and assimilate, important paradigms of moral kinds. Such a teacher will thus help students make progress along the various non-religious dimensions of moral development I have identified in this paper.

To the religious educator, however, there also falls a responsibility for moral development that does not belong to the secular teacher. It is the job of encouraging development along the specifically religious dimension of moral maturity. The best way to exercise that responsibility is to develop reflective discussion with the children themselves on the fascinatingly difficult question of how God is related to morality. That question should be as challenging and as important for the teacher as it is for the children.

The teacher has obvious advantages in such discussions — advantages of position, knowledge and experience. But children bring their own advantages. They have greater freedom and more imagination in trying out new ideas; they have a fresh sense of wonder to motivate the inquiry and less need to be proven right. An openly philosophical discussion with young children can be an intellectual adventure for all parties, not least for the open-minded teacher. It is nice to think that it can also nudge each of us, whether adult or child, a notch or two further up an important dimension of moral maturity.

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## THE CHILD'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE BIBLICAL PERSONALITY

Howard Deitcher

A story is told about a third grade teacher who was teaching her students the story from Genesis 23 – about the death of Sarah. The teacher felt that she had a rare educational opportunity to discuss with her students the notions of death and bereavement. She asked the children to prepare a eulogy for Sarah, as it would have been delivered by Abraham. To her surprise, the children responded with a deafening silence.

The puzzled teacher didn't fully comprehend what was happening, as the class was generally very active and responsive to this type of exercise. Finally, one child raised his hand and asked, "Does a eulogy have to include only positive things about a person?" The teacher quickly understood what the source of the silence was. Suddenly, the children began to present many questions and possible criticisms, about Sarah's personality. They were disturbed by her treatment of Hagar and Ishmael, they questioned her laughter at the news about the upcoming birth of a son, and they wondered at her glaring absence from the story of the binding of Isaac.

Such a classroom episode is not unique. Thus, it must encourage us to ask several fundamental questions about the child's understanding of the biblical personalities and the text's portrayal of them. What educational guidelines should we follow in focusing on these figures, in order to best meet the child's needs and expectations? Furthermore, if we are told that 82% of children registered in Jewish day schools throughout the Diaspora do not continue through high school, but rather, complete their formal Jewish education at the end of elementary school (Himmelfarb, 1982), what kind of impact should this have on our teaching of Bible in general, and the biblical personalities in particular? Can we afford the luxury of assuming that in the child's second encounter with these stories, he/she will read them at a deeper level?

In the course of this paper, we will examine several of the

underlying religious, philosophical, theological, psychological and educational issues related to the child's understanding of the biblical personalities. We will raise various questions from the child's perspective and offer different ways of dealing with this challenge.

### **Importance of Biblical Personalities for the Child's Study of Bible**

By virtue of the fact that Bible study generally begins with the narrative portions of the Book of Genesis, the child's initial exposure is to the biblical characters. He/she learns about various biblical personalities and their encounters with God and man. Each of these personalities is unique. Thus the child has an opportunity to explore different traits and characters.

Second, through these figures the child receives his/her first impressions of Jewish history. The student of Bible attempts to reconstruct the biblical characters and this helps mold his/her own development.

The Bible is not a book to be idly read in passing; and the men and women of the Scriptures are more than life portraits: they continue to live and function long after their deaths in this world... These are not ordinary historical figures but archetypes; as such, their lives are carried on and continue not only in literature and philosophy but in the lives of their descendants throughout the generations. In a sense, they continue to live and also to evolve throughout Jewish history, in its psychic experience, and as part of the collective personality of the Jewish nation. (Steinsaltz, 1984, p. xiv)

Concurrently with this discussion, we should also examine the critical role of the biblical character in the child's religious development. Moshe Greenberg (1964) has described the unique role of the Bible teacher in the school and how the biblical characters help the teacher accomplish his/her task.

Greenberg (1964) asserts that these biblical figures facilitate the teacher's work of identifying and emphasizing the critical religious issues for the reader. Of particular interest to Greenberg, is the way in which the text portrays the insights into the

motives of the biblical personalities, their diversified reactions under differing circumstances, and their extraordinary human qualities. These issues serve to highlight the paradigmatic features of these personalities and help the reader grapple with the complexities of their lives and the religious message inherent in the text (p. 81). In a similar vein, Eliezer Schweid (1979) claims that our encounter as readers with these personalities allows us to introduce them into our own lives. We confront the struggles and tribulations that faced the biblical characters and this involves us directly in their value conflicts (p. 196). We cannot be idle bystanders; we must be active readers of the text and thereby confront many of the religious conflicts which face the biblical personages.

Both Ronald Goldman (1977) and James Fowler (1976) have presented developmental models for religious and faith development in education. For our purposes, Fowler's mythic-literal stage encompasses the age group of children that we teach in the Jewish elementary day school. In this stage of development the worthy authority extends beyond primal others to include teachers, religious leaders, customs, traditions, media, books and ideas of peers. At this stage, the child reaches out and beyond his/her immediate environment for religious stimulation and development. In this regard Fowler states that:

...religious symbols, myths, rituals, music and heroic figures can provide important vehicles of identification and affiliation. Where effectively offered they can become means of evoking and expressing the child's or person's faith in a transmundane order or meaning, as well as being guarantors of present and future promise. (p. 195)

The child is concerned with understanding regularity and predictability in people's actions, and with attempting to incorporate the notions of intention, motivation and prediction into the biblical stories. If we attempt to explore the psychological, social and educational advantages of examining the biblical personalities, we will discover several other factors that may not have been mentioned earlier. When we teach a story to children or adults, the most salient issues to be remembered involve the character's make-up. As Northrop Frye (1957) has stated:

The actions, thoughts, and feelings of the various charac-

ters are the basic story elements, rather than words, prepositions, and paragraphs. When we remember a story, we almost always recall the goals of the characters, the resulting alliances and conflicts, and the reaction of the characters to unexpected challenges... Consequently a theory of story understanding should focus on the relationships among characters rather than among prepositions. (p. 42)

By the same token, in helping our students wrestle with these issues, we must present them with many of the "great and ultimate questions" which face us on an existential basis. Bruner (1959) has correctly stated that our primary goal as educators must be to help the student deal with the specific situations of life. These include: birth, growth, loneliness, passions and death. We must strive to help the learner cope with these situations in a healthy and supportive environment (p. 186). This is one of the critical goals of education and certainly a fundamental premise of Bible education. When the student confronts the biblical characters and their experiences in life, he/she is, in effect, striving to deal with these basic situations and how they affect his/her own life.

In effect, by seeing how the biblical characters dealt with many of these issues, the students learn more about themselves. In this manner, they share the joys, the frustrations and the sorrows which the biblical personalities felt (Bachrach, p. 25). They relate to these experiences and attempt to place themselves in the role of the characters. Therefore, when Abraham must decide what to do with Ishmael, the reader empathizes with the inner conflicts that confronted our forefather.

In portraying the biblical personalities, we do not have an overabundance of information regarding their behavioral motivations. We are not told much explicitly about the inner considerations that help determine a practical decision or behavior. As Dvora Koubovi (1970) has noted:

We don't know the psychological dynamic — it is only hinted at. This invites children to become active participants in discussing the reasons for this behavior. (p. 56)

We thereby encourage the child to engage in a deliberation on motivating forces behind a particular character's behavior. The reader examines these questions in consultation with the classi-

cal and modern biblical commentaries that have offered varied and divergent theories throughout Jewish history. At a later stage we will show how *aggadic* literature serves this purpose. The reader is thereby engaged in an ongoing dialogue which has continued for thousands of years.

Another psychological need that is met by an in-depth examination of the biblical personality is the need for what is called modeling and its impact on the student's development. Albert Bandura (1977), who has pioneered some of the most innovative work in this field, describes the critical role of observational learning and its potential impact on the learner. Bandura maintains that one of the most effective means for establishing role models is through literary contexts (pp. 24–25). In determining who are the most accessible and effective models, Bandura claims that those who possess engaging qualities are the most sought out, while those less exciting are usually ignored or rejected. Furthermore, the complexity and salience of a particular model will also affect the rate and level of observational learning. From the child's perspective, there is no more appropriate or accessible means for achieving this goal than studying the characters in the Bible.

In focusing on the biblical figure and his/her confrontation with some of the ultimate issues, we are allowing the student to grapple with several critical philosophical and theological issues that may trouble him/her. He/she is encouraged to think objectively and critically. Although he/she need not learn the fundamental principles of logic, the student may, according to Lippman (1984), "discover them in the process of discussing philosophical concepts of importance to them such as fairness, friendship, and truth" (p. 52).

Our mandate, therefore, as educators of young children, must be to help them deal with these issues at their level of understanding and growth. We must zealously pursue this goal and never allow ourselves to lose sight of this responsibility. As Professor Nechama Leibovitz (1941) has written, "We must never allow the study of the biblical figures to be distorted into a simplistic story devoid of meaning and relevance to our everyday lives (p. 13). Our ultimate challenge is to take this material and adapt it for use in the elementary school classroom in such a way that it will add purpose and appreciation of this book and make

an impact on the youngster's life.

*The Uniqueness of the Biblical Character*

The biblical personality is portrayed as a complex and perplexed individual who struggles with the mundane as well as the ultimate existential human questions which have plagued mankind since creation. The "great questions" are revealed to the reader through the actions and reactions of the biblical figures. The uniqueness of the biblical text highlights these points in different ways. Adin Steinsaltz (1984) has written:

The techniques and tricks of dramatists: the revealing monologue, the intimate conversation to explain dreams and longings, a chorus providing background details – are all absent in the Scriptures. It is this almost dry style that gives the biblical story its impact. Here, every sentence, every action counts, indicating by means of the most subtle allusions occurrences whose significance resounds in the souls of men and in the world at large. (p. xii)

The biblical figures are not thus simply life portraits; rather, they serve as archetypes. They continue to grow and develop throughout Jewish history "as part of the collective personality of the Jewish nation" (p. xiv). In this sense, the reader's task is to take these figures and insert them into the present. The serious biblical reader cannot allow him/herself anything less. He/she must attempt to understand the biblical figures as well as possible. He/she must seek to reconstruct their portraits from biblical and *midrashic* texts, and allow them to enter into his/her world, in the present.

Within the Bible we find several types of characters who fulfill various literary, religious and value-bearing functions. According to a classification by Berlin (1983), the first type is labeled the "full-fledged" or "rounded character" (p. 23). These are complex figures manifesting a multitude of traits and appearing as real people. They exhibit diversified reactions and thereby intrigue the reader. We gain insight into their personalities through their interactions with other individuals in a host of different circumstances. Obviously, all of the biblical patriarchs belong in this category, as well as Moses, David, etc.

As mentioned earlier, the portrayal of rounded characters is enriched by *midrashim* and *aggadot* which serve to fill lacunae left by the biblical text. According to Kariv (1976, p. 381), these extra-biblical writings convey their message to the reader in three ways:

1. The *midrash* oftentimes informs us of the background of the biblical figures. Thus, for example, the Bible introduces us to Abraham, when he has reached the age of seventy-five. In this case, the *midrash* describes to us in some detail the earlier part of his life.
2. The *midrash* tells us of numerous moral and ethical dilemmas that faced these 'full characters.' After the destruction of Sodom, according to Genesis 20:1, the text states that "Abraham journeyed from thence towards the land of the south." The text doesn't explain the reason for Abraham's journey, but the *midrash* teaches the following: "After the destruction of Sodom, passers by stopped coming and Abraham said: 'How can I not continue to welcome needy people into my house?' At that point, he went and moved his tent to Gerar [in the South]" (Geneseis Rabbah 52:1). Abraham was not able to stay in a place where he would be removed from those in need. According to the *midrash*, his desire to help these people was so great that he decided to look for other individuals to help.
3. In addition to what we learn in the biblical text about the impact of these full-fledged characters on their own generation, the *midrash* describes their impact on future generations. Therefore when we are told, in Genesis 37:34 that in his period of mourning "Jacob rent his outer garment, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days," the *midrash* (in Genesis Rabbah 84:20) relates that this was the basis for the custom of wearing sackcloth as a symbol of mourning. In other words, Jacob's act set the precedent for mourning practices in Jewish law.

Each of these rounded figures confronts life's trials and tribulations on a regular basis. Whether it be tensions in the family between spouses or siblings, or between children and parents,

the biblical figure faces these realities. In other cases, he/she faces issues of love and hate, freedom and bondage and feelings of human loss or gain. The biblical figure does not lead a secluded, isolated existence. He/she is part of a community and interacts with his/her fellow beings on different levels and in varying circumstances; he/she laughs, cries, rejoices, mourns; he/she questions and responds while pondering life's existential meaning; he/she is a complex individual living in tension.<sup>1</sup>

The biblical figure's life is replete with struggles and constant questioning of what is happening to him/her and to the world in which he/she lives. And yet, as a result of this process, he/she grows, develops and reaches an understanding, appreciation and love of the message of Sinai. All of these messages are crucial to a clear understanding of the biblical figures and their impact on our lives. All of these messages are part of the religious and educational mandate which the Bible teacher must undertake.

A second type of biblical character has been labelled a "flat character." These characters are built around a single quality or trait, and do not stand out as individuals; rather, in terms of the biblical plot, they project a unidimensional image as it appears in a particular situation. Potiphar's wife, for instance, exemplifies this kind of character.

Finally, we have the biblical character who is called the "agent." He/she performs an action necessary in order to move the plot forward. The actions of these characters do not surprise the reader in the sense that they are loyal to their roles and react accordingly. Thus, the purpose, role and portrayal of each figure is different and presents the student with a comprehensive picture of the players in the drama.

### *The Educational Portrayal of the Biblical Figure*

Sometimes, the portrayal of the biblical character is complex. The biblical personalities are not presented as perfect super-human species who do not err or succumb to temptation. Their greatness and uniqueness are predicated on this fact and, thus, any attempt to deny or change this impression is a distortion of

1 See Joseph B. Soloveitchik's description of these tensions in *Halakhic Man*, note 4, p. 143.

the biblical message. As Hirsch, in his commentary on Genesis 12:10 states:

The Torah never hides from us the faults, errors and weaknesses of our great men. Just by that it gives the stamp of veracity to what it relates. But in truth, by the knowledge which is given us of their faults and weaknesses, our great men are in no wise made lesser but actually greater and more instructive.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, in our teaching of this material there is a critical lesson that must be stressed. The classical biblical commentators and *midrashic* literature repeatedly emphasized this point in different contexts. As Leibovitz (1978) has noted:

It is commonly believed, and especially in those circles that are not familiar with our classical biblical commentaries...that these [commentators] attempt to justify the actions of our forefathers and their deeds, that they attempt to rationalize the [forefathers'] actions at any cost. And there is no greater mistake. Beginning with the rabbinic *midrashim* and especially in them, and until the end of the Middle Ages, we find great liberty taken in criticizing the biblical characters, and these [the characters] include the greatest and most revered leaders of our nation. All their actions are scrupulously criticized. (p. 33)

A critical and probing question arises when we attempt to explore different educational approaches to portraying the biblical figures in this way. In other words, how does one present the complexity of the characters in such a way that will be understood by the child and yet remain loyal to the text? There are certain theological, philosophical, psychological and educational premises which will determine the approach to be adopted. These must be fully examined before offering a possible teaching strategy. However, there still remains a certain common ground to all the approaches. Zuta (1937) believes that one must protect the child's 'pure thoughts' about the biblical images at any price (p. 39). According to this approach, the child's understanding (referring to children in the elementary school grades) is too fra-

2 See also Ibn Ezra, commentary on Ecclesiastes 7:20.

gile to expose him/her to possible flaws or questions about the images of these biblical personalities. Minkovitz (1960), continuing this line of thought, raises the possibility of introducing some of these issues at the onset of puberty. He too is most cautious and wary of raising these issues at a younger age. He argues as follows:

The learning of Bible in the elementary school is an issue of search and discovery, and its ideas and personalities must serve as a paradigm of good and beautiful, and therefore any flaw in these [ideas or personalities] will also weaken their educational impact. (p. 320)

A second approach, as proposed by Zvi Adar (1967), holds that the biblical characters should be reexamined and reevaluated at the end of each episode.

The ability to evaluate biblical characters will be developed by the students when they are called upon to revise their judgement of the heroes as the evidence accumulates. (p. 101)

Adar maintains that only through an open and undirected search will the student achieve a deep appreciation of these biblical personalities.

Finally, Yehuda Keel (1969), instructs teachers to concentrate on the 'great deeds' of the 'great biblical personalities' rather than on the personalities themselves (p. 44). In this way the focus shifts away from the biblical figures themselves and highlights the actions rather than the 'personalities.' Keel concedes that the biblical personalities had many human failings and that therefore we should try to help our students appreciate the deeds rather than the figures themselves. In this way we avoid confronting the dual nature of these personalities, i.e. we only need to examine their actions and thus we can somehow separate the questionable traits from our overall impressions of these biblical figures.

As previously noted, each of the above cited attempts to deal with this educational question is rooted in deep philosophical, religious and psychological premises. As a result, each carries a clear, distinct educational message to the learner, which ultimately affects the student's appreciation and understanding of the

biblical narrative.

It is not within the scope of this paper to highlight the underlying ideological differences, but rather to offer a different approach to this challenge which will attempt to address some of the religious, psychological and educational needs of the child which we discussed earlier. This attempt to focus on the child will, we hope, sensitize us to more carefully examine the world of the learner and to how this ought to affect our pedagogic orientation.

Our first premise (as emphasized by Saunders (1967), is that the greatness of the biblical text speaks to children with the same eloquence and meaning as it does to adults.

If children are treated with respect, they are more likely to act respectfully. If they are given tin cups because they are so clumsy, they are more likely to be clumsy, but if they are given crystal so they can have beauty, they are more likely to act beautifully. If we give them intelligent reading matter they are more likely to act intelligently. (p. 17)

This point only serves to emphasize the negative consequences of using books of Bible stories "adapted" for children. Generally speaking, these 'Bible Readers' for children distort, reduce and oftentimes nullify the religious message of the text.<sup>3</sup> In attempting to help the child by simplifying the original text, we are depriving him/her of the pleasure of confronting the challenges, lessons and dilemmas that we find in the Bible. In other words, children must be taught the biblical material in a serious and meaningful way, without condescension and without changing the basic meaning of the text. Let us encourage the child to face the dilemmas with the tools that he/she possesses. If necessary, we will help guide him/her to better understand some of the subtleties or conceptual messages which he/she may not necessarily appreciate. These, as Matthews (1980) points out, may be linguistic, chronological or literary matters that he/she

3 See for example: *Pesukei Bereshit* published by the Israel Education Ministry, 1984. Compare the story entitled "Joseph's Dreams" on page 47 with the original text from Genesis 37. See also the adaptation of this story in *Haver L'Torah*.

may not fully comprehend due to his/her cognitive-developmental stage of growth.<sup>4</sup>

However, let us first examine the child's ability to achieve a sophisticated and meaningful understanding of the issues being raised. As Matthews (1986) has also pointed out, our experience has taught us that children are able to raise many of the sophisticated and challenging questions of human existence. In fact, children are constantly thinking in sophisticated, conceptual frameworks. As Matthews (1980) has so poignantly noted:

In fact, such evidence as I have been able to assemble suggests that, for many young members of the human race, philosophical thinking — including, on occasion, subtle and ingenious reasoning — is as natural as making music and playing games, and quite as much a part of being human. (p. 36)

The second point of our suggested approach addresses the notion of the child's understanding of the biblical personality. It seems imperative that we present the biblical figures to children with the same clarity, and sense of challenge and conflict, that we offer adults. It should be noted that there are certain instances where we will be obliged to offer an "educational translation" or adaptation in order to make certain that the child has fully comprehended specific concepts or ideas. However, the guidelines for treatment of material with children should be the same as with adults. We believe, as Scharfstein (1966) stressed, that from a religious as well as philosophical, psychological and educational point of view, children will further appreciate and cherish the biblical text if it is treated in this way. The *midrash* in Genesis Rabbah 9:7 teaches us that because of the evil inclination, man is propelled to build a house, take a wife, have children or engage in business. The capacity to sin raises the importance of our forefathers teaching us the power of repentance, and showing us the full scope of human nature.

We believe that children can appreciate the concept of sin and repentance and understand its full implications. Furthermore, we are convinced, as suggested by Miller (1979), that children from

<sup>4</sup> Matthews (1980, ch. 4) highlights possible unjustified limitations that a Piagetian model of teaching children may pose, in grouping children's abilities based on stages of cognitive development.

the age of nine can begin to accept and value certain inconsistencies in a biblical personality (p. 50). The child can understand that Abraham acts quite differently in various stories that we read in the book of Genesis. More specifically, Abraham's reactions in Genesis 14, where he shows clear signs of leadership in fighting the five kings, are very different from his behavior in Genesis 16, when he is asked to intervene in the rivalry between Sarah and Hagar. So, too, when he and Sarah go to Gerar in chapter 20, and he tells King Abimelech that she is his sister, the young reader sees another side of our forefather's character.

Third, this approach encourages the teacher to use *midrashic* literature as a means of providing the reader with a fuller picture of the biblical personality. Shifman (1929) has shown how the *midrash* portrays the biblical figures in their childhood. He argues that the *midrash* fills in the gaps of what happened to our forefathers in that stage of their lives (p. 535). This is a critical means for enhancing the child's understanding of the biblical text and it should be used in that way.

Finally, and critical to our understanding and appreciation of the biblical figures will be the attempt to explore the motives behind certain actions. For instance, we must train the child to ask why Abraham reacted as he did in the story of Hagar and Ishmael. We should help focus the child's attention on understanding the behavior of our forefathers. If the child understands what motivates Abraham to react in a particular way under certain circumstances, then he/she has learned a great lesson about human nature and the Torah's attitude toward this behavior. As Greenberg (1986) maintains, he/she is further challenged to constantly reexamine his/her own behavior in light of what he/she has learned from the biblical narrative (pp. 12-23). Finally, if the biblical text is studied together with various classical and modern commentaries, it provides the youngster with a spectrum of Jewish scholarship throughout history. It highlights the pluralism of the commentaries and shows how different schools of thought have understood the biblical text from various and differing vantage points and perspectives.

In conclusion, this paper began by posing a series of questions about the nature of the biblical figure. It proceeded to explore different components of these figures and analyze how, from the child's perspective, their complexity can be understood. Finally,

we presented an approach which stressed the unique qualities of these figures and their importance for the child's religious, developmental and psychological growth.

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*Section III*  
*PEDAGOGIC ISSUES*



## A TYPOLOGY FOR BIBLICAL LITERACY

Marla Frankel

The perception of reading activity, as held by theoreticians and practitioners in the field of general education, has undergone radical changes over the past four decades. At the turn of the century reading was defined as the ability to recognize the symbols on a page and pronounce them aloud. Researchers and developers of reading instruction debated the methods best suited to reach this goal. By the mid 1920's this definition of reading activity was recognized as insufficient. In order for the reading activity to be complete, *literal* comprehension had to accompany word recognition and enunciation. Reading instruction was adjusted to accommodate this new dimension of reading activity, and didactic efforts were directed toward helping the student discover the literal message communicated by the printed word.

Instructional materials show that in the 1950's and 1960's, theoreticians and practitioners reached a consensus regarding the insufficiency of decoding and literal comprehension; *deepened* comprehension became the new focus of concern. Indeed, both at the elementary school level (beyond the primary grades) and at the college level, there appeared a growing concern on the part of researchers, teachers and parents with the lack of success in teaching students the skills necessary to comprehend deeply and meaningfully.

David Pearson (1978), whose extensive research in the area of reading comprehension has been of direct benefit to teachers of reading instruction, suggests that the shift of focus from reading as decoding to reading as multifaceted comprehension was due to three factors: a general consensus about the method of instructing reading as decoding which I have already mentioned; heightened concern about comprehension failures throughout the school and college systems; and, particularly significant for those dealing with biblical literacy, the intellectual challenges posed to researchers by the field of cognitive psychology. Pearson explains, "Indeed the relatively new field of cognitive psychology considers the reading process to be one of its most precious objects of study, encompassing as it does subprocesses like atten-

tion, perception, encoding, comprehension, memory, information storage and retrieval."

The catch phrase "reading is thinking" characterizes both the research and the substantial alterations in instructional materials that have taken place over the past two decades. Taxonomies of thinking skills abound, such as those of Smith, Carr & Stauffer, to mention only a few, and have been paralleled by the descriptive stages of the reading process offered to us by the developmental psychologists.

Teachers of classical religious texts may reject as inappropriate both past and current research in the area of reading, for two reasons. Firstly, the obstacles they face loom so much greater since they are teaching a second language (in the case of biblical language perhaps even a third), and they are attempting to teach a classical religious text whose time and values are perceived by many to be removed from the realities and concerns of 20th century life. Secondly, teachers often claim that traditional exegesis has assumed for centuries that reading is not merely decoding. *Explication de texte* has always characterized the manner in which Bible has been read and taught. Despite the claims of inappropriateness, it is suggested here that there is a great deal to learn from current research into the reading process, primarily because the fields of religious education and general education share the fundamental problem of teaching *deep comprehension* skills to students. Along with general education facilities, Jewish day schools have succeeded in teaching decoding skills to children by the time they are 8 or 9 years of age. These students have successfully mastered the Hebrew alphabet and can read the printed word, even if to some extent their reading is mechanical. In addition, they possess a limited vocabulary in modern Hebrew that enables them to have at least a minimal understanding of brief narrative portions of the biblical texts.

Teachers abroad (and in Israel as well) are nevertheless frustrated because they, like their counterparts in general studies, cannot advance their students beyond the stage of *literal* comprehension. They have not cultivated in their students the skills of reading comprehension which would make the reading experience active and meaningful. Although children's minds continue to mature intellectually, little is done to advance them beyond reading the text mechanically and merely translating

biblical phrases. Occasionally, teachers may engage them in value discussions or offer *midrashic* material in seeking the various interpretations to a given text. However, more often than not, teachers admit to playing the game that Durkin describes as "guess what's in my head" during these discussions. The *systematic* teaching of reading comprehension skills which has been initiated these last two decades in the study of literature in general studies, is sorely lacking in Jewish studies.

Mortimer Adler (1940) compares the art of reading to other forms of art and explains:

Before you become expert, you cannot coalesce a lot of different acts into one harmonious performance. You cannot telescope the different parts of the job so that they run into one another and fuse intimately. Each deserves your full attention while you are doing it. After you have practised the parts separately you not only can do each with greater facility and less attention, but you can also gradually put them together into a smoothly running whole.

It is in the spirit of Adler's dictum that the present paper on how we read a biblical text is organized. What will be offered is a typology of the reading process for students ages 8 to 11, in the middle grades of the day school classroom. The development of this typology is the result of current research into the field of reading comprehension, teaching, and observations within the Diaspora classroom over the last decade and a half, as well as ongoing work in teacher training at the Melton Centre, with elementary school teachers from both Israel and abroad.

### Reading Modes and their Application

The five modes of reading which make up the typology are: fluency reading, deciphering, scanning, analysis and interpretation. Together, these modes form the process of reading that students ages 8 to 11 engage in while reading a biblical text. As such, they are *descriptive* modes. However, as will be seen upon closer examination of each mode, they are also the necessary components of biblical literacy, particularly for this age group.

Although it may be possible to set the modes of reading along a continuum where the criterion for progress is deepening

comprehension, the typology is not a hierarchial or developmental one. In fact, students engage in a particular mode, depending upon the objectives they set for themselves or their teacher sets for them. For example, if the teacher wants students to have a grasp of the course of events in a given narrative, he/she will engage them in the mode termed "scanning." For this purpose, the mode of "fluency reading" is secondary, and "analysis and interpretation" are superfluous. However, in order to initiate this task, "deciphering" is a necessary, *a priori* step. If the teacher wants to review or strengthen the students' facility with biblical vocabulary he/she will again focus on "deciphering" and may also utilize the mode of scanning to facilitate contextual understanding. If, however, the teacher's purpose in a particular lesson or series of lessons is to gain a deep understanding of the text, then "analysis and interpretation" will have to be the foci of these lessons.

### *Fluency Reading*

Basic to the reading process is the ability to enunciate the words of a text with ease and accuracy. Fluency reading can only be accomplished with the help of comprehension after mastering the mechanical technicalities of reading (i.e., decoding symbols and word recognition). Indeed, the greater the level of comprehension, the greater is the facility in reading or enunciating the text.

Unfortunately, mechanical reading is still regarded as an ultimate objective by many practitioners. Haramati's research (1973) in the field of reading Hebrew as a second language has led him to observe that mechanical reading gained legitimacy in both the day and supplementary school curricula when pressure was put on principals and teachers to prepare children for prayer in the synagogue. The fact that these children understood little of the liturgy they read was disregarded by parents who themselves possessed little knowledge of the texts. Their children's seeming fluency in reading the liturgy had justified the parents' investment in their parochial education. Haramati goes on to explain that the supporters of mechanical reading assume that reading for understanding can be taught later. However, that opportunity is soon lost when students lose interest in the texts that they have managed to read successfully, albeit mechanically.

According to Haramati, reading can be taught most efficiently when meaning and comprehension are sought simultaneously. He points to the inherent difficulties of decoding Hebrew as a second language and claims that without contextual understanding, word recognition cannot be easily or accurately accomplished. According to him, initial reading should be taught as a means for understanding. Teachers in the primary grades whose responsibility it is to initiate students into the process of modern and biblical Hebrew would do well to heed Haramati's conclusions.

By the time day school students are 8 years of age, the majority of them *have* mastered the initial skills of word recognition. In addition, they possess a limited vocabulary in modern Hebrew and often recognize root and base words in biblical Hebrew as well. However, their technical reading still lacks fluency, speed and most important, confidence. Chall (1983) reports that even in first language reading, fluency confirmation is a necessary stage after initial reading. She writes:

...with the basic decoding skills interiorized in Stage 1, the reader can take advantage of what is said in the story and book, matching it to his or her knowledge and language. Although some additional more complex phonic elements and generalizations are learned at this stage, it appears that what most children learn is to use their decoding knowledge, the redundancies of the language and of the stories read. They gain *courage* and *skill* in using context and thus gain *fluency* and *speed*.

Both Chall (1983) and Haramati (1973) claim that fluency confirmation will be reached along with deeper comprehension. *This ability to read a text with technical ease is extremely important in order that the student feel comfortable with the text.*

Another important part of the early study of Bible is reading the text aloud, preferably in small groups, followed by accurate and expressive reading once the text has been understood. This is not to suggest that Bible lessons be turned into recitals or that students be asked to read aloud before they even understand the text. On the contrary, a fluent and expressive reading of the text should be the teacher's contribution to the beginning of any lesson. Teachers need to be encouraged to teach basic טעמיהםקרא

— the Masoretic punctuation marks, as possible tools which can add fluency in reading and promote a degree of understanding of the phrases being read. At a later stage, these “cues” can be used for textual analysis. The accurate and fluent reading of a biblical narrative, proverb or psalm is an essential component in biblical literacy.

### *Deciphering*

The ability to translate and decode biblical Hebrew into a language that is comprehensible to students is a prerequisite for any further comprehension of the text. Students must be given the tools to recognize base and root words, prefixes and suffixes of biblical nouns and verbs, and then taught the intricacies of biblical grammar. This mode of reading is called “deciphering” as opposed to “translating” for two reasons. First, deciphering more aptly describes the nature of the students’ activity as they labor to find word meanings and synonyms in their vocabulary which closely match those in the text. Second, it is incumbent upon the teacher who facilitates this mode of reading to offer definitions that are synonymous with literal meanings and not interpretative meanings which translation allows.

Teachers often claim that deciphering poses the greatest obstacle to further study and so justify devoting so much of their classroom time to this mode of reading. However, experience in the Diaspora classroom has demonstrated what Nechama Leibovitz has long claimed: that the vocabulary necessary to comprehend a biblical narrative is quite limited since the language of the narrative is so very repetitive. Haramati (1983) supports Leibovitz’s claim and has done teachers a great service by providing word lists, citing their frequency of appearance in the book of Genesis (Haramati 1983). He concludes that students can understand most of the Bible with a working knowledge of only 200 different words, each of which appears 25 times or more in the entire text. Considering that approximately 500 new words can be taught during a school year, even in a supplementary afternoon school, the 200 word basic vocabulary can easily be absorbed in short order by most students. Haramati also points out that in the book of Genesis alone, which is the first book to be taught in most Diaspora schools, there is a core of 279 frequently used words which comprise 70% of the “running vocabu-

lary" of the entire text. In the course of three years, with 500 new words taught per year, teachers should be able to cover that list and still have time to supplement frequently repeated words from additional texts.

In a similar vein, Moshe Greenberg (1976) comments on the context in which textual deciphering should take place, "Here the basic aim should be to remove the obstacles from the reading of the text *prior* to the reading (study) of the text. The experience of reading the text should be as far removed from an agony of pitfalls and slipping and falling and stopping and explaining — as far removed from that as possible" (see article in this volume). There is no question that for biblical scholars and experienced students of the text, deciphering and interpretation are often combined skills. Indeed, when so much of biblical narrative is laden with multiple meaning, even deciphering may be interpretative. However, for the *beginning* student, deciphering should be separated from the deep comprehension skills to follow.

Conclusions from work in teacher training at the Melton Centre over the last number of years have suggested that in order to handle difficult vocabulary, exercises and games based on memory and retrieval skills, created by both teachers and students and engaged in *before* the reading of the text, add a necessary and varied dimension to Bible study in the middle grades. Although initially more time must be allotted toward these exercises, the dividends become apparent by mid-year. Students look forward to such exercises as indispensable tools for furthering their literal understanding of the text.

### *Scanning*

The third mode of reading in the typology is reading for information and, in the specific case of the biblical narrative, emphasizes understanding of the storyline. A great many discussions in the classroom are based on factual information gleaned from the text. Worksheets and workbooks reinforce this tendency to focus on the factual. Successful scanning confirms for the teacher that students have "understood." However, many students are already familiar with the general storylines of the narratives by the time they reach the middle grades. Thus the teacher's emphasis on reading for information, which demands little intellectual effort, only serves to aggravate the students' boredom. Scanning a text

for literal understanding is essential to students' need to further their comprehension of the text, but it is merely a beginning. Rather than devoting precious discussion time toward confirming successful scanning, teachers should utilize games, exercises and weekly reviews for this purpose. The challenge of understanding a biblical text in any significant way will begin when the student turns to "analyzing" the text.

### *Analysis*

On the basis of the testimony of many teachers, it is clear that "analysis" is the least understood mode of reading. Analysis of the text involves understanding from *within* the text, the assumption being that there is meaning to be found in every word and in every phrase. Literary skills provide analytic tools to help reading instruction in this mode, and thus direct students' attention to sentence structure, word emphases and deletions, repetitions and parallels, paragraph and chapter divisions, etc. The teacher's role in facilitating textual analysis is to provide the students with these tools in a systematic way, emphasizing at least one tool in every analytic lesson. Textual analysis naturally leads to delineating problems in the text; the reader is pressed to find out *why* there are seeming deletions, repetitions, incomplete storylines, contradictions, etc. Whether the answers offered to solve these problems are the reader's own or are taken from a secondary source, a first step has been taken toward *interpreting* the text. Whereas analysis is understanding the text from *within* the text, *interpretation* is understanding the text from *beyond* the text.

Through the use of tables composed of word, phrase or verse listings, as Leibovitz (1983) exemplifies in so many of her writings, it is possible to analyze individual verses and short paragraphs with students as young as 8 years of age. For example, in two separate grade three classes, students aged 8 and 9 were asked to analyze two brief paragraphs in Exodus 4:1-9, where Moses expresses concern that the Children of Israel will neither believe nor heed him. God's immediate response is to give Moses three miraculous signs that he can display before the Israelites in order to convince them of His divine mission. The students were asked to note the signs that were given to Moses by God, as well as the verses in which the signs were mentioned. All agreed that *three* signs were given in order to make Moses feel more confi-

dent when facing the Israelites. In both classes, the teacher furthered the analysis with the following question: "Why does God show Moses three signs; wouldn't one have been enough?" — thereby articulating the problem of *textual redundancy* alluded to in the students' initial analysis. Responses were as follows: "Sometimes people need more than one example to explain something," "Maybe Moses didn't think the people would be convinced after the first and, looking disappointed, God gave him two more." The teachers drew up the following table in order to redirect the students back to the text and have them *analytically* compare one sign to another.

Beside each verse and each sign, the students were asked to note who or what was affected by each sign, and to rate from 1–5 how effective they thought each sign was. In filling out this table, it became clear to most of the students that the first sign (a rod changing into a snake) affected only the rod ("and maybe the snake was in the rod to begin with!") the second sign (Moses' hand turning leprous) affected only Moses ("maybe he slipped on a glove!") but that the third sign (the water of the Nile turning to blood) would affect all of Egypt and was definitely to be rated 5, the most powerful. This table clearly portrayed the progression of the signs and the advantage of each sign over the previous one.

In one class, a child persisted, "Why didn't God just begin with the *last* sign, since it was the most powerful anyway?!" Another student joined in: "He should have known that the first two wouldn't have worked!" (that is, wouldn't have convinced the Israelites). The teacher then asked the children to review the tables they had prepared and suggested that they take a closer look at each of the signs and then probed further, "Were the signs different from one another, and if so, how?" The students offered the following: "The rod is only a thing." "Moses isn't a thing — he's a man." "The Nile is a thing." The teacher continued, "So we have a *thing*, a person, and the Nile. Is the Nile really a thing like the rod? It is a thing, but a thing in nature. The rod isn't a tree, but a dead sort of a stick, merely a thing. The river is a natural resource, flowing and providing life." The teacher then asked that the students complete the following sentence in their notebooks: "God showed *these* three signs to Moses, as if to say, 'I can or I am . . .'" Some of the students completed their sen-

tences as follows:

"I can control three different things in the world"

"I have power over different parts of the world"

"I am strong and can do what I want to everything in this world."

Children at age 8 and 9 have difficulty categorizing rod, Moses and the Nile. However, there is no harm in the teacher's suggesting categories as the analysis proceeds. In fact, the students' sentences indicate that some of them clearly understood that these signs were symbolic – that they were examples of God's domain of power. Interestingly enough, the teacher admitted that in her own analysis, she had not thought beyond the point of the progression of the effectiveness of the signs. This meaningful interpretation of the text was clearly a result of three factors: the analysis already initiated, the students' persistent questioning and, no less important, the teacher's faith that further analysis would yield deeper meaning.

Of course, one example of a successful analysis of the text and the interpretation offered to solve the textual problem of possible redundancy is insufficient to support a claim that children of these ages can always analyze and interpret a biblical text. Still, it is important to continue encouraging children as young as 8 and 9 years of age to engage in simple analysis of the text, and in offering their own interpretations as solutions to the problems raised.

### *Interpretation*

Too often, teachers proceed from scanning the text – understanding the storyline – to interpreting the text, so that *methodical* analysis is totally neglected. Students do not participate in delineating the textual problems, but instead are offered either the teacher's own interpretative "meaning" or a solution offered from traditional exegesis such as *Rashi* or *midrashic* literature. While such sources undoubtedly enhance the students' perception of the text's deeper meanings, when offered *prior* to analysis, they leave no room for students to develop their own tools of interpretation. When *Rashi* is introduced into a lesson, the purpose is often to find out: "מה קשה לרש"י" – what difficulty did *Rashi* have with the text – and an attempt is then made to understand *Rashi*'s solution. However, having neither analyzed

the narrative nor subsequently discovered the problems in the text, the students are not even clear as to why the additional source was introduced, and know only that they have to cope with yet another difficult text. The danger of teachers' reading the text only through their own interpretative meanings should be obvious; students have not been provided with the analytic tools to offer their own understanding of the text or possibly to refute those offered by teachers.

In a classroom discussion an 8-year-old child raised the question as to why the Egyptian midwives who tried to save the Hebrew children were also punished with the ten plagues. The teacher's quick answer that they were *Hebrew* midwives and not Egyptian *interpreted* the text without admitting its obvious ambiguity. Indeed, Professor Leibovitz (1975), unlike other commentators, chooses to see these women as righteous Egyptians. The student, however, persisted, "But what about the *good* Egyptians?" (referring to the fact that every household was affected by the tenth, and harshest, plague). The teacher then quoted a *midrash* suggesting that the Egyptians were all at fault in not convincing Pharaoh to release the Hebrew slaves. Later, in a discussion, the teacher admitted that she was not comfortable with her own interpretation. Indeed, she had twice missed the opportunity to analyze the text with her students, thus depriving them of a close reading of the text and the tools to arrive at a possibly alternative solution. The teacher might also have raised the problem of unfair collective punishment, an issue the students could well have appreciated and discussed — and might even have recalled the Abraham and *Sodom* narrative. Instead, the teacher's own interpretation was set forth as conclusive and a perfectly legitimate and pressing concern about why the innocent were punished by God was not at all addressed.

It is advisable to consider that whatever additional sources are studied — and the choice of these sources may depend upon the religious goals of the program — they should be brought in only *after* the students have analyzed the text and raised the problems themselves, even if it is with the help of the teacher. Because students will have formulated the problems on their own, their motivation to search for sources and compare interpretations will be that much greater. Of course, for mature students of Bible, the traditional commentaries provide clues to textual problems that

they may not have discovered on their own, but mature students already assume the benefits of studying the extra source material. For beginning students, an appreciation of extra source material must be cultivated (whether from traditional exegesis, ancient Near Eastern texts or modern literary works) so that they gradually realize that their analyses alone, though satisfying, are at times insufficient and can be enhanced further with the help of this material.

It is within the context of extra source material that recognition should be given to the possible contribution of the various arts: drama, drawing, music and film in the Bible curriculum. Whether a child writes a script, draws a picture or produces a filmstrip, he/she must learn to appreciate these arts as interpretations of text. For the moment that a child writes a script, he/she will have deviated from the text; drawings of a biblical scene will not only be descriptive but interpretative. Children should be encouraged to compare their scripts and drawings to the text and to other extra source material so that they can be made aware of the many possible interpretations — for they are continuing in the tradition of *Torah Shebe'alpeh*, and the use of the arts within the context of the Bible curricula should be honored as such. In the elementary school classroom the arts should play a significant role, not to replace the cognitive skills so necessary to biblical literacy, but in order to enhance them.

The meaningful and often contemporary interpretations offered by young children ought to be regarded as valid if they fulfill two criteria: The first is that the interpretation be rooted in the text; that is to say, it must have a direct bearing on the written word — it must explain, comment upon or refer to a specific textual matter, and its implications must not contradict the text itself. The second criterion is that it be in accord with Jewish value systems and traditions. Although extending beyond biblical sources (to the *Talmud*, *aggadah*, etc.), these values and traditions form a framework for a coherent biblical outlook, so that other texts within the Bible, whether preceding or following the particular text studied, serve as supports or authorities for rendering a valid interpretation. The abundance of traditional commentaries on biblical texts is witness to the fact that even within this framework the scope is wide, giving credence to the rabbinic dictum, "There are 70 faces to the Torah." Interpreta-

tions which abide by these two criteria and are the results of sharp textual analysis are to be respected as honest attempts by the student at finding meaning in the text. By honoring such attempts, the teachers are in no way canonizing the students' interpretation nor undermining the rabbinic commentaries. They are, instead, engaging students in an ongoing process of studying Torah.

There is a great deal of skepticism regarding the child's ability to cope with multiple and sometimes opposing interpretations. Chall (1983), who bases her developmental theory of reading on the cognitive stages of development delineated by Piaget, claims that only children between the ages of 14 and 18 are capable of coping with and learning from multiple or contradictory viewpoints. However, according to Piaget (1928), 8 and 9-year-olds are at the "concrete operational" stage which is characterized by cooperative and non-egocentric communication. Unlike "preoperational" children (2-7 years of age) who are unable to assume the viewpoint of others, the concrete operational children are aware that others can come to conclusions that are different from their own, and consequently they seek validation of their own thoughts.

Our own work with 8 and 9-year-olds indicates that children of this age are capable of learning from different viewpoints, if the degree of variation is not radical. Confusion seems to set in when diametrically opposed interpretations are offered. Although a certain amount of cognitive dissonance may be desirable in order for learning to progress, an overdose of conflict can lead to disillusionment with exegesis and the tradition as a whole. Interestingly enough, it is often more difficult to convince *teachers* than students of the complexity of meaning, and the teachers' own readiness to deal with multiple viewpoints is frequently poor. But even taking into account teachers' hesitation to expose 8 and 9-year-olds to multiple and contradictory interpretations, it still remains necessary to provide these same students with the tools of textual analysis, so that when they are eventually exposed to multiple interpretations, they will be better able to cope with, and learn from them.

Finally, in addition to the literacy tools already cited, skills of *rhetoric* are essential for the cultivation of the modes of analysis and interpretation. Students must learn to be coherent and arti-

culate and to sharpen their opinions. They should be directed and redirected to the text for validation of their interpretations. It is important that they listen and respond to their fellow students so that conversation is not always directed to and by the teacher. Techniques for developing tolerant and coherent classroom discussion are vital to the teacher of Bible so that intricate exegesis can be carried out.

Reflection and synthesis are the last two cognitive activities in the final mode of interpretation. Reflection demands that students distance themselves from what they have learned, so that at some time, they can conceptualize, internalize and synthesize what they have learned on a personal level. Teachers can be counterproductive when they offer their own synthesis or demand that children of this age group summarize what "lessons" they have learned from the text. Mature readers know that reflection and synthesis are lifelong processes and are often the culmination of many years of experience – even if the story was read years earlier as a child.

### Conclusions

As stated earlier, the proposed typology for biblical literacy is not hierarchical and therefore cannot serve as a basis for a developmental curriculum. Furthermore, all five modes of reading are necessary to cultivate biblical literacy throughout the elementary grades. In using the typology as a reference point, the teacher can make more systematic and effective use of classroom and individual instruction, both oral and written. On a broader scale, however, a more balanced emphasis on content and method is desirable, particularly in the spiral curriculum. In addition to guiding teachers through the texts, commentaries and topics to be studied and reviewed in each grade – learning units must be created which make systematic and effective use of the *comprehension* and *literacy* skills that have been delineated and which are appropriate for the various age and grade levels. Such a curriculum would utilize the different modes of reading in order to design particular student tasks, both written and oral.

In addition to offering teachers more content to enrich their knowledge of the sources and more didactic techniques to diversify and enliven their teaching patterns, programs in teacher

training should help teachers maximize the intellectual potential of their students. Teachers need to learn how to cultivate the various literacy and comprehensive skills that have been outlined. Techniques for productive and tolerant classroom deliberation have to be integral to the courses designed for the teacher of Bible. The effectiveness of this new direction will depend on a shift in the perceived role of the teacher of Bible. For although the teacher may be an experienced *reader* of the text, when searching for *meaning* in the text, the teacher is a student and must be encouraged to study *alongside* his/her students. Ultimately, empirical research will clarify the limits of children's ability to engage in intricate exegesis at the various stages of cognitive development. It is essential for educators to learn the extent to which the child can be initiated into the world of contradictory interpretations without causing utter confusion or disillusionment. No less important, the teachers' readiness to engage their students wholeheartedly in analysis and interpretation needs to be examined, for without their cooperation, students will never truly study the biblical text.

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## CHILDREN AND THE MIDRASHIC PROCESS

Kathy Green

As Jewish educators, how do we understand the underlying principles that guide our teaching? What do we mean by *midrash* or *midrashic* process? Certainly we are not only talking, for example, about *midrash halacha*, or about learning from a text according to such classic guidelines as *kal v'homer* or *gezerah shavah*. But are we, rather, simply dealing with fanciful stories, intended perhaps to humanize or make a text more accessible? Are we using such stories to teach moral lessons? Does one such approach negate another, or are we striving to synthesize? Surely we are at the very least seeking to hone skills in interpretation, in *darshanut*.<sup>1</sup> We are participating in an ancient tradition, about which Hai Gaon (as referred to by Levin, 1931) maintained in *aggadah* "everyone may interpret as he thinks fit" (pp. 59–60). We are participating in a tradition described by Samuel ha-Nagid in his *Mevo haTalmud*, "Each one explained the verse according to his fancy and according to what came into his mind" (p. 91). And yet we also have to admit that, regardless of the traditional origins of our enterprise, we are employing new and different media.

We are trying to lay the groundwork, to prepare the way for what we hope will develop into children's lifelong study of text and commentary in Hebrew. Thus, more precisely, we look forward to the time when the reading skills of our students will have increased to the point where they will actually be able to read a text and be bothered by it, when they will ask themselves: What is troublesome in this line, and what troubled *Rashi* or the *baalei aggadah*?<sup>2</sup>

But what image of the biblical text or of *midrash* are we actually conveying to children? When we focus on a narrative section of *Humash* are we emphasizing the story aspect to the extent

1 Barry Holtz (1982) provides us with an excellent survey of classical texts and helpful distinctions between legendary and interpretative commentaries.

2 Another approach to understanding our teaching strategies falls under the

that children come away with the impression that *Humash* (*l'tovah* and *l'ra'ah*) is a story book?

### A Sample Lesson

To illustrate these issues, let us outline some ideas for teaching *midrash* or *midrashic* process to young, school age children. There is no intention here to propose a cohesive unit or curricular plan; rather, the hope is that these ideas will serve to stimulate further discussion. Let us first explore what is meant by *midrash* or *midrashic* process and then discuss some theoretical issues and problems involved in such instruction, thus re-examining our initial ideas for teaching. For illustrative purpose alone, we will focus on the study of Noah and the flood, with first and second graders living in the United States.

The topic may be introduced with a review of very old stories, some of which, perhaps, are preserved in families (e.g., "Once upon a time when my grandmother was a little girl...") Children can either recount such stories or tell about an event which they remember from "a long time ago" in their lives or in the history of the class. (The point to be made is that sometimes individuals remember or understand events differently.) We can then explain that we are going to review a very, very old story and proceed with a careful reading of the biblical text of the story of Noah and the flood. A useful text for our purposes is the new Jewish Publication Society translation. The teacher might choose to simplify vocabulary but should not edit, emend, or engage in explanations of "what the text means." (Of course, if children have a rudimentary Hebrew vocabulary, Hebrew nouns may be substituted; for example, *mabul* for flood, or *geshem* for rain.)

rubric of "Informed Strategies for Learning." This system has been described by Scott Paris (1986). In his article, emphasis is placed upon preparing children for future reading tasks, "coaching" or training them in skills that are taken for granted by more experienced readers: for example, how and when to "skim" a text. Might "I.S.L." be creatively adapted to the teaching of classical Jewish texts? While Aryeh Davidson of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America has suggested (in a presentation at the International Research Conference on Jewish Education, Hebrew University, March 1987), that the method could be translated into the teaching of Hebrew language and text, might it not also be fruitful to think of the teaching of skills in textual interpretation as a form of "informed strategies for learning" as described by Paris?

The reading should be done aloud by the teacher who directs children to listen with their eyes closed. Children may then (without discussion of problematic elements in the text or review of vocabulary words) be asked to draw pictures of an event, perhaps of Noah building the ark, animals entering the ark, the flood itself, the dove going out from the ark or returning with the olive branch, or the arrival of the ark on dry land. Obviously the alternatives are numerous, but at this stage, all children should be asked to draw the same event.

Why? At this stage we are following the dictum of Bettelheim (1975, 1976, 1981) not to intrude upon children's fantasizing or "imagining" of an event.<sup>3</sup> They are simply hearing an ancient tale, but unlike Bettelheim's ideal storyteller, we are expressing our commitment to the integrity of the text by reading it. What we hope children will recognize (for our pedagogic purpose) is that each of their drawings will be unique. Each child will, with eyes closed, have seen the story differently.

To emphasize the different manner with which all creatures perceive the world, we can ask children to describe what they see while role playing different animals who entered the ark. Thus, children can be taught to hold their hands to their eyes to enforce side vision, seeing as a bird does rather than looking straight ahead as humans do. Children can be asked to describe the world from the vantage point of a snake or giraffe. This developmentally appropriate activity serves to reinforce, in Piagetian terms, perspective taking, a necessary step toward the ability to experience empathy. (Realize, of course that, according to Piaget (Ault, 1977), the children with whom we are working are most likely nearing the end of the "pre-operational" stage or beginning "concrete operations.")<sup>4</sup>

Children can then play a game, variously known as "Gossip" or "Telephone." In this game a person begins by whispering a brief, secret message to the person sitting next to him/her. The message is "passed along" until it has traveled full circle. The

3 For a stimulating description of creative art as *midrash*, see Jo Milgram's "Hand-made Midrash" (1984).

4 Ault's *Children's Cognitive Development* (1977), provides us not only with an excellent outline of Piaget's developmental theory in general but also with a succinct description of the particular skills of the children with whom we are especially concerned in this paper.

expected result is that by the time the message has returned to its original sender, it has changed substantively. The purpose of this exercise is to demonstrate that no matter how clear an initial event, its retelling from individual to individual or generation to generation, will result in changing, evolving versions.<sup>5</sup>

Thus prepared, children may then be introduced to a variety of adult-made versions or tellings of the flood. These versions could include:

- Noah and the Rainbow* (Bolliger, 1972)
- Prayers from the Ark* (DeGaszold, 1962)
- My Noah's Ark* (Goffstein, 1978)
- Ladder of Angels* (L'Engle, 1978)
- Why Noah Chose the Dove* (Singer, 1973)
- Noah's Ark* (Spier, 1977)

All of these books exist in English, those by Bollinger, Singer, and Spier, falling within what may be categorized as amply and colorfully illustrated children's books. Their counterparts exist in Hebrew; see for example, *Noah/The Flood and The Ark Animals* by Mik'l Flanders, published by Am Oved, or *Noah's Ark* by Devis Grebu, published by Massada Ltd.

Enrichment activities could include the showing of the filmstrip version of Peter Spier's *Noah's Ark* (1978). (The filmstrip is accompanied by an excellent tape of such sounds as waves slapping up against a creaking wooden boat and animals lulling.) Other activities may include visiting a museum collection of 19th century models of toy arks and animals carved for children; touring a zoo; and exploring a natural science or fine arts museum. Children may also enjoy learning an American folk song ("God Made a Floodie, Floodie") which recounts the flood story. Children can make representations of animals in clay or as cookies, using cookie cutters. Even in the latter, cookie cutter version, no two animals will be precisely alike, again reinforcing our contention that each being is unique and perceives the world or is perceived by the world differently.

5 A marvelous illustration of the process of how a story can change in the telling can be found in "The Power of a Lie" in *A Treasury of Jewish Folklore* (Ausubel, 1948). The story might well be used in conjunction with playing "Gossip" or "Telephone" with older children.

For those teaching within a day school context, dealing with animals and issues of uniqueness may serve to strengthen the bonds of integrated curricula. The implications for science study are obvious: these are the years of learning in science lessons about animal classification. Further natural science work at this level, which can support attempts to classify generalities and at the same time perceive uniqueness, includes identifying animal tracks, paw prints and the like. Incidentally, children, perhaps fifth graders, who are old enough to understand the humor, will appreciate the comedian Bill Cosby's version of Noah's reaction to the oncoming flood in the tape recording "The Best of Bill Cosby."

### Comments on the Sample Lesson

What are we seeking to convey by exposing children to such a variety of printed depictions of Noah and the flood or, for that matter, to such a variety of media? Perhaps we are suggesting that these diverse versions are in fact a variety of commentary on the biblical account. To the extent that we subscribe to the notion of "hidden curricula" it is thus significant that when using books, we are both exposing children to a variety (as opposed to one version) of commentary and presenting these commentaries in printed and in illustrated form. We are not proposing that there is only one way to see the text; rather, that a variety exists and that children in their earlier drawings have themselves participated in adding to that cumulative variety.

Are we simply promulgating our understanding of *midrash* as a collection of various and unique visions of a biblical event? Or are we taking an enormous risk of violating the integrity of both the biblical text and children's imaginations? Regardless of what we say or of how many versions we present, is there a possible danger that children will be so impressed by colorful pictures as to always envision the flood as presented by Max Bollinger? (The classic examples of this dilemma include the adult who believes that *Moshe Rabbenu* really resembled his picture on the kosher butcher's give-away calendar, or that the story of Abraham smashing the idols can be found in the *Humash*.) Peter Spier's book (1977) provides us with an interesting problem — detailed pictures without words. The reader's task is to "read" the pic-

tures, supplying his/her own commentary. Despite the almost classically *midrashic* nature of this task, by focusing on Spier's marvelous pictures, might the richness and ambiguity of the unillustrated, written biblical text be diminished? These are risks of which we must be aware. We must also take cognizance of the fact that we are expanding our definition of *midrash* to include non-traditional media, e.g., children's books, tape recordings, filmstrips, et. al.

Is *midrash* simply synonymous with vision, or is it a response to a problem within a text? Are retellings of a biblical narrative just that, or can they be understood as another variety of response to text? Classically the answer is yes; some *midrashim* simply provide us with alternative accounts, amplified retellings of biblical narrative. In the case of Isaac Bashevis Singer's book, *Why Noah Chose the Dove* (1973), we find a direct attempt to answer the question: Why did Noah choose a dove and not some other creature? Singer is probably unique in his concern over this question, just as children may have unique concerns appropriate to their age level, even if not consistent with the concerns of the classical commentators. Thus young children occasionally ask what happened to the fish during the flood,<sup>6</sup> but what youngster has inquired as to how Noah compared to Abraham at Sodom as a righteous person, an *ish tzadik*?

At this juncture might it be appropriate to raise questions or problems within the text? We have exposed the children to what we deem creative, contemporary commentaries or versions of the text, and we have even elicited their own impressions in the form of drawings; isn't it time that we raised a traditional problem with the text and allowed them to encounter a genuinely classic response? First, we need to review several caveats. Realize that we are dealing with, for purposes of careful textual analysis, an essentially pre-literate population. A child who can barely read the words of a text can hardly be expected to be sensitive to what is bothersome either to himself, herself or to *Rashi*. Also the very reasons that make the story so popular with young children demand great sensitivity as we formulate questions we may want to raise about the text.

6 A classic response does exist to this dilemma (See Sanhedrin 108a or *Rashi* 7:28 on Parshat Noah).

Let us review briefly some of the reasons for the popularity of the Noah-and-the-flood episode. Animals and their classification are obviously attractive to children in the early years of schooling. Reward and punishment are clearly delineated. Children can readily identify with Noah and his family. Noah did exactly what all good children are supposed to do: he followed directions. Noah also did what normal children expect of their parents: he protected his children, ushering them onto the ark. All these factors lead children into accepting the story as unproblematic. We can argue in the tradition of Piaget (1953) and Hunt (1981) that growth and learning occur through dissonance, that children challenged by new, conflicting data will seek to achieve "equilibration" by struggling to synthesize the discordant with what is already known. But in order for them to achieve this new level of understanding the challenge must be appropriate to the child's developmental level.

Therefore the teacher's choice of which problem to raise must be made with great sensitivity. The teacher will have to work hard to help students uncover a problem and avoid providing students with answers before students have any sense that there may be a question. Let us say, for example, that the teacher wants to risk raising questions about Noah's willingness to follow God's instructions and not argue. This is, as we have just noted, a risky question, because it "goes against the grain" of children's cognitive developmental stage. None of the children will have noticed the problem, and the teacher will have to go to some lengths to help children perceive the difficulty. The children may have their own solutions: "I'd argue with my big sister, but if my father told me to do something and really shouted at me, I'd..." The teacher is well advised to try to share more than one comment: *Rashi* thought this, and the *Ramban* said that, thus reinforcing the sense that there is not necessarily just one desirable interpretation.

How might we want to help children understand this process of interpretation? Some graphic ideas come to mind. We could show children a variety of ambiguous pictures, for example, of an adult touching a child's arm.<sup>7</sup> We could then ask children to talk

7 While interpretation of pictures is well known to those who administer "thematic apperception tests," the technique has been interestingly adapted in working with Arabs and Jews; see Cohen (1983).

about what is happening in the picture. Is the adult patting the child affectionately, hitting the child angrily, etc.? We thus allow children to express different interpretations of the same photograph. In the next picture, is the dog wagging his tail because he is happy or because he is begging for food, or . . . ? Later we might ask children what connection, if any, they find between talking about the Noah story and talking about the pictures. A variation of this technique finds the teacher showing an ambiguous vignette captured on film or video cassette and eliciting children's explanations of what they have seen.

Another alternative is to bring a small, plastic model of a human skeleton into class. We can ask the children to describe the person whose skeleton this might be. (Is it a skeleton of a man or woman, a fat or thin person, etc.?) Next we ask children to draw pictures of the person they envision. Finally, we are tempted to ask: How could the skeleton and the biblical text be similar? How is drawing a picture of the person who could have been supported by this skeleton like drawing a picture of Noah building the ark?<sup>8</sup> We are tempted, but we know that these questions are very sophisticated, quite probably more appropriate for mature fourth graders. Again we have to ask: Do the children with whom we are working have any sense that the story of Noah and the flood is incomplete? Perhaps at this developmental stage, if we have risked bringing a small, model skeleton into class, we should be satisfied with explaining to children that some stories are incomplete and that what we are doing is "flesh-ing" them out, just as we put imaginary flesh on a skeleton. Incidentally, for younger children, an alternative to a skeleton is a stick figure made of pipe cleaners, the task being to "dress" the figure and thereby give it more definitive characteristics.

Furthermore, at this stage in children's literacy and Hebrew knowledge, we are at best exposing them to translation, and in the case of traditional commentary, we are in all probability paraphrasing, that is simplifying our translations. We accept this reality as a given; but just as with even younger children, at times, we may choose to show them a text in a Torah scroll ("See the *bet* of *Bereshit*"), or in a *megillah* ("See how the names of

8 For the idea of presenting children with the analogy of "fleshing out" a human skeleton and a skeletal biblical text a debt of gratitude is owed to Sara Lynn Newberger, a creative and thoughtful teacher of classical texts to children.

Haman's sons are written"), so too we want to show children the appropriate section in a large edition of *Mikraot Gedolot*, thus allowing them to encounter the graphic intertwining of text and commentary. (Actually, in Piagetian terms, understanding that a biblical text remains the same while appearing in such different forms as a Torah scroll and *Mikraot Gedolot* represents a triumph in "conservation" and "transformation.")<sup>9</sup>

### Basic Dilemmas and Cautions

What are some of the dangers of what we are doing? Should we be teaching *midrash* at all? We must reiterate and underscore the problems. Are we providing children with answers before they experience questions? Would time with the children be better spent teaching basic skills in reading, thereby readying them to encounter the real text? Those of us who are experienced in working with young children are accustomed to "taking dictation" from pre-literate children and encouraging more literate children to write and "publish" their own books in the manner outlined by Donald Graves (1985). But as an American-Jewish educator who has witnessed the popularity of encouraging children to "make modern *'midrashim*," I feel compelled to insert a cautionary note. Are we giving too much credence to essentially shallow, childish interpretations? When Joel Grishaver (1985) seems to advocate writing down, collecting and publishing children's "*midrashim*," how do we react? Does *all* our thinking about the *parshah* merit publication, or might it be more productive to admit that an individual's opinions change over the years? Are we in danger of elevating children's insights while neglecting classical commentaries? What implicit messages are we conveying to children?

It seems to me that Menahem Mendel Kasher (1927) in his *Torah Shleimah*<sup>10</sup> provided a model preferable to Grishaver's in

9 Piaget has made us all more aware of the cognitive development and acumen needed for a child to comprehend that an object can remain constant in different forms; for more information about problems in "conservation" and "transformation" see Ault (1977) and Piaget (1952).

10 The first volume of Menahem Mendel Kasher's *Torah Shleimah* was published in Jerusalem in 1927 by Y. A. Weiss; subsequent volumes followed, published by various printers.

*Being Torah* (1985), in that Kasher presented us with the Torah text, *Targumey Onkelos*, *Yonatan ben Uziel*, *Yerushalmi*, *Rashi*, and finally his own comments rather than only presenting the Torah text and children's comments as Grishaver does in *Being Torah*. We tread a tightrope of wanting neither to under- nor over-value children's creative efforts, and yet we also want children to acquire the humility which accompanies the realization that they live within a Jewish historical context and are neither the first, nor God willing, the last to react to our sacred texts. Certainly our alternatives are not "either/or" or mutually exclusive; rather, we are challenged to exercise good sense as we consider the consequences of the pedagogic decisions we make regularly.

We are teaching children something about interpretation as a human activity and we are trying to support the sense that there may be a variety of legitimate interpretations. The enterprise of trying to support and nurture children's interpretative skills, is in itself one of challenge to children's cognitive skills, demanding new achievements of "equilibration." While we may also ask children, as an exercise, to explain/interpret an ambiguous statement, we know that children may respond by asking: But which interpretation is true?

We benefit from the power of written words, from the sense that if it is in print, (as in the newspaper) it must be true, and we are at the same time asking children to interpret, explain, paraphrase. We also admit that while we may feel happy about the variety of media at our disposal, vivid, colorful pictures may have more impact than printed words. On the other hand, we wonder: Should we be teaching only interpretative skills and introduce text later? As Jewish educators we want to express our commitment to the sense that a legitimate direction of such skills is not just interpreting what *Emah* or *Abbah* said at breakfast but should also focus on what our written and oral traditions teach us. Thus it is only fitting that interpretive skills be related to a biblical text.

In using the story of Noah and the flood as our example we are taking advantage of resources which exist in children's vernacular, in the sense that books are available in English and that colorful picture books are a part of children's culture. But what if we as teachers feel compelled to move on next week to *Parshat Lekh-Lekha* and then on to *Vayayra*? As our supply of pre-

existent resource materials decreases, the demand on our own, self-generated creativity increases.

In many ways the process of preparation (and therefore, search for materials) remains the same. After our own careful reading of text, we must ask ourselves some very basic questions which can thereby stimulate our thinking: What is this really about? What theme, idea, concept do I really want to teach? By focusing on the most basic question that we can formulate for ourselves, we are in the best position to liberate our own pedagogic imaginations. What does it mean to...? But despite the deluge of imaginative pedagogic responses which may fill our minds, we must continue to ask ourselves: Is this age appropriate? What subtle messages does this material convey? All the questions, reservations, caveats which were applicable to our study of Noah and the flood remain with us.

Certainly we can find illustrated children's books which offer subtle commentaries on biblical events and dilemmas without directly intending to do so. (Might, for example, *The Runaway Bunny* (Brown, 1942), *Where's Yonkela?* (Hirsh, 1969), or *The Lekachmacher Family* (Richman, 1976) be useful as they relate to Avraham's going out from his father's house?)<sup>11</sup> Louis Ginzberg's *The Legends of the Jews* (1976) offers a wealth of *midrashim* in English and a profound challenge to choose and make them accessible to young children. Teacher- and parent-made books, fostered by the magic of xerox machines, enrich our possibilities as does the creative use of the home video camera. The possibilities seem almost limitless, constrained only by our own judgments of value and appropriateness, and by the realities of juggling time and effort.<sup>12</sup>

11 Margaret Wise Brown's *The Runaway Bunny* (1942), provides young children with a sense of the warmth and security awaiting them at the end of their "runaway" adventures; it is impossible not to note the irony of such an appealing vision being promulgated in the United States at precisely the moment in history when well over a million Jewish children lacked any possibility of such comfort. Did Avraham's family search for him after he had gone forth? Yonkela's did; see *Where Is Yonkela?* (Hirsh, 1969). Slightly older (perhaps third grade) children may appreciate the analogy between Avraham's venturing forth and the Lekachmachers' sojourn in a new land in *The Lekachmacher Family* (Richman, 1976).

12 A creative suggestion made during a discussion of this paper at the International Research Conference on Jewish Education at the Hebrew University

Furthermore, while for the purposes of this paper pedagogic ideas have been organized in an informal unit format, many of the same strategies could be integrated into a Hebrew language curriculum. Alternately, following the approach developed by Scott Paris (1986) such material could be understood as part of "preparation for learning"

### In Conclusion

We must acknowledge two, seemingly antithetical theological implications. On the one hand, by illustrating with such a game as "Gossip" that a handed down story may change, are we implying that such might be the case with biblical texts? On the other hand, in such activities as asking children to interpret ambiguous photographs or to put flesh on a skeleton, are we also suggesting that all commentary represents responses to perceived events, which somehow happened, which children may very well conclude, literally happened? For no matter what we say or do, we know that children, for good, developmental reasons, will tend to understand events literally and concretely. It is suggested here that we be prepared to live with these apparent contradictions.

Elie Wiesel, in his introduction to *The Gates of the Forest* (1966), wrote that God created man because He loved stories. We might add that perhaps the rainbow of *Parshat Noah* is a sign of divine commitment to the continuing of our story making, a process which we are compelled to share with the children we teach.

in March, 1987: Just as day schools have participated in programs of artists and poets "in residence" so too might *darshanim* or *baalei aggadah* be invited to schools.

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# **THE APPLICATION OF MENTAL HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS IN THE TEACHING OF BIBLE**

**Dvora Koubovi**

This chapter deals with principles which, we believe, should guide Bible teachers in addressing the influence of Bible teaching on the mental health of the child. Mental health is, of course, not the main goal – and certainly not the only one – in Bible teaching. However, the teacher should be aware of the effect Bible studies can have in this regard and try to channel it positively. We propose that the Bible should be taught in the spirit of Therapeutic Teaching.

The principles of Therapeutic Teaching are outlined below, and their importance will be discussed in reference to Bible teaching. In addition, various approaches will be proposed for the application of mental hygiene considerations in Bible teaching, in light of the unique opportunities the Bible offers us and in light of the unique problems that Bible teaching presents, as far as these considerations are concerned.

## **Therapeutic Teaching**

“Therapeutic Teaching” (Koubovi, 1970, 1977, 1981, 1985, 1986, 1987) is a method that has been developed in Israel for applying mental hygiene principles in the teaching of literary texts (poetry, stories or the Bible) and therefore belongs to the general field of bibliotherapy.

Although quite extensive, the professional literature in this field seems to include no systematic discussion of either the mental process bibliotherapy reputedly promotes or the methods of implementation. Thus, the translation of general principles of mental hygiene and psychotherapy into a language of communication through literature has been left primarily to the initiative of those in the field. Therapeutic Teaching is an attempt to fill this vacuum.

Therapeutic Teaching focuses primarily on: improving com-

munication between consciousness and experience; preventing excessive repression, and enhancing the student's ability to assimilate a multitude of experiences. *It assumes that the openness of communication channels among the various levels and areas of personality is a necessary, though not a sufficient condition for healthy mental functioning.*

The method is mainly directed at the needs and personality structure of the average elementary school pupil, who by that age, has internalized a moral authority and who tends, to a greater or lesser degree, to repress psychic events that are unacceptable to this authority. Given ego-structures that have already crystallized to some extent, children tend to ignore or deny those aspects of their personalities that are incompatible with this structure and whose assimilation would require considerable psychic effort on their part. Denial and other impoverishing modes of experience, often supported by social mores and by cultural "conventionalization" (Schachtel, 1947) as well, can lead to the development of distorted affective and perceptual patterns and to impaired personality development.

The teaching of literature may somewhat counteract these developments if the teacher deals with the wide range of the pupils' emotional reactions to the literary text read in the classroom, according to commonly accepted mental hygiene principles, with special emphasis on the following:

1. Acceptance of all passing thoughts as legitimate parts of human nature that should not be judged in terms of right or wrong and good or bad. The teacher should communicate to pupils a clear distinction between internal mental life, where moral judgment has to be suspended as much as possible, and its realization in behavior and action, which should be judged and controlled.
2. Psychodynamic analysis of the emotional situations in the texts, in order to heighten the pupils' sensitivity and understanding of the emotional processes underlying human behavior and, it is hoped, increase their understanding of themselves.

As children identify with fictional figures and situations, they are influenced by the reactions of their teachers and classmates to their objects of identification. In this way, they relive certain

experiences of their own and may modify their attitudes toward them. A grasp of the emotional processes within the fictional characters can help pupils to better understand themselves. The spirit in which the class discussion of these fictional characters is conducted can provide the children with signposts in working out their own problems. The emotional impact is increased when the pupils are led to participate actively and to verbalize, analyze and illustrate the mental processes embodied in the text and evoked in themselves. Although this is not always possible or desirable, a passing remark of the teacher, made at the right moment, can prevent harmful mental processes possibly aroused by the text and can sometimes even contribute towards a "corrective emotional experience" (Alexander & Ross, 1946). A description of the principal methods for the implementation of Therapeutic Teaching will be presented in the section, "Methods for Implementation of Therapeutic Teaching."

#### **Mental Health Principles in Bible Teaching: Importance, Application and Problems**

The importance of applying mental hygiene principles in the teaching of literary texts in general, takes on special emphasis in the teaching of biblical texts, primarily because of the considerable influence that Bible stories have on the developing personality of the student. This fact, which is discussed widely in the professional literature, is based essentially on the literary power of the biblical story, as noted by many authors, to involve the reader emotionally because of the realistic and impressive presentation of human nature in its texts.

There are a number of additional well-known factors that help increase the impact of the Bible on the emotional development of the child and thus enable and obligate us to channel this impact in such a way as to foster the child's mental health.

Children are exposed to Bible stories in kindergarten, at home, during religious services and on numerous other occasions. In Israeli schools, a considerable portion of the curriculum is devoted to Bible studies and certain biblical texts are studied several times during the student's scholastic career. This very fact in itself can help explain the tremendous impact the Bible has on the child's emotional development. For many children,

some biblical heroes are very real figures; they seem almost alive and resemble important relatives who, though never encountered in the flesh, are so often referred to that they become identification objects and play a prominent part in the molding of the children's personalities.

Biblical figures and events are symbols and form a part of the national mythos that expresses and reinforces the inner world of the nation and the individual. This fact increases the weight of the biblical story's impact on the development and consolidation of the child's emotional world. Biblical phrases, rich in connotation, are a major element in the "public language" of society, of its "limited code" (Bernstein, 1977) both in terms of day-to-day speech, — i.e. Noah's flood, the mark of Cain, "thy brother's keeper," "the wisdom of Solomon," etc. — and in terms of allusions and direct references in literary texts, in the plastic and performing arts, and even in the mass media.

The child is well aware that Bible stories are not intended solely for children but also for adults, and that adults regard Bible stories with a great deal of respect, some of them devoting considerable time to their repeated study. This fact encourages the child to develop a serious attitude towards study of the Bible (Bettelheim, 1982). Thus, the degree of effort that children are willing to expend in studying the Bible will determine, to a great extent, how much they will in fact learn from the Bible and how much it will affect them.

The attitude of the child towards the Bible — even if the child attends a completely secular school — is quite different from their attitude towards any other piece of literature taught in the classroom. This is the Book of Books for every child. Even if they have not been brought up to regard the Bible as having been transmitted to Moses by God and to regard the Bible's truths as absolute at the subconscious level, they perceive the Bible as having a certain measure of undeniable truth and authority.

However, the notion that we should believe what the Scriptures tell us can lead to feelings of conflict among some children when they encounter certain biblical passages. The teacher should be aware of such possible reactions and deal with them. Many Bible stories, including the very first one — the creation of the world and the first man — and the many accounts of miraculous events, arouse in some children feelings of doubt as to the

veracity of these passages, which seem to be discordant with "nature." These reactions turn up mainly among elementary school pupils who, on the one hand, already see a contradiction between the biblical accounts of miracles and the information that is provided through science classes, encyclopedias, documentary films on television, etc., and who, on the other hand, still have difficulty in coping with parallel truths that express varying points of view. Nonetheless, many children are given an explicit or implicit message, through their parents or teachers, that we must not harbor any doubts as to the veracity of the biblical accounts. (This situation is primarily the case in religious educational frameworks.) If children internalize this approach in an inflexible manner, they are liable to experience feelings of guilt and mental discomfort because of their doubts and to consequently deny — and even repress — these feelings.

But, if the teacher "reflects" (Rogers, 1961) these feelings of doubt when they arise and gives them legitimation through a non-judgmental comment along the lines of, "Sometimes it is difficult to believe in certain things" or "It is hard to reconcile the biblical account with other explanations of developmental processes in nature," he/she can prevent the formation of guilt feelings and their repression. (Of course, this approach is unrelated to how we attempt to provide answers or to dispel the doubts and uncertainties. These attempts will vary from one educator to the next and will depend on his/her own educational or religious values, the age of the students and their intellectual level.)

"Reflection" of feelings can help us to deal with other "forbidden" feelings that might crop up in reaction to biblical passages, such as opposition to and doubts concerning the justice of some of the actions depicted and some of the precepts given. For example, in teaching the passage referring to the divine command forbidding Adam and Eve to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and later the fruit of the tree of life, the teacher could, at the appropriate juncture, make a comment such as, "It is hard for us to understand why God would command such a thing" or could even go one step further with a statement such as, "Perhaps some of you are saying to yourselves right now, 'It's too bad that they weren't able to eat the fruit of the tree of life as well.'" The smile of relief on the faces of grade 2 pupils on

hearing a statement that had also crossed their minds is proof that we have been able to grasp what they have been thinking about. In doing so, we have also been able to ease the guilt they are experiencing and to prevent the process of repression from setting in. Our intervention here is particularly crucial for young children (kindergarten to grade 2), who, as is well known, are already beginning to be troubled – in a nearly conscious manner – by fears of their parents dying and by fantasies in which they will use their omnipotence to protect their parents from such a fate.<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \*

Moreover, the Bible, through its literary characteristics, provides us with an excellent opportunity for in-depth discussions that can enhance the students' capacity for self-understanding.

Suffice it to mention here a prominent characteristic of the biblical story, as pointed out by several authors. Most Bible stories "depict the actions of individuals and the circumstances of their lives without bothering to inform us what the emotional factors are behind these actions or what thoughts and feelings are aroused by the circumstances of their lives (Zvi Adar, 1946/47, 1950/51).

The fact that the psychodynamics of the biblical stories are usually not made explicit, but only hinted at – in the behavior of the characters – invites pupils to play an active part in trying to understand the processes taking place in these characters, and to seek explanations for that behavior in their own emotional experiences. It also enables the teacher to turn the discussion to psychological problems appropriate to the age, understanding and psychological state of his/her pupils – especially in view of the fact that the biblical story can be interpreted at different levels. An ideal background is thus created for the proposed discussions.

1 Additional proof that children in fact do entertain such thoughts can be found in the comment of a grade 2 pupil (who was apparently trying to settle her doubts as to the justice in the divine command forbidding Adam and Eve to eat the fruit of life), "If God had allowed them to eat the fruit of life, everybody would live forever. But then there would be no room on earth for all of the people who would be born. Maybe my parents might not have been born and, then, who would look after me?"

However, the very fact that the emotions and mental processes are not explicit has both advantages and disadvantages, since teachers and students can find, in the biblical texts, meanings which are not always "healthy and health-inducing." Teacher training is vital in order to avoid undesirable interpretations. Otherwise, there is the danger that teachers, explicitly or implicitly, will offer interpretations or commentaries (their own or others') without giving sufficient thought to the effect they may have on the student's mental health.

For example, in Chapter I of the Second Book of Samuel, an Amalekian youth informs David that Israel has been defeated on the battlefield and that Saul and Jonathan are dead. The youth presents Saul's crown and bracelet as proof that the king is dead. David's words and actions are described here in detail: he queries the Amalekian ("How did you know..."); he orders the death of this messenger who had brought news of the national catastrophe and had obeyed the dying Saul's command to hasten the moment of death; and, finally, laments the death of Saul and Jonathan in a mourning chant.

The text provides no explanation whatsoever as to the complex feelings that were operating on David at this moment and only describes his actions and words. It is clear, of course, that David was shaken and pained by the news that his beloved friend Jonathan had been killed in the battle. However, in light of what we know of the nature of his relationship with Saul, it is safe to assume that David must have felt at least a modicum of relief in the knowledge that he would no longer be forced to flee from Saul's sword. At the same time, it can be assumed, this sense of relief was accompanied by feelings of guilt, since David's attitude towards Saul was ambivalent; despite the hostility between the two, David loved and admired him. These feelings of guilt might help explain why David ordered the Amalekian youth to be executed; perhaps David felt that the messenger had read his mind and had assumed that the news of Saul's death would bring joy and relief to David.

In teaching this chapter, the teacher has a number of options:

1. To conduct an extensive discussion session that could help make the students more sensitive to the complex dynamics of David's feelings at that juncture and perhaps also to the feelings of those students who identified with David throughout

- all of the various stages of the story. The emotional dynamics here include the guilt feelings we experience when a violent wish has been granted, particularly if that wish concerns a person to whom we relate in an ambivalent manner. Such feelings can sometimes lead us to deny the very existence of this wish and to transfer the target of our anger from ourselves to other persons. This is one of the explanations we can offer for David's order that the Amalekian youth be executed.
2. The teacher could also refer to these feelings with a few casual comments, such as, "It is obvious that David was genuinely pained by this catastrophe. Nonetheless, it is also quite possible that his feelings here were mixed. In fact, it might even be the case that he experienced a sense of relief at the death of someone who had been his relentless persecutor." (Or, "David does not express any sense of relief, perhaps because he was angry with himself and was ashamed to harbor such feelings. Or, perhaps because these feelings were overshadowed by his sense of grief at the disaster that had befallen his people." Or, "perhaps because he felt – and quite justifiably – that it would be highly inappropriate to express feelings of personal relief in a situation of national disaster.")
  3. Another alternative, which, however, is really a "cop-out" and a missed opportunity, is to avoid getting into any possible explanations for the feelings David might have had at that moment.

In any event, the teacher should not suggest – even implicitly – what the Bible in its wisdom and understanding of human nature does not state, namely, that one should expect David (and the students in similar situations) to experience no feeling of relief whatsoever. Nonetheless, we have found that a number of teachers do, in fact, make such a suggestion. The absence of any statement in the Bible on the complex feelings David is experiencing has perhaps encouraged these teachers to stress – and, of course, to praise – something that is *not* stated in the Bible, namely that David did not feel any relief at all. Moreover, in one teacher's guide to Bible studies (Amitai, 1976/77), it is proposed that teachers ask, "Did David recall at this point that it had been Saul who had caused David to be banished from the royal court, his wife to be taken from him, his parents to be exiles and to die

in Moab, and he himself to be constantly on the run?" And teachers are advised (in this guide) to follow up this rhetorical question with "Not at all! David's feelings were quite the opposite! He experienced not one iota of relief or joy!"

In other words, this guide suggests that teachers vividly remind their students of all the injustice and sorrow that Saul caused David, that the students focus their emotions on David's fear of and anger with Saul, and that the students then be told – and quite emphatically – how unworthy it would have been of David to have felt even the slightest relief at Saul's death! The students are thus brought to deny the feelings of relief that have been aroused in them by their identification with David through their teacher's guiding comments.

Experience shows us that the teaching of Bible, to a greater extent than the teaching of stories the teacher did not know as a child, often brings out feelings and attitudes that first developed during the teacher's formative childhood years even though these childhood feelings and attitudes are anachronistic vis-a-vis the teacher's present outlook. On the other hand, when teaching new stories, the teacher is more likely to bring out attitudes and principles acquired in the course of his/her training. Thus, Bible teaching in the classroom, to a greater extent than the teaching of any other subject, conserves traditions passed on from one generation to the next, without enough consideration about whether these traditional messages have a positive or negative impact.

For example, we found that most teachers and thus most students, tend to interpret the intermingling of languages in the story of the Tower of Babel as a punishment for the desire of the builders to reach up to the heavens and to compete with God. Children are liable to go beyond this interpretation, to consider God's action as a punishment for excessive pride and to regard even the attempt to set goals and to strive for difficult attainments as forbidden. Surprisingly enough, we could find no justification for such an interpretation in the text itself (with the exception of a slight hint that might be found in the verses "... a Tower with its head reaching up into the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves" and "now nothing will stop them"). The Bible explicitly tells us that the builders wanted to erect a lofty Tower in order to prevent their being scattered. That is, they

were afraid of experiencing the unfamiliar and the unknown. In this spirit, the intermingling of languages in fact forced humanity to spread itself over the globe and settle all of the earth, in accordance with God's first commandment to Adam, "... populate the earth and take possession of it" and His commandment to Noah, "And populate the earth." The idea is to populate the entire world, to encourage a sense of daring – a pioneering spirit – and to present the differences between nations in a positive light.<sup>2</sup>

The common view held by the teachers we have observed – that God was punishing humanity for excessive pride and for the joint attempt to attain far-reaching goals – is not acceptable from the standpoint of mental hygiene nor is it in accordance with society's present-day values. In fact, it does not even seem to be in the spirit of what is written in the biblical text. (Moreover, such a view can be criticized even from the religious standpoint since God is presented through that interpretation as apparently having to rely on a tactic of "divide and rule" in order to preserve His superior position vis-a-vis humanity.)

Our point is that, when a number of interpretations are possible for a given biblical text, teachers should avoid an interpretation that is undesirable in terms of mental hygiene, particularly if such an interpretation is not necessary and a straightforward interpretation seems the most satisfying. It should again be stressed that there is no intention here whatsoever to propose the presentation of interpretations that are not in line with the spirit of the Bible; rather, it is proposed that interpretations favorable to the promotion of mental hygiene be highlighted and emphasized.

On the other hand, the fact that the teacher, in teaching the Bible, may tend unconsciously to express personal views internalized during childhood may be an advantage in the process of his/her training. A confrontation between the teacher and these unconscious views can help him/her to recognize their presence within him/herself, explore their unconscious origins, examine them and possibly replace them with more mature views. In other words, training teachers to apply mental hygiene principles

2 This view is offered, for example, by the commentator Ibn Ezra: "... these builders wanted to remain together, but God was opposed and they were not aware of His opposition." A little further on, Ibn Ezra notes, "... and God scattered them – for their own good..."

in Bible studies can be of benefit not only to the teaching of this subject but to the teachers themselves. In addition to becoming more aware of the impact Bible studies have on their student and paying closer attention to the manner in which they teach Bible texts, teachers will also note a marked improvement in their inner dialogue with repressed layers in their own personality and will become more adept in the application of mental hygiene principles.

Moreover, because of the place the Bible holds in the teachers' own lives and the significance for adults as well as children (in contrast with stories that are aimed at children and that are of little interest to the teacher personally), the presentation of new aspects in Bible teaching can become a challenge that teachers will willingly assume.

However, in our experience, even among those teachers who identify with Therapeutic Teaching's goals and principles, and who also apply these principles in their own work in literature lessons, there are many who are hesitant about – and even openly opposed to – the application of Therapeutic Teaching principles in Bible classes.

One reason for this opposition is the argument that Bible teaching has important and unique goals and functions, such as transmission of universal ethical values and Jewish values, education in Jewish traditions, familiarization with national roots and history, promotion of a love for the Land of Israel, linguistic enrichment, etc., and thus that there is no justification for the introduction of additional goals and functions at the expense of the intrinsic and substantive goals of Bible studies. An example of this approach is the contention that, in the teaching of Bible texts, the student's attention should be focused on the fact of divine providence in the human events depicted, rather than on the human protagonists themselves and their psychodynamic processes. According to this contention, it is unjustified to invest the student's time and emotional energy in extensive discussions of the psychodynamic processes behind the actions of the personalities in the various biblical stories. It is possible to accept this contention and yet to leave the decision on priorities to the individual teacher's discretion. But, as will be discussed below, it is proposed that mental hygiene considerations be applied at least through the "implicit navigation" method, which does not

rob classroom time and does not distract the students from the central issue of the lesson.

Some teachers are reluctant to apply any mental hygiene considerations whatsoever in Bible studies because of the view (sometimes only a feeling) that all extraneous and "alien" considerations, no matter how important, should have no place in Bible lessons. This approach, which totally rules out the application of mental health considerations, even in the form of "implicit navigation," is untenable in our opinion, since it is not all clear what a literal interpretation of the Bible is. The well-known Hebrew phrase, "The Bible has myriad facets," should be recalled at this point, since the vast majority of narratives in the Bible — and here lies one of the Bible's greatest strengths — can be interpreted in a wide variety of ways without any departure being made from the essential spirit of the Scriptures. Over the generations a variegated body of interpretations has been amassed, reflecting the specific historical circumstances of the different historical periods and the extent of scientific knowledge and philosophical inquiry of the commentator and the age. Thus, every educator has the right — and, in our opinion, the *obligation* — to make the Bible a relevant, living entity for his/her students and to help them find personal meanings suited to their own inner world and to the spirit of contemporary society. Otherwise, the Bible is liable to be taught as an anachronistic document that has nothing to offer in the solution of the existential problems facing the students and cannot be integrated into their inner spiritual world.<sup>3</sup>

It is obvious that, in dealing with texts in general, and with biblical texts in particular, we must always maintain a proper balance between what the individual may draw from the text and what he/she reads into that text. In other words, the integrity and credibility of the text must be preserved even if we adjust the teaching and reading of that text to suit various outlooks (Copeland, 1984, Twersky, 1972).

3 The approach presented here is based on what has been stated by eminent experts on the subject, "While it is true that the reader cannot ignore what is written in the biblical text, the absorption of the literal word is not the only process taking place; on the contrary, the reader contemplates the word in terms of his or her own soul, thereby turning the very teaching of the biblical word into a living, relevant act." (Lsibovitz, 1973)

The Bible itself helps us to apply mental health considerations and to thereby maintain this balance, since the fundamental principles on which these considerations are based can be drawn from the various scriptural texts. Most Bible stories not only allow, but in fact encourage, interpretations that are in accordance with contemporary principles of mental hygiene. The Bible not only displays a profound understanding of the human soul in all its complexities and inner contradictions (like classical works of literature, the Bible predates psychodynamic theories for probing the depths of the human soul and its needs), but also, in the vast majority of its texts, conveys commonly accepted mental hygiene messages and outlooks. For example, as already noted above, punishment is nearly always meted out for negative actions, not for emotions and passing thoughts,<sup>4</sup> and even positive protagonists display human frailties.

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However, it is impossible to ignore the problems involved in the teaching of biblical texts to children, particularly from the standpoint of mental hygiene.

Some biblical texts deal with the personal and interpersonal problems of adults and are not suitable for children. A teacher may often be swept away by such texts and become involved in a lengthy discussion of their content, because the powerful literary expression given to these aspects arouses a feeling of personal involvement in the teacher. Thus, children are at times exposed to issues and problems that they are not yet emotionally equipped to handle (such as Sarah's infertility, the jealousy between Rachel and Leah, the complex feelings experienced by Rebecca as she tells her son Jacob how to deceive his own father).

The tendency of the teacher to identify with the adult protagonist and to discuss the problems raised from the adult

4 Even in those cases where the Bible forbids certain kinds of feelings as in the commandments, "You shall not covet the possessions of your neighbor" and "You shall not carry hatred in your heart towards others," the classical commentators tend to the view that only an action expressing the forbidden feelings is considered sinful, "Transgression of the commandment 'You shall not covet the possessions of your neighbor' takes place only when the feelings are translated into action, that is, only when the individual actually seizes the possession coveted." Maimonides, *Mishneh Latorah*, Nesikin, 85.

viewpoint, without sufficient thought being given to the needs of the child, can be provoked by any story, even one written especially for children. But, this tendency can become more pronounced if the story is a biblical one, because of the Bible's powerful impact on adults as well. Thus in some parts of the Bible, as well as in some parts of other multifaceted works of great literature, particularly works not written specifically for children, there is a danger that the child may be exposed to experiences that could be inimical to his/her needs and mental well-being.

Hence, while it is impossible (or undesirable) to avoid teaching a story or chapter in such a category, sometimes the only option is to avoid reinforcing the intensity of the emotional experiences that the text may arouse in the children. In rare cases, it is advisable to purposely dilute the emotional element in the text, to reduce the intensity of identification with the situation depicted, and, if possible, to sever the link between that situation and the personal lives of the children.

A prominent example of such a text is the binding of Isaac. Emotional identification with the narrative could awaken latent and unnecessary anxieties in children: a father, who loves his son, is, nonetheless prepared to sacrifice him because of his religious convictions and does not even warn his son or inform him of his impending fate. It is obvious that we must avoid reinforcing the anxieties that the text could produce and that have archaic roots in the child's soul. These anxieties, particularly among children in the lower grades, where this story is traditionally taught, could penetrate the child's soul; the child may think, "If such things can happen, then perhaps other horrible fantasies that I sometimes have could also happen!" The impact is intensified by the fact that the story is written in the Bible and that the protagonist in this drama is a positive father figure, presented in the Bible as a role-model. At the same time, however, it is impossible to "skip over" this story, even in classrooms where the teacher gives an abridged version of the Scriptures (as in the Hebrew series, *Bible for Children*); the binding of Isaac, which is a major element in the biblical narrative, is deeply rooted in Jewish consciousness and is a familiar motif in Jewish liturgy, sacred poetry and dirges (*kinot*).

Nor can we try a "sophisticated" approach, distorting the

spirit of the text and claiming that Abraham never really intended to go through with the sacrifice. The narrative indicates that this is a test of faith, which Abraham passes and for which he is abundantly praised.

However, we should avoid intensifying the already high level of emotional experience invariably produced by the story. Many teachers do not, unfortunately, adopt this approach and instead amplify the child's anxiety by reading out the passage in dramatic tones and by making suggestions such as "Let us try to imagine what little Isaac must have felt as he held on to the hand of his father, whom he loved and trusted, not knowing that..." or "What must have been going through Abraham's mind, since he knew that he had no alternative but to sacrifice his only son?" Some teachers go one step further and ask their students to write essays on subjects such as "I am Isaac and I am on my way to the place of sacrifice" or to make a picture based on the narrative, etc. These educators believe that identification and emotional involvement are desirable ends in themselves and are not aware of the fact that identification and involvement can be double-edged swords, depending on the nature of the experience.

In the binding of Isaac, the teacher must attempt to blunt the emotional impact, to discourage the children from immersing themselves in the narrative, and to sever, as much as possible, the link that the children may be producing between themselves and Isaac and between their own fathers and Abraham. This distancing can be achieved by alternately presenting Abraham as a *far-removed and symbolic figure*, as an *abstract idea*, and as the father of the Jewish nation, *rather than as a real flesh-and-blood father*.

In some classes, depending on their level, the teacher can direct the discussion towards the historical background of and the general outlook expressed in the narrative: for example, God's opposition to human sacrifice, which was a traditional practice at that period (see Cassuto's commentary). Briefly, the teacher should direct the children to maintain an emotional distance and to activate their critical thinking rather than their emotions.

In the lower grades, the teacher should precede the direct treatment of the narrative with some comment aimed at reducing the emotional intensity. In doing so, the teacher can rely on the

text itself, "After these events, God tested Abraham." The teacher can add here, "You see, this was only a test. Things like that don't happen in real life." The teacher can also make use of appropriate biblical commentaries and legends in order to blunt the emotional impact. At any rate, it is not advisable for the teacher to spend too much time on those aspects that stress the narrative's realistic setting and that thereby increase the emotional voltage.<sup>5</sup>

The binding of Isaac is one of the few biblical stories that unequivocally demand that the teacher dilute the emotional involvement of the children. In most biblical narratives, the message usually has a positive impact and the text itself points out, even in the depiction of difficult situations, desirable attitudes and solutions that are in accordance with the principles of mental hygiene. The teacher must simply be sensitive to these other messages and utilize them appropriately.

The idea here is not to have the teacher "sterilize" stories, teaching or telling only stories that can arouse beneficial experiences. This approach is both impossible and undesirable. Precisely those pieces of literature that are most disturbing often provide an opportunity to supply "corrective emotional experiences" (Alexander, 1946): some students can relive, through the story, pathogenic fantasies and situations from their own past, and can balance and handle them with the help of appropriate beneficial comments from the teacher. The gap between the pathogenic experience that the story arouses in the child, and the beneficial meaning that the teacher attributes to the behavior of the "significant other" in the story, adds additional force to the "corrective emotional experience."

For example, take the chapter in the Bible describing the exile of Hagar and Ishmael (Genesis xxi.8 ff.). This story is likely to arouse the children's fears of being thrown out of the house for "improper" behavior, anxieties that exist to varying degrees, consciously or unconsciously, in many children. The story might undermine children's basic trust (which every child needs for

5 The fact is, however, that even those educators who produced the abridged version of the story in the Bible for Children series saw no reason to delete the passage "And then he picked up the butcher's knife..." and even added a picture to make the scene more vivid.

healthy emotional development) that their parents will not abandon them and that their place at home and their parents' protection are assured as long as they need them.

We therefore recommend that the teacher not encourage emotional identification with Ishmael. But, since the story itself arouses identification in most children, the teacher should accentuate and interpret the verse, "And the thing was very bad in the eyes of Abraham, concerning his son" (xxi.21) by pausing, repeating the verse, and then underlining it with a comment such as, "Of course, he saw it as bad: no father is prepared to do such a thing to his own son." And, most importantly, emphasis should be placed on the verses that follow, in which God promises Abraham that no harm will come to Ishmael and that the latter will become a mighty nation. The teacher should pause at these verses, emphasize them and then provide an interpretation along the lines of, "Only after Abraham was certain that no harm would come to his son and that, in light of the family situation, it would be in Ishmael's best interests (he would become a mighty nation) to be sent away from home, only then did Abraham agree to send him away." The teacher might also add, "Ishmael, who did not know all this, was naturally frightened and also angry with his father" (the teacher thereby legitimizing the anger of those children who identify with Ishmael).

In certain classes it may be appropriate to add, "Parents would never *purposely* do something that would hurt their child, unless they were convinced that, under the circumstances, that action would be a 'lesser evil' and would even be good for the child. Of course, in any event, the parents would find the situation painful for themselves as well." Or, "Sometimes we have to cause a little pain — in order to prevent something worse from happening." This type of comment, purposely phrased in broad general terms, should relieve the child's anxieties, which are awakened by the text. We are, in effect, saying indirectly to the students that children can be sure that their parents, even though sometimes they seem to be hurting them and do not seem to be acting in their best interests, are fundamentally concerned with the well-being of their children.

One possible exception might be, "Is that always the case? Are we not distorting reality here, creating expectations that might lead to disappointment and frustration?" We believe that, in the

vast majority of cases, this is indeed the reality; parents will not purposely do something that will hurt or endanger their children if such an action can be avoided. However, even in those rare pathological cases where parents purposely hurt or endanger their children, it is better that the child experience, if only through a story, the positive aspects of parenting, in order to be able to internalize a "benign parental agency" (Schafer, 1968). We assume that these vicarious experiences will have a cumulative effect on the formation or structuring of the child's inner attitudes and can therefore serve as a series of "corrective experiences." After this story was taught as described, one child commented, "It's a shame that Abraham didn't explain everything to Ishmael! Ishmael must have thought that his father didn't care if he died in the desert and that he deserved it because he was a bad boy. For me such thoughts would be worse than being spanked!"

### **Methods for the Implementation of Therapeutic Teaching**

We shall briefly present two of the principal teaching methods — "psycho-dynamic depth discussion" and "implicit navigation" — and then illustrate their application to the teaching of a biblical text. Each classroom setting will entail varying proportions of these two approaches in accordance with the specific text and the course of the discussion.

#### *Depth Discussion*

The psycho-dynamic depth discussion following the reading of a literary text, aims at encouraging the students to discover and verbalize the hidden emotional processes latent in the text, as well as those which they experience in similar situations.

Our experience has shown that discussion of a literary text can help promote the participants' insight and growth when such discussion precipitates a psychological process that includes several stages or components (identification, reverberation and detachment) feeding into and balancing each other.

*Identification*

"Identification" is the process in which readers immerse themselves in the unique emotional state embodied in the text, thus achieving an understanding from within. This is primarily an unconscious activity, spontaneously aroused in students upon reading a literary text. The teacher, however, can deepen and sharpen it through questions and comments aimed at encouraging the students to verbalize, in their own language and in as differentiated a manner as possible, the perceptions, attitudes, feelings and hidden emotional processes that the text expresses.

When the students have difficulty in revealing the hidden emotional processes latent in the text, the teacher can help them, using all the hints in the text, by "reflecting" (Rogers, 1961), or even with a tentative "interpretation." The assumption here is that the "recognition" of repressed material will facilitate the process of its active and experiential "recall," and constitute an important step towards the material's integration.

For example, the discussion may make the students realize that anger is often accompanied by aggressive fantasies about the person who caused it. The teacher then poses the following question (if a supporting text is available): "How do we feel when we are angry with a person we like?" If the students find it difficult to express their confused reaction to this question, the teacher is justified in putting the next question to them, "When we find ourselves in such a situation, are we sometimes worried and anxious?" If the teacher feels that the pupils can intuit the answer but cannot formulate it, an additional statement such as the following could be helpful, "Maybe we are afraid that our aggressive wishes will be granted as if by magic." A child, who has fewer barriers than an adult between conscious and unconscious, will often respond by dredging up fantasies from his/her unconscious mind.

The teacher need neither make a precise, explicit or full interpretation of the unconscious dynamics at work, nor expose deeply repressed content, even in its hypothesized universal form. Instead, the teacher's interpretations should refer explicitly to emotional processes that are close to consciousness, with only implicit references being made to their deeper roots. For example, "Though he was really angry at his father, he blew up instead at his brother, who had not harmed him. Perhaps he did

not dare know himself all that he felt towards his father (all the kinds of feelings and fantasies that a big strong father can sometimes arouse in a little boy ...)."

The classroom context makes it impossible for a teacher to relate at the appropriate time and manner to the specific personal conflicts and idiosyncratic fantasies of each student. But it is assumed that a general and incomplete interpretation given by the teacher "whose direction is correct on deeper levels" (Glover, 1955), will, when well-timed, enable each student to find personal meaning in accordance with the depth and specificity of which he is capable at the time.

### *Reverberation*

"Reverberation" refers to the students' act of listening to the resonance that the text arouses within them and maintaining an active dialogue between the internalized experience of the "other" in the text and their own personal (real or imagined) experience. At this stage, the students' ego boundaries are opened simultaneously outwards towards the situation presented in the text and inwards towards the hidden layers of their own inner life — that is, those unseen corners of their psyche that were previously closed to them. Through understanding of the universal aspects of the unique situation embodied in the text, they return and consider aspects in themselves. They can then return with greater precision to an understanding of the "other" in the text. This "movement between two polarities at one and the same time" (in Reik's words) occurs primarily on the level close to consciousness or in semi-consciousness, which is dominant in any creative activity.

The reverberation stage is the primary contributing factor to improvement in internal communication and in self-understanding. The teacher can facilitate this process by inviting the students to discuss situations (other than those in the text) which illustrate the emotional processes that took place within the story's protagonist.

Thus, the students are expected to remain with the essence of the emotional processes embodied in the text, but to change its concrete manifestation, or to make relevant additions from their own inner world. Clarifying the similarities and differences

between the examples they offer and what takes place in the text, encourages increased self-understanding. (The students' examples also indicate the depth and direction of the personal insight that has been achieved.)

At the same time, we do not encourage the students to expose publicly detailed and intimate personal or family information; sometimes we even prevent students from getting carried away, for both psychodynamic and circumstantial reasons: uncontrolled exposure may arouse feelings of guilt and anxiety, which may be made even more intense by the response of classmates. Also, an explicit, detailed and extensive personal example from one student may not be meaningful to the others and may often distract the class from the experience being evoked by the text.

### *Detachment*

Finally, we direct the students to detach themselves emotionally, to "achieve distance" from the subjective attitudes both in the text and in themselves, thereby developing a more comprehensive, objective and balanced perspective of the interpersonal situation involved.

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The order of the stages in the ideal process described above is based on an internal psychological logic that facilitates a natural flow from stage to stage, where each stage feeds into and is a convenient takeoff point for the following one (which, in turn, enriches and deepens the experience of the previous stage). The stages are so organized as to build up an integrative and dynamic process, interconnected by conscious and unconscious internal ties to different layers of the psyche.

This general and schematic description gives only a broad outline of the unique process in each lesson. The relative weight and length of these stages – and to some extent the order of their occurrence – will depend on the nature of the text and the personalities, psychological state and ego strength of the students. However, if a component is missing, dealt with superficially, over-emphasized or misdirected, the therapeutic process will be incomplete and may even be harmful. For instance, if the teacher spends too little time on the identification stage, not encouraging the experiential understanding of the unique psycho-

logical state embodied in the text, the identification process will probably be superficial or even distorted by "projection." When we "arrive too quickly at ourselves," whether openly (in the form of "That reminds me of something that happened to me, when . . .") or unconsciously, when there is projection rather than identification, the motives of the character in the text will become distorted and we shall not achieve the optimal level of new insights, expansion and growth that the literary work has to offer. However, even such discussion has a certain therapeutic, primarily cathartic value, as the students are enabled to express themselves less defensively. But, when each participant projects his/her feelings into the story, the common emotional denominator that is required for a meaningful interpersonal interchange is not aroused. There is no real discussion, only a series of monologues. Also, the essence of the text will probably be distorted.

Neglect or curtailment of the reverberation stage will deprive the students of the opportunity for self-exploration that this stage offers. If we skip the active personal dialogue with the text and do not help the students to clarify the new psychological nuances that the text has helped them to reveal within themselves, then any insight they may have gained in the identification stage will remain detached from their personality and may easily sink back into the unconscious. Any experience that has not been processed by the student in his/her own personal terms will make little contribution to his/her self-insight, expansion and growth.

The detachment stage also has its function, although the teacher's help at this point is not always necessary. Sometimes, however, if the teacher does not complete and balance the subjective insight gained, with an objective and broader view of the entire situation, the student may attribute inappropriate meanings to subjective perceptions and attitudes, which are always partial and sometimes even damaging; a self-revealing therapeutic lesson, as opposed to one guided only by the laws of logic and objectivity, is built upon movement between the level of objective reality and that of subjective experience. The students must be able to distinguish between the laws of objective reality and rational thinking, on the one hand, and the different and unique laws belonging to one's inner world, on the other hand. Those students for whom these levels of reality contaminate one another are likely, if unassisted, to reach irrational "conclusions" that

are out of touch with reality. For example, the teacher's stance of non-judgmental acceptance towards subjective perceptions and passing thoughts, may be interpreted by some children as objective validation and even as a legitimization and reinforcement of the irrational behavior described in the story.

This possible effect applies chiefly to vulnerable children with a tendency towards distorted perceptions of reality. For most children, the mere insight into the unconscious dynamics behind perception and behavior is enough to help them be less determined by irrelevant unconscious processes. But for those who do require such aid, the teacher should take care to balance subjective experience with a more objective and rational evaluation of the events in the story and to complete "insight" with "outsight" (Forer, 1961).

If the students are to derive the optimal benefit and growth from the story, the teacher must help them pass through the entire process, including all the components listed above. Of course, this process, with all its components and stages, is never fully achieved and the level of achievement varies with the class and the story. Individuals vary in their ability to experience the process, to absorb the psychodynamic material embodied in a story, and to relate that material to their personal worlds (that is, to be activated by the identification and reverberation stages) in accordance with the degree of their openness towards themselves and towards others. The less the individual is in touch with his/her emotions and with different layers or areas of his/her own personality, the more closed that individual will be to the feelings of others (including the "other" of the story). In other words, the student's ability to be activated by the text, as described above, is limited by excessive repression; precisely those who are in the greatest need of improvement in intrapersonal and interpersonal communication through revealing discussion, have the greatest difficulty in being activated by that form of discussion. Nonetheless, Therapeutic Teaching assumes optimistically that it is possible to break through the vicious circle by sharpening sensitivity and increasing openness to the multilayered emotional reality expressed in literature. In pursuit of this goal, we use the power of literature to awaken elusive and repressed layers of the reader's personality, thereby weakening the barriers of disregard, denial and repression.

A text from the Bible (I Samuel xvii.22–28) illustrates the proposed approach:

And David left his carriage in the hands of the keeper of the carriage, and ran into the army, and came and saluted his brethren. And as he talked with them behold, there came up the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, out of the armies of the Philistines, and spake according to the same words: and David heard them. And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were sore afraid. And the men of Israel said, Have ye seen this man that is come up? Surely to defy Israel is he come up; and it shall be, that the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel. And David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God? And the people answered him after this manner, saying, So shall it be done to the man that killeth him. And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle.

This text can help us achieve the following goals:

1. To bring the students to confront fear, anger, frustration and helplessness in the face of a powerful, threatening figure.
2. To enable them to deal with the ambivalence we tend to feel in such a situation towards another who dares to show courage or some other quality we admire and perhaps envy.
3. To help them to comprehend the human tendency to ignore "shameful" feelings such as fear or jealousy, a tendency that is often accompanied by subterfuges allowing us to discharge the anger aroused by disagreeable feelings whose real causes we are unprepared, or unable, to admit (such as displacement of emotion, rationalization, etc.).

The students' identification with the Israelites taunted by Goliath can provide an experiential background for grasping the psychological processes mentioned above, together with the (assumed) emotional reaction of Eliab to David's courageous words, and his (Eliab's) resulting outburst.

Eliab's outburst ("Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart...") might indicate "displacement" of anger; he did not accuse his brother David of deserting his sheep to watch the battle when David arrived at the camp, but only after the latter's courageous reaction to Goliath's challenge. We already know that David did leave someone in charge of the sheep (verse 20) and we can assume that Eliab would have known this fact, since we are informed that David made regular trips to his brothers in the camp: "and the three eldest followed Saul. But David went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem" (verse 15).

What follows is part of an imaginary lesson that is based on this text and that illustrates the kind of leading questions that the teacher can ask and the assumed content of the students' answers. The students, of course, should be encouraged to cover a wide range of possibilities in their answers.

Q. Try to imagine what his brothers felt when they saw David.

A. They were: glad to see him; jealous because he did not have to fight and could visit the camp whenever he wanted to; glad to receive the food he brought them; glad to hear the news he conveyed to them.

Q. What happened soon after David's arrival in the camp?

A. Goliath's appearance and taunts.

Q. What do you suppose the Israelites, including David's brothers, felt when they saw and heard Goliath?

A. Fear; helplessness; humiliation; desire for revenge; anger at themselves; shame because of their lack of courage; self-contempt.

Q. When we do not approve of our own behavior, we are often angry with, or ashamed of, ourselves, but, when everybody else acts similarly, our own self-judgment is more lenient. Why?

A. We can console ourselves with the thought that there is no

alternative and that no one can act any differently.

- Q. How did David react? What did he say?
- A. "And who is he, an uncircumcised Philistine, to defy the army of the living God?"
- Q. What might David's brothers have felt on hearing these words? What might they have heard in his words? What might they have said to themselves on hearing his words?
- A. They might have "heard" criticism of themselves; David's words might have made them critical of themselves; he proved to them that it is possible to behave differently; they could no longer console themselves with the thought that nobody could behave differently in such a situation; perhaps they feared that David's courage would underline their own cowardliness both for themselves and for the others.
- Q. Feelings of this sort are disagreeable to us, so disagreeable that we sometimes tend to ignore them; what might Eliab have felt about David who was awakening these feelings in him and whose behavior was underlining Eliab's own cowardice?
- A. Admiration but also envy, anger, aggression.
- Q. Why did Eliab not admit the real reason for his anger? Why did he look around for a different reason?
- A. Perhaps he was ashamed to admit his feelings; sometimes we are ashamed to admit such emotions even to ourselves.
- Q. What sort of reasons do we usually find for our anger?
- A. "Logical" reasons; "legitimate" reasons; reasons that we need not be ashamed of and that we can even be proud of.
- Q. Have you read about, or perhaps experienced, anything similar? Could you "invent" other examples?

The assumption is that the search for, or the "invention" of, other examples will bring the pupils closer to a recognition of the phenomenon in themselves, and in their own personal experiences.

A discussion of the kind described above can have a positive effect on the mental health of the students only if the assumed psychodynamics underlying the behavior of Eliab are shown to be irrational without implying that he should be rejected or condemned as a person because of them (although the injustice of his behavior towards David should be stressed).

Obviously, the discussion will never take place exactly as described above. The teacher will adapt the leading questions to the level of the students and to the developing discussion, and will add auxiliary questions whenever necessary. He/she must also be ready to adapt his/her goals and the depth of the analysis of the psychological processes involved. While the teacher should not have too palpable a design on the students, sometimes it is desirable to help them in a more active fashion. If they have not been able to express their emotional response, it may be worthwhile for the teacher to attempt a more or less explicit, though still tentative, interpretation of the psychological processes presumably stimulated by the text. The assumption is that the teacher's words will revive latent experiences in the students and will ease their recall to consciousness.

The purpose of the classroom discussion is to enable the student to grasp as many as possible of the feelings which are mostly on the threshold of consciousness and are awoken in him/her by the text and, by the ensuing discussion, to express these feelings (even if only in third person) and cope with them through his/her own ego resources.

### *Implicit Navigation*

While the kind of discussion outlined above has been shown to contribute to the promotion of self-insight and emotional growth (Koubovi, 1970), this method cannot always be used. Certain themes, classroom situations, and particular constellations of students and circumstances demand more subtle ways of "meeting" a text. In such cases, less explicit techniques — such as "implicit navigation" — are preferable.

"Implicit navigation" refers to a process in which the teacher implicitly directs the subliminal emotional processes taking place in the children upon hearing and/or reading a work or literature, without encouraging them to reveal or verbalize these processes. Implicit navigation takes place at the level of "story-telling behavior." Through intonation, the stressing of certain words or phrases, a passing comment made at the right moment, the teacher can direct the unconscious responses awakened by the text, and thus strengthen the implicit growth-promoting messages and neutralize — or at least weaken — possible pathogenic influence.

It is well known that the messages embodied in the text, including those that have not been exposed and verbalized, are absorbed by the students, who may not be fully aware of this process. The child will identify with the characters and situations described and will therefore be affected by the way in which the teacher presents them and relates to them. In telling the story, the teacher should subtly channel its influence in a beneficial direction and try to weave therapeutic messages into the narrative.

The multiplicity of motifs and layers inherent in every story, and its symbolic language, which has multiple meanings and can be interpreted in various ways, enables each individual to notice different components in the story and to understand it in terms of his/her personal tendencies, problems, specific situation at the time and the individual associations which these components arouse.

However, beyond differences in emphasis and timing which are appropriate to each individual, it is possible to distinguish in every story between messages that are essentially desirable and those that are not. Thus, the teacher must be able to distinguish between possible meanings that will affect most children constructively and those that are likely to reinforce undesirable responses and "emotional conclusions." He/she must ask him/herself which messages the children are likely to pick up from the text and must consider whether the meanings of these messages are "beneficial" or "pathogenic" components in the child's experience. Accordingly, the teacher should be constantly on the lookout for differential strategies to strengthen or weaken (if possible, prevent) the absorption of the different "emotional messages."

### **Dealing with the Possibility of a Text's Negative Impact**

The teacher should try to answer the "unspoken" questions the students, who have been provoked by a text, may be asking themselves, consciously or unconsciously. The teacher's comments can prevent the drawing of harmful conclusions. Sometimes even a passing remark is enough. For example, in the Book of Judges (vii.3), God commands Gideon, "Now therefore go to proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful

and afraid, let him return and depart from Mount Gilead." Confronted by this verse, many pupils (some perhaps unconsciously) will ask themselves, "Would I have run away, or would I have stayed to fight?" And then they might add, "I mustn't be scared if I want to be considered a brave person." And then, "I'm not scared..." — a denial that can lead to the repression of fear. This undesirable process might be prevented by the teacher saying, "It's natural to be afraid in such circumstances." Or, "Can we be sure that those who stayed and fought were not afraid?" Sometimes such comments or questions, which convey the notion that no one should be condemned simply for feeling fear and that even heroes have to overcome such feelings in themselves, can thereby reduce the student's need to deny or repress such feelings.

In some cases, a negative message is not embodied in the text at all but is rather the product of a misguided interpretation. The interpretation, which often is out of step with the general spirit of the text, may stem from the universal nature of the human psyche or from the values and outlook of a particular society. One example is the divine command forbidding Adam and Eve to eat the fruit of the trees of knowledge and life (Genesis ii), and the punishment meted out to Adam for his transgression of this command. On being exposed to this narrative, small children tend to draw the conclusion — which is often unconsciously reinforced by educators — that even wanting something is forbidden; that wanting to taste, to experience, to know is sinful. Through the process of extension, even being curious might automatically become a sin in the eyes of the child. The curiosity and culpability in this passage have a unique connotation, which is frequently encountered in works of literature, namely, that there is an implied connection — which the child unconsciously picks up — between curiosity and knowledge about the "facts of life" ("Once they realized that they were naked, they wove for themselves skirts of fig leaves..."). This passage could therefore reinforce feelings of guilt over being curious and wanting to "taste" (that is, try out new experiences) in general, and being curious about sex in particular.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The tendency towards this variety of extension is prominent in most children, because of the explicit and implicit messages that the child picks up from his

When bringing such passages before the class, teachers themselves must be careful not to fall into the trap of extending judgment from a particular action to the emotional source of that action. In fact, the teacher should stress that only the deed itself, not the curiosity motivating it, was forbidden and then punished, and that curiosity, even if the object is "forbidden fruit," is a perfectly natural feeling and is not harmful or sinful in itself.

Similarly, the stories of Cain and Abel, Joseph and many other narratives concerning jealousy and aggressive acts may produce unnecessary anxieties in the mind of the child. The teacher must make sure to sever the almost automatic link that the child is liable to make between jealousy and murder. A clear distinction must therefore be made between ordinary jealousy, which is quite a natural emotion and is neither sinful nor dangerous, and the kind of jealousy that is present in the passage. The teacher might make a comment such as, "We all experience passing jealous feelings at one time or another. But that doesn't mean we would kill somebody because of jealousy!" Or, "Cain's sin was not jealousy — after all, jealousy is a normal reaction at times. His terrible sin was, of course, murder."

In all of the abovementioned texts, the Bible distinguishes between the deed and the emotion, with punishment being meted out only for the deed. However, because of the natural

surroundings. Punishment for curiosity in general, particularly for curiosity about sex, is a frequent motif in many legends and children's stories. For example, *Sleeping Beauty* is punished for having sought to discover the secrets of the seventh room, where she accidentally pricks her finger and draws blood — the symbolism here is obvious. One could cite numerous other tales, including modern stories where this message is quite explicit.

This familiar motif (which is expressed in such sayings as "Curiosity killed the cat") expresses conscious and unconscious adult fears with regard to the exposure of embarrassing areas in general or personal "secrets" in particular. Even parents who are aware of their children's curiosity and its importance to personal development and who usually encourage such curiosity, may convey a double message when their children approach certain "danger zones." The ambivalent attitude of parents towards the curiosity of their children and towards the questions that children ask because of their curiosity can stem, of course, from other factors, such as impatience with the seemingly endless stream of questions a child can produce, particularly if the parent is too embarrassed to admit ignorance as far as the answer to some of those questions is concerned.

human tendency to blur the boundary line between deeds and feelings, it is important that the teacher utilize the biblical text being taught in order to emphasize the existence of this crucial distinction.

*Reinforcing the Absorption of a Positive Message Contained in or Suggested by a Text*

If a text contains a constructive, beneficial message, which, however, is not given much prominence or is intermingled with other messages, there is the possibility that the students will either be totally unaware of the message or will not feel its impact sufficiently. In such cases, the message should be highlighted and emphasized by the teacher in a number of ways. For example, the passage in which the daughter of Pharaoh saves Moses and raises him as her own son (Exodus ii) provides a suitable opportunity for conveying the message that one should be judged by his/her own actions, not by the actions of parents (or relatives), and that one is not "fated" to follow the ways of the members of his family. Such a corrective message, which can help every child towards emotional maturity, is desperately needed by some children in order to help save them from the trap they are caught in by their life circumstances – and experience shows that children particularly worried by this problem have absorbed and been helped by this message.

An example comes from a teacher in a special class including many children from broken homes (father in prison, mother a prostitute, etc.). When she taught the above passage about Pharaoh's daughter, she made the following comment, "Though she was the daughter of wicked Pharaoh, she herself was kind and generous and deserves a lot of respect," adding, "Not necessarily, not always, and not in everything do children follow in the footsteps of their parents." The children's responses showed that they had absorbed this important message. This fact found expression in their essays, even in their daily interactions. A child whose father was in prison was upset by his friend's comment, "Your father is a criminal," and replied, "So what, I can still turn out like Pharaoh's daughter, but you are Pharaoh."

Another example, the verse, "Therefore will every man leave his mother and father and remain close by his wife, and the two

shall be one flesh," (Genesis ii.24) expresses a fact of life and supports the need for our eventual separation from our parents. This separation is a necessary element in the process of growing up and ultimate independence, and a precondition for the establishment of a satisfactory relationship with one's spouse while also expressing a positive attitude towards sexual relations. (The same type of message is contained in most positive legends, in which the protagonist receives the blessing of his/her parents before leaving them in search of a mate [Bettelheim, 1977].) In teaching this verse, most teachers tend to gloss over this message perhaps because of embarrassment but also because of the assumption that the message is not important or relevant for children.<sup>7</sup>

The approach of these teachers and the assumption on which it is based, strike us as incorrect. Children of all ages are troubled by the prospect of an inevitable separation from their parents and by the conflict between dependence and independence. The verse addresses this problem with the statement that, when the time comes, it is both necessary and good that such a separation take place and that the relationship with one's parents find its substitute and compensation in the mature love relationship of adulthood. In other words, the teacher should translate the verse into the emotional language of the child and into the relevant terms of the child's age (without, of course, burdening him/her with points that are not relevant to that age bracket). Thus, a small contribution is made towards the formation of healthy fundamental attitudes that will be relevant when the time comes to establish a family (according to Bettelheim (1977), "good legends" are like the sowing of seeds: some of the sprouts will be absorbed into the child's soul and will achieve articulation at a later stage of life).

Essentially, implicit navigation is a minimalist method (that is, one that does not take up much class time and does not arouse any difficulties from the religious standpoint) for the application of mental hygiene considerations. In our opinion, this method must be utilized by every Bible teacher, even one who, for whatever reason, refuses to conduct extended discussions in the spirit of the principles of Therapeutic Teaching.

7 The passage is deleted in the Bible for Children version.

The comments of the teacher — while applying the implicit navigation method — must be woven into the text and should sound as if the teacher were “thinking out loud” in response to the text. In doing so, the teacher is taking an active part in the internal dialogue going on inside the children, while gently and unobtrusively guiding them in a beneficial direction.

If a real “dialogue” is to occur, if the child is to internalize the teacher’s comments, the teacher must first correctly assess what the students’ dominant spontaneous response will be, what it will lack, where it will be defective, and what will be their conscious and unconscious unvoiced questions. The teacher’s comments should be linked to the materials and images of the specific story and should be both heard and unheard: heard by those who need them, who are disturbed by the problem the teacher is trying to answer, and who are therefore attentive to a “directing sign,” — and unheard by those who do not need such comments.

### **Considerations Affecting the Choice of an Implementation Method**

We have proposed various ways in which mental health considerations can be applied in Bible teaching. Teachers can choose from among these options in accordance with psychohygienic and general pedagogical considerations and according to the relative weight and amount of time they feel should be allowed for the attainment of psychohygienic goals in Bible teaching. The basic criterion that should guide the teacher in this choice is the children’s ability to cope constructively with the uncovering of the repressed material that the psychological situation in the story arouses in them. The teacher must therefore assess the “ego strength” of the students, as well as the extent of the threat and anxiety that the topic is likely to awaken in them. Thus, the teacher must consider in advance, when planning the discussions — and, ultimately, in accordance with the students’ responses — who is the dominant figure for identification and what is to be the central emotional situation around which the discussion will revolve. The teacher must also consider which of the situation’s components, layers and hidden roots will be dealt with using the “implicit navigation” method and which will be

focused on more explicitly in order to help the students deepen their insight.

Sometimes we must direct the students to identify with and expose an emotional situation that is different from that with which they would tend to identify spontaneously and that may even be different from those that the teacher tends to choose intuitively. In the following example, we shall demonstrate the considerations that guided us in deciding whom to choose as a figure for identification in a "depth discussion" and when to prevent discussion (using only "implicit navigation") concerning a different psychological situation. The example relates to the passage in I Samuel, xx, 35–42, which describes the meeting in a field between David and Jonathan, who confirms the fact that Saul intends to kill David. Prior to this meeting, David, who is hiding from Saul, tells Jonathan of his suspicions. Initially incredulous and shocked, Jonathan tries to convince David – and perhaps himself as well – that these suspicions are groundless. Jonathan, however, agrees to clarify his father's intentions, while David remains in hiding, and he subsequently learns that his father indeed wants to kill David.

We have found that most teachers tend to focus the discussion on Jonathan's feelings; it is tempting to discuss this dramatic and painful situation which depicts a conflict of loyalties between a parent and a friend. This is a universal problem that every child experiences in varying degrees at some time.

While it is no doubt important to give children an opportunity to deal with such a common conflict, it seems to us that this is not an appropriate passage upon which to base such a discussion because of the unique content and context of the conflict – here we have a father whose pathological jealousy has driven him insane. There is a sharp difference of degree between Jonathan's pain and anxiety and that which most children experience in situations of conflicting loyalties. Thus, the use of this biblical text for a discussion of conflicting loyalties in everyday life would so trivialize the psychological situation it contains as to distort its essence (since the difference in degree creates a qualitatively different emotion). On the other hand, since it is beyond the ability of children to delve into and truly identify with Jonathan's terrible situation, the subject is inappropriate for class discussion. A depth discussion of Jonathan's real experience is bound to be

either shallow and distorting or anxiety-provoking and even harmful.<sup>8</sup>

Nonetheless, the teacher must remember that, without his/her encouragement, many children will identify, to some degree, with certain aspects of Jonathan's situation, which will awaken echoes from their own real or imaginary experiences and which will arouse anxieties derived from two primary sources:

1. Jonathan's guilty feelings about warning David, thereby "betraying" his father and perhaps also guilt because of his anger towards his father, whom he blames for persecuting David.
2. Jonathan's anxiety over a feeling of "responsibility" for his father's behavior.

Such feelings, though less powerful, are frequent among children who discover "something terrible" (whether objectively or subjectively) about a close member of the family (a discovery that might also be accompanied by fears of inherited tendencies).

As already noted, it is not advisable to intensify the students' identification with Jonathan and to reveal his complex emotions at this point. The teacher should try instead to beneficially steer the students' struggle with the complicated feelings awakened by the text, to calm the unconscious anxieties that may be evoked in some of them, and to contradict the mistaken notions and irrational beliefs which are at their foundation. The biblical text helps us in these various tasks. How?

Concerning Jonathan's guilt feelings about his disloyalty to his father: on the simple plot level, Jonathan's behavior seems illogical, but, psychologically, it is very realistic. David and Jonathan agree among themselves on a "code" for exchanging information through the unknowing youth whose job it is to gather Jonathan's arrows. The device is used on the assumption that the two friends will be unable, because of the dangers involved, to

8 Some teachers direct their students to discuss Saul's feelings in this chapter. There is indeed room earlier in the story for identifying with Saul and for discussing his lack of confidence and his jealousy of David, feelings that everyone experiences. But, at this later stage in the story, the force of the perverted, pathological and unrestrained jealousy that overtakes him no longer resembles normal jealousy; thus any discussion of Saul's pathological jealousy will either lead to distortion of the power and quality of the text or will flood the students with the extremely threatening anxiety of loss of control over jealous feelings.

talk to one another openly. However, even though Jonathan sends away the youth and the opportunity for talking face-to-face presents itself, he does not tell David the details of his father's shocking behavior (and David in his sensitivity does not probe). Jonathan only blesses him with a "Go in peace" and they part with an oath of friendship and loyalty.

We need only emphasize Jonathan's behavior and allude to its motives with a comment or rhetorical question, such as, "Why didn't Jonathan tell David details of his father's behavior, as he would have done were he talking about a stranger? Because it hurts Jonathan terribly! He didn't want to speak badly about his father any more than was absolutely necessary to save his friend's life and protect his father from becoming a murderer." With such comments we express empathy with the depth of Jonathan's pain and conflicting emotions, and we hint that his "betrayal," which was an unavoidable necessity, did not express the whole of his feelings towards his father. We are also emphasizing the positive aspects of his confusing array of ambivalent emotions towards his father.

Concerning the second anxiety factor — a feeling of responsibility for his father's sins — the text again comes to our aid. We need only emphasize that David's friendship and love for Jonathan were not impaired by Saul's behavior. David does not identify Jonathan with his father nor does he hold him responsible for Saul's deeds and intentions. David is clearly aware of the fact that Jonathan is not Saul and that Saul is not Jonathan. David flees from Saul, while Jonathan is his friend to whom he swears his love. We thus convey the message that one is not responsible or guilty for the characteristics and behavior of other members in the family. In this way we are helping the children to separate their personal identity from their family identity and we are weakening somewhat the universal irrational tendency to feel responsibility, shame and guilt for the deeds, failures and negative qualities of members of our family.

The two messages that we try to deliver through *implicit navigation* are (1) the fact that you are angry with your father or even disobey him does not mean that you do not love him and that your actions are not causing you emotional pain; and (2) a person is responsible only for his/her own behavior. In their generalized form the messages help the children deal with the maze

of emotions involving conflicts of loyalty, guilt, or shame about a family member, in which every child is often caught.

On the other hand, if the teacher and class are ready for a "depth discussion," David's situation in the above passage makes a useful background for several reasons:

1. Identification with David's situation enables the reader to experience and understand universal emotional processes in many situations, which most children can locate in their own experiences. The drama of the situation spotlights similar processes in less dramatic situations.
2. At the same time, exposure of these processes does not entail content that is taboo or overloaded with anxiety, and children are able to deal with it constructively.
3. David's feelings are not explicit, thus requiring the students to elicit them from their own internal experience.
4. The foundation for identification with David has been laid in earlier chapters, so that the students are likely to identify with him anyway. However, if he/she decides to focus the discussion on David's emotions, the teacher must encourage this identification, since Jonathan's tragic conflict in this passage might otherwise dominate and even overshadow David's situation.

Several psychological processes can be revealed by discussing this passage. David is entangled in a complex web of emotions which the students can understand and locate in their own inner experience at a level close to consciousness. The ambiguity and uncertainty of David's situation plague him, and he strives to gain a clear answer to his doubts. What answer does he really hope for? It is reasonable to assume that, after three lonely difficult days in the field, he hopes to learn that his suspicions have been unfounded, that his king loves him as he did formerly, and that he can return to his secure and respected place in the king's court. It might be assumed that this striving was dominant at least on the conscious level. But deep in his heart he is sure that his suspicions are true. So he will probably feel some relief at learning that they have turned out to be true. He now knows that he can rely on his intuition — a necessary component for basic self-confidence and feelings of competence in interpersonal relations.

The search for confirmation of his perceptions of Saul's enmity is also fed by the natural resistance to changing perceptions (even when they are unpleasant and uncomfortable). Confirmation of his suspicions will also free David from the guilt he may have felt for being suspicious when he was still uncertain whether his suspicions were founded. It might also free him from the guilt that in his heart he had indeed set his eyes upon the crown – Saul's attempts to kill him will legitimate his heart's ambitions. Moreover, David's primary psychological need is to free himself from uncertainty; but we can assume that, if Jonathan's answer had conflicted with his intuition, he would still not have been convinced. He would not have believed the answer wholeheartedly and would have remained doubtful and uncertain. In addition, his trust in Jonathan, whose friendship was so important to him, would have been undermined.<sup>9</sup>

Children are able to understand these conflicting desires at work in David, since they experience them in various situations, i.e. suspecting a friend who is no longer loyal, who has begun to keep "secrets," who is angry and whose attitude has changed even though he/she denies the change; or a feeling that a teacher has changed his/her evaluation of the child even though no explicit mention of the fact has been made, etc.

The teacher can increase the children's identification with David and bring these conflicts to light by asking leading questions such as:

- What did David expect as he sat waiting in the field?
- What memories, thoughts or images came to his mind?
- How would he have felt if Jonathan had told him that his suspicions were mistaken (and that Saul loved him and was waiting for him)? Only relief? The way the teacher continues to lead the discussion will depend, of course, on the children's answers, and the teacher must help them understand why a different answer from Jonathan would have aroused an ambivalent response in David while his actual answer, painful and disappointing as it was, was also a relief.

9 By emphasizing this aspect, we are again transmitting to those students who continue to identify with Jonathan that a son is not responsible for his father's behavior and that another person (i.e., David) does not generalize from one member of a family to another.

To help students relate this insight to their personal world (in the reverberation stage), the teacher can ask them to "invent" (and recount orally or in writing) an example of a similar situation in which we suspect something unpleasant: when the suspicion is confirmed, we feel sad and hurt, but sometimes we also feel relief.

Below is part of an essay that proves that insight was indeed acquired and applied to personal experience:

Last year I had a feeling all the time that my friends in the neighbourhood were planning a bonfire on the Lag BaOmer holiday and were keeping it a secret because they didn't want me to come. For example, when I approached them, they would stop talking. There were other signs, for example . . . This was an insult and all the time I comforted myself by telling myself that I was imagining things: Why should they suddenly not want me to come? And all the time I'd go back and forth: true or untrue? And it was terribly upsetting. Then in the end I asked Itzik right out: Is it true that . . . " He got all flustered and asked, "Who told you?" and then he had to tell me that it was true. Then I got sort of depressed because I was insulted, but I also had a feeling of being victorious, like we said about David – of relief, that I wasn't just crazy and making up things, and suspecting my friends for no reason, and that I saw that I was right. Then afterwards I figured out what to do (I don't have time to write the rest, but it was okay).

In this article we have given examples of the various ways in which mental hygiene principles can be applied in Bible teaching and we have clarified some of the considerations that have guided us in their application.

It is, of course, unnecessary to point out that we have related neither to the various other aspects of Bible teaching nor to important pedagogical questions such as: At what age should Bible teaching begin? Should Bible stories be taught in their entirety or should only selected passages be given? Should we use the abridged form of the *Bible for Children* approach? We have related to one aspect only: mental hygiene considerations, which should be one of the guides for Bible teachers. In the application of these considerations, we have pointed to a wide

range of possibilities. We leave the decision on the relative weight and time allotment for this component in the lesson up to the discretion of the individual teacher.

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## MEDIA MATERIALS AND INSTRUCTION IN THE TEACHING OF RELIGIOUS TEXT

Steven M. Brown

An authentic presentation of traditional text must provide the student with an appreciation of it. Students need an opportunity to sense the archetypal experiences or occasions which generated the great sacred works under study. Many children do not identify with the experiences which generated the religious literary creations for the Jewish people. Traditional approaches, to some extent, and modern approaches to a large extent, view classical texts as reflecting the historical, cultural, philosophical and economic conditions under which they were written. The texts are seen as representations of humanity's struggle to understand and find answers to ultimate questions about the nature and purpose of life.

Current instructional procedures in religious schools do not offer students the opportunity to participate in the tradition of *parshanut* (hermeneutic processes) associated with the study and development of religious text throughout Jewish history. Religious school students not only lack a sense of the generative or antecedent experiences which are represented in the earliest classic texts, but they lack the equally important sense of the life experiences which inform the development of the interpretative traditions surrounding those texts. In a world where scientific knowledge doubles every five years, commitment to the hermeneutic tradition and the current educational emphasis on thinking skills confirms Cohen's statement:

The only way that the revelation can be kept relevant to new problems is to interpret the written word so as to make it apply to the activities of peasant and businessmen, housewife and servant, school boy and scholar. It is this interpretative body of literature that Judaism calls its *midrash* or law. The primary function of *midrash* is to make the Torah a living legal document so that every act of life may be performed in accordance with the divine command. Though the Torah obviously did not spell out

the correct behavior for every situation, surely the Revealer must have foreseen every possible contingency and made room for it in His law. (Cohen, 1956, pp. 141–212)

The building of Jewish tradition was accomplished through a process of debate, reasoned insight, historical necessity, and economic reality. Thus the classic purpose of textual study was not merely an esoteric exercise but rather a crucial factor in leading to the improvement of society and to the continual spiritual development of human beings. Today's Hebrew school youngster lives in two different worlds with little congruity between them. Text educators must begin to emphasize that "To Judaism all of life is a religious experience, since the division between religious and secular does not exist. Such a division would have been incomprehensible to the rabbis. All laws are religious injunctions" (Goldin, 1949, p. 160). The hermeneutic process in our schools must therefore involve children in the role of scholars. They need to integrate, into their studies, academic disciplines ranging from mathematics, to zoology and physiology, to economics and finance (Goldin, p. 160). Textual study has to be integrated with a wider realm of secular learning. Hermeneutic instruction must show the relationship between form and content and the utilization of a wide range of thinking processes by the student to comprehend and relate to the textual material under study.

Jewish text education must also relate to the fact that the highly verbal nature of the curriculum has not reckoned with the fact that alternative media of response, in addition to the spoken and written word, are increasingly part of the American child's repertoire. More and more has been learned in recent years about cognitive styles and handicaps which emphasize the need for alternative modes of study and learning to the traditionally text-based approach. It would be tragic to write out of Jewish tradition a third of the people who find traditional linguistic analysis approaches difficult at best.

The use of educational media in the widest sense can be helpful in: presenting students with archetypal experiences; enabling them to sense the life experiences of past and present generations which contributed to the development of the ongoing hermeneutic tradition, and in providing vehicles for contemporary creative response to that tradition. If children are "to be pro-

vided with the opportunity to experiment in the construction of inferences about the meaning of the text, based upon a careful reading of the text itself, to formulate *their ideas* in clear and precise language" (Gardner, 1966, xiii)[my emphasis], they should have access to vehicles of creative expression that can make them part of the continual development of the Jewish tradition. They should be allowed to use the media of expression with which they are familiar (as did their ancestors) to represent their own creative personal reactions to the religious experiences they garner from the text.

Though the media and materials of expression available today are largely unknown to traditional hermeneutical methods, many non-print modes of expression have always been part of the tradition. The detailed account of Bezalel's art and craftsmanship in the construction of the tabernacle is elegant testimony to the most ancient Jewish devotion to expression of deep religious feelings in tangible visual forms. The Book of Psalms reiterates the worship of God through music and song. Throughout Jewish history, religious craftsman have created *klei-kodesh* which embodied their faith (The *Encyclopedia Judaica* and Roth, 1961).<sup>1</sup> Utilization of modern media alternatives to the verbal tradition are a consistent, though possibly innovative, extension of the hermeneutical tradition so essential to Jewish life.

In essence, then, multi-media approaches can provide a wide variety of experiences which bring the awe, wonder and mystery of life to the level of inquiry and consideration by children in the religious school. Modern media can enable the educator to reproduce, in the classroom, many of the archetypal experiences of humankind. Educational media can recreate history, revive ancestors and expose people to various wondrous events not normally within their immediate access. In developing the hermeneutic tradition, multi-media resources can be used to introduce students to the worlds in which their major religious forms and institutions were generated.

A minimal involvement with the life experiences which related to the production of biblical and post-biblical literature would necessitate experience in archeology, anthropology, crafts, geography, etc. The ability of various media to involve students with

1 Over 150 pages in the *Encyclopedia Judaica* are devoted to the history of Jewish art and craftsmanship.

worlds of experience not within their immediate environment is obvious. A better understanding, for example, of the wandering in the desert and the process of forging a united people, might be gained from the employment of media resources which make the climate and anthropology of the Sinai Desert more immediately sensible to our children. Similarly a study of early agricultural, economic and social conditions in Babylonian Palestine, through the use of commercially available film and video tape, add greatly to an understanding of the nature and lifestyle of the Talmudic world in its hermeneutic development.

For children to sense an involvement with their heritage, they must feel that they have a stake in its ongoing development. By enabling them to react creatively to the lessons and experiences of the past in terms of their own present, teachers are helping them to intellectually and emotionally establish a natural link with their heritage and people (Cooper, 1972, pp. 86–88).<sup>2</sup> E. P. Torrance (Greenberg, 1968, pp. 114–116) has suggested that creativity in students may be furthered by the instructors being respectful of unusual questions and imaginative ideas, showing pupils that their ideas have value and occasionally having pupils devise something original without threat of premature exposure to evaluation. Cooperative learning techniques for developing greater use of media resources in the religious school classroom can go a long way toward changing the atmosphere of those classrooms, making them more humane and permeating them with an atmosphere of the *mitzvot* of *bein-Adam L'chavero*.

A caveat is in place here. Great abuses of educational media can result from inappropriate media strategies designed to simply visualize mythic events for children, particularly those narrated in the Bible. It is a mistake, probably beyond repair, to expose young children to visualizations of Bible stories which fix in them mental images from which the children cannot extricate themselves. The very process of *midrash* requires that there be many, varied and highly ambivalent interpretations of the biblical text. This is, after all, the *raison d'être* of the entire rabbinic

2 An interesting example of using present day forms of expression to investigate basic archetypal human experiences in teaching children can be seen in the use of popular music in social studies instruction. Such music can be used to discover the issues, feelings and problems important to people at a given moment. It can then be related to the concerns of people in the past.

hermeneutic tradition. To fixate on one visual image of a biblical story, such as those expressed in some of the new VCR cartoons on the market, might do much more damage than good to the long range development of a child's understanding of the hermeneutic tradition and to his/her own ability to derive personal meaning from religious texts. A strong battle has to be waged against the inappropriate, ineffective and downright harmful uses of educational media in our religious schools.

### Materialization Process<sup>3</sup>

The instructional process suggested here will not take the place of text as have the textbooks, but rather seek to help alleviate current deficiencies in text instruction procedures. The materialization process (Gerlach & Ely, 1971, pp. 5-38; Kemp, 1963; Minor & Frye, 1970; Popham, 1971, pp. 169-208; Popham & Baker, 1971, pp. 120-168) begins with an open encounter with the traditional body of knowledge such as that surrounding the three Pilgrimage Festivals. The approach is to distill from that knowledge the concepts and ideas which permeate the various rituals, laws, customs, literatures and scholarship (Heschel, 1959, p. 301; Kaplan, 1962, p. 296).<sup>4</sup> It requires a wide reading of the information involved, followed by the building of a list of specific concepts associated with each festival.

- 3 By materialization process we mean the generation of instructional materials and experiences from an analysis of particular bodies of knowledge. This process, whereby educators translate the world of ideas into tangible instructional materials and experiences is also known as instructional product development and instructional materials development. The materialization process involves the generation of materials and experiences for use by students and teachers in various educational environments.
- 4 It should be noted here that there does exist a difference of opinion regarding the efficacy of reducing traditional material to a list of concepts or ideas. Mordecai Kaplan, in *The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion* (1962), outlines the concepts underlying all the Jewish holidays with a view towards discovering the nature of the conception of God they contain. It is Kaplan's contention that such a conceptual analysis can lead to a knowledge or understanding of the nature of God in Jewish tradition. A. J. Heschel (1959), on the other hand, opposes Kaplan's type of reductionism. For Heschel, a given holiday or tradition is greater than the sum of its parts, and can only be legitimately experienced as a totality, in all its fullness. For Heschel it is impossible to reduce any part of Judaism to a list of ideas, a credo, or an outline of deeds.

The same could be done for elements of liturgy or the Bible. These concepts can then be reorganized into clusters associated with various ideas or values. The by-product of this initial step is a collection of traditional sources organized along thematic lines and a clearly defined unit of Jewish knowledge made available to help generate instructional materials and programatics. It next becomes necessary to select those concepts which have the best potential for utilization through the use of educational media and materials. It is clear, for example, that the centrality of the Jews' relationship to the Land of Israel as seen in *Shavuot* is a concept which can provide a rich source for the generation of multimedia material.

The teacher should also apply the criterion of developmental level of the age group for which he/she is planning and programming. It is likewise important to look at a child's overall education to see what the secular curriculum embodies at a particular point in a student's educational career.

The holidays can be used as a vehicle for curriculum organization and continuity over the course of the school year. The Pilgrimage Festivals are all interrelated. Therefore, a concept which was held in common by all was selected, but orchestrated differently in each; a concept common to all, but particularly emphasized by one, and a concept unique to each particular festival. Subsequently a taxonomy of media and materials was generated based on the guidelines discussed above.

The first category of media materials consists of those designed to present to the student the archetypal human or

One cannot understand the significance of single acts detached from the whole (pp. 296, 301). But Heschel's view of the totality of Jewish life is not easily adapted to the kind of instructional situation we have been describing. Accordingly, we have elected to use Kaplan's conceptual approach because it is more functional for our purposes. Even Heschel's position, taken as the basis for the development of a curriculum, would necessitate some sort of sequenced procedure designed to make the tradition in its totality available to children. For an analysis of the educational implications of Heschel's philosophy of religion see Arzt (1973). In this study we have attempted to heed Heschel's warnings about the danger of reductionism by providing a detailed listing of the sources from which we have derived our concepts. This is done not only to demonstrate the kind of textual analysis needed to authentically develop Jewish learning materials, but also to show the interrelatedness of the various texts and ideas. Also see Max Kadushin, *The Rabbinic Mind* (1952) for a treatment of the problems involved in conceptualizing rabbinic thought.

natural events or experiences which help to generate the great classic religious texts. The second category consists of materials which help make the hermeneutic tradition and the life experiences of past generations part of the process of this text study. The third category consists of materials produced by students and teachers in reaction to their experience of the text and concepts studied. This category provides for the creation of materials by students and for the stimulation of student creativity by the use of media designed to evoke personal creative responses. Each major category in the taxonomy has been subdivided into a) media and materials which are commercially produced and can be utilized in Jewish education, and b) media and materials which are locally produced by students and staff on the school or regional level.

Although there are many models of media programming, Goodman's plan incorporates the elements of most and can be used as a sound basis for material development (Goodman, 1971, pp. 37-38). The following is Goodman's procedure:

1. *Analyze Behavioral Objective.* Determine if the behavior specified in the objective calls for the student to view, hear or manipulate some specific object or other kind of media.
2. *Analyze Student Characteristics.* Determine if student characteristics (age, grade level, IQ, reading ability, physical characteristics, social or cultural background, attitudes, etc.) would suggest that some media should or should not be used.
3. *Make Preliminary Decision on Useful Media and Media Combinations.* Decide on the media combinations which, considering the behavioral objective and the student characteristics, would be most useful.
4. *Analyze Media Presentation Equipment and Methods.* Determine which methods of presenting each combination of media would be the most useful.
5. *Determine Local Availability of Equipment.* Find out if the media equipment thought to be useful is presently available or could be purchased with available funds.
6. *Analyze Available Instructional Materials.*
  - a. Determine which, if any, presently available instructional materials in the media formats which have been decided upon as most useful, would help the students accomplish the specified behavior objective.

- b. Determine the kinds of instructional materials, not presently available, that would be useful.
7. *Analyze Production Capabilities.* These include the finances that are available for the local production of instructional materials that would be useful, but are not commercially in stock.
8. *Analyze Instructional and Cost Effectiveness of Alternatives.* Determine which of the remaining alternatives of media combinations would be the most effective and efficient in terms of combined instructional and cost effectiveness.
9. *Select the Most Cost Effective Media Combination.*
10. *Obtain or Produce Required Instructional Materials.*
11. *Initially Use and Evaluate Selected Instructional Media Selected.* Try them out in a realistic situation. Measure student reactions and obtain effectiveness data.
12. *Recycle through Media Selection Process as Necessary.*

The selection of any one model for instructional product development is a matter of personal preference and ultimate utility, and must be implemented by the educational planner as an assigned task. Anyone developing materials must be comfortable with the mechanism chosen. Since the present program suggestions are not being directed at a specific school with a known population, the material presented here will be primarily illustrative and applicable to most schools.

Below is a summary of the schema of the materialization process that is proposed for the utilization of media and materials as an adjunct, but vital part of text instruction in religious schools.

#### Summary Schema of Materialization Process

##### Content Analysis and Selection

##### Determination of Instructional Aims and Objectives

##### Systematic Development and Selection of Materials

Selection and Utilization of Commercially Produced Materials. (Technical information regarding operation and alternatives in regard to equipment and commercial sources)	Local Development (Technical information regarding production and use)
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The strength of the materialization process delineated here lies in its adaptability to other areas of Jewish educational endeavor. Instead of developing materials of instruction, for example, an educator concerned with group processes could utilize this procedure for translating the conceptual frameworks developed, into various communal living situations. Such a group worker might take the social welfare concept, basic to *Succoth*, and generate from it a whole series of community living situations designed to involve children in various communal problem solving activities. What follows are some of the concepts, instructional objectives and suggestions for media alternatives, which arise from this materialization process in relationship to the *Shalosh Regalim*, the three Pilgrimage Festivals. Selected as an example for this short paper are concepts developed from the holiday of *Succoth*.

It must be emphasized that in the teaching of text to elementary grades, all the senses of the child must be invoked. Whereas the approach to text study appropriate for high school and university levels may exclude a multi-sensory approach without losing understanding of the text, elementary school children by and large learn best when exposed to a variety of stimuli. A positive emotional climate for children must be created. Teachers are increasingly aware of individual differences and learning styles and must work all the harder to provide for a variety of modes of exposition and response.

### Overview

*Succoth*, the Feast of Booths, is third in the cycle of festivals, but first to occur during the school year. It is the festival richest in symbols, ritual and ceremony (Kitov, 1970, p. 134)<sup>5</sup>. *Succoth* is, among other things, an agricultural festival marking the Fall harvest. As such it provides a wealth of traditions linking man with the sources of life. It has always been a holiday of unbounded joy, celebrating the gifts and beauty of life. At times the feelings of joy so overflow that people are somewhat prone to excess

5 The Biblical sources for *Succoth* are: Ex.23:14-17, 34:22; Lev. 23:33-44; Deut. 17:13-17; Num. 29:12-34, 35-39; Deut. 31:10-13; I Kings 8:1-5, 75-76; II Chron. 5:3-4; II Kings 12:32-33; Ezra 3:1-5; Ezekiel 45:25, 17:25-31, 32:27-29; Amos 9:11. For Talmudic sources, see *Tractate Succa* and *Tractate Rosh Hashanna*.

(Ariel, 1964, p. 74). It likewise, in its commemoration of the desert wanderings, serves as an historical reminder of the dependence of the Jewish people on God for support and guidance. Unfortunately, modern urban life has had a deleterious effect on this holiday, and it often does not get the attention it deserves (Gaster, 1952, pp. 96–98).

What follows are three major pedagogical concepts (with their accompanying corollaries) which underlie the festival of *Succoth*. These concepts have been extrapolated from the various rituals, traditions, literatures and forms associated with this holiday. They are supported by references from scholarly resources and traditional texts. For the sake of brevity, the reader will at times be referred to a particular passage or text, rather than to a paraphrase or a quote, since the amount of support material is considerable.

### Concept I – Materialism and Spiritualism

The first concept in the present analysis is unique to the festival of *Succoth*. Embodied in this concept is *the tension between the material and spiritual aspects of life*. *Succoth* attempts to juxtapose elements of physical and spiritual comfort, viewing both as necessary in their proper proportion and place. The festival celebrates both material achievement and spiritual hope (Gaster, 1952, p. 91). Coming as it does on the heels of the High Holidays, with their heavy accent on the spiritual, ethical dimensions of life, *Succoth* serves to so structure life that religious humans may rise above the mundane, materialistic concerns of everyday existence. It asks them to find security in an ongoing spiritual development which rests on a belief in God and on performance of God-like actions, as opposed to reliance upon, and dedication to, material things (Vainstein, 1964, p. 116). The *Succah* becomes a haven for a return to spirituality (Kitov, 1970, pp. 136, 139, 141).<sup>6</sup> *Succoth* attends to the psychological difficulties of human change and growth, and provides a place of personal refuge and security in its attempt to further the growth process energized during the

6 The very fact that the Jews build the *Succah* at a threatening time of year, with the onset of the rainy season, rather than after it in the spring, heightens the message of the need to depend on spiritual securities rather than purely material ones.

High Holidays (Kitov, Vol. 1, pp. 154–155; Glatzer, 1953, pp. 323–324;<sup>7</sup> I Kings 8:2–21;<sup>8</sup> Gaster, p. 94; Kitov, 1970, p. 142;<sup>9</sup> Adar, 1967, pp. 363–395;<sup>10</sup> Gordis, 1949; Rebolov, 1951, pp. 229–232).

Similarly, *Succoth's* proximity to the High Holidays serves to provide an immediate structure for putting into practice the ethical resolutions and spiritual aspirations gleaned from a confrontation with the issues posed by *Rosh Hashannah* and *Yom Kippur* (Zavin, 1964, pp. 85–86).<sup>11</sup>

- 7 This attempt to show people that psychological, spiritual and emotional security is to be preferred to material wealth is eloquently enumerated in the following parable related by Kitov, "The matter may be compared to a person who locks himself up at home for fear of robbers. Regardless of the strength of the locks he uses, he remains afraid, lest the locks be broken. Once he hears the voice of the King and his company approaching and calling, 'Emerge from your chamber and join me!' he is no longer afraid. He immediately opens his doors, and emerges joyously to join the King. For wherever the King is found, robbers are absent. He then goes wherever the King leads him, and trust and joy never leave him." The person (in the parable) is Israel. The house – his general activities throughout the year. The robbers – the evil inclination and all who assist it. The King – the King of Kings, the Holy One-Blessed be He. The King's company, the seven faithful Shepherds: Avraham, Itzhak, Ya'akov, Moshe, Aharon, Yosef, David. The call of the King to emerge from one's house – the festival of *Succoth*, as it is said, "In *Succoth* you shall dwell seven days." Those who go out to the *Succah* do it joyously... The festival of *Succoth* is therefore called by our sages, "the shadow of faith." The *Succah* is the shadow of faith and trust in God. Every Jew may merit the protection of the "shadow of faith" by dwelling in the *Succah*.
- 8 The *Succah*, built annually, also reminds the Jew of *Succat David Hanofelet*, David's fallen *Succah* – the Temple in Jerusalem, which was the physical center of Jewish spiritual, cultural and economic life. The use of this phrase in the Grace after Meals during the *Succoth* festival reminds the Jew that spirituality is not a matter of specific time and place, centering around a temple, or other material object, but, rather, a frame of mind. Thus the fragile *Succah* could serve in the tradition as a substitute for Solomon's magnificent Temple.
- 9 See Gaster (1952) for problems of personal change and the establishment of one's own priorities. The Book of Ecclesiastes, traditionally attributed to the elder Solomon, is read on *Succoth*. Perhaps it is read to teach us "to temper our pride in our possessions, for all is vanity."
- 10 See Adar for an excellent analysis of the message of this biblical book (Ecclesiastes) and its relationship to the themes of *Succoth*.
- 11 For the history of the link between the High Holidays and *Succoth*, see Schauss (1962, p. 113; Sefer Hamoadim, Vol. 4, pp. 40–4). Kitov (1970) summarizes the need to structure life such that newly resolved spiritual intentions can be actualized, "A person who has won a trial feels relieved and happy. He immediately celebrates and relaxes. Israel, however, is different. After emerging

Thus, simultaneously, the holiday attends to humanity's pragmatic need for a minimal level of material security in order to find some measure of happiness (Kitov, 1970, p. 139;<sup>12</sup> Ariel, 1964, p. 79;<sup>13</sup>) and in order to free itself for spiritual pursuits. When people must worry about physical survival, little energy is left for spiritual or moral pursuits. The tension between the material and spiritual dimensions, as seen in *Succoth*, is a paradigm for the Jewish tradition's view of their relationship in all areas of human existence. Humanity is both blessed and cursed. Humans are collectively "a little lower than the angels" and therefore aspire to be like them. At the same time, humans are commanded to have dominion over the earth and to subdue it, forcing their dependence on the physical world (Levinsky, 1951, Vol. 4, pp. 43–46).<sup>14</sup> What follow are some suggestions for the materialization of these rather abstract ideas.

### Category I

Media which present the generative or archetypal experiences which gave rise to sacred texts and the religious forms they convey. In subsequent sections this part of the taxonomy shall be referred to simply as Category I. The same will apply to Category II and Category III.

meritorious in judgement on *Yom Kippur*, they exert themselves in the practice of God's *mitzvot*. They do not return to rejoicing till *Succoth* on the fifteenth day of the month. During the four days between *Yom Kippur* and *Succoth* they are busy building their *Succah* booths and obtaining their *lulavim*, and they do not come in sin. Neither does God engage, as it were, in recording the sins of those days... From *Yom Kippur* till the festival of *Succoth* all Israel is engaged in *mitzvot*. One is engaged in his *Succah*, another with his *lulav*, and on the first *Yom Tov* day of the festival all Israel stand before God with *lulav* and *etrog* in hand. God then says to them, 'What is past is past. From now on we shall begin a new record.' Therefore Moshe forewarns Israel; 'And you shall take for yourselves (i.e. for your good) on the first day!'"

- 12 The Jew on *Succoth* is commanded to rejoice and celebrate; to enjoy and be grateful for his material well-being, as well as for his membership in Israel. See the *Kiddush* for *Succoth* and Deut. 16:13–17.
- 13 Interestingly, historically, the joy and revelling got out of hand, and the prophets condemned excessive preoccupation with the mundane.
- 14 The relationship between the material and spiritual aspects of life and their resultant tensions which affect the lives of almost all men, are thoughtfully discussed by Shimshon Rafael Hirsch in *Horev* (1951).

*Instructional Objective:* Upon exposure to human beings' archetypal reactions to the forces of nature, students will describe human involvement with water.

**(A) Commercially Produced Media Resources** (In subsequent sections commercial resources shall be designated as A and locally produced [American] will be designated B.)

Given the nature of the objective, use of a medium with sound, color and motion is recommended (e.g. *National Resources and You* or *Desert Oasis*). Media which show the beauty and power of natural resources should be selected.

**(B) Locally Produced Media Resources**

Develop sound-slide presentations showing water resources around the world. Collect pictures from books, magazines, people's trips, etc. Convert them into 35 mm. slide; develop a script; select music; synchronize.

**Technical Information:**

For 35 mm. slide production see:

Coltharp, J. (1970). *Production of 2 X 2 Inch Slides for School Use*. Austin: Visual Instruction Bureau, Division of Extension, The University of Texas.

For use and selection of 16 mm. film see:

Brown & Lewis (1959). *A-V Instruction, Media and Methods* (Ch. 10). New York: McGraw Hill;

Brown & Lewis (1957). *A-V Instructional Material Manual* (3rd ed.) (pp. 107-108). New York: McGraw Hill;

Brown and Lewis (1963). *Choosing a Classroom Film* (16 mm., sound, color). New York: McGraw Hill.

For use and selection of 8 mm. film see:

Wallace, C. (1965). *Making Movies*. London: Evans Brothers;  
*8 mm. Film: Its Emerging Role in Education* (1967) (16 mm. 33 min. sound, colour). Produced by the Project in Educational Communication, Teachers College, Columbia University for the U.S.O.E., DuArt Film Laboratories, 245 W. 55th St., New York.

For equipment comparison and selections see:

*Audio-Visual Equipment Directory* (14th ed.) (1973). Virginia National Audio-Visual Association.

For overall script development and sound-picture synchronization see:

Kemp, J. (1963). *Planning and Producing Audio-Visual Materials* (2nd ed.) (pp. 23-60). San Francisco: Chandler.

For combination use of audiovisual equipment see:

Brown & Lewis. *A-V Instruction* (chs. 16, 20, 21);

Brown & Lewis. *A-V Manual* (pp. 135-138).

For equipment selection and comparison see:

*A-V Equipment Directory*.

## Category II

Media which involve the life experiences of past and present generations in the study of the texts and the hermeneutic tradition they represent.

*Instructional Objective:* When confronted by the responses of various cultures to the demands of the natural world, students will identify how people take or abrogate responsibility for natural resources.

### A

Select a medium which demonstrates the roles various people or institutions play in maintaining and exploiting natural resources. To lend historical perspective, search for a medium which portrays the issues in earlier periods. e.g. *Egypt, Nile Valley: 35 min. Slide*.

## Technical Information:

see:

*Production of 2 X 2 Inch Slides for School Use: Effective Lecture Slides* (March, 1966, publication S-22). Eastman Kodak Co., 343 State St., Rochester, N.Y.;

*Photographic Slides for Instruction* (1956). (16 mm. sound, color, 11 min.). Bloomington: Indiana University;

Brown & Lewis. *A-V Instruction* (pp. 231-232).

## B

Develop a super 8 mm. sound film on the role of natural resources in the lives of students. The film can be constructed as a documentary on community resources, problems and attitudes and may include cuts of natural beauty with appropriate "Blessings of Benefit" (*Birkot Hanehenin*) along with contrasting natural blight.

**Technical Information:**

For producing super 8 mm. sound films see:

Wallace C. *Making Movies: Colburn Comments on 8 mm. Magnetic*

*Sound*. George W. Colburn Laboratory, 164 N. Wacker Drive, Chicago, Ill.;

Gaskill A. & Englander, D. (1960). *How to Shoot a Movie Story*. New York: Duell, Sloane and Pearce.

**Category III**

Media which seek either to generate or serve as vehicles for the expression of creative response.

*Instructional Objective:* After exposure to *Materialism and Spiritualism*, students will recreate, reinterpret, or generate new elements of festival traditions in media of their choosing.

## A

Present filmstrips or study prints of various holiday rituals associated with the nature theme and the interrelationship of all human beings. Suggest that students develop their own interpretations of *midrashim* around objects presented. These reactions may be expressed in several media if desired.

**Technical Information:**

For study print preparation and display see:

MacLenker, J. (1968). *Designing Instructional Visuals*. Austin: Instructional Media Center, Division of Extension, University of Texas;

MacLenker, J. (1968). *Instructional Display Boards*. Austin: IMC, Division of Extension, University of Texas;

Preston, J. (1960). *Educational Displays and Exhibits*. Austin: Visual Instruction Bureau, University of Texas;  
 Brown & Lewis. *A-V Manual* (Selecting Flat Pictures, pp. 95-98, Teach with Flat Pictures, pp. 94-100);  
*Study, Pictures and Learning* (1960) (35 mm. filmstrip, 63 frames, silent, color). Teaching Aids Laboratory, Ohio State University.

For use of filmstrips see:

Brown & Lewis. *A-V Instruction* (ch. 8);  
 Brown & Lewis. *A-V Manual* (pp. 109-110);  
*Children Learn From Filmstrips* (1963). (16 mm, 16 min. sound, color). New York: McGraw Hill;  
*The Sound Filmstrip System - the Method* (1966) (35 mm. filmstrip, 12 min., sound, color). A-V Division, Dullane Corp.

For filmstrip projector comparisons and specifications see:

*A-V Equipment Directory*

## B

Construct a super 8 mm. animated film expressing themes of joy and celebration seen in such rituals as *Simchat Beit Hashoavah*, *Nesuach Hamaylm*, or in the *Sacrifice of the 70 Oxen*.

### Technical Information:

See:

Wallace, C. (1967). *Making Movies; Animation: Its History, Techniques and Applications*. Associated Educational Services, 630 Fifth Ave., N.Y.;  
*Basic Titling and Animation*, Eastman Kodak Co., publication S-21;  
 Halas, J. & Manvell, R. (1959). *The Technique of Film Animation*. New York: Hastings House.

### Concept II - Man and Nature

The second concept deals with *Succoth's* message concerning human dependence upon, and relationship to, nature (Gaster, 1952, p. 80). Common to all the festivals, this theme emphasizes that the world is in a process of ongoing recreation and that

religious people react to that process out of a need to thank, bless, and be responsible to the Creator for maintaining natural processes (Klausner, 1951, pp. 11–12; Ariel, 1964, pp. 104–105; Kitov, 1970, Vol. 1, p. 143). Viewed as gifts of God to mankind, natural processes and the elements of the natural world become objects of awe and wonder, as well as precious possessions to be cared for and respected (Kadushin, 1972, pp. 63–69).<sup>15</sup> Highlighted in this festival's cognizance of the natural world is human basic reliance upon, and need for, water as the source of life (Vainstein, 1964, p. 119; Gaster, pp. 82–83; Kitov, Vol. 1, pp. 201–212; Klausner, p. 12).<sup>16</sup> *Succoth* expresses the interdependence of all human beings in the utilization and preservation of natural resources (Kitov, 1970, Vol. 1, pp. 159, 184; Vainstein, 1964, p. 120).<sup>17</sup> It underscores the increased distancing, through urbanization, of our direct contact with the elements basic to life, and bids us remember our dependence upon natural processes much greater than our individual selves (Lilinblum, 1951, Vol. 4, pp. 8–11). In the same vein, the festival attends to human dependence upon, and relationship with, seasonal change, climactic conditions, and solar and lunar cycles, viewing these as sources of growth and determinants of time, as well as of the embodiment of a vast aesthetic realm (Colson, 1937, p. 439; Gaster, pp. 80, 91; Kitov, Vol. 1, pp. 167–171).<sup>18</sup>

15 The liturgy for all three festivals deeply reflects this theme. The *Hallel* Service consisting of Psalms 113–118 is a ringing affirmation of the Joy and beauty man experiences in witnessing creation. Likewise the multitude of *Birkot Hanehenin* ("Blessings of Benefit") said in response to acts involving the senses, and especially prominent at a time like *Succoth*, reflect the Jew's amazement at life, and summon him to take responsibility for the gift acknowledged. It is not enough, therefore, to praise God as the Creator and giver of gifts to mankind, but one must also assume responsibility for the maintenance of the world and the gifts it can provide. To thank God for food from the earth, while being callous to the ecological concerns involved, is nothing short of blasphemous.

16 This is mainly seen in such ceremonies as *Nisuch Hamayim* (Water Liberation), *Simchat Beit Hashoavah* (Rejoicing of the Drawing of the Water), The Four Species and the Prayer for Rain said on *Succoth*.

17 The Patriarchs who are symbolically, though ceremoniously, invited into the *Succah*, bring offerings for all the world's nations, that they may be blessed.

18 *Succoth*, traditionally, is the time of judgement for water, rain and nature in general. The people are judged on *Rosh Hashannah*, and the world, three weeks later on *Succoth*.

Basic to the festival's symbolizing of human interaction with the natural world, is its projection of the commonality of human origin and development (Lilinblum, 1951, pp. 9-10). Since all people are interrelated and depend on the same basics, they are also responsible to and for each other. *Succoth*, accordingly, becomes the universalistic holiday par excellence. The well-being of all nations of the world is prayed for, and a world unity and mutual human interdependence is projected (Gaster, 1952, pp. 92-93, 323-324).<sup>19</sup>

Given this basic concept along with its corollary issues, we now proceed to examples of the various ways in which these ideas could be materialized.

### Category I

*Instructional Objective:* In the presence of archetypal patterns of human interaction with the environment, students will identify the effects of different environments on human behaviors, beliefs and communal organization.

#### A

Select a medium which demonstrates how human civilization and behavior are influenced by the surrounding physical environ-

19 Each year on *Succoth* seventy oxen were sacrificed in hope that the seventy known nations of the world would unite in the service of God. *Succoth* is the only holiday to which the non-Jewish residents of Israel were asked to respond. The hope of *Succoth* for mankind is expressed in *Zechariah* 14:17-21 and is worth reproducing here, "And whosoever does not come up of all the families of the earth (non-Jews) to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt does not go up, and does not come, then they shall have no overflow. This shall be the plague, with which the Lord will smite the nations that shall not come up to keep the Feasts of the Booths. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that do not come up to keep the Feasts of Booths. On that day shall there be (inscribed) upon the bells of the horses, Holiness to the Lord; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like basins before the altar. And every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be sacred to the Lord of Hosts; and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and cook in them, and in that day there shall be no more merchants in the House of the Lord of Hosts." (English text adapted from Harold Fisch's *Koran Bible* (1969). The imagery in this passage clearly points to the need for all nations to rely upon one another in order to maintain and receive nature's gifts.

ment — e.g. *Food, Clothing and Shelter in Three Environments*, or *Humans and Their Environment*.

To add historical perspective see: *Bus through Sinai* (16 mm., 50 min., sound, color). Alden Films, Brooklyn, N.Y.

**Technical Information:**

For combination uses of A-V materials and equipment see: Brown & Lewis. *A-V Instruction* (chs. 16, 20, 21 and Reference Section I).

**B**

Arrange a photographic exhibit portraying contrasting human reactions to physical and material distress. Pictures could be shot live or copied from books and magazines, juxtaposing such events as the arrest of a poor person for stealing food, or protesting unemployment, and the work of the U. N. in helping under-developed nations; the plight of a small independent farmer and the success of a modern Israeli kibbutz. Picture display should be accompanied by appropriate descriptive text.

**Technical Information:**

See:

*Planning a Photo Essay*. Eastman Kodak Co, pamphlet T-39;  
*Basic Copying* (August, 1966). Eastman Kodak Co, publication AM-2;

*Basic Developing, Printing and Enlarging* (May 1966). Eastman Kodak Co, publication AJ-2;

Smith, R. *Local Productive Techniques*. Austin: IMC, Division of Extension, University of Texas;

Grumarin S. (1965). *Lettering Techniques*. Austin: Visual Instruction Bureau, University of Texas.

On mounting flat pictures see:

Brown & Lewis. *A-V Instruction* (ch. 8) and *A-V Manual* (pp. 37-38).

On making still pictures see:

Brown & Lewis. *A-V Instruction* (ch. 17) and *A-V Manual* (pp. 65-68).

## Category II

*Instructional Objective:* When confronted by the conflicting priorities innate to human needs and desires (both spiritual and material), students will identify issues involved in the development of personal and societal institutions.

### A

Select a medium which demonstrates the tensions and dilemmas involved in human competition for material comforts – e.g. *A Place in the Sun* or the simulation game, *No Dam Action: An Ecology Water-Resource Simulation*.

#### Technical Information:

See:

Zuckerman, D. and Horn, R. (1973). *The Guide to Simulations/Games for Education and Training*. Lexington, Mass: Information Resources. This work contains a complete listing of sources and instructions on locating, developing and using simulations/games.

### B

Produce audio-tape interviews of community members, parents, friends and leaders, around the theme of finding personal security. Questions could be asked, such as, what is necessary for security; what are people's priorities towards their material settings and how do people organize their life styles given their physical needs and desires?

#### Technical Information:

Sloane, R. *The How To Do It Booklet of Tape Recording*. 3 M Co. St. Paul, Minnesota;

*The Tape Recorder*. Austin: Visual Instruction Bureau, University of Texas;

Brown & Lewis. *A-V Instruction* (ch. 12) and *A-V Manual* (pp. 105–106);

*Tape Recorder* (1960) (16 mm., 6 min., sound, b & w). A-V Center, University of Iowa.

### Category III

*Instructional Objective:* Exposed to Concept I, students will identify their own material and spiritual priorities through media of their choosing.

#### A

Select a medium which raises the questions of life choices, priorities and decision making. Expose the students to the selected medium and suggest that they develop a similar or alternate mode of expression to exemplify their own problems and dilemmas in determining priorities – e.g. *A Fable*, or *I Am*.

#### Technical Information:

For suggestions on using film to generate thought and interaction see:

*Film Utilization Catalogue.* Learning Corporation of America, 711 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10022.

#### B

Suggest that students compile their own list of the *Birkot Hanehenin* ("Blessings of Benefit"). The objects of these blessings could be visualized on *U-Film* (a clear 35 mm. film on which you can draw, type and paint) with a narrative combining thoughts on material comfort with their feelings of gratitude and responsibility, as well as their difficulties in confronting the material and spiritual dimensions of life.

#### Technical Information:

*Simple Ways to Make Title Slides and Filmstrip.* Eastman Kodak Co, pamphlet, T-44. U-Film Kit, Hudson Photographic Industries, Irvington-on-the-Hudson, New York.

### Concept III – Social Welfare

This third theme is found to some extent in all three festivals, but is particularly emphasized in *Succoth*. It deals with *social welfare*, or *human responsibility for the physical and spiritual welfare of others*. The *Succah* stands as the great equalizer of men, in that all men, rich or poor, are asked to leave their huts or palaces and live in a fragile, legally delineated booth of the simplest possible

construction (Levinsky, 1951, Vol. 4, p.44,<sup>20</sup> Colson, 1937, p.435).<sup>21</sup> That booth must be limited in size, shape, and materials, prohibiting the expenditure of great sums, or the ostentation of personal whim (Levinsky, Vol. 4, pp. 27–28).<sup>22</sup> The very nature of the Pilgrimage to Jerusalem, around which the festival revolved, embodied a conception of a community structure and responsibility very much a part of the Jewish world view which sees men as responsible for their fellows (Schauss, 1962, pp. 172, 175; Vainstein, 1964, pp. 119, 120–121; Klausner, pp. 11–13).<sup>23</sup> Similarly, on the historic plane, *Succoth* recalls the refugee status of the Jewish people in its wanderings through the desert, reminding us of the plight of refugees whoever they may be (Colson, p. 437; Glatzer, 1953, p. 323; Hirsch, 1951, pp. 43–46; Ariel, 1964, p. 105).

Considerations of social welfare are extended to a tradition which made *Succoth* the time of resolution making and peace-seeking. Traditionally, it was a period when gross social injustices were least tolerated (Levinsky, 1951, Vol. 4, pp. 14–21.<sup>24</sup>) It

20 Shimson Rafael Hirsch answers the question of why the Jew is asked to live in the *Succah* as follows: "So that you know, that if you are rich, man of Israel, not riches, possessions, cattle nor acquisition of property; not the acts of men nor their machinations in which you take pride – none of them will support and strengthen you, only the Lord; He alone supports life and maintains existence... And if you are poor, man of Israel, so poverty stricken that you are sick at heart – your soul dry, helpless – go out and sit in the *Succah* under the straw and the instability, leave your roof which protects and defends you against wind and cold, floor and rain... become even poorer and remember that the Lord made your forefathers dwell in *Succoth* in the desert, and thus did he maintain them... And know that God, who for 3000 years has kept alive and sustained our fathers in *Succoth* like those in the desert, is alive and existing..."

21 Philo adds that the very season in which the holiday falls, at the autumnal equinox, when night and day are of equal length, further supports this message of equality.

22 For details concerning the specifications of size, materials, and options involved in *Succah* building, see *Sefer Hamoadim*, Vol. 4, pp. 27–28; *Tosefta*, *Succah* 1–2; *Shulchan Aruch*, *Orech Hayyim*, pp. 631–640.

23 It was also a time of national study; a time of recommitment to the central ideas and values which bound the nation together. The communal experience is superbly expressed in *Psalms* 87:2; 84:2–3, 11:122 and 125.

24 Levinsky recounts various events which are said to have occurred on *Succoth* such as a cease fire between Antiochus Sidatus and Yochanan Iben Harkanus in 134 C.E., the pelting of the unpopular Alexander Yanai with citrons in 95 C.E.; Jewish rebellion against the Greeks in Alexandria in c. 4 C.E. The traditionally prophesied battle of Armageddon is also to be fought on *Succoth*.

was a time when armistices were arranged, and wars ceased. Above all, the holiday bids us, in our wealth, to remember our poverty, to relive it, and thus become more sensitive to the needs of our fellows (Colson, 1937, p. 437). *Succoth* seeks to implement the ethical conclusions of the High Holidays by asking us to relate seriously and practically to the problems of our neighbors, to invite them into our homes, or, at least to provide them with the basic needs for sustaining life at more than a mere subsistence level (Kitov, 1970, Vol. 1, pp. 155–161).<sup>25</sup>

Multimedia learning resources can be helpful in providing educational experiences and a means of reacting to this underlying commitment in *Succoth* to social welfare.

### Category I

*Instructional Objective:* In the presence of archetypal patterns of human suffering, students will describe instances of social injustice and human degradation around the world.

#### A

Select a medium which vividly illustrates human suffering in the world. Most important here is the visual stimulus, sound and movement being of secondary importance — e.g. *People of the World* (35 mm. slide); *Poverty in Urban Society* (overhead transparencies); *Hunger in America*.

#### Technical Information:

For use of overhead transparencies see:

Smith, R. *The Overhead System: Production, Implementation and Utilization*. Austin: Visual Instruction Bureau, University of Texas;

25 Traditionally one is to invite poor people to one's home and *Succah* on the holiday, and if no poor are to be found, the Jew is supposed to provide help which reaches them wherever they are. The custom of inviting the *ushpizin* or "Patriarchal guests" into the *Succah* each night stems from this attitude of concern for others as mirrored in the exemplary personalities of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aharon, and David, all of whom led lives in the service of others. Philo reminds us that the Sabbatical Year started on *Succoth* (Deut. 31:10–13), reinforcing the idea that we must be responsible to future generations, and to the needs of the larger community of people who are dependent upon the earth for sustenance.

Kelley, G. and Sleeman P. (1967). *A Guide to Overhead Projection and the Practical Preparation of Transparencies*. Leeds, Mass: Chort, Pale;

Brown & Lewis. *A-V Instruction* (chs. 9, Reference Section I);

Brown & Lewis. *A-V Manual* (pp. 45-54, 143-146);

Kemp, J. *Planning and Producing Audio-Visual Materials* (pp. 161-186). *AVI*, April 1962, entire issue;

Schultz, M. J. (1965). *The Teacher and Overhead Projection*. N.J.: Prentice Hall;

Wynn, R. (1967). Matching Overhead Projector to Educational Needs, *EPIE in Forum*, Supplement No. 1;

*Projecting Ideas with the Overhead Projector* (1960) (16 mm., 17 min., sound, b & w). Bureau of Visual Instruction, State University of Iowa.

For equipment, specifications and comparisons see:

*A-V Equipment Directory, 1973-74.*

## B

Arrange a multimedia resource center containing films, filmstrips, student produced photographs and taped interviews, describing social welfare conditions in the local community, nation or world. Supply a list of biblical and rabbinic laws and statements regarding human responsibility for others and ask students to match the statements with the resources that have been gathered.

### Technical Information:

Glogau, L. et al (1972). *Developing a Successful Elementary School Media Center*. New York: Parker Publishing;

Brown & Lewis. *A-V Instruction* (chs. 16, 20, 21, Reference Section I) and *A-V Manual* (pp. 135-137);

Kemp, J. *Planning and Producing Audio-Visual Materials*;

McVey, G. (1966). Multimedia Instructional Laboratory, *AVI*, 80-85;

Ford H. J. (1962). The Instructional Resources Center, *AVI*, 524-526;

Glenn, M. (1961). Organizing a Materials Center, *National Elementary Principal* (pp. 28-30).

For information on individual filmstrips and slide-viewers see:

*A-V Equipment Directory 1973-74.*

For an easily accessible collection of traditional statements on social welfare responsibility see:

Vorspan, A. (1968). *Jewish Values and Social Crises: A Casebook for Social Action.* New York: UAHC.

## Category II

*Instructional Objective:* When confronted with aspects of Jewish communal living situations through history, students will identify Jewish communal structures which have evolved to deal with problems of social welfare.

### A

Select medium, or group of media which show how Jewish communal organizations handle social welfare, e.g. — *Your Federation, Ort, American Joint Distribution Committee, The Story of Tzedakah.* These could be used as a basis for discussing Maimonides' levels of charity, or the various biblical laws and rabbinic interpolations concerning the Jew's responsibility for his/her neighbors. Similarly, the simulation game, *Dilemma* (N.Y.: Behrman House, 1972) can involve the student in the difficult decision making processes regarding conflicting ethical positions in dealing with social welfare matters.

### Technical Information:

On using 16 mm. film in the classroom for the purpose of analysis and discussion see:

*How to Use Classroom Films* (1963) (16 mm. 15 min. sound, color). N.Y.: McGraw Hill;

*New Dimensions Through Teaching Films* (1963). Coronet Films.

For further practical information on film utilization in the classroom see:

*Film Utilization Catalogue.* Learning Corporation of America, 711 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y., 10022.

## B

Investigate a local Jewish communal charitable institution or fund. Obtain films and information produced by the agency. Student can record interviews with agency officials and recipients of an agency's services, and then film or videotape facilities, services or clients. Then students can compare results of their investigation with the literature and media produced by the agency. They can also compare their findings and the agency's information with traditional literature on community responsibility.

**Technical Information:**

See:

Zettl, H. (1961). *Television Production Handbook*. San Francisco: Wadsworth Publishing.

For local production of TV see:

Brown & Lewis. *A-V Instruction* (ch. 11);

Ericksen, C. (1968). *Administering Instructional Media Programs* (ch. 10). New York: Macmillan;

Bretz, R. *Techniques of Television Production* (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw Hill.

For TV equipment, specifications and recording techniques, see:

*A-V Equipment Directory, 1973-74* and the various manuals supplied by manufacturers such as Sony, Akai, Panasonic, and Coffelt, K. *Basic Design and Utilization of Instructional Television*. IMC, University of Texas.

**Category III**

*Instructional Objective:* Exposed to Concept III, students will identify social welfare issues through media of their own choosing.

## A

Present students with media designed to portray the life of a Jewish community outside the US. Try to amass slides and films from people's trips to the USSR, Israel, South America, etc. Charge students with the task of taking a particular person or

family from one of these communities and enlarging upon and personalizing the image contained in the viewed media. Students might elect to produce a short 8 mm. film showing a particular family and its problems; to write and record a ballad or song depicting the problems of a particular Jew or his community, or to pick one of the *ushpizim* ("Succoth patriarchal guests") and develop a filmstrip or photographic essay around some personality trait exhibiting concern for social welfare.

**Technical Information:**

See previous examples for information regarding photography, 8 min. film production.

For sound recording see:

*Tape Tips from Capital Audio Engineers.* Los Angeles, California: Capital Recordings;

Sloan, R. Jr. (1958). *The Tape Recorder: Bridges for Ideas Series.* Austin: University of Texas;

Operating the Tape Recorder; Operating the Record Player; Splicing Magnetic Tape in *Recording* (1968). (series of 8 mm. silent loop films). New York: McGraw Hill;

Kemp, J. *Planning and Producing Audiovisual Materials* (Ch. 12).

**B**

Students prepare brochures on a social welfare project they themselves undertake or feel should be supported by their community. The brochure might contain photography, graphics and art, along with statements from the Jewish tradition regarding the religious obligations of charity and social welfare.

**Technical Information:**

See:

Kemp, J. *Planning and Producing Audio-Visual Material* (ch. 18);

For graphics production see:

Guimann, S. (1965). *Lettering techniques.* Austin: Visual Instruction Bureau, University of Texas;

Silver, G. A. *Modern Graphic Arts Paste-Up.* Chicago, Ill.: American Technical Society, 848 East 58th St.;

*Graphic Arts Paste-Up*. Chicago: American Technical Society, 848 East 58th St.

For specific information on all lettering techniques and on multimedia sources demonstrating such techniques see:

Brown & Lewis. *A-V Manual* (pp. 15–20);

Hutchkins, M. (1969). *Typographics: A Designers Handbook of Printing Techniques*. New York: Reinhold Book Corp;

Smith, R. *Local Production Techniques*. Austin: University of Texas.

For collection of sources on Jewish social values see:

Vorspan, A. *Jewish Values and Social Crisis: A Casebook for Social Action*.

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