

THE SOVEREIGN AND THE SITUATED SELF
EDITED BY JONATHAN BOYD

THE SOVEREIGN AND THE SITUATED SELF

JEWISH IDENTITY AND
COMMUNITY IN
THE 21ST CENTURY

A COLLECTION OF PAPERS BY
CONTEMPORARY JEWISH SCHOLARS,
THINKERS AND EDUCATORS



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First published in Great Britain in 2003 by
The United Jewish Israel Appeal
Balfour House
741 High Road
London N12 0BQ

in association with Profile Books Ltd
www.profilebooks.co.uk

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Typeset in Times by MacGuru Ltd
info@macguru.org.uk
Printed and bound in Great Britain by
Hobbs the Printers

This book has been produced with the generous support of the
Lord Ashdown Charitable Settlement.

ISBN 1 86197 761 1

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The UJIA–Hebrew University Conference on ‘Jewish Identity and Community in the 21st Century’ had its origins in two places. Clive Marks, one of the most well-respected and visionary lay leaders of the British Jewish community, had been pivotal in bringing together some of the world’s greatest Jewish scholars in May 2000 at the President’s Conference at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His dream, and that of the Chief Rabbi, Professor Jonathan Sacks, was that that event should serve as a springboard for a series of conferences throughout the Jewish world, designed to encourage dialogue and deepen understanding of contemporary Jewish issues. In considering where the first follow-up conference should be, where better than his home city of London?

During the same period, Jonathan Ariel, then Executive Director for Jewish Renewal at the United Jewish Israel Appeal in London, was dreaming of coordinating a major conference for senior Jewish community leaders – both lay and professional – to help establish Jewish education as a central priority for British Jewry. When UJIA and the Hebrew University learned of each other’s plans, it seemed prudent to merge the two initiatives, and hence the shidduch was sealed.

As the plans began to take shape, a team was built, led by Clive. Without him, the event would never have taken place – his ideas, his reputation and the funding he brought from the Lord Ashdown Charitable Settlement were all critical in turning our dreams into reality. He also helped to build a lay team, chaired by Allan Fisher and

coordinated by Michael Gee and Anthony Spitz from the Friends of the Hebrew University UK, and Professor Leslie Wagner CBE, Michael Goldstein and Tony Danker from UJIA. All of these people gave up considerable amounts of time to help select and invite the speakers, build the programme, and construct the event. Their contribution was priceless and their commitment infectious.

In addition to the lay team, a group of committed professionals worked with me in the office on a day-to-day basis, offering me support and, in truth, doing the bulk of the work. Shalom Orzach, Jonathan Ariel's successor at UJIA and my teacher, guide and mentor, was always inspiring and helpful, and lent his considerable experience and expertise to the entire endeavour. Andrea Mail of the Friends of the Hebrew University and Syma Weinberg from the Office of the Chief Rabbi were also heavily involved, and were an ever-present source of help and advice.

The staff team at UJIA Renewal deserves a special mention. Lira Winston, Lisa Capelouto and Dr Raphael Zarum offered more unconditional support and advice than I could ever have wished for. Zoe Matthews and Ruth Etzioni deserve particular thanks for all their administrative support; Gila Sacks offered me several sharp and valuable insights, all of which influenced the final programme; and Ruth Silver was a truly exceptional professional throughout, and pulled together the event with great expertise.

In the aftermath of the conference, as we began work on this publication, two people contributed their time and expertise. Gitta Zarum transcribed the entire event, and Anne Joseph both began the editing process and helped me to design the final product. We elected to publish summaries rather than the full proceedings because we wanted people to gain easy access to the wealth of ideas that were presented during the three days of the conference. Conference proceedings often remain in the realm of academia; our intention was to do everything possible to bring academic thought into the day-to-day world of Jewish community education.

In our search for a publisher, Professor Barry Kosmin at the Institute for Jewish Policy Research was an incredibly helpful source of

advice, and pointed us in the right direction. We eventually encountered Paul Forty and Andrew Franklin of Profile Books, who, together with my colleague Zoe Matthews, worked with exceptional professionalism, dedication and patience to produce this book.

My last thank you is reserved for the conference presenters – all of the remarkable individuals who travelled to London in spring 2002 and gave the British Jewish community the benefit of their wisdom and insight. Particular thanks are due to those who came from Israel at that time – the conference took place during an extremely tense period there, and it is never easy to be away from family and friends at such times. Somehow, they all managed to lift themselves out of the extraordinary realities of day-to-day Israel, and to engage fully in the questions that punctuated our deliberations. To them, and to the families who had to be without them for a few days, a genuine and heartfelt *todah*.

Jonathan Boyd
Conference Director

INTRODUCTION

THE SOVEREIGN AND THE SITUATED SELF: JEWISH IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Jonathan Boyd

Two concepts sit at the heart of the Jewish community's deliberations about its future today, and both took centre stage at the UJIA-Hebrew University Conference that took place in London in 2002. The first, 'the sovereign self', describes the state of identity in much of the western world, certainly in the decade leading up to 11 September 2001. Sociologists and thinkers such as Robert Putnam, Robert Bellah, Zygmunt Bauman and, in the Jewish world, Steven M. Cohen, have written extensively about the notion of radical individualism. They maintain that people have become increasingly individualised, increasingly caught up in their own individual needs, concerns and quests for meaning, and as a result, increasingly isolated and alone.

The second, 'the situated self', prescribes how identity in the western and perhaps wider world ought to be. To the best of my knowledge, it was the British Chief Rabbi, Professor Jonathan Sacks, who coined this phrase in his impassioned attempt to challenge the

sociologists' description and the possible policies it implies. For him, and for several other contributors to this book, we ought to be *in situ* with others, not separated and cut off from one another. And we should never pander to individual desires or contemporary fads; we should rather uphold our principles and remain steadfastly committed to our tradition.

The debate between the sovereign and the situated self is essentially a debate between sociology and philosophy. The sovereign self describes what is; the situated self prescribes a vision of what ought to be. But the policy question that arises out of the discussion is far more down-to-earth: whether to preserve Judaism as it is and seek to attract others into it, or to alter Judaism in ways that will make it more attractive and meaningful to as many as possible. The traditionalists maintain that Judaism is not open to major alteration; indeed, that any attempt to do so is contrary to divine will. The liberals argue that Judaism has always undergone change, and that stagnation is tantamount to destruction. Perhaps our challenge today is similar to the challenge the rabbis faced in the aftermath of the destruction of the Second Temple: how is it possible to both maintain and transform Judaism during a time of tremendous change?

My teacher and friend, Jonathan Ariel, recently added a third phrase to the debate: the 'social self'. In doing so, he cast a new light onto the debate for me. Individualism may well be rife in contemporary society – certainly many Jews crave individual fulfilment, and sometimes find the limitations of the community stifling. However, we are not all loners, disconnected from others and disconnected from our past, in spite of what the sociologists tell us. We continue to maintain a determined grip on our links with others across time and space; indeed, we continue to recognise that we need other people to achieve individual success and self-realisation. One only has to look at the aftermath of September 11, or the assassination of Yitzchak Rabin ז"ל, to see this – we need one another, and we seek ways of being together, particularly at times of great sadness and fear. The challenge, then, is surely to build a Jewish community that allows social selves to thrive – a community that both provides sufficient

space for the individual to grow on his or her own terms, and requires the individual to work with others in the community to help strengthen one another. In helping to articulate this idea, I was reminded of the exhibit at Beit Hatefutsot in Tel Aviv that shows nine men waiting for the tenth to arrive to make up the *minyan*; in Judaism, the individual is diminished without the community, and the community is diminished without the individual.

This challenge is complex for both philosophical and practical reasons. Philosophically, it is not always clear why we ought to live within the bounds of the Jewish community. Post-modernism and the multicultural society have led many to believe that fulfilment can be found in any culture, and have allowed many the freedom to explore all possibilities. Why should we be Jewish today? Is the purpose of Judaism to preserve ourselves, or is it to affect others? Can we affect others without having a clear sense of self? Do we have time to develop a sufficiently robust sense of self to be able to self-confidently affect others? Until we can both articulate a compelling answer to these questions and live it out within the community, we will struggle to hold, let alone increase, our numbers.

Practically, the challenges are very stark. British Jewry has declined at an alarming rate. A post-war community of 450,000 now numbers under 300,000; the 2001 census underestimated it at 267,000, but it was probably not so far off the mark. According to research conducted by the Hebrew University professor, Sergio Della Pergola, no western country in the world has suffered a greater rate of demographic decline than Britain. Certainly, this is not all a result of assimilation – well over 30,000 British Jews have made *aliyah*, and a rapidly declining birth rate, particularly over the past decade, has also taken its toll. But assimilation is a major factor – large numbers of Jews have opted out of Jewish life, or have simply allowed their connections with the community to slide away.

However, there is also a remarkable renaissance going on in the British Jewish community. UJIA is part of that renaissance, as is day school expansion, the continuing commitment to Israel Experience programmes in spite of the situation in Israel, new initiatives in synagogue

change and transformation, cultural programmes, and the ever-increasing plethora of adult learning opportunities that are now available. How should we nurture these frameworks to attract more people to them? And how should we nurture individuals so that they are attracted to our frameworks?

In the process of reading and editing the essays in this book, it has become increasingly clear to me that the answer to our challenges lies neither in solely pandering to individual whims and desires, nor in stubbornly upholding our principles in the hope that people will continue to be drawn to them. The answer today is far more complex than either of these extreme positions claim, and will vary from one individual to another and from one organisation to another.

We do have to find ways of drawing those Jews who are somewhat estranged from Judaism into our community. The only way we can hope to do that is by leaning towards them, listening to them, and carefully demonstrating how their concerns, interests and quest for meaning can be accommodated by Judaism. But that alone will not be sufficient. We also have to find ways of helping them to genuinely connect with a part of the Jewish community that touches them – to find people with common concerns and interests who are travelling along a similar path, and to find teachers and mentors who can help them on their journey.

Equally, however, we must find ways of maintaining the many strong and robust Jewish communities that exist throughout the Jewish world. The only way we can hope to do that is by continuing to follow Jewish traditions, upholding Jewish beliefs, and carefully living and learning the values, obligations and texts that have preserved us for generations. But, again, this alone will not be sufficient. We have to find ways of helping the committed core of the Jewish community to reach out to those on the periphery, not simply to fashion them in their image, but to be fashioned by them and by their experiences in the Jewish and wider worlds.

In short, we must neither pander to those who are estranged from Judaism, nor turn away from the winds of change that threaten to engulf us. Rather, wherever we choose to position ourselves on the

religious or political spectrum, we must teach and be taught, touch and be touched, hear and be heard. Every sovereign self can find his or her way into the community, and every situated self can be strengthened by others beyond the community. That is our task – I hope the papers in this book will serve to guide us on our journey.

PART ONE

WHAT IS, AND WHAT
OUGHT TO BE?

D'VAR TORAH

Shalom Orzach

The portion of *Vayakel* that we read on the Shabbat preceding the conference in London affords many striking images that I believe are particularly pertinent to the themes of Jewish identity and community. I wish to focus on two of them.

The first appears in Chapter 35:4–5, which can be paraphrased as: 'And Moshe spoke to the children of Israel ... Bring an offering to God, all with a willing heart let him bring an offering to the Lord.'

Later, in Chapter 36:5–6: 'And they said to Moshe, "The people are bringing too much for the work which God has commanded to be carried out." And Moshe ordered that an announcement be proclaimed asking the people to stop contributing ...'

These verses describe an astonishing episode where the Children of Israel are asked to bring contributions towards the building of the *mishkan*, the Tabernacle. In Verse 6, the Torah portrays this contribution using the word *melacha*, as opposed to the word *mamon*, money, which would be more apt. The word *melachah* is found most often in reference to the work or creativity that must not occur on the Shabbat. Interestingly, these 39 actions are based on the procedures employed whilst constructing the tabernacle. It could be suggested therefore that the choice of *melachah*, as opposed to *mamon*, is an indication that the people are in effect giving of themselves, demonstrating the highest level of engagement and creativity.

The text records that, very quickly, it was apparent that the people were bringing too much. Can you imagine a fund-raising campaign

where the people have to be asked to stop bringing? That is in fact exactly what occurred.

A *kol bemachaneh* – a voice in the camp, perhaps a *shofar*, perhaps a message – was released. A singular voice, a *kol*, went out to the community asking people to stop giving.

The question that fascinates me, and I imagine many of us in this enterprise, is: what was at the root of such a successful campaign? What motivated the people to give of themselves in such an extraordinary manner? We are not just talking about their money. We're talking about their time, their enthusiasm, their creativity, their passion – all expressed through the word *melachah*.

There is a second image which is equally intriguing. It occurs in Chapter 37:7–9 where the *keruvim*, the cherubim that sat on top of the *aron*, the ark that housed the Torah, are described. The depiction is of two angelic, childlike beings with their wings stretched out facing one another – a beautiful, commanding image that I believe Amnon Shamash, a well-known Israeli poet, brought out very poignantly in his poem, *Roots and Wings*:

*I want to be a person both with roots and with wings.
 Why should one give up the roots if his heart desires wings?
 The roots are missing so much when they are stuck deep in the
 ground and cannot fly and see the tremendous top of the tree
 that they are part of and the great forest that the whole
 tree is a part of.
 And the birds on the tree, who are lucky to have wings, are
 missing the grip on the ground and their nests are dependent
 on the mercy of the storm and the strength of the tree
 under whose wings they take shelter.
 Therefore, I concluded, when I grow up I want to be a man
 with roots and wings.*

Shamash succeeds in portraying the tension which Jewish educators and policy-makers so often experience: the provision of both 'roots' and 'wings'. This dichotomy is in fact the central motif on the

holiest vessel placed in the Holy of Holies in the *mishkan*, the Tabernacle, and later in the Temple in Jerusalem.

Isadore Twersky z"l, who defined *halachah* as 'the practical manifestation of the Jewish spiritual essence', argued that the emphasis is on both the practical and spiritual aspects, and *halachah* blends these two elements into a unified whole. He referred to this ongoing dialectical system in terms of 'image and reality'.

His conception ties in directly with Shamash's poem and the image of *keruvim* on the *aron*. This is the enthralling idea that inspired the people to go beyond the call of duty when asked to contribute towards the development of the community. It encapsulates one of the essential ideals which Jewish communities have aspired toward throughout our history: the delicate act of transmitting our tradition so that rather than stifling innovation, it actually informs and facilitates it. I believe that this endeavour has enabled us to survive the arduous challenges which have confronted and continue to confront us.

The question of how to create compelling new flight paths for those to whom we are giving wings whilst ensuring that they will always be anchored in our tradition is the central theme of this book. A community that aspires to these values will succeed in inspiring its members, both lay and professional, to go beyond the call of duty when called upon to contribute towards its future.

EXPLORING THE
CHALLENGES CONFRONTING
THE CONTEMPORARY
JEWISH WORLD

Professor Irwin Cotler MP

It has been said that the world changed on September 11. I don't know whether it did or whether what was revealed was a darker underside of evil that had always been there. But it is clear that after September 11, the World Conference against Racism in Durban that ended just two days earlier – an event that had already become a code word for what Jews felt was happening to them in the world – passed under the radar screen.

But if September 11 overshadowed Durban, Durban foreshadowed September 11. In fact, Durban can be seen as a wake-up call for everyone: it tells us something not only about the Jewish condition, but about the human condition as well.

When the World Conference against Racism was first announced some four years ago, I greeted that announcement with a certain sense of anticipation, if not excitement. But regrettably, what happened at Durban was truly Orwellian. A conference that was intended to celebrate anti-racism turned into a conference of racists against Israel and the Jewish people; a conference that was supposed to speak in the name of humanity, ended up speaking in the name of inhumanity.

The road to Durban

The World Conference against Racism in Durban was organised around four preceding regional conferences. The Asian regional conference in Iran was marked by the exclusion of Israel from even being able to participate in its deliberations, and the effective exclusion of Jewish NGOs from even being able to attend. Not surprisingly, the declaration that was reported out of that regional conference in Iran was one of the most scurrilous indictments ever visited against Israel and the Jewish people since World War II:

- It referenced the occupation as a crime against humanity, as a threat to international peace and security, as itself a new form of apartheid – implying that terrorism is a justifiable form of resistance.
- It promulgated the notion that Israel, in its essence, is an apartheid state – leading to the call for its dismantling.
- It portrayed Israel as a criminal state born in ‘original sin’ resulting from the ethnic cleansing of mandatory Arab Palestine in 1948, and Zionism as a violent, supremacist movement of racism, akin to Nazism.
- The criminalisation – and the call for the dismantling (euphemism for destruction) – of the racist/apartheid/Nazi state of Israel was now held out as a moral imperative – for such a state had no right to exist.
- In a world in which human rights had emerged as the new secular religion of our time, it characterised Israel as a meta-human rights violator – in effect, the new anti-Christ of our time – using language right out of the Nuremberg indictment against the very victims of Nuremberg – of Israel as the perpetrator of war crimes and crimes against humanity.
- The term ‘holocausts’ was referred to in lower case, in the plural, with Israeli treatment of the Palestinians held out as an example of a contemporary holocaust.
- And in one of the most disturbing of Orwellian inversions, Zionism itself was held to be akin to antisemitism.

But the worst part of this scurrilous indictment was the silence it received from the international community. Edmund Burke once said that the surest way to ensure that evil will triumph is for enough good people to do nothing. And, tragically, good people have been doing nothing for a long time, including during the ongoing delegitimisation of Israel and the Jewish people; the singling out of Israel for differential and discriminatory treatment in the international arena; the culture of hate against Israel; the religious dimension of the conflict where Israel is regarded as being the enemy of Islam; and the ongoing racism and terrorism. This is, in effect, becoming institutionalised.

Durban as a festival of hate

There were three conferences at Durban. There was a youth conference, a non-governmental conference, and a governmental conference. I am going to deal only with the first two.

The youth conference began with a T-shirt being given to everyone at registration. Under the auspices of the United Nations and with its official logo, the shirt announced that Zionism was racism. That was these youths' first exposure to the conference – and for many of them, their first exposure to the idea of Zionism.

Meanwhile, at the opening of the NGO conference, the only banners and placards to be held aloft at the cricket stadium showed slogans saying that Zionism was racism, that Israel was an apartheid state, that Israel was a criminal state, and the like. For the next week, every forum, every exhibit, every street march, every encounter that I went to was festooned with similar messages. If I attended the forum on hate crimes, then Israel was categorised as a hate crime; if I attended the forum on women's rights, then Israel was categorised as an oppressor of women's rights. And in the African forum, which was titled 'Alternate forums of apartheid', the only form of apartheid to which that forum dedicated itself was the notion that Israel is an apartheid state.

Durban as a metaphor: lessons to be learned

Durban is a metaphor not only for the Jewish condition – or the state of the Jews in the world today – but for the state of the world which Jews inhabit. There are a variety of lessons to be learned – some of which did not originate in Durban, but were dramatised by Durban – but I will limit myself to only two of these lessons.

The Israeli–Palestinian Arab conflict

The first challenge is the existential nature of the Israeli–Palestinian Arab conflict. Although the dispute involves issues of borders, resources and the occupation, they are not what it is really about. The root cause of the problem is the unwillingness – the almost psychological inability – of the Palestinian and Arab leadership to accept the legitimacy, as distinct from existence, of a Jewish state, as distinct from a state called Israel in the Middle East.

This is something that I learned first-hand in my encounters with Arab and Palestinian leaders over the years, dramatised in a more recent visit to the Middle East which took place three months before Camp David, in April 2000. At each port of call I would put the same question to our Arab and Palestinian hosts: ‘If Israel were to withdraw from all the occupied territories and an independent Palestinian state would be created, and there would be shared sovereignty over Jerusalem, would you then be prepared to accept the legitimacy, as distinct from existence, of a Jewish state, as distinct from a state called Israel in the Middle East?’

After receiving two initial responses that avoided the question, I got an answer that reflected and represented the consensus that I heard amongst the Arab and Palestinian leadership wherever we were. This answer was that, for a real, just, lasting and comprehensive peace, Israel must do three things—again, the burden was only on Israel.

The first was that Israel had to ‘cease being a racist state’ – and that, I was told, meant that Israel had to cease being a Jewish state. The second was that Israel had to ‘freeze Jewish immigration’ for the

same reason and – not ‘or’ – ‘permit all Palestinians the right of return to Israel’. The third was that Israel had ‘to become a Middle Eastern state’ like any and every other Middle Eastern state.

In a word, the entire condition of the Israeli–Palestinian Arab conflict can be summed up in two words: ‘double rejectionism’ – where the Arab and Palestinian leadership, from 1947 to the present, has been prepared to forego the establishment of the independent Palestinian state, if that meant countenancing a Jewish state in any borders. A second lesson – in addition to the configuration of the Israeli–Palestinian Arab conflict and peace process – is a need to sound the alarm about the new anti-Jewishness.

The new anti-Jewishness

The new anti-Jewishness, perhaps representing the most formidable challenge at this point to the Jewish condition, is grounded in classical antisemitism but is distinguishable from it. We need almost a new vocabulary to define it, but it can best be defined as ‘the discrimination against, denial of, or assault upon the right of Israel and the Jewish people to live as an equal member of the family of nations – upon the emergence of Israel as the Jew among the nations – as the singling out of Israel for differential and discriminatory treatment in the international arena’.

In other words, traditional antisemitism was the discrimination against, or denial of, the rights of individual Jews to live as equal members of their respective societies. That kind of traditional antisemitism is very much on the decline. But the new anti-Jewishness is the discrimination against, or denial of, the rights of the Jewish people to live as equal members of the family of nations.

What is common to each form of anti-Jewishness is discrimination. All that has happened is that it has moved incrementally – imploding in Durban – from discrimination against Jews as individuals to discrimination against Jews as a people. What is needed are indices of identification and measurement with respect to the rights of the Jewish people as an equal member of the family of nations in order to

understand and overcome this new threat. Seven such indices are proposed below.

1 Genocidal antisemitism. This involves the public call for the destruction of Israel and the Jewish people – the only state and people that are the standing object of an unequivocal genocidal call for their destruction. Genocidal antisemitism has three expressions.

The first is the juridical commitment of terrorist organisations such as Islamic Jihad, Hamas and Hizbollah to charters that publicly proclaim their intent to seek the destruction of Israel and call for the killing of Jews everywhere. The second are the *fatwas*, the religious execution writs, issued by Muslim clerics calling for the destruction of Israel. The third is exemplified by the public calls by Iranian leaders for the destruction of Israel, and even the threat to use atomic weapons to accomplish that purpose.

Most alarmingly, genocidal antisemitism is met with silence by the international community. Thus terrorists and their genocidal goals are dubbed ‘militants’ or ‘activists’; Israel becomes the Salmon Rushdie of the international community, only without the outrage; and the member states of the United Nations ignore the most compelling affront to the organisation’s Charter and principles.

2 Political antisemitism. This is the discrimination against or denial of the right of the Jewish people to self-determination, and the attribution to Israel and the Jews of all evils in the world. If medieval or classical antisemitism regarded the Jews as the poisoners of the wells, this political antisemitism regards Israel as the poisoner of the international wells.

3 Theological antisemitism – the reference to Israel and Jews as the enemy of Islam.

4 Ideological antisemitism – not just declarations that ‘Zionism is racism’, but that Israel is an apartheid state and that as such it should be dismantled.

5 Cultural antisemitism – where anti-Jewishness becomes part of the *Zeitgeist* of our times, where it becomes appropriate for the French Ambassador to the United Kingdom to say ‘That shitty little country Israel might yet result in World War III.’

6 Economic antisemitism – as exemplified by the Arab boycott.

7 A denial to Israel of equality before the law in the international arena – so that Israel is continually singled out for differential and discriminatory treatment. The problem is not that anyone should seek that Israel be above the law; the problem is that Israel is being systematically denied equality before the law. The problem is not that human rights standards are being applied to Israel, but that these standards must be applied equally to everyone else.

One example: The contracting parties to the Geneva Convention convened in December 2001 to put Israel in the dock for its ‘violation of human rights in the occupied territories’. That is a legitimate critique, and men and women of good will can relate to the critique. However, for 52 years no country was ever brought before a conference of the contracting parties to the Geneva Convention. Not Cambodia or Rwanda, with their genocides. No one with regard to ethnic cleansing in the Balkans. Nothing with regard to the killing fields in Sudan – and one can go on. The first country to be brought before the Geneva Convention, and against whom a condemnation was issued, was Israel.

There are other examples of the new anti-Jewishness, but space does not permit their elaboration at this time. However, I will add one more comment because I do not want to leave discouraging fallout from my remarks. Although much of what I have said here is discouraging if not disturbing, I want to say that my ultimate approach and belief happen to be optimistic.

I regard Durban as a wake-up call for a Jewish community that was living through a certain somnolence and complacency. Once one understands the nature of the Jewish condition and the human condi-

tion, one can address it. And, this is not the 1940s. There is a Jewish state today, as an antidote to Jewish powerlessness. There are Jewish people with untold intellectual and moral resources. There are non-Jews prepared to stand up with Jews – prepared to stand up and be counted – if we will show them the way.

A people – a state – that has the *shilton hachok* – the rule of law – as its heritage; that has *torat haneshek* – purity (restraint) in arms – as its military doctrine; that has ‘*tsedek, tsedek tirdof*’ – ‘justice, justice shall you pursue’ – as its abiding moral imperative; and that has ‘*shalom, shalom lerachok u-lekarov*’ – ‘peace, peace to those who are far and those who are near’ – as its abiding vision and dream – of that people, of that community, of that state we can say *netzach Yisrael lo yeshaker* – truth and justice will prevail!

EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES CONFRONTING THE CONTEMPORARY JEWISH WORLD

Professor Steven M. Cohen

For more than a decade, Jewish leadership has become acutely worried about the prospects for Jewish continuity. Leaders fear that intermarriage, the low birth rate, Jewish ignorance and apathy, and weakening involvement in Jewish communal life are conspiring to diminish Jewish vitality – if not leading to virtual Jewish disappearance in the Diaspora.

We can easily understand why we tend to focus on challenges and weaknesses, but in thinking strategically we ought not to ignore or downplay our strengths and achievements, for those strong areas constitute assets that can be marshalled to meet the challenges that confront us.

Before conducting my research on British Jewish identity, I had the privilege of speaking with several rabbis, educators, professionals and volunteer leaders. Listening to them, I was impressed with many positive features of British Jewry that distinguish Jews here from Jews elsewhere. In contrast with the geographic dispersal experienced by Jews in most Diaspora settings, most British Jews continue to choose to reside near to one another in ethnically concentrated parts of London and a few other cities. Jewish day school enrolment rates in this country have climbed dramatically in recent years, reach-

ing as high as 50 per cent of school-age youngsters. British Jewish youth movements may be the most extensive and most energetic in the world. Given their population size and income distribution, British Jews may be among the most generous of any communities of comparable size, outstripping communities such as Chicago, Philadelphia and Boston. On a per capita basis, British Jews travel to Israel more frequently than any other Jewry, and have an unusually close relationship with the state and people of Israel. Several trends and developments point to a new-found ferment in British Jewish life: the UJIA itself, Limmud, and pioneering experiments in all the religious movements – Orthodox, Masorti, Reform and Progressive – to make our congregations more engaging, enticing and exciting.

I am sure that there is much more to cite and celebrate. Yet, at the same time, British Jewry is confronted by many of the same challenges that confront other Jewries both in the Diaspora and in Israel.

Many of us have been concerned about demography and affiliation, how many Jews there are or will be, and how they are or will affiliate with organised Jewish life. Those concerns are real, but in this paper I wish to direct our attention to an equally important concern: our sense of common origin, common condition, common purpose, common fate and common destiny – that is, the collective aspects of being Jewish.

With few exceptions, various measures of Jewish ethnicity, peoplehood or *Klal Yisrael* are in decline, both in the Diaspora and in Israel. Certainly, Professor Barry Kosmin's work points in that direction here in the UK, and my own work on American Jewry undoubtedly supports it.

According to the findings of a recent national survey I conducted of over a thousand American respondents nationwide, younger American adult Jews are consistently less likely than their elders to agree – or to agree passionately – with each of the following statements:

- I am proud to be a Jew;
- Jews are my people, the people of my ancestors;
- Jews have had an especially rich history, one with special meaning for our lives today;

- Jews have a permanent bond;
- I look at the entire Jewish community as my extended family;
- I have a special responsibility to take care of Jews in need around the world.

Significantly, the answers to these survey questions on Jewish peoplehood statistically correlate very closely with a complex of related attitudes, including resistance towards intermarriage, engagement with Jewish institutions, and attachment to Israel. On measures of these attitudes as well, younger Jewish adults consistently score lower than their parents and elders. It is well known that intermarriage threatens the Jewish identity of the intermarried, their children and their grandchildren. However, it has other disturbing effects as well. With notable individual exceptions aside, intermarried Jews are less strikingly engaged in Jewish life than in-married families—especially with respect to matters of Jewish connection and collectivity such as friendship, residence, institutional belonging and Israel. Many Jewish leaders, particularly in the United States, have refashioned Judaism in ways that are more accepting of intermarriage. But let's be clear about this: a Judaism that approves of intermarriage—even by way of quiet acceptance—is one that becomes less centred on collective Jewish identity.

Of perhaps even greater concern is the decline of Jewish in-group friendship. Whereas 60 per cent of 55- to 64-year-olds said that most of their friends are Jewish, only 34 per cent of those just twenty years their junior make the same claim.

But ultimately, the broadest challenge to collective Jewish identity is embodied in the central findings of *The Jew Within*, the recently published study of American Jewry that I conducted with Arnold Eisen. In it, we note that identities can be best represented by the notion of 'the sovereign self' – that is, the contemporary American Jewish self sees itself as 'sovereign'. The individual feels entitled, with little guilt or hesitation, to decide what to observe Jewishly, and is more than ready to place the search for personal meaning – over and above anything else – as the central arbiter of ritual practice and communal involvement.

Our concept of the Jewish sovereign self does contain several critical sub-elements worth noting. Notably, Jews no longer feel an urgency to escape being Jewish. Our interviewees told us, in effect, that 'no matter what I do or don't do, I will always remain Jewish'.

Primacy of voluntarism and autonomy are also common. We were told by our sample that they considered themselves free to make up their own minds about their own practice, belief and involvement, and the vast majority felt they had the right to reject those Jewish observances that they didn't find meaningful.

We also encountered a lot of personalism: people making their Jewish choices not on the basis of some external ideology, obligation, tradition or communal norm, but rather on what they find personally meaningful, relevant and enriching.

Finally, we found a strong trend of anti-judgementalism. Most moderately-affiliated Jews believe that no one can or should judge anyone else's ways of being Jewish.

To be sure, the self is not as fully sovereign as it could be or as some Jews may say it is. Rhetoric may be more individualist than behaviour. Today's Jews like to 'talk individual' but they often 'act communal'. Nevertheless, they do place a great premium on their search for meaning. Many test Judaism and congregational and organisational involvement against their search for meaning – and many find these concepts wanting.

What is new is the extent to which the locus of Jewish meaning has been drawn inward into the self, the family and the institutions that serve them. Relative to politics, philanthropy and organised Jewish life, the Jewish family has come to occupy a larger and more central place than it did two or three decades ago.

Even affiliated Jews often see conventional, organised Jewry as largely irrelevant to their lives. Israel is no longer as central and inspiring as it once was. And in one of the most religious western countries in the world, many American shul-goers believe that God has no special relationship with Jews, offers no special revelation to Jews, provides no particular providence over Jews and promises no Messiah to the Jews. All is universal and personal.

The trends towards a greater individualism, voluntarism and personalism in Jewish identity are neither surprising nor exceptional. After all, the world has become more fluid, identities more individually constructed, and institutions more porous.

The sociologist Peter Berger teaches us that over the last few centuries religious systems responded in three paradigmatic ways to the challenges of modernity: the reductive option, the deductive option and the inductive option.

The reductive option refers to reducing the scope and demands of the religious culture so as to adapt to – if not, frankly, to surrender to – the cultural currents of the day. The deductive option refers to retaining the traditional customs and ways of thinking by a studied effort to fence out modernity and those cultural elements that challenge religious traditionalism. The inductive option is undoubtedly the most difficult. Induction refers to invention, a process that is at one and the same time authentic to the tradition but relevant to contemporary circumstance.

Berger's three options are suggestive of the multifaceted response we need to fashion. Reduction means allowing highly individualist and personal expression of Judaism to flourish – even if these ideas sometimes seem to run counter to collective ideals and commitments. The deductive option suggests that we invest in teaching Jewish ethnicity and collectivity by providing experiences that emphasise Jewish peoplehood and Jewish community. The inductive option means creating new possibilities within Jewish communal life that provide room for creativity, individuality and personal significance. We will need to treat both leaders and volunteers more as individuals, providing each of them with personalised options for involvement and growth – as difficult as that might be.

We will need to open the parameters of acceptable debate and create opportunities for real dialogue among the varied streams within Jewish life, be they Orthodox, Masorti, Reform, Progressive or secular; be they feminists or traditionalists, hawks or doves. If people cannot discuss all that is dear to them as Jewish individuals within the

Jewish community, they will choose to act as individuals outside the Jewish community.

To sum up, I have argued that the collective dimension – or *klal Yisrael* – is the dimension most in need of our care and attention. As leaders of modern and post-modern Judaism, we engage in several balancing acts. In general terms, we must balance authenticity with relevance. In more specific terms, we will need to enthuse collective involvement with personal Jewish meaning. This, I believe, is the key issue challenging rabbis, educators, Jewish communal professionals and lay leaders. It demands our attention, our openness, our reflection and our very best efforts.

A CASE OF NEW IDENTITY: DETECTING THE FORCES FACING JEWISH IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY

Professor Steven M. Cohen

‘Identity’ is a difficult word that never quite works for me. It is an instrument, a resource to achieve something else – like ‘community’. It is not an end in itself. Furthermore, it is socially constructed, socially determined and affected by the Jewish opportunity structure. To rephrase Lennie Bruce: If you’re Jewish in Iowa, you’re goyish. But if you’re goyish in Brooklyn, you’re Jewish – even if you’re goyish! It turns out that we can predict intermarriage a lot more successfully by United States postal codes than we can by Jewish day school or Jewish education. It is not a matter of motivation – feeling very Jewish – but where you are and how you are connected that affects the expression of Jewish identity. Thirdly, it doesn’t have to be this way, but identity tends to emphasise attitudes, whereas Jews care much more about behaviour.

Allow me to do something extremely *chutzpadik*: to give you my initial observations about British Jewry, and to ask your permission to be superficial, to be wrong, and to offend. So let me try my four initial take-away points about British Jewry – about British-Jewish identity and community.

First, in a number of different ways, you are very British. You define yourselves publicly as ‘religious’ rather than ethnic or political. The bulk of your Jewish life takes place in synagogues. I have seen many wonderful Jewish things here, but everybody, frankly, is

very down on their dreary Jewish life. When I went through a whole list of vibrant and interesting Jewish activities beyond the synagogue, people accepted that those things exist, but still regarded the critical part of Jewish life as 'synagogues' and 'rabbis'. In addition, like Britain, you are organised from London, and have very centralised and hierarchical structures. You are very deferential to rabbis. You, like many Jews, don't listen to them, but you give them a lot of deference. At the same time, you under-support and underfund and under-help them. You are also very concerned about authenticity and are resistant to change and, unlike Americans, you don't have very high expectations of your religious communities.

Secondly, amongst the older generations at least, there seems to be a great deal of concern with integration into, and acceptance by, the larger society. This used to be the case in the USA too, but not since the 1940s and 1950s. Here people continue to quote non-Jews to prove how good and smart and wonderful and moral Jews are. My hunch is that this suggests that there is still considerable concern here with integration and acceptance. As a result, this is the only Jewish community I know of that accepts titles and honours from the larger society – legitimately and rightly so, as these people have done wonderful things for British and Jewish society – and we in turn, as a community, appropriately give them honour and deference. There are no other societies that do this to the same extent – elsewhere titles relate purely to one's profession, for example, 'professor', 'doctor', 'attorney'. You do, of course, encounter more antisemitism and anti-Zionism than Jews in the USA, so concerns about that heighten concerns about acceptance and integration. Is that feeling as prevalent among the younger generation? I have no idea. That's one of the things that I want to find out.

Thirdly, Israel is very alive here, much more so than in the USA. You travel there, you commit to Israel, and you send a large fraction of your communal funds there. Israel is a major, prominent, organised part of your identity.

My last point, which brings a lot of this together, is 'ethnic inside, religious outside', or 'ethnic content and religious institution'. In the

USA, Jews invite non-Jews to their private Jewish celebrations. American Jews don't separate the Jewish and non-Jewish parts of their lives to the same extent as people do here. This is probably changing among younger people, but much of British Jewry is still living its important private life within Jewish precincts.

Residential clustering demonstrates this. Barry Kosmin and Stanley Waterman are doing wonderful work at the Institute for Jewish Policy Research on Jewish geography. In their basement they have a large map of London. On the map, there is a little green strip representing where Jews live. It covers part of the West End, St John's Wood, Golders Green, Hendon and Finchley, up to Edgware, Stanmore, Bushey and Radlett at the top. When you look at the whole of London, you see a little, thin green strip covering maybe 3 to 5 per cent of the whole city. There are a few dots elsewhere – particularly in parts of east London – but apart from that, Jews live in very particular areas. What does this tell us about Jewish residential choices? Even when you move 'out', you still tend to move just fifteen minutes away from a synagogue.

Your attitude to intermarriage also reflects this 'ethnic inside, religious outside' idea. Jews who marry non-Jews are more alienated – by both sides – than they are in the USA. On the whole, the Jewish community doesn't talk about them and doesn't want anything to do with them. Occasionally you can find an article in the *Jewish Chronicle* arguing that we should be nice to them. And the intermarrieds themselves are more distant because – and here is my point – the community is very ethnic. Here it is actually easier for Jews to accept intermarriage religiously than they can ethnically.

Because of the powerful youth and student experiences that are commonplace here, a pattern emerges that is entirely unique in the Jewish world. In most parts of the world, people are religiously 'high' in their childhood. That is when they get Sunday school and everything else. They then go into religious depression during high school and college years – and before you know it, they have a seven-year-old child. When they have a seven-year-old child they re-enter the religious community and the cycle starts again. That may be true to

some extent here, but I've met a lot of people in Britain whose peak Jewish experiences were actually social/ethnic ones that occurred between the ages of 16 and 24, and now they are in depression. They're saying that they are waiting for something good to happen to them Jewishly – and they're 40.

It is possible to sense the beginning of religious innovation and change here, but it is slow and happening later than in other places. There are several great rabbis, several great congregations, and people know about them, but the very fact that they are spoken about in that way implies a great deal about all the rest.

To bolster the ethnic idea still further, my last point is that this is not an ideological or theological community. I spoke to a highly regarded Orthodox rabbi here who said to me: 'You know, none of my congregants are Orthodox.' Then I spoke to a very well-respected Reform leader, and he said: 'You know, hardly any of our people are Reform.' What they are both saying is that the ideologies and the content of Orthodox or Progressive Judaism are not really learned, and are not held on to by the members. Orthodox and Reform rabbis have no problem in saying what they believe to be right – they have a mission to fulfil. But most members don't speak about their Judaism in theological or ideological terms.

In short, and I stress that these are just my initial impressions, four key factors define British Jewry as unique. To summarise: first, you define yourselves to wider society as a religious group, and your continued deference to your religious authorities results in a laissez-faire attitude to community change and improvement. Secondly, you are concerned about how the non-Jewish world sees you, and you seek acceptance and recognition from it. Thirdly, Israel is a central and key part of your identity, almost to the detriment of the strengthening of your own community. And finally, you behave like an ethnic group. You live close to one another, your key Jewish experiences are often ethnic rather than religious, and you have little interest in theology, even though you meet within religious institutions. In short, I hear reports of high ethnic content and low religious content, and yet see an absence of ethnic institutions and a presence of religious institutions.

A CASE OF NEW IDENTITY: DETECTING THE FORCES FACING JEWISH IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY

Professor Kate Loewenthal

As a psychologist, I'm intrigued by the psychological aspects of being Jewish, feeling Jewish, and what we and other Jewish people do about it. In exploring these issues, I would particularly like to address four questions:

- 1 What are the psychological factors involved in being Jewish?
- 2 Are there differences between the ways men and women respond to their Jewishness?
- 3 What are the positive and negative psychological factors that impact on identity?
- 4 What is happening in general to Jews today, and how should our efforts and initiatives – educational or otherwise – respond to these trends?

First of all: what do we mean by 'identity'? In seeking to define it, I turned first to my faithful 1950s *Dictionary of Psychological Terms*, which described it rather reassuringly, as 'the unity of personality over a period of time'.

But then I thought that I needed something more modern, so I took out one of my social psychology books edited by Miles Hewstone, a kind of guru of modern views of social identity and categorisation. Remarkably, his dense textbook didn't even index the word 'identity'.

So I took out another book that did index 'identity' in a chapter on Eric Erikson, the thinker who first claimed and introduced us to the concept of an identity crisis. It noted that 'identity is a multi-faceted concept' that refers to 'a conscious sense of direction and uniqueness'. It went on: 'It is derived from a variety of post-social experience: psycho-social experiences that are integrated by the ego.'

My favourite definition of identity is 'the answer to the question, "Who am I?"'. Who am I – and particularly, what are the factors that impact on my sense of myself as Jewish?

To explore this, we need primarily to look at basic *halachic* definitions. One is either:

- born a Jew – that is, born to a Jewish mother, or:
- a Jew by choice – that is, a convert to Judaism according to Jewish law.

In addition, there are several more scattered factors to explore:

- dress – its meaning and impact;
- highly selective aspects of the legacy of customs, beliefs and values;
- the way in which identity impacts on our beliefs and behaviour.

Clearly, people use dress in different ways to express different aspects of their identity. *Charedim* dress in unmistakably Jewish garb to publicly demonstrate their Jewishness. In contrast, many young Jews dress according to the norms of general youth culture, so their Jewishness tends to be hidden and not necessarily publicly available.

Beyond dress, how else is Jewish identity affected? How else does it affect what we feel and what we do? Some of my recent research has been on attitudes towards alcohol. We were surprised to learn how prevalent negative views of drinking and drunkenness were in the Jewish community, as compared to those among people of Protestant background. Our assumption is that there are ways in which our

Jewish identity can affect our beliefs and our behaviour without us necessarily being particularly conscious of it. For the Jews that we interviewed, the normative response was that drinking makes you lose control; it can be off-putting, and even repulsive, demeaning, undignified. Many of the Protestants, including those who were not practising, felt that drinking was normal in British society, and that it is a relaxing and important means of socialising, as well as a means of helping people to let their hair down so that they can put their problems to one side and enjoy themselves. In short then, our identities can colour all kinds of ways of thinking and behaving of which we are not necessarily highly conscious.

What about contemporary issues like September 11? How did Jews respond to it? Did we respond differently to others because of our Jewishness? What did Jews think when they saw it or heard about it? Did our Jewish identity play any role in what we thought?

My initial thought was that this was simply a very serious catastrophe. But for many, Jewish thoughts surfaced very quickly. Many Jews quickly drew links between the USA and Israel – that the USA was being targeted because it was identified with the Jewish cause, or because a number of Jews worked in the World Trade Center, or that Americans might now develop a stronger sense of what life was like in Israel, living under the constant threat of terrorism.

The key point is that our Jewishness affects us in all kinds of ways that may or may not be obvious. At one extreme, it affects the ways in which we dress, or eat, or behave on Shabbat; at the other, it may be a much more subtle force affecting our attitudes to current events, or perhaps our choice of profession.

Are there differences between how men and women relate to their Jewishness? From a *halachic* point of view, it is important to note that the responsibilities of men and women are, in most important respects, very similar. Everybody, whether they observe it or not, has an obligation with regard to Shabbat, kashrut, prayer and so on, although our obligations do vary. Women are traditionally exempt from many time-bound, positive *mitzvot*.

However, intriguingly, when I've spent time conducting inter-

views with Jews from across the community and trying to probe their experiences, many of the issues raised by men and women were similar. For both gender groups, the dominant concerns were in the areas of health, relationships and money, rather than women's rights to participate in synagogue services and so on. In essence then, whilst there are particular concerns that the media has picked up on, men and women do not differ dramatically in their Jewish identities.

What about religious practice? Are there differences between men and women in levels of religious observance? Yes. Our research, based on data pulled together from a number of studies involving several hundred participants, is that in terms of religious practice, men are praying more regularly and studying more regularly. However, this does not mean that women are less religious than men. Indeed, when we looked at styles of religiosity other than practice – issues such as 'intrinsic' or 'quest' religiosity that we might typically understand today as 'spirituality' – we found that these were higher among the Jewish women we studied than they were among the men.

What positive and negative factors can impact on Jewish people's identities? I've picked out four: two positive – our sense of group belonging and our sense of spirituality; and two negative – antisemitism, and internal communal weaknesses such as a poor home atmosphere, ineffectual or nasty teachers, or uninspiring synagogue services.

There can be no doubt that sharing positive experiences that are associated with being Jewish provides people with a good feeling about being Jewish. These experiences can be extremely varied – a Jewish wedding, an Israel Experience programme, a good quality Jewish learning programme – the critical factor is that they are experienced as enjoyable.

Spirituality is remarkably interesting. According to a growing pool of research, Jewish spirituality, like any other form of spirituality, is associated with both psychological and physical well-being. Spiritually active people are generally less lonely, have a stronger purpose in life, have high levels of existential well-being, have better physical health, lower rates of depression and stronger identity achievement.

What about negative factors? It is clear that individual experiences of antisemitism may not be as salient and important today as the broader political antisemitism that is being promoted, but individual experiences do nevertheless leave their mark. Victims of even the mildest antisemitic attacks are left scarred and frightened, which undoubtedly serves to affect their identity in all kinds of complex ways.

Internal community weaknesses appear to be taking their toll too. There is a growing literature suggesting that, given the opportunity, all kinds of people are seeking alternative identities if they feel unfulfilled, bored or put off by negative experiences within their own group. For the Jewish community, boring synagogue services, ineffectual teachers, a poor home atmosphere and not finding the right marriage partner can be very destructive. In this regard, we need to ask ourselves whether we are doing enough to value the roles that women play in devoting themselves to their families and children, and in trying to give those children a positive experience of being brought up as Jewish. And finally, are we doing enough to encourage Jews to marry Jews?

A CASE OF NEW IDENTITY: WHAT SHOULD ALL JEWS KNOW?

Professor Hanan Alexander

To explore this question, we must first recognise that we are talking about identity as a moral rather than an empirical category. Sociologists study identity as an empirical category – they highlight the catalogue of beliefs and attitudes that one must embrace to have this or that identity. Our concern is about identity as a moral category – we are trying to look beyond behaviours and attitudes, and to move into the moral arena of fundamental purpose and meaning.

We can draw a further distinction within moral identity between a negative and positive sense of the term. Negative identity is related to what Rav Joseph Soloveitchik once called '*brit goral*', the covenant of destiny. In this view, we share an identity with others when we share their fate. Positive identity is related to Soloveitchik's idea of a '*brit yeud*', a covenant of purpose – the notion that we share an identity with others because we have a common role to play in the world. It is this latter form of identity that concerns us.

What sort of knowledge is needed to foster a Jewish identity in the sense of those ideals by means of which we define the purpose of our lives? Martin Buber distinguishes between an objective and a subjective way of talking about knowledge. Objective knowledge exists outside of us – it can be found in both empirical scientific studies or in traditional religious texts, but does not exist inside of us sufficiently to help us make meaning. In contrast, subjective knowledge entails developing such a strong relationship with other beings or

ideas that we begin to allow them to guide our lives. Again, it is this latter type of knowledge that we need to address.

In spite of much of the prevailing uncertainty around the question of required knowledge at present, our tradition actually offers us quite clear guidance. In particular, there is a *beraita* that finds its way into *Pirkei Avot* and that appears in other places in the *Gemara* that talks about three central categories: *mikra*, *mishnah* and Talmud. In the text, the first two terms are fairly clear: *mikra* means Bible in this case, and *mishnah* means the *Mishnah*. However, there's a fair amount of disagreement among medieval commentaries about what Talmud means in this instance. Is it the actual text itself, or does it mean a certain style of study of some particular kind? In this article I'm going to give the whole text my own, by no means objective, interpretation. This is certainly not the *pshat* by any stretch of the imagination. Rather, it is my own *wort* on how I think these three categories might be used to construct a sense of knowledge for today's Jewish life.

Mikra. *Mikra* is about Torah. It's the Jewish narrative. It's the Jewish narrative into which I must place myself if I am going to figure out what it means to be a good version of myself. In this world of rampant relativism, I have to find a place for myself if I want to make something of myself. Searching for personal meaning is very nice, but the problem with personal meaning is that in order for something to mean something, somebody else has to be able to understand it. If nobody else can understand it, how do you know that it means anything? And, if somebody else has to understand it, then it has to be more than personal meaning. It has to be meaning that finds itself in the course of a context.

How does a Jewish youngster construct that personal meaning? Where is the context to be found? For me, the Jewish answer is clear: in the narrative history of the Jewish people. The best example of this is the Passover *Seder*, when we recount the narrative history of our people. We debate it. We have a conversation about it. That's Torah. It's not simply about enabling young people to tell us what's written in the third chapter of *Bereishit* or *Shemot*. It's about a young person situating themselves in Torah, and learning to be able to genuinely

articulate that this is my story and my narrative, and as I live out my life, I continue the story. *Bechol dor vador chayav adam lirot et atzmo*. In every generation, I see myself as the next generation.

Mishnah. *Mishnah* is about Jewish practice. You cannot have a community without practice. Communities that don't *do* things together are not communities, even if those things are simply talking together or living together. The minute we're living together, we're sharing and doing things together. We have Jewish ways of doing things that have a long history of elaboration and development. Of course, that is also found in Torah, but here, in my little *wort*, I am arguing that it can also be found in the notion of *mishnah*. Today, *mishnah* means the articulation not only of a situation in a narrative, but also in a narrative of a community that has a common practice. We pray in a certain way. We talk in a certain way. We eat in a certain way. On the seventh day we do certain kinds of things. This is part of what we do.

But if we only talk about narrative and communal practice, the value or the source of meaning and moral purpose that I'm going to find is only going to be found in the community. And that makes it relative: this community has this purpose, and that community has some other purpose. So narrative and communal purpose are not enough.

And so we come to Talmud, and an understanding of Talmud that Maimonides was certainly familiar with. Talmud is about the engagement in the deliberation, or the process of creating Jewish knowledge and thought, all the way up to and including Jewish theology. Ultimately, it is not sufficient for me to engage narrative and to engage practice. I need also to engage God.

A form of Jewish knowledge afraid to engage God does not have a future. I say this avowedly to the secularists: we've tried it! We tried it in the Diaspora. It failed. My grandfather was a free thinker. He was a socialist. But when he tried to figure out how to educate his kids, it didn't work. It didn't work for him and I don't think it works for the Israelis that are trying to figure out how to do it now.

I once had a young woman come to study with me at the University of Judaism when I was there. She was a Talmud teacher and a

Bible teacher in Israeli secular schools. She gave a talk in a class about Bible pedagogy without God. I asked her: 'I don't understand this. Talking about the Bible without God is like talking about *Hamlet* without Hamlet.'

How can you talk about the Bible without God? I mean, God is everywhere in the Bible! To do so is to ignore a central theme of this historical tradition. But, more importantly, it's to place our sense of narrative and practice, our sense of communal self, in terms that are only relative. We do this; the Aborigines do that; the terrorists do their thing. One person's terrorism is another person's freedom fight. Except for the fact that one person's terrorism is *not* another person's freedom fight, and if we want to find a way to get beyond those moral categories, we have to be able to appeal to something beyond, something higher, more elevated. Something transcendent. We call that God.

These are the three primary categories with which I think a discussion about Jewish knowledge has to fit. Jewish narrative – *mikra*, if you like. Jewish practice – communal practice – *mishnah*, if you're willing to buy this little *wort*. And lastly, Talmud – Jewish theology. We have to engage the process of thinking about and up to God.

However, I think it is a mistake to think about our engagement with these categories of narrative, practice and theology in terms of the objectives of study and the standards achieved. I am much more concerned about what I like to call study, practice and celebration.

In our tradition we study in order to learn how to practise. But we also practise in order to learn how to study. Study is a *mitzvah* in itself, so when we study we are engaging in *mitzvot*. And when we are learning how to perform *mitzvot*, we are deepening our knowledge of them. So study and practice are not divided from one another; they go hand in hand. If we practise without study, we return to the type of problematic blind empiricism that I described above. We have to deepen our knowledge with some sort of background, and to study is part of the process. However, if the study and practice is done in a dry and abstract way, or if it's done because somebody makes me do it, it starts to become coercive. And if it's coercive, I don't think we will

create the kind of intimacy with the knowledge that is required in order to build a genuine sense of identity.

And so, celebration becomes vital. We need to approach Jewish learning – or the study and practice of Jewish narrative, law, practice and theology – as a celebration of Jewish life. Indeed, it is a celebration of human life altogether. We need to bring a joyous and celebratory attitude to the educational table. Shlomo Carlebach's music, which is exploding all over the place, is an example of what is required to help us to celebrate. In order to celebrate, we need to bring the spirit of that joyous music into the halls of study, so that the sound of the students studying becomes a celebration of the creation of a whole new generation of Jewish identity.

A CASE OF NEW IDENTITY: WHAT SHOULD ALL JEWS KNOW?

Professor Aviezer Ravitzky

After *Ne'ilah*, at the end of Yom Kippur, when all the students and the rabbis would run to eat, it is said that the Netziv of Volozhin, the Rosh Yeshivah of the biggest theological seminary in Eastern Europe, would go to the study hall and study for one or two hours until he would be replaced by other rabbis and students. He was asked why. 'At this very moment,' he said, 'there is a danger that all the Jews all over the world are eating and nobody is studying Torah.' For the Netziv, since the Torah is the metaphysical foundation of being, the cosmos would effectively collapse without it.

This was the tradition. What should all Jews know – all Jewish males at least – according to tradition? Jews should be able to read and study Torah. We should know how to read and write in Hebrew. We should be able to pray, to *daven*. If possible, we should also know *mishnah*, *Gemara*, and Maimonides. That's the essence.

Today, however, there are many different Jews and there are many different opinions. So when we ask the question of what we should know, we are seeking something existential, a means of sharing the same fate or destiny, identity, and consciousness of continuity. How do we create it?

Our primary concern should not be the content, the level, or even the amount of knowledge. Rather, we should principally be concerned about the knowledge mindset – the psychological approach towards knowledge. The key questions are: what do you consider to

be important? To what do you grant value? What do you consider to be marginal? From what are you alienated?

My grandmother, like many *charedi* women in Poland, went to a Polish *gymnasium*. She could quote Tolstoy in Russian and Rousseau in French. But she was married to a *Gerer Chassid*, who studied *Gemara* and *Chassidut* all day long. Somehow this couple lived like *tzemed yonim* – like two doves – for many years. I have often asked myself: could they really speak? Everything that she knew, he didn't know. Everything that he knew, she didn't know.

The answer I suggest is that they shared the same values. I am sure that my grandmother believed that her knowledge was relevant for *olam hazeh* – for this world. But she also believed that my grandfather's knowledge was crucial for *olam haba* – the world to come. So whilst the knowledge bases may have been totally different, the mental approach towards this knowledge was almost identical.

So the question of what we should know doesn't start with the curriculum itself. It starts with a common language, a set of common values and common appreciations, and a dialogue that we live in the same cosmos even if one of us approaches this cosmos through Tolstoy and Rousseau and the other approaches it through Talmud.

The problem today is that we do not appear to have that common language or appreciation of our texts and values. Instead there are, I believe, five different attitudes towards our texts that can be identified.

The first is a rejection. I reject it. I hate it. It's senseless. It's not humanistic.

The second is alienation. I don't hate it. I don't reject it. I am not against it. It just doesn't speak to me. I don't try to study it. It's not very significant for me.

A third approach that we encounter or confront is *hashra'ah* – inspiration. I select. I consider the classical Jewish sources as a source of inspiration for myself, but not for everything. What speaks to me, I take. What doesn't speak to me, I reject.

The fourth possibility is commitment. I am committed to these sources as I am committed to my parents. I don't necessarily love

everything in my mother and father, but I am committed to them because I come from them. I must know them; I must have some sort of relationship with them. I am the source of the commitment. I am religious because it was my decision to be religious and to approach the divine sources, the divine realm, the texts.

The fifth is that I approach the text as a source of authority. It is not me who endows it with meaning. It is not even me who is committed; it comes from above. Even if I don't like it, I am obliged to do it without any question.

For a secular person, the first three options are possible: rejection, alienation or inspiration. Once you start to commit, you move from a secular attitude towards the Jewish sources and a more religious attitude. For a religious person, the only available options are commitment or authority.

There is, however, always a way to construct the sources. This is the very essence of *Midrash*. The text itself is the letters, the words, the Book of the Torah on the parchment. But the meaning, the significance, is very different. If you invited Maimonides and Luria to discuss the phrase '*Bereishit bara elohim et hashamayim ve'et ha'aretz*', they would not agree what *bereishit* means. They would not agree as to what is *bara*. They would certainly disagree about God. And *shamayim*. And *aretz*. Nevertheless, they are both committed to the verse, even though they would interpret every word differently.

In some generations, one saying, one truth, one concept, shifts from the periphery into the centre. In another context, it shifts from the centre to the periphery. Something which has been latent can suddenly become alive. And something which was very much alive and vivid can be consciously or subconsciously pushed to the margins of individual and collective consciousness.

Some people wrongly believe that this does not occur in Orthodoxy, and certainly not in ultra-Orthodoxy. They are very wrong. According to the Satmar Rebbe, the core of Torah consists of the oaths the Jewish people accepted upon itself after the Bar Kochba rebellion: not to rebel against the Gentiles, not to hasten the End and not to go to the Land collectively by force before the coming of the Messiah.

How then does he explain Rambam's failure to mention this amongst the 613 commandments? For him, Rambam's omission merely indicates that this is *too* important to be included as one of 613 – it was not included because it is more fundamental than any other detail in the text.

Similarly, if you were to ask *Merkez Harav*, the followers of the religious *Gush Emunim*, 'If *kibush ha'aretz* and *yishuv ha'aretz* are so central a *mitzvah shekula keneged kol hamitzvot* – again, how is it that Rambam didn't mention it as a *mitzvah*?' Subconsciously, they will give you the same answer. Rambam mentioned particular *mitzvot*, but this principle constitutes the *mitzvah klalit*, the universal or general *mitzvah*. So again, if something is not written in the text, I construct it. Either I say it is irrelevant, or I construct it to be more important than the text itself.

A similar example is the concept of *da'at Torah* that exists in the *charedi* world – the notion that even when there is no halachic precedent or argument, the spirit of the rebbe knows how to guide you. If it is so important, why did Rambam not mention it? Again, they give the same answer without being aware of the two other camps. *Da'at Torah* is the core of Judaism so Rambam didn't need to mention it explicitly. It is behind everything that he says.

In the secular camp, educators often need to overcome some degree of alienation from significant portions of our tradition. A teacher once taught a course entitled *imrot chochmah* – 'wise sayings of nineteenth-century British thinkers'. Only after two months of study did she reveal to her students that she had actually been teaching them *Pirkei Avot*! Sometimes we need a *kvish okef* – a bypass – to overcome both rejection and alienation. However, whichever camp we are in, we should attempt to endow our texts with sufficient meaning and authority to encourage our students to develop a common positive approach towards them.

We should not teach our sources as an accumulation of different constituents which are almost strangers to one another. Rather, there should be continuity and unity between Jewish history, literature, *Midrash*, *Gemara* and Israeli songs. Each of these should be regarded

as different links in the same chain that come from somewhere, go towards somewhere else, and are in dialogue with one another.

For example, we should not simply study the Bible in order to know *how it was* created, using the tools of biblical criticism. We should study it to know *what it has* created. We should be driven by our desire to know the Jewish response to the Bible – the *Mishnah*, the Talmud, Jewish philosophy and Jewish mysticism. Our primary concern should not be the past of the Bible, but its future. So we need a dialogue between all of our texts – from the most ancient to the most modern. For me, this also needs to be taught.

What should all Jews know? At least what they know, they should integrate. Rav Soloveitchik used the findings of biblical criticism to enrich Orthodoxy's understanding of the contradiction between Chapters One and Two of Genesis.

Instead of separating Jewish and general knowledge, we should add the universal dimension of other knowledge to Judaism, and the Jewish dimension to world knowledge.

In the final analysis, what should all Jews know? The Torah is the axis. But fundamentally we should teach an approach that integrates Jewish and universal texts and is designed to move our children away from rejection and alienation and towards becoming inspired by, committed to, and compelled by the sources of authority that accord with our religious conviction.

LOOKING IN, LOOKING OUT: THE ROLE OF THE JEW IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

Professor David Cesarani

How do Jews overcome the challenges of the 21st century? What strategies can be constructed on the basis of Jewish historical experience to ensure Jewish continuity?

At critical stages in Jewish life, when the Jewish people has encountered various obstacles or challenges, different parts of the Jewish people have moved in different directions. The Jewish historical experience should be treated with great caution, but at the risk of making some sweeping generalisations I will try to explore some of the lessons of this history.

There have been four main blocs in modern Jewish life – leadership groups that articulated aspirations for the Jews and wanted to move the Jews in a certain direction. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the majority could broadly be called ‘integrationist’. Most of these integrationists were willing to tolerate all the different forms of Jewish self-expression – religious and secular – and to pursue their individual or group aims untrammelled.

The second major bloc constituted the Jewish working class and its socialist leadership. They also wanted full civil rights for the Jewish people, as well as economic rights and, in some cases, social revolution. Their numbers were very substantial in Eastern Europe, and significant in urban centres in North America and Western Europe.

The third bloc – the Zionists – was a tiny minority until 1948. It had a very clearly defined and concrete programme – to establish a Jewish state in Palestine. Loosely related to them were Diaspora Jewish nationalists who wanted Jews to have minority rights where they were.

The fourth bloc was comprised of traditional Orthodox Jews. These Jews could be found in the three other camps, but the vast majority of Orthodox Jews had a different agenda. They were not so concerned about the political or the social context in which they lived as long as they were allowed to observe *mitzvot* and to raise their children as Torah-true Jews.

What obstacles and challenges did each of these blocs face?

The integrationists, like the others, faced antisemitism, xenophobia, exclusivist nationalism and the forces of conservatism. But until the early 1930s, they were winning and they felt confident that, sooner or later, in every country in central Europe and in North America, Jews would be fully integrated into the countries in which they lived.

The socialists faced the same challenges as the integrationists, but had further dilemmas: how to create working-class unity when Jews were being prevented from fully entering the mainstream of socialism because of antisemitism, and how to maintain Jewish particularity in the face of the universalist doctrine of socialism.

The main problems the Zionists faced were that (a) they didn't control Palestine, and (b) most Jews were not terribly interested in what they were trying to achieve.

And Orthodoxy? Well, Orthodoxy was doing well, as Orthodoxy always does.

All of these groups faced Nazism and the Shoah between 1933 and 1945. The onslaught against the Jews confounded every sector of Jewish life and society. No Jewish ideology had any answers or effective strategies when confronted by Nazi antisemitism. Jews survived the Nazis more or less by accident. For that reason, I do not think that we can draw any lessons from that particular awful episode.

The Jewish community had changed radically by the Cold War era

of 1950–90. The same blocs still existed; they were just in different places and in different numbers. The Nazis destroyed the vast mass of Orthodox Jews in Eastern Europe and the huge Jewish working class, so those communities existed merely as a shadow or an echo.

Integrationism was still the ethos of the majority of Jews outside of Israel. There was increased concern about Jewish survival, but the main preoccupation of major Jewish communities, certainly up to the mid-1960s, was still about achieving full civil rights.

The socialist element of Jewish life had shrunk to a tiny proportion, although its universalist aspirations and progressive traditions did continue and most Jews remain politically left of centre to this day.

The third bloc – the Zionists – fulfilled its main goal: the creation of the State of Israel. However, it was less successful in its other goals of liquidating the Diaspora or achieving normal status for the Jewish state amongst the community of nations.

The final bloc – Jewish Orthodoxy – began to reconstruct, despite the devastating blow of Nazism. One of the most extraordinary features of the post-war era was the reconstitution of Orthodox Jewry that gathered pace during the 1950s.

The period from the 1970s to the 1990s constitutes a phase within a phase. The struggle for integration had succeeded pretty well everywhere around the world, and the lament shifted away from the troubles caused by external constraints and towards the troubles caused by freedom.

In this era, however, a number of strategies were put in place to deal with this freedom, called the ‘danger of assimilation’: Jewish day schools, investment in youth, Zionist activities, cultivating interest in the Holocaust, and the revival of Yiddish and Jewish culture. These strategies, devised under the broad heading of survivalism, had varying degrees of success.

Investment in Jewish youth was moderately successful, although it suffered from a lack of follow-through when young Jews moved into adulthood.

One option for the follow-up was Zionism – offering young adults

activism within Zionist institutions, philanthropic enterprises or political lobbying on behalf of Israel. That mode of identity ran into the buffers between 1979 and 1982 when a period of progressive disillusionment with Israel and Zionism started to take shape.

Deploying the Holocaust as a focus of Jewish identity was successful with young people, and it was bolstered by several factors – not least of which was the opening up of Eastern Europe to what some people have called ‘Holocaust tourism’. The trouble with it was that it suffered diminishing returns.

The boom in ethnicity in this period helped a renaissance of Jewish culture which offered another way of being Jewish. But the most successful forms of commercialised Jewish culture have tended to be the most sentimentalised, unsophisticated and shallow.

Up to the end of the 1990s, Jews really faced no obstacles to their aspirations other than those that they themselves were creating. Those who did not want to be Jewish in any recognisable sense because Jewish life in the Diaspora seemed boring or irrelevant, or Jewish life in Israel seemed too difficult or dangerous, did not have to. But this freedom can hardly be called an ‘obstacle’.

Since the end of the Cold War and 11 September 2001, we have moved into a different era.

Integrationism remains the dominant ethos of Jews outside Israel, although the development of multi-ethnic societies has changed the terms of integration. Outside the Jewish community it is broadly accepted that Jews have a right to be different. Jews are now merely arguing amongst themselves over degrees of difference, and differences between themselves, rather than the right to be different.

Socialism has more or less gone. Progressivism is still an element in Jewish life, although it is being challenged by the fact that most Jews find themselves in a privileged socio-economic position.

Zionism is also basically dead. It has been replaced by Israeli nationalism and a Jewish ethnicity in the Diaspora in which Israel exists as a focus of Jewish identity. But Zionism has none of the resonance that it had a generation or two ago. It has been totally transformed.

By contrast, Orthodoxy is booming. Orthodoxy has not done as

well for over a century. It is flourishing partly because we live in multicultural societies, at a time when adherence to tradition and faith, dubbed 'fundamentalism', is being validated.

Jews have always been adept at moulding themselves to whatever society they have encountered and adapting to dominant cultures. They will continue to do so. So we need to ask: what is the *Zeitgeist*?

Various words describe it: globalisation, hybridity, instantaneity, individualism, commercialisation, and so on. Jews are doing well in all of these areas. The Jews are a global tribe, and adopt styles or methods from the culture, societies, and political environments in which they find themselves. Jews, even Orthodox ones, are comfortable with hybridity. As long as society revels in difference, single and multiple identities can flourish. And the commercialisation of ethnicity is allowing Jewish culture to be quite chic at the moment.

The problem resides with a leadership that is mired in the past and is often unable to tolerate and accept diversity, and a community that consistently underfunds all of the solutions that are staring us in the face.

LOOKING IN, LOOKING OUT: THE ROLE OF THE JEW IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

Alan Hoffmann

Larry Kramer, the late president of Teachers' College at the School of Education at Columbia University, in his last essay, called 'The Ecology of Education', provides us with a very pithy definition of education, one still important for us today. He calls education 'the transmission of culture across generations'. I accept this definition and would like to talk about some of the policy issues it raises as we look at the future of Jewish renewal in a global perspective.

First, there is the issue of transmission. We cannot begin a discussion today without talking about demography. One must talk about the fact that there are communities (and I think that Britain is one of them) that are half the size they were 30 years ago. Many Jews make decisions not to have additional Jewish children because of the financial cost of being a core member of the Jewish people. This has policy implications that we have to face across the board.

Charedim and the Orthodox, whose birth rates are much higher, have made their own decisions. They have decided to create subcultures and to sacrifice for the sake of the Jewish education and Jewish future of their children. But I suspect that if, outside of the Orthodox world, we want to deal in a positive way with the issue of transmission, before we even begin to deal with culture and generation, we are going to have to consider the whole question of the financial cost of Jewish life at the policy level.

The transmission of culture across generations in the modern world means the wilful transmission of culture. The question of will is one of the issues that we are struggling with in Jewish life, right throughout the Jewish world. This must be dealt with both by educators and by policy-makers. What are the conditions that will create the will to really want to be involved in the transmission of culture across generations? The question of how to ignite the energy that will bring about an interest in the wilful transmission of culture across generations is absolutely critical.

It is related to the issue of the culture. It is not enough to say that we have a problem of continuity. What is the content of the continuity? What will engage young people to actually want to be 'Jews within', as Steve Cohen and Arnie Eisen have phrased it? Our communal structures often focus on sociological meaning, but they must be infused with a sense of personal meaning as well, whether it is a spiritual search or in the form of Zionism. I know that membership of Zionist youth movements conveys a very powerful sense of Jewish meaning.

Then there is the issue of culture. What do we mean by culture? What do we mean by Jewish cultural literacy? What are those concepts and terms? Is there a basic set of foundational knowledge common to all Jews, whether cultural, agnostic Jews or observant Orthodox, a foundation forming the basic platform for Jewish life and providing a common cultural language that unites all Jews?

It seems to me that unless we engage in the building of Jewish cultural literacy rooted in some basic concepts and probably with the Hebrew language at its heart, we have very little chance of being able to transmit Jewish culture across generations.

Over the last decade, the educational visit to Israel has been a way to ignite identity and passion and to give our youth and students powerful Jewish experiences. Israel is an opportunity to engage in a powerful way with the Jewish past – but also with a very powerful vision of the Jewish future. At the same time, experiences are not enough. They must be connected to basic Jewish literacy.

A third component of culture is a sense of Jewish peoplehood.

I want to say something about young Israelis. Young Israelis are not protected from what I am talking about. In Israel, we do not have a core concept of Jewish literacy and are not yet convinced of the need to involve young Israelis in powerful Jewish educational experiences. We have learned how important experiences are that bind young Israeli Jews to their peers from throughout the Jewish world. One of the ways to create such experiences is through service. We have not done enough to create such service frameworks, part of *tikkun olam*, which bring together young Israelis with their peers from other countries to work in Jewish service, but there are some beginnings.

I worry about the statement that Zionism is dead when we talk about culture. I think we do have a real crisis in educating about Israel. Zionism was, and in my opinion continues to be, a radical, revolutionary idea of creating a new Jewish future under conditions of Jewish sovereignty. We have to engage the next generation throughout the Jewish world with critical reflection on Israel, to re-engage them with the vision that is at the heart of Zionism – the vision of creating a new Jewish future – and not necessarily demand solidarity at all costs in a way that seems to inhibit criticism.

I want to talk about what I think are the two necessary conditions to bringing about Jewish renewal. The first is educational personnel: building the profession of Jewish education. The Jewish people have the ability to do whatever they want to do. They have not yet put their mind to creating the next generation of educators and educational leadership. Not enough is being done worldwide to train senior educators. This is a major issue. We need to think about ways of helping communities in this regard, and to use Israel and its resources.

The second precondition is community and lay leadership. One cannot think of building the profession of Jewish education without thinking about lay leadership as well.

Some of these problems cross local boundaries. We should be able to develop a generation of principals who start their career line in one country, continue in another, spend a few years in Israel and then go back to work in Jewish education in still another place. We should, as

a global Jewish people, be able to think of a global Jewish personnel network that could service a Jewish renewal.

Israel is a huge resource for Jewish renewal. With the emergence of new distance-learning technologies, we are beginning to put the great resources of Israel at the disposal of the most far-flung Jewish communities.

I want to end by going back to Kramer and the transmission of culture across generations. What do we really mean by transmission? What are the inhibiting factors? How are we going to deal with it? What do we mean by culture? I have tried to suggest some of the major components of what that culture contains.

The number of *zaka'ei chok hashvut* in the FSU, people qualified to come to Israel under the Law of Return, is about three times as large as the number of Jews who are defined halachically. We need to create frameworks in our communities that respect the intent and the desire of Orthodox Jews to preserve Orthodox Jewry, but make it possible, as occurs at Limmud, for Jews of all shades and hues, including Israeli Jews, to be able to come together in this wonderful enterprise of worldwide global Jewish renewal.

LOOKING IN, LOOKING OUT: ON WHAT SHOULD OUR EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS BE FOCUSED?

Professor Michael Rosenak

The former and long-time Minister of the Interior of the State of Israel, Yossele Burg z"l, was once asked: 'You believe in *Torah-ve'avodah* – Torah and physical labour; and in *Torah-im derech erez* – Torah and general culture. Which is the more important? The inside word – Torah, or the outside words – *avodah* or *derech erez*?' He said: 'The most important thing for us is the hyphen – the hyphen changes the meaning of each of the elements. It brings them into a different kind of conversation, with the other, with the world, and with us.'

It is true that we have huge problems and that we had better learn how to deal with them as intelligently as possible. However, we also have texts that place us in the world and may give us a perspective on our manifold problems. I am going to suggest not only that texts are important, but that we may have forgotten a certain text – the one that puts inside and outside into a different relationship. This text raises the question of whether indeed there is such a thing as inside-outside, and whether we oughtn't to be asking simply: between which two words would we like to see a hyphen?

Let me clarify my point with a record of a short conversation, and then with a *midrash*.

First, the conversation. During the Lebanon War, in the early 1980s, I took a group of students to the 'Sandhurst' of Israel, B'ahd

Echad, where they spent a day with officers discussing the moral dilemmas of war.

Many, many times the soldiers – who were high-ranking officers – would say that a person ‘cannot do so-and-so’ – *ben adam lo ya’aseh kachah*. A *mensch* wouldn’t do that kind of thing.

Afterwards, I asked one of the students – a rabbi from the United States – ‘Nu? What do you say?’

He said: ‘I was very upset. I was disillusioned. They’re not Jews.’

I said: ‘Why not?’

He replied: ‘Didn’t you notice? They never said “Jews”. They always said “*ben adam*”. They always said “*mensch*” – a person.’

I said: ‘Well, they mean Jews. It was all about Jews and they’re dealing with a Jewish problem.’

‘Oh no, they should have said Jews.’

And I thought: all right. Maybe he doesn’t understand about the hyphen.

Now, the *midrash*. It illustrates that in the Jewish tradition there are many ‘insider’ type of matters, but there are also ‘outsider’ things. So, whenever the Bible gives us an outside story, it comes with an inside *midrash*, and vice versa. For example, what is a more beautiful ‘outside’, universalistic story than the one in which Ruth says to Naomi: ‘Where you lodge, I will lodge; your people are my people, and your God is my God; where you die, I will die.’

And yet, see the *midrash* on Ruth. When Naomi realised that her daughter-in-law really wanted to be Jewish, she began to teach her the laws of conversion. Her response to ‘Where you lodge, I will lodge’ was to teach her the laws of *mezuzah*.

This is one way of making a very universal story utterly incomprehensible to anyone but Jews. Others will ask: ‘What’s a *mezuzah*? What is the connection?’

On the other hand, when the Bible says, ‘In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,’ we seem to be at the epitome of universalism. Yet Rashi, in the very first commentary to the Torah, suggests that the Creation narrative intends to teach the nations that God, Who created the world, parcels it out as He wishes. He gave us

the land of Canaan. It is for us—even when the nations come and say that we are robbers and that we have taken it away from the seven Canaanite nations. What could be a more ‘insider’ commentary than that?

Peter Berger, the great sociologist, has said that a minority group that has its own language, its own way of thinking, its own way of knowing, its own way of deciding things, has three ways to discourse with a majority culture, or to confront it.

One way is to segregate, to zealously keep away. That is, to say: I don’t want to have anything to do with you. I am going to wear a long, black coat even on a summer’s day, when it’s about 35 degrees centigrade in the shade. People may say, ‘Look at that idiot!’, but that’s all right. My assumption is that if they say that, they won’t bother me (a questionable assumption!). By self-segregation, I declare that what is ‘inside’ is the whole of the meaningful world, while everything outside is another world, a world of chaos and corruption, and we should have nothing to do with it.

Another way is to say that they, the majority, who want us to be like them, are right. But we don’t want to give up our Judaism altogether so we’ll say: Well, Chanukah and Christmas are really the same. Both are festivals of light. But actually people who do this are saying: For us, all that used to be outside is now going to be inside, even if it blurs the distinction between them and us.

Then there is a third group, one that engages in cognitive negotiation. Cognitive negotiation means: I am ready to partially accept some things in your ‘world’ if you agree to let me be my ‘inside’ self in other things. I am going to walk around the streets of London looking like everybody else, getting on with my business, going to the theatre. It is true that on Shabbat you won’t see me around because I am with my fellow Jews in shul. In winter, I may be wearing one of those funny rubber coats because I don’t carry an umbrella. You might even say that on Shabbat I will look like some kind of Martian who has come down inexplicably to London to walk through the rain without an umbrella. No car. No umbrella. What’s going on?

Cognitive negotiation is something we do all the time. Most people are cognitive negotiators, but, as Berger says, when you

negotiate with the devil you'd better have a long spoon. Dinner with the devil involves the danger of being eaten up. The devil wants you to be like him, to be 'normal'. You insist that you too are normal, even when you are 'on the inside'.

There are various ways of wearing the cognitive negotiator down. A personal example: when I was in the ninth grade in New York City, I was getting dressed for sports in the locker room, and I was wearing *tzitzit*. The fellow next to me asked me: 'Why do you wear strings?' Now I had never known that they were strings. As Berger describes it, strings and *tzitzit* were in two different languages. I wanted to say: 'They're not strings! They're *tzitzit*!' But I didn't say it because I suddenly realised that the word would be incomprehensible. So I said: 'Oh, they're not strings; it's my religion.' That sentence may also have been incomprehensible, but it was the best that I could do.

I mention this to indicate that when we talk about what should be the foci of our education – inside or outside – we should realise that we are both inside and outside. Our tradition is inside and outside. We are covenanted to God, who is the Lord of creation and all humanity – a very inside-outside situation. Education can teach us how to hyphenate this. Hyphenation must take place on many planes. We wish to teach norms, but also openness. We wish our children to understand the world they live in today, but also to speak the language of traditional norms and visions. We hope they are capable of solving problems that face them and us, but also that they have the perspective to recognise insoluble problems that invite us to maturity and heroism.

How should we educationally cultivate Jews who are insiders, but who are open to the outside and are capable of dealing with the problems that both we the Jewish people, and humankind as a whole, face? In my opinion, we ought to start from the inside – that is, we ought to have an education which is based on the textual tradition of Judaism.

These texts are not the sum total of our education. They don't teach us how to swim, even though the Talmud demands that parents teach children how to swim, because it is necessary to competently

deal with the world. They don't teach us how to make a living, though we are told to teach our children that too, so that they will not be a burden on others. But these texts do teach us how to look at a sunset. They tell us what to do in an hour of great sorrow. They tell us what to do in a moment of salvation. They tell us who we are and what possibilities for responsible and intelligent action are made plausible by our identities and our experience – as Jews and as human beings. That is certainly something with which to start, or at least to take into consideration.

LOOKING IN, LOOKING OUT: ON WHAT SHOULD OUR EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS BE FOCUSED?

Professor Irwin Cotler MP

Much of the Jewish world's attention is currently focused on the threats and difficulties that confront us from the non-Jewish world. However, how we will ultimately come to respond to that outside world very much depends on how secure we are on the inside.

Indeed, the outside has its own fallout for Jewish identity. For the existential nature of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, the new anti-Jewishness, the culture of hate, and the mainstreaming of all of this in the United Nations and human rights culture, all impact on Jewish identity, both in Israel and throughout the Diaspora. In the globalising world in which we live, we are not immune from the delegitimisation virus that increasingly acts itself out. In fact, in response to this drumbeat of global indictment, while much of the world continues to see the United Nations as an ally, there are a growing number of Jews in Israel who see human rights as an adversary. At the same time, there is a small but not unvoiced minority in Israel that internalises this indictment as their own and sees itself as the oppressor. In a very crude nutshell, that is the fallout of this drumbeat in Israel.

This drumbeat also has fallout in the Diaspora. I sense a certain ambiguity, moral ambivalence and confusion there about the justice of Israel's case and cause, which in turn leads to a certain psychological distancing of oneself from Israel and the Jewish people. Most strikingly, on university campuses, Israel is increasingly regarded as

politically incorrect, and Jewish students who identify with Israel may find themselves estranged from the larger campus culture with its human rights discourse and universalising ethos. On the other hand, if they identify with this universalising campus culture and the human rights discourse that tends to delegitimise Israel, they may begin to estrange themselves both from their own Jewish identity and the Jewish people as a whole.

So this outsider universe has prejudicial fallout in various forms on the Jewish identity. But it doesn't end there, because while the Jewish condition is buffeted and impacted upon by these external dynamics, there is a whole constellation of other dynamics that are impacting on the identity of the Jewish community.

One of these dynamics is globalisation. Living in a world of global media and markets, technology and templates, and justice and injustice, has an impact on Jewish peoplehood in its particularity and territorial dimensions. On the one hand, we are the proto-typical global people – the Torah is our global Jewish internet across space and time, so we can naturally relate to this globalising universe as a resource rather than a threat. But we should not ignore its potential fallout for the particularity and territoriality of a people that speaks in terms of normative and territorial borders and boundaries.

We should also be conscious of Americanisation. Twenty years ago, I felt that the real problem in Israel was not so much the Ashkenazi–Sephardi divide, but the Americanisation of both Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews. Americanisation is a handmaiden of globalisation, and, as such, has the potential both to enhance and to overwhelm our individual and collective Jewish identity.

Assimilation is obviously a concern. Our ease of engagement with wider society has benefits and risks. However, when we consider low fertility rates, the increasing absence of a sense of propinquity in terms of Jewish neighbourhoods, and the nature of the global and open society, it is clear that conditions in much of the western world lend themselves towards assimilation.

The counterweight to this is the phenomenon of tribalisation. Tribalisation emerges as a kind of antidote to globalisation and Amer-

icanisation. In national cultures, tribalisation causes identity politics; in Jewish culture in particular, it causes identity politics with a vengeance. Unlike the Muslim world, where the response to globalisation is a growing sense of unity, in the Jewish world there appear to be growing divisions and a distinct absence of a common Jewish identity. Two of the specific phenomena of the tribalisation of Jewish identity are what I call 'charedisation', and its antidote, 'secularisation'.

The next key dynamic is 'Diasporisation', which itself is not unrelated to the problems of the outside world. Diasporisation occurs when people choose not to embrace 'politically incorrect' Israel, and as a result, the central focus of Jewish life becomes the Diaspora rather than Israel. In contrast, we can also discern a trend of 'Israeliisation', which is different from 'Zionisation'. Israeliisation also has its own Canaanite dimension, its own post-Zionist dimension, as well as some sort of clear disconnection from Jewish roots.

Because of all of these factors, we are undoubtedly seeing a great deal of polarisation. Indeed, on Israel's 50th anniversary, *Yediot Achronot* held a panel discussion in which one of the panellists claimed that more Jews hate each other than at any time since creation, only to be qualified by another panellist who claimed that in fact more Jews hate each other today than at any time since 1948. Either way, polarisation is a big issue.

Part of the response to this is pluralisation, which is a subtext of egalitarianism, liberty and tolerance, and so on. In addition, there is now the phenomenon of privatisation, or in its more extreme form, the cultural phenomenon of narcissism. The 'me' generation is an antidote to the whole notion of *Klal Yisrael* and to the communitarian ethos that itself is part of Jewish identity.

A further important phenomenon is feminisation. Interestingly, a number of Jewish women are at the vanguard of the human rights struggle today, but they are often involved in the human rights movement and not the Jewish community because the notions and normative features of Jewish peoplehood and values don't resonate with them in the ways that the human rights movement does. But the

phenomenon of feminisation means that the Jewish community has to relate much more seriously to women, both in terms of our constructs of Jewish identity and building our future Jewish leadership.

Globalisation has also emerged hand-in-hand with immigration. This is well known to us as Jews, but we should not forget that one million Jews have arrived in Israel over the past decade or so. That is having an enormous impact on Israeli and Jewish culture.

The phenomenon of 'judicialisation' is also important: if the Supreme Court of Israel makes a decision on the norms of conversion, it has significant impact on Diaspora Jewish identity – regardless of whether we know about it, read about it or understand it.

Finally, 'Palestinisation' is an issue: increasingly, people see the optic of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict through the looking glass of Palestinisation. This, in turn, leads to the associated dynamic of 'media-isation' – where we only see Israel through the media's images – which, of course, has its own internalising fallout for the constructs of Jewish identity.

The key response to all of these threats lies in the notion of 'aboriginalness' as a kind of universal Jewish identity. In other words, we ought to work to see ourselves as part of a proto-typical global or 'aboriginal' people. If we do this well, it could act as an antidote to all the phenomena above. We are, after all, the only people today who still inhabit the same land, worship the same God, study the same Torah, share the same covenant, speak the same aboriginal language, and bear the same name as we did 3,500 years ago.

As an aboriginal people, we will have to learn how to relate to Jewish history. The whole notion of *morashah yehudit* – Jewish heritage – must be understood and felt not only as an abstraction, but as an existential reality in the present; as a kind of *shalsholet* – a chain – linking us up in an inter-generational way. How else will we ever understand the idea from the Haggadah, that in each generation we have to see ourselves as if we personally experienced slavery and redemption? If Jewish history is to be felt as well as understood, it must be experienced.

In order to achieve this, the notion of *zachor* – remembrance –

must act as a kind of anthropological or aboriginal dimension of Jewish peoplehood and identity. *Zachor* is not only a moral imperative with regard to the Holocaust. It is actually a biblical, aboriginal tenet of our people.

Jewish ethics are also an essential element. Ethical precepts are not only constituents or constitutive of Jewish identity in the individual sense, but also in the collective peoplehood sense. The central principles of this are *kol Yisrael areivim zeh lazeh* – that we are all the guarantors of each other's destiny – and *hametzil ben adam echad k'ilu hitzil olam kulo* – that if you save one person, it is as if you have saved the entire world.

As a result, we need to study the jurisprudence of the Jewish people with its distinguishable and distinguished characteristics, and enable it to fortify us from within. One of the problems in dealing with the assault from without is that we tend to be insecure in both our Jewish and secular national identities. Insecurity in either will tend to result in acquiescence in, or indulgence of, the assault against us. So, we have to fortify ourselves in both, although the greater priority for most Jews today is undoubtedly the Jewish parts of their identity.

Some of the central principles of Jewish jurisprudence are also relevant here. The principle of *Klal Yisrael* – the community of Israel – can be used to override obstacles and obscurantism in any form of interpretation in Orthodoxy. *Kavod ha-briot* or *b'tzelem Elokim* – respect for one's fellow human being because we were all created in the image of God – is a Jewish jurisprudence of human dignity which we ought to have shared in Durban if we had organised ourselves properly. *Lo tamod al dam re'echa* – the Jewish obligation to stand up to our responsibilities – is also key, and we must learn to both understand it and live it. *Chayim v'mavet b'yad lashon* – the dangers of hateful and assaulting speech – is a Jewish jurisprudence of speech that is frankly more profound than anything I have read in First Amendment jurisprudence in the USA. In short, if we did anchor ourselves in our own Jewish jurisprudence, we would have something to say not only as a constituent of Jewish identity but something from our own particularisation that we could hold out globally.

To teach Jewish jurisprudence, we must invest in Jewish culture and education. A strong Jewish culture is a foundational principle for Jewish identity, and the aboriginal language of Hebrew is a vital foundation of our culture and our peoplehood. Aboriginal peoples in Canada, who reach back 300 or 500 years, cling to and celebrate their own aboriginal dialogue. We can go back 3,500 years, and yet we ignore ours.

Jewish education ought to be anchored in Jewish literacy. We have to take as much time ensuring that our young people are Jewishly literate as we take ensuring that they are computer-literate. We have to take time to socialise young Jews into the entire framework and fabric of Jewishness and Jewish identity – its historical, cultural, ethical, Zionist and countless other numbers of identifiers. We have to teach Judaism as an agent of transmission for Jewish ethical values. By becoming more Jewish, we should become more human; in affirming our Jewishness, we should make a contribution to the betterment of the human condition. *Im ein ani li mi li? U' chshe'ani l'atzmi ma ani?* If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I?

If we do not affirm our heritage, our values, our ethos, our language, how can we expect others to understand it, let alone join us in that affirmation? But if we only affirm that, and do not engage in the larger struggle for human rights in our time, we will not only diminish that larger struggle by our absence, but we will also diminish our Jewishness. And *im lo achshav, eimatai?* – if not now, when? Being Jewish and building a Jewish identity has to have a certain sense of urgency as well as continuity to it. We need to go into the trenches. *Talmud Torah k'neged kulam* – if we study our Jewishness, then we will begin to affirm that Jewishness. I have always said that I come to the support of the case and cause of Israel not because it is a Jewish cause but because it is a just cause. If we can reach that understanding of it, we can help both to strengthen our own identity and build a better world.

EDUCATING OUR CHILDREN: EXPLORING THE ROLE OF THE JEWISH DAY SCHOOL

Professor Hanan Alexander

The Institute for Jewish Policy Research's recent report on Jewish day schools in Britain clearly conveys how they are achieving high levels of success in general education, but continuing to fall short in Jewish education. It is this latter area that is of greatest concern, so my comments below will focus on it. I want to do this by exploring four key issues raised in the JPR volume that are among the key challenges for the British Jewish community to consider as it moves forward. The four issues are: vision, leadership, teachers and curriculum.

First: vision. I firmly believe that we get the schools that we deserve. Schools are not primarily institutions that can transform communities. Schools develop when communities transform themselves. If we want the schools to succeed, the leaders and members of the community need to address the following question: what is the nature of the community you would like to see develop over the course of the next decade, and how does the educational system that is emerging fit into that community?

To answer the question, it is important to locate the community in its broadest context, and to consider the central challenges facing us as a people. Among all the issues we need to think about, there are two in particular we should explore: the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora, and the challenge of maintaining Jewish particularism in a democratic culture.

I submit that if we want the current vitality and renaissance of Jewish life in the Diaspora to continue, we must recognise that it requires some deep and profound connection to the state of Israel as a container. Conversely, if we want Israel to continue to serve as that container, we must recognise that it needs to embrace and address its own content crisis, its widespread failure to conceive of the nature of a Jewish identity. If we don't address these issues, the world Jewish population's ability to withstand pressures from both within and without will become increasingly fragile and problematic.

However we conceive of the nature of our communities, the renaissance of Jewish life in the Diaspora and the ability of Israel to contain the Jewish community need to be brought together. This is deeply threatening. It means that Diaspora Jews cannot be complacent about remaining in the Diaspora because if we care deeply about the Jewish future, our relationship with Israel requires our commitment.

By the same token, the vast majority of Israeli Jews who regard Diaspora Judaism as a kind of alien *galuti* thing that has no real roots in the State of Israel have to start to feel uncomfortable about the way in which they carry out their Jewishness, because that Jewishness has no future. In short, we need each other. However we conceive of the nature of this emerging renaissance of day school education throughout the Diaspora, we must reassess the relationship between Zionism and the Jewish people in the land of Israel, and Judaism and the Jewish people outside of the land of Israel.

The second visionary issue we need to address concerns how we can construct a particular Jewish education that privileges Jewish attitudes and ideals and that is also democratic.

As democracy moves in the direction of diversity, particularism is not necessarily recognised or valued in the way in which it might once have been. Israel is compared to an apartheid state from time to time because it privileges a particular group of people. Part of our intellectual challenge is to figure out how we can build a Jewish and democratic state. Part of the answer may be found in trying to build Jewish and democratic schools. The challenges of the Jewish people

and the State of Israel are the challenges of the Jewish day school, and need to be addressed in every context we create.

In short, we need to think about how to connect Diaspora Jewish schools with Israel and how to connect Israeli Jewish schools with what is going on in the Diaspora, and figure out how to balance our particularism on the one hand with democracy and universalism on the other.

Second point: leadership. Schools cannot grow without leadership. The big problem is creating, nurturing or finding the kind of leaders that are capable of running these institutions. Leaders of schools, like leaders of any organisations, need to have an intimate understanding of the business they are in – in this instance, Jewish education, and educational/fiscal administration. School leadership is crucial, and at the moment we do not have sufficient institutions to prepare those leaders.

My third point is about teachers. Let's be clear: the mission of the school is to create a new kind of Jewish consciousness among our children. If we don't create the resources to cultivate that Jewish consciousness, we will do no better with the new Jewish day schools than we did with the previous supplemental system. If we do not make these schools deeply and profoundly Jewish, we should return to that supplementary system, because the fiscal risks we take running this holistic system are far greater. Why should we invest those resources if we are not going to get the added value that we're looking for in terms of Jewish life?

The key way to do this is through the teachers. Unfortunately, Jewish teaching tends to be the most underprivileged, under-represented, under-thought-of profession in the whole of Jewish life. We rest the future of Jewish life on the shoulders of these people, but we don't prepare them, pay them, give them benefits, or give them any status in the community – and then we complain when people cannot speak Hebrew or study Jewish texts!

The critical priority in the context of this burgeoning day school community is to create an apparatus to prepare teachers. If you have a good school manager and good teaching staff, you'll have a good

school. If you have a great charismatic educator at the top that doesn't have high-quality teachers to rely on in the classroom, it's a waste of money.

The single biggest priority of this community, as UJIA has correctly identified, is to rethink the purpose and role of the two central institutions of higher Jewish learning here: the London School of Jewish Studies and the Leo Baeck College Centre for Jewish Education. They should no longer focus solely on rabbinic training (although that continues to be important). They should both start to take on the role of preparing teachers to be able to teach young Jews to find meaning in their Judaism. Teachers must have what Lee Shulman, the President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, calls 'content pedagogic knowledge'. They shouldn't simply know the text, or have fluent Hebrew, or understand Bible, they should develop genuine mastery of the arts and crafts of how to teach the text, Hebrew and Bible. These kinds of efforts are absolutely crucial, and they need to be placed right at the top of our status priorities. And they need to be followed up with salaries and benefits for the graduates of these programmes that make it possible for us to say: 'I would be proud for my son or daughter to become a Jewish teacher.'

Finally, curriculum. In addition to the big question I raised above about the nature of the curriculum, we must also have adequate pedagogic materials for the teaching of core Jewish subject matters. At present, none of the teaching materials we have are up to the standard of the existing equivalent materials in other subject matter areas. We know how to design curriculum materials, what they should look like and how to put them together, but we have not invested sufficient resources in creating them so that Judaism is seen as attractive, interesting and dynamic.

Furthermore, we have to think carefully about how to integrate Jewish and general studies. At present, children tend to see these subjects as entirely separate parts of the curriculum that don't speak to each other and have nothing to do with one another. If this continues, it will continue to be easy to opt out of Judaism, because it will be

viewed as something children either elect to study or not, like any other subject in the curriculum. The general and the Jewish studies parts of the curriculum need to be brought together so that they are in constant dialogue, and so Jewish ideas are continually being raised throughout the education system.

To sum up, the four key issues we need to be thinking about are:

- 1 The vision of our community, and particularly its relationship both to the State of Israel and to democracy.
- 2 The importance of fiscally competent, administratively sound and educationally responsible leaders.
- 3 The supreme importance of qualified teachers who have content pedagogy: subject knowledge and how to teach the material.
- 4 The importance of conceiving of curriculum materials which enable different elements of the curriculum to speak to one another in such a way as to allow youngsters to feel profoundly committed to the Jewish people without feeling alienated and separated from the larger society.

EDUCATING OUR CHILDREN: EXPLORING THE ROLE OF THE JEWISH DAY SCHOOL

Professor Barry Kosmin

It is difficult to explore the role of Jewish education without sounding overly idealistic or overly prescriptive. We have to view the students we educate both as a generation or group we wish to socialise into Jewish life, and as unique individuals whom we wish to help fulfil their own particular potential and expectations. Getting that balance correct is important on an ethical and practical level. In addition, in the Jewish day school setting it is necessary to maintain the balance between educating our young people for the real world in which they live, and educating them for a Jewish world in which we would like them to live. We have to recognise that these goals might not be entirely compatible at all times and in every way.

In the course of conducting the research for the Institute of Jewish Policy Research (JPR) publication, *The Future of Jewish Schooling in the United Kingdom* (2001), we were able to assemble a wealth of unique statistical and educational data that shows the level of professionalism in the Jewish community. The data gathering also revealed high levels of cooperation among educators – we were able to get all sections from the *Charedi* schools to the Reform schools to work together on the project.

Why is that possible in the educational realm, in distinct contrast to other areas of communal life? One reason is the fact that education is not a zero sum game where one side's gain is another's loss. The

British government is seriously interested in education and will fund anybody, so there are incentives available which encourage public-spiritedness and a non-competitive attitude. This positive general milieu creates a feeling of *achdut* – unity – in the Jewish community. It is very interesting that today we accept, right across the community, that there are going to be schools of different Jewish outlooks, and that all of them can and probably will be funded.

The success of Jewish day schools is clear: whereas the Anglo-Jewish population is down by a quarter over the past 50 years, the number of children in Jewish day schools is up by five times. More importantly, whereas 10 per cent of the grandparents' generation received a full-time Jewish education and a quarter of the parental generation did, we have now reached a point where half of the Jewish children in Britain are in Jewish day schools. That is a phenomenal change in the educational profile of the Jewish population, and it has wide-ranging consequences for our community.

Education is British Jewry's only real and solid achievement in the last 50 years. Both educationally and socially, it makes increasing sense for the Jewish bourgeoisie to come together and congregate around educational institutions. The other side of that success, of course, is the societal acceptance this implies. Faith schools are now recognised as a successful educational agent nationally. However, the most important thing for us, as a small minority, is the change in British society that the statistics suggest. Difference is now accepted in British society. The kind of Anglo conformity that was expected in the 1950s – a homogenous world where everybody was supposed to end up with a BBC accent and behave appropriately – has vanished. Today, large numbers of Jewish parents think that marking their kids for life with a Jewish educational background on their resume will have no negative affect on them. That confidence too is a phenomenal change with wide ramifications for Jewish identity in Britain.

The verdict on the quality of the educational product in the Jewish day school is good. Jewish schools do very well from an examinations point of view – they are among the leaders at the top of the league tables in national examinations and university applications, and as a

result, are well supported by the government. Jewish schools are helping our young people to obtain the qualifications they need to get a living, and are producing responsible, educated and useful citizens, which according to government policy is what education is all about.

But while the students and the parents may be happy, the religious sponsors are not satisfied – especially those who are responsible for the state-funded mainstream Orthodox schools. Whereas Jews are doing very well at physics and French, they are not doing so well in the culture which they theoretically exist to perpetuate. In fact, the weakest chapter in the story is *limmudei kodesh*, or Judaic studies. Jewish religion and the Hebrew language are problem areas of the curriculum in most of these schools. We are weakest on the language side, both in *Ivrit* and classical Hebrew. It is clear that we have to think hard about how we can motivate young people to take their Judaic and Hebrew language studies seriously.

It is clear that the Jewish community itself has to provide more teachers and more funding. Where are the Hebrew and Jewish Studies teachers going to come from? Eventually they are going to come from within the community they serve. But although the leadership talks a good game, it sometimes does not supply the resources that would be necessary to get good teachers into the classrooms.

One of the reasons why the Jewish community's leadership is not doing enough is because it is working within a politicised area. Another reason why we are struggling is because British Jewish schools simply don't have enough hours devoted to Judaic studies. In contrast, in the USA, some *yeshivas* and Jewish day schools set aside half of every day for Jewish learning. Yet however weak the day schools in Britain may be, the end result is undoubtedly better than the old *cheder* system.

In order to diagnose the situation and find a solution, we first have to decide which parts of the problem are Jewish, and which parts are British. It is clear that our greatest need is for high-quality Judaic studies and Hebrew language teachers. The fact that these teachers are scarce and are badly rewarded simply reflects wider society's situation and its priorities. The fact that Jewish communities are located

in the expensive residential areas of Britain merely compounds the problem. If we want to think about this in a structural policy way, we need to innovate in order to overcome this barrier. In theory, it is a soluble problem. It is possible that 50, 75 or 100 people could really turn this situation around. Just the recruitment of 50 or 75 well-trained, well-paid teachers could make a real difference in this whole area – but of course that means some real action on recruitment.

Part of the problem is the whole question of who these teachers should be. In most cases at present, these individuals have to be super-Jews rather than good pedagogues. As a result they are drawn from elements of the community that are far removed socially and ideologically from the majority of the pupils, which inevitably causes problems. Getting mainstream Jewish people to teach is an issue. Most schools also believe that women shouldn't teach some subjects. There are many ideological issues, but people will have to face some very hard decisions to achieve the best resolution. Maybe people just have unrealistic expectations. Many United Synagogue members and parents are ambivalent or unwilling to accept the harsh truth that ideology or theology often cuts across practicality.

If we want to get even more than 50 per cent of Jewish students into Jewish day schools, we must recognise that as we widen the intake, they will come from less enthusiastically Jewish families. If we don't recognise where our students come from, we are likely to give them a Jewish education that ends up alienating them from Judaism and the Jewish people. Pushing hard can in fact push people a little bit too far – especially if the effort doesn't have the support of the family.

An intriguing trend, which is far more British than Jewish, is that the keenest Judaic Studies students, and the ones with the best results, are girls rather than boys. For the traditionalists in the community, this suggests problems for the future of Jewish families, and raises questions about the future supply of teachers and rabbis. We will have to deal with this gender differential. It is a British disease, but it should not be a Jewish disease. Why can't our community be counter-cultural in these areas? Why is it that we are so much like the rest of the country when it comes to educating our young people?

The sponsors of Jewish day schools need to be aware of two other factors. Firstly, they mustn't get too carried away with their recent success, because we live in a consumer society. If things start to go wrong, people will vote with their feet very quickly because they are sophisticated consumers who have the resources to make alternative choices on how to educate their children. Secondly, they will soon have to face the dilemma of what to do with Jewish schools when there aren't enough Jewish children to go to them. Within ten years, even in London, there won't be enough Jews to fill all the schools that currently exist. Will they accept the Ministry for Education's idea that every Jewish school should have 10 or 25 per cent non-Jews? Is the multi-faith school a policy area that we ought to start thinking about? Of course, once non-Jewish students begin to study in Jewish schools, the dynamics within the schools – and within the realm of Judaic Studies – will start to change significantly.

The Jewish community has established a solid system of day school education over the past few decades, but it cannot relax. How we can maintain this success, and how we can improve it, are the questions we must now explore. British Jewry has a very good infrastructure and educational record to work on, and a communal and national climate that is conducive to flourishing Jewish schools. However, the future of Jewish day schools in Britain will only be assured if we are careful, realistic and strategic, and if the decision-makers realise that the key investment must be focused on the most appropriate human resources, rather than just on bricks and mortar.

EDUCATING OUR CHILDREN: IMAGINING THE JEWISH DAY SCHOOL OF THE FUTURE

Professor Barry Chazan

There are two secrets to the successes of Jewish day schools in the twentieth and 21st centuries. The first is that in order to succeed, the Jewish day school has to be a high-quality institution in terms of general education. On the simplest level, it has to do whatever general schools do and it has to do these things better in order to succeed. But to examine the question on a more complex level, we need to look into the new world of 'cultural psychology' or 'constructivism', and five key educational tenets or principles it upholds.

The first principle is that education is really a culture. Education happens in or through an all-encompassing culture. The venue, the way rooms are set up, the way programmes or timetables are printed, the meals, the breaks, and so on, are all significant. In short, education is much more than simply the transmission that happens – in the words of the classroom, it is a culture.

The second point is the notion of communities of learning. Education is about social participation within a community of learning. Education is not simply about the transmission of facts. It is about communities that interact and talk.

The third principle of constructivism or cultural psychology is the notion of experiential learning. The point here is that a curriculum is an itinerary of transformative experiences rather than a list of subject matter, and learning occurs through those experiences.

The fourth principle of cultural psychology is the notion of identity building. Cultural psychology says – in contradistinction to what most of twentieth-century general education said – that the central test of education is really about identity development. Much of twentieth-century education gave education different roles – for example, moving people along the hierarchy of the educational ladder; social and class differentiation; or babysitting. Cultural psychology says that actually education is ultimately about shaping the identity and personality of people. There never was an actual subject called ‘Jewish identity’ in classical Jewish education. Rather, identity simply happens – it is like a flower that grows if the conditions are right.

The final point of cultural psychology is the notion of narratives and reflection. Cultural psychology says that a lot of life is about our stories. Our stories – or narratives – are real, personal and internal. Reflection is the ability to stand back and make sense of one’s experiences.

These are the five principles of cultural psychology. How do they relate to our question of what makes Jewish day schools work, beyond getting the students into a good university?

- 1 When day schools work well, they are total Jewish cultures. They don’t simply pass on an inner piece of Jewish knowledge. They are Jewish *kehillot*. They are a modern or post-modern restatement of what Jewish life really is.
- 2 Day schools create communities when they work well. They are not simply about kids coming into a classroom. They are about the relationships between children and other children, between the teachers and the children, between the children and their brothers or sisters who may be in the school, and even between parents and grandparents. In short, the best Jewish day schools are not just about kids. They are total *kehillot*.
- 3 When day schools work well, there are curricula about life experiences. In the best day schools, if you ask what the curricula are, you won’t hear about the syllabus. Rather you will find out

about the totality of moments, experiences, activities, rallies, events and personalities that make up the life of the school. You will find out about how a school deals with the issues of *tzedakah*, and with the personal issues that develop among people. A great Jewish day school is a laboratory of Jewish experiences.

- 4 The fourth characteristic of good Jewish day schools is that they are far more concerned with shaping and affecting the Jewish identity and personality of young people than the transmission of intellectual knowledge.
- 5 The last characteristic of good Jewish day schools is that they are personal and they are about kids. A good Jewish day school cares for the child and the young person in his or her totality as much as it cares about the future of the Jewish people and the topics that it is dealing with. That is not to minimise the future of the Jewish people. It is to maximise the centrality of the child.

When Jewish day schools work well, they employ these principles. As a result, part of me is actually uncomfortable with the word 'school'. *Kehillah* is a better word. I am similarly uncomfortable with the word 'teacher' – it is not the same as a *moreh* or a *mechanech* or *rav*. The truth is that a good Jewish day school in the 21st century is a different kind of phenomenon to our twentieth-century notion of a school. Whilst day schools will continue to be shaped by general education, they will also be shaped by some modern or post-modern attempt to reconstruct the totality of Jewish community.

The real secret of Jewish education is not to look at the school. Historically, the school was a partner in the totality of the neighbourhood, the family, the *Bet Kneset*, *Bet Midrash*, the *Chevra Kadisha* and all the communal organisations. As that totality has broken down, the best Jewish day schools are really a fascinating exercise in creating the new Jewish kind of learning community.

This new kind of learning community ought to focus on three things. First, the day schools of the future should be *kehillot* that teach and reflect a culture. All parts of the school should teach – as the *Shema* teaches us, education should happen at all times and in all

places. Every little detail of the school should reflect this culture – how the day begins, the colours, the role of the secretarial staff and custodial staff, how food is used, where and when *netilat yadayim* is made available or not, and so on. The day schools of the future should spend as much time focusing on these issues as the day schools of the present spend on curricular issues.

The Hebrew language and the state of Israel should both be regarded as central aspects of this culture. The role of language is central to culture. Hebrew is the language of Jewish culture. Without Hebrew it is questionable if we can really have total cultural emergence. And, however complicated it may sometimes be, the contemporary dynamic, exciting, modern state of Israel is a critical and powerful part of our culture. It is not simply a problem, it is a living cultural laboratory. So we have to teach about it, and we have to enable children to visit it.

Second, day schools of the future should not regard informal education as ‘extra-curricular’. Indeed, they shouldn’t even refer to it as ‘informal’. All of the things that we refer to as ‘informal education’ are as important as the other aspects of the curriculum, and should be fully integrated.

The third focus ought to be on what I call the ‘holistic notion’, or ‘integration’ or ‘meaning’. Ultimately, good schools make life whole. They give a sense of organic quality. They give meaning to our lives in a very confused kind of world. Judaism is a complete system that makes life meaningful. It integrates. So, just as I would suspect that a good day school is ultimately going to integrate general and Jewish studies, it is also going to integrate Ashkenazim and Sephardim. It is going to integrate my emotion and my feelings. It is going to integrate my behaviour and my thinking. A good Jewish day school is really going to be concerned with bringing all the pieces together in order to help us find our totality. It is not simply going to be teaching a snippet of Shabbat here, a snippet of *Tu B'Shevat* there and a snippet of contemporary Israel here.

Finally, a great Jewish day school is going to care for kids. Not all education does this. One of the great achievements of much of

informal education is that it focuses on the individual, on the person. Great Jewish day schools of the future will be concerned about the future of the Jewish people, Jewish demographic trends, and that people get into the best universities. But they will also be concerned for the dearest and most wonderful phenomena we have in our lives: Jewish children.

EDUCATING OUR CHILDREN: IMAGINING THE JEWISH DAY SCHOOL OF THE FUTURE

Dr Beverly Gribetz

In considering what the Jewish day school of the 21st century should look like, it may be worthwhile to examine some of the curricular challenges of Jewish day school education today, so that we can develop a consciousness of where improvements most need to be made.

Perhaps the most fundamental curriculum issue concerns the place of general studies in relation to Jewish studies. This is a real issue for the Jewish community, and it cannot be resolved in one dimension. All Jewish communities have to define who they are through the curriculum that works for them, and hence I am not convinced that community day schools, or day schools that try to encompass a whole range of families with all kinds of different levels of commitment, can really work. In the rush to build community, we often water down the curriculum to create something that is interesting but '*pareve*'. As we move into the future, we need to look at this, and clarify the specific roles each individual day school should play within the community.

Part of this debate centres around the questions of what should be learnt in school, and what can be left until after school. At the very least, schooling ought to aim for children to reach the point where they are obligated to *mitzvot*.

How does one teach a child to be obligated to *mitzvot*? This is not

something that we can simply expect to come from the family and the home. A big part of the answer may be related to teaching spirituality. There is a tremendous quest for spirituality among teenagers today in Israel and around the whole world, and we educators do not know much about how to deal with it. We see children having some kind of spiritual *nitzotzot* – sparks – in their informal educational experiences – a *Shabbat yachad*, or at a wonderful seminar. But we haven't yet learned how to put this into the curriculum.

We also do not know how to talk to the children about God. We are afraid, and often prefer to talk about text instead. But children want to talk about God, because they are surrounded by a general crisis of faith. Perhaps we feel this more in Israel than teachers do in the Diaspora – my girls have been to more funerals in the past two years than I have been to in my whole life. But even without the current situation, the crisis of faith is going to stay with us. Teachers in the future need to learn to talk to children about God, and to allow them to express their faith, or their concerns and doubts, in an open and honest way.

We will also need to learn how to run schools that can develop a sense of commitment to social action. In the contemporary world, this notion is in decline: the younger generation is very 'me-orientated'. Their dominant questions are the same: what can I do for myself? How am I going to make a living? How am I going to grow up to have the right career? The day schools of the future need to be better equipped to respond to this challenge, and to find suitable mechanisms to engage young people in social causes.

Part of the way to tackle this is to create a wider school culture that exudes social justice. In many countries, Jewish schools must charge very high tuition. Certainly in the USA, there are a lot of issues over who gets scholarships, which federations support the schools, and which do not. We like to think that anybody who wants a Jewish education gets one. But it is highly likely that there are people who want it, but can't afford it.

In Israel we have a graduated system. We have what is called 'grey' education. Everybody is officially getting education for free,

but the so-called 'better' schools are charging a lot of money. One small example: in Israeli schools, lockers are for rent. If you want a locker you pay an annual fee; if you don't – or can't afford one – you don't pay. For this reason, I refused to put lockers into my school, until a group of parents complained. I argued that I needed sufficient funds to be able to give everybody a locker, or else nobody should get one. The parents raised the money. Creating injustices in school only enhances the legitimacy of the injustices outside of it. Similarly, the values of freedom, democracy, respect, *tzedek*, honesty and tolerance need to be taught, in ways that fully integrate them into both Jewish and general education.

In recent years, there have been significant strides forward in co-curricular education – bringing arts, music, theatre, sports, newspapers, and so on, into the Jewish school. Not all of this need necessarily be Jewishly-integrated, but some links ought to be drawn. Children should gain a general education, but they also need to find a space where they can feel their Jewish identity together with their cultural identity.

A group of tenth grade girls in my school wanted to study art. For them to be able to do so was going to be very expensive – the costs of the equipment required to enable children to learn photography, sculpture, and so on are extremely prohibitive. As a result, I established a relationship with the Israel Museum which has a *bagrut* programme in art one evening a week, and the girls now study there. Complaints from the Ministry supervisor from the *mamlachti dati* about me beginning the process of the girls' secularisation did not dissuade me. I don't see opening them up to the secular world of art as the beginning of their downfall. But it takes a while for everybody to understand that this is a good thing. And if we are going to open our children up to the world around them, we must also openly discuss the challenges that world presents. Indeed, our job is to keep them conversing about all the challenges they meet when they go out into the world.

In Israel, there are particular issues about heterogeneity, but similar issues exist everywhere. One of the biggest challenges con-

cerns the *aidot* – the different ethnic groups – and specifically cultural and religious differences between Ashkenazim and Sephardim. In Jerusalem, especially in the *dati* world, there is a tremendous amount of racism that has not yet been cracked. Many of the *dati* schools are de facto separated by *aidah*. But, if we want to build a macro-society that values difference, we must celebrate our differences in micro-structures like schools. We must talk about them, and encourage children to share the *minhagim* from their homes, and to value one another's customs and practices.

The issue of *tefillah* in all of the movements is very complicated. I don't think anybody has yet found the right formula for how to teach kids to *daven*, and how to find meaning in it. There are all kinds of radical solutions, but we have to give it a lot more thought. One of the main reasons that we have problems teaching it is probably because we have problems with it ourselves as adults.

Women's education is likely to continue to be a major issue. Having worked in a co-ed school, an all-girls' school and an all-boys' school, I am increasingly seeing the value of separate gender education, except in instances where it gives girls a lower-level curriculum and less good teachers. The principle for girls' education in schools of the future ought, I believe, to be 'separate but equal'. To date, I haven't seen that really work anywhere.

Part of the means of achieving this will be the appointment of female principals of modern Orthodox schools. In the last four years of the 1990s there were close to fifteen searches for principals of modern Orthodox co-ed high schools, all of which are proud to give girls an equal education. Not one of the search committees interviewed a woman. Part of girls' education demands that women teachers need to be given real opportunities to serve as role models, and full and equal access to top positions in schools.

Finally, Hebrew is absolutely essential for Jewish education, and for keeping the world Jewish community together. Reading Chumash or Rashi in English is not the same as reading them in Hebrew. The concept of a language that keeps us all together and helps to build a vision of a common future based on a common past is something very

important. Since I think that little children learn Hebrew best, they should be given an opportunity to learn it when they are young. These are our challenges.

CREATING COMMUNITY: IS THE SYNAGOGUE DOING WHAT IS NEEDED?

Dr Margaret Harris

My initial interest in churches and synagogues stemmed from the coming together of my professional interest in 'voluntary sector organisations' and my personal involvement in my own synagogue.

One Sunday morning I had one of those 'Eureka!' moments. It had been a week in which hours of time had been spent on the telephone trying to sort out yet another 'crisis' within the shul. It suddenly dawned on me that there was a link between what was going on in the shul and what I was spending my working life studying – the organisation and management of voluntary non-profit organisations.

In my job as a university teacher I was doing research into voluntary organisations and also teaching voluntary sector managers and practitioners. The kinds of questions we were addressing were:

- Who has the right to decide on the goals and priorities of an organisation?
- How are debates about deeply held values to be resolved?
- Who manages the paid staff, if there are any?
- What is the appropriate relationship between the voluntary board and the paid members of staff?
- What right does the national headquarters organisation have to issue instructions to the local units about how they should conduct their business?
- How do you direct and control people who are committing

themselves on a voluntary basis in what would otherwise be their leisure time?

According to Jewish tradition, synagogues are places of prayer, meeting and learning. It's important to hold on to that concept, but it is not the totality of the discussion. If we want to run our synagogues so that they meet aspirations such as enabling Jews to find value in their Judaism or to construct a common identity, then we need to think about synagogues as *organisations*.

So what kind of an organisation is a synagogue? From my own studies into how people behave in synagogues, I would suggest that the most useful way to think about synagogues in contemporary Britain is to see them as *voluntary membership associations*.

Lay members of synagogues often behave pretty much as they would in any other kind of voluntary membership association. Synagogues are organisations that they choose to join and they pay some kind of membership fee for the privilege. Having paid that fee, they expect something in return. They also feel free to come and go as they like and when they like. They assume that they can expect a service when they need it and that they can contribute in whatever ways they want to, to whatever extent they want to, and for whatever time period suits them.

Consider those people who drift into active shul participation and attendance at around the time their child is approaching bar mitzvah age – and then drift back into occasional appearances only. And what about those members who expect instant attention when they have a family bereavement? 'I've paid my money', they say to themselves, 'the shul should be there for me when I turn up'.

Another aspect of the associational nature of synagogues is that people in them do not generally expect to be told what to do and how to do it. It is *their* organisation and, just as in your own home, you expect to be free to behave as you wish. Moreover, you expect your relationships with other members to be both informal and fulfilling. Nor are you much interested in the 'headquarters' organisation of your shul (United Synagogue, Federation of Synagogues, RSGB and

so on) – unless, of course, they have some tangible benefits to offer you.

It follows from all this that paid staff in synagogues are likely to get a bit of a rough ride too. Lay members' attitudes to paid staff, often including the rabbi, can be ambivalent. They are unclear about their role and status. They are unclear about what should be expected of staff. Are they there just to 'extend the arm' of members? Or to do work that lay people don't want to do? Or to do work for which they have specialist expertise which demands special respect?

Once we start to see the synagogue as a special kind of voluntary association, we also begin to see why members of synagogues behave the way they do. We see why people are so unsure about how to relate to rabbis in particular, and to other paid staff in general. We see why there are incredible rows about priorities that are conducted with such heat and such energy: 'It's *my* organisation and I want my priorities to be paramount.' We also see why volunteers have to be treated so carefully, and why it is so fiendishly difficult to get people involved in activities that involve interaction with other organisations.

We also see the source of some of the real misunderstandings that arise in synagogues, notably between rabbis and uninvolved members. Uninvolved members often feel that this is a voluntary association, and that they can come and go and contribute as they wish. Rabbis, and perhaps the more learned or the more traditional lay members, don't see shul membership as 'voluntary'. It's actually an obligation. Some of the difficult discussions that take place between rabbis, very involved members and less involved members are centred on the fact that they all hold different perspectives of what kind of organisation a synagogue is.

Although I think that the model of a voluntary membership association comes closest to explaining how synagogues function in contemporary Britain, I would also add that synagogues have two special features that mark them out from other sorts of voluntary associations.

First, synagogues have rabbis, and they are just not like other kinds of lay paid staff; they are generally seen as having an authority

that is different in quality and derivation from that attributed to secular organisational roles. Rabbis have the authority to direct and control lay people and to interpret the overall purposes and values of the synagogue as a congregation. But herein lies a source of conflict. On the one hand, rabbis have the right to decide how to run this organisation and how to determine a Jewish way of doing things, but on the other hand, people come to the organisation as voluntary members and they don't expect to be told which goals they have to adhere to.

This brings us to the second special feature of synagogues: the fact that members have so little control over their goals and purposes.

In most other kinds of membership associations there is a quid pro quo: 'I pay my money, I join, I opt into this association, and in return I receive the right to decide, with other people, the goals of this organisation.' But in fact, in synagogues – indeed, in any religious congregation – we actually don't have that right to determine its mission and goals. In synagogues there is a very low 'ceiling' above which we cannot debate the goals, because there are certain lines we cannot cross. We are very limited in the extent to which we as members can decide what happens in synagogues.

What, then, are the implications of seeing synagogues as special cases of voluntary associations? On the positive side, we see that they are really well placed to create a sense of common purpose between Jews, and that they provide a space where Jews can come together voluntarily to get things done and to find fulfilment.

But the challenge is how to 'manage' people in synagogues in ways that are appropriate to synagogues' special status as membership associations. Rabbis and senior lay leaders need to develop skills in 'volunteer motivation and recruitment'. Christian priests call this 'discerning' people's 'gifts': they go around and try to tease out what it is that people want from their church and what they can give in return.

We have to develop these sorts of skills in synagogues. We have to work hard to construct appropriate relationships between rabbis and governing boards (councils). We have to find ways of educating our

members to understand the full implications of low goal ceilings; that there are some things that are just not up for debate in this sort of organisation. And rabbis have to accept that synagogue membership, for many of the congregants, is just one leisure-time interest among many.

As the American sociologist Hirschmann famously argued, when people are discontented, they have three choices: loyalty, voice or exit. People who are not happy with their synagogues may keep quiet – loyalty. They may make a big fuss – voice. Or they may just vote with their feet and we may lose them altogether – exit. Unless we give people what they want by helping them to fulfil their needs and wants, they will go elsewhere. And it won't necessarily be to another synagogue. It could be to any membership association where they can feel at home.

CREATING COMMUNITY: IS THE SYNAGOGUE DOING WHAT IS NEEDED?

Professor Michael Rosenak

What kind of community are we talking about? One of the key factors, or key expressions, that Margaret Harris uses in her paper, is 'you don't have to', because it's a voluntary organisation. People can like or dislike. They can go in and out. This creates a very serious problem. Institutions of religion have to do with absolute values – not values that you have, but values that have you. You shouldn't define them, they should define you.

There are two ways to discuss the question about synagogues. One is to say: 'Here is the situation. Let's try to improve certain elements of the synagogue service in some way so that it will be more meaningful for others.' Another way is to say: 'What do we learn from existing important research in order to relate to the basic question: what would we want to do with this research?' Should it determine policy for us? Or should it point to questions that we cannot evade when constructing a policy of our own?

My friend and colleague, Seymour Fox, once taught me that if 100 per cent of children steal in school, we should not make an educational policy that permits stealing. We should rather think carefully about what needs to be invested in moral education that will make it possible for that not to happen.

Just before the conference in London, I went to a very fine shul and a man next to me told me that 'People don't come here to pray. They come here to associate. They come here to celebrate in a certain way. They come here to *schmooze* and they come for the *kiddush*.' It's also part of the association.

Now I would imagine that the spiritual leadership, including some lay people, are not happy with that situation. And yet it is very difficult to make a policy if you don't have a conception of what you mean by community and where the shuls can create community in our world today.

So we have to ask ourselves the question: what do we mean by community? We have many options in modern Jewish thought to go by. In this article, let's consider four possible models.

The first model is the *charedi* one. Judaism is very simply called – and the people who come to shul, and the people who are part of it are called – the *olam*. They are the world. There is no cognitive negotiation and there are no problems of plausibility structure. You don't have to culturally negotiate with others. The *olam* knows what to do. The community is the totality of Jewish life, and ideally it is life.

The second model, a dialectic Orthodox one, is that of Rav Soloveitchik. All human beings live in two communities – or should live in two communities. One is a community of majesty and a community of achievement. The other is the community of covenant, which is a community of discipline and salvation. This second community is the one which actually tells you what your life is all about, how you shall live, and how the second community shall also affect the first community – the community of making a good impression and making many achievements.

Ideally the shul is a focus of the second community, the focus of learning, of *davening*, the internal life of Judaism. But, very often as we know, the shul has become the status symbol of the first 'majestic' one, wherein people can 'make an impression' on others.

Thirdly, there is a Buberian, or what I call dialogical, model of community. In this model, true community is found where opportunities for encounter are found – where the *Shechinah* rests between people.

The *Shechinah* is found where there is caring and self-discovery, through meeting. Now it so happens that in Buber's model the shul is not necessarily a good place for that because, to cite another metaphor, 'God is everywhere but shul is His business address'! Holiness is not

necessarily to be found there. Buber tells a wonderful story of a person who walks by a well of water and, on seeing the reflection of the moon in the water, says: 'This is wonderful! Let's put a cover on the well so that the moon can't get away!' Of course what the man saw was not in the water; it was simply the reflection of the moon in the water. But he didn't understand that. This was Buber's conception of what happens when you say: 'This place is holy. Let's put a cover on it.' Because of course, that is one of the ways that it loses its holiness.

The final model is a cultural conception, around some foundational text. There is learning. There is praying. There is reflection. These exist in order to redeem the culture and to be redeemed by it. The larger the parameters of the culture, the more persuasive it is. The more of that that's in the shul, the more holiness in the shul. Zionism is a spiritual movement because it is a place that could again take seriously the Hebrew language, the Hebrew text, the Hebrew landscapes and so forth. But every house of God can be a place where Jews learn together, experience together, sing together, and invent Judaism together again and again.

Two important points. Firstly, Peter Berger says that modern people feel free only when they have a life of dignity. But no society can live without honour as well. 'Honour' means it is fitting; it's a suitable thing to do. Synagogues have to live on those two poles – the same pole, of course, as *keva* and *kavanah*. Certain things ought to be done together, and other things ought to exist for people not to have to do it with everybody else. There have to be *chavrutah*, there have to be study groups – but there also has to be a *daf yomi*, or something which is the equivalent of it.

Secondly, communities have to build a *bfarhesya*; they have to build a public space that is Jewish. In other words, they have to create a world in which Jews have the public domain. Levinas said the problem with life in the Diaspora – which he was not in principle opposed to – was that there was no Jewish public domain. Every shul can be a kind of answer to that if enough things are going on there.

Living in two cultures as we do – or as we try to do – means that

we have to be aware that the larger culture in which we live, the gentile culture in which we live, is much more powerful. Therefore it requires that we take into account how to give more *ko'ach*, more strength, to Jewish culture. If we do this, the synagogue will continue to be, or will again become, a vibrant institution.

CREATING COMMUNITY: ENVISAGING THE SYNAGOGUE OF THE 21ST CENTURY

Professor Charles Liebman

There are two basic models for a synagogue. The differences are not only in how the synagogue actually functions, but also in how we think about it. The synagogue can function as a service centre. When my family and I first came to Israel back in 1969, synagogues were not communities. Synagogues were places which provided services – a place to pray, a place where one could attend *shiurim*, sell one's *chametz* before Passover, bring children for a Purim celebration or watch the crazy adults dancing with the Torah scrolls on *Simchat Torah*.

The synagogue serves as a service centre in the minds of many people, and it will probably continue to do so. The question is: is the synagogue a service centre in the minds of the people at its core, those who run the synagogue? I would hope not. I want to argue that it has to be a community. Even in Israel, synagogues are increasingly becoming synagogue communities. By a synagogue as community, I mean a synagogue that continues to provide services but also provides its members with a sense of community in four clear ways.

Firstly, the community should be an agency for integration into *Klal Yisrael*. *Klal Yisrael* represents the reality of the Jewish people throughout the world to whom Jews have a special relationship and special obligations. But *Klal Yisrael* also represents a concept that there are not only so many millions of people who are Jewish, but

there is also an entity called 'the Jewish people'. This entity, like a nation, exists in our minds. It is an imaginary entity. But we imagine it as having a history, a culture, a destiny, identifiable needs, and the moral authority to command our loyalty, and we, therefore, turned this imagined community into a reality.

The synagogue, when it functions as a community, integrates its members into both the real and ideal aspects of *Klal Yisrael*. It is a major way through which members learn about the conditions and activities of Jews in other Jewish communities. It affords them opportunities to advance the interests of other Jews by mobilising them for rallies and demonstrations, letter-writing, volunteer work and financial contributions – and by so doing the community not only promotes the participation of its members into the larger community of Jews, it also makes real the notion of *Klal Yisrael*. It translates what may have been a vague symbol or concept into a concrete reality.

Membership in the community imposes certain obligations and responsibilities. In addition to paying dues, members are expected to invest time and effort in advancing the interests of the synagogue and in responding to the needs of other community members.

The community provides services to the individual members, such as religious services, educational services, pastoral services, a place for meetings, even recreational services in some cases. But beyond these specific services, the community also meets human needs for friendship, caring for others and being cared for.

Secondly, community is a model for, and guardian of, the normative religious structure. (Here I am addressing Conservative and Orthodox Jews, rather than Reform and Liberal Jews.) Both traditional and Orthodox Jewry affirms the notion of *halachic* norms. In many instances the interpretation of these norms differs but the obligation of every Jew is to observe Jewish law. This is a core value of Conservative Judaism as well as Orthodoxy.

Observing the Sabbath, maintaining dietary restrictions, daily prayers and ethical behaviour towards others – non-Jews as well as Jews – are not matters of choice or, in the larger sense, subject to individual interpretation. These are laws. At the heart of *halachah*

rests assumptions about the atmosphere or the environment in which these laws are to be observed. The problem is that the environment and atmosphere in which observance of Jewish law becomes meaningful in one's life is absent. Jewish law is divorced from the routine affairs of the individual. Hence, observance seems peculiar, strange and irrelevant.

The community is the ideal mechanism to meet these challenges. First, the community is almost always a teaching community. It engages its members in ritual activity, in learning and, if it is functioning properly, in acts of loving-kindness.

Synagogues do, or at least should, undertake such activities as *shabbatonim*. These sorts of activities involve individuals and families in ritual activity that awakens the members to the existence of rituals of which they may not have even been aware, and demonstrates the proper manner in which these rituals are observed. They are also occasions for programmes of informal learning, and they provide opportunities to engage individuals in caring for one another in accordance with several precepts in Jewish law.

The community also becomes the guardian of Jewish law by virtue of the informal sanctions that it imposes, although this may be done quite unselfconsciously.

Thirdly, the community is the generator of specific behavioural norms. Modern Jews affirm the evolving nature of Jewish law. We are aware of the need to maintain a delicate balance between fidelity to the norms and mores of the tradition, and the need for innovation – if only to meet the challenges which are posed by contemporary political, social and economic changes. The conscious recognition and the painful awareness that there is no simple formula for maintaining the balance between tradition and change are distinguishing characteristics of Modern Orthodoxy and of Conservative Judaism, as distinguished from *Charedi*, fundamentalist or 'old-fashioned' Orthodoxy.

But it is clear that among the sources of authority is the community itself – the synagogue community in particular. Within the parameters established by *halachah*, there is not only room but also a necessity for local communities to adapt and adjust their vision of

Judaism to local exigencies and local propensities. For example: what is our attitude and how do we treat Jewish groups, even rabbis, who deviate from our standards? How do we respond to antisemitic manifestations in the local community? How do we respond to anti-Israel statements by friends, when we ourselves question what the Israeli Government is doing? And, what is our attitude to intermarried couples and how are they to be treated should they seek to use synagogue services?

The local community offers the ideal setting for discussion, for experimentation and innovation, albeit within an environment committed to tradition, authenticity, continuity and meaningfulness.

Finally, the fourth function of community I would mention is community as a source of personal meaning. The community with its public norms, rituals and ceremonies, with its calendar of public events and its support and participation in the individual's private events, provides a sense of order to both an individual and, no less important, to the family, and locates the individual and his or her family as part of a larger entity.

I think that basic outreach, which I believe has to be undertaken, needs to be wary of incorporating at least some of those Jews who are marginal to the Jewish community and who are not unhappy with their marginal status. They want to be 'one-time-a-year Jews'. There are certain services they want and it is appropriate for the synagogue to perform these services for them. But if they are not prepared to make the sacrifices of self that are involved in being part of the community, it would be a mistake to try to include them in the community. That would mean adjusting and lowering the standards of the community.

I think we have a need for serious outreach. It is interesting that in many Diaspora communities, the Orthodox – or at least some of the Orthodox – have learned this.

CREATING COMMUNITY: ENVISAGING THE SYNAGOGUE OF THE 21ST CENTURY

Dr Robert Rabinowitz

Whenever we think about the future, many of us operate with an implicit view of what that future will look like. Peter Schwartz, the founder of the Global Business Network, and a big advocate of a type of strategic planning known as ‘scenario planning’, warns strongly against this. He suggests that ‘the official future’ – the accepted view of the future – often contains untested assumptions that won’t stand up to rigorous challenge, and that limit an individual or an institution’s ability to plan intelligently. Scenario planning exposes these assumptions and suggests sounder alternatives by enabling people to think more playfully, speculatively and imaginatively than they are able to when constrained by their institutions’ official future.

Jewish community thinking about synagogues also relies on an implicit ‘official future’. I want to present an alternative scenario in order to try to open up the discussion beyond its conventional boundaries.

In the official future, the very structure of Jewish life is under threat from individualist trends in society. The Jewish community is being eroded by the forces of assimilation and intermarriage. The synagogue is, therefore, held up as an institution that could potentially anchor individual Jews who would otherwise just simply flow away and disappear into the void of assimilation.

This somewhat heroic vision of the synagogue is, I would suggest, a little naive. Jewish community was never created in the synagogue alone. The synagogue was an important institution, perhaps even a *primus inter pares*, but Jewish community actually existed within a rich blend of formal and informal religious, civic and economic institutions and interactions of which the synagogue was only a part.

The encompassing nature of the traditional Jewish community was reinforced by two factors. First, cultural norms and legal regulations prevented intimacy between Jews and gentiles. Second, the variety of institutions which served Jews was inhabited by the same set of people. There was, therefore, a deep continuity among all aspects of one's public self and between one's private and one's public personae.

In our own time, most Jews now live their lives in multiple institutions. We work, we play, we study, we raise our children and we conduct commercial transactions in many places and with many different people, and there are fewer and fewer barriers to intimacy between Jew and gentile.

If the synagogue was never the sole institution in which community was created, then *kal vechomer* it will be unable to fulfil that role when Jews do not lead their lives within a bounded set of people, relationships and institutions. Indeed, by placing too much weight on the synagogue, we may be making a dangerous mistake.

The logic of the official future scenario seems to allow just two possible Jewish institutional responses. One is to accept the continued weakening of Jewish affiliation, and to reach out to include the intermarrieds or the gentile partners of Jews in the community. The alternative involves creating not just synagogues, but a whole separate network of distinctively Jewish institutions, reinforced by ever more detailed laws and rituals that act as a surrogate for the gentile hostility and legal barriers that no longer separate Jews from gentiles.

Of course, the official future scenario assumes that the nature of Judaism and Jewish institutions will remain constant, even if Western society continues to develop in more individualist or personalist ways. What happens if this isn't the case?

In my alternative to the official future – the ‘brave new world scenario’ – new forms of Judaism emerge, based on the patterns of Jewish identity uncovered by Cohen and Eisen in their study of moderately affiliated Jews, *The Jew Within*. For these Jews, family, the home and networks of friends are challenging the synagogue for the territory at the heart of Jewish life. It is in these arenas that individual Jews are in control of how they express their own Jewishness. They also do not feel obligated to perform rituals exactly as specified by traditional communal authorities. They feel free to adapt them to make them more meaningful, or to adopt new ones from other cultures, or even to drop them if they cease to be personally meaningful. They do not see their lack of organisational affiliation, or the intermittent way in which they involve themselves in Jewish institutional life, as in any way diluting their inalienable Jewish identity.

In the brave new world scenario, the forms of Jewish identity studied by Cohen and Eisen become the norm. Jewish identity would cease to be primarily communal in nature. The primary indicators of Jewishness would no longer be the two things to which all demographers currently refer: namely, communal affiliation and the performance of a fixed set of rituals identical across the community. In the new scenario, it would be harder to talk of a single Jewish community, or to imagine Jewish institutions as gateways into a single organic collectivity called the Jewish people. That doesn’t necessarily mean that there will be no such thing as the Jewish people – it just might be that that term comes to be understood in new and different ways.

We should not be surprised if the synagogue would also change in the brave new world, as it has changed throughout history. We should remember that it took about a thousand years for it to evolve into the tripartite combination of *beit tefilah*, *beit kneset* and *beit midrash* with which we are familiar today. The earliest references to synagogues are Egyptian inscriptions from the third century BCE which talk of prayer houses. Yet most of the ancient sources such as Philo, Josephus and the New Testament describe synagogues primarily as places for public reading and study of the Law, while the synagogue

described in the Theodotus Inscription of the first century CE also features a hostel for travellers. It is not until rabbinic times that we can be sure that synagogues were used for communal prayer at fixed times. Archaeological evidence from the third to seventh centuries of the Common Era also reveal that there were a wide variety of different types of synagogue, many of which do not fulfil rabbinic expectations of what a synagogue should look like.

The synagogue has also evolved much more recently. In the twentieth century, Mordechai Kaplan created the Jewish Community Center (JCC) because he felt that the conventional functions of synagogues were no longer sufficient. He added new dimensions – the swimming pool, arts and adult education. We don't call that a synagogue, even though many JCCs today fulfil the role of *beit kneset* and *beit midrash*, because we, as post-Enlightenment Jews, have decided that prayer is the thing that counts in defining a synagogue, but that decision could have been different. If we shifted our definitions just a little, a JCC could easily qualify as a synagogue.

In short, the synagogue has always evolved to meet certain spiritual, educational and communal needs. In our brave new world scenario, synagogues would either evolve or gradually disappear as new forms of community emerged. These forms of community would probably be more intimate, maybe more permeable and more impermanent than synagogues – but they would still meet the spiritual, educational and communal needs that synagogues had previously emerged to fulfil.

Perhaps this new scenario will never emerge, but even if it doesn't, the process of imagining an alternative future allows for assumptions about an institution's official future to be exposed and challenged, and enables new creative possibilities to emerge. Furthermore, it helps an institution to naturally ask a critical strategic question: what steps are we taking now to ensure that our institution is able to meet the challenges of whichever scenario comes to pass?

Regardless of the veracity of their findings, Cohen and Eisen's work offers us one other important insight that we ought to consider. Until their research, nobody had really previously taken the time to

ask Jews why they were going to synagogue, so the official future could just rest unchallenged. They found that moderately affiliated Jews do believe in God, a personal and universal God, whom Grace Davie calls the 'Ordinary God'. Yet the Jews Cohen and Eisen spoke to feel uncomfortable with synagogue prayer and do not come to synagogue looking for God. They cite music, the personality of the rabbi and the opportunity for personal reflection as the major things that bring them to synagogue.

It seems to me that the best way to prepare for the alternative possible futures the synagogue may face must surely be through open conversation with Jews about what synagogues mean to them. If we are engaging with them in conversation, we will be much better prepared to meet whatever scenarios unfold.

JUDAISM AND THE
CONTEMPORARY WORLD:
FOUNDATION PRINCIPLES OF
JEWISH IDENTITY
AND COMMUNITY FOR THE
21ST CENTURY

Professor Aviezer Ravitzky

If you open the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* of 1911 and read Theodor Neldiker's article on ancient semitic languages, you will find the following quotation:

The dream of some Zionists that Hebrew – a would-be Hebrew, that it to say – will again become a living, popular language in Palestine, has still less prospect of realisation than their vision of a restored empire in the Holy Land.

From his point of view he was right. A scholar and historian is not supposed to deal with dreams. He's meant to deal with historical facts, analogies and precedents. And it seems that there is no precedent for the revival of a language of study and prayer, into a secular language – the language of science and everyday speech.

Neldiker's misjudgement reveals a critical idea. There is a need for a special energy to achieve and preserve that which is given to other nations, religions and peoples. Secular Zionism wanted to revive Hebrew as the spoken language, as part of its attempt to normalise the Jewish people. But to achieve normalisation, we had to go

through such an abnormal and unique process that, according to an objective scholar in 1911, it could not be realised or fulfilled. .

This special energy was not only limited to the secular Zionist revolution. The very preservation of ultra-Orthodoxy represents a remarkably deep revolution. To try to recreate the old world within the new one is even more difficult than to create it *ex nihilo*, out of nothing. To re-plant Slobodka and Poniewicz and Belz in Bnei Brak and New York needs a lot of energy.

Let us take a different view of Jewish history. Let's imagine – God forbid – that after the Holocaust, the Jewish people would have lost its willpower, and tried *en masse* to run away from Jewish identity. Let's imagine that Zionism failed because after the Holocaust nobody wanted to revive the dead Jewish people, and that the revival of Orthodoxy failed because nobody had the energy to revive it after 90 per cent of the Torah world in Europe had been murdered.

When historians came to retrospectively analyse it, I am sure they would have argued that deterministically it had to happen that way, because no people can overcome and revive itself just three years after such a Holocaust. No spirit can revive itself so quickly and in such a flourishing way as did both the Orthodox and Liberal communities.

So the voluntary decisions, for both the revolution of secular Zionism and the revival of the Jewish religious life, are direct consequences of strong willpower. A radical shift occurred from determinism and an existence taken for granted, to the voluntary decision to establish a state, to revive a nation and a language, to have political sovereignty, to study Torah, and to teach the language of the text.

Several years ago, when I was visiting Auschwitz, I encountered an elderly *Visznitzer* rabbi who was a survivor of one of the death camps. He told me that he was deeply frustrated by the fact that the *gedolim*, the *admorim*, the Jewish scholars, are fighting one another today in the realm of Israeli politics. He said that there was total agreement between all the *gedolim* when they left the concentration camp. All of them wanted one and the same thing: a potato.

The potato is a symbol of the inevitable, when your fate and your

Jewish identity are forced upon you. The possibility of struggle between religious leaders, of choosing between two ultra-Orthodox parties in Israel, is an example of the very opposite. In one generation, we moved from 'Judaism by descent' to 'Judaism by consent'. Today you can choose whether you are going to vote for an Ashkenazi *charedi* party or a Sephardi *charedi* party in the secular sovereign state, in the heart of the Holy Land, led by transgressors of the Law, before the days of the Messiah.

The very fact that we can ideologically fight one another today is one of the foundation principles of the contemporary Jewish identity and community. This is a new form of freedom. It's a phenomenon which is both fascinating and dangerous, and yet is essential for the future of the Jewish identity and Jewish existence.

This new freedom of choice affords us countless options. But the manner in which we handle the choices we make is critical. Three particular choices stand out above all others: the way in which we choose to relate to the wider world, the relationship between the physical and the spiritual, and the tension between myth and reality.

There are two symbols in Judaism that represent our view of wider society: one is *Antiochus harasha* – the wicked Antioch; the other is *Aplaton ha'elohit* – the sublime or sometimes even divine Plato.

Antiochus harasha represents the external world that seeks to overpower us, to force us to lose our own identity, to stop being ourselves. Encountering this world means encountering the hedonistic world with its eclectic culture, and the results are tantamount to personal or national suicide.

Aplaton ha'elohit represents the universal world that has, for example, the potential to encourage the creation of Jewish philosophy. When we were exposed both to the non-philosophical Jewish texts – Bible, Talmud and *halachah* – and to the non-Jewish philosophical texts – Plato, Aristotle and Kant – Jewish philosophy became a possibility.

In short, if we are exposed only to the non-philosophical Jewish texts, we will develop Judaism but not Jewish philosophy. If we are

exposed only to external philosophy, we will develop only philosophy. But if one's personality has become an arena for both influences, there is at least a chance that one will create Jewish philosophy.

The outside world is both *Antiochus harasha* and *Aplaton ha'elohit*. I am afraid of the external demonisation of the Jewish people, and I am afraid of the internal demonisation of the outside world. It is a dialectic situation. I believe that every Jew who today does not support the building of a tremendous Jewish physical military power betrays his grandchildren – since after the Holocaust, until the coming of the *Moshiach*, it is a necessity. And every Jew who does not try to ensure that this army will be ethically unique and different from all other military powers may betray his or her grandparents. We should be loyal and faithful to this dialectic, to both these two poles.

A number of years ago, while I was standing at the *Kotel*, I witnessed a huge military ceremony to celebrate the end of an officers' course. During the experience I recited *tehilim* with the *charedi* Jews, and I heard the *shirei Eretz Yisrael* of my youth movement days. And I didn't know to whom I belonged: to those saying Psalms, or to those singing Naomi Shemer. Perhaps I was in exile in both places? Perhaps I was at home in both places?

Reflecting on this later, it dawned on me that, according to Jewish tradition, King David – General David – was also the author of the Psalms. He was both great military leader and great spiritual figure. It is such a difficult synthesis. But I believe that the Jewish tradition demands of us to try to do this. This is the challenge: to combine political Judaism with our classical spiritual and religious message; to combine the modern with the classical. It seems that there is a danger of a terrible split that we often don't even try to integrate.

Some time after the Oslo Agreement, Shimon Peres referred to David during a speech in the Knesset. Immediately, there was an outcry. 'How dare you mention the name of King David? King David conquered almost the whole land of Israel, and you are giving back territories?' Peres replied by saying that, whilst he admired David, he did not have to imitate him in every respect. For him, David is a great

heroic historical figure, who nevertheless had failings and weaknesses.

However, for *charedi* members of the Knesset, it was a profanation of the Divine Name. For them *kol ha'omer David khata ayno ela to'eh*. According to the Talmud, David didn't sin. He is a myth, a symbol. He is an *ushpiz*, a visitor, the metaphysical visitor who comes to visit us every Sukkot. He is *sefira* and a divine attribute. He is the forefather of the King Messiah!

When these two King Davids – of secular Zionism and of ultra-Orthodoxy – met on the floor of the Israeli Knesset, they didn't recognise one another. One was an historical figure; the other was a myth, an ethos, a symbol.

A few weeks later, at Yad Vashem, some *charedi* leaders demanded that some photos of naked women being humiliated moments before their death be removed. The Zionist response was not unexpected: 'How can you see a sexual connotation in this context?'

Here the rules were reversed: for the Zionists, the Holocaust is a symbol, a myth or a lesson. But for many *charedim*, it is an example, albeit a terrible one, of yet another pogrom in Jewish history. These women are individuals with personal names, and nobody asked them if they would agree to stand there forever, humiliated and undressed, as a symbol of the future power of the Jewish people.

We cannot only plan our future. We must also constantly rewrite our past. As long as we quarrel regarding our past, it will remain alive and can be rewritten time and again.

JUDAISM AND THE
CONTEMPORARY WORLD:
FOUNDATION PRINCIPLES OF
JEWISH IDENTITY AND
COMMUNITY FOR THE
21ST CENTURY

Chief Rabbi Professor Jonathan Sacks

How can we see the 21st century not as a crisis but as an opportunity? I want to articulate three challenges.

I begin with an axiom, from the *sedra* of *Ki Tisa*. The Israelites, who have just had the greatest revelation in the religious history of mankind – God’s revelation at Mount Sinai – 40 days later commit one of the greatest sins, the Golden Calf. Moses pleads with God to forgive them and says: *Mechayni na mi’sifraycha asher catavta* – ‘Blot me out of the book You have written.’ Then he says something curious. He says: *Im na matzati chen be’aynecha haShem* – ‘If I have found favour in your eyes, oh God’ – *yelech na haShem bekirbenu* – ‘please walk in our midst’ – *ki am kshei oref hu* – ‘because this is a stiff-necked people.’

This is a very odd remark. The fact that they are a stiff-necked, obstinate people is surely not a reason to forgive them. Moses surely should not have said ‘forgive them *because* they’re stiff-necked’. He should have said ‘forgive them *even though* they’re stiff-necked’. Why ‘because’?

The answer, Ramban suggests, is that there is one thing you

cannot do if you have a stiff neck. You cannot bow down. It hurts. That is the story of Purim – *Umordechai lo yichra velo yishtachaveh*. Mordechai refused to bow down, as Jews have always refused to bow down. That is the greatness of a stiff-necked people. Moses' argument was that what was then their greatest failing, would one day become their greatest strength.

That is the first Jewish axiom. Never capitulate to social trends. Never allow the 'is' to define the 'ought'.

I want to apply this to three phenomena – the 'Three Cs', or the three great opportunities that lie ahead of us in the coming years:

- 1 Community;
- 2 Creativity;
- 3 Counter-voice.

First of all, community. You will know, from Steven Cohen and Arnie Eisen's book *The Jew Within*, that the Jewish community has embraced what, in 1986, Robert Bellah (in *Habits of the Heart*) called 'the sovereign self'.

This is not something Judaism can endorse. To this cultural shift we have to be an *am kshei oref*. We have obstinately to resist it.

We believe in the primacy of community. That is not because we do not value the self, but because only in community can the self find identity. Many non-Jews (they are often called 'communitarians') understand this as well. The sovereign self is one of the idols of our age.

In Judaism the 'we' counts as well as the 'I'. We care about religion as well as spirituality. 'Spirituality' is what happens when religion goes 'bowling alone'.

What is community? In Judaism there are three words for community: *edah*, *tzibbur* and *kehillah*. They refer to different aspects (even different types) of community.

Edah derives from the word *ed* (a witness), or *ye'ud* (destiny). An *edah* is a sect of the like-minded, a community where everyone is, in key respects, the same.

The word *tzibbur* in Hebrew means an aggregate, a heap, or a

group of people who have nothing in common except that they happen to be in the same place at the same time (that is, a quorum). Thus, an *edah* is a group with everything in common; a *tzibbur* is one with little in common except physical proximity.

Kehillah combines aspects of both. It is a community where everyone is different, but each individual brings their unique gifts to the common good. That is the concept of community I would wish to advocate. That is our first challenge: to take, in an age of individualism, our own individuality and join it with others in pursuit of what we share. To create communities which are strong and open, diverse and participative.

Second: creativity. Uniquely, through every crisis in our history, the Jewish people did not just survive. In addition to simply surviving, we took crisis as an impetus to originality and creativity – or what I call *chiddush*, renewal. That happened at every previous stage of our history. What has happened in our time? Too little. No new philosophies of Judaism. No new religious poetry. No great literature of homecoming. No immortal works of Jewish music. Why has our creativity failed in the modern age? Today there are more Jews at university than ever before. There are more Jews at *yeshiva* than ever before. But there is less dialogue between them than ever before. The right is intact. So is the left. But there is all too little contact, communication, conversation – and the result is a loss of creativity.

That is the second challenge: to bring our worlds together in a collective conversation, so that out of it will flow a renewal of our creative energies as a people.

Finally: the Jewish counter-voice. Judaism is the great counter-voice in the conversation of mankind. Why antisemitism? Why have we been so often hated, persecuted and reviled? There are many answers, but the simplest and most inclusive was given by the first great antisemite, namely Haman, who said: *Yeshno am echad mefuzar umefurad bein ha'amim* – 'There is a people scattered and dispersed amongst all the others.' Then he added the fateful words: *vedateihem shonot mikol am* – 'their laws and customs are different from those of everyone else.' Antisemitism is the paradigm case of

dislike of the unlike. Jews were hated because they were different.

One feature of Judaism is structurally unique – and the proof is striking. Judaism gave rise to two other monotheistic faiths, Christianity and Islam. However, neither Christianity nor Islam, who borrowed so much else from us, borrowed this. What is it?

The God of Israel is the God of all the world; but the religion of Abraham is not the religion of all the world. Judaism is unique in being a particularist monotheism. We do not believe that ours is the only path to salvation. Why? Why did God, who created all humanity, choose Abraham and say, ‘Be different’?

I want to hazard a speculation, namely that Judaism is the world’s most sustained protest against two phenomena: one old, ‘imperialism’; another new, ‘fundamentalism’. Imperialism and fundamentalism have in common that they are attempts to impose a single truth on a plural world. Against this, God calls on Abraham, as He calls today on us, and says: ‘Be different.’ Be different: not for the sake of Jews alone, but for the sake of all humanity. Be different: to teach humanity the dignity of difference – or, to put it as the Mishnah (Sanhedrin 4:5) does: to be able to see God’s image in someone who is not in my image. That is the single most important truth we need to learn in this conflicted, civilisation-clashing world.

For a thousand years, Jews faced persecution in Christian Europe because they weren’t Christian. Today they face persecution in the Middle East, because they are not Muslim. Because in an area of totalitarianisms, Israel remains a free, liberal, secular, democratic state. A world that has no room for Jews and a Jewish state has no room for difference. A world that has no room for difference has no room for humanity.

The third challenge, therefore, is to have the courage to be different, to go against the tide. Not to accommodate ourselves to sociological trends, but to resist them. Do we have that courage? The answer is yes, because we are an *am kshei oref* – an obstinate, stiff-necked people. A stiff-necked people does not bow down. Let us have the courage to be different and, by being what only we are, let us give the world what only we can give.

PART TWO

EXAMINING
OUR CONTEXT

D'VAR TORAH

Angela Gluck Wood

If there is one document to turn to for an exploration of the themes of education and community, it would have to be the *Haggadah-shel Pesach*. It is probably the educational and communal text par excellence in our tradition, and perhaps even among the traditions of the world.

One passage in particular – quite early on in the *Magid* section – concerns the four children: the *chacham* or the wise one, the one who is described as *rasha* or wicked, the one who is *tam* or simple, and the one *she'aino yodei'a lishol* – who doesn't have the wherewithal to ask. We can think of these four children as four *talmidim* or *chanichim* whom we may have encountered. We can perceive them as four elements of our humanity. We can even accept that they are four aspects of ourselves, for we are all likely to have been each of them in one situation or another.

If we think about the *chacham*, what does he ask? The *chacham* asks about the *aidot*, the *chukim* and the *mishpatim*. The *chacham* wants to know something in detail and depth – but also wants to know something that goes in through the surface. What do we have to do? He gets an answer: he is told about the *afikomen*. It's an answer about depth and about detail. That, our tradition says, is wisdom. You go in through the action, on the surface, but you go into some depth and you open it.

The *rasha* has always intrigued me, because I'm a bit *rasha*. But I ask myself: why is this person *rasha*? What is this person doing?

What is this element of us that we describe in our tradition as wicked? The *Haggadah* says that the *rasha* asks: 'What does it mean to you?' The *magid*, the narrator, puts a gloss on it, emphasising the 'to you' and suggesting that the person is *rasha* because he is separating himself from the community. He has violated the principle of *al tifrosh min ha-tzibur*. In actual fact, if we look closely, the *rasha* has not separated himself any more than the *chacham*. The *chacham* says, 'what do all these things mean that the Eternal, our God, has commanded *itchem?*', and the *rasha* says, '*lachim*'. They are not so different: both use the plural 'you' and therefore exclude themselves.

Then we come to the *tam*. The *tam* asks a totally closed question. '*Ma zot?*' – 'What is this?' It may be that the question isn't *tam*, but that the questioner is *tam*. The answer given to that child, that person, that element of ourselves, is actually very similar to the one given to the *rasha*. That is to say, it isn't a direct answer. It is an answer about what the whole thing means: *Pesach* is about being taken out of *Mitzrayim*.

Finally, we come to the one who, according to the typical translation, 'does not know how to ask'. I prefer to think of it as 'does not have a way of knowing how to ask'. This child, this person, this element without questions, receives an answer anyway. We are told to open, or to develop, them: to make something grow where there is nothing. The text reads: '*at patach*'. Why the feminine *at*? Up to this point, the text has been in the masculine form. Perhaps a point is being made about the existence of an alternative self. This unopened self, the one that doesn't have the wherewithal to ask, has the greatest potential for growth, and it is the feminine aspect that can make the self grow. It's intriguing that we are not told to develop any of the other children, only the one who apparently has nothing in the first place.

I've often wondered what this text would look like, what meaning it would yield, if these were not children, but were rather *morim*, or *madrichim*, *mazkirim*, *manhilim*. What kind of questions would we ask? Would they be the closed kind with simple answers? Would they be ones that appear to be superficial but are really deep? Or appear to be deep but are really superficial? Or would they be ones that really open others up for growth?

The way we often respond to the *rasha* bothers me terribly. Many children and young people in our generation are saying '*lachem*'. It seems to me that they came by that honestly: they are saying '*lachem*' because they don't feel connected. Yet we readily think of them – or treat them – as if it's their fault that they don't feel connected. It seems to me that we need to shoulder at least some of that responsibility for them not being connected, for feeling that they have to say '*lachem*'.

That responsibility is: *at patach*. The child who has not been given the ability or the opportunity to ask becomes *rasha* in the end. If that happens, it's our fault. If we don't seek to open up our children, we cannot blame them when they say: 'I don't get this. I don't feel connected. Help me with this.'

Indeed, if we do blame them, we too are guilty of violating the principle of *al tifrosh min ha-tzibur*, for they are also part of our community and we need to find ways to connect and include them.

We don't have answers to all of our questions. In a sense, we never arrive; we are always arriving. But in exploring the themes in the *Haggadah*, the key question for us as educators should be clear: *Chacham, ma hu omer?* – What does the wise *teacher* say?

EXPLORING OUR GENERAL CONTEXT: THE IMPACT OF NATIONAL AND GLOBAL TRENDS ON IDENTITY, COMMUNITY AND EDUCATION

Professor Barry Kosmin

As a small minority, both in Britain and the wider world, we Jews have to be realistic about what we can change about the world we live in and what we can affect vis-à-vis all the powers and forces that are out there. These exterior social forces impact on us at two levels.

The first is on the level of social change, or what we used to call the '*Zeitgeist*'. In a democracy, people's ideas and passions are translated into a political momentum that eventually, through the political arena, becomes legislation. And this legislation then serves to constrain some activities and encourage others.

Secondly, in a western, capitalistic system, society is affected through the market. Changing levels of demand and patterns of consumption in all areas of the economy – products, services, ideas, knowledge, information – affect what we do and can do, what is acceptable and what is not.

Our ideologies and theologies have to work within the material reality that exists around us. That reality, in our post-modern world, is full of complexities and contradictions. Jewish educators and

community professionals are in day-to-day contact with real people who are affected by these forces. Whether we ultimately elect to accept or reject the prevailing climate of opinion on key issues, we have no choice but to engage with it.

The first issue we have to face up to is the fact that, over the past ten or twenty years, the pace of social change has quickened dramatically, and as a result, we live in very uncertain times. Indeed, perhaps the only thing we can be sure about is that we can't be sure about very much.

Historians talk about the 'period effect': the notion that in particular times or generations, people have common experiences. When they look back at our period, they will notice the remarkable amount of migration that took place over the last 30 or 40 years. This has affected both the Jewish people and everybody else in the world. Migration has created tremendous upheavals in society and large numbers of people have been affected.

The twentieth century also saw great world wars and political upheavals. The recent collapse of communism is having a phenomenal impact. New states, linked to old identities, are being born. Some will survive. Others won't. In either scenario the eventual impact will be enormous.

The conflicts and changes of the twentieth century led to a tremendous growth in secularisation in British society – that is, a loss of authority by religious institutions. The established Church of England is just a shadow of how it was even 50 years ago. The Catholic and Nonconformist churches are also much weaker in numbers and influence. One reaction to burgeoning secularisation in British society has been that a small minority have begun to return to religion: countercultural movements such as cults have emerged.

New religions and immigrant ethnic groups have produced an efflorescence of minority identities. We now live in what is termed a multicultural society. Yet even if we accept this fact, it raises further questions. Does multiculturalism give us the right to be different whenever and wherever we like, and how different? Or is it really the right to a common citizenship? Does that difference apply to groups,

or does it apply only to individuals? What constitutes a legitimate group in society? Who defines it and its boundaries? These questions and concerns are all tied in with the renaissance of old tribes and the emergence of new minority groups. They are the inevitable outcome of what sociologists call 'identity politics'.

Globalisation is also changing everything. All that we thought was nailed down is coming loose. People are reacting to globalisation in one of two ways: they are either enthusiastically buying into consumerism, or rejecting it and returning to a 'purer' or simpler lifestyle. We have gone from a world of one, two or three television channels to a world in which we can access hundreds. The paradox is that in a globalised world it is possible to access everything, or to live completely in a bubble and only access very specific information. In a globalised world, it is easy to follow what's happening in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem, but it's equally easy to avoid it altogether.

The generation that ran the world in the latter half of the twentieth century was part of the world of the past. They were rebuilders – people who had come through World War II and were intent on reconstruction. The emerging contemporary leadership is far less traditional, and has much less of a sense of history and purpose. In an era of reconstruction, you need hierarchies, unquestionable authority, discipline and standardisation. In today's consumer society, all these factors are in decline. A consumer society does not value them. On the contrary, increasingly important and pervasive phenomena in the western world are anti-judgementalism and relativism.

One of the important developments in the wider environment that affects Jewish education is the move from the world of text to the world of cyberspace. Most of the world is working in images today – icons, pictures and symbols. For the People of the Book, this has to be an incredibly significant and important change.

Market capitalism wants constant change and innovation. It puts the emphasis on luxury goods and services because we have moved beyond the producer world that was concerned with catering to basic needs. The up side of our world of luxury and relative material prosperity is that there is room for culture, the arts, and reflection. The

down side is that there is no time to engage in these pursuits. Constant consumption has created the 24/7 mentality. This is a problem for the Jews. When do people take a break? How do you keep Shabbat in a 24/7 world? Certainly, in a 24/7 world, you can't be an involuntary Shabbat observer any more.

The other side of that dynamic is the weakening of the nation state, particularly in Europe. The nation state is all about authority, power and control. Nation states control our world – politicians pass legislation to try to control our lives. They used to control what we could watch and not watch; what we could read and not read. But in the current climate where we have access to everything and anything, the nation state no longer has that authority. Whether it is out of belief, despair or lack of morale, the state's growing inability to enforce the law means that now everybody, in all western societies, is moving away from the standardised controls of the nineteenth century. Liberalisation is breaking out everywhere, although it is not clear whether this is happening because people believe in it, or because the authorities are simply unable to stamp their authority on society any longer.

All of this is associated with speed. Today's consumers don't want to wait for anything. They want instant gratification. One of the reactions to all this is the countercultural idea of treasuring relationships. What was a normal part of family life, such as a meal together as a family, is now considered 'quality time'. Yesterday's basics have become today's luxuries.

Migration patterns are affecting people's loyalties to people and places – two of the most fundamental means of organising society. Jewishness, like medicine or education, is delivered locally. If large numbers of people only live in a place for two or three years, their sense of loyalty, their sense of commitment, their willingness to invest in people or places, decreases.

The whole area of family, gender and sex has changed. The changing status of women, declining rates of marriage, rising divorce rates, and the end of hierarchy or patriarchy in the family, all have huge implications. The chances of getting four Jewish parents under the *chupah* at the same time are statistically reduced. Many people are

going to end up with six or eight 'grandparents'. Jewish families will inevitably include gentile members. This is part of the mixing up of a mobile society. And it is not just our problem – it's everybody's problem.

Biomedical change is also linked to this issue. What will happen in the future? The nuclear, heterosexual family has already been affected by the pill and changing attitudes to sex and procreation. There is no need for a father now – or even a mother – given many of these new biological breakthroughs. These changes are important because they create the *Zeitgeist*. They undermine the central Jewish ideas of a group of ancestors, continuity of descent, family tradition and loyalties, and the role of grandparents.

How we react to these trends will be extremely important. One of our biggest challenges is how to deal with difference in a multicultural society. We also have to learn to deal with the pace of change – how to accept that today's success cannot guarantee tomorrow's, and that today's failure doesn't necessarily indicate tomorrow's. For all of us, the concepts of controlling, monitoring and evaluating what we are doing and how our institutions are performing, are going to be increasingly crucial.

My prediction is that outside of the *Charedim*, Judaism is increasingly going to take on the characteristics of an affinity group. There will be a few professional players, as in golf, the Tiger Woodses of this world. But most people will be like those who just watch golf on TV and play once or twice a year. There will be Jewish equivalents of golf clubs, and Jewish equivalents of people who work for golf magazines. That may be the kind of world we are already working in. Some will regard this as wonderful; others may reject it entirely, and try to provide the real, strong, pure product and demand unconditional loyalty. But, whatever happens, all of us working on behalf of communal agencies, and particularly those dealing with the younger generation, will have to engage with these powerful forces and trends. Whoever you are and whatever your goals and tasks, you should prepare for high winds and stormy waters. *Yihiye tov!* I wish you luck on the way.

EXPLORING OUR GENERAL CONTEXT: THE IMPACT OF NATIONAL AND GLOBAL TRENDS ON IDENTITY, COMMUNITY AND EDUCATION

Professor Steven M. Cohen

The concept of social capital refers to patterns of frequent interaction that build expectations of generalised reciprocity. It is the notion that if I do something for you, you'll do something for her, she'll do something for him and he'll do something for me.

Robert Putnam argues that this pattern of frequent interaction creates mutual support, cooperation, trust, and institutional effectiveness, and is a powerful condition of groups and of individuals. He maintains that social capital can be divided into two subsections: 'private' and 'public'. Private social capital is the type we all amass by creating individual ties with others and developing systems that knit people together. Public social capital is the type that exists in a society which exists with trust and reciprocity as normative, where social networks are able to facilitate cooperation for mutual benefit.

There are two other ways of defining social capital: 'bonding' social capital and 'bridging' social capital. Bonding social capital is a social capital of ties and relationships, trust and reciprocity within a group, whatever the group may be – a synagogue, ethnic group, nation and so forth. Bridging social capital refers to the ties between members of that

group and other people who are far away from one another. I want to suggest here that we think carefully about both of these.

In exploring these types of social capital, one of the problems we encounter is politics. Bonding social capital tends to have a conservative bent to it. This needn't necessarily be the case, but it often implies a sense of the parochial, and truthfully, when you only have bonding social capital, you are sectarian.

But bridging social capital actually has a liberal bent about it. Bridging social capital is the cosmopolitan base: the Tel Aviv as opposed to Jerusalem; the Hellenites as opposed to the Maccabees. Of course, we need both. We need both the cosmopolitan, outward-looking Tel Aviv and the more insular and bounded Jerusalem for a complete and healthy state.

To invest in both bonding and bridging social capital also requires two languages: an internal language which is useful for bonding, and an external language useful for bridging. The most successful individuals and successful communities will always be those that can master the vocabulary, cadences and rhythms of both languages.

Putnam notes further that societies and communities characterised by high levels of social capital not only function better, but also accrue all kinds of other benefits such as better health, stronger economic achievement, even reduction in crime. High levels of social capital also teach people how to function democratically, in groups.

Putnam's punch comes when he analyses what has been occurring in the USA. By examining per capita membership of a whole variety of organisations, he demonstrates that, following a steady rise in measures of social capital over 1900–60, there has been a steady decline in the period that followed. Other factors are also in decline: participation in politics, bumper stickers on cars, going to meetings, voting, trust in government, trust in other people, picnicking, having dinner at home, having dinner with friends, card-playing, and – slightly less than all of these – religious participation. Actually, Putnam identifies churches and synagogues as being the repository of at least half the social capital in the USA.

He demonstrates four factors that may be responsible for this

decline in social capital. The first is television. In the USA in the 1950s, we used to have three television stations, and one television set per household. People watched the same station together, and as a result, we had a common television culture. Today, there are numerous channels and numerous programmes, and multiple TV sets in the house. So today, not only do we have less of a common TV culture, but we also have more and more isolated people watching TV alone. In addition, the internet has now entered our lives. To be fair, there is some evidence that the internet is a valuable means of connecting people, but most of the early studies suggest that it is principally associated with less participation in the larger society.

The second factor is that of the participation of women in the labour force. Previously, women were major volunteers in a variety of volunteer organisations. They supported these organisations both for themselves and for their families. Their withdrawal from these organisations has actually resulted in sharp declines in social capital.

Putnam's third factor is urban sprawl – a factor which again very much relates to Jewish life. By moving further and further away from the centres of business and finance, people have longer and longer commutes to work. Every ten minutes of commuting time is associated with ten minutes less civic participation time.

The final factor is the passing of the mobilised World War II generation, which was called up to engage in civic and patriotic activities during the war. After the war finished, this generation went on to build up social capital and organisations in their respective countries. But as they passed away, the succeeding generations were less civically orientated and less volunteer orientated. It also led to the following familiar question: what do you do when you no longer have a sense of solidarity and threat?

The main critique of Putnam has come from Robert Wuthnow, in his 1998 book *Loose Connections: Joining Together America's Fragmented Communities*. In it Wuthnow accepts Putnam's data, but argues that organisations have become much less bounded than in the past, and nowadays tend to be much smaller and therefore less visible. Major national organisations, one of the great innovations of

the twentieth century, are in decline, but a lot of highly individual, localised, non-hierarchical smaller organisations are growing up in their place. Indeed, according to Wuthnow, at any one point some 40 per cent of Americans are involved in a support group for their own individual growth, and they tend to pass in and pass out of these things as they have finished growing! They may then grow in some other way.

This trend has resulted in a change in the nature of volunteering. Volunteering is now more focused and more entrepreneurial. It is much more episodic: people do it – and leave. It is also less socially embedded: people do it, but don't necessarily develop great relationships through it. They just come in and they come out, and develop very individualised networks.

As Wuthnow points out, in the past, people knew each other in voluntary organisations. When someone assumed the national presidency after 30 years of service, they had often built up lots of trust, reciprocity and social capital. But today we tend to fly in and fly out of organisations, so we don't know the other people. It is often unclear how we should relate to them, there may be a lack of trust, and, as a result, we become subject to frequent emotional and personal injury.

The implications of all this are that in the future Jewish leaders will need to develop much more specialised and tailor-made career paths for the volunteers. Gone is the era of the Henry Ford type leader. Ford said that Americans could have any colour car they want – as long as it's black. Today, Sony produces a new Walkman model every three weeks, and Heinz has 57,000 types of relishes and sauces. Why? Because organisations have to deliver specially tailored products to every single individual.

Our leaders will also have to become therapists. We will need to have open relationships with our counterparts. We need to share information because we can't wait to parcel it out on a piece-by-piece basis. We will have to have open inventories. Anybody can walk in and look at what K-Mart is selling right now because we have to supply K-Mart with the goods on an anytime basis. Leaders used to

be visionaries. They cannot have that function any more. They have to help their organisations to become what Peter Senge calls 'a learning organisation'. They have to learn how to adapt and to tie people together, and to coordinate in a less hierarchical and more educational fashion.

Organisations can probably shift, but as Jews we are somewhat bounded. Clearly, there are differences of opinion on how fuzzy the boundaries are, depending on one's ideology or theology. But the questions for us are clear: where should we draw our boundaries? How hard should we hold on to them? How porous should we make them? Or perhaps all of these questions will ultimately become obsolete, and the world will simply overtake us. Perhaps ultimately, all we will be able to do is accept the realities of change, and respond to them accordingly.

EXPLORING OUR JEWISH
CONTEXT: TRENDS IN
THE JEWISH WORLD,
AND HOW TO UTILISE THEM
FOR OUR BENEFIT

Jonathan Ariel

I would like us to consider three propositions. Let us call them stories, structures and stirrups. The first proposition regarding stories is that we would do well both to remember *and* to forget. Berl Katznelson reminds us that: 'Were only memory to exist, then we would be crushed under its burden ... And were we ruled entirely by forgetfulness, what place would there be for culture, science, self-consciousness and spiritual life?' Human beings are really good at both remembering and forgetting – we just sometimes get our categories confused!

Identity is both given and chosen: it is given in that one's choices are not unlimited; and it is chosen in that there are multiple groups and ideas to which one subscribes. Identity is professional and recreational, religious and ethnic, and it is gender and nationality. What pulls these together is a story or a narrative. Groups need a narrative to justify what they are, because they do not want to perceive themselves as totally eclectic or totally self-serving. We want the stability of an anchor.

Yet narratives change; they are 'puncturable', and we sense the fragility of modern narratives of the Jewish people. Think of the undermining of the organising frames of the twentieth century –

Zionism, Modern Orthodoxy, Reform – and of secularism. Let's look at the Zionist narrative. On my teenage Israel Experience, I cannot recall a more poignant moment than when we visited the 'magic mountain' of Masada, exploring the story of heroism and the symbol of Jewish defiance and dignity. Today, we go to Masada the tourist site and also listen as the guide relates: 'But you know, maybe they weren't heroes. Maybe the story happened in a different way.' The narrative is punctured the moment we ask: do we really want to view suicide as the embodiment of Jewish potential?

It goes deeper. Think about Zionism and what it represented – the contemporary realisation of millennial Jewish longing for the ancestral homeland. And then recognise that one of the fastest-growing Jewish communities in the world today is in Germany. Germany! Put that in your Zionist pipe and smoke it! Can we just carry on? When there is compelling historical evidence, the narrative is undermined. Yet within the best, most exotic stories, and the Jewish story is certainly that, there is the power to rebuild, to reconstruct, to add, and to change. Eric Hobsbawm reminds us that the 'authentic' Scottish kilt, which we suspect is an ancient tradition, only achieved widespread use as the result of an enterprising English businessman in the eighteenth century. This should give us heart. We can rewrite the lachrymose view of history, that Jewish life is an ongoing tale of woe, into a creative narrative that gives purpose for the future. The key property will be truth-likeness, more than truth as the historical record, and its promise is that a people can rebuild and invite us into the ongoing conversation of the many and varied stories that we will create. British Jewry has not been noted for proactively writing its own narrative – perhaps the time has arrived.

The second proposition is about structures: never before has so much changed for so many people so quickly. The Polish saying, 'sleep faster – we need the pillows', captures the pace of change in our life patterns. The structures in this community, and around the Jewish world, seem incapable of meaningful response as they are too rigid and hierarchical. Think of the way in which we talk now about British royalty, American presidents and Israeli prime ministers compared to

a generation ago. This crumbling of authority is a profound indication that one malaise of this era is the presence of inadequate structures, as Charles Taylor argues.

Compounding the challenge is our default educational understanding that people feel the way that they do because of what they know. Therefore, cognitive knowledge should be the response. Yet look at the libraries, the internet, the books and journals – people do not lack opportunities for information and knowledge. The reverse is true: people do not feel the way that they do because of what they know; they know what they do because of the way that they feel.

And so the structures that we create for the community are going to have to be those that recognise the ‘death of deference’ and yield in turn to the rise of integrity. They are going to be guided by people who have moral, cultural, spiritual and social integrity. Structures governed by integrity, not authority. Big synagogues, despite their many benefits, alienate members who are not part of the inner circle. The creation of intimate settings within larger networks may well prove more adequate to the imperative of integrity. Most Jews have neither a serious conversation with a Jew, which probes the heart of what it could mean to be a Jew, nor a fun conversation of jokes and banter with a Jew who takes Jewish commitments seriously. We need both. And only in smaller entities does it seem possible. So, let’s keep the organisation simple, otherwise we end up with a complicated structure that means we simplify the hearts and the minds of the participants and the subject matter. Let’s do the opposite. Put human contact in a virtual world as the top priority and build a lean, flexible and simple structure that champions Jewish complexity and human sophistication.

The third proposition is about stirrups: how can I listen to what you say when what you do is ringing in my ears? We talk about accessibility and welcoming Jews into our community, yet we often make the barrier so high that people are afraid to enter. We do it intellectually by not ensuring that educators are inspired and inspiring. If rabbis are boring and teachers are trivialising, are we not guilty of gross misconduct? Yet a sustained initiative to provide professional

development will have to be undertaken in a wider cultural frame. If Jewish public culture does not support the morally serious purpose of human inquiry, then the obstacles to engagement are insurmountable. So we need stirrups, or scaffolding, to help people participate and contribute to the conversation without sacrificing the rigour of those with rich Jewish or general backgrounds.

There is another feature to cultural accessibility. Sam Heilman understands Jewish organisations as social drama. These dramas, in which we are all participants, involve cognitive, affective and behavioural aspects. Using one's whole body, as Jewish culture and ritual has long acknowledged, is fundamental. What might this mean? Recognise that teenagers and students have hormones whizzing around their bodies that keep them alert at night and prevent them being awake in early morning. And what is our response? We organise our serious programming for when they are most asleep! Let's start the day at 11 a.m. Think whole person, not only human cognitive processor.

Another example: Rabbi Avi Weiss wanted to honour a severely injured congregant by calling him to the Torah. Access to the *bimah* was restricted. Weiss said: 'Don't worry. I will help you.' And the 19-year-old man said: 'No. If I cannot go up to the Torah on my own, I will not go.' Weiss understood that the shul was not a dignified, accessible place for all Jews. The shul eliminated a row of seating, giving up membership fees, to install ramps to enable any person to be called to the Torah. That is accessibility in a way in which I think Huizinga, the Dutch theorist, talks about *homo ludens*, about being able to play, inviting people inside to truly play and participate in the future of the community.

If we tell renewed stories within supportive structures and shape a culture that provides stirrups for every Jew, as a key member of our people, then I think we have the wisdom to harness the trends in wider society for the sake of our community and its ideals.

EXPLORING OUR JEWISH CONTEXT: TRENDS IN THE JEWISH WORLD, AND HOW TO UTILISE THEM FOR OUR BENEFIT

Rabbi Tony Bayfield

One of the most striking trends within the British Jewish community over the last 50 years has been the revival of ultra-Orthodoxy. Ignaz Maybaum z"l, writing back in the 1950s and 1960s, was confident that the days of Orthodoxy were numbered. He was completely and utterly wrong. Jonathan Sacks, writing more recently in his book *One People?*, underlines this phenomenon and addresses the tendency within the ultra-Orthodox grouping to be so devoted to the survival of Judaism as they understand it, that they are prepared to write the majority of 'less faithful' Jews out of the Jewish people. Sacks argues forcibly against that position. Nevertheless, the issue is by no means decided.

There is a section of the Jewish world which, on the one hand, is the custodian of much Jewish learning and of a fascinating, and for some, very attractive way of life, but which, on the other hand, has a monopolistic view of truth and a desire to impose that truth by coercive means if necessary.

My perception is that all the rest of us, whether we like it or not and whether we admit it or not, are not just in the same boat, but are much more similar to each other than we sometimes care to admit. One only has to look at a typical British Jewish family to see that within that one context, most of the rest of the trends and most of the rest of the paths can be seen.

There are sociological factors that we all have in common: the postponement of the age of marriage with its many consequences, one of them a very low birth rate; the formation of permanent relationships with people outside of Judaism; the changing role or the pressure for a changing role for women; and the by no means solely Jewish phenomenon of the individualisation of religion.

There are some strong forces within British society. They seek to assimilate individuals into British culture, rather than allowing them to take root within their own culture whilst being part of and contributing to civil society. The British bargain of 'acceptance, providing you support our cricket team' has still to be replaced by the much more creative and helpful salad bowl concept of a society in which we Jews remain the distinctive clove of garlic giving flavour to the whole.

Faith continues to be both challenged and a challenge, and we who only escaped the Shoah by the breadth of the English Channel are deeply affected by that, perhaps more than we realise or let on. Those trends, those patterns impact on 85 or 90 per cent of British Jewry to a very significant extent. And they continue to erode us as a community by 1 per cent per annum across the board.

During my professional career, we have responded to these challenges in a number of ways.

We have tried to do what Michael Goulston *z"l* told us not to do, namely, to use the Shoah as an instrument to retain Jewish loyalty. Developing a wholly lachrymose account of Jewish history and backing it up with contemporary external threats hasn't worked, because a people cannot live by guilt or fear alone.

We have attempted to use Israel and Zionism as *the* cohesive and uniting force binding British Jews to the Jewish people, and binding the Jewish people to one another. That hasn't worked either. We do visit Israel more than our American cousins – more, perhaps, than any other Jewish community – but in my section of the Jewish community at least, it hasn't proved to be the determinative factor that some predicted it would.

In the USA we have tried to create new and more congenial Jewish institutions: Jewish community centres, Jewish country clubs

for those with social and sporting interests, and *chavurot*. But Barry Shrage and the Boston Federation are not alone in having come to the conclusion that the synagogue remains and will remain the primary place of affiliation – or dis-affiliation! – for the majority of Jews, and the place where the challenge has to be faced or lost.

We have tried to build Jewish continuity around Jewish culture, and to embrace secular Jews, particularly secular Jewish academics. This hasn't worked either. The circulation of the *Jewish Quarterly* is as poor as any other intelligent Jewish publication in this country. A major Jewish cultural centre would be very nice – but it won't solve our problems and will divert resources.

The British Liberal movement has tried radical outreach – patrilineality, blessing mixed faith marriages, and so on. But the size of the ULPS does not suggest that the community responds to their courage and their radicalism, and there is no evidence from the USA that it preserves more families than less radical forms of outreach.

We have tried to emulate the American emphasis on social action, but again, it is hard to see the response. Jews are heavily over-represented in campaigning organisations, but the Jews within these organisations are often those who are least connected to the Jewish community and have least understanding of where their values come from.

Which brings me to the point of asking: where do I see us now?

Let me narrow the focus still further and talk about where my organisation is. It has come to recognise the importance of a text that is starting to play a key role in our self-understanding.

That text can be found in *Shemot* (Exodus), at one of the great moments of Jewish history. It comes just before Nachshon ben Aminadav experiences his moment of glory by plunging into the waters, which only part when he has risked his very life by going in up to his nose. It comes just as Moses, with the sound of impending charioted Egyptian disaster ringing in his ears, has prayed and been told that there is a time for a long prayer and a time for a short prayer, and that this is the time for the short prayer. 'Speak to the children of Israel and tell them, *Vayisa'u*. Get going. Get going forward. Start the journey now.'

We are a genuinely endangered community, approaching the point where numbers are dwindling to a level where our young people cannot find Jewish partners even when they want to, and to numbers that come dangerously close to not being able to support the infrastructure of a significant national grouping. But, paradoxically, you can dwell on the danger so much – the long prayer – that you become obsessed or paralysed by it, allowing it to colour judgements too much.

So our emphasis is on *vayisa'u*, on moving forward, on journeying forward into the future, facing up to the exponential rate of change and having the courage to remember the words of the Catholic philosopher Renan: 'Only in Judaism is the golden age still to come.' Journeying is such an important motif because it reflects the very essence of Judaism. Genesis is almost wholly – and holy – about a number of individual journeys, and the motif stretching right across the rest of the Torah is a collective journey.

Our task is to reach out to individuals, to give space, to mentor, to guide, to buddy and to facilitate their individual Jewish journeys whilst binding them into the collective Jewish journey expressed in community. Our community needs to be *routed*, rather than just *rooted*. *Vayisa'u* – get a move on! Go forward!

Our task is also to recognise the diversity of individual stories, and the need for a multiplicity of programmes to respond to the multiplicity of personalities, experiences and needs.

Most importantly, we must invest in Jewish education. It is within the educational framework that autonomy and individualisation can be balanced by a recognition that Jews do not exist in an autonomous vacuum. We exist within an historic and current context of obligation to God, tradition and community. We are 'situated selves' rather than 'sovereign selves'. And if, as in that famous passage from Ansky, we are moving closer and closer to the centre, at the very centre of it all lies the text, the classical Jewish text, the modern Jewish text, the text of the individual Jewish life itself.

When I look at the whole Jewish community, I see a considerable consistency of thinking across denominational boundaries. I am genuinely excited by many of the responses that are emerging and have

genuine hope that they will bear fruit. I only wish that we could work together across the community even more than we do at present. A community as small as ours and as strapped for resources as ours cannot afford to waste a single hour of leadership time, or a single pound of donor's money, on duplication, conflict or rivalry. Maybe that is the meaning of Nachshon's risk-taking for us today.

better or a little worse. This is simply one of the essential pillars of what Jewish existence is about.

This should lead, therefore, to a three-part long-term pedagogy. First, communities need a systemic long-term plan to return Israel and the narratives of Israel to Jewish life. This battle begins not with children, but with rabbis, educators, communal professionals, lay leaders. We have to re-educate our leaders so that they return to one of their mandates which is to become spokespeople of this great vision and mission. Our leaders have a great moral responsibility to return to this mandate.

Second, we need to translate this narrative into six pedagogical ideas:

- 1 We should use old, core texts to emphasise the central role Israel plays in them, and to demonstrate how Israel is utterly intertwined into the very essence of Judaism.
- 2 We should emphasise the realities of the contemporary state. Israel is a fascinating, exciting, vibrant and confused modern country. It's not accurate to simply portray it as a place of conflict and turmoil, as CNN and the BBC do. But neither is it accurate to portray it as simply a religious state as some educators do, or simply a secular *chalutzik* Zionist country as other educators do. It is all of these things – that is what makes it so fascinating – so all of these things need to be incorporated into our pedagogy.
- 3 We should use the Hebrew language. Everybody who deals with education and teaching culture knows that language and culture are intertwined. Hebrew is the key to this whole notion of Israel. People who can speak Hebrew will have a different relationship. They're part of the family. To give up on Hebrew is to give up a core dimension of teaching Israel.
- 4 We should use experiences. Israel is a subject which invites experiences. People deserve and are entitled to have as many experiences as possible related to Israel.
- 5 We should use real human beings. One of the best texts we have in teaching Israel is real Israelis. They're complicated, fascinat-

STRUGGLING FOR ISRAEL: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE CLASSROOM BECOMES DANGEROUS?

Professor Barry Chazan

The current problem of how to present Israel in light of all the challenges it is facing has become a major issue in Jewish education. However, we should be clear about where the core of the problem lies. To my mind, the problem is not the current Intifada, it is not about the state of Israel per se, and it is not about how to teach Israel.

The core of the problem is what is called in philosophy 'the prior question', which, in this instance, concerns the relationship of contemporary Jewry to the place of Israel in our lives. We have lost the authentic narrative of Israel in the lives of the Jewish people. We've given it up. The leadership of our communities – professional, lay and educational – has simply not made it a major part of our mandate.

For me, the narrative is clear. Contemporary Israel is a continuation of a centuries-old link between Israel the place and Jewish culture, civilisation or ethno-religion. Israel the place has been, and should be, a core dimension in the laboratory of Jewish culture, civilisation and ethno-religion. It is one of the indispensable elements both of being Jewish and of Jewish peoplehood.

Our responsibility as leaders of the Jewish community is to present core visions and narratives of our people. Israel is one of the core narratives. This is not *ahavah t'leuyat b'dvar* – we cannot choose whether we do this on the basis of whether Israel acts a little

ing, wonderful people. By giving the Jewish people access to all kinds of Israelis, we are offering them an opportunity to view Israel as the diverse textbook of Jewishness that it is.

- 6 Finally, we should go to Israel. The trip to Israel should be the immediate, the proximate goal of all education about Israel. One of our core Jewish educational goals should be to get kids to go to Israel on a trip. The Israel Experience is not a magic bullet, but it is a completely unique tool in Jewish educational culture.

But what of the current crisis? Should all these principles continue to stand at a time when Israel is facing a serious and threatening wave of terror? I don't know definitively, but my thoughts are based on Jewish wisdom, the time I've spent working in this field, and my own reflections.

We should continue to bring people to Israel. I still feel comfortable doing so, and I still feel confident to say it. The day and the moment when we shouldn't bring people, I am sure that the statement will be made. But at the moment we should still bring people to Israel. Certainly there is a responsibility to maximise safety and security and to ensure that our plans are effectively presented. But we should not give up on Israel trips. Why? Because they are special and unique experiences in young people's lives. If they lose that opportunity now, they may lose that opportunity for all time. But, more important, we should do it for the Jewish people. If we give up now, if we give up another summer or two, we could set this field back by five to ten years. We have laboured hard to make Israel trips part of the Jewish educational system of the Jewish people, and there is a real danger that if we give it up, it could completely backslide. It is a Jewish responsibility to enable young people to experience Israel, and we are renegeing on our responsibilities by failing to do so at this time.

As a result, I do not think that we should build alternative summer or travel programmes at the moment. Under normal circumstances, I would argue that education should exist to help serve people's needs. But, in this instance, I disagree with this perspective, because in this

instance, we will stand to undermine one of our core Jewish responsibilities by failing to uphold the central place of the Israel Experience in the Jewish educational curriculum.

Great damage has been done in the Jewish world by failing to stand by the Israel Experience. When leadership failed to take this stand, its views inevitably trickled down to professional and lay leaders and to Jewish congregations and communities. The bottom line is clear: we cannot let what we've worked so hard to build fall apart. It would take years to rebuild. And there are times when we need to stand up and be counted. This is one of those moments.

REACHING OUT TO OTHERS: THE ROLE OF A SOCIAL ACTION AGENDA IN JEWISH EDUCATION

Dr Edie Friedman

Growing up in Chicago, I was one of many Jews involved in the civil rights and peace movement in the 1960s. Although we did not necessarily connect our Judaism with what we did, the mere fact that there were so many Jews involved in these struggles made us aware of that connection.

When I came to this country in the early 1970s, I noticed that here, the situation worked in reverse. In organisations to which I was connected, such as Oxfam, there was virtually no Jewish involvement. I also faced antagonism from other Jews towards the notion of being involved in global development issues when the 'third world', they insisted, was so blatantly anti-Israel.

These experiences left me feeling alienated from fellow Jews and not a little bewildered. I had grown up to believe that one of the basic tenets of Judaism was about making the world a better place to live. I felt that to cope with my disillusionment, I had two options. One was to opt out of the Jewish community altogether. The second was to create a new organisation that would bring together like-minded people. This process would help us to reclaim our identity as a people concerned with social justice who wanted to take our ethical position in this multi-faith society alongside other religious and secular groups.

I opted for the latter. When I founded the Jewish Council for Racial Equality (JCORE) in 1976, the inspiration was historical on

different levels and from different times. There was the seminal Jewish experience of the Holocaust. There was also the centuries-old one of being refugees and economic migrants. Underpinning the inspiration were Jewish teachings of social justice.

In creating a new organisation, I had to be aware of certain factors that could influence our involvement in social action. For example, the importance attached to 'looking after our own' is central to our community. If you want to be positive about Jews, you say that we are very good at self-help. If you want to be negative, you say that we only look after our own. Obviously there are many examples to refute this belief. Top of the list is the phenomenon of the disproportionate numbers of individual Jews who have been involved in a whole range of social action agendas, not only in this country but also in the USA and South Africa and elsewhere in the world.

But even with those exceptions, it is antisemitism here and in other parts of the world that is the major influence on British Jews' behaviour and attitudes. The existence and persistence of antisemitism here and abroad, both real and imagined, often translates in people's minds to the erroneous belief that all Black and Asian people are antisemitic. The myths and realities of the sometimes symbiotic, sometimes fraught relationship between Blacks and Jews in the USA in particular has had an impact on how we view each other here. And of course the Holocaust has been a dominating influence in our lives in profound and diverse ways. Among them is the way it has led some people into believing that as victims of racism, it is impossible for Jews to be perpetrators of it as well.

There is also the uncomfortable legacy of some Jewish activists' experience of the anti-racism movement of the 1980s. The prevailing attitude then was that racism was specifically levelled against Black and Asian people, and that antisemitism was no longer an issue. Moreover, because most Jews are white, they were considered part of the problem. These views were further inflamed by the persistent – and continuing – conflation of Judaism and Zionism.

In response to these challenges, JCORE has developed three main

areas of activity: race equality education; Black, Asian and Jewish dialogue; and asylum and refugee work.

In order to reinvigorate the community with traditional Jewish values of social justice, JCORE has devised an education project called 'Jewish Identity and Values in a Multi-Racial Society'. Central to this is the publication of two race equality packs for schools, one for primary and one for secondary aged children. A publication for pre-school children is in the pipeline. These publications should underpin the curriculum that all Jewish children receive. The pack encourages Jewish schoolchildren to see their responsibility individually and collectively to not only combat racism, but to contribute to the development of Britain as a thriving multicultural society, vibrant and creative in its diversity.

The point of the pack is to enhance Jewish children's understanding of the relevance of Jewish values and historical experience to the issue of racism. I have been in a number of Jewish schools when, in response to my question 'What does Judaism have to say about our responsibility towards others?', I have met with stony silence. There has been a failure within Jewish education to demonstrate the connections between being a Jew and being socially concerned, involved and responsible.

There also needs to be an intelligent approach to the similarities and differences between being Jewish and being a member of another minority group. But comparisons between our experience and the experience of other groups can lead to a senseless vying for supremacy in the suffering stakes: who scores the most points, the victims of slavery or the Holocaust?

However, to make these connections in thoughtful ways is to help towards an understanding of how all kinds of prejudice, stereotyping and scapegoating do damage from a psychological point of view and in terms of affecting people's life chances in this society.

Making connections is part of what our Black-Jewish Forum is about. A small group of Black, Jewish and Asian people, the Forum meets every six weeks to discuss issues, campaign for more effective race equality legislation, and write letters to the press on issues such as the Asylum Act. The Forum is publishing an exhibition, an education

pack and a website documenting the history and experience of Asian, African-Caribbean and Jewish people in Britain. It is a comparative study focusing on the interaction between the groups and uncovering hidden histories that have been neglected.

We have also been actively involved in refugee issues for many years. This involvement is born of the belief that, as a community comprised of former refugees and economic migrants ourselves, we should have a special commitment and understanding of these issues. We work on a practical level, for example, organising a mobile counselling service for some of the former inmates of concentration camps in Bosnia; helping refugee doctors to professionally re-qualify; and providing support for unaccompanied children who come to Britain as refugees. We also work on a campaigning level to contribute to the debate on unfair asylum legislation.

All our activities and campaigns point to one of the most important and pressing tasks we face within the Jewish community: rehabilitating the very concepts of asylum and refuge which have suffered such intense distortion and assault by the press and by successive governments. Why should these issues concern us so much as Jews? Firstly, because they are basic, fundamental human rights issues that are being steamrollered with hardly a dissenting voice in the current climate of fear and distrust of 'the other'. Secondly, because when these concepts are denigrated, our own history, in a sense, is being denigrated. Without portals open to us as immigrants fleeing persecution, poverty and a lack of opportunity over the last couple of centuries, Western Europe, the USA, South Africa and Australia would be very different places today. And many more of our forebears would have suffered miserable fates.

JCORE's aspirations today go beyond this race equality agenda. For the organisation to be truly successful, concern for social justice must become a more integral part of Jewish identity, and be reflected in our values and our interaction with the rest of society. This is vital not only for what it demonstrates to the wider community but also, perhaps more importantly, for our sense of what it means to be a Jew in today's diverse Britain.

REACHING OUT TO OTHERS: THE ROLE OF A SOCIAL ACTION AGENDA IN JEWISH EDUCATION

Dr Reuven Gal

I have been involved in the Voluntary Youth Service and the relationship between it and personal growth for many years. My understanding of the relationship came to my attention through a good friend and colleague, Simon Caplan, who made the connection for me between personal growth, volunteering and service, and Jewish education.

In the last few decades, voluntary service programmes have been a growing phenomenon across the globe. Their main goals and rationale are quite obvious. They vary from education to welfare, and touch on environmental protection, public education, assisting health centres, reinforcing emergency services, and so on. They vary in length from a few weeks to six months to a year, and sometimes even two years. They can be completely voluntary, or completely compulsory, for instance, when they are a substitute for military service as is the case in Germany. Sometimes they are only selectively compulsory, for example, in many countries where university studies are subsidised by the state, students are required to give one year of service to their country's volunteer programme.

Some of the programmes are focused within their own communities; some are cross-communal, and some function regionally, nationally, or internationally. Regardless of their specific characteristics, the rationale for voluntary youth service programmes is quite

general: they are designed to achieve combined benefit, for both the serving youth and the served communities; they often utilise low-cost but highly committed manpower; and they are aimed at what are commonly considered 'good causes'.

Jewish voluntary service programmes have a further rationale, which stretches beyond simple welfare and education. Jewish programmes are generally founded on a central concept within the social action agenda, the traditional Jewish concept of *tzedakah*.

For me, it is critical to include the issue of *tzedakah* when we are talking about identity. According to a definition by Rambam in the Mishnah Torah, the strength of one's Jewish identity can be evaluated or assessed by the depth to which the concepts of *tzedek* and *tzedakah* are not only preached but are also practised. It is not surprising, therefore, that we find *tzedakah* activities in almost every Jewish community.

What is surprising, however, is that in the Jewish educational field, it is rare to find structured volunteer programmes that engage large numbers of students and young people in *tzedakah* enterprises that are so closely linked to the development of a mature Jewish identity.

There are several developmental aspects that come to mind when one talks about such programmes. The first is what is usually called in psychology 'critical periods'. Critical periods are like 'windows of time' in the development of young people, where the personality really shapes and grows. According to Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, people go through eight stages, each of which involves a developmental crisis. Depending on how they overcome that crisis, they will develop favourably or unfavourably.

Two particular stages – adolescence and early adulthood – intrigue me. These are the two periods in Erikson's scheme that relate directly to the voluntary youth service age bracket. The crisis young people go through during adolescence relates to their identity, and their confusion over it. If one goes through this period successfully, the result, as Erikson describes it, is 'fidelity'. It is, according to Erikson, 'the ability to see oneself as a unique and integrated person and to sustain loyalties' both to oneself and one's own values, and to

others. If one struggles unsuccessfully through this stage, confusion emerges over two key identity questions: 'Who am I?', and 'To what am I loyal?'

In early adulthood, around the age of 19 or 20, the issue is intimacy versus isolation. The successful outcome at this stage is the ability to commit oneself in terms of identity, relationships with others, and so on. If one is not successful, the result is the avoidance of such relationships and commitments.

According to Abraham Maslow's 'hierarchy of needs' – another classical psychological framework – everyone has several fundamental needs. The first ones are physiological requirements and safety. Once people feel safe, they need to fulfil psychological needs such as belonging, love, self-esteem and recognition. Only if these are fulfilled will they strive for the higher level of self-actualisation. In later years, Maslow even added an additional level that he called 'the transcendental need'.

The remarkable thing about voluntary service programming is that it is perfectly designed to meet these psychological and higher needs. The main characteristics of this type of programming are as follows:

Independence: If a young man or woman joins a programme like this, there is an opportunity to develop independence, get away from home, and to do things on one's own.

Group life: These programmes also allow young people the opportunity to both enjoy and be challenged by a group.

Coping with difficulties: Serving in impoverished areas, both in the western and third worlds, provides young people with the experience of genuinely empathising with those less fortunate than themselves.

Opportunities for success and accomplishment: Voluntary service programming offers unique opportunities to succeed, accomplish, and develop a strong sense of individual achievement.

Focusing on altruism: The programmes clearly focus on giving, being generous, and providing for others.

Appreciation and reinforcement: They offer important opportunities for young people to gain appreciation and reinforcement for their work.

Grown-up expectations: Being placed in charge of a group of children, young people are asked to take responsibility and live up to the expectations placed on them.

Gender interaction: In the voluntary service environment, gender interaction is qualitatively different from more general social interaction, and individuals are required to take full responsibility for the relationships between one another.

Unfortunately, there are very few serious reports on the impact of the voluntary youth service, in either the Jewish or the wider world. The only systematic evaluation I have found of a Jewish volunteer programme was conducted by Steven M. Cohen together with Judith Schor, looking at Makor in New York and JIA in Boston. Very significantly, their report clearly reveals that the emphasis in both cases is less on social skills than identity, caring and reinforcing one's own affiliation with Jewish community.

Their report, along with my own personal experience and observations, indicates that the outcomes of volunteer programmes are clear:

- 1 They help to strengthen young people's sense of citizenship and affiliation. People emerge from these programmes with a clear sense of what it is to be a partner or a member of a community, or to be a citizen, and so on.
- 2 They help young people to grow in self-confidence and self-efficacy.
- 3 They enable young people to recognise that they have a locus of control – that is, they can affect things and make them happen.

- 4 They enable young people to develop leadership skills.
- 5 They help young people to develop social and emotional intelligence – sensitivity towards, and empathy and sympathy for, others.
- 6 Through engagement with these activities, young people often develop heightened levels of sexual maturity.

The Jewish parallels of the psychological and developmental effects are also clear:

- 1 Spending a year, or even less, with one's fellow Jews, particularly if they come from different countries and different traditions of Jewish life, almost inevitably serves to strengthen one's Jewish identity.
- 2 Voluntary youth service programmes often attract non-affiliated sections of the Jewish community, and help young people to develop a sense of Jewish affiliation.
- 3 The programmes also help young people to develop a sense of mutual responsibility – the ideas of *kol Yisrael chaverim* or *kol Yisrael arevim zeh la'zeh* move from theoretical dictums to practical issues.
- 4 Commitment levels to *tikkun olam* and philanthropic giving are enhanced. As Steven Cohen has shown in his study, the people who volunteer become better philanthropists and more generous providers.

To my mind, voluntary youth service programmes are the most critical means of developing the Jewish identities of young people today. As the Chief Rabbi Professor Jonathan Sacks has said: 'The more we give, the more we grow.' This is the essence. By giving and, through giving, growing, young people will not only develop their maturity and personality, they will also enhance their Jewish identities.

SPIRITUAL EXPLORATION: FOLLOWING MY HEAD OR MY HEART?

Dr Zvi Bekerman

I worry about many strange things in life. For example, I am terrified by words. Words dominate us more than we dominate them, thus I take etymology tremendously seriously. ‘Curriculum’, for example, is a funny word. It is the arena in the Roman circus on which the chariot (also from curriculum) that is pulled by horses goes around.

‘Spirit’ is also a funny word and it frightens me to death because it belongs to a family of words that is alarming. Spirit is ‘breath’: translated from the Greek *pneuma*. It is not *ruach*. It is much closer to the Hebrew *nefesh*, blood, which is something material rather than spiritual. And *psyxi*, which is Greek for *nefesh*, also means blood, although modern psychologists use it to refer to the mind. So for a long time, ‘spirit’ was understood as a material thing. But, over the past 400 to 500 years, as with many other words, it has started to be understood as something much more abstract and non-material.

In the past, ‘spirit’ was so material that it actually meant people. Bishops, for example, were spiritual. And similarly, certain communities were valued as spiritual. Spiritual was also a verb, and, as a verb is always an action, it was never an abstract concept. So I am concerned by the following question: how did we end up in a world in which we fall in love with an abstraction – spirituality – a concept that was previously an action?

We’ve been told that there is a lot of spirituality about. Certainly for some Jewish thinkers, this is a cause for concern, because it sug-

gests that the individual is searching for self-meaning or self-fulfilment alone. And it appears they are right to be concerned. According to one of the 1680 definitions offered in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'self' means 'anti-God' or 'anti-Christ'. The world of modernity, that we all cherish and in which we want our children to become 'autonomous selves', seems paradoxically to have been a blasphemy 400 or so years ago! Could there be anything worse in England in 1680 than being accused of being anti-God or anti-Christ?

So how can it be that the 'self', which was formerly a curse, could become a blessing within 300 to 400 years? When I look back on that period of history, I learn that during that time both the nation state was born, and the great modern universalist Platonic–Cartesian philosophy conquered the imagination of the west. The nation state was created to allow universal values to flourish. It was also used to develop an industrial society that exploited 'me', the 'self', in order to thrive.

The nation state, including Israel by the way – let that be very clear – cannot accept anyone between itself (the sovereign) and the citizen. The nation state needs individuality; it needs individual selves because nothing can stand between itself and the citizen – no group, no faith, no tribe, no guild, no nothing.

The thing that really terrifies me about this is not the historical development itself, but rather the implications of this change in the notion of 'self'. Consider the development of antisemitism over the same period. During the Inquisition, you were still lucky enough that if you changed the way you acted, you could be saved. By the time we reach the Nazi era, there was no such option. Once a Jew, you were always a Jew. Your Jewishness was part of your very essence, and it was inescapable. So in the Nazi era, 'self' becomes essentialised and thus racist.

Viewed through this lens, I start to ask myself: in what ways do 'they' want to kill me now? And I am really terrified by that. Let's not forget: in the USA at the turn of the twentieth century, the word spirituality was strongly connected with Catholic and Jewish groups doing those things that the sovereign state would not do. At that time spirituality meant helping people from one's own community,

because the great United States of America knew for sure that Blacks, Jews, Irish – indeed all ethnic minorities – were second class citizens. They were nothing. At that time, the mainstream view was to build schools to train ‘them’ – ethnic minorities – to be more like ‘us’ – the sovereign.

But then, over the past 50 years, the world started to offer me spirituality. And now, the spiritualists tell me that I have to deal with my internal self, which frankly is simply a sure way to stop me from looking at the world. Spirituality is merely a means of encouraging me to focus on myself. When will Jews realise that to be relevant to themselves they have to be relevant to the world?

When I try to pull all of this together, partly etymologically and partly historically, it leads to me the following conclusion: we, the Jewish people (although I don’t think that there is a ‘we’ for Jews) ought to represent a different epistemology that clearly states that people are what they do. Not what they feel. Not what they sense. Nothing other than what they do.

Most rabbis – Orthodox or other – would agree with that. I am surprised that they don’t always take that seriously enough. My sense is that, rather than raising people towards spirituality, we ought to raise our children to do acts of goodness, because people ultimately are what they do. No Jew is a Jew because he feels so, or because he spiritually believes he is. Jews are Jews by their acts, in much the same way as Christians are Christians by their acts, or English people are English people by their acts. Nothing else.

Is textual study an act? I do not think that the importance of textual study ever sustained the Jewish people. Most Jewish people throughout history had little to do with texts, yet they still survived. There is nothing behind texts, in spite of what we are continuously told. It’s all theory. Since when has Judaism, as a civilisation or culture, allowed itself to be narrowed down to fifteen pages, or more, of Talmud? And this whole discussion about spirituality similarly merely serves to narrow down the perspective of what we believe to be Jewish. Since when have Jews only dealt with *tefilah*? What’s going on?

Jewish education seems to be the place where people teach texts as if they would like the children to look like texts – instead of as the place where they would like the children to act like those who wrote the texts. That is the choice we should make. Do we want them to be similar to the letters written on paper, or to Rabbi Akiva and his actions? When we make up our minds on exactly what it is that we want, we might start to look better.

Likewise, raising our children to simply believe they are Jews, or to have faith in Judaism, or anything else, doesn't seem to work. It has not worked in the liberal Jewish world for the last 200 years (or at least many liberal Jews complain about the outcomes). Our concern should not be about how to *daven* better. Not that *davening* is unimportant. But even *tefilah* comes from *l'hafil*. Fundamentally, it is an activity, a reflective activity. So our educational task should be focused on *doing*; on doing anything that can get us a better world, whatever that may be. We should just try to do good things.

If education will become the acts of doing, emphasising the material action and not the ideal abstraction, maybe we will get people to become what they do. So let us go back a little bit to etymology and history. First comes the good deed. Then let us deal with the mind, if it exists. But let us come down from the world of abstract philosophy, and start working now for a better world through our deeds and actions.

SPIRITUAL EXPLORATION: FOLLOWING MY HEAD OR MY HEART?

Rabbi Dr Michael Shire

Writing about the concept of spirituality, Rabbi Art Green noted a recent classified ad in *The New York Times* which stated: 'DJF [divorced Jewish female], spiritual, not religious. Seeking like-minded man.'

Green suggests that this woman is an icon of our age, and if we are to understand contemporary spirituality, it is critical to understand what she means by 'spiritual, not religious'. He suggests that she may have grown up in a Jewish environment and attended *cheder*, annual family *sedarim*, and shul on high holydays. But none of these ever engaged her. Rather, she has possibly found spirituality in Reike healing and African dance. She regularly attends holistic seminars on the Greek islands and she goes to yoga every week.

She is not undisciplined about her spirituality. She has been a vegan for ten years. She also hasn't failed to understand the concept of 'community'. Her friends are made up from her women's group and they meet every month for lunch and an in-depth conversation. So why is it that when she seeks meaning in her life, her own spiritual heritage has nothing to say to her and she can find no connection with Judaism?

In his book *Stages of Faith*, James Fowler wrote that faith is 'an activity of meaning'. He meant that faith is not just about expressing a belief that God exists and that all things are therefore settled forever, but rather that faith is a human activity that seeks to explore the relationship between us and God in an ever-changing and dynamic manner.

Fowler describes faith in five different ways. First, faith is the

primary focus of a person's being. It is the core of our being and the way in which a person makes meaning in his or her life. It is, in a sense, the first substantial thing that you do when you get up in the morning – it is the primary core of what we are all about.

Secondly, faith is an activity of knowing and interpreting life. It is not just about intellectual belief or even about observance. It is an orientation of each and every person, rather than a characteristic of a system or of a religious inheritance.

His third point is that faith is relational. It is formed, developed and nurtured in community, particularly in places where there are shared centres of trust and value.

Fourthly, faith is dynamic. It is ever-changing, and therefore it is either growing or diminishing. It is impossible to stand still in faith, so even profound doubt is a component of a search for faith.

Therefore, based on the first four descriptions, Fowler argues that faith must be a universal phenomenon. It must apply to every single human being. In fact, it is an inherent characteristic of humanity, not necessarily through a belief in God or adherence to a religious tradition, but it is a core of human activity. And if a core of human activity is to make meaning in one's life, it must therefore be universal and apply to every single person.

Much of this thinking about faith is echoed in the way Jewish tradition understands the concept of *emunah*. Jewish sources never define faith as merely affirming a set of beliefs. *Emunah* is rather about the placing of trust, from the root *aman*. It is an activity and an attitude that is changing all the time. In the Bible, *emunah* is understood as putting trust in God's reality, and as the idea that both humanity and God can be trustworthy. In many respects, the whole biblical narrative is about this. When is God trustworthy? When is humanity trustworthy? And when are they not? And how does this relationship play itself out? Our task is to struggle to build that trust between ourselves and God, and to develop the confidence that it will be reciprocated. So we are naturally called *Yisrael* – the ones who struggle with God – as opposed to Islam, which is submission to God, or Christianity, which is love of God.

Rabbinic Judaism denotes various aspects of how faith can be increased or diminished. Indeed, the rabbis instituted two activities that would nurture, refine and develop this trusting activity. One of *tefilah* – prayer, or a form of talking to God, and the other of *talmud Torah* – study, or the manner in which God talks to us through our reading of the text.

So far, I have avoided the word ‘spiritual’. While I have no problems with it, it does have a bad name in parts of the Jewish community, particularly among those who regard it as individualistic, other-worldly, devoid of content – especially moral content – or even as dabbling in non-Jewish practices.

This critique of spirituality may be problematic for us, especially in Britain, because every school is required to show its progress in what is called ‘spiritual development’. In seeking this, the British government has drawn upon the notion of a universal conception of faith – à la Fowler – not necessarily connected to religious traditions but as a conception of the making of meaning.

What makes it even more problematic is that different people interpret spirituality in different ways. An Ofsted school inspector, having witnessed a very raucous and spirited *tefilah*, commented to my colleague Helena Miller: ‘Well, that wasn’t very spiritual, was it? Their heads weren’t bowed and they weren’t quiet and contemplative at all.’

Spiritus, from the Latin, is the breath of Genesis I. It is the *ruach haKodesh* that makes us human. Spirituality may, indeed, be a feature of being human. Jewish spirituality must be the way we live out that human characteristic in our own particularistic fashion.

Following Martin Buber, I choose to call this Jewish conception ‘religiosity’, which combines what Mike Rosenak calls ‘the explicit and the implicit notions of spirituality’. Let me define that. ‘Explicit’ draws upon what the eleventh-century philosopher Bakhya Ibn Pekudah called ‘the duties of the limbs’ – *khovot ha’ikarim* – those activities that we carry out for religious purposes: *mitzvot*, *davening* – all the acts of Jewish life. ‘Implicit’ means the duties of the heart – *khovot halevavot* – those inner attitudes and spiritual virtues that provide meaning, *kavanah*, a core sense of purpose.

Bakhya said that when we bring together *khovot ha'ikarim* and *khovot halevavot* in juxtaposition, then we act *tamim* – in a whole-hearted or perhaps 'pious' fashion. So Art Green, drawing upon this definition, defines Jewish spirituality as both 'striving for the presence of God', and the more active 'fashioning a life of holiness appropriate to such striving'.

However, it remains difficult to know how to enable this to occur in Jewish educational settings. My own research demonstrates that there is a great deal of spirituality going on but we have little conception of what it is and what to do with it. I interviewed teenagers in day schools, *chedarim*, and summer camps, and on Israel programmes, and discovered three phases of curricula that enhance religiosity. I called them 'encounter', 'instruction' and 'reflection'.

Encounter – a kind of Buberian term – occurs on each and all of these programmes, although probably most commonly on summer camps and Israel programmes. Students, *chanichim*, teachers, *madrachim*, all experience moments of heightened emotion, concentration, wonder and awe throughout their programmes, whether it is at the *Kotel*, during *havdalah* at camp, in day school *teflah*, or in a song session at *cheder*. As a result of this type of encounter, students express a closeness to God and a sense of God's presence.

Instruction about God, about the nature of God, about God's role in history, combined with the reading of Jewish texts to allow students to examine their personal beliefs and attitudes, helps to give content to young people's religiosity.

The problem is that these two phases of curriculum are rarely connected and are therefore left unrealised in the students' process of making meaning. What unifies and integrates them – Bakhya's *tamim* – is the element of reflection, where students are prompted to reflect on their encounters and instruction, and where they share their deepest concerns and critically reflect on their experiences, with both teachers and peers. In the light of what they have been taught, they may begin to articulate questions about their religiosity, and respond in a tentative and episodic way in developing their sense of making meaning.

Reflection is an intimate, imaginative, highly personal activity that should take place in a supportive environment that allows speculation, exploration, personal discovery, doubt – very importantly, doubt – and affirmation. Reflection helps to name and understand the experiences of the maturing of faith, and is the glue that binds encounter and instruction. All three phases of the curriculum are necessary for the enhancement of religiosity in Jewish educational programming, and therefore have implications for the training and the role of Jewish educators who design, plan and implement these programmes.

I believe that maturing of faith is an integral and necessary part of human development. Fowler, like Heschel, understands faith as an act of the whole person, of mind, will and heart. It is not something achieved once in our lifetime, but something we continually engage in to make meaning out of the experience of our lives. Therefore, as we grow, we come to know and redefine our religious values and beliefs. Faith involves a total person's growth, and by understanding this growth we can begin to talk of religious development and, consequently, engage in religious education.

CIVICS: SHOULD BRITISH JEWS SWEAR ALLEGIANCE TO BRITAIN?

Clive Lawton

Your national identity, like your family, is one of those things that is thrust upon you. You are born into it, and the starting assumption is often that you ought to be loyal to it. But is that a reasonable assumption? And, if it is, should our loyalty to the state be conditional or unconditional?

If our loyalty to Britain is conditional upon something, it ceases to be loyalty at all. Instead, it becomes self-interest, or coincidence of interest, or possibly common cause. But if it's unconditional, we effectively vow to stand by Britain regardless. As Jews, we often argue that loyalty means sticking by our core principles even when things become really difficult. Much of the current debate around attitudes towards Israel centres on this issue. Of course, different people have different understandings of what loyalty means. For some, loyalty is about standing by the individual or nation under all circumstances; for others it may be about deliberately standing against the individual or nation as a means of effecting change. Perhaps loyalty ultimately means not walking away, not saying 'I don't care', 'it's not my business' or 'I'm not interested'.

Loyalty is often most challenged at times of insecurity. When we feel secure in our relationships, our loyalty to our parents, children or spouse is not in question. It is only when those relationships feel uncertain that our loyalty to them starts to be in doubt. So if immigrant loyalty to Britain is in question today, we know that underneath all of the debate, there are genuine feelings of insecurity. In short, when

countries become passionate about loyalties, they are not feeling strong in themselves.

I was very struck by an experience I had in Australia recently. A South African woman who had moved to Australia two or three years ago attended her citizenship ceremony while I was there. The day before, she proudly announced that tomorrow she was going to become an Australian citizen. And the following day she went to a ceremony in a city building, listened to a dignitary make some comments about the importance of the moment, and was welcomed to Australia as a new citizen. I was mostly struck by the simple fact that she had a ceremony to go to, because, to the best of my knowledge, people who become British citizens aren't required to attend an event at all. They have to pick up documentation from somewhere, but there is no ceremony, no moment of crossing the line. What struck me even more was the way in which she was congratulated and welcomed by her friends and colleagues over the following few days. It was a real moment, shared with others. I can't imagine and don't know of any such event in British life.

How does someone become British? Technically, it's very easy. You get a passport. Once you have a British passport, you're British. You can be a British Asian, a British Pakistani, a British Jew, a British anything you like. But you don't actually have to do anything. You don't have to salute any flag or anything else like that.

There's something strangely 'grown-up' and self-confident about the British attitude, which, I should add, is starting to erode. The British attitude, certainly in the second half of the twentieth century, has been extremely accommodating. Britain has effectively said to potential immigrants: 'It's fine if you want to come here. You'll settle in. It'll take time. Don't expect to become British overnight or even over two generations or four.' It's as if Britain understands that genuine loyalty is not something that can be created through a simple ceremony. To become genuinely loyal takes generations. Gaining a British passport is simple; becoming English, or Scottish, or a Scouser takes generations.

There's an interesting parallel here. We don't think it's easy to

become Jewish either. You have to take an oath of allegiance. You have to go to a lot of classes and salute a lot of flags. Adopting an identity, as opposed to a national political status, is a long, slow process. We should be surprised if anybody thinks it's easy. Indeed, it might be entirely reasonable for a Jew to say 'of course I can't be English: I respect it too much', or 'of course I can't be Scottish: I understand how deep that is.'

I remember a Sikh friend of mind talking to me about the power that Jews have in Britain. You must know that we appear very powerful to everybody else. We think we're helpless; they think we're powerful – that's why we're not telling anybody what we really think. This Sikh chap said to me that he was very struck by the fact that there were so many Jews in the House of Commons. He said that there are as many Sikhs in Britain as there are Jews, and wanted to know how Sikhs could achieve the same level of power and participation in government as Jews have.

And I said: 'Well, it's very simple. You come over here and you wait 300 years.' Because of course these things haven't happened overnight at all. It's a long, slow process. The USA has a written constitution. Britain has a history. Things in Britain come into being over time, and hardly anybody can spot how they happened.

Britain also has a wonderful capacity to underestimate itself. It's one of the most resilient qualities of the British. I am very impressed by the British incredulity as to why anybody should want to try and smuggle themselves into Britain. We have this strange mixed view. On the one hand we believe that there are millions of them out there all desperately trying to get in, and we haven't noticed that, in the great scheme of things, most people would rather live in Germany. But then when someone does get in, we wonder: why on earth would they want to come here? It's dirty and smelly and the weather's lousy and so on. I really like that. It's actually very Jewish. Jews can never imagine why anybody should want to convert to Judaism, even though we generally love being part of the Jewish people. That wonderful ambivalence seems to me to immediately give Jews and Britons common cause.

That common cause ought to propel us to think carefully about the nature of our contribution to Britain. Jews have a responsibility to play a part in wider society. I am struck by the large numbers of Jews who volunteer to serve as magistrates on the Bench on which I sit. Why do we do that? We do that because it's a civic responsibility, and we have a duty to play our part. The responsibility to play a part in society and enrich the society in which we live seems to me to be a fundamental Jewish imperative. I would hope that we teach our Jewish youngsters that they should do that too.

However, I fear that we don't. In many respects, as Professor Aviezer Ravitky has claimed, we are teaching them to almost demonise the non-Jewish world and to treat it with fear and distrust. There are members of our community who maintain that we can use wider society, but we shouldn't help it. This is reprehensible, and as long as we keep doing it, we should expect the society in which we live to distrust our behaviour in relation to it, because our relationship with it is temporary and self-serving.

Many years ago, when I was about 14 years old, my dad taught me a lesson I will never forget. He had been struggling to build up his own business as a company registration agent for some time. Life had not been good for us. Financially, it had been extremely hard – my bar mitzvah money had gone, and my brother's bar mitzvah money, which didn't amount to much in the first place, had been shared between the two of us. But my father's business was just starting to turn itself around.

There was a general election coming up. My father had always been a Labour supporter, and at the time the Labour Party had made it clear that, should it come to power, it would adjust tax law so that there would be a lot less value in becoming a limited company than there had been previously. For us that meant that if the Labour Party won, my father's business would be destroyed just as it was starting to turn a profit.

I asked my dad how he was going to vote. And he said: 'Why do you ask? Labour, of course.' In those days, there was an 'of course' to the way you voted. And I said: 'But Labour will change the law.'

And my father said something that I will never forget: 'When you vote, you vote for your country, not for yourself.' That message ought to be a central part of our education as Jews.

CIVICS: SHOULD BRITISH JEWS SWEAR ALLEGIANCE TO BRITAIN?

Dr Robert Rabinowitz

The question in the title reminds me of a somewhat tiresome discussion that would frequently take place in my youth movement days. If there was a war between Israel and Britain, which side would you be on? My problem with the question was always that, for me at least, it depended upon a whole host of factors. What is the war about? Why are they fighting? Who started the conflict? Is Israel threatening to blow up London? Or is Britain threatening to take away Israel's water?

The debates never mentioned context because they presumed an either/or between Britishness and Jewishness. This is based on a flawed way of thinking about identity that assumes each of us is an empty space that can be filled up with either Jewishness or Britishness. Ideally we'd be all British or all Jewish, but we have this conflict within us that complicates everything.

The thing about space is that it's exclusive. If an object occupies a particular space, nothing else can occupy the same space. That is why it is a flawed metaphor: because it assumes that where there is Britishness or Jewishness, it has to be either/or. Identity is much more complex than that. There are tensions, complexities and inconsistencies between different parts of our identity.

A few years ago, my brother went to see Israel play football against Argentina in Tel Aviv. The stadium was full of Israeli Jews originally from Argentina wearing their blue and white striped shirts and cheering for Argentina. Many of these people had risked their

lives for Israel while serving in the IDF and many paid a very large proportion of their income in taxes to the Israeli state, and there was no sense that their cheering for Argentina demonstrated disloyalty to Israel. So, contra Norman Tebbit, we see that identities are much more complex than such simple questions allow.

There is a parallel problem with the way we often conduct social studies of the Jewish people. We typically ask people closed questions with only a small fixed range of options for answers. For instance: do you go to shul once a week, once a month, or three times a year? Or: are you Orthodox, traditional, Reform, just Jewish, or secular? What happens if I go to shul when I feel like it, and that is constantly changing? Or what happens if I can't put myself into any one of the denominational categories, because I am none of them? Identity is more complex than the boxes on a questionnaire allow, so we cannot set up simple questions and simple tests and assume to get anything useful out of them.

So identity is a complex thing. With that preamble, I shall begin to answer the question by relaying three recent observations about Britain.

When I came to London soon after September 11, I was astonished by the things that I heard British Muslims saying on the TV and radio. I could not believe that people were saying such anti-American, anti-British, anti-western things in Britain. It was mind-blowing that this country allowed people to speak with such derision, not just about particular policies, but of the whole British way of life.

Then, when I was back in England for Limmud in December, I heard about the now famous edition of *Question Time* where Will Self, a British-Jewish writer, challenged Melanie Phillips, another British-Jewish writer, on the 'war between Israel and Britain' question. I couldn't believe that this was on national TV.

And then, the same week, I watched Robert Kilroy-Silk ask a rabbi who was a guest on his TV programme whether circumcision was not a form of mutilation, rather like female circumcision.

All of these stories share something in common, what I am going to call the problem of 'outsiderness' in Britain. This is the difficulty

that those who have come in from the outside, or are perceived to have come in, have in being fully accepted in the UK, whether or not they try to maintain traditional forms of identity. There is a sense of outsidership that clings to them.

So what does our allegiance to Britain mean? Is it allegiance to the place in which we were born? Is it allegiance to the values that Britain stands for? Is it allegiance to an ethnic people, the British? Surely it's not absolute commitment to any of these, because otherwise there would be no room for conscientious objectors, dissidents, or people who choose to leave the country because they feel it has betrayed some of its core values.

Part of the problem is that Britain doesn't have a very clear sense of itself. To swear allegiance to Britain, Britain would have to stand for something. At the present time, it is unclear what it means to be British.

The USA has no such problems. At the Museum of Immigration on Ellis Island in New York, there is a video in which people talk about their reasons for coming to the USA. There are really only two. The first is that they want to make money and they don't want some tyrant, government bureaucrat or bully-boy to be able arbitrarily to take it away from them. The second thing is that they want to be able to say what is on their minds without having to worry about the consequences.

To get into the USA, all of these people – along with all school-age children – have to swear an oath of allegiance. It is clear then that the oath of allegiance is a way into citizenship. But, in essence, people can turn up and whether they are Indian, Latin American, Korean, or whatever, as long as they are committed to economic and political freedom and are willing to work hard, they can become Americans.

Obviously, that is a simplistic view, but there is clearly an ethnic element in British identity which makes the American model a difficult one for us to emulate. That notion of ethnicity adds a complexity to British identity which the USA doesn't have. What exactly is the difference between being English, Scottish or Welsh, and how is each

of these identities interwoven under the title of Britishness? I know that American identity has its own complications and excludes many people, but fundamentally, it's a very different concept.

The more exclusive nature of British identity is revealed in the terms of the debate about oaths of allegiance. By and large, the demand is only that people with ethnic roots elsewhere in the world be required to take such an oath. It is, of course, inconceivable that such an oath would actually make people more loyal to Britain. If anything, it would only reinforce the sense of 'outsiderness' that leads to the alienation from British life and values demonstrated by the inflammatory statements of radical Muslims after September 11.

Perhaps the first step we as British Jews can take in thinking about these sorts of issues is to acknowledge the flip side of the difficulty of breaking into British society. When I have asked British students of mine to identify five events that are key to understanding Jewish identity, many choose the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel as their final two and almost nobody mentions any events from British Jewish history. This seems to indicate that we neither feel thoroughly at home here, nor have we worked out what it means to be British Jews. There is the mainstream of Jewish history and we don't know where being British fits into it.

In contrast, the Museum of Jewish Heritage in Manhattan tells a very different story about American Jewish identity through its three storeys. The first storey explores Judaism past – Judaism one hundred years ago, all in Europe. It is generally very miserable and Jews are always being forced to choose between their nationality and their Jewishness. The second storey is about the Holocaust, and the message is clear: this is where the story of European Jewry ends.

And then the top floor is about Jewish renewal, and it covers life in Israel and the USA. The stunning thing about the top floor is that it is completely underwhelming, until you come out of the exhibit and you see a remarkable view, out over New York harbour, the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. That's when you get the message. Our past was in Europe and those places where they made us choose between our Jewishness and our nationality. Then they decimated us in the

Holocaust. The answer to the problems of our past is to be found in the USA. It's like *yetziat Mitzrayim*. We were oppressed. Then we became free, and now we're in the Promised Land. In contrast, there is no British symbol that could serve as the ending to a British Jewish narrative. Big Ben, or the Houses of Parliament, or any Jewish institution, simply wouldn't work in the same way. There is a disconnect, not only on their side, but on our side. Both need to be addressed.

Perhaps we ought to try to address it. We are definitely somewhat alienated from our Britishness – we're somehow divided, things don't fit together. But as we think about what it means to be a British Jew, we should also think about what we, the Jewish people, or the British-Jewish community, or Judaism, have to contribute to what it means to be British. We ought to develop a vision of what British society could be, and what a Jewish contribution to that society might look like. At the heart of that project stand a number of key questions: what sort of oath of allegiance would we take? Who would take it? How could we ensure that it wouldn't serve to divide British people, but would rather unite them around whatever it means to be British?

A project focusing on these questions would be a fascinating exercise. And who knows – it may even come to be something we might ultimately choose to include amongst our top five events in Jewish history.

PART THREE
IN SEARCH OF VISION

D'VAR TORAH

Dr Raphael Zarum

תלמוד בבלי - שבת פטו:

אמר רב חונא: היה בדרך או בנדבר, ואינו יודע אימתו שבת? מנה ששה ימים וששה יום אחד, חזיא בר רב אמר: משנה יום אחד ימנה ששה, במאי קמיפלגי? בר סברו כברייתא דר' עזריה, ור' סברו: כאדם הראשון...

אמר רבא: בכל יום יום עושה לו כדי פרנסתו, בר מההוא יומא, וההוא יומא לימיה דעביד מאתמול שתי פרנסות.

הדילמא מאתמול שבת הוא? אלא: כה יום יום עושה לו פרנסתו, אפילו ההוא יומא, וההוא יומא במאי פנסי ליה? בקידושא ואבדלהא.

Rabbi Huna said: If a person is on a journey or in the wilderness and does not know when it is Shabbat, what should they do? They should count six days and then observe one day. Chiya, son of Rav, said: They should observe one day and then count six. What is the dispute about? One Master holds that it is like the creation of the world; the other Master holds that it is like Adam, the first person ...

Rava said: Every day the person should only do for themselves sufficient for their basic needs, except on that [Shabbat] day. And on that [Shabbat] day should they die? They should have prepared double their needs on the previous day.

Perhaps the previous day (Friday) was actually Shabbat? So then every day they should do for themselves sufficient for their needs, even on that [Shabbat] day.

Then how may that [Shabbat] day be recognised? By Kiddush and Havdalah.

This text relates directly to the themes of this book. As you will see, it is about envisioning a path in a post-modern world. Though it is a legal text from the Talmud (tractate Shabbat, 69b), I want to read into its underlying philosophy. We begin with a question which seems like one of those *klotskashes* (bizarre queries) that only Talmudic Rabbis could ask:

Rabbi Huna said: If a person is on a journey or in the wilderness and does not know when it is Shabbat, what should they do?

An intriguing scenario. Imagine waking up in the middle of nowhere and not knowing what day it is. How often does *that* happen? This question might be about not being able to find out the date of Shabbat, or it could really be about being so distant from tradition that you are not interested in when Shabbat occurs. The context of our text deals with the legal consequences of forgetting the laws of Shabbat. But our question is more fundamental because it is about forgetting Shabbat *itself*.

Unlike other time measurements, calculating the day of Shabbat from your physical surroundings is impossible. You can know what time of the day it is, because you see the position of the sun in the sky. You can calculate how far through a month you are, because you follow the nightly waxing and waning of the moon. And if you are any good at astronomy you can know what time of year it is, because you recognise the orientation of the star map in the sky. But the date of Shabbat eludes you.

What is the origin of the seven-day week? Torah teaches that it comes from the Creation of the world. Historians of ancient civilisations say that the counting of seven comes from the seven planets in our solar system that can be seen with the naked eye – the Sun, the Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus and Saturn. These seven planets are immortalised in the names of the days of the week in many languages. Note then that both agree that the seven-day week does not come from a cycle in nature but from a conscious counting.

Anyway, back to the wilderness. What are your options?

*They should count six days and then observe one day;
whereas Chiya son of Rav said: They should observe one day
and then count six.*

Two options: live and work for six days from 'the day you forgot the day' and then keep Shabbat, or keep Shabbat that very night and then live six days as usual. But Shabbat could actually have been any day of the next seven, so neither option is completely accurate. Have you really found Shabbat? No, you made it up. So why does the Talmud present these two options?

*What is the dispute about? One Master holds that it is like
the creation of the world; the other Master holds that it is
like Adam, the first person ...*

In other words, you are like God or like Adam. God worked on Creation for six days and then rested. Meanwhile, Adam was created on the sixth day so that very night was the first Shabbat and only after that did he begin to work for six days. Who would you like to be? God or humanity? *Imitatio Deo* or *imitatio Homo*?

These options are in fact two ways of dealing with the wilderness in which we find ourselves today. From the 'God' perspective we are encountering a totally new world. There is no compass, no pre-existing system to rely upon, no data. We have a lot of work to do. Six days to create a world from nothing. Only then, just like God, can we rest. The other option is far less dramatic. From the 'human' perspective this world might be somewhat different and confusing, but there are still many received truths from the past in which we can trust. All we have to worry about is our personal little human roles. Tonight is Shabbat and that is the main thing.

The final decision in the Talmud (which comes out as *halachah* in the *Shulchan Aruch*) is that you should count six days and only then keep Shabbat. We do not act as Adam, we act as God. Thus in

times of doubt, when in a wilderness, we are educated to build anew.

Here then is my point. Conceptually, Shabbat stands for a unified and integrated *vision* and the Talmudic scenario is none other than our current modern predicament. On Shabbat we reflect on what we have achieved in the world. It is a time to incorporate and envision. Now, in our post-modern world, we are no longer sure of past truths and we are disconnected from the concentrated environments in which we used to live. We are out there 'on a journey' (for the optimists) or 'in the wilderness' (for the more pessimistic). Either way, what do we want to do?

There are two options: One, we set down our pre-existing vision *immediately*. This vision flows directly from the past, without any major changes. It's Shabbat straight away, and then we will carry on as we always have. But Jewish tradition rejects this option. Instead we say that *everything* has changed. We are facing a new world that requires immense work before we can come up with a new world-class vision. We must be God-like, building up day by day until we get to Shabbat. But how? Our text continues:

Rava said: Every day the person should only do for themselves sufficient for their basic needs, except on that [Shabbat] day.

Rashi's commentary explains Rava's statement. Since you really do not know when Shabbat occurs, *any* day could really be the one. So every day that you travel, you should only do what you have to – do no extra work beyond your basic needs. The only exception is the day you counted as Shabbat. This really is a shocker. *Since any day might really be Shabbat, you have to be vision-conscious every day.* Not just once every seven days. There is a little bit of Shabbat throughout the week.

But on that [Shabbat] day should the person die? [No!] They should have prepared double their needs on the previous day.

A great question. If we just do enough every day to survive, then if we do nothing on Shabbat we will surely die. So what should we do? Well, you could try to do what you did in the *old* world: work twice as hard on Fridays. Run around like a headless chicken and then rest on Shabbat. But that will not work, because this is no longer the old world:

Perhaps the previous day (Friday) was actually Shabbat?

If any day could really be Shabbat, then that includes Friday! So even with your pretend made-up Shabbat, you cannot work doubly hard on the Friday because you may be wrong. This might have worked in the old world, but not here. So what do you do? The Talmud's answer is incredible:

So then every day they should do for themselves sufficient for their needs, even on that [Shabbat] day.

Every day you do the amount of work you need to sustain your vision, even on Shabbat. There is no longer a separation between working and visioning. Every day requires a dual consciousness, a realisation of immediate needs and long-term goals.

One final issue. What becomes of Shabbat? If we treat it like any other day, then have we completely lost the Godliness that it used to give us?

Then how may that [Shabbat] day be recognised? By Kiddush and Havdalah.

Work on Shabbat like every other day, continue as normal, but also mark the beginning and end of the Shabbat day. In essence, retain the framework even if the depth of content is lost. *Havdalah* – 'difference' – and *kedushah* – 'sanctity' – are the things that will carry you and remind you of the cycle even if you are not completely in touch.

In the past I have used this text as two approaches to management, 'top down' or 'bottom up', but here I have tried to read it as 'old world' and 'new world'. Talmud is not normally very post-modern. It comes from a time when there were holistic structures and clear truths. But our text reaches out to us. It is for an unsure world and it has some suggestions: be conscious of your vision every day. Remember that even on the day that you think your vision is achieved, it might not be. Hold on to sanctity and difference. They will remind you and keep you going.

Today might be any day of the week, but I think it's still fitting to say: *Shabbat shalom*. May you find peace and wholeness through your visioning.

THE ROLE OF VISION IN 21ST-CENTURY EDUCATION

Jonathan Ariel

Jewish tradition suggests that 'where there is no vision, the people perish'. English tradition, according to William Shakespeare, suggests: 'Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow ... It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.'

Perhaps British Jews have to balance idealism and realism, which is the very essence of educational endeavour. A succinct definition of vision is 'a conception of the good life'. This prompts us to think not about what is, but also of what should be, a profound image of the life worth living.

It is profoundly difficult to engage with educational vision for many reasons. First, the very idea of ideology is tarnished. Anyone with a sense of history knows that Hitler, Stalin and Mao were visionaries. They conceived of a world that brought unmitigated evil to millions of people. Thus anyone wanting the 'good life' should proceed with caution.

Secondly, to talk in imperatives is hard. Even Bertrand Russell, the humanist, when asked to join a humanist society, gave a reluctant 'no'. He said: 'I agree with everything that you stand for, but I don't want to put human beings at the centre of the universe.' He neither wanted God nor human beings in the centre. However, if you cannot have either, it becomes very complicated to articulate what human beings must do.

Thirdly, the language of carefully calibrated outcomes infuses much of our culture and ideas. What do we do if the truly important

things in life are just not measurable? The drive for standards has many benefits – nevertheless, it privileges those things that are measurable. Reflect that any vision has virtues that are not usefully measured.

Lastly, it is thorny to articulate the ‘good life’ in the face of daily contradictions. Parents give up responsibility for the very things that they want schools to teach. Insistent that schools show zero tolerance for violence, they purchase violent games for home use. In schools, simultaneously we drive for more diversity and more specialisation. Educational discourse prizes multiculturalism, inter-disciplinary thinking and multiple intelligences. Yet we have more standard tests based on narrow learning styles. We relish the world changing – and we are nostalgic for what used to be.

Many of us find these contradictions unresolvable. When added to a hesitancy to talk of ideology and moral imperatives, and a results-driven corporate culture, exploring and nurturing conceptions of the good life as guiding visions for education is so difficult.

However, we have to do it. Whether you know it or not, you convey a conception of what is worthwhile. A view of what you consider desirable emerges from the programmes, the symbols, the rules and regulations, and even the message you leave on your voicemail. To be explicit about one’s choices enables our labours to nurture a sought-after end.

Additionally, vision encourages us to critique what currently exists and to issue a warning that changing undesirable trends is imperative. It urges us to figure out the scope of the vision and to whom it applies. It implies which habits it is necessary to adopt in order to suffuse an institution with the appropriate conceptions. Even after a creative intellectual investment that successfully puts you in a substantially different educational arena, there is a need to polish the interplay of our living reality with our noble ideals. The perpetual movement between vision, theory and practice in an eternal spiral of construction and reconstruction painstakingly allows us to ‘tinker towards Utopia’.

Furthermore, if we develop a guiding vision in a group, then we

may well come to share it. A guiding vision creates a common language, a common conversation across diverse activities. It brings together people with energy on the move, lends structure to the enterprise and purpose to the activity. Done well, the 'good life' is going to be compelling and it is going to be clear. The outcome will be a group of people that can work together on something of ultimate importance.

Moreover, if vision speaks to matters of ultimate concern, then guiding our institutions from such a place will animate all that we do. Daniel Pekarsky makes an important distinction between *institutional* visions and *existential* visions. Institutional visions are those that guide the organisation in striving to achieve policies and programmes. Existential visions suggest a compelling portrait of the 'good life', conceiving of the qualities of human beings we wish our institutions to nurture, cultivate and treasure. Do not ask, 'What is an exemplary synagogue, school or youth movement?', suggests Pekarsky, rather ask, 'What would an exemplary synagogue, school or youth movement look like in light of our aspirations to nurture certain kinds of human beings?'. This provides guidance on which decisions it is important to take and which are peripheral, and on the substance of the key decisions.

Clarifying which conceptions are vital to the 'good life' is both exacting and exhilarating. Many perspectives are called for to ensure that the vision has both 'roots and wings'. It may be useful to consider four categories to feed the deliberation:

- Which values, ideas and behaviours are we to *prescribe*? These things absolutely must exist in order for us to enter the 'good life'.
- Which are we to *prefer*? Which will help us nurture the 'good life'?
- Which are we to *permit*? Which are neutral and need not be the subject of a ruling or specific measures to stimulate desirable outcomes?
- Which are we to *prohibit*? Which can never be tolerated, as they will undermine the essence of our prescribed values, ideas and behaviours?

Such a task of cultural and ideological clarification is forbidding. So, can we do it?

Deborah Meier in New York was asked to guide a school to address significant under-achievement. She says: 'What I wanted to create were thoughtful citizens: people who believe they could live interesting lives and be productive and socially useful. So I tried to create a community of children and adults where the adults shared and respected the children's lives.'

Meier had a critique of state schools that said that they are the most disrespectful places: teachers, pupils and parents are subject to numbing abuses. And they seem to be designed to be the most uninteresting places possible. If we could create an interesting and respectful place, perhaps we could find ways of addressing the fundamental problems of democratic society. Her underlying conception was to work towards a society in which citizens participate responsibly. So she asked: what it is that we have to do? Her answer: we have to value and respect those that we view currently as statistics.

Therefore, she endorsed small schools. We need to develop stable relationships. We cannot move around subject teachers all day and not expect children to feel lost in a whirlpool. We should have a small enough number of teachers and children, in order to nurture a shared community. Two small schools, on the same site, are educationally and morally preferable to one large one.

Meier argued that something important has to be going on. The institution and all of those connected with it, including the pupils, the teachers, the parents, the staff, and the wider community, have to sense that what is happening is not only academic, or interesting, or fun – but also important. It has to be clear and compelling; there has to be genuine devotion to all sorts of values.

Thirdly, she said, all constituents in my school community have to have a voice, an influence on the life of the school. One needs to establish frameworks that allow differing sections of the community to develop their views and to make them heard in the policy-making forum.

Fourthly, a school is a community of novices and experts, of

adults and children. We want every child to experience what it is like to do life well. Think of a music school or a sports school, where they pursue their talent with experts. You see gifted people with enthusiasm and dedication practising and playing. School should be similar, with every subject and topic exposing children to the range of attributes and virtues necessary to overcome frustrations and obstacles, whilst maintaining an ethos of awe and wonder.

If one adheres to these guidelines, it is possible to avoid high-school dropouts, low morale amongst students and teachers, and staid presentation of subject matter. The results achieved by Meier and her associates are stunning. With the schools that she set up at both primary and secondary level, she achieved more than double the city-wide rate of success. In addition, she did it in the toughest neighbourhoods.

Meier pinpointed the decisive intervention that generated change: success was dependent on talking – and talking takes time. She built into the school timetable six hours every week in which teachers could talk with each other in order to advance the cause of the school. Make the programme complex – but keep the administration simple, so that people's energy focuses on the educational issues rather than in struggling to keep pace with administrative procedure. An illuminating example is what Meier did with the school bell. She got rid of it. She empowered every teacher to set their own timetable so that they could pursue interesting work at length and halt unproductive work before it soured the subject for the children. Hence, there was no need for a bell. A teacher could then bring their success or their failure to the staff room for shared analysis and improvement.

What I wanted to do with this case is to explain a process. A conception of the good life rooted in what democracy can be at its best for active and engaged citizens led Deborah Meier to articulate desirable habits of mind. From there, it prompted ways of developing the school teaching programme and the allocation of staff time – until you reach the point where you can even decide whether the school bell will ring or not.

It is my contention that Jewish educational institutions can

develop a thoughtful vision that actually ennobles the members of the organisation. Subsequently, they may create an environment and programme that nurtures their profoundest and most wholesome view of human beings. Unlike Shakespeare's 'sound and fury, signifying nothing', visions can urge us onwards to make the most of ourselves so that we do not perish, but flourish as Jewish human beings.

THE ROLE OF VISION IN 21ST-CENTURY EDUCATION

Professor Michael Rosenak

There are, I believe, four conceptions of vision that I would like to see applied to Jewish education. All of them, like the visionary statement in *Brachot* 64a which we say every day in our prayers, strive for peace. All suggest ideals that are not rigid. They all contain the concept of the moral life that strives for coexistence of learned behaviour and carefully constructed principle. I have drawn them from four sources: the work of Michael Oakeshott, the work of Alastair MacIntyre, the text about Hillel and his proselytes, and a comment of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch on the education given by Isaac and Rebecca to their son Esau.

In his essay *The Tower of Babel*, the British philosopher Michael Oakeshott suggests that there are two ways of approaching a moral, cultural or religious world. One is the way of learned behaviour, of habits of affection and conduct. Here there is no constant weighing of alternatives or the making of judgements, but the following of a tradition in which we were brought up. There is little concern with rules or principles. Right conduct is learned in much the same way as a native language. According to this vision, education gives people the power to act appropriately and without hesitation. Right action is linked not to an attachment to the ideal of obeying a rule but to self-esteem. It is a model of stability. Those who call aspects of it into question, eccentric intellectuals, are shunted aside. But as long as they are merely individuals, they are given some reverence. They are admired but never copied.

The second form of the cultural, moral or religious life that Oakeshott deals with is reflective. This searches relentlessly for system and abstract ideal. The best way of life is philosophically formulated, and its aims are clearly defined. Here it is more difficult to translate the ideals into practice than to formulate them. Indeed, it will seem more important to have the right religious or moral ideal than to act upon it. For when we act, we hope to see our actions constantly accompanied by critique, reflection and even some healthy doubt as to whether we are doing it in a principled fashion altogether.

This form of education is well protected from a descent into superstition but it has little flexibility. While it can be interpreted and principles can be re-thought to some extent, after a certain point it yields only revolution and rejection rather than peaceful change.

On the one hand then, learned behaviour, self-esteem, habit, convention and social appropriateness. On the other hand, principles, ideals, reflection, critique. And two things are clear. First, Oakeshott prefers the behavioural model to the intellectual ideal one. The first may be rather unreflective, but it takes on the measure of real human beings and societies as they are, rather than building towers designed to reach heaven that ultimately confuse all tongues. Being so visionary, the second model must lead to disillusionment. Yet there are also many things that the first model is incapable of teaching us. We may learn to play a game, but we are unlikely to learn to formulate the rules. Somebody must do that for us. Moreover, the first model can fail when the range of behaviours it authorises do not cover the range of what is required.

Hence, and this is the second point, we require a combination of both approaches. Habit and reflection must be joined together. We need not moral extremes but forms of the moral life which are variegated and rich. In this combination of the two, confidence and action will remain, but this combination will also enjoy the advantages that spring from a reflective morality – the power to criticise, to change, to explain, and the power to propagate itself beyond the range of the customs of a society. It will have the benefit of theology without losing its character as a form of living. We may say it

can be philosophical, but it will not lose *yirat shamayim* – the fear of heaven.

How to put these things together? One thing that is certain is that there is a *na'aseh venishma* element. Education must inculcate primary habits before seriously dealing with reason. But, eventually, it must do that as well. The habits of behaviour make changes an internal and slow process. Education's most successful products act well, and their actions provide grist for their thought. Yet they do not fall into the extremes of behaviourism or zealous system-building. They are to become scholars who increase peace in the world, even if some will sometimes argue that they have betrayed Utopian truths. And in furthering peace, they are not only wary of building too many conceptual fences that keep most people out, but also of seeking in their Torah study to increase the burden of behaviour so that it leaves the realm of custom and enters the thicket of mindless compulsion.

MacIntyre offers us a vision that is more conciliatory than dialectical, but it is conciliatory without denigrating excellence. Here the principle is that 'all your children shall be taught of the Lord' which MacIntyre finds illustrated in eighteenth-century Scottish society in which a tolerably large body of individuals understood what scholars were talking about. This type of what he calls an 'educated public' shares assent to standards of rational judgement from which different positions in debate derive their authority.

The third assumption is that there is 'some large degree of shared background belief and attitudes informed by the widespread reading of a common body of texts – texts which are accorded a canonical status within that particular community'. *Talmidei chachamim marbim shalom be'olam*. Note: this canonical status does not require automatic agreement with the texts but does demand that they be taken seriously. And this common possession by a community of such a shared body of texts is only possible when there is an established tradition of interpretative understanding of how such texts are to be read and construed. And MacIntyre adds with pronounced polemicism that not every literate and reading public is an educated public. Mass literacy in a society which lacks

both canonical text and a traditional interpretative understanding is more likely to produce a condition of public mindlessness than an educated public.

The assumption must be that there are disagreements, yet there is a common language. There are scholars and experts, but they are not incomprehensible. There is a canon, but it invites interpretative discussion rather than doctrinaire statements that choke it off. There are loyal sons who are also perhaps adventurous builders and their enterprise constitutes the arena for all your children to be taught of the Lord.

The archetype of the sage and educator who sought the peace of God's children is undoubtedly Hillel, whom we meet in the Talmud in the famous set of encounters with heathens desiring to become proselytes, and he is compared with the severe and highly principled Shammai. Each of the three heathens first approaches Shammai, who finds their approach to conversion totally flawed and thus disqualifies them. The first wishes to accept only the written Torah, and he obviously thought that Shammai was a Saduceean rabbi who would accept that reasonable approach. He cannot imagine that the conversations of human beings can constitute a divine law. The second, obviously a young man in a hurry, demands that Judaism be concisely stated as one regulation while he stands on one *regel*, while he stands on one foot. *Regel* – regulation! The third, most ludicrous of them all, wishes to become a Jew in order to gain the right, so he imagines, to wear the luxurious garments of the High Priest. Shammai is an educator who only gives right answers to appropriate questions, and he drives all three from his presence.

In contrast, Hillel carefully explains to the first heathen that an oral Torah can be Torah. After all, we depend on humans to make sense of the written word for us. Responding to the second heathen, Hillel identifies a regulation within Judaism that is adequate for going out to study the rest, namely: do not do unto your neighbour what you would not want done to yourself. As for the infantile character who saw in Judaism a way to become better dressed, Hillel leads him through a course of study for the High Priesthood, a course that

quickly makes it clear to the man that the High Priesthood is closed to him – just as it was to King David himself.

It is clear that Hillel and Shammai not only had different visions, but also very diverse educational orientations and methods. Shammai knew what the subject matter of Judaism was and was willing to teach those who shared it or who were humble enough to hear his understanding of it. Hillel, on the other hand, listened carefully to the questions and tried to understand the individuals who asked those questions. He knew himself to be standing opposite, respectively, an intellectual who thought he understood something about the nature of revelation; then a practical man who wanted a Greek translation of Jewish teaching; and finally, a simple person attracted to Judaism who could find no way of articulating that but in a fancy for resplendent clothing.

To the first he gave a theological response; to the second, a pithy philosophy of Judaism response; and to the third, a learning course into self-awareness. It is this third proselyte who returns to Hillel saying: 'Why didn't you tell me I couldn't be a High Priest? Doesn't the Torah teach that the stranger that draws nigh shall be put to death?' Perhaps it is he who initiates the get-together of the three, who at their meeting declare that 'Shammai sought to drive us from the world but Hillel brought us under the wings of the Divine Presence'.

Here we have a vision of teachers more than of students or of an educated public. It is a vision built on the understanding that people come to education with varying backgrounds, concerns and capabilities. The good teacher, in this vision, guides them but respects their individuality.

Finally, in the nineteenth century, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch formulated the vision in the form of a biblical commentary to the verse, 'And when the lads grew up, Esau was a man of the field and Jacob was a dweller of tents'.

It was only when they grew up that the difference in their temperaments, interests and inclinations became clear. Hirsch declared that it was then that the failure of Isaac and Rebecca in the education

of their older son became apparent. They tried to educate him as a Jacob. They apparently believed that only a dweller in tents could be an ideal Jew. Had they taken notice of Esau's outgoing, nature-loving character and related to it with empathy, the two brothers – one sedate and studious, the other a zestful, outdoor type – could surely have become, the Torah says, brothers before the Lord, each devoted, in his own way, to the Torah and to the divine mission of Israel.

Jacob, when he blessed his sons, realised that while they shared an historical task as Israelites, they were different from one another. There were merchants and scholars among them, farmers and priests, teachers and warriors. Isaac and Rebecca could have educated a multifaceted family. Their vision was too narrow and that meant that only one of their children could develop as a Jew. Only one could be a Jew – by the constricted notion of what they meant by that.

We may say that they should have held before their mind's eye the vision and prayer of Rabbi Elazar stated in the name of Rabbi Chanina: 'For the sake of the house of thy God I shall seek your good.'

The educational vision seeks the good of the other, even when he or she is different. And this is not due to a lack of interest in all commonalities. It is done for the sake of Israel as a covenanted people; it is done for the sake of the people that constitute a house of God in history.

Those who oppose visions for education in the 21st century fear that fixed ideals can only alienate the majority while making the minority smug and distant. But as Rabbi Elazar and Rabbi Chanina teach us, visions can unite peace and strength. They can foster unity amidst differentiation. If teachers will listen to diverse learners and learn themselves from their very diversity; if conflicting ideals can have dialogue; if there is a cultural centre to learn within and to argue about in a fraternity – then the resulting strength may create that truthfulness that these sages perhaps had in mind: the truthfulness that has nothing to fear from peace. Or, in their words, 'Great peace shall be given to those who love Your Torah and they shall not stumble'.

PART FOUR

CASE STUDIES FROM
THE BRITISH JEWISH
COMMUNITY

CASE STUDY 1: TEXTS AND VALUES PROJECT OF THE UJIA MAKOR CENTRE FOR INFORMAL JEWISH EDUCATION

Dr Raphael Zarum

The study of traditional Jewish texts and the values they contain has enjoyed a revival in many of Britain's Jewish youth movements and youth clubs. I was asked to create and direct the 'Text & Values Project' (TVP) at UJIA Makor to address this new development and to enhance the quality and importance of this kind of study in the field of informal Jewish education.

Two sources serve to characterise my work. The first comes from the daily evening prayer service. Referring to traditional Jewish texts, we pray:

...כי הם היינו וארך ימינו. ובהם נהגה יומם ולילה.

... for these are our lives and the length of our days,
and we should be deeply involved in them day and night.

Texts are meant to be the focus of our learning lives. A never-ending and ever-deepening commitment to their significance and meaning is the vision of the TVP. The second source addresses the modern state of affairs when it comes to text and values study. Abraham Joshua Heschel described us as 'messengers who forgot the message'.

The Jewish people have a noble and historic part to play in the world. The way we live and learn is how we carry that message. The TVP is about reconnecting with that message.

With these thoughts in mind, we tried to achieve three interrelated objectives:

- Encourage greater Jewish literacy. Literacy does not just mean reading and writing. It means knowing how to ‘get around’, read the signposts, and understand how things fit together. It means being comfortable in the world of Jewish sources – befriending Avraham, Rabbi Akiva and Rashi, and not relating to them as unfamiliar strangers.
- Increase and deepen interaction with traditional Jewish values. This creates a common language for values to be addressed.
- Involve people in Jewish living and learning cycles. Unlike school curricula, Jewish tradition has provided us with natural living and learning cycles. Preparation for upcoming festivals, weekly *sidra* study, and commitment to Jewish lifecycle events all serve to bind Jews in multiple cognitive, cultural and historic ways.

In the main, we realised these objectives by working in three ways:

- Consultancy: This works on many levels, from ‘nice quotes’ as document headers, to reading texts that might serve to inspire an educational programme, to actually creating study opportunities. The critical factor is always to be encouraging a deeper connection.
- Teaching: In the world of informal education, no one trusts you unless they can see that you can do it yourself. So occasionally I go and model how text study can be inspiring and meaningful.
- Writing: This involves finding and experimenting with new ways to present texts by creating thoughtful and compelling written materials.

Here are a few examples of the work of the TVP. The Federation of Zionist Youth (FZY) was guided in their production of a *Sefer T'nua* (movement booklet). It contained analyses of a number of Jewish texts as a way of explaining and reflecting on the ideals of their movement. We also worked with the Union of Jewish Students (UJS) and Habonim-Dror on their own study booklets. Many youth movements asked and received help in constructing the educational frameworks for their summer camps. Individual informal Jewish educators arranged one-to-one study classes to deepen their understanding of particular Jewish values and ideas.

As well as responding to requests from the field, I wanted to be proactive. Where to begin?

Rebi said: 'A person only really learns from those parts of Torah which they really appreciate.'

(Talmud: *Avodah Zara* 19a)

So I began with what the young people in movements and clubs care most about: becoming a *madrich/ah*.

My question was: 'What is the Torah of *hadrachah*?' This meant looking at some fundamental concepts in *hadrachah* (for example, setting a personal example, or working as part of a team) and searching Jewish sources to see if and how these concepts are presented. Returning to traditional texts here was more than just seeking illustrations for *hadrachah* concepts. In fact, these texts invariably re-framed the concepts we were looking for, and deepened our understanding of them. Reading 'in' became reading 'out'.

The result was *Torat Hadrachah*, a 50-page booklet with fifteen study pages of traditional texts through which five key concepts of *hadrachah* could be studied. The subtitle was 'Learning about Jewish Education Leadership Through the Study of Traditional Jewish Texts'. The booklet was successfully piloted and has become an integral part of the educational curriculum of many youth movements and clubs in Britain.

TVP did come in for criticism from time to time. Below are five

criticisms of the TVP which I have experienced and reflected upon. My responses are not comprehensive but they do point the way to dealing with such issues, and they help to further characterise the TVP.

1 TVP is not serious. There are always compromises in authenticity, complexity and accuracy because the education takes place in an informal setting.

A response: Any class, whether formal or informal, is selected from a greater pool of knowledge and fashioned appropriately. 'Fitness for purpose' is the essential criterion, and this is equally valid in the formal and informal education worlds.

2 Calling them Jewish 'texts' makes them into disembodied sources. Three major problems result: quoting out of context; not appreciating the historical placement of a source or how to weigh its importance; and selectively choosing classical and modern texts based on preconceived biases, and so failing to understand traditional study frameworks.

A response: A competent (that is, a skilful and learned) teacher knows how to select honestly and intelligently. This involves reading around the texts, appreciating their context, and mapping out traditional learning patterns. One danger is that the 'second-hand learner' might not realise the work a competent teacher has done in preparing sources.

3 A cross-communal environment is fatal, because working with different denominations means that no consistent views are expressed. Instead, a plethora of approaches are incoherently thrown up. Also, traditional patterns are invariably lost in the need to pander to the desires and biases of different groupings.

A response: This challenge has been very difficult, even at times paralysing. If a 'common ground' is adamantly searched for, then all are partly compromised. Two approaches have worked reasonably well: (a) working separately with each denominational client group. This has involved being acutely conscious of their specific outlooks

and teaching and advising accordingly; and (b) working mainly with pre-1800 texts and so avoiding the denominationalism of Judaism altogether. This means sacrificing the writings of Soloveitchik, Buber and Kaplan in producing materials for all. A great price to pay, but at least all can gather around the same core texts.

4 It is too basic – nothing is really achieved. The time constraints of the informal setting limit what can be achieved in text study. Having ‘an hour here or there’ is very problematic and there is little opportunity for cumulative understanding.

A response: Even so, learning *does* happen in these limited contexts. Often it provides the impetus for further study. A good *shiur* can often motivate and inspire. Also, an incredible amount can be taught if it is taught in a way that makes it directly relevant, applicable and meaningful.

5 Values cannot easily be distilled from texts. Ancient historical contexts are so alien to the modern Jew that uncovering or ‘learning out’ contemporary values cannot be done in any serious or systematic way. Often it’s just finding texts to hook already-held values upon!

A response: True, some arguments are somewhat tenuous, but many are not. There are some clear and well-established basic texts that hold Jewish values within them. Initiation into the midrashic process is vital. When done badly, it leads to comments such as: ‘Yes, well, you can read anything out of a text.’ When done well, it leads to a respectful appreciation of the ‘method’ and a desire to be involved in the process.

The TVP has been running for over three years and has contributed to a significant rise both in the use of Jewish texts and in commitment levels to Jewish values in the informal education world of British Jewry. The success is due in the main to a new generation of young informal Jewish educators who are willing to open themselves up to the study of their traditions and to pass on what they have learnt in innovative and creative ways. It’s not over yet ...

CASE STUDY 2: LIMMUD

Jacqueline Nicholls

Limmud is known primarily for its large annual Jewish education conference. However, due to Limmud's growth and popularity, it has expanded to other activities. We run one-day conferences around the country; a family Limmud (a camp in August for anyone with children between the ages of 5 and 12, for example, grandparents bringing grandchildren); and an adult education programme, the Florence Melton Adult Mini School, in conjunction with the Hebrew University.

Occasionally new projects and events are proposed to the Limmud Executive, the body that oversees all of Limmud's activities. These new events make us analyse what Limmud is and develop a sense of what makes something 'Limmud'. It seems that Limmud is not just its products, but is actually the process and the way of doing something that has a vision and goes beyond the actual event.

Another question that is often raised is: 'Who owns Limmud?' There appears to be a kind of fuzzy ownership. Who is qualified to define it? There are the participants, the volunteers, the presenters and so on. Within Limmud there are a huge variety of different stories and different experiences, and all of those parts tell Limmud's story.

In our literature we have this promise:

Come to Limmud and together we will strengthen our identities, inspire our faith and invigorate our community. Wherever you find yourself, Limmud will take you one step further along your own Jewish journey.

There are a couple of things I want to point out. We talk about 'invigorating our community'. Limmud sees itself as a community, and a community within Anglo-Jewry. But it also places a lot of importance on the individual within that. So we say: 'Wherever you find yourself, Limmud will take you one step further along on your own Jewish journey.' That is, there is the respect for people who are coming from their own contexts, with their own particular paths, but, in terms of Limmud's vision, we don't want people to stagnate. We want people to grow and to develop, but in a direction and at a pace that they determine.

This has led to the need for us to provide many different opportunities, gateways and facilitators for people's own Jewish journeys. But it is *their* Jewish journey. That leads then into providing a choice. On a basic level, there is a choice of sessions to attend. The student, therefore, is actually empowered to create their own learning path because it is their journey and they have to own it.

This thinking led to our mission statement – the clearest statement about who we are and what we do:

Limmud is a cross-communal learning organisation that enables anyone who is interested in being Jewish to come together to share their experiences and to grow and develop their enthusiasm in being Jewish.

There was a lot of discussion about each of these terms. When Limmud describes itself as a 'cross-communal learning organisation', it is embracing diversity. It is aware of the multifaceted nature of the community and reflects that. It also wants to create cross-generational experiences. At Limmud events, there is a wide range of age groups, often two or three generations of the same family. So it is not just cross-communal learning in terms of the denominations, but a broader sense of diversity.

The mission statement further states that it 'enables anyone', meaning that it is sensitive to the need to be accessible to all and to provide multiple entry points. In a practical way, different needs are

catered for – for example, if we want to enable parents to learn, we have to provide childcare facilities for them. However, it also means wanting to break down barriers that prevent people coming to learn. Another aim of Limmud is that:

It tries to ensure tolerance and respect and does not want to make any assumptions on the interactions. It wants to create a warm and welcoming atmosphere and nurtures goodwill.

Limmud really does run on goodwill. It is volunteer-led. But what does it mean that the desire to create a ‘warm and welcoming atmosphere’ is part of an *educational* organisation’s aims? It acknowledges that if a person feels comfortable, they are then able to learn. For example, if there isn’t somewhere where they can just sit down and have some ‘quiet time’ or have a cup of tea and a chat with a friend, then it will not matter that there are amazing sessions going on: you haven’t created a warm atmosphere where people feel that they want to be and learn. So the planning of social spaces and participant care at a Limmud event are as important as providing high-quality education.

There is another aspect to ‘enabling’. When somebody comes to Limmud and says, ‘why aren’t you doing this?’, we can also say, ‘yes, you’re right, and would you like to help make that happen?’, thereby facilitating the actualisation of people’s ideas. We have had incredibly talented people come in as volunteers, and they give of themselves because they perceive Limmud as something they can contribute to and impact upon.

‘Coming together and sharing experiences.’ Limmud wants to connect people – not just those of similar interests but, and perhaps more importantly, those with very different interests, so that all are enriched by diversity. It also reflects a very strong idea in Limmud that everybody is a student and everybody is a teacher. At Limmud, there is no separation between the presenters and students. All are participants. You will often find someone who has just taught a packed lecture hall sitting and learning from an inexperienced pre-

sender in a smaller session. Limmud is non-hierarchical. This comes through in many different ways; for example, we don't use titles in the literature, or on name badges. Simply 'first name, second name'. This is partly due to political necessity, and avoids issues of whom you do and don't call 'Rabbi'. That question becomes irrelevant. We will use the term 'rabbi' in the programme book to describe somebody's profession, but not as a title. It is a very subtle distinction, but it creates a culture in which the presenters are participants, are accessible to all, and are entitled to the same privileges as any other Limmud participant. In addition, we do not pay presenter fees. We are reliant on their goodwill that they come. Where presenters are not part of the British Jewish community, we will pay for their expenses to join us.

The mission statement concludes: 'to grow and develop in their enthusiasm about being Jewish.' We don't want people to stagnate on their Jewish journey. We want people to keep moving and to keep learning. And teaching is key part of that learning.

Part of Limmud's uniqueness is that it is genuinely led by volunteers. And the volunteers are part of the event in a similar way to the presenters. Limmud is not about providing a service for others and separating away from that group, but is rather about providing an educational Jewish experience for our community and ourselves. The volunteers 'own' the event with their ideas and energy. They are not 'lay' leaders. Within Limmud there is a culture where all the decision-making – including budgetary matters – is the responsibility of the volunteers.

Finally, a footnote on the politics surrounding Limmud. At various points in its history, it has been seen as a controversial force within the community because of its cross-communal nature, and because it was regarded for some time as the 'alternative' and 'anti-establishment' programme. Some maintain that these factors helped Limmud to become fashionable. I would argue very strongly that that is a very superficial understanding of its popularity. It is different and 'alternative' on account of all the aspects listed above. To concentrate just on the controversy is to ignore much of what Limmud, with its many volunteers, has achieved.

CASE STUDY 3: SYNAGOGUE TRANSFORMATION

Julian Resnick

(This paper was given one year into the Reform Synagogue of Great Britain's 'Living Judaism' initiative, and as such, reflects the learning that had emerged only up to that point.)

In the work that I've been doing so far, one of the things that I have learned is that I have to listen very carefully to people in the community. When I started the initiative by interviewing 'pew Jews' – people who sit anywhere in the middle of the synagogue or sometimes in the back – I said to the leadership of my movement that even if we decided not to have a transformation project, the mere act of going into people's homes and asking them who they are and what they care about would be enough. *Dayenu*. People often said to me: 'Nobody has ever asked me what I think, what I care about. I'm just an ordinary member of this community. Nobody has ever thought that my voice was important.' They were enormously moved by being asked to tell their stories, which taught me a great deal about the power of listening and the power of the narrative.

Here is a picture of a provincial community, about 50 years old. The membership, as in most of the communities that I have come across, is becoming older. Demographically it is shifting. There is a difficult relationship with the Orthodox communities in the particular city, and the issue is important as some of the members belong to the community because they don't have an alternative because of their personal status issues. Even though they might personally feel more

comfortable within another Jewish environment, they know that they don't have another option.

There is a mixed history of relationships with rabbis. Some have been very positive and powerful relationships, others have been very difficult. The community could be described as conservative and hierarchical. Much of the real power is held by old-timers, even though the present leadership is not particularly old. The rabbi and some younger lay leaders are very keen on change.

That is a snapshot. How did I begin? Crucially – and here I am stating the given, not necessarily the desired option – the central organisation, the Reform movement, decided that this was one of the synagogues that should be a pilot in the initiative. The synagogue was approached by the movement to be a pilot. The council agreed without really knowing what the implications were going to be for the congregation. And, understandably, the central question from the leadership was: 'Will it cost us anything?' This is actually a serious question. Most of the synagogues are incredibly under-resourced, in terms of both human and especially financial resources, and both are required in an initiative like this.

Who are the players that I immediately identified, or who came forward? The rabbi. The chair. The immediate past chair who holds the organisational memory, and is often someone who is looking to add meaning to his or her life. And finally, the people who are on the periphery of the community have to be involved. If you don't try to reach out and touch them, you've actually done nothing. You're just talking to the usual suspects.

The process

I began by interviewing people and listening carefully to their opinions. I then prepared a mosaic of the interviews in such a way that the anonymity of the people who were interviewed would be maintained. Then I began the tough process of reporting back: to rabbis, to executives, to councils. In each synagogue the response was different. Some wanted to know what should happen next. Others wanted to

know how to contain the information. Others wanted to think about whether the information should be shared, how it should be shared, and with whom it should be shared. Once again, I am not trying to place any value judgements. Communities have histories and are made up of a variety of personalities. It is always important to bear those in mind.

The establishment of partnership

What is the partnership between myself and my fieldworkers – the people who are working on behalf of the initiative within the communities? What is the meaning of partnership between the person from the outside and the person/people within? We learned to pay attention to what seemed at first glance to be irrelevant. For example, I made a terrible mistake early on. I wrote the job description for the fieldworker. I found out that I was wrong. If this was to be a real partnership, the job description had to be created by myself and the community. But I'm the line manager. What does that mean? Where does the rabbi or the chair of council or the liaison person fit in terms of line management or managerial status? Even though it sounds weird in synagogues, I have learned that sometimes you have to create written agreements of partnership – even in organisations that are intimate and voluntary communities.

The beginning of exploring and the beginning of taking risks

This is an enormously important part of the process. How does one create an atmosphere in which taking risks is OK; in which making mistakes is OK?

In one community, a new *minyan* has been established by a group of people who, in most cases, have no real experience of being *shlichei tzibur*. They make mistakes. But they are going through the enormously significant and empowering Jewish experience of taking responsibility for communal prayer. Is it significant that ten people

who have never read from the Torah have the opportunity to do so, or is it more important to ensure that high standards are maintained? Different people focus on, and want, different things.

How do you recognise significant moments and build on them? What do you recognise as significant? Is it significant in a new *minyan* that ten people who have not read from the Torah since their bar or bat mitzvah had the opportunity to do so? Or should we criticise how one of the songs was sung, or how the transliteration was prepared?

How do you ensure that what is produced is something of quality? And how do you ensure that what is produced isn't pushing boundaries too far? I found myself struggling with the issue of boundaries when I went to a new *minyan* and felt that they were overstepping the mark. One of the rabbis of the movement later said to me: 'Don't think of boundaries – think of ground rules. Boundaries limit. Ground rules anchor and aim to keep people connected to those things that are crucial and important.'

The pace of change is also important. It is slow, and it has to be slow. Transforming a synagogue is not quick-fix work. Being able to identify significant change, and defining what constitutes significant change, helps, although this is also complex. Is it an increase in the number of members in the community? Or is it an increase in the number of smiles that you see on the faces of people who are in the synagogue? How do you come to your funders and say, 'More people are smiling'? Funders are often businesspeople. If you tell them that more people are smiling, they'll probably ask you what you are talking about. How do you measure that type of thing?

Other issues that have arisen

How do we work with the sceptics, or the older and more conservative members of the community? In his book *Finding a Spiritual Home*, Sidney Schwarz argues that we should not be impatient with those who cannot cope with change. Some people care incredibly deeply about aspects of the synagogue which others would get rid of

without a second thought. It is vital to find creative ways to work with them and include them, but it is equally vital to ensure that they don't damage the initiative's goals. If you see these people as difficult and intransigent, you will never get anywhere. If, however, you try and understand what their pain is, what their issues are, if you try and understand and value what they're saying and work with that, then you have a chance. A key technique is to highlight the values you all share. Even a difficult and intransigent council is comprised of people who have given years of their lives to the Jewish people. Articulating your respect for them and their work, and identifying the values you share with them, often goes a long way.

The effect on the individual rabbis was different in each of the communities. What do you do when the tensions that exist just below the surface, that have been there for years but have been somehow contained by the community, begin to bubble over? What do you do when the rabbi says 'Don't rock the boat'? Equally, what do you do when the rabbi says 'I thought you would be rocking harder'?

How do you manage the pain of change? How do you support the rabbi – the person who is in many ways most affected by change, or potentially most impacted by change? Enabling rabbis to feel that they are involved in a situation which isn't just adding to their enormous workload, but is actually giving them additional help and support for the work they are doing, is critical. I increasingly feel that the role of the rabbi in the community needs to shift from 'teacher' to 'empowerer'. Rabbis must teach, and must offer guidance. But more importantly, they should teach others how to teach, so that their congregants start to feel empowered to share their own thoughts and insights with others.

Such an approach is only likely to improve levels of volunteering within the synagogue. We should stop using the language of 'taking' and 'using', and shift instead to the language of 'nourishment'. We should see volunteers as the people to whom we want to give the most nourishment in the community. We have to think about what we can give people who come forward and are prepared to give of themselves and their time. If we simply use people, we will destroy our future leadership. It's as simple as that.

One final thought. Community-building or synagogue transformation is not something that need happen outside of Judaism. It is possible to enable and encourage people to look at the *chagim* as the primary community-building events, and not as add-on additional events and days during the year. If we use them well, we can actually do the work of community-building in a Jewish way, and start to build individual Jews, our Jewish community, and the Jewish people in an entirely holistic way.

CASE STUDY 4: KING SOLOMON HIGH SCHOOL

Alastair Falk

King Solomon High School is situated in north east London, in a borough which probably has a Jewish population of 20,000 to 30,000 Jews. It opened in 1993 and since that time the roll has grown from 85 to 950 students, which represents by any calculation 75 per cent of the available Jewish high school population. King Solomon is a United Synagogue School – all our pupils have to be halachically Jewish – but we also strive to be very much a community school, and our students range right across the board in terms of synagogue membership.

One of the most important aims of the school was to raise achievement and expectations, because, fairly atypically of Jewish communities, most of our parent population did not go into tertiary education. Socio-economically, the vast majority would fall into a lower middle class bracket, so their occupational structure does not necessarily mirror the occupational structure which might be assumed. Similarly, very few went into tertiary education, so one of our core objectives was to encourage and enable our students to stay in school until 18 or 19 years of age, and then go on to higher education.

In encouraging this, it quickly became even more apparent to us that we needed to construct a Jewish Studies programme that would aim to give our students the Jewish knowledge and skills they would need to get through university and their later life. By taking a long-term view of each of our students, we understood that our responsibility to them was not just for the period of time they would spend in

the school, and we really needed to see our Jewish Studies programme as preparation for Jewish life.

To do this, we trained an open-minded and fairly creative Jewish Studies team – people who were Orthodox, but were nonetheless extremely open to the realities of Jewish life. The nature of our Jewish Studies curriculum was important from the very beginning. Together with Alex Pomson, the first Head of Jewish Studies at the school, and today Professor of Education in York University in Toronto, we developed the notion of *torah v'tarbut* (Torah and culture), which understood at its core that the experience of the Jewish people, certainly over the past 200 years, has been exceptionally varied. In seeking to build a community school in an Orthodox framework, we knew we had to be accepting and inclusive of all our students, each of whom had been shaped by those different Jewish experiences and influences. We have always been passionately committed to that principle, and have always actively tried to help people find their place in the community without dictating to them where that place ought to be.

Teaching text was central. Many Jewish schools with diverse populations are very afraid of tackling text. But we felt that if Torah is the unifying force of the Jewish people, if it is the starting point from which everything else branches off (even if you branch off in opposition to it), it had to be possible to take text and to make it central to the Jewish Studies experience. And we began this education from the very beginning – our starting point with Year 7 children was 'Learning to Learn Jewishly' and exploring why text is so important to the Jewish people. That commitment to text has remained constant in all the development work we've done on the Jewish Studies programme, and our students have learned both about the centrality of text and how to engage critically with it. We called it 'Nehama Leibowitz for Juniors'!

Today, we define the objectives of the programme as follows:

The aim of the King Solomon Jewish Studies Programme is to provide all students with the skills, knowledge and experiences to become active members of, and find their particular place within the Jewish community.

Our key concerns were that the students should find their place within; becoming active members of; be familiar with. But the next objective is critical:

An ideal student will continue to play an active role in the Jewish community and will see Israel as the centre of Jewish life.

In other words, the role of the school, the vision of the school, is all about what happens in the long term. It's not just about what we do, but rather about the impact of what we do on the choices that young people make in later life. We don't dictate which Jewish choices are right or wrong, but we do aim for our children to continue to make positive Jewish choices throughout their lives.

Israel plays an important part in that. In fact, perhaps the most important thing we have done Jewishly is to establish the Israel Experience as central. Again, the community we serve is unusual in that the vast majority of parents have not visited Israel. The trip, therefore, has an extremely powerful impact. Since the school opened, the number of young people from Redbridge going on the post-sixteen summer schemes has increased dramatically. Similarly, the number of students going to Israel in their gap year is also becoming quite a significant phenomenon. We were even contemplating organising a trip for families, but unfortunately, with the current situation it is unlikely to go ahead.

We have also spent time exploring the notion of what a Jewish school for the future might look like. For us, it would particularly provide an educational base for the wider Jewish community, and provide a strong message of communal responsibility in action. In this regard, King Solomon is very fortunate, insofar as it is located within a very specific community.

In recent years, as we developed our understanding of these community school ideas, we brought the local Jewish family services organisation – Norwood Ravenswood – on to the school site, where they now pay a token rent to us. We use their counselling facilities

and they work with our pastoral team. The cross-referral that occurs is extremely valuable, and serves our vision of building a community school very well. Given that a lot of Norwood Ravenswood's work focuses on families with adolescents and with teenagers, the link with it has been very natural, and to actually have them on the site is a great example of joined-up thinking.

Another example of the school working with the community: one of the most exciting developments in the last few years is that we currently have twelve students training for the first level of professional work in informal and community education, through George Williams College – which is actually part of the YMCA. We are the only Jewish school that works openly with the YMCA. The students have to do 240 hours of face-to-face work with young people, which they do primarily at the local Jewish community centre, Sinclair House. They are supervised in and out of school by people from school, from the college and from Sinclair House. At the end of the programme they will gain the first level of a professional qualification in youth and community work.

Ultimately, however, when we think about the Jewish day school of the future, there are, I believe, five key strands that have to exist: community, culture, celebration, challenge and commitment.

- Community is about developing the school as a community cultural and educational centre, giving students the skills and opportunity to become active participants in religious and communal life, and creating links and experiences within a wider Jewish community.
- Culture is about traditional Jewish learning and skills, *Ivrit* and Israel, Jewish history, music and art. It's about creativity, and allowing students to bring their identities into an open experience where there is no right and wrong. It is also about trying to create a contemporary Jewish culture: even Marc Chagall was an artist in residence in a school at one stage.
- Celebration is about highlighting the Jewish calendar in school, maximising opportunities to celebrate Jewish culture, and building on bar and bat mitzvah as the single most important celebration in

many young people's lives. Indeed, at one of the most successful evening programmes we have run, we explored how to reclaim some of the spiritual meaning of bar and bat mitzvah.

- Challenge is about looking at Jewish responses to personal and global issues. We look at how students can become contemporary *nevi'im*; we introduce them to the concept of Utopia and whether there is a Jewish view of an ideal society; and we work hard to place Jewish values at the heart of school life.
- Finally, commitment is about involvement in life beyond the school, particularly in Jewish life. Students are encouraged to talk about what they have done in the local community, and their work is celebrated and valued in a whole variety of ways.

Some theory with which to conclude: today, schools are often primarily about results. People send their children to a particular school because they want them to do well. Martin Buber would call that an 'I-It' relationship – schools exist simply to serve our needs. Most of us live most of our lives in 'I-It' relationships.

I don't believe that schools should be purely about 'I-It' relationships. A lot of families turn to the school when there is a crisis at home. Often the school's response to these situations has a real impact on how that school is valued. If schools can create safe environments where people can begin to talk about things that go beyond their immediate needs, they will begin to develop very different kinds of relationships; the kind Buber called 'I-Thou'. Good schools do this. The Jewish schools of the future are, to my mind, obligated to do this.

CASE STUDY 5: THE SAATCHI SYNAGOGUE

Rabbi Pini Dunner

In 1998, I was approached by someone who told me that there was an opportunity to take an empty space – actually a synagogue which wasn't being utilised as a synagogue – in an area populated quite heavily by young Jewish people, and start a weekend shul at that location, and hopefully do something along the lines of what's been going on for some 25 years in the Upper West Side of Manhattan.

The shul is the Saatchi Synagogue.

I sat down in my office: how do you start a shul? How do you start a shul for young people? How do you start a shul for young people who never go to shul? How do you start a shul for young people who never go to shul because they don't want to go to shul?

So we put an advertising campaign together. It's the first time anything like this was ever done.

Here's what we said:

At our Synagogue this [gefilte fish] is the only thing that gets rammed down someone's throat.

The message was that you're not going to get anything rammed down your throat, and I or you are going to be well fed. Why would that be a powerful message for young people? Because all the shuls anyone ever goes to are replete with rules and regulations. You are force-fed Judaism. That is the general impression young Jewish people have of Judaism and Jewish life. So the only Judaism that they

will be comfortable with is one which is not going to be force-fed. At the Saatchi Synagogue, we promised, you are not going to be force-fed Judaism. Oh, and there'll be good food, too!

We had no idea whether anyone was going to attend the first week. We had absolutely no idea and no way of knowing. There was no previous record. We had no existing membership and we were tackling a market that doesn't have a glorious record when it comes to synagogue attendance. We were just four weeks away from a revolutionary new concept in Anglo-Jewry. Our marketing pitch continued:

Introducing the Saatchi Synagogue: a synagogue that is open and welcoming [two important words] to everyone [another important word] who comes through its doors, whatever their level of religious observance or knowledge [also very important]. We are Orthodox but not stuck in the rigidity of convention. We don't see, for example, why an Orthodox service must necessarily be a boring service; why the atmosphere has to be so formal; why a synagogue can't be relevant to people under 45 whether they are married or single, whether they have children or not.

That was the first introduction people had to the Saatchi Synagogue. We're Orthodox, so your parents are not going to complain if you're from an Orthodox family. On the other hand, if you're coming from a Progressive background, you could try a synagogue that may be unimposing and yet is Orthodox. That was also a weird experience. We are Orthodox – but what's the difference? The difference is that we don't stick to the conventional off-putting norms of British Jewry. We're informal. We're tolerant. We're open-minded. We're friendly.

You've got children? That's no problem. You're single? That's no problem. What about single mums? Great. What about people in their 40s who are single, not married yet? No problem. What about single people who want to meet other single people? Can they go to a shul *kiddush* on a *Shabbos* and meet their hopeful? Unlikely. But let them

come to us. We were creating a shul where that might happen. That was the idea of the Saatchi Synagogue.

In short, the Saatchi Synagogue will be a breath of fresh air. It will be comfortable to people who are regular shul-goers, but also accessible to someone who, for example, cannot read Hebrew. So in addition to conventional siddurim, we will have prayer books that are transliterated phonetically into English characters. We won't just pray together but eat, talk, learn and laugh together. Every Friday night after the service we will have a four-course traditional Friday night dinner followed by discussion, led by a top speaker. And after the Shabbat morning service, we will have a great kiddush, fish balls included, and the chance to chat and get to know each other.

Our rabbi is Rabbi Pini Dunner, 28, a man of great energy and passion who aims to create a synagogue which is full of vitality. Come and experience it for yourselves from October 16th. Call the number below to receive a leaflet about us or to make a credit card booking for Friday night dinner.

What does this advert tell you about the Saatchi Synagogue? It gives you a lot of messages which conflict with many people's preconceptions about Orthodox synagogues. We were saying that we were going to present you with something which is the absolute opposite of everything you'd expect an Orthodox synagogue to be. It's friendly. It's fresh. It's young. It's social. It's sociable. It's contemporary. The advert is contemporary. If you took out the word 'synagogue' and put 'new shopping centre' or 'new art gallery' you wouldn't know that you were looking at an advert for a synagogue – the idea being that a synagogue doesn't necessarily have to fit in with the image of a synagogue that we have been brought up to expect.

Let's look at the second ad.

Done your three visits to synagogue this year? Why not try a fourth?

If you find three visits to synagogue are plenty, thank you very much, please give us a minute of your time anyway.

We want to tell you about the Saatchi Synagogue. It is a new type of synagogue. It has all the good things of traditional ritual without the bad ones of being boring and uninspiring.

We're new, and yet we haven't in any way compromised on all the things that make a shul a shul. We are an Orthodox synagogue but we don't expect you to have any particular degree of religious observance or knowledge. We welcome and cater for people at all levels. We are a synagogue for those aged under 45 and our rabbi, Rabbi Pini Dunner, is himself only 28. We think you'll find an energy and vitality you may have rarely experienced in synagogue.

We had another plan here. We wanted to get people in through the door who didn't come to synagogue because it's a place which is for people their parents' age. I'm sure that all grandparents were regular synagogue-attenders, were members of a community, socialised with the people they met regularly at synagogue. My generation do not socialise with the people they meet at synagogue because they don't go to synagogue. They are not regular attenders of synagogue. Synagogue plays a tertiary role in their life, if it plays any role at all.

They don't go to synagogues because they are uninspiring and boring; if a synagogue was inspiring and exciting, maybe they would come.

We followed that ad up with another. This was the one that really got people going. It featured a speed limit sign that read '45'.

In three weeks' time, a new Orthodox synagogue is opening, the Saatchi Synagogue. It will have tremendous energy, vitality and dynamism. One reason is that people who go there will be under 45.

I came straight out with it. I didn't beat around the bush or hide the facts. This is not a synagogue for the regular, British Jewish establishment. This is a synagogue for people who are *not* the regular, British Jewish establishment.

People find – you may be one of them – that they are missing a spiritual dimension to their life and certainly aren't finding it at a conventional synagogue. They recognise the power of tradition and ritual. It's just: 'Why do services have to be so staid, boring and limiting? Why can they never be uplifting? Why can't they ever be fun?'

This campaign started in the second week of September 1998. We had one phone line. By the end of the month we had six. We took bookings all the way through until December for Friday night dinners. One journalist wrote that it was more difficult to get a booking at the Saatchi Synagogue for Friday night dinner than to reserve a table at the River Café!

We created hype around a synagogue, which most people might have thought was impossible. Why did we succeed? Because we confounded all the people who said that the reason people don't want to go to shul is because they don't want to go to shul. What we discovered is what people really knew: the reason people don't want to go to shul is because the shuls that are on offer are not the shuls that people want to go to. That's a very different thing.

The shul is Carlebach-inspired. The tunes are those of Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach. We sing. We dance. Yes, even English people can dance in shul. We don't have synagogue wardens. I was quoted in the *Jewish Chronicle* as saying 'wardens are for prisons'. I still stand by that quote. We don't have top hats. We don't have fixed seating. In the shul, nobody takes precedence over anybody else. What we've really done, hopefully, is translate the atmosphere of a *chassidische stiebel*, into a world which hadn't experienced it for probably two or three generations.

People who came from Russia or Poland welcomed and embraced

formality centuries ago as a way of expressing their Judaism. We live today in an informal world where Judaism is no longer a lifestyle but a hobby. It comes on a list with eating out, gym, TV programmes, and if you've got satellite television, it doesn't even appear on the list at all. So how do we ensure that people put 'shul' at the top of the list of Saturday morning or Friday night activities? By making it a place that they would choose to go to whether or not it was a synagogue. Because it is nice to be there. Because the people they'd meet are people they'd want to meet even if it was in a café or a club. Because, hey! – it's great to be Jewish if this is what being Jewish means.

BIOGRAPHIES OF CONTRIBUTORS

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Professor Barry Chazan is Professor of Education at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the educational consultant of the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies. A specialist in informal, moral and religious education, he has held visiting faculty positions at Brandeis University, the Ohio State University, the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, and has served as Jewish educational consultant to the JCC Association for over a decade. He has published on Jewish ethnic education in Great Britain, and his numerous publications include *Contemporary Approaches to Moral Education* (Teachers College Press, 1985); 'What is Informal Jewish Education?' (*Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, 67: 4, summer 1991); and *The Israel Trip: A New Form of Jewish Education* (CRB and JESNA, 1994).

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Rabbi Pini Dunner is the Rabbi at the Saatchi Synagogue in London. A graduate of various yeshivot in Britain, Israel and the USA, he formerly worked as Assistant Rabbi in Moscow's Choral Synagogue. He founded the Saatchi Synagogue in 1998 in an effort to create a shul for unaffiliated Jews, and it has quickly become one of the most well-known centres of Jewish life in London.

Alastair Falk has just moved, after 28 years in Jewish education, to become Principal of the West London Academy. From 1993 to 2003 he was Head Teacher of the King Solomon High School, and prior to that he was Head Teacher of the Independent Jewish Day School. He

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Dr Reuven Gal is the founder and Head of the Carmel Institute for Social Studies, a non-profit research and policy-making centre which studies and promotes social and psychological projects in Israel and abroad. Formerly the IDF's Chief Psychologist, he is currently serving as the Deputy to the Head of Israel's National Security Council. He has been centrally involved in the Helping-the-Helpers programme designed to support mental health professionals in the Former Yugoslavia, and was a key thinker behind the World Jewish Peace Corps initiative. His publications include *A Portrait of the Israeli Soldier* (Greenwood Publishing Group, 1986); *Legitimacy and Commitment in the Military* (with Thomas C. Wyatt; Greenwood Publishing Group, 1990); and *The Seventh War* (Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House Ltd, 1990, Hebrew).

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Alan D. Hoffmann is Director-General of the Education Department of the Jewish Agency for Israel. Born in South Africa, he moved to Israel with the first wave of volunteers just before the Six Day War, and subsequently served in the paratrooper brigade of the IDF. Since that time, he has served as Director of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem's Melton Centre for Jewish Education in the Diaspora, Executive Director of the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education in New York, and Head of the Mandel Centre for Jewish Continuity at the Hebrew University.

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Professor Charles Liebman (of blessed memory) was the Yehuda Avner Professor of Religion and Politics at Bar Ilan University. His publications deal with religion and politics in Israel, Israel–Diaspora relations and the religion and culture of American Jews. His most recent book, co-authored with Bernard Susser, is *Choosing Survival: Strategies for a Jewish Future* (Oxford University Press, 1999). In 2003, Liebman was awarded the Israel Prize in Political Science.

Sadly, Professor Liebman died while this book was in preparation. His contribution to the Jewish people and the academy was immense and he will be greatly missed.

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Julian Resnick is a Jewish educator and specialist in community change and development, presently working as Director of the Synagogue Transformation Initiative of the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain. Born in South Africa, he has lived in Israel since 1976 and has subsequently served as a shaliach and Jewish educator in San Francisco, Cape Town and London.

Professor Michael Rosenak is Mandel Professor of Jewish Education (emeritus) at the Hebrew University's Melton Centre for Jewish Education. He is a senior faculty member at the Mandel School for Educational Leadership and lectures widely on issues in the philosophy and practice of Jewish education. His books include *Roads to the Palace: Jewish Texts and Teaching* (Berghahn, 1995); *Commandments and Concerns: Jewish Religious Education in Secular Society* (Jewish Publication Society, 1987) and *Tree of Life: Tree of Knowledge: Conversation With the Torah* (Westview, 2001). His most

recent publication, written in Hebrew, is *Tzarikh Iyyun* ('On Second Thought'): *Between Tradition and Modernity in Contemporary Jewish Education* (Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 2003).

Chief Rabbi Professor Jonathan Sacks is Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of Great Britain and the Commonwealth, a visiting professor of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and King's College London, and Associate President of the Conference of European Rabbis. A specialist in Jewish thought and frequent radio and television broadcaster, he has published widely and counts amongst his numerous works *The Dignity of Difference* (Continuum, 2002); *The Chief Rabbi's Haggadah* (HarperCollins, 2003); *Radical Then, Radical Now* (HarperCollins, 2000); *The Politics of Hope* (Jonathan Cape, 1997); and *Will We Have Jewish Grandchildren? Jewish Continuity and How to Achieve It* (Valentine Mitchell, 1994).

Rabbi Dr Michael Shire is Vice-Principal of the Leo Baeck College – Centre for Jewish Education. Born and educated in Birmingham, he studied Hebrew literature and Jewish history at University College London. He gained an MA in religious education from New York's Hebrew Union College and an MA in Hebrew and Jewish studies from Leo Baeck College, London, where he was also ordained as a rabbi. He received his doctorate in Jewish education from Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles. His publications include *The Jewish Prophet* (Jewish Lights Publication, 2002); *L'Chaim: A Guide to the Blessings and Prayers that Guide our Faith* (Chronicle Books, 2000); and *The Illuminated Haggadah* (Stewart, Tabori and Chang, 1998).

Dr Raphael Zarum holds a doctorate in theoretical physics and a Masters in adult education, and is currently a Jerusalem Fellow in Israel. He was the Founding Director of the Texts and Values Project at the Makor-AJY Centre for Informal Jewish Education, and was the first head teacher of the Florence Melton Adult Mini School in Britain. He also created the Chavruta Project for Anglo-Jewry's annual Limmud Conference. Raphael has worked as the reviews

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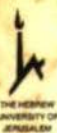
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