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HaYidion

אביב תשע"ד • SPRING 2014

TEACHING JEWISH HISTORY

26 Jonathan D. Sarna:
Why American Jewish
History Matters

72 Jan Darsa:
Connecting Jewish
Ethics and History



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RAVSAK NEWS

COLUMNS: *From the Editor*, page 5 • *From the Desk of Rebekah Farber, RAVSAK Chair*, page 6 • *Good & Welfare*, page 7 • *Dear Cooki*, page 8 • *Jonathan Woocher, Keeping the Vision*, p. 36

PROGRAMS: *RAVSAK's New Offices*, page 7 • *JCAT Recruitment*, page 13 • *RAVSAK/PARDES Jewish Day School Leadership Conference*, pages 16-20 • *Sulam Alumni Shabbaton*, page 24 • *Sulam 2.0 Launches*, page 37 • *Head of School PEP Recruitment*, page 47 • *Reshet Roundup*, page 61 • *RAVSAK Judaic Art Contest Winners*, pages 64-71

CHALLENGES AND APPROACHES

Jewish History: The Neglected Discipline	10 Samuel Kapustin
The Opportunities of Teaching Jewish History	14 Sivan Zakai
Between History and Memory in Israel Education	22 Alex Sinclair
Why Study American Jewish History?	26 Jonathan D. Sarna
The Command to Remember: Creating Collective Memory as a Moral Imperative	28 Nance M. Adler
Teaching Jewish History: A Major Impediment	30 Robert Chazan
On the Virtue of Not Taking a Stand	32 Martin Lockshin
PaRDeS: History as Spirit in Action	34 Michael Feuer

JEWISH HISTORY IN OUR SCHOOLS 38-43

PEDAGOGY

Recipe for Engagement, Enrichment, and Inquiry: Primary Sources	44 Jack Lipinsky
Using Simulations to Play with Jewish History	48 Meredith Katz
Understanding the Holocaust, as Jews	54 Ann Nachbar
Developing Historical Thinking in Upper Elementary Students	58 Lisa Micley and Stan Peerless
Role-Playing: Between Accuracy and Creativity	62 David Fain

INTEGRATION

Connecting Ethics and History Through a Jewish Lens	72 Jan Darsa
Teaching the History of Jewish-Christian Relations	74 Mark Stolovitsky
Integrating Jewish History Within a General Social Studies Curriculum	76 Juli Kramer and Naomi Lev



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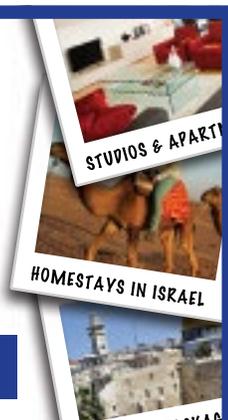


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From the Editor

■ by **BARBARA DAVIS**

About thirty years ago, I developed a photographic exhibit/catalog of the Jewish community of Syracuse. Being neither a historian nor a Syracuse native, I found this a challenging undertaking and quickly realized that history is often a result not of selectivity, intention or bias, but rather of availability of materials. People who kept scrapbooks, records, diaries and artifacts guarded them jealously and often would not part with them even for the hour or so it would take me to photocopy or photograph them.

Even the local historical association, not known for believing that Jewish history was of any import, was open only a few hours a week with materials catalogued (a word I apply loosely here) according to the somewhat clouding memory of the elderly gentleman who controlled it with an iron fist. Nonetheless, my exhibit opened and was immediately assailed by those whose families, histories, materials, photos etcetera were not included.

Fast-forward twenty-five years. A publisher offers to convert my earlier work into a genuine tome, available at real bookstores for real money. Things are different now. Many who refused to lend me their memories are now deceased, their scrapbooks and ledgers, sadly, discarded by those for whom they held no value. But technology has advanced. Materials no longer need be borrowed, even for an hour. One can take digital photos of the utmost clarity on site. No one need be separated from that which they cherish. The historical society has a new director, although there is still not a single folder in the files with the word “Jewish” in its title. So my book is published and is immediately assailed by those whose families, histories, materials, photos etcetera were not included. As Gertrude Stein remarked, “It is the soothing thing about history that it does repeat itself.”

Which brings us to today. The greatest generation has come to the realization that the life they led will soon be lost to posterity unless they take action to preserve it. A Syracuse Jewish Historical Associa-

tion is created. A young woman living in another state takes it upon herself to create a Facebook page on which people can post photos and memories and artifacts and documents of their lives as Jewish citizens of Syracuse—which they do, by the hundreds. A videographer from another city who summered in Syracuse returns to create a film of his memories of the Jewish world of his grandparents. Someone else writes another book. “History never looks like history when you are living through it,” says John Gardner. But when you finally reach the age when you want your life to have significance, when you realize your life is now history—to whom does it matter besides yourself?

This is the dilemma that the teacher of Jewish history faces today. How do we make that which is meaningful to us equally significant to those who will succeed us? Memory and keeping memory alive are critical Jewish values. The past has a special place in our being Jewish. We are enjoined to remember past events *as if they had happened to us*. Richard Abrams has written, “Our memories of bondage should remind us to wipe out slavery and to treat all people with dignity. Our memories of leaving the corners of our fields untouched should remind us to take care of ‘the stranger, the fatherless and the widow’ both within and outside our community. Our memories of Amalek should remind us of our role to blot out evil in the world. Ours is an active existence: we do not live in a state of forgetfulness or ‘forgettiness’ but in a state of memory and consciousness that induces us to seek to make the world a better place.”

Our history is integral to who we are, yet ours is not a happy story. Thus, as many of the authors in this issue point out, it is unappealing to those whose focal point of Jewish identity, as revealed by the Pew Report, is a sense of humor. Within the pages of this issue of *HaYidion* are many suggestions for addressing this problem. Technology, creativity and an acknowledgement and awareness of the changing nature of the study of history provide the means by which we can make the teaching of Jewish history vibrant and meaningful.

At our recent conference in Los Angeles, a keynote speaker asked us to consider a text by Abraham Joshua Heschel that is totally relevant to the theme of this issue. In “The Spirit of Jewish Education,” Heschel described the teacher as “the intermediary between the past and the present....the creator of the future of our people.” The teacher of history, Heschel wrote, must teach students “to evaluate the past in order to clarify their future.” We hope that this issue of *HaYidion* will make you better able to address this challenge ■



Dr. Barbara Davis is the secretary of RAVSAK's Board of Directors, executive editor of HaYidion and head of school at the Syracuse Hebrew Day School in Dewitt, NY. bdavis74@twcyn.rr.com

From the desk of Rebekah Farber, RAVSAK Chair

In *Relational Judaism*, Dr. Ron Wolfson states, “What really matters is that we care about the people we seek to engage. When we genuinely care about people, we will not only welcome them; we will listen to their stories, we will share ours, and we will join together to build a Jewish community that enriches our lives.” The recent RAVSAK/PARDES Day School Leadership Conference, in my home town of Los Angeles, was a wonderful example of just such connection, community and relationships. Attendees listened carefully, learned together, challenged each other, and deepened their relationships with each other as well as our network.

The goals of our conference were to provide value to our schools, make people feel connected with each other and with our mission and enable them to engage with RAVSAK as a basis for future contact. We listened to what people told us they wanted: more programming for lay leaders, specific tracks for small schools, deeper content knowledge in critical areas, and more opportunities for networking. In the smaller, more targeted conference this year, I believe we were able to do all of these things and do them well.

The power of learning at any age was also very much in evidence at the conference. One of the primary missions of Jewish community day schools is the creation of lifelong learners, and the conference was a perfect illustration of that value. Attendees came to the conference not solely as observers, but as active participants. They were eager to

learn. People brought their learning into the corridors of the conference, onto social media, in the Reshatot, and to their dinner tables. They were clearly impacted by the learning opportunities they had at the conference, with new ideas to discuss and new contacts with whom to collaborate.

As Jewish community day school leaders, we want to support our students. But adults coming together to be enriched is also very empowering. The conference attendees—lay leaders and professionals—came for that empowerment. They came for practical advice and also for text study, for learning just for the sake of learning. It was very exciting to watch adult learners be mentally and spiritually intrigued. The same is true for the students in our schools: when they are mentally, spiritually and intellectually engaged, then the whole child is empowered and we are truly fulfilling our mission and the mission of our schools.

With almost 550 in attendance, our conference was a great success. It enriched our teachers, our professionals, our lay learners—and ultimately our students. May we grow from strength to strength and come together again in March of 2015 in Philadelphia to learn and be empowered again.

Chazak, chazak ve-nitchazek!

Rebekah



Rebekah Farber is chair of RAVSAK's Board of Directors and co-founder of the New Community Jewish High School in West Hills, California. Rebekah would love to hear feedback on RAVSAK's work and engage in conversations with the field about what is happening at our schools worldwide. You can email her at rebekah.farber@ravsak.org.



RAVSAK would like to thank Legacy Heritage Fund for its generous support of HaYidion.



RAVSAK would also like to thank Rebekah and Howard Farber and Arnee R. and Walter A. Winshall for supporting HaYidion.

Good & Welfare

Welcome to the newest RAVSAK members: **CHICAGOLAND JEWISH HIGH SCHOOL** in Deerfield, IL, and **SOLOMON SCHECHTER DAY SCHOOL OF GREATER MONMOUTH COUNTY** in Marlboro, NJ.

The **JEWISH DAY SCHOOL OF THE LEHIGH VALLEY** in Allentown, PA, announces that Al Goren, serving as the temporary head, has been chosen as the new permanent head of school.

The **JEWISH DAY SCHOOL OF METROPOLITAN SEATTLE** has named Hamutal Gavish as its new head. Hamutal is currently the cam-

pus head of San Francisco's Brandeis Hillel Day School Marin Campus.

The **WEBER SCHOOL** in Atlanta announces the appointment of Rabbi Ed Harwitz as the new head of school. Ed was the founding director of two Jewish high schools and is currently the director of leadership and Innovation for day schools at the Jewish Education Project in New York.

Mazal tov to Cheryl Maayan, head of school at the **SAUL MIROWITZ JEWISH COMMUNITY SCHOOL** in St. Louis, for receiving the

Visionary Award from JProStl, a Jewish professional organization.

METROWEST JEWISH DAY SCHOOL in Framingham, MA, has been selected for a grant from The Gelfand Family Charitable Trust (GFCT) in collaboration with The Combined Jewish Philanthropies (CJP) to increase STEM initiatives. This grant, which will provide teacher training and curriculum materials, will enable MWJDS to introduce its youngest students to robotics, through integrated programming utilizing multiple robotics kits. ■



Kitchen Tables to Conference Tables: RAVSAK's New Offices

At the recent RAVSAK/PARDES Day School Leadership Conference, several people remarked that they remember when RAVSAK was “a mom and pop shop, with the small handful of volunteers gathered around Marc’s kitchen table.” From that table grew an expansive network of Jewish community day schools, which today includes over 130 hubs of Jewish learning spanning four continents.

As our sphere of influence grew, so too did our need for staff and space. In 2007, RAVSAK decamped from the kitchen table to a ground floor suite on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. From these new offices sprang field-building professional development programs, exciting student initiatives, innovative services for schools and school leaders, and the expansion of our newsletter into an industry leading journal.

Our 2012 strategic plan called on additional program and staff expansion, and with it, the need for more space. After an extensive search, we were pleased to find our new organizational home. So while the conference planning team organized one of our finest convenings ever, the rest of the staff packed and during the last week of December, we said good-bye to 120



West 97th Street and decamped for our new offices at 254 West 54th Street in the heart of Manhattan. The paint is (mostly) dry, the boxes (mostly) unpacked, the mezzuzot all up, and the door open wide. We look forward to the many opportunities that will surely come in our new home. ■

Dear Cooki

■ by **COOKI LEVY**

As a head of school, I am increasingly dependent on short-term consultants for one of the following reasons: they are more affordable than permanent staff; funders often agree to the short-term hiring of an expert but will not fund a permanent hire; the board of directors believes that this is the best possible course of action. As a result, I am working with consultants in the areas of curriculum development, servicing special needs students, and technology.

I value the expertise that consultants bring to the table, but how do I maximize the benefits to the school? How can I convey the particular culture and context of our school that may preclude certain approaches without sounding defensive? How can I overcome the resistance of staff to what they perceive as “outsiders taking over”? How do I sustain the changes or improvements once the consultants have left?

While it may be little consolation, many nonprofit organizations, including schools, are increasingly engaging outside consultants. They are hired because they have very specific expertise, and knowledge and experience stemming from diverse sources. In short, they know their subjects both deeply and broadly. Most often, these consultants are engaged to make recommendations in one precise area; sometimes they are brought in to help resolve a fundamental difference in opinion among varied lay and profession-

al leaders; moving a very special project forward is another reason to call in an outside expert. And while many of us often repeat the adage, “A consultant is someone who lives 50 miles away,” the truth is that there is a great deal of benefit to be derived from consultants, as you point out in your question. So how can you, as the head of school, make it work well?

Choose your consultant wisely. While it is often tempting to hire a close friend or the board chair’s colleague, do careful research on the specific areas of expertise and the professional objectivity of the consultant you plan to hire. Someone with a program to sell or some other agenda may come in with a bias that will not, in the end, be helpful to you. And while you are always looking for the most cost-effective ways to achieve your goals, hiring someone *only* because he or she offers the lowest fee is not a good idea.

Be very specific about what you need. Consultants do their best work when they know precisely the desired outcome, the timeline, and the stakeholders with whom

they will work. You define the task at hand, not the consultant.

Make sure the consultant understands your school in advance. Be sure that you explain clearly your school’s mission, culture and ways of operating. Introduce the permanent staff members, outline the organizational structure, and be clear about any constraints such as teacher unions, community expectations, board directives, etc. It’s not enough to understand the problem, project or issue s/he has come to help with. The consultant must know your school.

Build a personal relationship. Get to know your consultants and let them get to know you on a personal level. It becomes much easier to disagree or to build consensus when there is a solid personal relationship in place.

Introduce the consultant openly and freely. When someone seems to be hiding in the background or operating in a secretive manner, suspicions mount. Don’t give your staff time to be suspicious. Introduce your consultants, explain why they are there, encourage them to speak to a large cross-section of staff members, and encourage staff to offer their views to the consultant. Almost everyone, I think, prefers being inside the process rather than outside wondering what is going to happen.

Be involved in all aspects of the consultant’s work. A consultant works best in partnership with the permanent staff. Develop plans together; share information;

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 12]



Cooki Levy is the director of RAVSAK’s Head of School Professional Excellence Project (PEP). Previously, she served as the longtime head of the Akiva School in Westmount, Quebec. Dear Cooki accepts questions from all school stakeholders. To submit a question, write to hayidion@ravsak.org, with “Dear Cooki” in the subject line.

A young man is shown in profile, looking intently at a complex geometric paper model he is holding. The background is a blurred classroom with other students and various geometric shapes hanging from the ceiling.

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A group of four students, two girls and two boys, are smiling and holding up prayer shawls (tallitot). They are standing in front of a large, dark-colored Torah ark with Hebrew text on it. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting an indoor setting like a synagogue or school chapel.

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Jewish History: The Neglected Discipline

■ by **SAMUEL KAPUSTIN**

Kapustin explains reasons why Jewish history is often less valued than other pillars of the Judaics curriculum. When taught well, he argues, Jewish history is the subject most capable of shaping mature, sophisticated thinking.

Even a cursory perusal of Jewish studies curricula across North America, at all levels, will attest to the relatively minor role that the study of Jewish history plays in the focus of most schools. In comparison to the Big Three—Tanakh, Ivrit and Rabbinics/Talmud—Jewish history barely receives attention. If one limits the area of study to the post-Biblical period, i.e., from the beginning of the Second Temple on, this situation is even more pronounced. Schools differ in what periods they choose to emphasize and the length of time they devote to them, but most share a reluctance to place emphasis on this discipline equal to all the others.

To be sure, we are all confronted by the challenge of what *not* to include in our school curricula; there are only so many hours in the day. Yet, for some reason, Jewish history usually tends to draw the short straw. In this article, I will try to explain this phenomenon and why it is wrongheaded and should be changed.

There are a number of reasons for the relative absence of Jewish history in our curricula. It is not considered a part of *limmudei kodesh*, those studies traditionally viewed essential for an educated Jew. It is not “holy” in the sense of Tanakh or Talmud, and it does not provide a basic, technical skill as does Hebrew language, a prerequisite to study the others. At best, Jewish history is deemed

an add-on, something good to have, but not in any sense essential.

If the study of Jewish history is less significant, it follows that whoever teaches it need not necessarily have the same level of expertise or training as required for the other disciplines. In fact, perhaps any teacher can really do it, since the knowledge base can be easily “picked up” from any good textbook, and there appear to be no specific techniques or skills required. Thus, in most schools, those who teach Jewish history, even in a defined course, are often not trained to do so.

It follows, therefore, that any Jewish historical knowledge that is required can be provided by the teachers of the Big Three in the process of teaching their respective disciplines. It simply is not worth the time and thus not justified to have a course or identified period/s devoted to Jewish history. It will only get in the way of the important studies.

Similarly, it is often felt that whatever is the perceived need for Jewish history can be fulfilled through the process of “integration”—Jewish and general history taught together in one course/time slot. The relative merits of this approach really deserve their own article, but suffice it to say that, in such attempts of which I am aware, it usually results in the study of general history—often to fulfill state/

Jewish historical sources are often viewed as a means to fill in the blanks, adding context to other disciplines, but not contributing per se to the creation of serious, authentic Jews.



Samuel Kapustin was for many years the principal of Jewish studies at the Tanenbaum Community Hebrew Academy of Toronto, having previously served as department head in Jewish history. He and his wife are retired in Jerusalem. mskapustin@gmail.com.

provincial requirements—with small bits of Jewish material sparingly introduced. Certainly, one cannot study Jewish history in a vacuum, and knowledge of the general historical setting is essential. The issue, here, however, is not only a quantitative one of emphasis, but also a qualitative question of goals and objectives.

For example, in the teaching Tanakh and rabbinics, there is no question about the primary goal: the development of Jewish identity. Traditional texts are the sources of Jews' beliefs, practices and experiences. Students need to appreciate that these texts can speak to them as individuals and inform ways they confront contemporary challenges. Traditional Jewish sources connect them to what being Jewish is all about. In contrast, the primary sources of the Jewish past are not normally viewed in this manner, but simply as a means to fill in the blanks, putting the other disciplines in some context, but not contributing per se to the creation of serious, authentic Jews.

At best, emphasis is placed on influential events or outstanding personalities, which are presented as either warnings or lessons, in the case of events, or models of good or bad behavior, in the case of personalities. Little effort is expended on how or why they should, or perhaps should not, be considered influential or outstanding. Past judgments are accepted and transmitted with little questioning of why they are justified. In other words, when it comes to the Jewish past, most of our schools tend to view its educational value in instrumental terms, unlike the traditional Jewish disciplines, as an aid to achieve specific objectives, rather than as worthy of study in itself.

To be clear, what I am advocating applies more to high school than to pre-high school. That is not because Jewish history should not be taught before the age of 14, but because before that age, we are really talking about two different studies. It is usually only in the early years



At Masada, were the Zealots correct in what they did? Were the alternatives open to them worse than suicide? What do the sources have to say?

of high school that students begin to develop the skills necessary for the study of history, properly understood. Prior to this, the focus should perhaps be more on the who and what of history, and less on the why, certainly not in the pursuit of memorization, but in the study of major personalities and their contributions. Instrumental Jewish history education does have a role at that level.

However, the study of Jewish history on the high school level should raise fundamental value questions about what Judaism is and what Jews do. This should be reflected less by the choice of events and personalities, than by how we approach them. A few examples may help to illustrate.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 12]

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1) Rather than claim that the Zealots at Masada were great heroes, reflecting essential Jewish ideals, one should ask the following: Were the Zealots correct in what they did? Is mass suicide a recommended Jewish practice under any conditions? Were the alternatives open to the Zealots worse than suicide? What do the sources, ancient and contemporary, say about this? The teacher's goal is not to convince the students of a particular view, but to enable them to develop their own, based on careful analysis and thoughtful evaluation.

2) How were the Jews in the Middle Ages able to survive their situation outside of their own land? Is "survive" the correct term, or should the maintenance and enrichment of Jewish identity be considered something more? If their experience is considered a "success," is perhaps Jewish existence in the Galut preferable to Jewish life in Israel? In short, do the Jews need to be in the Jewish land to be the Jewish people?

3) Was military resistance to the Nazis the preferred response? If so, at all times in the evolution of the Holocaust, or only when extermination was inevitable? What was/is the purpose of resistance: survival, sending a message to those who follow, or something else entirely? What conditions are necessary for "successful" military resistance, and were they present for the Jews?

None of these questions is easily dealt with. They are formulated to challenge beliefs and accepted truisms, not to present specific views or positions. They demand critical skills and self-examination. The path to their successful educational treatment lies in the process of examining primary sources. The past cannot speak meaningfully to the present if we are unwilling to meet it on its own terms. That requires, to the extent possible in the high school classroom, a sensitive attempt to "walk around in the shoes" of our ancestors, to be

sensitive to their own motivations and aspirations. Only thus will we enable our students to grow into mature and thoughtful Jewish individuals.

It is not my claim that the serious study of Jewish history is indispensable for the achievement of these goals, only that it is, perhaps uniquely, suitable for the task. It is undoubtedly a neglected means for its realization. If approached by the teacher informed with historical knowledge and the requisite educational training, the study of the Jewish past can facilitate mature, even sophisticated, thinking, leading to honest and fruitful exploration.

There may be some among us who will be reluctant to invest in such an open-ended enterprise. They may feel that it is guaranteed to raise too many problematic issues and is, indeed, too far removed from the "nuts and bolts" of Jewish history, i.e., what happened and when. Others may feel that their personal or school ideology or educational philosophy does not lend itself to this type of approach.

To such responses I can only suggest the following. Any Jewish studies that we undertake with our students must speak to their values and concerns, demonstrating that Judaism, in whatever form, has something serious and worthwhile to say to them. If they do not confront such issues when they are in our charge, they may never do so, in which case they may leave our schools convinced that Judaism is a simplistic and superficial set of beliefs and practices. Alternatively, they may only first be challenged with such questions in a much less hospitable and sensitive environment—the twenty-first century university campus. I, for one, would leave no stone unturned in the effort to foster opportunities conducive to their developing their own informed Jewish identity.

After all, is that not what we are all about? ■

Dear Cooki

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8]

discuss strategies; come to agreement on implementation. While the outsider is the expert in a specific area, you are the expert in your school. Not everything that works well elsewhere will work for you. Do not hesitate to offer objective, concrete reasons why some suggestions or recommendations will not be helpful in your school (but be sure that is really so, and not a result of repudiation on your part).

Trust your consultants. They know that your institution is not perfect; none is. They know that their expertise is needed—why else are they there? You owe them an honest explanation of what the challenges are, understanding that they are confidantes who

will use this information only to help in determining your best course of action. Don't hide the ugly truths they need to know.

Demand a complete report. Your consultant's work is not done until you have developed together not only recommendations for future action, but a specific timeline, implementation plan, projected budget figures and personnel needed. You need the vision, but you also need the pragmatics and you must be able to move forward with the task at hand after the consultant has gone.

Attend to future planning. Determine what you need to add to your next year's budget, or what staff you may need to engage, or what kind of re-organization is

needed. Working with your board, seek ways to gather the needed resources to act upon the consultant's report. The walls of many institutions can be covered with reports containing solid recommendations that never saw the light of day because follow-up and follow-through are costly and time-consuming.

Limit the number of consultants that you work with at any one time. With the many, many responsibilities that heads already have, and with the numerous budgetary constraints they face, it is important not to take on too much at any given time. Prioritize your needs and determine with complete realism what can be accomplished, and paid for, each year. ■

Join the Award-Winning 2014 JCAT: Jewish Court of all Time Program for RAVSAK Middle Schools

In partnership with the University of Michigan, University of Cincinnati and The Davidson School of Education at the Jewish Theological Seminary, JCAT empowers students to delve into history by assuming the roles of iconic figures and debating moral dilemmas, while interacting with a large cast of their peers and adults playing other characters.



Taking place mostly online, students discuss cultural, social and moral issues surrounding a fictional trial, using the voices of those characters. In doing so, JCAT provides students with an opportunity to practice historical research, deliberation, perspective-taking, genre and voice in writing, and other skills.

For the second time, JCAT has been awarded a prestigious Covenant Foundation Grant honoring special programs that advance excellence and impact in Jewish education. Find out why The Covenant Foundation calls JCAT “a change maker in Jewish education.”



The Covenant Foundation

Did you know? More than 1,600 students have taken part in JCAT from Jewish day schools throughout North America.



Interested? Contact us to get involved and bring the magic of JCAT to your school!

Lisa Inberg, Student Programs Coordinator
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Website: www.ravsak.org/programs

WHAT ARE TEACHERS SAYING?

“JCAT provided an opportunity for rich discussion around Israel- her purpose, her future, her security, her neighborhood. The skills that the students gain through their research, our learning together on the topic, and their interactions online will all be used in future learning. The deep thinking and writing skills are major.”

**Jodi Lasker, Heschel Day School,
Los Angeles, CA**

“My students are engaged in Jewish history learning in a fun, dynamic and interactive learning space. Students develop research skills, hear different voices of significant Jewish historical figures and are excited about their learning.”

Nance Adler, Jewish Day School of Seattle

WHAT ARE STUDENTS SAYING?

“I really had to think during the JCAT lessons. I had to make the right choices during the times when I was running for justice of what my character might think. I really had to stretch my band of thinking.”

6th grade student

“I liked that I was able to speak to other seventh graders, and in a group. I think that because of this my writing became much better and I was able to give my opinions for my character, as I shared the same ideas as her. I think that acting as another person made the JCAT experience much more meaningful and more creative. Having to learn about another person and be them makes JCAT fun and challenging.”

7th grade student

“It was amazing to play a Jewish historical figure with a strong opinion. I thought it was interesting to play someone else and speak in their voice.”

7th grade student

The Opportunities of Teaching Jewish History

■ by **SIVAN ZAKAI**

As someone who trains teachers of Jewish history, Zakai here tailors ideas about best practice in the teaching of general history for Jewish day schools.

Jewish history sits at an important nexus in day school education, straddling the worlds of Judaic and general studies. It focuses on the ways that Jews have lived and found meaning in Judaism, and yet to do so, it draws upon the tools and texts of a secular discipline: history. Because of its unique status as a secular-Jewish subject, teaching Jewish history can integrate the lessons of both Jewish and general studies in a way no other subject is poised to do.

Yet it is no easy task to teach students to think carefully and critically about history while also helping them look inward to find meaning in their own Jewish lives. The following are three strategies that I suggest for Jewish history teachers who hope to draw upon the powers of both *limmudei kodesh* and *limmudei chol* to inspire the souls and ignite the minds of their students.

Ditch the names and dates

When history, Jewish or secular, is whittled down to a timeline of dates and names for students to memorize, it becomes boring and irrelevant. The history classroom is a place of meaning and purpose only when it becomes a laboratory for exploring the past and why it matters.

So how can the Jewish history classroom become such a laboratory? By introducing students to the cornerstone of historical analysis: engagement with primary source materials. Rather than teaching students *about* Jewish life in 17th century Europe, ask them to read age-appropriate excerpts from the memoir of Gluckel of Hameln and to extrapolate from her story how Jews structured their families and businesses. Instead of lecturing students about Jews in early American history, let them examine George Washington's own words in the famous letter he wrote

in 1790 to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport.

Students of any age can learn to engage with primary sources, and to use them as a “time-machine” through which they can catch glimpses of how people lived in the past. It is never too early to start introducing students to artifacts from Jewish history. Even pre-readers can begin to engage with real historical sources by examining photographs and paintings from the past. This is an important lesson that Jewish educators can learn from secular history education, which is increasingly moving away from the rote memorization of names and dates and towards an examination of primary source material as a way to help students think critically about the past and why it matters.

Even pre-readers can begin to engage with real historical sources by examining photographs and paintings from the past.

The problem is, most Jewish history textbooks contain only a few, if any, primary source documents. Luckily, organizations like The Center for Jewish History, The Jewish Women's Archive,

and even the Library of Congress have been constructing digital archives with hundreds of primary source documents. Teachers and students can access these documents from any computer, transforming the Jewish history classroom from a dry recitation of facts to an exciting quest to uncover the Jewish past.

By helping students encounter and engage with sources from digital archives—rather than hear a recitation of names and dates from the teacher—we can provide our students with a twofold advantage. First, we reinforce best practices in the (secular) history classroom, where reading primary sources is increasingly a curricular staple. Second, and even more important, we help students learn to interpret and analyze (rather than list) different ways of being Jewish. This process is essential for helping children learn to make choices about how they will lead Jewish lives today.



Sivan Zakai PhD is director of research and teacher education at American Jewish University's Graduate Center for Education. szakai@aju.edu

Welcome the “wicked child”

Every Jewish day school has students who harbor deep skepticism about the relevance of Jewish life. Despite the best efforts of Jewish educators, these students, like the “wicked child” at the Passover seder, struggle to see how Judaism could have meaning in their own lives. Often, these are the very students to whom teaching Jewish history matters most.

A student need not believe in God, need not love Hebrew, and need not find meaning in prayer or Halakhah, to fall in love with Jewish history. For Jewish history is a secular Jewish subject, requiring neither belief nor observance. The very students who push back against other Jewish studies classes can often find Jewish role models in previous generations of Jews hoping to reinvent Judaism in their own times, ranging from the rabbis who dared to envision a new Jewish life after the destruction of the Temple, to the chalutzim who hoped to build a new Jewish society in Eretz Yisrael.

The study of Jewish history allows students to encounter Jews who believed radically different things than today’s normative Jews believe. Students are often surprised to learn that in its early days, Zionism was met with deep hostility from Orthodox and Reform rabbis alike. Those who struggle with their own relationships to Israel and Zionism may take comfort in the fact that their questions are not new. Some students are intrigued by the fact that early Hasidism was seen as so revolutionary that its leaders were actually excommunicated by the Jewish establishment. Others feel drawn into Judaism when they discover that many activists of the early US labor movement were Jewish men and women expressing their Jewish beliefs through political organizing.

Not only can these encounters surprise and ignite young Jewish minds, but they also serve to “open the tent,” showing students multiple avenues that have existed for Jews to find meaning and purpose in their lives. For community day schools in particular, this is a central message of the Jewish studies curriculum, and one that Jewish history is uniquely equipped to address. For what better place to find examples of myriad paths to Jewish life than in the long expanse of the Jewish past?

Yet we can teach this lesson only when we begin to see our most skeptical, critical students as assets, not detractors, in the history classroom. For they are the ones who are best poised to find comfort in the surprising stories, and meaning in the counter-intuitive moments of the Jewish past.

Stop focusing on the dead, white (Ashkenazi) men

Although secular history classes have long ago moved away from an exclusively “dead white male” narrative of history, in many Jewish schools, Jewish history is still taught as a story about Ashkenazi Jewish men in Europe. Jewish women, Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews, and Jews whose stories occurred outside of the West or the Land of Israel

Every day school has students who harbor deep skepticism about the relevance of Jewish life. Often, these are the very students to whom teaching Jewish history matters most.

PRIMARY SOURCE RESOURCES

The Center for Jewish History Digital Collections: access.cjh.org

The Jewish Women’s Archive: jwa.org

Library of Congress Digital Collections: www.loc.gov/library/libarch-digital.html

SUGGESTED READING LIST

Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History by Paula Hyman

Cultures of the Jews edited by David Biale

Jewish Women in Historical Perspective edited by Judith Baskin

Sephardi Jewry: A History of the Judeo-Spanish Community by Esther Benbassa and Aron Rodrigue

are largely ignored in the Jewish history curricula.

When we teach only the history of Ashkenazi Jewish men, we are inadvertently telling some students in our class that their stories—the stories of their grandmothers, their communities, their Jewish cultures—are not important in the collective Jewish experience. If one of the goals of community Jewish day schools is to recognize and embrace pluralism in the Jewish world, then the history classroom is an important place to incorporate lessons of diversity.

When we teach a more inclusive approach, not only does the Jewish history classroom more accurately reflect the diversity of Jewish experiences in the past, but it also calls into question some of the commonly taught narratives of Jewish history. For example, historian Paula Hyman has shown that the widespread belief that modern Jewish history marks an inexorable decline towards increasing assimilation is in fact much more complicated when we consider the experiences of Jewish women alongside those of Jewish men. For Jewish women in Western Europe often assimilated at a slower rate than their own husbands and sons, acting as guardians of Jewish tradition, and Jewish women in Eastern Europe often assimilated much more than their male counterparts, pursuing opportunities for secular education as their brothers kept alive traditional Jewish learning.

Jewish historians have come to understand that the Jewish world has always been broader and deeper than traditional Jewish narratives suggest. Now Jewish day schools must follow suit, shifting the stories we tell about which parts of the Jewish past—and therefore which students in the Jewish present—matter. ■

A Day School Conference That Truly Moved the Needle

50 day school leaders from more than 110 schools. 90 speakers. Over 85 workshops and sessions. 1200+ tweets. One exceptional conference experience.

The numbers don't tell the whole story. Over three sun-filled days in Los Angeles, RAVSAK: The Jewish Community Day School Network, and PARDES: Day Schools of Reform Judaism partnered to hold **Moving the Needle: Galvanizing Change in Our Day Schools**.

Designed to offer a more concentrated focus on the 144 schools specifically part of the RAVSAK and PARDES networks, the conference was focused on providing unique learning and networking opportunities to strengthen schools by supporting their most valuable asset: the people who make up their school communities.

From the opening keynote by Rabbi Danny

Lehmann that offered a provocative reimagining of the mission of our schools and the dozens of structured workshops and sessions, to Dr. Rob Evans's reflections on school change, the daylong deep-dives on specific topics and Dr. Mary Helen Immordino-Yang's exploration of the impact on the brain of values transmission, **Moving the Needle** offered practical, real-world solutions for 21st century Jewish day schools.

Recognizing that strong day school boards result in stronger Jewish day schools, the conference offered the Board Leadership Institute, a unique learning and networking event. More than 100 day school board members and lay leaders attended the institute, which focused on effective board governance while reaffirming the Jewish mission of a school. Fifty LA-area teachers were also on hand the final day of the conference for a special "Teacher Day" program, in which they learned with experts

on a range of topics to build their skills and promote professional growth.

It was impossible to walk through the hotel corridors, join a session or visit a table during meals without hearing people passionately discussing new ideas, sharing resources and making new connections. Uniting all who attended was the commitment to day schools as the builders of the next generation of knowledgeable and passionate Jewish leaders.

Attendees at **Moving the Needle 2014** returned to their communities equipped with new knowledge and skills, an expanded network of contacts and a wealth of innovative tools to strengthen their Jewish day school from classroom to boardroom.

Find additional photos, videos, presentations from the conference and media clips online at www.movingtheneedle2014.org. ■



Attendees participate in a conference-wide Beit Midrash discussing texts that relate to the mission of Jewish day schools



Breaking bread at the Board Leadership Institute



Rabbi Danny Lehmann, President of Hebrew College, delivers the opening keynote at Moving the Needle 2014



Participants enjoy cooperative play during Walter Drew's workshop on "From Play to Practice: Investigating the transformative power of play for our schools and society"



Attendees collaborating to design a new wallet in the Deep Dive on "Design Thinking and Adaptive Leadership"



Dr. Rob Evans delivers a keynote address on *The Human Side of School Change*



Dr. Mary Helen Immordino-Yang delivers the closing keynote on *Rest is not idleness: Neurobiological perspectives on social emotions, moral development and academic learning*



Conference attendees enjoying the networking reception

Thank you to our inspiring and thought-provoking presenters:

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Dr. Rob Evans
Dr. Mary Helen Immordino-Yang
Rabbi Danny Lehmann

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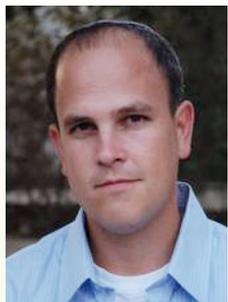
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Between History and Memory in Israel Education

■ by **ALEX SINCLAIR**

Sinclair splices conversations with four other leading Israel educators to reflect on the purpose of Israel education, what it should be and what it is capable of.

I was once with speaking with a group of American students and, as an introductory activity, asked for each to tell the group about his or her “Jewish journey.” Nobody began before they were born. Their stories all began with themselves. I found that very strange and disturbing—if I had done the same activity with Israelis, they would always begin with their parents and grandparents...

I was told this story by Dr. David Mendelsson, professor of Jewish history at Hebrew Union College and director of its year in Israel program. The story captures the essence of the challenges facing those who would teach Jewish history and Israeli history to today’s Americans. In an era of “now-ism,” how is history relevant? Can history speak to young American Jews today? How, if at all, does it affect their identities, their ways of understanding themselves as Jews? If these questions are relevant when it comes to American or American Jewish history, how much more so is the case when it comes to Israeli history. Put simply: why teach Israeli history?

I posed these questions to Mendelsson and three other colleagues in the preparation of this essay: Rabbi Josh Feigelson, head of strategy and field building at the iCenter; Dr Yehuda Kurtzer, president of the Shalom Hartman Institute of North America; and Dr. Kenneth W. Stein, professor of contemporary Middle Eastern history and Israeli studies at Emory University and president of the Center for Israel Education.

Can history build identity?

Suzanne Wilson and Sam Wineburg, in chapter 6 of the latter’s

landmark book *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts*, analyze four different history teachers and the disciplinary goals each of them has in teaching history. One teacher wants children to “love and appreciate history”; another is interested in “politically empowering students”; a third in “developing conscientious citizens”; and the fourth teacher wants kids to become “mini-social scientists” who look at the key concepts of culture in the past as in the present.

None of the teachers suggest that the study of history should make students “feel more American” or “enrich their American identity” or “connect them with other Americans.” Substitute “Jewish” for “American” and the problem becomes clear: is the teaching of Israeli history the right tool

Is the teaching of Israeli history the right tool to use if we’re looking to carve out Jewish identity, to sculpt a connection with modern day Israel or the Jewish people?

to use if we’re looking to carve out Jewish identity, to sculpt a connection with modern day Israel or the Jewish people? Can the study of history build identity?

Stein and Feigelson have faith that history can be that tool. For Stein, the teaching of history is essential to understand Jewish identity. “We as a people have become ahistorical,” he tells me. “If we don’t go back to learn where we came from, we can’t have pride in who we are.” Stein has deep faith in history as a subject matter, in the power of history, in the power of stories of the past to shape present identity. For him, “our journey through history is our Jewish identity... without it we are not a people.” Feigelson’s approach is similar, although he stresses the idea that history and the present are in dialogue with each other. “We have to help kids to write the story of their lives in dialogue with the story of the Jewish people and Israel. History is inseparable from that dialogue.”



*Dr. Alex Sinclair is the director of programs in Israel education for the Jewish Theological Seminary and the author of *Loving the Real Israel: An Educational Agenda for Liberal Zionism*, a finalist for the 2013 National Jewish Book Award in the category of *Education and Jewish Identity*. He lives in Modiin, Israel. alsinclair@jtsa.edu*

Between history and memory

Of the four informants for this essay, Kurtzer's position was unique. He's much more skeptical about the value of history as an identity builder. He makes the distinction between "history" and "memory," borrowing the famous notion from Yerushalmi's *Zakhor* that Jews always used to interact with the past through memory, and that we only began being "historical" in the post-enlightenment world. For Yerushalmi, and for Kurtzer, history and memory are not the same, and are sometimes in opposition to each other. And they both agree that history is a poor substitute for collective memory.

Kurtzer argues that if you were born into a particular historical time (1948, 1967, Entebbe), then Israel captures a sway over you, and nothing that Israel can do today can undermine that historical experience—that *memory*. But "hearing the story of 1967 or Entebbe is not the same as living through it," Kurtzer says. History, in other words, can't build identity in the same way that memory can. Values build identity, not history, and he tells me that he is "much more interested in an ahistorical conversation about values." Kurtzer argues that in conversations about meaning, values precede data, and history is a form of data.

Stein is probably the most opposed to Kurtzer's position. Stein's faith in the power of history, especially in the educational power of the stories of history, has a remarkable fervor. If we return to the history/memory distinction, it's almost as if Stein believes that you can plug that chasm between memory and history by telling history in a captivating and compelling fashion: as if history can *become* memory if it's really taught right.

Mendelsson's approach feels like it might bridge between Stein and Kurtzer. Like Kurtzer, he's interested in values and the compelling questions of how Israel today should be. The issue of Jews and power, for example, is one that Mendelsson keeps returning to: throughout much of Jewish history, Jews have been powerless, but now that we have power and sovereignty, how should we use them? This feels like a very Hartman-esque kind of question; indeed, it's one of the core questions that is referred to in their iEngage project. But whereas Kurtzer would probably suggest that we answer the question primarily through the prism of Jewish values, Mendelsson wants to see how that question has played out in Jewish history. He argues that looking at this kind of question historically "takes the individual and makes him less central." It "links you to the trials and tribulations of the Jewish people."

Feigelson is also interested in teasing out the "big questions" of history, the big questions that Jews have always grappled with, and making them questions for ourselves today. His is, in some ways, an appeal to the *Understanding by Design* school of thought, building curricular units around essential questions and having them drive student motivation, discussion, learning and assessment.

"Hearing the story of 1967 or Entebbe is not the same as living through it," Kurtzer says. History, in other words, can't build identity in the same way that memory can.

ISRAEL BOOKSHELF

Here are the "top ten" books on Israel recommended by the people featured in this article.

Gershom Gorenberg, *The Accidental Empire*

Yossi Klein Halevi, *Like Dreamers*

Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims*

Michael Oren, *Six Days of War*

Amos Oz, *In the Land of Israel*

Itamar Rabinovich and Jehuda Reinharz, *Israel in the Middle East*

Avi Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism and Jewish Religious Radicalism*

Howard Sachar, *A History of Modern Israel*

Anita Shapira, *Israel: A History*

Ari Shavit, *My Promised Land*

When history and memory collide

Not all of Israeli history is easy to digest, though. As we learn in Ari Shavit's much-praised new book, *My Promised Land: The Triumphs and Tragedies of Israel*, some of Israel's actions in history were deeply disturbing. Should we teach these less stellar moments of Jewish history? And if so, how?

Most of my interviewees were adamant on this point. Stein: "You have to teach everything that's part of who we are. History is usually in the gray area. Gray areas require effort to teach and nuance to understand." Mendelsson: "I like to think that I deal responsibly with complicated and difficult periods of Israeli history. I want to put the dilemmas [that Israel faced] before my students, I want to teach with integrity. I can't imagine teaching anything without a commitment to integrity."

Feigelson was more ambivalent about this issue, though, and wondered about how nuanced history can be taught to younger children. "We're not there yet. We want to present things in such a way that we don't undermine the effort to strengthen children's Jewish identity. But when the time is right we don't want to be dishonest about history."

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 25]

Sulam Alumni Shabbaton: Inspiration for Mind and Heart

Leading up to the conference in Los Angeles, 50 alumni of Project Sulam gathered to rekindle the program’s learning and connection, led by renowned scholar Rabbi Shai Held. Rabbi Held is co-founder, dean and chair in Jewish thought at Mechon Hadar in New York City, and author of *Abraham Joshua Heschel: The Call of Transcendence*. The shabbaton theme was “What it Means to Be Human: Explorations in Jewish Theology, Spirituality and Ethics”; the sessions explored basic questions, such as What is the purpose of human existence?, What is a person worth?, and What can people do, and what can’t they?, turning to core texts in Jewish tradition for answers.



The discussion focused particularly on unpacking the deeper implications of the notion that people are created *betzelem Elohim*, in God’s image. What impact might this idea have for students’ self-worth, humility and sense of responsibility toward others? How are Jews required to “walk in God’s ways”: by performing chesed, or by cultivating character traits, middot? Participants showed the program’s continued influence through their inspired divrei Torah and tefillah leadership.

This year’s shabbaton is part of a larger initiative to continue Sulam learning throughout the year. The alumni have been contributing to a weekly Parsha Blog (found on the RAVSAK website). They have also participated in four monthly study circles via webinar. At the shabbaton the study groups had a chance to study and discuss sacred text and Israel education in person.

Dr. Deborah Starr, head of school of Temple Beth Am Day School in Miami, Florida, said, “The Sulam shabbaton has become an integral part of my life. It is almost like a life-cycle event. The scholar-in-residence is always stimulating, engaging and thought-provoking. During this year’s shabbaton, I especially was intrigued by our responsibilities as humans for the simple reason that we are created in the image of God. There was much valuable discussion on what that means to each of us.” ■

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23]

This debate takes us back to where we began the paper. To argue that teaching Israeli history impacts Jewish identity is not a slam-dunk. Indeed, when it comes to the darker sides of history, it could even be argued that the teaching of history is counterproductive to the engendering of identity (Stein, as can be seen from his position above, firmly disagrees). In my recent book, *Loving the Real Israel: An Educational Agenda for Liberal Zionism*, I make the analogy between the teaching of Israeli history from the perspective of the “new historians” and the teaching of the history of the biblical text, also known as source criticism. For some, the teaching of source criticism should be avoided at all costs, or at least kept quiet as much as possible, because seeing the Torah from the perspective of history, as opposed to collective memory, has the potential to damage Jewish learners’ relationship with the Torah. So too, some argue that the teaching of the more problematic aspects of Israeli history has the potential to damage Jewish learners’ relationship with Israel.

From a Jewish perspective, I firmly believe that we have an obligation to teach the history of the biblical text, within the framework of deep and core commitment to Jewish life and Torah study. I appreciate the danger of biblical criticism, but I can’t imagine teaching Torah without, to use Mendelsson’s term, integrity about its historical origins.

So too when it comes to the teaching of Israeli history: like Men-

delsson, I can’t imagine a curriculum on Israeli history that doesn’t take into account the insights of the new historians. Ari Shavit’s chapter on Lydda, which was excerpted in the *New Yorker* in October, and is perhaps the most harrowing of his book, can’t be ignored. As Zionists, we have to find ways to contain it within our identity.

It’s a mistake to reject history when it violates our collective memory; but it’s also a mistake to discard memory in favor of history.

Nevertheless, I wouldn’t want to downplay Feigelson’s concerns. Integrity as an adult who is already committed to the Israeli story is all well and good; but how do we translate that integrity into our curriculum and pedagogy for young American Jews who don’t have an a priori relationship with Israel? What do we do as educators when, as in the case of Lydda, the gap between history and memory is so vast?

Wineburg elsewhere suggests that history is taught in order “to prepare students to tolerate complexity, to adapt to new situations, and to resist the first answer that comes to mind.” This definition might be our best bet in situations when history contradicts our collective memory so sharply. It’s a mistake to reject history when it violates our collective memory; but it’s also a mistake to discard memory in favor of history. To be a Jew today means to live in what Shavit calls this “epic motion picture whose plot we do not understand and cannot grasp.” To be an Israel-engaged Jew today means to find ways to live with that vast chasm between history and memory, and, despite the temptation, to discard neither. ■

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Why Study American Jewish History?

■ by JONATHAN D. SARNA

The doyen of historians of American Jewry, Sarna proposes a host of reasons why day schools should care about and teach this neglected subject.

Note: This article is adapted from material originally published in Moving Haym Solomon and Torah at the Center.

For many years history held a central place in the curriculum of the Jewish school. Lady Katie Magnus' *Outlines of Jewish History*, the first book issued by the Jewish Publication Society (1890), was the textbook of choice, and it taught readers unabashedly heroic history, filled with sentiment, homily, and romance. Its aim was to turn students into "loyal and steadfast witnesses"—to keep them true to their faith.

History still constituted "the chief subject of study in the Jewish Sunday school" in 1932. A study by Julius B. Maller entitled *Testing the Knowledge of Jewish History*, published that year by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, called for the "reconstruction of the history curriculum in the Jewish school, with a shifting of emphasis from dates and names to interpretation." Where Lady Magnus was primarily concerned with maintaining Jewish loyalty, Maller stressed that the "ultimate aim" of Jewish history was "to enrich the inner life of the Jewish child." He explained that Jewish history

deals with true stories of Jews who lived, struggled and exerted their influence, who were instrumental in making things better or worse. If the teacher succeeds in making the past living and real to his pupils, they will learn the good that has resulted from acts of loyalty and integrity. They will realize why there were martyrs, why these men deserve our recognition and gratitude. After the children will have long forgotten most of the dates and names connected

with the various periods of Jewish history, their understanding of the significance of these periods will remain. This understanding, which will probably continue to influence their behavior in later life, is one of the ultimate aims of Jewish education.

The object of Jewish history, according to this view, was to create role models for Jewish children, to provide them with heroes from the past with whom they might identify and seek to emulate.

American Jewish history, when it entered the school curriculum, fell heir to all of these various goals. It sought to instill pride, promote loyalty, and create effective Jewish role models for young people to follow. In addition, the first high school textbook in American Jewish history, Lee Levinger's *A History of the Jews in the United States* (1930), aimed to create "intelligent American Jews" who understood their home environment. The Jewish school, Levinger insisted, needed to compensate for the fact that there was

"seldom much mention of the Jews" in the American history curriculum that students studied in public school.

Notwithstanding all of these high-minded aims, history over the ensuing decades lost out in the competition for space within the Jewish school curriculum. Today, Bible, Hebrew and holidays form the central themes of Jewish education; Jewish history, and especially American Jewish history, are neglected. Some teachers, seeing how little attention is paid to history in the secular curriculum, wonder why they should be teaching Jewish history at all.

American Jewish history is not just a record of events; it is the story of how people shaped events: establishing and maintaining communities, responding to challenges, working for change.

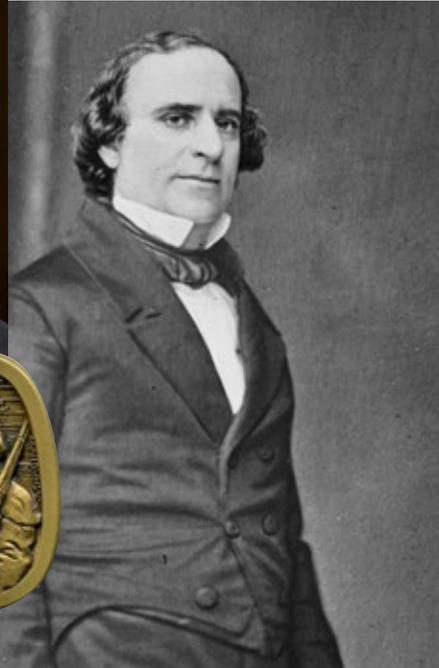
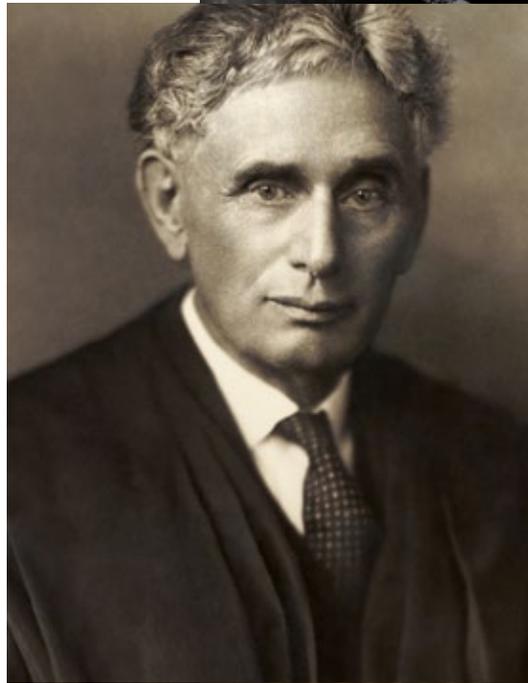


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Scholars have recently proposed a variety of new answers to the question of why Jewish history, and especially American Jewish history, should be taught. Their arguments may be summarized as follows:

- American Jewish history contextualizes contemporary challenges facing American Jews. It helps American Jews understand where they are by showing them where they have been and allows them better to appreciate what sets them apart both as Americans and as Jews.
- American Jewish history deepens students' understanding of America and shows them how their ancestors fit into the larger picture of American society.
- American Jewish history broadens students' horizons, helping them to appreciate different ways of life, different points of view, and the impact of change over time.
- American Jewish history teaches students how to read, understand, and internalize primary source texts.
- American Jewish history helps to deepen attachments to Judaism and the Jewish people.
- American Jewish history communicates the enduring power of religion in America and shows how Jews have formulated religious identity in a distinctively pluralistic setting.
- American Jewish history bridges the gap between collective experiences and personal stories. It helps students find the links between their own history and the history of the Jewish people as a whole.
- American Jewish history encourages students to integrate Jewish and secular studies by forging chronological and conceptual links between them.
- American Jewish history is a form of collective Jewish memory, and as such a vital part of Jewish identity.
- American Jewish history offers students tools to think historically about what constitutes the Jewish family, Jewish space, Jewish religion and Jewish work, how they themselves relate to these concepts, and ultimately what it means to be an American Jew.
- American Jewish history helps Jews appreciate the common past shared with other American Jews.
- American Jewish history helps provide Jews with a master story that unites them both vertically with their ancestors in previous

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 52]



The Command to Remember Creating Collective Memory as a Moral Imperative

■ by **NANCE M. ADLER**

Adler argues forcefully for the centrality of history in Jewish identity, as the storehouse of collective memory that binds us to our people, our values and our heritage.

We have all heard the adage: “Those who don’t study history are doomed to repeat it.” I would like to add to it: “Those who don’t remember their people’s history are doomed.” Much of how we are to behave as Jews is based in our remembering. Both God and our own modern experience exhort us, “Never forget”—we are to remember what was done to us and work to keep it from happening to others. If we don’t know what was done, we can’t participate in this work to better the world.

In the Torah we are reminded numerous times to “remember that you were strangers (or slaves) in Egypt” and as a consequence of that memory we are to treat others better than we were treated. We are to care for the widow, the orphan and the stranger in our gates. We are to treat others as we want to be treated and we are to remember that it was God who helped us escape and that we must be faithful to God as a consequence of this memory. The study of history—or even the idea of history—comes late to Judaism. In *Zakhor*, Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi differentiates between “collective memory” and history. Yerushalmi points out that memory is a religious commandment in Judaism. The root *zakhor* appears 169 times in Torah. What God commands in the Torah is collective memory. It is looking at an experience as if it happened to you rather than in its proper historical setting.

The best example of this is the Pesach seder. We do not say, “The father of my ancestor was a wandering Aramean.” We say, “My father was a wandering Aramean.” We say, God took “me” out of Egypt. The Pesach story is told as personal memory. It is also the most widely observed Jewish ritual. Secular, unaffiliated, otherwise totally assimilated Jews hold and attend seders—this

collective memory experience speaks to them and reminds them of who they are and how they are supposed to be in the world.

For Jews, as Yerushalmi points out, up until quite late, all of history was seen as collective memory. It was all seen as a playing out of God’s plan for God’s chosen people and all connected no matter how far apart in time events occurred. In my sixth grade Jewmanities class I combine teaching the stories of Tanakh with the teaching of history. We look at the early kings of Israel as the Jewish archetypes they have become—memory—and then we look at them in their historical setting and as real people. We look at the prophets and their warnings of divine punishment and then learn about the Assyrians and the historical events of the conquering of ancient Israel and the destruction of the First Temple.

By seeing our story both as history and memory, connections can be made and lessons learned beyond what doing it as one or the other allows. One of the most valuable things, in my opinion, about the heroes of the Tanakh is that they are real people. To learn about Solomon as only wise and to not see that he also made bad decisions, mostly connected to women, makes it hard to connect to him as a role model. Knowing that our problems were also the problems of our ancestors makes their experiences and lessons apply to our experiences. This is the power of collective memory. Knowing how your people have handled problems—how Jews handle problems—allows you to make Jewishly informed choices in all areas of life.

Our history teaches us what it means to be a Jew—the good and



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Sarajevo Haggadah

the bad of it. Much of Jewish history is depressing and awful. It is regularly debated just how appropriate it is to even teach it to various age groups. Parents ask me why I want to make their kid hate being a Jew by teaching about the Shoah or the Inquisition or other dark episodes of our history. A seventh grader recently asked why we always learned about such depressing stuff. He wanted to know when we were going to learn something “sunny” about Jewish history. Unfortunately, seventh grade JSS is 70 CE—Middle Ages, so, other than the Golden Age of Spanish Jewry and Babylonian Jewry, there isn’t a lot of sunshine.

But there are still lessons to be learned here that should make students value their Judaism and want to cling to it as strongly as their ancestors, who did so often at cost of life. How

do we use history to create a connection to Judaism that fosters that kind of attachment? Can our stories and a stronger collective memory work to counter the pull of popular culture that threatens the Jewish community today? I think that it can. Knowing the strength that being Jewish—being in community, the support of family life, the meaning given to life through being a Jew—gave to our ancestors in their struggles, will encourage modern Jews to want those same things. What one might have to give up because one is a Jew, will easily be compensated for by what one gains in the bargain.

What God commands in the Torah is collective memory—looking at an experience as if it happened to you rather than in its proper historical setting.

So how do we inspire a deep and abiding love of and valuing of being Jewish? For me, it is through the teaching of Jewish history and memory, in creating a sense that all of Jewish experience is part of my Jewish experience and figuring out how to understand that so I can be a part of making the world a place where the negative experiences will not be repeated and the positive ones will be accentuated and increased. Sharing in the collective memory of one’s people allows one to partake in the ongoing story of that people in an engaged and meaningful way.

Having the memory of our stories, from Torah to today, as their own will allow our students to connect to their Jewish heritage in a strong and positive manner. It will keep them connected through

adolescence, college and early adulthood. Knowing that all Jews shared the same story allowed our ancestors to excel in trade because they could connect to any Jewish community in the world; this same connection can make today’s young Jews proud to be Jewish and allow them to connect to a new community wherever they go in life. Knowing their history—having a Jewish collective memory—will allow our students to be engaged in bettering the world, deepening their Jewish lives and strengthening our global Jewish community. ■

Teaching Jewish History: A Major Impediment

■ by **ROBERT CHAZAN**

Eminent scholar of medieval Judaism Chazan suggests a reason why many students find history uninteresting. His solution is to give them the tools to understand the complexity of choices people confronted.

Teaching Jewish history at the high school level is fraught with difficulties. For many high school students, the past feels utterly irrelevant, offering no genuine insight into the new, ostensibly more complex, and seemingly intractable issues of the twenty-first century. This sense of a remote and irrelevant past regularly cripples the efforts of dedicated teachers to connect with the imaginative and conceptual faculties of their students. To a significant degree, this core problem in the teaching of Jewish history can be traced to a less obvious but equally daunting impediment.

In the eyes of many high school students, the Jewish past is composed of smart and stupid Jews. Let us note a few examples of this student sense, beginning with the Jewish rebellion against Rome that commenced in the year 66. Was it not perfectly clear that the Roman authorities had at their disposal the most powerful army in the world? Should it not have been obvious to those fomenting rebellion against Rome that their cause was hopeless? Thus, the Jews of pre-66 Palestine for many high school students fall into the categories of smart Jews who opposed the rebellion and stupid Jews who supported it. The problems of Jewish life in pre-66 Palestine and their obvious solution seem to offer little guidance for the complexities of 2014, so why bother studying them?

Let us examine yet another instance of the same dilemma, this one from the Middle Ages. In 1391, the Jewish communities of Spain suffered devastating violence all across the Spanish peninsula. Thousands of Jews lost their lives; many other thousands

converted in order to save their lives; entire Jewish communities—some of them very ancient—disappeared. A century later, in 1492, the Jews of Spain were expelled from their homes, seemingly in sudden and unexpected fashion. However, was not the die cast in 1391? Was it not clear after those massacres that there was no future for Jews in Spain? Why did Jews persevere and remain in Spain? Once again, this behavior seems to offer evidence of obtuseness in Jewish circles.

Finally, moving closer to the present, Jewish high school students have great difficulty understanding why Jews should have

opted to remain in Germany through the 1930s. Was the eventual destruction of European Jewry not obvious from the moment the Nazis came to power? The decision to remain in Germany can only reflect Jewish unwillingness to face up to

realities that were beyond reasonable doubt. Studying Jews who exhibit such resistance to truth seems pointless to many high school students—and indeed to many of their elders as well.

At this point, I suspect that many readers will have their backs up, objecting that historical outcomes are never clear-cut, that those living through a crisis—for example the road to rebellion in first-century Palestine, the events leading to the expulsion of 1492, or the evolving assault on German Jewry—have no way of knowing the ultimate outcome of the difficulties they are experiencing. This is surely the case, but it highlights the nature of the pedagogical problem: How is it possible to introduce students to the complexities of crises the outcomes of which are fully known in retrospect?

Was it not clear that the Roman authorities had the most powerful army in the world? Should it not have been obvious to those rebelling against Rome that their cause was hopeless?



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How can this significant pedagogical challenge be overcome? I would urge that, in order to make Jewish history rewarding, high school students must be transformed into active participants in the reconstruction of the Jewish past. Assigning students to study and present the thinking of the opposing Jewish parties in first-century Palestine or fifteenth-century Spain or twentieth-century Germany often meets initially with shrugging shoulders and doubts that a serious case can be mounted for all the diverse factions and their conflicting positions.

However, these doubts tend to dissipate fairly quickly. As students become committed to understanding and representing forcefully the first-century War Party or the Jews committed to reconstruction of Jewish life in fifteenth-century Spain or those convinced of a future for Jews in Germany, they seek out fuller comprehension of the thinking that animated these groupings, despite the well-known outcomes of the crises. Investment on the part of such students results in the drive to fuller comprehending of context and issues and thus leads to augmentation of interest in these difficult points in the past. These crises have the potential of transforming seemingly obvious realities and choices into genuine human dilemmas, worthy of serious consideration.

How can students arrive at such fuller understanding? The key lies in two sets of available literature. The first literature clarifies contexts. Teachers aspiring to turn their history classes into genuine engagement with the dilemmas of the past must seek out secondary literature that portrays the period under study in all its complexity. Secondary readings that present difficult periods of the past in their full complexity are invaluable in the effort to transform dilemmas of the Jewish past into real and vibrant crises, replete with reasonable alternatives.

Beyond the secondary literature that establishes realistic context, students must also be led to available primary source materials that can clarify in a compelling way the range of alternatives available to Jews living through the crisis period. In some instances, such multiple perspectives are readily available. Letters from German Jews convinced that their fellow Germans would come to their senses and repudiate the Nazis abound. These were hardly “stupid” Jews, unwilling to face up to obvious truths; they were concerned and intelligent Jews using

the best available evidence at their disposal. That they were eventually proven wrong is tragic, but not a sign of obtuseness. In other instances, the sources are quite limited and require historical imagination. Thus, for example, Josephus—who was at the point of his writing convinced of the hopelessness of rebellion against Rome—must be used imaginatively to offer students hints for reconstructing the counter-arguments of the Jewish War Party.

This kind of historical reconstruction is not easily achieved. It requires skillful, knowledgeable, well prepared teachers capable of guiding students in historical investigation. These teachers need guidance in choosing crises worthy of study, in locating the requisite secondary literature, and in identifying primary sources that are accessible to high school students. Organizations like RAVSAK must take the lead in identifying major crises in the Jewish past, in providing the kind of secondary literature that would enable high school students to grasp the complex context within which these crises unfolded, and in presenting primary sources that transform Jews of the past into feeling and thinking human beings.



Enabling such creative reconstruction of the Jewish past is arduous, but certainly worthwhile. Such historical reconstruction transforms the Jews of the past from often incomprehensible ciphers into fuller human characters facing life's uncertainties; it makes the study of the Jewish past incomparably more engaging and meaningful. In the process, students also come to realize that the fluid reality through which they and their Jewish contemporaries are living will one day also resolve itself into clear results. Hopefully, this will engender a greater interest in the present dilemmas of Jewish life and a measure of humility and uncertainty as to the positions currently espoused in diverse quarters with undue confidence. Ultimately, a measure of humility and uncertainty is a fine outcome for historical study. ■

On the Virtue of Not Taking a Stand

■ by **MARTIN LOCKSHIN**

Lockshin, another prominent medievalist, advocates presenting students with points of contention and debate in the historical literature and not favoring a position.

One of the luxuries of teaching Jewish history in a university setting is that you can avoid taking an ideological stand. For example, in a graduate seminar on the Jewish experience in Muslim countries in the Middle Ages, you can assign readings, both primary sources and scholarly articles and books, from a variety of perspectives, some of which contradict each other. You can teach the viewpoint that the so-called Golden Age in Muslim Spain truly was golden, and that, in general, Jews thrived in Muslim countries (with a few minor exceptions) in ways that the Jews of medieval Christendom could not dream of. And you can also assign the writings of those who claim that when Muslims called Jews *dhimmi*, they were assigning them a uniquely degrading status, a status that was far worse than that of Jews in Christendom (again with a few minor exceptions).

You can quote Maimonides saying that Islam is truly a monotheistic religion and explain how revolutionary this assertion was. And you can quote this from one of his letters: “On account of our sins God has cast us into the midst of this people, the nation of Ishmael [that is, Muslims], who persecute us severely, and who devise ways to harm us and to debase us... No nation has ever done more harm to Israel. None has matched it in debasing and humiliating us.” When asked which perspective is more accurate, the graduate school instructor can challenge the students to study the primary sources and judge for themselves.

Not every professor achieves or even strives for objectivity or

balance. In a recent controversial Hebrew article (“From Victim to Murderer: The Jewish-Christian Encounter in the Middle Ages – Historiography in the Wake of the Establishment of a Jewish State,” in *Remembering and Forgetting: Israeli Historians Look at the Jewish Past*), Professor Daniel Lasker of Ben Gurion University points out that contemporary Israeli scholars who believe that medieval Jews prayed for or even took vengeance against Christians tend to be Israelis with left or far-left views about the Arab-Israeli conflict. In other words, academics who see Jews today as victimizers, and not as victims, promote an un-

derstanding of history in which pre-modern Jews were also not simply passive victims, but possibly even avengers.

Similarly a case could be made that scholars with far-right views about the Israeli-Arab conflict tend to emphasize how Muslims brutalized Jews in pre-modern times. For

me, one of the most disturbing aspects of modern academia is when professors mix their roles as political activists with their roles as scholars, and look down on those who strive for objectivity. They argue that objectivity is impossible and every scholar has an agenda, either overt or covert. But thank God, some scholars still struggle to present differing historiographical perspectives to students without favoring one over the other.

In day schools it might be more difficult to tell students that we do not know for sure what lesson can be learned from historical data. When teaching Jewish history in a day school we

Just as the Gemara teacher presents conflicts between Abbaye and Rabba without asking “Who is correct?” so too the history teacher can teach the value of historical debate, even or especially when the debate is unresolved.



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surely ought to be, at least in part, strengthening students' Jewish identity and increasing their Jewish pride. To do that, we pretty well have to take a stand. We either have to say, for example, that (1) the Jews went like sheep to slaughter during the Shoah; or (2) that they fought back vigorously much more than people imagined, or (3) that they practiced forms of non-physical resistance that were more fitting for the unimaginable horrors that the Nazis inflicted on them. Most contemporary Jewish educators are attracted to approach (2) or (3) and structure their syllabi and readings to support such approaches.

But the distinction between academia and day schools may be less than meets the eye. Pedagogically speaking, most academics I know are not so different from day school history teachers. Rarely do university instructors have the luxury of teaching a graduate seminar where they can analyze all the significant texts and theories about one issue. Most undergraduate students cannot or will not read a significant number of primary sources (certainly not in the original language), and only rarely do professors assign secondary readings with opposing interpretations of the data. The undergraduate instructor in the academy, just like the day school teacher, chooses the limited number of texts the students will read and thus also chooses a perspective.

When I teach a sweeping Jewish history course in the university (which we jokingly call "From Tanakh to Palmach," though it goes beyond the Palmach, too), I get to spend two weeks, occasionally three, on the era

“Where were medieval Jews better off—in Christian countries or in Muslim countries?” Generally, I refuse to answer such questions.

that I know best, the Middle Ages. My best and/or most Jewishly-involved students would like me to give unambiguous answers to questions like, “Where were medieval Jews better off—in Christian countries or in Muslim countries?” Generally, I refuse to answer such questions.

Instead, I present in the same class two mini-lectures on the Jews of Christian Europe, one following what Salo Baron has called the lachrymose tradition of Jewish historiography and the other highlighting all the advantages of life in Christian Europe for Jews. The next week I do the same for the Jews of Muslim countries. Each week I also assign a small number of readings that support each viewpoint.

Some students, often the weaker ones, do not like this pedagogical approach. (“Why does he keep telling us that some say this and some say that? Why doesn't he just tell us who is right?”) But I consider it crucial for students to learn that the evidence does not always support one viewpoint unambiguously.

This can work in the higher grades of high school, too. Many sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds are mature enough to learn to search for answers to complex questions and to recognize the equivocal nature of our findings. Just as the skilled Gemara teacher teaches students to value and analyze the conflicting perspectives of Abbaye and Rabba without asking “so which one is correct?” so too the history teacher can teach the value of historical debate, even or especially when the debate is unresolved. ■

PaRDeS: History as Spirit in Action

■ by **MICHAEL FEUER**

Inspired by postmodern historians' questioning of "facts" and "objectivity" in historical research, Feuer offers a schema for transmuted historical texts and data into a national story.

Ever since Thucydides' rejection of inherited narrative in favor of empirical observation, facts have been the gold standard in the Western conception of history. Homer may have been a great poet, but to Thucydides he was a lousy historian. Truth is about the literal, not the literary. Give me the facts, he asserts, and I will give you the truth. In our day, the ability to teach history "as it really was" is crumbling under the weight of unlimited information and the unavoidable subjectivity in how we filter; it is not possible to claim to tell the whole story anymore. This reality evokes reactions ranging from a willful ignorance of the problem, to rejection of all facts outside of traditional narratives, to the denial of any coherence to be found in history whatsoever.

Through the Tanakh and rabbinic literature, Am Yisrael has carried forward a conception of history as an articulation of inner truth, in which facts are a necessary but not sufficient means. We embrace the twin tools of the literal and the literary in telling the story of our past. We also understand that the significance of our history can never be divorced from the goals of cultivating consciousness and dynamic identity in the present. Further, when the prophet expressed his desire for redemption in the phrase "renew our days as of old," he taught that our story of the past must provide inspiration toward actualizing its truth through our future.

As teachers, we must ask whether we aim to give our students information about the past or knowledge of it. If facts are points of data, then knowledge consists of these points, together with the values and beliefs we use to assign them significance and in-

tegrate them into a coherent whole—a story. If teaching history means providing facts, then its events remain in the past, unable to shape the present or to guide our behavior toward a constructive future. But if we want to bring history into the realm of knowledge, then we must tell a story of the past that provides these facts with meaning.

But how to tell such a story? Clearly it must be rooted in fact, but just because it is factual, a story does not necessarily articulate an essential truth of human experience. Conversely, if a story is a vehicle for such an essential truth, what happens if the facts are

uncertain? And if we open the door to such questions of where the truth lies, how do we avoid the traps of moral relativism and subjectivity?

When struggling with this question of where to locate truth in the study of history, Cambridge

historian E.H. Carr (*What Is History?*) offered the following insight. "The absolute in history is not something in the past from which we start; it is not something in the present, since all present thinking is necessarily relative. It is something still incomplete and in process of becoming—something in the future towards which we move, which begins to take shape only as we move towards it, and in the light of which, as we move forward, we gradually shape our interpretation of the past. This is the secular truth behind the religious myth that the meaning of history will be revealed in the Day of Judgment."

The truth of history cannot lie solely in present analysis of the facts of the past, because we know that our present identity is

When the prophet expressed his desire for redemption in the phrase "renew our days as of old," he taught that our story of the past must provide inspiration toward actualizing its truth through our future.



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not neutral. In order to tell a true story our very definition of objectivity must shift. Instead of seeking an unobtainable, objective view of past events, we must bring ourselves and our students to consciousness of the beliefs which shape our present identity. Before we look for truth in history, we must make explicit the standards by which we judge things to be true. Once we have come to consciousness of our present identity, we can begin to build a history of consciousness.

Our map for integrating the literal and literary aspects of truth, and joining stories of our past with the development of consciousness, is found in the four-dimensional framework of meaning which we are enjoined to seek in the text of the Torah—*pshat*, *remez*, *drash* and *sod* (forming the acronym PaRDeS). PaRDeS can be engaged as a framework for Jewish consciousness as it has emerged in its historical context: rooted in mythic truths, embodied in facts and their narrative, and ultimately experienced as a present self that prays for the future. Here is a taste of what such a structure might look like.

Every story begins in *pshat*. In text, *pshat* is the surface meaning, the point of contact between reader and text. In the development of personal consciousness it is the child-like simplicity which precedes self-awareness. In chronology it is the phase of pre-history, the dreamtime. From this perspective, the stories of the Torah can be

taught as living spiritual archetypes to be engaged in their timeless relevance, and as the beginning of our story.

The next stage is *remez*. In text, *remez* is meaning bounded by the text itself. In the development of consciousness it is the coming to awareness of self without critical comparison to other; that innerness which grants prophets and soldiers the courage to be consumed by their passions. In chronology, it begins with the conquest of the Land of Israel. At the end of his life, Yehoshua evokes Am Yisrael's memory of their past in order to transform their experience into a story which can serve as the whole context for their national life (Joshua 24). The exposure to meaningful perspectives which transcend local experience would only come with the destruction and return that mark the end of the First Temple period, and the end of the phase of *remez*. This transition from self-referential consciousness to critical awareness is the evolution from living within our story to learning to tell it. This complex process is canonized in the Tanakh and is the fertile ground from which both classical exegesis and critical analysis grow.

From here we move into *drash*. In text, *drash* is the search for meaning in total context. The text no longer bounds meaning, but rather serves as anchor, trigger and organizing principle for the reader's understanding. In the development of consciousness, *drash* is the know-

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 57]

History, Myth and Meaning: Living in the Present with the Past

■ by JONATHAN WOOCHEER

I recently finished reading Ari Shavit's personal history of Israel, *My Promised Land*. It's a compelling narrative, and a disturbing one for anyone who cares passionately about Israel's future (as I do). What makes Shavit's observations about the present and his hard-headed but not unhopeful concerns for the future so persuasive is the vividness of his depiction of Israel's past—how the Jews came to Palestine, how the Zionists resolved to fight for independence, and the terrible price the Palestinian Arabs paid in the course of a war that he nonetheless believes was necessary and just. His chapter on the fate of the Arabs of Lydda (Lod) during the War of Independence is both chilling and terribly sad. And, if anyone ever doubted it, he makes brutally clear that for many, if not most, Israeli Arabs (not to mention the Arabs still living under occupation in the West Bank or hemmed into Gaza), the victories of 1948 and 1967 that we celebrate are truly, and perhaps irrevocably, a Nakba—a catastrophe.

Shavit's book is important for many reasons, one of which is that it appears destined to make the wider Jewish community in America aware of debates about Israel's founding that have long been part of the Israeli academic scene but have been mostly ignored here. In so doing, *My Promised Land* resurfaces a broader theme that is relevant to any teaching of Jewish history: what are we teaching as "true," and "true" in what sense?

No doubt, there will be some in the Jewish community who contest Shavit's account and challenge its accuracy, or at least its completeness.

But I suspect that even among those who accept his narrative of the events there will be hesitation about whether students should be exposed to it. What we do with uncomfortable stories from Jewish history is as much a challenging issue for educators as what we do with difficult texts (the two often overlap). If Israel's leaders during the War of Independence indeed ordered or encouraged the forc-

What we do with uncomfortable stories from Jewish history is as much a challenging issue for educators as what we do with difficult texts (the two often overlap).

ible eviction and sometimes killing of Arab inhabitants of Palestine—even, as Shavit makes clear, out of a conviction that Israel could not be born as a Jewish state without such actions—how do we teach this to today's Jewish youth? Do we teach this at all?

These are questions that are applicable to far more than just the history of Zionism and Israel. They arise in almost every context in which we seek to connect our students to their past and that of the Jewish people. I remember the kerfuffle a few years ago when Rabbi David Wolpe gave a sermon express-

ing the view that the Exodus may never have happened. Every Hanukkah brings discussions among Jewish educators about which Hanukkah narrative to teach: the one in the book of Maccabees, the one the rabbis of the Talmud advanced, or a synthetic, nuanced and ostensibly more "truthful" one pieced together by modern historians. In fact, historians would likely argue (with evidence to back them up) that there is no event in Jewish history that is not far more complex factually and subject to multiple interpretations than the way we typically depict these events in our commemorations (where we might argue "memory" is more important than "history") and, often, in our schools (where substituting memory for history is more problematic).

This is important because in Judaism and, I would suggest, in human life generally the past is a vital source of meaning in the present. Up to a point, there is no problem in asserting that history need not be "factual" to be "meaningful" and even "true." This is the category of narrative that we call myth—stories that reveal fundamental truths about our lives and the world, regardless of the facts. I would agree with those who argue that it does not matter whether the Exodus actually happened, and certainly whether it happened as recounted in the Torah. The power of the narrative and its paradigmatic role in Jewish life transcend its facticity.

However, in other historical situations it's



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not as easy to say that what actually happened does not matter when varying versions of the past can have dramatic consequences for attitudes and behaviors in the present. In the long run, it did not benefit Israel or our relationship with it that several generations of young American Jews knew only a mythologized and romanticized version of its history. This is true as well for our own American Jewish history and for many events in the Jewish past—the story of the Maccabees among them.

Of course, there is no single “right” version of history. All history is selective and in-

terpretive (reading Shavit, one might well conclude that both the Israeli-Jewish and the Arab-Palestinian narratives of the events leading up to Israel’s founding are “true” despite being almost diametrically opposed). And, the “facts” on which history is based are often difficult to uncover or disputed. Nonetheless, history is important, as is the effort to reach as full and truthful an understanding of it as we can achieve.

I firmly believe that in today’s world our students are ready for history that is complex and challenging. I want them to read Shavit (and even to begin learning about Israel’s trium-

phant but disturbing path to statehood at an earlier age). I want them to debate and discuss our past without apologetics and without embarrassment, and to do the same for our present and future. Encountering the problematics of history may not always be comfortable, but avoiding them or airbrushing them is far worse. Our identity as Jews, struggling to realize timeless values in an ever-changing, often recalcitrant world, is grounded in both myth and history. We need both, and we need to help our students understand how both contribute to a life lived with integrity and purpose—which, in the end, is what I think we want our schools to be about. ■



Sulam 2.0 Launches

Thirty eager day school board members came together in LA for RAVSAK’s exciting new Sulam 2.0 program. Ten schools sent three representatives each to participate in the opening shabbaton for this exclusive yearlong leadership development program.

Funded by AVI CHAI and several anonymous funders, Sulam 2.0 - an offshoot of RAVSAK’s successful Project SuLaM - engages day school lay leaders at the intersection of great governance, great leadership, and great Jewish values for a year of intensive learning and coaching.



Our new program has attracted some of the best board consultants in the country to assist our schools. Working with their talented and experienced mentors, the school teams will target specific areas of focus in best governance practices, leadership skills, and strengthening the Jewish identity of the school. Training throughout the year uses multiple modalities, including in-person conferences and shabbatonim, webinars, self-study packs and mentorship to help each leader develop and grow and then bring his or her learning back to the whole school board. ■

Jewish History in Our Schools

“In Jewish history there are no coincidences.” Elie Wiesel

In Jewish day schools also there are no coincidences; everything is planned, from buildings and budgets to curricula and lessons. Nonetheless, the best-laid plans are the ones that allow for the messiness of life, that encourage students to “go astray” in their own productive ways, to find their voice in the chorus. We asked schools to share some of their successes in teaching Jewish history, programs that both instill the “what” of historical understanding and frameworks, and inspire the “why” of student interest and connection. These programs range from early elementary through upper-level high school, covering timelines and case studies, curricular design and cross-disciplinary collaboration, and touching upon different periods of our history. They empower students to put themselves, heart and mind, hands and feet, into the subjects they study, so that they will come to know their own history and feel that they are living it themselves.

Beginning in First Grade

By Bryna Leider, Luria Academy, Brooklyn, NY

In the Montessori model, students begin the formal study of history at age six; they cover the span of time from the beginning of the universe through the Renaissance in first through third grades. For those accustomed to early civilizations being taught in sixth grade, it seems an impractical choice, but any Jewish educator should be able to recognize the possibilities. What day school does not successfully teach first graders about Ancient Egypt before Pesach? Why, then, do most schools claim to begin Jewish history in fourth grade and why are educators so convinced that young children are unable to acquire these concepts?

Maria Montessori wrote extensively about the need for a Cosmic Curriculum, which in current education vernacular denotes a holistic, cross-curricular education. In Jewish schools that use the Montessori Method, students learn history in tandem with studies on the parashah and the chaggim. In actuality, all day school students in first through third grades learn Jewish history through Torah and holidays. The only difference is that teachers in Jewish Montessori schools are systematic about its inclusion

and therefore make sure lessons directly relate to Jewish history goals.

In a Cosmic Education, a child constructs an understanding of one’s miniscule presence in the enormity of space and time while simultaneously being a crucially important and impactful presence. This idea, which could have been just as easily lifted from Jewish mysticism, is first developed through storytelling. Children hear five extended and dramatic tales that set the tone for the future study of history.

Jewish Montessori schools include a theatrical version of Bereshit and then an interactive introduction to the entire span of Jewish history. In this activity, which typically takes place outdoors, a very long piece of cloth or rope is used as a timeline and is unrolled as a teacher introduces key events. Pictures or objects are laid out along the sequence and children literally walk alongside their history.

In Montessori, all of the study of history ties back to the timeline. After the grand introduction, the students practice sequencing Jewish history cards, pictorial representations of pivotal events. The cards are as-

sembled in open spaces on the floor and are manipulated over and over again. Once students can complete the sequence easily, it is set aside, but is later revisited and extended with each consecutive holiday.

Before Chanukah, a first grade teacher might slowly unroll a long black ribbon. At one end, he or she would place a card with a picture depicting the beginning of the world. A gap would be left and then a card representing Noach would be added. Another gap would lead to Avraham and then overlapping cards representing the avot and imahot would be placed in the sequence. The teacher would explain that the overlap demonstrates that they knew each other.

The teacher might add a card representing matan Torah and then a longer gap at which a menorah might be placed, representing the time of Chanukah. After an even longer gap, a photo of the class or school would be added and the ribbon would continue, with more remaining visible on the spool, representing time that has yet to pass. Before Purim, this process would be repeated, but a card representing Purim would be added before the menorah, indicating that the sto-

ry of Purim took place before the story of Chanukah.

After children are familiar with the entire timeline, they work with more narrow snapshots of time and add details. Before Asara be-Tevet, second and third grade students at Luria Academy explored the historical significance of the Beit Hamikdash by combining map work and timeline work. They identified where Jewish people were living prior to the destruction of the first Temple and how some were then dispersed. They compared this dispersal to what came after the destruction of the second Temple. After practicing the chronology and marking the geographic locations of key figures in the mesorah as well as four generations of their own families, they were able to have informed conversations about how the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash changed the way the Jewish people lived and practiced.

We worry about how to lift our past from the pages of a textbook, but the answer is in front of us. Acknowledge that *you are already* teaching Jewish history in early elementary and resolve to approach it more



methodically. Empower Judaic studies teachers to function as history teachers. Invite teachers of Jewish studies to talk to general studies teachers and to upper elementary teachers. Use the tools of Montessori and the best practices of early childhood to

make the process engaging and the information enduring.

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Connecting Curricula: Jewish Social Studies in a Community Day School

By Andi Koss, Syracuse Hebrew Day School, Dewitt, NY

Several years ago, I transitioned from being a general studies teacher in grades 4 and 5 to being a Jewish social studies teacher for grades 3-6. As I looked over the curricula of the Jewish social studies program, it struck me that there were few thematic connections between Judaic and general studies. In the upper grades, Jewish history was basically taught in chronological order, starting with ancient Israel in 4th grade and moving to modern Israel by grade 6. In general studies, however, students study the ancient world in 6th grade and more local and recent history in grade 4.

That summer, I developed a more integrated Judaic social studies program, seeking curricular connections between general and Judaic studies at each grade level. Rather than teaching Judaic studies in a vacuum, I wanted my lessons to support and enrich what my general studies colleagues were doing.

Third graders, for example, study about deserts. We take that opportunity to study about Israel's Negev Desert in JSS class. We study Bedouin history and culture, making cultural connections to Abraham and our ancient Israelite roots. We investigate ways

that Negev inhabitants have traditionally utilized the natural resources of the desert to survive as well as modern methods employed by Israeli farmers and scientists that have made the Negev bloom. We culminate this unit with the construction of a huge Bedouin tent, from which students share research and welcome guests with tea and authentic snacks.

In another example, as 3rd graders study health and nutrition in general studies, we study Jewish food traditions, including kashrut laws and practices, and investigat-

Jewish History in Our Schools



ing the role of food in Jewish culture and tradition. Students plan healthy Shabbat and Jewish holiday menus and contribute a Jewish family recipe with an interesting story to a collective class cookbook.

In 4th grade, the general social studies curriculum focuses on local history and New York State. In JSS, we connect conceptually by studying the history and structure of

traordinary opportunities. Beginning with the story of the first community of Jews in America, refugees fleeing the persecution of the Spanish Inquisition who found shelter on the shores of New Amsterdam, we use trade books and novels to view American history through a uniquely Jewish perspective. We culminate our year of study with a visit to Philadelphia, where we combine our visit to Independence Mall with a visit to

our local Jewish community. We learn how important Jewish values such as tikkun olam, tzedakah, and gemilut chasadim are put into practice. We visit the area synagogues and meet with rabbis and other community leaders, such as the heads of our JCC, Jewish Federation, Jewish Family Service, and Jewish Home for the Aged.

From colonial settlement to the American Revolution, and from the Civil War to the period of mass immigration, the breadth of nearly 400 years of history is included in the 5th grade general studies curriculum. In JSS, that history is infused and integrated with the stories of American Jews. America has offered Jews un-

precedented freedoms and ex-

the National Museum of American Jewish History, connecting the history and traditions of the Jewish people with the broader national experience. Similarly, within the study of ancient civilizations and medieval history in 6th grade, there are several points throughout the year where natural connections can be made between the general and Judaic social studies. From Sumer to Egypt and Babylonia to Rome, the challenges and experiences of the Jewish people can be understood within a larger historical context as students examine secular and Judaic sources simultaneously.

Collaborating with general studies teachers has allowed me to teach Judaic social studies within a much broader context and to make connections, daily, with what students are learning in their general studies classrooms. Learning in one area is supported and enriched by the other. Additionally, collaborative projects make use of reading, writing, speaking and listening skills in Judaic studies classes just as in general ones. Combining general and Judaic topics not only allows students to broaden their perspectives of history, but also makes the most of our teaching time to focus on the same language arts, critical thinking and research skills that are the cornerstone of an excellent elementary education. ■

Teaching Jewish History Across Disciplines—and Across the Hall

By Joel Abramovitz and Shona Schwartz, Ronald C. Wornick Jewish Day School, Foster City, CA

We are a middle school social studies teacher and a Jewish studies teacher who regularly engage in a debate over whether the teaching and learning of Jewish history is more suited to a Jewish studies class or a social studies class. In social studies the focus is on historical awareness, research skills and critical thinking. In Jewish studies the focus is on Jewish values, connecting to the experi-

ences of the Jewish people and development of a strong Jewish identity. In other words, social studies seeks to uncover “historical truth” while Jewish studies seeks to discover “spiritual truth.” Over years of working together, we have realized that each class offers unique opportunities and lenses to unpack the meaning and importance of Jewish history—and that, in fact, the answer is: both.

One method we use to approach the dual views is by approaching the same content from multiple angles. In sixth grade, the social studies class learns about ancient civilizations; the Jewish studies class looks at the emergence of the Israelite nation in the First Temple era. The nexus of these units is the Babylonian empire, depicted, somewhat differently, in both biblical and archaeological sources. By looking at the destruction of

the First Temple and the Babylonian exile both as a uniquely Jewish spiritual moment, as well as in the context of Babylonian culture and history, the students begin to see multiple viewpoints and significances of a particular Jewish historical event.

Perhaps an even more profound example of how our students are asked to think about different understandings of history is through the story of the exodus from Egypt in the parted Red Sea. The students study the Torah from Exodus 14 in both classes at a literal level. In social studies, the focus of the learning is archaeological. Examining evidence of remains uncovered at the bottom of the Red Sea, the students ask, “What sort of historical evidence do I need to understand the meaning of this event?” It becomes an exercise in understanding the importance of documented and provable historical evidence. In Jewish studies, the focus of the learning is on the spiritual evidence. Focusing on the impact and meaning of the sea crossing, the students ask, “What sort of spiritual perspective do I need to uncover the meaning of this event?” This tends to add to the “sea-change,” in which the sixth graders begin to differentiate the ways they look at Jewish history—but also that these different views are not mutually exclusive.

Sometimes we use this approach for historical periods or cultural history. In seventh



grade Jewish studies, the students have a major unit learning about the European Enlightenment and Jewish Haskalah that led to the emancipation of the Jews and the resulting growth of liberal Judaism, Zionism and modern values. The following year, in eighth grade, the students return to the ideas and thinkers of the Enlightenment, but instead of following its ideological course to changes within Judaism, they follow its path to the American Founding Fathers and the Revolutionary War. Investigating the same moment in history from Jewish and American perspectives can teach

the students that “history” and “Jewish history” often affect each other—and in turn can deeply affect our students.

We are constantly developing our collaborations and curricular integrations. As our personal understandings of historical and spiritual truths change, so does the way we teach them. Ultimately, we believe that approaching the teaching of Jewish history simultaneously from both educational angles is an effective way for students to understand the importance and relevance of the Jewish past. ■

Barrack Centropa Museums of European Jewry

By Susan Schwartz and Amy MalissaHersz, Jack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy, Bryn Mawr, PA

Since 2011, 9th graders at Jack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy begin their study of the Holocaust by focusing on *what* was lost, not only how it was lost. We culminate these studies with the production of a sophisticated student-produced museum highlighting a different vibrant Jewish community each year. It is crucial to remember how Jews lived, not only how they died, and why their traditions were so important.

Studying the diversity within these Jewish populations throughout Europe breaks down stereotypes and long held misconceptions. Students research religious life (with both Ashkenazi and Sephardic traditions), youth movements, art, institutions, and prominent as well as ordinary individuals from the region being studied.

This process prompts students to make this

history a part of their history. Students begin with a family history of their pre-America roots followed by lessons on Jewry of the region they come from. Then they select and research a topic. Teachers and students always look for family connections for students to pursue: family stories, research on the shtetl of origin, etc. It is essential that the subject matter be relevant to each student. In the course of their research, they

Jewish History in Our Schools

learn both what was unique about the community, such as language, music or food, and what they share with people from this distant time and place, such as summer camps, youth groups and Jewish schools. Previous museums examined Czech, Polish and Sephardic Balkan Jewry. This year's museum will feature the culture and history of German Jewry.

Students use their research to produce 3' x 6' freestanding museum-quality panels. Each panel tells a personal or historical story with photos and text. Some students also create videos on their topic. The panels and videos address some of the following questions: When did Jews first come to the region? Where did they live? What cultural practices defined these communities? What contributions did Jews in this community make to Jewish history or to world history and culture? How did their communities function? What did their shul look like? What characterized their relations with the non-Jewish community? What happened here during WWII? After? Now?

Our students host a powerful, emotional museum opening on Yom Hashoah. Student docents train intensively to conduct tours for adults and student groups. After a featured speaker, the culture of the region being studied is brought to life through storytelling, regional Jewish music performed by students and the serving of regional food dishes.



This year, to highlight the importance of German Jewish contributions to both Western culture and Jewish history, in addition to the panels and films there will be an art gallery featuring reproductions of the work of Jewish artists who were central to Germany's art scene during the period between the world wars and a salon featuring students role-playing important intellectuals from the era of Jewish emancipation through the Weimar Republic.

After the museum opening, the panels and videos remain on display at the school for a week so that Barrack classes can visit, as well as members of the wider school community. The exhibit also coincides with the

annual Yom Hashoah assemblies run by the HEAR (Holocaust Education and Reflection) club. The assemblies feature students speaking about visits to the camps during the Poland portion of their trimester abroad at the Alexander Muss High School in Israel, speeches by survivors and liberators, discussion panels, movie clips, and more recently, presentations by children and grandchildren of survivors.

The Barrack Centropa Museum project began in 2010 when history teacher Lilach Taichman attended a Centropa Summer Academy in Vienna, Budapest and Prague. She envisioned bringing this exhibit to Barrack as a hands-on means to teach her students about the Holocaust. The first two years, Centropa supplied many of the museum panels; by 2013, all of the panels were exclusively student-produced.

Through this experience, our students work collaboratively, gaining critical research and writing skills. They learn how to share this material via new graphic technologies and hone their communication skills. More importantly, they are forging strong connections with the surrounding community and across generations within their own families.

The vibrant lives and history our students are able to highlight in this museum tell the story of a world that has not truly vanished as long as our children carry these memories forward into the future. ■

A Case Study Approach to Integrating Jewish Values and Modern History

By Neil Kramer PhD, Dean of Faculty Emeritus, New Community Jewish High School, West Hills, California

A course at the New Community Jewish High School in Los Angeles employed a case study approach integrating Jewish history and Jewish values, enabling students to apply

Jewish values to contemporary challenges of the Jewish world. The case study approach enables students to practice solving real world problems as if they were clergy or leaders acting on behalf of Jewish com-

munal organizations, or as Jewishly engaged citizens.

Students used the KaVoD (Knowledge Values Deeds) method of analysis for each

case study. To equip students for the work of applying Jewish values to practical affairs, the work begins with two exercises focusing on Jewish civic enterprises. First, working in groups, students receive the mission statement and IRS form 990 (nonprofit organization tax returns) for one of several Jewish organizations (such as the ADL, American Jewish Committee, Federation, Wiesenthal Center, American Jewish World Service). Students use these materials to create uniform analyses of each organization:

What are the organization's areas of expertise (Knowledge)?

What are the organization's Values?

What have been the organization's accomplishments (Deeds)?

How well does the organization use its resources?

These four questions become the standard for the rubric for evaluating student work.

Students review all the group analyses, then each is tasked with allocating a fictional \$1000 among the organizations, explaining the allocations based on the Jewish values the student holds dear. The Jewish values statements must reference specific Jewish texts, including sacred writings, commentaries, documents from the secular historical record (i.e., writings of Herzl), or from other parts of the Jewish historical canon (e.g., *Diary of Anne Frank*).

The bulk of course work consists of case studies in which students must master the facts (Knowledge) of actual past controversies, select Jewish Values applicable to the case, and propose a course of action (Deeds) to have been taken at the time of the case. A faculty partner who can fill in the content gaps may be brought into the lessons or made available to students who require guidance (whether in history or text) that the main instructor cannot provide. Some Deeds may be excluded by the instructor; I usually forbade prayer, writing to elected

officials, or sending money.

In each case study, the student selects his identity—such as congregational rabbi, director of a Jewish civic organization, or a government official (in the USA, Israel, or elsewhere, as the facts of the case determine).

Both high school students and 4th year rabbinical students have been successful using the KaVoD method to analyze cases:

The Jackson-Vanik Amendment (1975): Did congressional efforts to support refuseniks advance or retard the emigration of Soviet Jews?

INS “factory surveys” and Jewish intergroup relations (**INS v Gonzalez, 1984**): Is the status of non-Jewish immigrants to the USA a “Jewish issue”?

Israel's birth and the American diaspora (1950): Taking sides in the **Blaustein and Ben-Gurion debate**.

Playing for Time (1979): Should American Jews oppose PLO-sympathizer Vanessa Redgrave's casting as an Auschwitz survivor?

Yad Vashem and Bombing Auschwitz (2008): What should a 21st century American president say about the failure of the Allies to bomb Auschwitz or the rail lines leading to it in 1944?

Should zoning regulations forbid construction of a synagogue in a residential neighborhood (**Congregation Etz Chaim v Los Angeles, 2013**)?

Reagan at Bitburg (1985): How should American Jews respond when the president proposes to honor WWII German war dead, including SS criminals?

These cases arose from the instructor's research and experience in Jewish communal life. Instructors using this model should use

cases most familiar to them or which had been the basis of their research.

Student responses were often surprising and unpredictable. The same student who said, “I asked my dad for help understanding the ADL's tax returns,” also reported going to both the family's rabbi and her Chabad rabbi for guidance on selecting Jewish values relevant to the “Bombing Auschwitz” case,



and conferring with several friends to figure appropriate Deeds in response to Reagan's visit to the Bitburg cemetery. This course was also taught to rabbinical students at the Ziegler School of the American Jewish University; interestingly, the high school students tended to show a greater range of sources. Having less certainty about their own identity as scholars and citizens, the high school students searched more widely to find Jewish values to address these real world problems.

The outcome of this work is that students get practice acting as if they were the responsible decision-makers. Knowing that these problems actually occurred and that the people proposing solutions to these problems in real time were not always able to create outcomes consistent with their values, students attempted to come up with better solutions. Those who did so recognized that they could act on behalf of the Jewish community when their time to do so arrived. ■

Recipe for Engagement, Enrichment, and Inquiry: Primary Sources

■ by **JACK LIPINSKY**

Lipinsky argues that engagement with primary documents is vital for students' ability to find relevance in Jewish history. He demonstrates a sophisticated approach to two different kinds of documents.

All too often Jewish history turns into a timeline-based exercise in which students spend a great deal of time learning what historians like to refer to as “Whig history”: a narrative of history through the lives of the powerful, the famous, and, very often, an overwhelmingly male list of main characters. Even more often, Jewish history is taught through the lens of the approved textbook, which also limits discussion to the areas the authors have decided are vital. While these texts are improving quickly, many of them still have far too much text and too little visual material. These characteristics do not encourage student engagement or higher order analysis about the larger questions of Jewish history and our remarkable survival.

Introducing primary sources into the classroom offers a highly cost-effective and efficient way for teachers to upgrade class interest and appeal to a more diverse group of students. Properly selected primary sources can enliven discussion and, most important, add a layer of personal narrative to textbooks' often far too general account. What is needed is careful pre-planning with a clearly mapped out lesson plan aligning the source with its larger context. Let me offer two lessons from my classes as examples, the first examining a written source, the second focused on a visual source. Educators are invited and encouraged to take this process further in a 21st century learning milieu.

Medieval Jewish History: the First Crusade in the Rhineland

The Crusades offer an excellent opportunity to sketch out the nature of medieval society and the place of the Jews in it. After

students have discovered that feudal society was based on hereditary class lines, land ownership and religion, they can then begin to understand the animosity between Christians and Muslims that catalyzed Pope Urban II's call to a crusade. Students familiar with the key facts of Christian anti-Judaism, based on the Jews' refusal to accept Jesus as their savior, readily grasp why Crusaders stereotyped Jews as evil and, armed with papal dispensations, had no fear of massacring the “enemies of Christ” who lived relatively close to home before they even came close to the “infidel hordes” awaiting them in the East.

Decoding medieval documents requires knowledge of Bible, Jewish law and European history. I want my students to believe that being a Jew requires complex knowledge from within and without our tradition.

But what went on at “ground level” during these barbarous times? What challenges did the Crusades pose for Jewish spiritual survival? These questions take on a new level of reality in an age where any student can

download the opening scene from “Saving Private Ryan” to find out what D-Day looked like, or many YouTube videos try to ask about God's presence in the Shoah. Educators must assist students in recognizing that Jews have long engaged these questions, and primary documents point the way.

In the case of the First Crusade, I make sure students understand the geography by giving them the map from Martin Gilbert's *Atlas of Jewish History*; then I supply them with the document “The Crusaders in Mainz” (www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1096jews-mainz.asp).

For many students, this will be their first experience of a medieval text. The narrative of the massacre of the Jews of Mainz comes from the chronicler Solomon bar Samson and was written about forty years after the event. The teacher should note



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that this forces us to ask about its reliability. We do not know how Solomon heard this story. Were there survivors? Was the story told directly to him by a survivor? If not, what is the story's providence?

It is vital to inform students that we ultimately still do not know the answers to these questions, and thus this document's status as a primary source is debatable. As well, and this will be very challenging even for senior students, the language of Jewish medieval documents is difficult to decode because it is studded with many biblical, talmudic and aggadic twists of language and formulae.

To the medieval eye, these linguistic complexities were marks of learning and intellect; the modern eye sees them as obscurantist. It is vital that students be helped in paraphrasing certain parts of the account. However, it is equally important that the teacher clearly convey that the language also indicates that the author does not perceive history as we do, as a series of events whose cause and effects can be analyzed, but as part of the biblical motif of God's will. These linguistic challenges are an opportunity for the teacher to point out that studying Jewish history involves cross-subject and cross-curricular skills. A knowledge of Bible, of Jewish law, of European history, all are part of decoding this document. I like to showcase this as a model for modern Jewish living: a broad knowledge-scape that extends beyond the educationally convenient subject borders used for academic evaluation. I want my students to believe that being a Jew requires complex knowledge from within and without our tradition.

The issue of documentary provenance is vital in history. Students need to be asked: What if Solomon bar Samson's account was second-hand—would that impact its believability? What might his explicit and implicit motivations have been? For planning purposes, be aware that written documents will require much more decoding time than visuals, but they contain explicit emotions and facts while visuals generally must be “mined” to obtain these through visual inference.

For an 11th or 12th grade class I would focus on the latter part of the document, narrating the Jews' futile resistance. First, I note that the attestation of Jews fighting with weapons is incredible given that they lived in a society in which they had no access to them. Their bravery and desperation are clearly evident and the chronicler wishes to indicate this.

Even more striking and vital is the description of their martyrdom:

When the children of the covenant saw that the heavenly decree of death had been issued and that the enemy had conquered them and had entered the courtyard, then all of them—old men and young, virgins and children, servants and maids—cried out together to their Father in heaven and, weeping for themselves and for their lives, accepted as just the sentence of God. One to another they said: “Let us be strong and let

us bear the yoke of the holy religion, for only in this world can the enemy kill us—and the easiest of the four deaths is by the sword. But we, our souls in paradise, shall continue to live eternally, in the great shining reflection [of the divine glory].” (In Jewish law the four death penalties were stoning, burning, beheading and strangulation.)

I find it vital to explain that the language here is biblical and talmudic but familiar to readers of that time. (Asking why will lead to a discussion of Jewish literacy in the Middle Ages.) Note the use of appropriation of the traditional text as the language of narration; what does this say about what makes a text holy and how its readers regard it? The denouement of the tragic story parallels Masada and the death of Rabbi Akiva. Some students will find the linguistic references: the Torah frequently links the defeat of the Israelites with improper behavior, as does the central prayer of the holiday Musaf Amidah—*Umipnei cha-ta'einu galinu mei'artzeinu*. So too here—for some reason “the decree of death” has been issued and it cannot be evaded.

At this point my students are stunned. They may not be sophisticated enough to phrase the issue philosophically so they ask: “But why? What have these people done?” As a historian I can answer that they were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. But theologically this is insufficient, and the author of this manuscript knows it. So I

direct my students to read the next sentence: “With a whole heart and with a willing soul they [the Jews] then spoke: ‘After all it is not right to criticize the acts of God, blessed be He and blessed be His name, who has given to us His Torah and a command to put ourselves to death, to kill ourselves for the unity of His holy name.’” What an incredible speech our writer

puts into the mouth of the Jews! Obviously he finds this tragedy difficult to abide. And, if we doubt this interpretation, the document ends:

Behold their valiant ones cry without; [the angels of peace weep bitterly] and [Jeremiah 4.28] “the heavens grow dark.” Yet see what these martyrs did! Why did the heavens not grow dark and the stars not withdraw their brightness? Why did not the moon and the sun grow dark in their heavens when on one day, on the third of Sivan, on a Tuesday eleven hundred souls were killed and slaughtered, among them many infants and sucklings who had not transgressed nor sinned, many poor, innocent souls?

Now students can see that the philosophical and theological question “why do bad things happen to good people” is one Jews have discussed for over two millennia for reasons far from arcane. It is useful to point out that the medieval chronicler stands on the shoulders of giants. In his commentary on the events of the Flood, Rashi (based on the Midrash) calls this outcome *androlomusia* and explains that Evil produces disruptive chaos and the Divine effort to right it causes “the death of the innocent and righteous alike.” This would make a

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 46]

Now students can see that the philosophical and theological question “why do bad things happen to good people” is one Jews have discussed for over two millennia for reasons far from arcane.



ly straightforward: an account of the *Einsatzgruppen* deployment with a map to assist (kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kholmich/photos/Maps/MapEinsatzgruppen1.JPG). By this point students will have studied the “pre-conditioning” of these soldiers to murdering Jews and the role of Nazi propaganda on dehumanizing the Jews to simplify their annihilation. After warning about the graphic nature of the picture, the picture should be projected.

Students need to learn how to scan a picture first to gain overall impressions and then focus on specifics. This picture is an excellent introduction to the skill of image analysis because of its apparent simplicity. (An excellent introduction to teaching this skill is found at www.facinghistory.org/resources/strategies/media-literacy-analyzing-visu.) The key categories of victim, bystander and perpetrator are best taught by discovery lesson from this picture. Here are some questions I use; they can be written in advance for students to work on, or a group discussion can ensue as the class learns together. The victim is tragically obvious—note his expression. How many others have already died? Why was he saved to be the last—and why did the *Einsatzgruppe* take such pleasure in not murdering him *en masse* in accord with their methodology?

The progression in interrogative taxonomy is a key to this methodology and integrates powerfully with inquiry-based learning. Note as well that questions begin with the most obvious category: the victim. Now it is time to progress to the man holding the pistol. Where does he fit? He apparently is a perpetrator. Based on this picture, define a “perpetrator”? Is he the only perpetrator in the picture? What of the others—

are they bystanders or perpetrators? How can the visual evidence justify each conclusion?

This set of questions produces fascinating debates. Students have asked: what if the other men only watched and never murdered anyone in the pit—are they guilty and what are they guilty of? Is it possible that all these men are equally guilty? We don’t know what they did before the picture was taken, but it seems that their presence is connected to the mass grave. The astute students will note that the picture is posed (note the gazes of all the men on the camera): what does this tell you about the *Einsatzgruppe*? Are these “ordinary men” or especially wicked ones? Enrichment could consist of reading the relevant chapters from Browning’s famous book *Ordinary Men*, or visiting the Holocaust Museum’s propaganda online exhibit (www.ushmm.org/propaganda) and preparing a Wiki based on their learning. The questions asked in the image analysis can inform their understanding of the Nuremberg trials, when the then novel idea of “crimes against humanity” came into existence and the court struggled over how far down the Nazi chain of command the definitions of “perpetrator” and “bystander” should extend.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 52]

fascinating icebreaker for a Jewish philosophy class talking about the nature of evil or trying to understand why the righteous suffer. Teachers can also use this document to set the stage for student appreciation that various groups of Jews answered this question in very different ways depending on their understanding of Judaism. The answer remains a highly relevant litmus test of an individual’s approach to Judaism. Students should be encouraged to find their own answer and hopefully realize that it may well change as they mature.

Visual Primary Documents: “The Last Jew in Vinnitsa”

Teachers know that some images serve as primary sources, offering an important way of instructing today’s media-aware visual learners. One of the major challenges of teaching about the Shoah is analyzing the categorization of victims, perpetrators and bystanders. The membership of the first group is clear cut; those who fall into the latter two are the subject of much debate. An interesting way of catalyzing this discovery is a lesson on a picture discovered in the pocket of an *Einsatzgruppe* member that he titled “The Last Jew in Vinnitsa.” The necessary background for this lesson is relative-



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An Anonymous Funder

Using Simulations to Play With Jewish History

■ by **MEREDITH KATZ**

A JTS professor who joined as a JCAT partner last year, Katz draws lessons from this ambitious program for teachers to create their own simulations with student role-playing.

Hosts, Ms. Magistrate, and People of JCAT,

*I, Claus von Stauffenberg, have reached the amount of 12 VOCs [Votes of Confidence] and I am ready to make my decision. However, there is still one thing I want resolved before I make my ruling and that is why I am posting this speech. I am calling out to you all to tell you that I will give JCAT until 9 PM on the 26th to make a decision whether or not to make the "third option" viable to all. To those justices who have already ruled, I will give you an opportunity to keep your first decision or change to the third option... We must choose quickly. Before you make a decision, consider this. The **third option** will help both sides. Israel would let in some refugees, but not a great amount, and it would not stretch their resources to give them background checks to make sure they are not terrorists. It will be good for not only the Eissas, but for all of the refugees, who will all be accepted into new countries away from the genocide in Sudan. And to those of you who believe it is a dream and would never work, look around. We have the power to do this! But we must do it soon! Do what is right!*

Thank you,

Claus von Stauffenberg

What is going on here? What is Colonel von Stauffenberg (of the 1944 plot to overthrow Hitler) talking about and whom is he addressing?

A simulation provides a safe space for students to experiment with historical thinking, taking a break from right v. wrong in order to make lasting and personal connections as they build critical thinking skills.

This speech took place as part of RAVSAK's Jewish Court of All Time (JCAT) online Jewish history simulation game that culminates in a virtual trial. JCAT is the brainchild of the Interactive Communications and Simulations group at the University of Michigan School of Education and is run as a partnership with RAVSAK, the University of Cincinnati's Center for Studies in Jewish Education and Culture and with JTS's Davidson School of Jewish Education. Sixteen RAVSAK schools have participated in JCAT over the last 4 years.

In this speech, Claus, portrayed by a middle school student, is urging the court to consider a "third option" in the case of the "Eissas," a Darfuri refugee family seeking political asylum in Israel. Rather than choose between allowing them to stay in Israel and ordering their return to Sudan, Claus has researched and designed an alternative that would help to disperse the refugees among several countries. In the process of gaining feedback on his plan, Claus has interacted with Maimonides, Heschel, Emma Lazarus, Benjamin Netanyahu and Natan Sharansky, as well as the sanction of President Obama. Ultimately Claus' campaign was denied and his fellow student justices ruled in favor of the Darfuri family's right to asylum in Israel.

JCAT is an exciting and complex endeavor involving middle school students, teachers, undergraduate and graduate students and professors participating as characters from across time. JCAT helps to illuminate important questions when considering simulations as a learning activity. Why use simulations to teach Jewish history? Where exactly is the Jewish history in the



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simulation? What are some steps to take in scaffolding a simulation in your setting?

Thinking about goals

Like any curricular decision, the choice of a specific learning activity needs to be made in conjunction with overall goals. Although there are many possible definitions, in essence, a simulation is a game that requires role-playing and a flexible outcome around a particular subset of content. How do these elements fit into your purposes for teaching history?

Do you want engagement with Jewish history to help students build their Jewish identity, to deepen their feelings of connection, or to help them tackle contemporary challenges in the Jewish community today? Perhaps you want to use Jewish history to catalyze a moral, social justice response? Jacobs and Shem Tov (“History: Issues in the Teaching and Learning of Jewish History”) suggest these “orientations” and others as common purposes for Jewish history education in day schools. Although these orientations have distinctive and overlapping interpretations in different settings, they are useful in framing the choices educators make around content, skill development, learning activities and assessments. In this year’s JCAT case, for example, the moral

response orientation was prominent as characters referenced modern and ancient examples of Jewish exile and victimization as evidence in support of the plaintiff. Shaping the simulation to support a broader goal will help you structure student participation, provide a framework for assessment, and link the simulation to the extant curriculum.

The role of role playing

Underlying all of these orientations is a need for students to build historical empathy, a “cognitive and affective engagement with historical figures to better understand and contextualize their lived experiences, decisions, or actions” (Endacott and Brooks, “An Updated Theoretical and Practical Model for Promoting Historical Empathy”). Students who develop historical empathy can identify how the past is different from the present, articulate multiple perspectives held by people in the past, and can use historical evidence to support their explanations (Jensen, “Developing Historical Empathy Through Debate: An Action Research Study”). As a result students have a stronger understanding of history for its own sake and can more meaningfully apply its lessons to new situations. Building historical empathy requires intentional scaffolding, modeling and practice that

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 50]

Von Stauffenberg has interacted with Maimonides, Heschel, Emma Lazarus, Benjamin Netanyahu and Natan Sharansky, as well as the sanction of President Obama.

What you and your family should know about Gaucher disease.



Gaucher disease results from a specific enzyme deficiency in the body, caused by a genetic mutation received from both parents. Anyone can have the disease. However, Gaucher type 1 (the most common, treatable form) is most prevalent among Jews of Ashkenazi descent. Approximately 1 in 450 have the disease and 1 in 10 are carriers.

Gaucher can cause bone pain, easy bruising, bleeding, fatigue anemia, distended stomach due to an enlarged liver and/or spleen, osteoporosis, and more. Symptoms are often ignored, misdiagnosed and can be debilitating.

If you or a family member has symptoms of Gaucher, talk to your doctor about testing and various treatment options that are available. A blood test can detect if you are a carrier or have Gaucher.

To learn about the importance of early diagnosis, testing and treatment call 800-504-3189 or visit our website at www.gaucherdisease.org.

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 49]

can and should start in the upper elementary grades.

One approach to teaching for historical empathy is through the role playing inherent in simulations. Representing a character requires students to transfer the information they read about a historical figure to a first-person narrative, an important step in “thinking like they did back then.” Having that character interact with others from his own time or different times, as they do in JCAT, in both rehearsed and impromptu dialogue, offers multiple opportunities to practice this thinking. The curve may be nonlinear: as my JCAT colleagues comment, “Giving a seventh grader with a shaky grasp of world history the task of imagining what, for example, Ptolemy would say to Edgar Allen Poe is, on the face of it absurd” (Kupperman et. al, “It Matters Because It’s a Game: Serious Games for Serious Players”), yet a simulation can provide a safe space in which students can experiment with this type of historical thinking, taking a break from right v. wrong in order to make more lasting and individualized connections as they build critical thinking skills.

In this example from JCAT, “Rosa Rosenstein,” a Holocaust survivor played by a middle school student, introduces herself to Queen Isabella of Spain, played by a graduate student.

Hi Queen Isabella,

I can not believe that I am talking to you. This is not a positive remark. I disagree so much with how you hate the Jewish people and helped to kill them. This is devastating to me as I am Jewish and survived the Holocaust. People like you make me feel sick. How could you hate people just to hate them? Some people are not good and those are the people you should not like, not the people who mean well but believe differently from you. I do know that you did have a few accomplishments, like helping to finance Christopher Columbus, but that means nothing to me when I think of the innocent Jews you kicked out of Spain or killed. I am very curious about the response you have to this message.

Rosa Rosenstein

Here, the student playing Rosa is demonstrating strong historical empathy for her character, a Holocaust survivor. She also references accurate evidence from Isabella’s experiences. Rosa’s prompt to Isabella provoked a response that continued for several exchanges as the Queen explained how her thinking was guided by a different set of beliefs and standards in the Middle Ages. Ultimately “Rosa” did not accept Isabella’s justification for the expulsion, and she may not yet have a full understanding of medieval social forces, but she has been pushed to consider and experiment with a variety of perspectives.

Tachlis: some guidelines for getting started

A simulation can be very rewarding for students and teachers, but starting from scratch can also be overwhelming. It pays to keep the scale small initially. Some key points to consider:

Choose a content focus.

Thinking about the overall purposes and general ebb and flow of your course, what content holds potential for investigation through a simulation? Do you want to limit the time period to a specific case, i.e., a reenactment of the Dreyfus Affair or the First Zionist Congress? Or do you want students to apply historical content to a current situation, as we do in JCAT? Think about how you will introduce the content to the students. What common background should they have to level the playing field for meaningful interaction? What can they discover about the topic through their own research? If the students had to write a brief position paper after the simulation, what is the central question you hope they would be able to answer? What information would you hope they could include?

Set parameters for character selection.

What characters need to be represented? What choice can you allow students? If this is a Jewish history course, do the optional characters have to be Jewish? Thomas Arnold (“Make Your History Class Hop with Excitement (At Least Once a Semester): Designing and Using Classroom Simulations”), a college professor who designs “one session” simulations, makes sure to provide roles for all of his students, even for those who are shy or initially uninterested in the topic. In middle school we call this differentiation.

An important first part of the simulation, and where students can be exposed to a great deal of content, is through the research they do in order to represent their characters. In JCAT, each participant posts a brief narrative “resume” by way of introduction to the group, and teachers often instruct their students to read each others’ resumes as they begin their interactions.

Decide on a structure.

Think about adapting an established format such as a debate or a trial. In a debate, for example, student characters can prepare position papers and present them to each other through pro speeches, con speeches and rebuttals. Alternatively, you may choose to incorporate more alliance building and strategizing into your simulation. In JCAT, characters who wish to act as justices have to secure a certain number of “Votes of Confidence” from the group. They do this through formal speeches declaring their qualifications and through private emails. This year Claus von Stauffenberg went be-

Debriefing is a chance to help students think metacognitively about the kind of learning they did during the simulation and about how it may have been easy or challenging for them.

yond this process and literally tried to “change the game” by offering an alternative resolution not in consideration from the outset. He precipitated some emergency meetings of the simulation faculty back at headquarters as we had to decide how to respond to his request!

Some students will take the ball and run with it and some will need more scaffolding. The challenge is to define the rules of the game clearly enough to facilitate maximum participation AND to allow enough space for student initiative and flexible historical interpretations. If you are planning for an in-class simulation, one way to make time for unrehearsed character interaction might be through a class blog or Facebook type page with appropriate parameters for participation.

Plan for debriefing.

Just as students need guidance in taking on a role, they need guidance in taking it off. An important follow up to a simulation is giving students a chance to articulate how their own opinions might be similar or different to the characters they portrayed (especially if they were assigned a character with whom they disagreed from the outset)! Debriefing is a chance to help students think metacognitively about the kind of learning they did during the simulation and about how it may have been easy or challenging for them.

If necessary, debriefing can be a time to gently correct historical in-

accuracies that may have been showcased, and perhaps most importantly, it is time for an affective check-in. Students-in-character may have exchanged sharply worded comments, and in the end there will be simulation winners and losers (significant engagement factors for students). As students take off their characters and resume business as usual, it’s useful to remind students of your normative classroom culture.

Celebrate the experiment and learn for next time.

As a new high school social studies teacher, I remember my surprised and somewhat horrified reaction when “Syria” declared war on “Israel” in a United Nations peace conference simulation in the early 1990s (in both my 8th and 9th period classes)! I had worked with the students on the content for weeks and critiqued their prepared speeches. How could they end up so far from the reality of the time? In retrospect, I wish I had asked them this question more intentionally, rather than only testing to see if they could write an essay on “the role of religion in the Middle East.”

In retrospect I can also take pride in this activity that allowed the students to take on roles, experiment with the language and mannerisms of diplomacy and “try out” content. I started out with historical accuracy and concluded with a messy ending. For the teacher this can be a powerful reminder of how complicated the learning process can and should be as students internalize new information and then develop the ability to transfer meaningfully to other contexts. ■

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Why Study American Jewish History?

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27]

eras and horizontally with Jews who live in other communities. It makes them appreciate that they are part of something much larger than themselves and creates a shared sense of community.

- American Jewish history forms the basis for the shared Jewish memories that are basic to both Jewish identity and Jewish community.

Several of these objectives apply to all forms of history instruction. The study of the past, they suggest, places present-day problems in perspective and teaches valuable textual and evidentiary skills that students can put to practical use later in life. Other objectives might be used to justify teaching American Jewish history in a non-Jewish setting, as part of the American experience as a whole. The overwhelming majority, however, justify the teaching of American Jewish history on the basis of Jewish identity formation. The aim of American Jewish history teaching, they claim, is to link Jews one to another, to create shared Jewish memories, to promote community.

Deepening students' Jewish identity is, of course, a noble endeavor, but using American Jewish history as the vehicle to accomplish this aim raises significant problems. What do we do, for example, about unpleasant facts: criminality, slaveholding, intermarriage, or even (for those who teach in a non-Orthodox setting) the postwar resurgence of Orthodoxy? How, moreover, will students react later in life when they learn the more complex realities of the American Jewish experience; will they feel that their religious educators betrayed them? Even now, are we providing students with a portrait of American Jewish history that is as multifaceted and self-critical as their curriculum in American history? And, if not, what message are we unintentionally conveying—not just about American Jewish history but about Jewish education in general?

One prominent educator argues that “history is only meaningful

when it becomes memory” and that the task of Jewish educators is to “give life to Jewish history by translating it into memory for our students” (Regina Stein, “Teaching American Jewish History as a Story”). This, again, sounds like a noble goal, but as readers of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi's *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (1982) know, the relationship between Jewish history and Jewish memory is anything but simple. Memory, after all, plays tricks; it is fleeting, selective, and highly subjective. Students need to learn how to distinguish history from memory; the distinction is essential to critical thinking. Chanukah, for example, is part of Jewish history; the so-called Chanukah miracle, the cruse of oil that kindled for eight days, is part of Jewish memory. Rabbi Judah Loew b. Bezalel of Prague (1525-1609) is part of Jewish history; the golem attributed to him (in a book published in 1909) is part of Jewish memory. Haym Salomon (1740-1785) is part of Jewish history; his reputed funding of the American Revolution is part of Jewish memory. It is unquestionably important for educated Jews to absorb both Jewish history and Jewish memory, but the two should never be confused.

Elsewhere, I have spelled out a somewhat different set of reasons for teaching American Jewish history, placing less emphasis on identity and more on tensions and continuities within the American Jewish experience as a whole. In rethinking the issue now, I am inclined to believe that there is yet another theme that deserves emphasis, one that those of us engaged in the study and teaching of American Jewish history too often take for granted, not realizing how much of an impression it can make upon our students. The theme is human potential, in our case, the ability of American Jews—young and old, men and women alike—to change the course of history and transform a piece of the world. American Jewish history is, after all, not just a record of events; it is the story of how people shaped events: establishing and maintaining communities, responding to challenges, working for change. That, perhaps, is the greatest lesson of all that American Jewish history can offer our students: that they too can make a difference, that the future is theirs to create. ■

Recipe for Engagement, Enrichment, and Inquiry: Primary Sources

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 46]

Conclusions

These methodologies can be applied to many other—hopefully happier—primary source documents. In order to produce personalized and powerfully authentic learning, some key best practices must be followed. The primary source's deployment must be carefully planned out so that it yields another layer of narrative beyond

what was studied. The teacher needs to thoroughly research the provenance and background of the document and how authoritative it is.

In all cases, teachers should clearly map out the goals of the instruction in advance, and plan differentiated follow up activities. But the key is making sure to leave room for class conversation which often produces poignant personal links to the material that

helps students forge links to their learning and students can be encouraged to draw overarching conclusions. In sum, utilizing primary documents is a vital tool for catalyzing “class moments” that my students and I remember best—and certainly memory, as anyone who recites Kiddush or reads Yerushalmi's *Zakhor* knows, is the basis of Jewish history and an entry point into serious inquiry into the templates of Jewish survival. ■



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Understanding the Holocaust, as Jews

■ by ANN NACHBAR

In response to the challenge Chazan identified (p. 28), Nachbar presents a way to redesign a class on Shoah education so that students understand the victims not just as “sheep to the slaughter.”

Many American schools, Jewish and secular, teach the Holocaust. Curricula tend to present the terrible story more or less in chronological order, providing background information on anti-Semitism and the rise of Hitler, moving on to Nazi anti-Jewish legislation and Kristallnacht. The scene then shifts to Poland, where, in orderly progression, the Jews move into ghettos, deportation trains and death camps (usually focusing on Auschwitz). Classes move on to lessons on resistance (especially the Warsaw ghetto uprising), righteous Gentiles, liberation, and perhaps the war crimes trials after the war ended. Heart-rending survivor testimony is usually excerpted, in print and/or video, to illustrate the horror of particular moments. The victim list is commonly broadened to include homosexuals and Roma, and more recent genocides are referenced as evidence that studying the Holocaust has relevance to understanding today's world. Most curricula, as well as various American Holocaust museums, aim to teach the evils of genocide and to inspire students to stand up for other victims of discrimination and hatred. The lessons can be powerful, and all American students surely benefit from them.

This basic format has drawbacks, however, in that it distorts the Jewish experience during the Holocaust and does not forcefully make one of the central lessons that we, *as Jews*, ought to draw from the Holocaust.

Distortions of the Jewish Experience

For the 9.5 million individual Jews living in Europe before

World War II, the Holocaust (for which they had no name at the time) was utter chaos. It was a long time before large numbers of Jews realized that the Germans intended to murder every last one of them, and that the ghettos, trains, and “resettlement camps” were successive steps in a total annihilation process. Yet the chaos, terror and disorientation that characterized the Jewish experience are not adequately communicated when that experience is taught in the orderly historical context of Nazi Germany's rise and Germany's efficient design of the Final Solution. By giving the impression that the Holocaust was in any way “orderly,” curricula fundamentally distort the Jewish experience, for the Holocaust was “orderly” only for the Germans—not for the Jews.

Moreover, the focus on the murder process can sometimes overshadow teaching how hard and how continuously the

victims struggled to stay alive. In order to understand why Jews made the decisions they made, our students—who have always lived in a free country, and who have never faced starvation, let alone gas chambers or firing squads—must understand the pressures that ordinary Jews were under, the information they had and the resources they lacked in the winter of 1942-43. Above all, European Jews strove to live. Though it is certainly important to explain how two-thirds of them failed, we distort their experience if we fail to adequately teach their manifold efforts to survive.

Finally, we must take care in our lesson planning to avoid reducing the immense sweep of the Holocaust to the Warsaw ghetto and Auschwitz. Important as they were, they were not where

Above all, European Jews strove to live. Though it is certainly important to explain how two-thirds of them failed, we distort their experience if we fail to adequately teach their manifold efforts to survive.



Ann Nachbar, daughter of Holocaust survivors, has helped seven survivors to record their stories and has been teaching the Holocaust at Gesher Jewish Day School in Fairfax, Virginia, for the past 16 years. anachbar@aol.com

the overwhelming majority of European Jews lived or perished. The Nazis established over 1,000 ghettos and over 22,000 camps; more Jews were murdered in the Einsatzgruppen massacres and Operation Reinhard camps than in Auschwitz. Though it is, as a practical matter, impossible to study every local permutation, we can at least avoid giving the impression that one or two places constituted, in effect, a “ground zero” for the Shoah.

Selective use of oral histories offers a good, but only partial fix. A better remedy would be restructuring the curriculum, so that it is founded on a succession of well-chosen memoirs, supplemented by other historical materials.

A Day School Approach

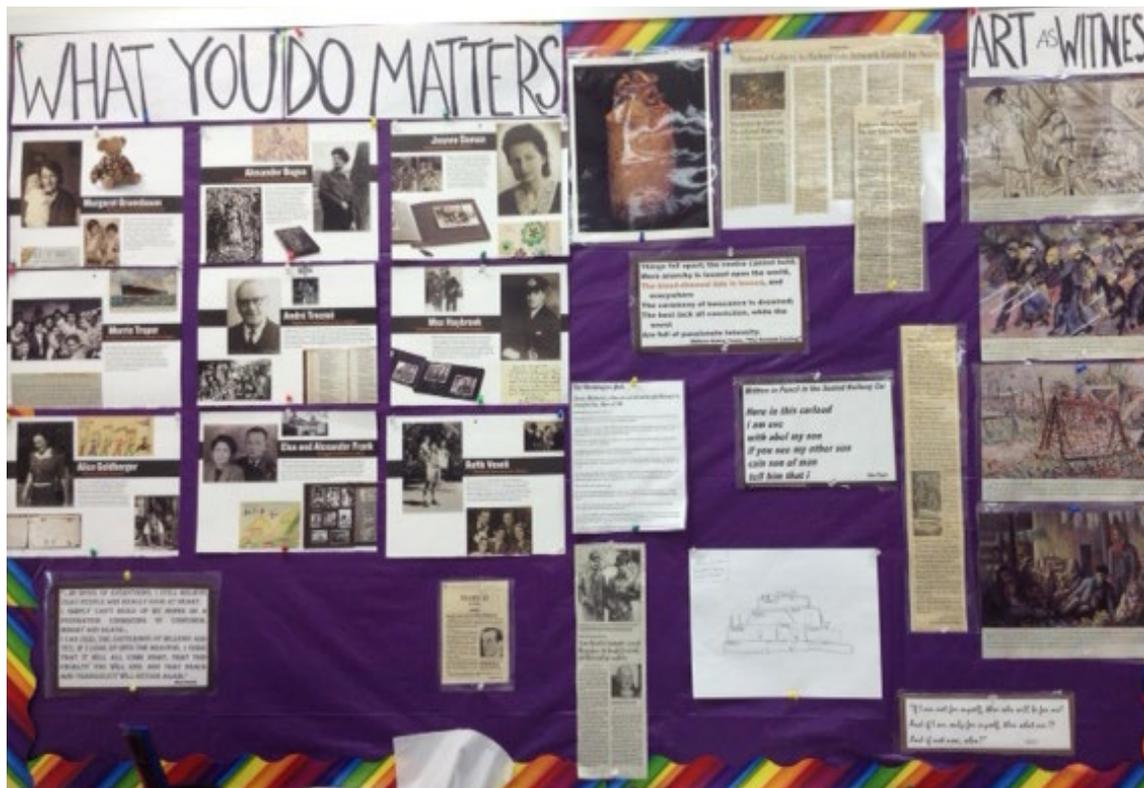
Since Jewish day schools have more time to devote to the subject than do secular and synagogue schools, they have an opportunity to address these curricular shortcomings. Even more importantly, perhaps, day schools have an opportunity to adjust the pedagogical goal; in addition to teaching the evils of genocide, Jewish day schools can guide Jewish students to understand a central lesson of the Holocaust *for Jews*—namely, that *Jews must never again be powerless*. By coordinating Holocaust history lessons with lessons in Jewish texts and secular disciplines, day schools can offer their students special depth in understanding the catastrophe inflicted upon European Jewry.

The first step is to untangle the Jewish and German experiences. Geshur Jewish Day School in Fairfax, Virginia, has modified the conventional approach by, in effect, teaching the Holocaust three times: first from the perspective of the Jews, again from the perspective of non-Jews/non-Germans, and finally, from the perspective of the Germans.

The Jewish Perspective

Geshur’s 8th graders learn about the Jewish Shoah experience by tracing the fates of two carefully chosen families: one from Stanislawow, in eastern Poland (now Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine), and the other from Hungary.

Beginning in 1941, the three-generation Polish family confronted abductions for forced labor, orders to surrender valuables, Einsatzgruppen massacres, ghetto struggles for shelter, food, fuel and medical care, round-ups and deportations. The father served on the third Stanislawow Judenrat. The family sought “good” jobs supporting the German war effort and arranged ghetto hiding places for family members unable to obtain such jobs. After mass shootings or deportations, they checked whether loved ones were still there; they wondered where the “resettlement” trains went; they only *eventually*



We must take care to avoid reducing the immense sweep of the Holocaust to the Warsaw ghetto and Auschwitz. They were not where the overwhelming majority of European Jews lived or perished.

realized that the Germans intended murder them *all*. Urgently, the lone family survivor brainstormed feasible strategies for evading the ever-tightening German net.

Five family members landed in Belzec Death Camp—a place no one had ever heard of or imagined. Rudolf Reider, the

only survivor of Belzec, recorded in his memoir exactly what happened to the Jews arriving there, and so it is possible for students now to follow the unsuspecting Jews into those gas chambers...and afterward.

The class then shifts its attention to the two-generation Hungarian family. Students follow them from their round-up, to the Hungarian ghetto, onto the cattle cars, landing finally in Auschwitz Birkenau.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 56]

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Selection: the confusion, the family suddenly separated after struggling so hard to stay together. The German officer's stick cleaves two sisters, separating the 9-year old from the 13-year old, sending them in different directions, to different fates. The disbelief. The shock. The barracks. The 13-year old is assigned to sort the mountain of clothes that had once belonged to the Jews—and she finds her own mother's white dress. Sustaining hope in that setting; losing hope in that setting. Death march. Again and again, the powerlessness of the Jews to save themselves and their loved ones is made searingly clear.

Building upon the foundation of these two families, the curriculum zooms out to the experiences of Jews elsewhere. Thus, from an Einsatzgruppen massacre in Stanislawow, the class discovers ongoing massacres in neighboring towns, and then in more distant places like Kovno and Babi Yar. An account of the quest for food in Stanislawow is paired with excerpts from Ringelblum and from the Lodz Ghetto Chronicle about food shortages in Warsaw and Lodz ghettos. Study of the Stanislawow Judenrat's response to a German demand to hand over Jews for shooting is followed by examination of how the Lodz, Warsaw and Vilna Judenrate heads responded to similar demands. After zooming in on the Hungarian family at Auschwitz, the discussion zooms out to Auschwitz in general—the death camp, the labor camp, etc.

Along the way, students pause to consider questions of resistance: in a situation of abject powerlessness, facing an enemy intent upon genocide, what options are there for resistance, and what do armed and passive resistance offer?

Ideally, many of these lessons would be accompanied by with class discussions of Jewish texts: Rabbi Akiva on distributing inadequate life-sustaining resources; Maimonides on handing a Jew over to an enemy for execution; Unetanneh Tokef and the Einsatzgruppen massacres; the Akeidah and the no-win choices that Judenräte faced during the war; Yocheved entrusting Moses to Pharaoh's daughter and Jews entrusting their children to righteous Gentiles; Job and the suffering of innocent victims, etc. At the same time, art classes can look at some of the Holocaust memorials that have been created, while music classes can listen to some of the songs written during and after the Shoah. Literature classes can read selections written by victims and survivors. By integrating their curricula, Jewish day schools can give their students a nuanced, multi-faceted *Jewish* understanding of the tragedy.

Non-Jews/ Non-Germans and the Allied Powers

Gesher JDS students then turn to what non-Jews knew and did between 1941 and 1945. If the Jews lacked power to save themselves, then who had sufficient power to save at least some Jews?

Since the murders overwhelmingly took place in Polish, Baltic and

Soviet territory, Poles, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians and Russians— all Christians—had front row seats for the horrors visited upon the Jews. Even if they did not know every detail of the gas chamber operations, they all certainly knew that Jews were being shot, starved and deported to their deaths. After acknowledging the immense pressures they too were under, Gesher students grapple with what led some to collaborate with the SS, what led others to attempt to save Jews, and what led most to simply stand by, watching Germany murder their own neighbors and turn their backyards into the greatest killing fields in history.

At this point, the class considers what the Allied

Powers knew and when they knew it—what they did and what they *could have* done—and how much difference they realistically could have made.

The Germans

Now that they know *what* the Germans did to the Jews and knows how little effort was made by others to save them, the class examines *how* and *why* the Germans did it. In order to grasp how such a catastrophe was possible, Gesher students look at the Holocaust one last time—from the perspective of the Germans. How did Nazi anti-Semitism differ from previous forms of anti-Semitism? Why was it necessary to murder the Jews in order to achieve their objective? What kinds of backgrounds did Nazi leaders have?

The Final Solution was so successful because, in addition to being utterly savage, it was so efficiently organized: the German bureaucracy and economy were thoroughly dedicated to its prosecution. Students examine train schedules and other original documents to assess how Germany allocated resources between its war against the Allies and its war against the Jews. What was the trial-and-error process by which the Germans ultimately designed their continent-wide murder machine? What happened to all of those gold teeth, the hair, the shoes? What happened to the necklaces, the fur hats, the paintings, the musical instruments? How profitable was the Final Solution? Now, at last, the organization of the murder/robbery process is fully revealed. Now it becomes evident what the unarmed, isolated, powerless Jews were up against.

What We Can Offer Our Students

With a thorough understanding of the Holocaust, day school students will not only then empathize with powerless Armenians, Bosnians, Tutsis and Sudanese; they will not only be ready to stand up for future genocide victims. Our students will also be ready to appreciate the importance *to them as Jews*, of the freedoms and powers guaranteed by the US Constitution. Our students will be ready to grasp why Israel is so vital. Our students will understand how terribly dangerous it can be for Jews to be powerless. ■

By integrating their curricula, Jewish day schools can give their students a nuanced, multi-faceted *Jewish* understanding of the tragedy.

PaRDeS: History as Spirit in Action

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 35]

ing of self in relation to other. In chronology, we enter the age of encounter. Ezra and Nechemiah mark the beginning of this phase by building walls that are physical, textual and halakhic. These walls serve as the system boundary for a new phase of Am Yisrael's development: the process of compare and contrast. Such growth requires an identity strong enough to integrate insights gained through knowing others, without losing a sense of self.

The Sages characterize this period as one of subjugation, with Am Yisrael passing through the "four kingdoms" of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. But they also read this historical journey into the opening lines of the Torah (Bereshit Rabba 2:4). In so doing they reimagine exile as an essential component of creation, thereby transforming its meaning. We are not meant to live an exclusively national experience; we are on an evolutionary journey toward consciousness which incorporates the whole world's experience. This phase of history provides a rich context for the exploration of the nature of identity and relationship. Furthermore, the question of where one locates its endpoint offers the opportunity to explore how one understands the idea of leaving exile.

The final phase is *sod*. In literal translation *sod* means secret. This level of meaning lies wholly within the reader as an inner understanding because communication relies on language, which is itself rooted in the shared structures developed through *pshat*, *remez* and *drash*. In the development of conscious-

ness, *sod* is the awareness of self coming to be through the meeting with other, rather than self as an atomized being. In chronology it is where the past meets the present and fuels our dreams of the future. From the perspective of *sod*, an event like Sinai is not a fact to be critically dissected, a story we tell ourselves, or even a context for knowing the world. It is an inner understanding which we touch, whose reality is experienced in our ability to shape the world in its image.

The subjectivity of *sod* seems to enhance the problem of relativism, but in reality it can address it in the sense that the Torah tells a story of absolute truth to individuals with a subjective experience. One of the primary tasks of tracing the story of Am Yisrael through time then becomes identifying the vessels which held together collective experience. These vessels mute the subjectivity of individual existence and serve as primary vehicles for national experience.

The birth pangs of modernity shattered many of the walls that Ezra and Nechemiah built for Am Yisrael, provoking a crisis of identity unseen since the end of the Second Temple period. The postmodern era has added a healthy dose of subjectivity, calling truth into question to a degree unfelt since the closing of the age of prophecy. Uncertain heirs of a rich history, we are struggling to articulate our story in a fashion which can guide our fragmented communities toward a future worthy of our past. If our present identity is assumed to be absolute, we can only tell a story of the past which justifies our present; but if we deny the importance of a coherent, shared identity then we have

no basis for telling a story which can shape a collective future.

So how do we begin to use this map and integrate facts and narrative into a story which can challenge present identity to grow in a healthy manner? One starting point is to pose the simple question: where does Jewish history begin? This serves as a frame for exploring the definition of history itself, and any assumptions our students have about its purpose. Choosing a foundational story from the Torah, like the Binding of Yitzchak, and tracing how it is used to shape identity at various time periods is also an illuminating process. Finally, if we want the story of our history to serve as a basis for personal growth and healthy identity, we must encourage in our students the capacity to project vision into the future and to dream.

The Sages tell us that it was Ezra the Scribe who gave us the first work of Jewish historiography, the Book of Chronicles. There is a message for every student of history in this book. Ezra lived in a time of reconstruction, and his writing of Chronicles was more than an account of the past—it was an attempt to set the present on a solid foundation. But his efforts were also guided by the understanding that our past only serves our present well if it imbues us with a longing for the future. When the Sages finished the task of canonization, they chose Ezra's words to conclude the Tanakh because they understood that telling our story ends off where we begin to live it. Our story of the past ends with an invitation to our future: "Whoever is among you of all his people—the Lord his God be with him, and let him go up!" ■



חג פסח שמח

We at RAVSAK wish you a Happy Passover!

Inheriting the Past, Building the Future: Developing Historical Thinking in Upper Elementary Students

■ by **LISA MICLEY** and **STAN PEERLESS**

Drawing on an online program in Jewish history they created, the authors elucidate best practices for engaging upper elementary students and offer suggestions for designing classroom activities.

Elementary Students

History is a challenging subject for day schools to teach effectively at the upper elementary level. Historical thinking in young students is limited and an effective history program needs to engage them in order to foster meaningful learning. An article on “Historical Thinking in the Elementary Years: A Review of Current Research” by Amy von Heyking of the University of Alberta offers a number of points that can guide us.

1. *Thinking historically does not just mean thinking about the past; it involves seeing oneself in time, as an inheritor of the legacies of the past and as a maker of the future.*

2. *Many studies support the claim that elementary children and adolescents can develop quite sophisticated historical thinking skills within an appropriate context of active engagement with source material, alternative accounts and teaching that scaffolds children’s emerging understandings and skills.*

3. *Understanding change over time is central to historical thinking. ... Researcher Keith Barton has indicated that upper elementary students are quite adept at observing changes in material culture, technology and social life and can categorize events according to broad historical periods.*

4. *Barton also found that children who were able to*

appreciate the subtleties of historical change were those who could make connections with their own experiences. Again it is clear that historical investigations of questions relevant to children are most likely to lead to more sophisticated historical understandings.

The frustration of the Jewish day school educators teaching history in upper elementary grades derives from the fact that the materials and methodologies they are using are not designed for the type of historical thinking that these students are capable of employing.

The Program

Following a focus group we conducted at last year’s North American Jewish Day School conference, we created a Jewish history program at the upper elementary school level guided by essential questions in an interactive asynchronous online model. The program, under development by Behrman House, is an adventure in which contemporary Jewish children use a time travel app to find answers to questions that they encounter in their own lives. The topics covered in the five modules include Pesach, the synagogue, Israel and the Diaspora, Jewish languages and Hanukkah.

The program includes a number of important educational features that follow the principles outlined above. The students are invited into the story and become personally

Thinking historically does not just mean thinking about the past; it involves seeing oneself in time, as an inheritor of the legacies of the past and as a maker of the future.



Rabbi Stan Peerless, a former day school teacher and principal in North America, lives in Jerusalem where he is an independent educational consultant and an associate in JETS, a Judaic studies online and distance learning provider. peerlestan@gmail.com



Lisa Micley, an educational consultant who specializes in teacher mentoring and curriculum development, is serving as project manager on this adventure in Jewish history in development by Behrman House. lmicley@gmail.com



Active Student Engagement

Josh and his sister Jenny decide to use the time travel app to go back in history and find out how the Diaspora started and how it affected the relationship of the Jewish community to Israel. Students accompany Josh and Jenny as they join a group of exiles in Babylonia in 586 BCE who have gathered to hear a letter written to them by the prophet Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah 29:28). The students are asked to help Josh and Jenny write an exile survival guide based on the letter, including the following components: remembering the past, living in the present and hoping for the future. Similarly,

involved in the adventure through the characters in the story. Each module begins with one or more essential questions that derive from something experienced by the children in the story. Students experience the Jewish past in a way that relates to their contemporary reality. They engage actively with the content by simulating research in an online Lexicon of Jewish life (the Lexicon of the Center for Educational Technology in Israel is used as a resource for historical material); by analyzing authentic Jewish texts, historical events, or art; and by drawing conclusions based on their research. Without memorizing any dates or information about historical periods, students come to recognize the development over time of various rituals and concepts in Jewish life.

in subsequent lessons, the students are asked to write Facebook posts for Josh.

Change Over Time

After reading in the Lexicon about the return of the Jews from Babylonia to Israel, Shivat Zion, they decide to go back in time to see how the story ended. They set their time travel app to "Shivat Zion" and are surprised to find themselves in the city of Shushan in Persia, rather than in Israel. They discover that not everyone returned to Israel when given the opportunity and that those who remained wear Persian clothing, speak Aramaic and even have Persian names, like Mordechai and Esther. They learn, as well, that Jerusalem still remains the center of their lives, as reflected in their financial contributions and frequent visits.

The Theory in Practice: A Sample Module

Let's look at a sample module in order to demonstrate how the educational insights and methods cited above are incorporated into the student learning.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 60]

Relevant Essential Questions

The "Israel and the Diaspora" unit opens with Josh Davidson, the child in the story, skyping with his cousin, Yehoshua ben David, in Beer Sheva. The conversation ends abruptly when an air raid siren in Beer Sheva goes off to warn of incoming missiles from Gaza. While Yehoshua heads for his shelter, Josh shares the experience in a Facebook post and expresses his opinion that the United States should support Israel in eliminating the threat from Gaza. Subsequently, Josh gets some surprising responses to his post with the message that if he likes Israel so much he should move there. Josh and the students are thus engaged in the essential questions regarding dual allegiance, presented in a manner that they can understand and feel.



[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 59]

The next stop on their odyssey is Jerusalem at the time of the “Great Rebellion,” which led to the destruction of the Second Temple. There they witness the controversy over whether or not to negotiate with the Romans. They accompany Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai as he reestablishes the Sanhedrin in Yavneh and enacts new laws that are designed to preserve Jerusalem in the memory of the people in their new reality. Josh and Jenny, along with the students, learn about the concepts of *zeicher le-mikdash* (remembering the Temple) and *zeicher le-churban* (remembering the destruction) and many of the customs associated with them.

In the final segment of the module, Josh and Jenny travel back in time to attend the First World Zionist Congress in Basel, where they also witness the controversy between Herzl and Ahad Ha’am as to whether or not all Jews should ultimately live in Israel.

At the end of the odyssey, Josh and Jenny and the students who accompanied them realize that the role of Jerusalem in the lives of the Jewish community has changed over time due to changing circumstances. They also discover that there are often different interpretations of events and texts within the Jewish community. Just as this was true at the time of *Shivat Zion* and of Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai, so too it was the case in Basel, and remains the case today.

Personalizing the Experience

An important aspect of the time travel in the program is that through it the students gain a greater understanding of their own experience. One example is the realization that the scene that they witnessed in ancient Shushan is very similar to their experience of the Jews in America. Similarly, after learning about the concepts of *zeicher le-mikdash* and *zeicher le-churban*, the students complete an activity that enables them to understand the origins and meaning of a number of the related customs that they have experienced in their own lives: breaking the glass at a wedding, praying in the direction of Jerusalem, the “Hillel sandwich” at the Passover seder, the fast of Tisha B’Av, etc. They are then asked to create their own visual *zeicher* for their rooms at home.

Implications for Teaching History to Upper Elementary Students

What are the implications of the above assumptions about the historical thinking of upper elementary school students for teachers

teaching Jewish history, or teaching the historical context of Jewish studies content, such as the holidays?

The first principle that can be derived is that history teaching does not begin in the past. Rather, it must begin in the present, with the actual experiences of the students and with issues that they or their contemporaries face. It is those current issues that should generate the essential questions that shape the learning experience.

The second principle is that students should be introduced to the broad strokes of historical change in Jewish history rather than to isolated events that occurred on specific dates.

The third principle is that the historical changes found in history must be

explicitly tied to the personal lives of the students and their contemporary reality—their family and community customs, their family history, their personal experience and expression of issues facing the Jewish community at large. Furthermore, the students must be actively engaged in processing the historical knowledge attained to discover and formulate those connections.

It is important to point out that, although in this model the learning of the student begins with his/her reality, the teacher does not have to begin his/her planning with the contemporary setting. Rather, the opposite is in fact often the case. The teacher may wish to teach a particular historical event or the origins of a particular custom or concept. The theory presented above suggests that in such an instance, the teacher should consider ways to connect the historical event to the children’s contemporary reality in order to tap into their style of historical thinking.

Josh and his sister Jenny decide to use the time travel app to go back in history and find out how the Diaspora started and how it affected the relationship of the Jewish community to Israel.

Students must be actively engaged in processing the historical knowledge attained to discover and formulate connections to their own lives.

Conclusion

By the end of his journey in the above demonstration of the theory, Josh has found the answer to his essential questions, concludes that he must maintain a strong connection to Israel and Jerusalem

in his life as a Jew in the Diaspora, and feels better prepared to face future decisions regarding the place of Israel in his life. Effective teaching of Jewish history can provide students with a learning experience that fulfills the function of historical learning as described by historian Gerda Lerner: “It gives us a sense of perspective about our own lives and encourages us to transcend the finite span of our life-time by identifying with the generations that came before us and measuring our own actions against the generations that will follow. ... We can expand our reach and with it our aspirations.” ■

Following the keynote address of the RAVSAK/PARDES Day School Leadership Conference, the crowd of over 500 day school administrators, educators, lay leaders, and supporters broke out in cheers at the mention of RAVSAK's Reshets. Asked what they treasured about the Reshets, participants focused on one central theme: RAVSAK has given us safe outlets to connect with colleagues so that we can think through common challenges and learn from successes in each other's schools. Through the shared learning within the Reshets, we are improving the educational product and upgrading professionalism in our schools.

Growing out of the conference are six new Reshets, which function on an entirely new model. Rather than using job title or program participation as the organizing principle, we have launched networks focused on topics of common interest to the field. Now, for the first time, professionals and lay leaders of small schools can come together to work on areas of common interest with other individuals in schools their size. Other new Reshets focus on the topics of tefillah; Israel; design thinking and adaptive leadership; special needs and the diverse classroom; and educational technology.

Over the course of the past few months, the Reshets have served a variety of functions for the field. They have been a source of professional development opportunities on a wide range of topics, including the use of technology in the teaching of rabbinics and strategic planning for boards of directors. We have hosted Reshet textual learning focused both on canonical Jewish texts like the Book of Esther and modern educational research like Jon Levisohn and Sue Fendrick's new book *Turn It and Turn It Again: Studies in the Teaching and Learning of Classical Jewish Texts*. Another primary function of the Reshets is to share research, documents, curricula and school policies. This source of shared knowledge has proven to be extremely useful and has

focused on questions of board term limits, philanthropic calendars, policies surrounding non-Jewish students and their families, out-of-school kashrut policies, tuition policies for Jewish communal service employees, and educational curricula from a wide variety of subjects, to name just a few.

One of the Reshets' greatest successes over the past few months has been RAVSAK's ability to support the creation of a variety of new collaborative initiatives, all initiated by Reshet members. I would like to mention three of them that represent the breadth of

the RAVSAK community. A group of first year Judaic Directors now meets monthly with an experienced senior colleague so that they can all support and learn from each other; a new platform is being created for small schools to pool resources around the use of social media; and a working group of Judaic Directors are exploring models of assessment appropriate to tefillah in a community day school. These collaborative initiatives represent a new model of distributive leadership, allowing professionals and lay leaders to share expertise and experience to set the bar higher for community day school education.

As the Reshets grow and develop, it is my hope that in addition to serving as the go-to address for guidance and shared learning about issues related to Jewish community day school education, they will also serve as a model of cross-pollination for the field. There are few other resources currently available for all of the interested parties in day school education (teachers, administrators, department directors, board members, funders and content area experts) to work together on common projects. This is the rich diversity of voices that enlivens the RAVSAK Reshet conversation, as we move the field forward, one connection at a time. ■



Role-Playing

Between Accuracy and Creativity

■ by **DAVID FAIN**

While acknowledging the benefits of role-playing developing student historical empathy, the author confronts challenges that this activity poses to the transmission of historical understanding.

At the end of every semester of my 8th grade Zionism course, the students attend an “Israel Peace Conference.” They come as leaders who have lived throughout Israel’s history to share their experiences, hopes and dreams for Israel’s future. The goal, as they prepare for the conference, is to learn about the depth, richness and complexity of the personages and historical eras they represent, and at the same time learn about themselves.

Characters are selected based on students’ interests, with historical figures ranging from politicians and military generals to community organizers and athletes. Students spend two weeks doing research, both at home and guided in class, before coming to class dressed in character for a two day conference. The first day of the conference is a meet and greet. Some characters lived during the same period of Israel’s brief history and others have never met. Students introduce themselves, share what they have learned and get to know other influential leaders. The second day of the conference features a conversation on Israel’s future based on what the students have learned about their characters’ beliefs. Sitting at the same table, Theodor Herzl and Benjamin Netanyahu may conduct a discussion about Diaspora relations or Middle East politics.

The goal of this project is much more than just research. I seek to have students connect personally with leaders in history, understanding their thinking and the factors that influenced them, and ultimately aligning their own thinking with the thinking of their character.

There are several challenges in role-playing scenarios. First, can an 8th grade adolescent really step outside of him/herself and get into another person’s head? Adolescents struggle to understand their own thinking and to reflect on themselves, let alone to understand someone else. This program asks them to be critical thinkers not only about someone else’s life but more importantly, their own. For example, when personifying Hannah Szenes, who was willing to sacrifice for her country, the student is asked to think about what he or she is willing to sacrifice. When students learn about Teddy Kollek, who worked to bring

Arabs and Jews together in Jerusalem, they think about what work they would be willing to do for coexistence. The challenge of doing this is that for many students they have never struggled with coexistence or for that matter

any of the challenges that leaders throughout history have faced, so they have a great deal to learn about others and themselves to prepare for the role-play.

A second challenge derives from the intractability of historical data. Can students integrate what they read and create a larger idea and thesis? For example, when learning about Benjamin Netanyahu, it is hard to understand what he really thinks about peace and Israel’s future; his stated views fluctuate often. How can students synthesize all of this information and create their own understanding of the character? Another example is Menachem Begin, an extraordinarily difficult man for historians to understand; at first he was a leader of the Irgun, and toward the end of his life he made peace with Egypt. Can an 8th grader

How do we strike the balance to encourage both history and creativity? Do they both matter equally?



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What are you willing to sacrifice?



What are you willing to do for coexistence?

bring this complexity into role-play? What are the appropriate expectations for teachers to have in this activity?

Finally, there is a tension inherent in the activity of role-playing itself between creating an accurate representation of the person in history and engaging students' creativity. The student is asked to bring the person to life in a realistic manner; the teacher wants to engage the student's personality and understanding of the material and at the same time does not want a misrepresentation of history. How do we strike the balance to encourage both history and creativity? Do they both matter equally?

For example, often students want to learn about athletes who participated in Israeli Olympics. This is a great opportunity for students to explore a personal interest and be creative. Having an athlete sit at a peace conference could bring an entirely different perspective on history. At the same time, it is nearly impossible for a student to know this person's views on issues of public and philosophical importance. Should we allow the student to be creative and make up the character's beliefs from nearly whole cloth?

Overall, role-playing offers an opportunity for students to bring

history to life—to engage in challenging issues and discover new perspectives on their lives and today's world. At the same time I wonder, what is the limit? I do not know what people who are no longer alive today would say about society today, yet this is exactly what I encourage my students to do. I want them to make educated guesses using the past about the present and future. If students' role-playing leaves the characters only in the past, then what have I accomplished? I want my students to gain a deeper understanding of their character in history while simultaneously inspiring them to transfer ideas from past into present—goals that can at times be at cross-purposes.

Most of role-playing today in history classes is about playing a character in history. The challenge should be to move students from playing the character in his or her historical context to bringing the character into the present, in dialogue with the student's own thoughts and perspectives. The student must be forced to walk the fine line of representing history and representing oneself, but first we as educators need to hold and meet both goals at the same time. This is the great challenge for the student and more so for the teacher: how do you walk the line of creatively role-play history while maintaining historical accuracy? ■

RAVSAK Judaic Art

The RAVSAK Judaic Art Contest engages students in a challenging regimen of Jewish study and artistic interpretation. Elementary, middle and high school participants from day schools across North America delve into Jewish sources and create works of art that grow out of their study. This year's theme was "Creating Together," inspired by the 2013 curriculum produced by our partners at the Global Day of Jewish Learning.

Below are the winners in each category, chosen by our esteemed panel of judges. To see all student entries, please visit the RAVSAK website for an online gallery. We invite you to learn more about the program at www.ravsak.org/programs/art-contest. Congratulations to all of the artists for their fine work.

RAVSAK Judaic Art Contest Winners - Photography



FIRST PLACE, HIGH SCHOOL
DAN GORODESKY, San Diego Jewish Academy



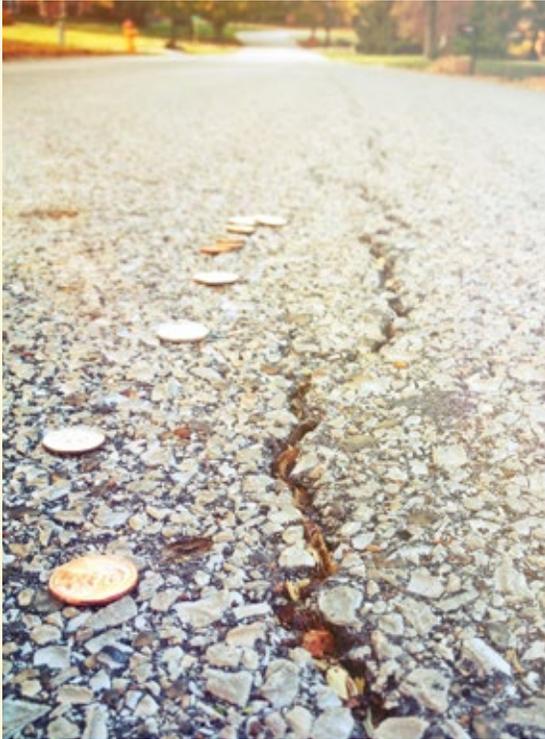
SECOND PLACE, HIGH SCHOOL
NOAH SINGMAN, Frankel Jewish Academy



THIRD PLACE, HIGH SCHOOL
JOEY RUSHFIELD, Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School

Contest

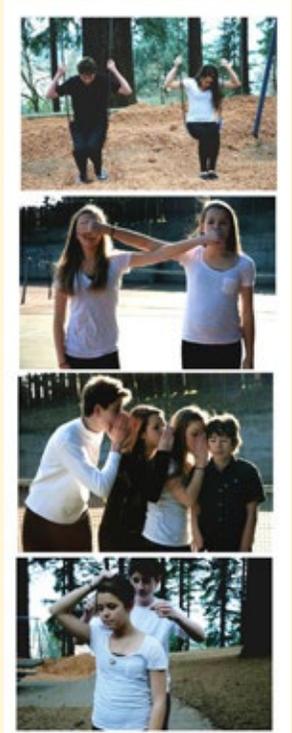
RAVSAK Judaic Art Contest Winners - Photography



FIRST PLACE, MIDDLE SCHOOL
RENA GERTSEN, Saul Mirowitz Jewish
Community School



SECOND PLACE, MIDDLE SCHOOL
ZAKAI ROSE, Saul Mirowitz Jewish
Community School



THIRD PLACE, MIDDLE SCHOOL
AUGUST LEWIS-HOOGHERHUIS,
Portland Jewish Academy

RAVSAK Judaic Art Contest Winners - Visual Arts



FIRST PLACE,
ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL
KINDERGARTEN at
Jewish Community
Day School, Boston

RAVSAK Judaic Art

RAVSAK Judaic Art Contest Winners - Visual Arts



SECOND PLACE, ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
SAM EISENBERG, Austin Jewish Academy



THIRD PLACE, ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
ELIANA LEGATT, Austin Jewish Academy



FIRST PLACE, MIDDLE SCHOOL
RACHELLE MURCIANO, Samuel Scheck Hillel Community School



SECOND PLACE, MIDDLE SCHOOL
TAMIR EISENBACH, Portland Jewish Academy



THIRD PLACE, MIDDLE SCHOOL
ILANIT SEDEK, Akiva School Nashville

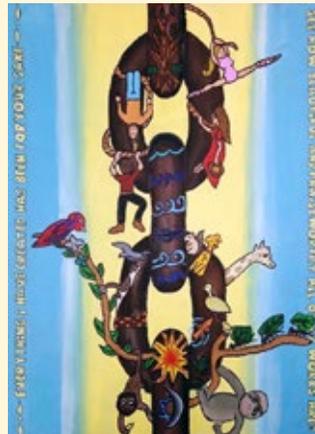
Contest



FIRST PLACE, HIGH SCHOOL
SOPHIA PORTER, Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy



SECOND PLACE, HIGH SCHOOL
MAYA GREENBERG,
Donna Klein Jewish
Academy



THIRD PLACE, HIGH SCHOOL
PARIS REISE, Donna
Klein Jewish Academy

RAVSAK Judaic Art Contest Winners - Sculpture



FIRST PLACE, ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
IRIS HANAI, Akiva School Nashville



SECOND PLACE, ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
GRACE CLEVELAND,
Akiva School
Nashville



THIRD PLACE, ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
DAVI WOLD, Akiva
School Nashville

RAVSAK Judaic Art

RAVSAK Judaic Art Contest Winners - Sculpture



FIRST PLACE, MIDDLE SCHOOL
NATE PINHAS, Rockwern Academy



SECOND PLACE, MIDDLE SCHOOL
ASHER WEINSTEIN, Rockwern Academy



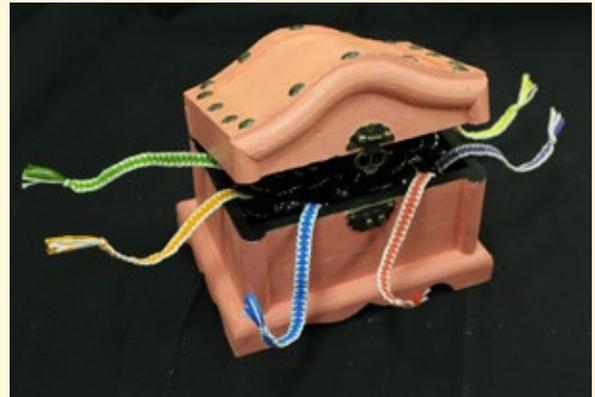
THIRD PLACE, MIDDLE SCHOOL
BERNARD NETANEL, Rockwern Academy

Contest

RAVSAK Judaic Art Contest Winners - Sculpture



FIRST PLACE- HIGH SCHOOL
TALY ACKERMAN, American Hebrew Academy High School



SECOND PLACE, HIGH SCHOOL
STEFANI CHUDNOW, Frankel Jewish Academy



THIRD PLACE, HIGH SCHOOL
SARAH BRONER, Frankel Jewish Academy

RAVSAK Judaic Art

Middle School Visual Arts Honorable Mentions



SAM LEVY, Carmel Academy



ISSY COHEN, Carmel Academy



EMILY DOCTOR, The Emery/Weiner School



SOFIA COLBY, The Emery/Weiner School

High School Photography Honorable Mentions



ELIZABETH SILBERMAN, Samuel Scheck Hillel Day School



NOAM DOVAS, Frankel Jewish Academy

High School Visual Arts Honorable Mentions



Yael Green, Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School



ILANA OSOWIECKI, San Diego Jewish Academy



SHARON STAMBOULI, Samuel Scheck Hillel Day School

Contest

RAVSAK Judaic Art Contest Winners - Staff Picks

Submissions to the RAVSAK Judaic Art Contest that RAVSAK staff simply loved and wanted to appreciate.



MIDDLE SCHOOL, VISUAL ARTS
ETHAN WEISMAN, Pardes Jewish Day School



MIDDLE SCHOOL, VISUAL ARTS
ADISON BERGER, N.E. Miles Jewish Day School



MIDDLE SCHOOL, VISUAL ARTS
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TIRTZAH BASSEL is an internationally-renowned Israeli artist based in New York.



JUDAH M. COHEN is associate professor of musicology at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music.



JASON HUTT is a producer and filmmaker, currently working on a documentary entitled "Sukkah City."

Connecting Ethics and History Through a Jewish Lens

■ by **JAN DARSA**

Director of Jewish Education, Darsa here proposes integrating the study of Jewish history with Jewish ethical sources to increase student interest and bolster Jewish identity.

As teachers of history, we are faced with the challenge of making history relevant to our students and helping them connect history with their own lives. By using the ethics and values of our sacred texts as one lens to study Jewish history, we can make history and Jewish texts come alive, while at the same time encouraging students to examine the relationship of these studies to their own decisions and actions.

Last year, Facing History and Ourselves published a study guide entitled *Sacred Texts, Modern Questions: Connecting Ethics and History Through A Jewish Lens*. The guide links history, specifically the history of the Holocaust, to the larger moral questions of our time. Its pedagogy integrates intellectual rigor and historical understanding with emotional engagement and ethical reflection. For example, examining the role of bystanders and upstanders in society, both past and present, illustrates that even small choices by individuals and groups can make a difference. There were individuals whose actions embodied courage and compassion in the face of evil in both modern Jewish history and biblical stories, and juxtaposing these in a thematic context for students brings together Jewish history and Jewish studies.

Biblical stories like those in Exodus exemplify such situations and responses from individuals who act on the basis of their internal moral compass. Moses, Shifra and Pu'ah (the midwives), Moses' mother and sister (Yocheved and Miriam), and Pharaoh's daughter all take a stand against the edicts and norms of a dictatorial authority and corrupt political system. Students can be encouraged to examine the personal and psychological factors that shaped the decisions of these people and think about how such factors may have played a role in the choices and decisions made by upstanders and rescuers during the Holocaust. Doing so may help those students to find connections to their own decisions about when to stand up or speak out about injustices they see in their own lives.

There is one story of a rescuer named Marion Pritchard (featured in a film entitled *Courage to Care*) who saves the life of a Jewish father and his three children during World War II by hiding them under the floorboards of a country home outside of Amsterdam. When she was discovered by a Dutch policeman, who was a collaborator of the Nazis, she shot and killed the policeman in order to prevent him from taking the father and his children to a death camp. The complex issues in both this story and the story of Moses' killing of the Egyptian taskmaster raise similar questions about people who act on their conscience rather than the "law of the land." Students see these dilemmas and examples of moral courage as universal issues that promote deep reflection and emotional engagement, which makes the study of history more powerful and personal. Thus, the Jewish history class and the text study come alive in new ways.

In the beginning of Shemot (verses 9-11), a new king arose who knew not Joseph and said to his people, "Behold the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: come, let us deal wisely with them: lest they multiply, and it come to pass that, when any war should chance, they also join our enemies, and fight against us, and so go up out of the land." From this moment in the story, the children of Israel were enslaved, and this eventually led to the edict of all male children being cast into the river, a genocidal decree that threatened the future of the children of Israel.

The Ramban interpreted "dealing wisely with them" as a slow and deceptive process. He stated, "It would have been gross treachery to smite without reason a people that had come into the land by command of a former king...Rather Pharaoh would do it wisely so that the Israelites would not feel it was done in enmity against them...Afterwards he secretly commanded the midwives to kill the male children...Essentially, Pharaoh did not want to charge his executioners to slay them by the decree of the king." He also may have wanted time to convince the public that



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the Israelites were a dangerous threat and one could make a case that his words against the Israelites was the first instance of propaganda against the Israelites.

It is not difficult to see parallels between these examples from the Exodus story where Jews are excluded from society and the slow and insidious steps the Nazis took against the Jews in their early years in power. The Nuremberg Laws in the mid-1930s in many ways constituted bondage and hardship because Jews were forced out of their jobs, children were eliminated from schools, and Jews lost their citizenship and membership in German society and were also portrayed as the enemy of the state through Nazi propaganda. This happened years before the systematic killing of the Jews took place in 1941. Both the biblical account of the Israelites in Egypt and the modern account of Jews during the Holocaust are related to the perceived threat that Jews presented in the society in which they lived. Both events can serve as a reminder that one must pay attention to the warning signs of dictatorial regimes, such as the denial of civil liberties for Jews and non-Jews as students explore examples of injustices they see in the world around them.

The issue of membership—who in a society is deemed to be a member of that society and who is not, along with what that membership means—can be asked about any particular history. We might think about that question in terms of what Facing History calls our “universe of obligation”: to whom in our world do we have some sort of responsibility and how wide is that circle of obligation? The concept of membership is helpful in studying Jewish history; many times Jews felt like they belonged somewhere, yet after years of living in a place where they experienced a sense of comfort or relative peace, their neighbors turned against them. One must ask, How is it possible for neighbor to turn against neighbor?

The answer is complex and unique to each situation and its historical and geographical context. Anti-Semitism, certainly one cause of actions against Jews, is a disease that has spread throughout the world and has manifested itself in many insidious ways across time and place. Of course issues of membership and exclusion have not been limited to the Jews. We need only look to events in recent history, like Rwanda, Cambodia, Bosnia and South Sudan for other examples.

As we discuss these events with our students, it is an opportunity to remind them of the concept of areivut. This is a term central to Jewish tradition, and refers to an individual's obligation toward others. Judaism advocates a continuously expanding sense of areivut, as individuals are encouraged to take responsibility for the world in which they live. Through this contemporary lens, we can help students find ways to act against such injustices. This lends an opportunity to encourage students to not only be students of history but participants in history.

There are many stories in Genesis that guide us in conversations about neighbors turning against neighbors, and to ask, What is our responsibility in the society in which we live? How can we take a position against morally reprehensible acts? How can we bring Tikkun Olam into the conversation, as one of our aims as global citizens and



A Tree of Learning by Samuel Bak.
Image courtesy of Pucker Gallery,
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Jews? There is no shortage of examples in our biblical sources of how our own traditions and history have dealt with these issues. From Cain and Abel onward, we have studied and discussed what it means to be our “brothers’ and sisters’ keepers.”

The biblical story of Joseph exemplifies how quickly groups or individuals can become the “other.” If petty jealousies and bad feelings can develop between siblings to the extent that they are willing to kill or leave their brother in the desert, then how easy might it be for strangers and even neighbors to exile someone from their “universe of obligation.” This story can also be read as an account of the development of areivut, particularly if the focus is not only on Joseph, but also on Judah, his older brother, who becomes an example of an individual who learns to reach beyond himself and take responsibility for his own actions and for others.

There are many rich opportunities within the day school curricula to reach into our students’ hearts and minds, intellect and spirit, to synthesize the rich sources of biblical, rabbinic and midrashic texts with the teaching of history. What better way is there to help give deeper meaning to student learning that reaches all aspects of a school’s learning objectives and outcomes and taps that moral philosopher that dwells within each of our children? ■

Teaching the History of Jewish-Christian Relations

■ by **MARK STOLOVITSKY**

Stolovitsky asserts the importance of teaching the history of Christianity and Jewish-Christian relations within day schools, to fortify students to be informed Jewish ambassadors as they move in the wider world.

We live in a world whose culture is deeply influenced by Christianity and whose populations still perceive themselves, by and large, as religiously Christian. The Jewish people has had a long, complicated and often troubled relationship with Christianity. As various forms of Christianity have wrestled with their attitudes towards Jews and have attempted to proffer hands in friendship, it is important for us to know all aspects of this relationship and the meaning it has had and continues to have for our people.

Following is a description of a course I have taught for over twenty years in Jewish day schools that represents an effort to equip Jewish students with a background that will enable them to better understand their own history and that of their Christian neighbors.

This history has all too often been written in blood. Crusade massacres, expulsions, blood libels and other accusations are all part of our past. In WWII, a third of the Jewish people died in countries that were heavily Christian. At times the Church required Jews to live in ghettos and wear distinctive clothing including yellow stars. The Talmud has been censored by Church authorities and burned for being blasphemous. Even America has not been free from anti-Jewish legislation, persecution and ancient stereotypes; one lesser-known example was a blood libel accusation that took place in 1928 in Massena, New York.

Since the Second Vatican Council, however, the Catholic Church has rejected the charge of deicide against all Jews forever. Evangelical groups now form the backbone of Christian support against anti-Semitic and anti-Israel deeds. The last three presidents have had seders at the White House for family members or staff. Other groups, however, still see in Israel a Jewish recrucifixion of Jesus through the Occupation, and not all Christian denominations have modified their theological bias against the Jews.

Curriculum

This course must start with the foundational story of Christianity: the Passion. For historical and theological reasons, most Jewish teachers are understandably reluctant to broach this topic, especially with students below college age; but we cannot avoid it if we want our students to have a mature grasp of the history. Just as it is inconceivable to teach American social studies without the Declaration of Independence or to teach Judaism without the Exodus and Sinai, one cannot teach Christianity without knowing the story of the trial, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus—and how Christians understand our role in that story.

Here are some important points to discuss:

1. As the story has been understood over millennia, either Jewish leadership of the time, the Jewish people of the time, or the Jewish people forever is responsible for the death of Jesus.
2. Pontius Pilate is essentially exonerated for his decree to kill Jesus. (Ever wonder where the English phrase “to wash one’s hands” of a decision comes from?)
3. Jesus’s suffering is considered a divine act of love for Christians.
4. The story takes place in the first century CE in Judea and the Galilee, and Jewish customs and ideas are woven throughout the texts.
5. The first Christians were born Jewish and thought of themselves as Jews; only later did the religion officially separate.



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Jewish-Christian Relations

Students need to understand the role of Jewish tradition and ideas in Christianity, as well as how Christianity adapted these Jewish symbols and thoughts into a new religion. It is important to understand the different versions of the Catholic, Protestant and Jewish Bibles, including the role of Apocrypha (Jewish writings after the time of the Tanakh) and the New Testament. It is eye-opening for students to learn that many of the books embraced by Christianity were written by Jews, and to learn why there is a “Book of Hebrews” in the New Testament.

Our students should understand how our Bible becomes Christianized in Church literature. From the Middle Ages, an extreme example is found in an early version of the Passion at Oberammergau. A tableau from this drama draws upon a scene from the book of Esther. Which character was chosen to symbolize the Jewish people? Vashti, who rejects the king and is replaced by Esther. Esther was portrayed as the Church and New Israel; this exemplifies the idea of supercessionism, i.e., the Church as the new Israel replacing the old Israel, the Jewish people.

This Christianizing of the biblical text bears a resemblance to our midrashic literature, as many scholars have explored. Each of our stories becomes a paradigm of some Christian ideal or belief. One obvious example in Genesis is Abraham’s attempted sacrifice of his son Isaac. Less obvious would be Jacob’s accompanying angels representing Christ. Similarly, any covenant in the Bible is interpreted as a forerunner of the Christian story.

To prepare students to serve as Jewish ambassadors, day schools have a responsibility to educate them to know not only our own history and culture but also the history and cultures of others and the ways that our history has interwoven with other peoples.

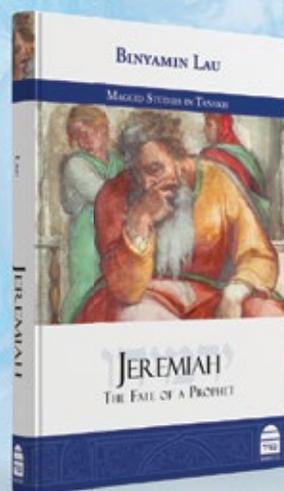
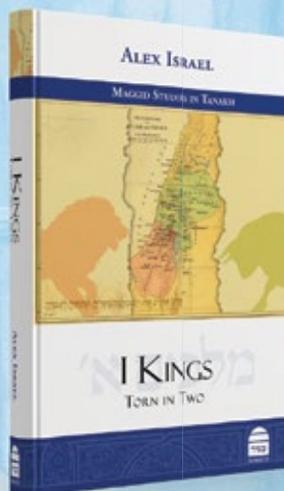
To understand why we as Jews have such a wary relationship with Christians, students need to have a basic understanding of the medieval worldview including notions of religion and blasphemy. A balanced portrayal requires covering the topics of Christian protection of the Jews as well as anti-Jewish decrees, blood libels, accusations of host desecration and forced public disputations, alongside Jewish responses, including mass suicide.

The course should discuss the state of the relationship between Christians and Jews today. After studying Christian writings and some of the history of Jewish persecution at Christian hands, students can appreciate the radical change represented by Nostra Aetate, the dec-

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 78]

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Integrating Jewish History Within a General Social Studies Curriculum

■ by **JULI KRAMER** and **NAOMI LEV**

Speaking especially to schools that may not have much time to devote to separate Jewish history classes, Kramer and Lev articulate ways to integrate the Jewish experience into general history.

Students in Jewish day schools, even those who claim that history is boring, are curious about their heritage, and as teachers, it is incumbent upon us to fan the sparks and teach about personal and ancestral history.

Some schools have the opportunity to offer dedicated Jewish history courses. When given flexibility of time and teacher resources, topics can mirror those seen at the university level. Courses can be as broad in scope as “From Torment to Celebration: Modern Jewish History 1450-1948,” or as specific as “Jewish Pioneers of the American West.” However, more commonly, with numerous colleges requiring four years of each core topic, English, math, science and social studies, history is often squeezed out in dual curriculum schools. Integrating Jewish history content into Advanced Placement (AP) and College Prep (CP) history courses serves the critical role of satiating students’ hunger to learn about their past while still meeting college entrance requirements enabling students to stay competitive in the college application process with peers from other schools.

Many schools do not have time or resources to offer Jewish history courses and must embed Jewish history within other subjects. For example, in AP World History, a unit on First Civilizations includes the Sumerians, Assyrians and Babylonians. The “Hebrews” during this time period receive only quick mention, solely in the context of being a religion, rather than a people living on and governing a specific area of land. The same holds true during Classical civilizations, such as the Greeks, Persians and Romans.

Asking students broad questions about Jewish history during these time periods can help them learn about their past and rein-

force lessons learned in Tanakh and Gemara classes. Some examples include, “How did the government systems of the Jews compare to other civilizations at the time?” “What connections can you make between Hammurabi’s Code and the Torah?” “What impact did the conflicts between the Greeks and Persians have on the Jews?” “How did shifts in religious tolerance, dictated by which empires ruled a region, affect the Jews?” “How did the emphasis on exploration of the natural world during Greek civilization affect Jewish scholars?”

These types of essential questions open up learning about the content of Jewish history and reinforce themes required by the AP curriculum. AP European and AP United States History lend themselves to the same exploration. The key is to ask questions that require acquisition and mastery of content that focuses on the Jewish experience. From here, teachers can develop goals and objectives that guide instruction and ensure that students are mastering big picture ideas and more specific factual content.

In CP history courses, where teachers have greater flexibility over content and the flow of the course, Jewish history can be the foundation from which to explore content about other civilizations and human experiences. For example, when looking at immigration in the United States, the unit could start with students’ family stories of coming to the US and expand outward. The experiences of Jews immigrating through Ellis Island could be compared to those of Chinese immigrants coming through Angel Island in San Francisco. The shifts in US immigration policy to restrict certain groups at different points in the country’s history could start with the Jewish experience and then look at other groups. A unit on invention and innovation in US history



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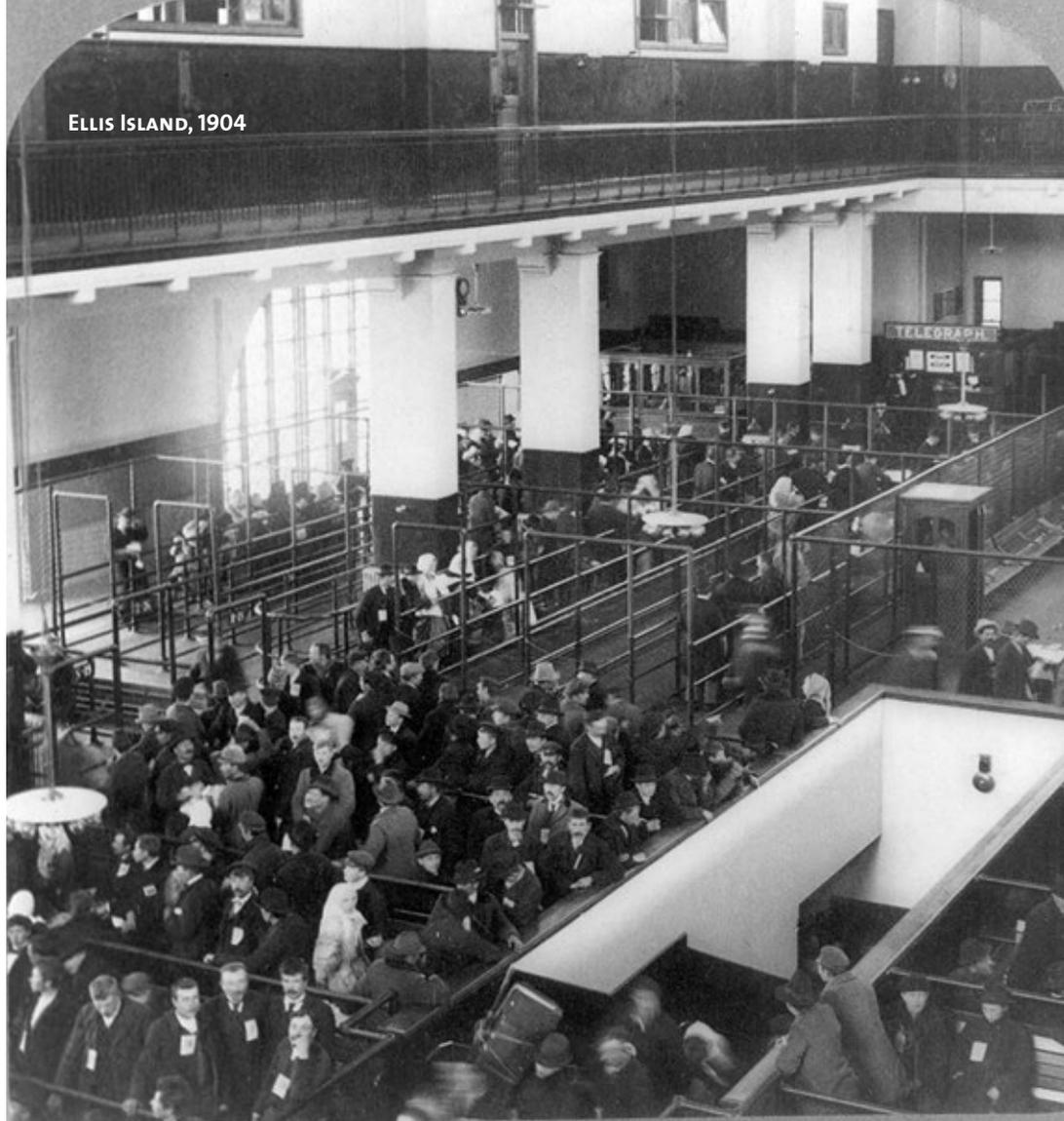
could begin with the contributions of Jewish citizens.

When exploring the causes of the Civil War, the entire unit can be taught through a Jewish lens, comparing attitudes and experiences of Jews in the North to Jews in the South, some of whom owned slaves. Essential questions might include, “Why were some Jews supportive of slavery and others opposed?” “What role did Jews play in the abolitionist movement?” “How did slave versus free state laws impact Jewish pioneers?” “How were Jews’ lives affected when the Civil War began?” Perhaps most exciting for students is to use community resources to learn about the history of Jews in their own states or regions. Students have “aha” moments when they realize that many Jews were pioneers, miners or even Crypto-Jews coming from Spain to the US in the 1500s. Essential questions again serve as a powerful tool in the planning process, helping teachers shape goals and objectives for the content.

Other social studies classes can also enable learning about the Jewish experience. In psychology, students can explore why so many Jews were instrumental in developing and applying psychodynamic principles in treating mental illness. Sociology courses can use the Jewish experience to understand the dynamics of “fear of other” in establishing power structures and how people are treated. Government courses can look at the Jewish experience as a variable in the development of political theories such as those developed by Karl Marx, or Michael Walzer’s series *Jewish Political Tradition* that looks to traditional Jewish sources for theories of governance and civic society. By setting Jewish history as a priority, endless opportunities emerge for seeking out and finding ways to feed students’ hunger to know about their people and their past.

In early elementary grades, social studies curricula begin to look at individuals in relation to community. This is a perfect opportunity for day school students to begin to explore personal Jewish history in light of family. As teachers we can ask questions about family traditions, grandparents, extended families, ancestral nationality and what being Jewish means.

These foundations can be built upon in later elementary grades when students explore American history. What made Jewish people want to move to the New World? How were Jews treated in the colonies? What was the role of Jews in settling new areas? What is the Jewish history of the town where students live? Exploring personal Jewish



ELLIS ISLAND, 1904

histories at that young age allows students to connect to their Jewish history and roots, setting the stage for connections to deepen later. Developing the ability to relate Jewish history with the histories of peoples and places among whom Jews lived will empower students to look for and discover connections and patterns throughout history, in all of their studies.

Connecting to experts in the field and working with them to brainstorm on how to integrate content can help teachers feel more confident about what information to include and how. Teachers can contact local experts through Jewish historical societies or professors at nearby universities to come speak with their students, or help them develop lesson plan ideas. The American Jewish Historical Society has links for “Community-Level and National Jewish Historical Societies in the United States and Abroad” that can connect teachers with people passionate about Jewish history to inspire and support them.

Embedding Jewish history in the curriculum allows students the opportunity to learn their personal histories and the history of their people. There is no greater gift educators can bestow on students than an understanding of their culture, heritage, religion and ancestry while lighting the flame of learning. ■

Teaching the History of Jewish-Christian Relations

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 75]

laration of Jewish innocence of the charge of deicide, proclaimed by the Second Vatican Council in 1965. This declaration has ushered in a completely new era of respectful dialogue between Jews and the Catholic Church, at every level.

Students also have to comprehend the very different Evangelical approach of standing with the Jewish people against physical harm while still attempting to bring the Jewish people to God through Jesus. They should also learn of other attempts at disavowal of horribly anti-Jewish writings, such as the Lutherans' distancing from Martin Luther's vicious anti-Jewish tirades.

Sample Lesson

Here is a lesson regarding the state of the relationship between Christian and Jews today, as an example of what a classroom discussion could and should reveal.

In 2000, the Catholic Church underwent a massive self-examination and had a Day of

Pardon for various offences against parts of humanity. A special section was reserved for the Jews and a papal apology was part of the prayers on that day:

A representative of the Curia [Church leadership]: Let us pray that, in recalling the sufferings endured by the people of Israel throughout history, Christians will acknowledge the sins committed by not a few of their number against the people of the Covenant and the blessings, in this way, will purify their hearts.

The Pope: God of our fathers, you have chosen Abraham and his descendants to bring your Name to the Nations: we are deeply saddened by the behavior of those who in the course of history have caused these children of yours to suffer, and asking your forgiveness, we wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the people of the Covenant.

In the parsing of this document, questions to ask are whether this is an apology from the Church or not. What is the meaning of the phrase "Christians will acknowledge the sins committed by not a few of their num-

ber"? Is there significance to "have chosen" as opposed to "chosen"? Are Jews still the people of the Covenant? Has supercessionism been rescinded? How does this fit in with Nostra Aetate? Is this apology acceptable to you as a Jew? Why or why not? When would it be?

Conclusion

One of the main roles of Jewish day schools is to empower students to serve as ambassadors of the Jewish people to the larger world. Day school graduates will be Jewish leaders both within communal organizations and without, as we navigate our course among other peoples, religions, cultures and governments. To prepare our students to fulfill that role, day schools should take seriously our responsibility not only to train our students to know our own history and culture, but also to educate them in the history and cultures of others and the ways that our history has interwoven with other peoples. Learning about Christianity and the history of Jewish-Christian relations is critical to empowering our students to fulfill this important role. ■

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