

Ideological, Philosophical, and Practical  
Approaches to Jewish Education:  
A Text Immersion Project

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## Digest

The goal of this Capstone project was to explore texts related to Jewish education. Laura Baum and I studied texts in *chevruta*, and regularly met with Rabbi Mark Washofsky to discuss what we had learned. We began by covering all of Rambam's *Misheh Torah*, *Hilchot Talmud Torah*. We also read and discussed commentaries, especially the *Kesef Mishnah*, and then explored related Talmudic texts, some of which became the background we used for our papers and our journal reflections.

Together, we covered three large units in the course of this project: women and *Talmud Torah*, study and action, and payment of rabbis. Throughout our studies, Laura and I each kept individual journals which outline the material we covered and contain personal reactions to the texts. My journal also contains reflections on the *chevruta* style of learning. That journal can be found in the final section of this Capstone project.

In addition, we each wrote three papers on separate topics. My first paper explores the tripartite division of one's studies, as suggested in *Kiddushin* 30a, and then examines Rambam's treatment of that idea. With this base, I then explore the curricula at different rabbinical schools and how they fit into this notion of learning. My second paper is written as a responsa and answers the question of what qualifications are necessary for religious school teachers. It examines the history of teaching, the *Mishneh Torah*'s stated qualifications for teachers, and the issue of paying those who teach. The final paper explores the notion of *kavod ha'rav* in the Talmud and the *Mishneh Torah*. From there I explore *kavod ha'rav* in a modern context and ask what that concept looks like in today's rabbinate.

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## Introduction

This Capstone Project explores the question of what it means to be an educated Jew. We started by studying Rambam's *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchot Talmud Torah*. In the course of this study, we looked at Rambam's primary sources such as the Tanach and the Talmud. In addition to looking at commentaries to the *Mishneh Torah*, we examined a wide range of more contemporary material, including responsa.

There were several topics that we studied in depth. These included: the education of women, the relative value of study and action, the notion of salaries for teachers, and respect for rabbis. In addition to these broad topics, we have each picked three areas of special interest to us and have written papers about them. This allowed for more in-depth, individual learning. A description of each paper can be found in our individual digests.

In addition to the papers, we have each kept a journal throughout this process. The journal includes an outline of the texts we have studied as well as our own reflections, questions, and observations. The journal was a vehicle for us to reflect on the texts we have studied and how they apply to our own lives and rabbinates. Each journal was done individually and includes our own personal work.

The written work that we have each turned in represents just one part of a larger project of year long study. An invaluable part of our learning was our meetings with our advisor, Rabbi Mark Washofsky. We reviewed the material we studied and also reflected on how these texts related to our own lives. This helped to frame our own thinking.

Another vital part of this project was our own process. Jews have studied in *chevruta* for centuries, and we found in this method of study that our own individual study was enriched by one another. Working together, we each learned and accomplished more than we could by



working alone. Our different strengths complemented one another. In addition, by having the opportunity to talk through the texts, we clarified our own thinking. *Chevruta* study was a powerful part of the learning experience.

This Capstone Project gave us the opportunity to strengthen our ability to read texts, to personally reflect on the material we studied, and to integrate different aspects of our learning. For us, these are vital skills to possess as we enter the rabbinate. We know that what we have learned during this project will continue to serve us in our future work as rabbis.

- Erica Seager Asch and Laura Baum

## Acknowledgments

This project would not have been possible without the support of Rabbi Mark Washofsky who was willing to take the plunge into the Capstone experience with us. It has been a wonderful year of working together. I am grateful for his guidance throughout this process, particularly his teaching of texts and his reflections of their importance today.

Of course, my *chevruta*, Laura Baum was also essential to this project. When we dreamed it up a year ago, we were not sure what it would look like at the end. I can not imagine a better study partner. She challenged me to examine my assumptions, corrected my grammar, made me think, and brought an element of fun to our study. I am grateful we had to opportunity to learn together.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to my husband, Chris Myers Asch. I had no idea how hard it would be to have a newborn and finish up this project. He spent countless hours watching Miriam, cooking, cleaning, and reassuring me that I should leave the house to do my work. It is not an exaggeration to say that this project would not have been completed without his help and support.

## Rabbinical School Curricula

At a recent interdenominational rabbinical student retreat, students discussed what they studied at their respective schools. The curricula varied greatly. Some schools had more of an emphasis on rabbinic texts, while others stressed practical skills. Some schools required service attendance, while others encouraged community service. All the students were pursuing a rabbinic education, yet they were being educated in remarkably different ways. While five years may seem interminable to someone in rabbinical school, in reality that is not enough time to teach everything that a successful rabbi must know. Each school presents a different curriculum based on what school leaders would like to emphasize about the rabbinate, be it acquiring a professional skill set, the ability to make halakhic rulings, or engagement with the modern world.

Jewish tradition has long recognized that we do not have the time to learn everything we would like. Maimonides, writing in הלכות תלמוד תורה discusses that we should divide our study time into thirds. One third should be spent on the written Torah, one third on the oral Torah, and one third on Gemara. He defines Gemara as “understanding and discerning the end of a thing from its origin, deducing one thing from another, comparing one thing to another, understanding the hermeneutical principles in the Torah, explaining them until you know how to discern the proper conclusions from those hermeneutical principles and how to derive the forbidden and the permitted, and things like that which one learns from one who knows.”<sup>1</sup>

This idea originally comes from the first chapter of Kiddushin. The proof text is the verse: ושונתם לבניך<sup>2</sup>. Rav Safra said in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya

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<sup>1</sup> Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Talmud Torah 1:11.

<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 6:7

that one should not read ושלשתם but ושנתם. Rashi explains how Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya gets “three” out of a word that seems to mean “two” (“repeat.”) He says that the word ושניתם is not written. This word means to repeat or to double. In the Torah text, we have ושנתם written with two *nuns*. This ‘extra’ nun implies that one should divide his studies into thirds. The Talmud continues that a person should divide his years into thirds, a third for Torah, a third for Mishna and a third for Talmud.

A *kashya* is then raised. “Who knows how long his life is?” In other words, if one does not know long he will live, how does he know how many years he should spend studying each part? One can not divide his lifetime into thirds without first knowing the length of his life. The answer, writes Rashi, is that he needs to divide his days. Rashi understands this to mean that each week is divided into thirds. In other words, the *tosafot* explain, two days will be devoted to Torah, two to Mishna and two to Gemara. However, the *tosafot* understand this to mean that every day should be divided into thirds. This is because we don’t know how many *days* we will live; hence, Rashi’s device does not resolve the Gemara’s *kashya*. Thus, we have the custom of saying verses from Torah, Mishna and Gemara every day before pesukei d’zimrah. Rabbeinu Tam explains that the proof for this comes from Sanhedrin 24a where the text explains that Babylonia alludes to being saturated with written Torah, Mishna and Talmud.

In the Mishneh Torah, Maimonides goes on to explain what dividing ones days looks like. He gives the hypothetical case of a workman who spends three hours a day working and nine hours a day studying. If this were the case, the workman would spend three hours on Torah, three on Mishna and three on Gemara. This, he adds, is what happens in the beginning. However, when one has increased in wisdom, he should spend

some fixed time reviewing written Torah so that he does not forget it, and then the rest of his time studying Gemara because the study of Gemara encompasses the study of both Torah and Mishna. It is not that studying Gemara is superior to studying the rest, but that in studying Gemara, one is really learning all three.<sup>3</sup>

Of course, the rabbis understood the constraints of real life. It is hard to imagine a workman who is able to spend only three hours a day at work and nine hours a day studying. Maimonides was describing an ideal—what he hoped to see happen. However, even if a man only had three hours to study, the principle of division is the same. Similarly, today we feel that rabbis must know more than just religious texts. However, the principle of division which Maimonides lays out still can be applied. We need to study a variety of subjects in a balance manner.

Jewish tradition makes a distinction between Torah, Mishna, and Gemara. Written Torah is the most basic building block that one can have. It forms the foundation for all other studies—the basics. Mishna, called oral Torah by Maimonides, represents an expansion of basic knowledge. It explains the basic building blocks in a more detailed manner. Gemara is more complicated. Maimonides defines Gemara as being beyond book learning. It must be learned directly from one who is qualified to teach. It involves being able to reason and apply what one already knows to new situations. You can explain why things work the way they work.

This division parallels Bloom's taxonomy, a hierarchy created in the 1950's to describe the different types of learning required in an educational setting.<sup>4</sup> At the bottom is knowledge, which consists of being able to recall specific facts, terms and basic

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<sup>3</sup> Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Talmud Torah 1:12.

<sup>4</sup> Bloom's Taxonomy, <http://officeport.com/edu/blooms.htm>, February 13, 2008.

concepts. Knowledge forms the building block for the rest of the steps. The next step is comprehension, demonstrating an understanding of the facts by being able to compare, contrast and interpret them. Next comes application. This is the ability to apply knowledge in new situations and use it to solve problems. Next comes analysis, the ability to break information down into parts in order to understand the structure or causes. Synthesis demands being able to compile information together by combining elements to create a new meaning or structure. Finally, evaluation involves presenting opinions and making judgments about the value of ideas or materials.<sup>5</sup>

The Jewish tradition of the division between Torah, Mishna, and Gemara is mirrored in the modern evolution from knowledge to evaluation. Torah represents knowledge, the basic building block of all the other knowledge. Mishna is the ability to take a text and interpret it, which corresponds to the second step, comprehension. (This is a debatable interpretation though, as Rambam seems to understand *Torah shebe'al peh* in its traditional sense as the halakhic expansion and commentary to the written Torah.) Gemara involves comparing and explaining, which requires both comprehension as well as application. After all, Gemara is about applying knowledge to new problems that arise. It also involves analysis and synthesis as information must be both broken down and compiled in order to make it meaningful. Evaluation is not a step that happens in the division proposed by Rambam. Ideally, it is what the modern student does after studying at each of these three levels.

There are several types of ways that this division works in the curriculum of rabbinical schools. First, there is a wide breadth of information to cover. In Jerusalem,

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taxonomy\\_of\\_Educational\\_Objectives](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taxonomy_of_Educational_Objectives), February 13, 2008.

the administration described Hebrew Union College as part graduate school, part professional school, and part seminary. This division reflects the variety of classes that are offered: professional development (leading services, teaching, counseling, synagogue management, etc.); graduate classes (history, bible, rabbinics, theology, etc.), and seminary/religious training (spiritual development, small group discussions, etc.).

Similarly, rabbinical schools also have to teach at a variety of levels. On one hand, students need basic knowledge. They need to know how to lead a service, and write a sermon, as well as basic facts of Jewish history and holidays. Rabbinical students also need to have an expansion of basic knowledge. They need to be able to answer the how or why, in addition to the what. In other words, they need to know the structure and history of the liturgy they are leading, the principles of homiletics, the larger narrative of Jewish history and the historical evolution of the holidays. Finally, they need to have the deepest level of learning. This means being able to create their own liturgy, to reflect on why certain sermons are effective and others are not, to see oneself as a part of Jewish history and articulate where we should be going, and to explain how holiday celebration helps to define who we are as a people.

Before examining the specific curricula, there are several points Rambam makes that will help us think about the curricula. First, Rambam says that after mastering the basic levels, one should spend all the time possible studying Gemara, which includes the other two. This approach would imply several things. First, that learning should start at a lower level, but by the end of one's time in school, he should be studying mostly at the higher level. Second, Rambam implies that the last level of learning includes the other levels, which is certainly true of curricula. If one is going to create his own liturgy, he

must know both the original liturgy and how it is used. Basic knowledge is required in order to move into higher levels. These are general considerations to keep in mind when examining the different curricula.

Each seminary cannot possibly teach all that it would in an ideal world. Five years is simply not enough time to cover both the breadth and the depth of full rabbinic training. Given that no single program can meet the ideal, each seminary has different parts that they emphasize. These various emphases help to demonstrate the qualities they feel are important in a rabbi. These qualities, in turn, help to explicate the values of each movement.

The following charts summarize the distribution of the core requirements of the curriculum at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (Cincinnati), Jewish Theological Seminary, Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, and Yeshivat Chovevei Torah

Totals:	Professional	Graduate	Seminary	Total:
Knowledge Level (Bible)	20 (7%)	129 (46%)	29 (10%)	178 (63%) <sup>6</sup>
Comprehension (Mishna)	11 (4%)	7 (3%)	5 (2%)	23 (8%)
Application/Analysis Synthesis (Gemarah)	26 (9%)	27 (10%)	27 (10%)	80 (28%)
Grand Total:	57 (21%)	163 (58%)	61 (22%)	

<sup>6</sup> Due to rounding, totals may not add up to 100%.



	Professional	Graduate	Seminary	Totals: <sup>7</sup>
Knowledge Level (Bible)	JTS: 4 RRC: 6 HUC: 4 YCT: 6	JTS: 28 RRC: 33 HUC: 32 YCT: 36	JTS: 5 RRC: 4 <b>HUC: 13<sup>8</sup></b> YCT: 7	JTS: 37 RRC: 43 HUC: 49 YCT: 49
Comprehension (Mishna)	<b>JTS: 4</b> RRC: 0 HUC: 2 <b>YCT: 5</b>	JTS: 3 RRC: 1 HUC: 2 YCT: 1	JTS: 3 RRC: 0 HUC: 0 YCT: 2	JTS: 10 RRC: 1 HUC: 4 YCT: 8
Application Analysis Synthesis (Gemara)	JTS: 3 RRC: 8 HUC: 8 YCT: 7	<b>JTS: 13</b> RRC: 5 HUC: 3 YCT: 6	JTS: 10 RRC: 3 HUC: 6 YCT: 8	<b>JTS: 26</b> RRC: 16 HUC: 17 <b>YCT: 21</b>
Totals:	JTS: 11 RRC: 14 HUC: 14 YCT: 18	JTS: 44 RRC: 39 HUC: 37 YCT: 43	JTS: 18 <b>RRC: 7</b> HUC: 19 YCT: 17	JTS: 84 <sup>9</sup> <b>RRC: 65</b> HUC: 77 YCT: 78

Electives: JTS: 11; RRC: 5; HUC: 7<sup>10</sup>

First, notice that all the schools have an emphasis on the knowledge level of the graduate classes, which include classes in rabbinic literature, Bible, theology, history, language and literature. This focus reflects a need for students to have a basic academic foundation and it represents by far the largest part of the curricula (58%). The foundation of a rabbinic education at each seminary involves learning basic facts in important areas. The emphasis on professional and seminary work is about equal, both representing about a fifth of the student's time. The skills in these areas, such as public speaking, teaching, and liturgy are acquired by many students before they enter seminary, which might account for the small number of classes in those areas. Also, they are 'on the job' skills that students will be able to continue to develop after they leave their seminary. A

<sup>7</sup> Courses compiled from: RRC, <http://www.rrc.edu/atf/cf/%7B20710196-D749-4EA3-AD29-CDB6DA6AF516%7D/2007-09%20searchable%20catalogue.pdf>, February 13, 2008; JTS: [http://www.jtsa.edu/Schools/The\\_Rabbinical\\_School/Academics/Required\\_Course\\_Distribution.xml](http://www.jtsa.edu/Schools/The_Rabbinical_School/Academics/Required_Course_Distribution.xml), February 13, 2008; YCT: <http://www.yctorah.org/content/view/39/47/>; February 13, 2008; HUC: Academic Catalogue, <http://huc.edu/academics/catalog/rabcn.shtml>, February 14, 2008.

<sup>8</sup> The bolded numbers represents values that are much higher or lower than those at other schools.

<sup>9</sup> Including electives

<sup>10</sup> See the Appendix for the breakdown of actual courses gathered from the sources in note six.

colleague can help them write a sermon or develop a lesson plan. On the other hand, the classroom is probably the only place where the students have access to graduate work, especially in areas like history and literature. (Many students do study texts after ordination). Given the small amount of time the curricula focus on the graduate classes that students cannot access after ordination, while developing the necessary skill sets in the other two areas.

In addition, most of the learning takes place at the knowledge level (63%), which also reflects that schools want to give students a strong foundation. Students need to know not only the basics in the academic areas, but also know how to lead a service, preach a sermon, and teach children. One fourth of the curriculum is on the level of application, analysis, and/or synthesis. These experiences are mainly internships, clinical pastoral education, volunteering, and seminars and they provide students with the opportunity to practice the skills they have been learning and to form their own opinions. A significant amount of classroom time is devoted to this type of learning.

A comparison of curricula at the various seminaries can tell us about the different goals of each course of study. After looking at the curricular focus, we can then examine the seminaries' own statements about their mission and vision to see how well the two match up. The vision statements show us what a seminary ideally would like to see, while the curricula show how this vision is worked out in practice.

Rabbi Daniel Nevins, the Dean of the Rabbinical School at Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), sums up the mission of JTS this way: "At JTS we immerse ourselves in this profound culture [of the conversation between the Jewish people and God] not only from love of tradition but also from the urgent desire to discover the path to holiness in

our day. We train leaders who are rooted in the past, conversant in the current, and visionary for the Jewish future.”<sup>11</sup> He sees JTS-ordained rabbis as looking back to tradition and bringing relevance to present day situations. One focus at Jewish Theological Seminary is Talmud. Students take thirteen classes in Talmud (thus the high number of graduate courses at the highest level), by far the highest number of any seminary. They also take an additional six classes in halakah. JTS defines its program as text based: “The program is known for its textual concentration, emphasizing deep engagement with Torah, Midrash, Talmud, Codes, liturgy, and literature.”<sup>12</sup>

In addition to emphasizing text skills, JTS is one of only two seminaries to have a social justice course. This emphasis is shown not only in the curriculum, but by the fact that it is advertised in the literature for prospective students. “You will translate into action one of Conservative Judaism’s core values—the devotion to the ideal of *tikkun ‘olam* (improving the world)—as you become actively involved in community service projects in New York City neighborhoods with the Va’ad Gemilut Hasadim: Helping Out for Heaven’s Sake.”<sup>13</sup>

The seminary training at JTS is a mix of liturgy, personal prayer life, and integrating seminars. This school has the strongest focus on seminars, which accounts for the large number of its courses that deal with analysis. The large number of professional comprehension courses is due to the pastoral care classes (there is no clinical pastoral education), social justice class and a Jewish Communal Service rotation. The

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<sup>11</sup> The Rabbinical School, <http://www.jtsa.edu/x731.xml>, February 14, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Outstanding Academic and Personal Preparation, [http://www.jtsa.edu/Schools/The\\_Rabbinical\\_School/Admissions/Outstanding\\_Academic\\_and\\_Personal\\_Preparation.xml](http://www.jtsa.edu/Schools/The_Rabbinical_School/Admissions/Outstanding_Academic_and_Personal_Preparation.xml), February 14, 2008

<sup>13</sup> A Sense of Community, [http://www.jtsa.edu/Schools/The\\_Rabbinical\\_School/Admissions/A\\_Sense\\_of\\_Community.xml](http://www.jtsa.edu/Schools/The_Rabbinical_School/Admissions/A_Sense_of_Community.xml), February 14, 2008.

school sees these as developing rabbinic skills. “Courses in pastoral counseling and professional skills combined with your experience in supervised small-group seminars and fieldwork will help you develop your rabbinic skills.”<sup>14</sup>

Two foci of the JTS literature that is not emphasized in its curriculum is living a halakhic life and personal spiritual growth. The course of study is designed to “cultivate your personal, spiritual, and professional growth. Throughout your studies, you will deepen your religious life, formulate a unique vision, and sharpen your communication skills to respond to the challenges that will face you as a rabbi.”<sup>15</sup> In fact, transfer students must show there has been “due attention...to issues of religious growth” in order to receive credit.<sup>16</sup> Given the strong emphasis on observance of the mitzvot, it is strange that there is no formal class that deals with this topic. Staff is available for religious guidance, but unless this is covered as part of a seminar, it is not a formal part of the curriculum.<sup>17</sup>

Overall, the curriculum at JTS stands out in its emphasis on Gemara and text study. This emphasis is seen in the written literature. The focus on seminars fits well with the school’s emphasis on personal growth and development. The lack of a seminar in issues in personal practice, which is even a question on the Rabbinical school

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<sup>14</sup> Outstanding Academic and Personal Preparation, Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Transfer from Another Rabbinical School, [http://www.jtsa.edu/Schools/The\\_Rabbinical\\_School/Admissions/Transfer\\_from\\_Another\\_Rabbinical\\_School.xml](http://www.jtsa.edu/Schools/The_Rabbinical_School/Admissions/Transfer_from_Another_Rabbinical_School.xml), February 14, 2008.

<sup>17</sup> Admissions Information, [http://www.jtsa.edu/Schools/The\\_Rabbinical\\_School/Admissions/Admissions\\_Information\\_Page.xml](http://www.jtsa.edu/Schools/The_Rabbinical_School/Admissions/Admissions_Information_Page.xml), February 14, 2008

application, is an omission.<sup>18</sup> However, on the whole, the curriculum at Jewish Theological Seminary coincides with the stated ideals of the school.

Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (RRC) takes pride in its different approach to curriculum. "Our core curriculum is unique among rabbinical schools, reflecting the Reconstructionist view of Judaism as an evolving religious civilization. As a student, you examine Jewish texts, beliefs and practices in the changing contexts of five historical periods: biblical, rabbinic, medieval, modern and contemporary. By studying world religions, the social sciences and ethics, you come to view Judaism within a larger frame-how the world has changed Judaism and how Judaism has changed the world."<sup>19</sup> During each year students study the literature and thought of that period in addition to taking classes in practical rabbinics. This focus is designed to give RRC students an idea of how all their classes fit together, much like the integrating seminar at JTS.

Students at RRC spend more time in practical rabbinics classes than their peers at other seminaries. There is also a strong focus on field experience, which includes campus placements, chaplaincy, congregational placements, education, and work in Jewish community organizations. This is reflected not only in the class distribution, but in the literature of the movement. There is a page of the website devoted to the varieties of field experience available which begins, "The College makes it a priority to help students experience some of the wide range of professional roles they may choose from, or create, after graduation."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> The Rabbinical School Essays for Fall 2008, [http://www.jtsa.edu/Schools/The\\_Rabbinical\\_School/Admissions/JTS\\_Rabbinical\\_School\\_Essays\\_for\\_Fall\\_2008.xml](http://www.jtsa.edu/Schools/The_Rabbinical_School/Admissions/JTS_Rabbinical_School_Essays_for_Fall_2008.xml), February 14, 2008.

<sup>19</sup> Academics, <http://www.rrc.edu/site/c.iqLPIWOEKrF/b.1453815/k.E33A/Academics.htm>, February 14, 2008.

<sup>20</sup> Field Experience, [http://www.rrc.edu/site/c.iqLPIWOEKrF/b.1453823/k.9D6D/Field\\_Experience.htm](http://www.rrc.edu/site/c.iqLPIWOEKrF/b.1453823/k.9D6D/Field_Experience.htm), February 14, 2008.

Another unique part of the curriculum is the inclusion of religious studies. Classes on Christianity and Islam are designed to “integrate academic learning and supervised community service in a multi-faith context.” This type of study “continues the work of Mordecai Kaplan by connecting Jewish religious thought with the evolving vanguard of social scientific research.”<sup>21</sup> In this case the classes have a reason that is well articulated and tied to the specific mission of Reconstructionist Judaism.

The three main graduate subjects studied are Bible, Hebrew and Talmud, each in about equal proportion. The strong focus on Hebrew is emphasized in the literature which lists it as a component of the core curriculum.<sup>22</sup> The special emphasis on Modern Hebrew makes sense given the Reconstructivist view that Judaism is a civilization.<sup>23</sup> Students must know the language of that civilization. Learning Modern Hebrew is a focus of the year in Israel, but the reason for this emphasis is not given.<sup>24</sup> Also, the equal emphasis on Bible and Talmud reflects the equal weight given to the variety of texts within Judaism. There is not a focus on law or on Talmud as there are in halakhic movements.

RRC teaches few classes in the seminary area. There is no homiletics class or volunteering and few seminars. The curriculum reflects a focus on the academic work required to become a rabbi and practical fieldwork experience. However, the stated goal of the curriculum is different. “Our approach to Jewish learning simultaneously embraces the wisdom of our tradition and our ancestors and shows a willingness to

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<sup>21</sup> The Core Curriculum, [http://www.rrc.edu/site/c.iqLPIWOEKrF/b.1453821/k.1CE/The\\_Core\\_Curriculum.htm](http://www.rrc.edu/site/c.iqLPIWOEKrF/b.1453821/k.1CE/The_Core_Curriculum.htm), February 14, 2008.

<sup>22</sup> The Core Curriculum, Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> RRC Course Catalogue, <http://www.rrc.edu/atf/cf/%7B20710196-D749-4EA3-AD29-CDB6DA6AF516%7D/2007-09%20searchable%20catalogue.pdf>, February 14, 2008.

<sup>24</sup> Israel Program, [http://www.rrc.edu/site/c.iqLPIWOEKrF/b.1453825/k.9985/Israel\\_Program.htm](http://www.rrc.edu/site/c.iqLPIWOEKrF/b.1453825/k.9985/Israel_Program.htm), February 14, 2008.

struggle or differ with that tradition.” It is hard to know what exactly happens in each class, but the curricular focus is on the knowledge level (72%), which deals with understanding the tradition, but not differing with it. The school does state that “ Every course at RRC requires students to be intellectually honest, rigorous and self-reflective. Our students learn how to understand our predecessors’ texts and traditions on their own terms historically; explore how subsequent generations have reinterpreted and developed them; and reaffirm, reconstruct or reject certain texts or practices.”<sup>25</sup> It is quite possible that this is what the core classes look like, but the curricular focus remains on the knowledge level. It is unclear if the theory of education at RRC is put into practice in the classroom.

The mission of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (Cincinnati) involves the integration of “Jewish tradition, academic knowledge and professional competence.”<sup>26</sup> These three areas are the division into seminary, graduate and professional work discussed above. The focus at HUC is on the graduate section, which has as many courses as the other two areas combined. There is no official explanation given for this, but the disparity makes sense given the large academic background that the school needs to cover. It is also similar to the divisions in all the other schools.

HUC has a large focus on the knowledge level in the seminary courses, compared to those of other schools. These seminary courses include liturgy, homiletics, how to lead services and a class on Reform Judaism. They cover the same material as the seminary courses at the other schools, but there are more of them. There is a sermon

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<sup>25</sup> RRC Course Catalogue, Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Statement of Purpose and Mission, <http://huc.edu/about/mission.shtml>, February 14, 2008.

requirement in the curriculum that does not appear at any of the other schools. Putting this formally into the curriculum acknowledges the rabbi's mission to "transmit and apply to contemporary life the sustaining values, responsibilities and texts of our tradition."<sup>27</sup> The sermon is an important vehicle for transmitting Jewish values to others. HUC requires multiple courses in both liturgy and in leading prayer, a division not seen in the other seminaries. The necessity for both could be because learning to lead Reform services does not necessitate knowledge of traditional liturgy. The siddurim used in all of the academic liturgy classes are Orthodox and students learn what Reform Judaism has changed.<sup>28</sup>

Unlike all the other programs, HUC does not have a mechina program, a preparatory year for students who need to work on their Hebrew and text skills. Not having this year does not appear to make any difference in the curriculum of the actual rabbinical program. It might mean that required classes start on a more basic level, but it does not change the distribution with regard to academic areas studies. At the same time, HUC is also the only seminary to require a written thesis in order to graduate. Since students do not get credit for it, it is not reflected in the chart above. However, it is still a vital part of rabbinic training and gives the last year of the program a more intense academic focus.

The school's mission includes "instilling in its members exceptional leadership skills and spiritual growth enabling them to become catalysts of transformation in the creation of vibrant Jewish communities."<sup>29</sup> There is one class in leadership, but not one in spirituality. It could be covered in Senior Seminar, but it is not a curricular focus.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Personal experience in classes with Rabbi Shabbat Beit-Halachmi and Rabbi Sarason.

<sup>29</sup> Statement of Purpose and Mission, Ibid.



Spirituality may be an important part of the mission of the school, but this value is not reflected in the curriculum.

The school views rabbis as “transmitters of Torah” who pass on tradition to the next generation of Jews. This means rabbis teach, build communities, lead worship, offer pastoral care, and lead life cycle events.<sup>30</sup> Except for building community, students take classes in all of these areas. They are prepared to teach by both a formal education class and because they have a knowledge base through their graduate classes. In this case, the curriculum does prepare students to be transmitters of Torah, the stated goal of the seminary. So, on the macro level, the curriculum does match the qualities desired in Reform rabbis.

Yeshivat Chovevei Torah’s (YCT) mission is “to professionally train open Modern Orthodox rabbis who will lead the Jewish community and shape its spiritual and intellectual character in consonance with modern and open Orthodox values and commitments.”<sup>31</sup> The school outlines eight commitments of the seminary. Most of these values are difficult to teach. They include “inspiring a passionate commitment to the study of Torah,” “cultivating spirituality,” “affirming the shared divine image (tzelem Elokim) of all people,” and “living our personal, family, and public lives guided by the highest ethical standards.”<sup>32</sup> These commitments do not really lend themselves to classes, but speak more of a general culture of the campus and the qualities which students should possess before they enter the school. Some of these skills are taught or developed through sessions that do not appear in the curriculum. For example, there are weekly discussions on “issues such as identity, boundaries, belief, commitment, and

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<sup>30</sup> Welcome and History, <http://huc.edu/academics/rabbinical/welcome.shtml>, February 14, 2008.

<sup>31</sup> Mission and Values, <http://www.yctorah.org/content/view/full/49/>, February 14, 2008.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

spirituality.” Every month, there is a moderated yeshiva-wide discussion on those issues. There are also “life-reflection” groups which help students to view their “life-experiences” through a “religious lens.”<sup>33</sup> Groups of students meet one hour per week with a mental health professional where they explore issues of interest. Spouses meet with a social worker who is married to a rabbi to discuss what it is like to be a spouse.<sup>34</sup> All of these small groups and discussions help to foster the values that are important to the school.

In the realm of academics, the school says that its curriculum “goes far beyond that of classical Orthodox rabbinical schools,” because Talmud and Halakha are supplemented with Bible and Jewish Thought classes.<sup>35</sup> This emphasis is reflected in the curriculum. YCT has slightly more graduate classes at the knowledge level than the other schools because of its focus on halakah. Given that one focus of this modern orthodox seminary is to train *poskim*, those who give halakhic rulings, it is not surprising that they offer 18 classes in halakah. There is also a strong emphasis on Jewish thought (thirteen classes), which is not found in traditional Orthodox seminaries. The idea is to prepare rabbis who can speak about the challenges of modern life while understanding the traditional views.<sup>36</sup>

YCT also offers many classes in the professional category. They have both a clinical pastoral education program and a pastoral care class. In fact, the school states that it places particular emphasis on this part of the curriculum because it is so important to the rabbinate. It views its life cycle classes (which I have classified as seminary

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<sup>33</sup> Culture, <http://www.yctorah.org/content/view/24/47/>, February 15, 2008.

<sup>34</sup> Pastoral Counseling, <http://www.yctorah.org/content/view/38/47/>, February 15, 2008;

<sup>35</sup> Academics, <http://www.yctorah.org/content/view/4/47/>, February 15, 2008.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

classes) as pastoral since they discuss family dynamics.<sup>37</sup> In addition, there are required ethics classes that are not offered at JTS or RRC. YCT also has a focus on seminars, offering one each semester. These classes all contribute to the mission of the school as stated on its website.

While YCT has fewer classes than JTS, its program is completed in only four years. There is no year in Israel at YCT unlike the three other schools. The importance of Israel is stated in the values of the school: “recognizing Eretz Yisrael as our homeland and affirming the religious and historical significance of the State of Israel for all Jews in Israel and the Diaspora,” but it is not in the curriculum at all.<sup>38</sup> This is one of the few instances where the school’s written statements do not match up with the curriculum. The amount of similarity between the two is probably influenced by the fact that YCT is a new school (started in 1999). It was also started with a very specific mission, to train rabbis who will be leaders in Open Orthodoxy. Rabbi Avi Weiss, who developed the philosophy of Open Orthodoxy, also founded the school.<sup>39</sup> The focus at YCT is halakah as well as professional development and integrating learning. They want to develop not just the professional rabbi, but the whole person and this is reflected in the curriculum.

The curricula and the schools’ websites shed light on what qualities are important in a rabbi. The emphasis in each case is a little different, but all schools rely heavily on knowledge level graduate courses. As students progress through their studies, they take more electives. Ideally, these classes are places for them to use the knowledge they have already gained to form their own ideas. In his introduction to *Moreh Nebukim*, Rambam makes no distinction between *limudi kodesh*, sacred studies, and *limudi hol*, secular

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<sup>37</sup> Pastoral Counseling, Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Mission and Values. Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> History, <http://www.yctorah.org/content/view/2/49/>, February 15, 2008.

studies. Both are valid areas of study and both lead to the truth and to God. Modern curricula integrate these concerns. In each school modern, secular studies influence the curriculum. Findings in psychology have lead to pastoral care curricula, modern historical scholarship influences how Jewish history is taught, and the bible is studied critically as both a literary document and a holy one. What is taught and how it is taught is reflects the intellectual currents of the modern day.

In addition to integrating secular learning, Rambam mentions that subjects relating to '*pardes*,' to esoteric learning, are in the Gemara generally. This learning can only be done with a teacher.<sup>40</sup> It is not book learning, but a higher level of learning where one tackles big concerns. The chance to look at one's personal theology, discuss philosophy, engage in independent study, and be a creative learner and teacher is not really available in the existing curricula. There is seminar time where some of that can be done, but this is something that students must seek out. In the focus on gaining skills and competence, integration and the exploration of big questions are often left out.

Those who design these curricula have a difficult task. They have to cram much material into a short program. Deciding what a future rabbi needs to learn also means making a statement about the values of the movement. Rabbis are the leaders of congregations and they transmit their values to future generations. Some schools focus on creating halakhic decision makers, others on creating spiritual leaders. No matter what the focus, the distribution of curricula show that one must first attain a basic level of knowledge before moving into the higher order thinking skills. These programs do not meet the Talmudic ideal of dividing ones study time into thirds. They are much more heavily focused on lower order learning. Perhaps this reflects the fact that rabbinical

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<sup>40</sup> Rambam, Mishneh Torah, 1:12, conversation with Mark Washofsky, October 3, 2007.

students are studying in order to enter a profession, not simply for the sake of learning. However, the profession is a unique one that requires not just a knowledge base and a skill set. It requires self knowledge and an ability to think through difficult questions and to have discussions with others. It is these personal and interpersonal skills that are not developed in the curricula and not be taught in a traditional sense. Perhaps this is the modern version of *pardes*, that which can only be learned from a teacher in private. One can hope that no matter their seminary, newly ordained rabbis do not stop learning but continue to study at all levels. As they continue to study and to grow as people and professionals, rabbis are wise to keep in mind the suggestions of the ancient texts, which offer a program for how to spend our time wisely, to include all types of learning, and to engage with the big questions.

## Appendix

### Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS)

Professional	Graduate	Seminary
Education Education practicum Leadership (x2) (4)	<b>Language:</b> Hebrew (x4) <b>Bible:</b> Biblical literature/religion Biblical text/grammar Bible (x2) <b>Rabbinic Literature:</b> Halakah (x6) Midrash (x2) Codes (x2) <b>History:</b> Ancient J history Biblical Israel Medieval Jewish History Modern Jewish History Israeli society <b>Theology:</b> Theology (biblical) Theology (x2) History of Religious Ideas <b>Literature:</b> Jewish literature Literature (28)	<b>Denomination:</b> Minimester: Conservative movement <b>Homiletics:</b> Speech and communication Homiletics <b>Liturgy:</b> Shabbat and holiday liturgy colloquium Advanced liturgy (5)
Jewish Communal Agency rotation Pastoral care and counseling (x2) Social justice (4)	<b>Bible:</b> Mikraot Gedolot (x2) Exegesis (3)	Prayer life and leading prayer Religious Leadership Colloquium (x2) (3)
Congregational work Internship (x2) (3)	<b>Rabbinic Literature:</b> Talmud (x13) (13)	Volunteer project Jewish people and land/field trips Year one seminar (x2) Integrating seminar (x4) Israel year seminar (x2) (10)

Electives: 11

### Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (RRC)

Professional	Graduate	Seminary
Practical rabbinics (x6) (6)	<b>Bible:</b> Bible seminar (x2) Bible narrative (x2) Bible (x2) <b>Language:</b> Hebrew Modern Hebrew (x8) Aramaic <b>Rabbinic Literature:</b> Midrash Codes Adv. Rabbinic text <b>Theology:</b> Rabbinic thought Medieval thought Modern thought Contemporary thought (x2) Kabbalah <b>History:</b> Medieval seminar (x2) Modern seminar (x2) Contemporary seminar Hasidut <b>Literature:</b> Modern Literature Contemporary literature (33)	<b>Denomination:</b> Reconstructionism (x2) <b>Liturgy:</b> Haftarat Siddur <b>Misc:</b> Religious studies (4)
	<b>Bible:</b> Parshanut (1)	
Group supervision (x4) Field experience (x4) (8)	<b>Rabbinic Literature:</b> Talmud (x5) (5)	Rabbinic seminar (x2) Senior seminar (3)

Electives (x5)

**Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati (HUC)**

Professional	Graduate	Seminary
Education (x2) Prepare and enrich (wedding counseling) Leadership (4)	<b>Language:</b> Hebrew (x4) Biblical Grammar (x2) <b>Rabbinic Literature:</b> Midrash (x3) General (x2) Codes <b>History:</b> History Israeli history <b>Bible:</b> Bible (x7) <b>History:</b> Biblical and rabbinic history Medieval and modern history American Jewish history <b>Theology:</b> Theology Medieval philosophy Modern philosophy <b>Literature:</b> Literature (x2) <b>Misc:</b> Christian scriptures Ethics (32)	<b>Liturgy:</b> liturgy (x3) life cycles (x2) Prayer preparation (chug) (x2) <b>Homiletics</b> Homiletics (x2) Sermon (x2) <b>Movement:</b> Reform Jewish history <b>Misc.:</b> Sexual Ethics (13)
Human Relations (x2) (2)	<b>Rabbinic Literature:</b> Midrash <b>Bible:</b> Commentaries (2)	
Clinical Pastoral Education (x2) Fieldwork (x2) Internships (x4) (8)	<b>Rabbinic Literature:</b> Talmud (x3) (3)	Israel seminar (x2) Senior seminar (x2) Volunteering (x2) (6)
Electives (x7)		



**Yeshivat Chovevei Torah (YCT)**

Professional	Graduate	Seminary
Ethics (x4) Petagogy Professional skills (6)	<b>Rabbinic Literature:</b> Halakah (X18) <b>Theology:</b> Jewish Thought (x13) <b>Bible:</b> Independent torah learning Bible <b>History:</b> History of Jewish movements (x3) (36)	<b>Liturgy:</b> Shabbat (x2) Life cycle Holidays <b>Homiletics:</b> Communications Homiletics <b>Misc.:</b> Rabbi and Community (7)
Pastoral care (x4) Social action (5)	<b>Bible:</b> Torah with commentaries (1)	Challenges of Modern Orthodoxy Philosophy of prayer (2)
Clinical Pastoral Education (x2) Fieldwork Internships (x4) (7)	<b>Rabbinics:</b> Gemarah (x6) (6)	Seminar (x8) (8)

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## **Kevod Harav**

### ***Introduction***

Love it or hate it, every HUC student has had a congregant call them by their first name. “Rabbi Daniel, we are so happy to see you this weekend.” “Rabbi Sarah, would you visit my mother in the hospital?” This form of address represents the liminal position of the student rabbi. On one hand, he is a student. He is not ordained and is still learning how to be a rabbi. In some cases, he has little idea how to officiate at life cycle events or plan a family education program. On the other hand, he is functioning as a rabbi. He leads services, teaches adult education, and is looked to as the leader of the congregation. Because rabbinical students are both students and leaders, it can be difficult to know how to address them. Some object to the use of the word rabbi at all, as they are not yet ordained. These students place an emphasis on their similarities with their congregants. Others object to being called by their first name, emphasizing their special rabbinic status in the community.

Ordination does not necessarily solve the problem of how one is addressed. Some rabbis prefer to be called by their first names, others by their last names. Some prefer just to be called rabbi. This confusion over what to be called reflects a larger shift in the role of the rabbi in Jewish life. In ancient times, the relationship between rabbi and student was highly regulated, with rules governing every aspect of behavior. Today, that is less and less the case. We use the same terminology as our ancestors, but we do not interact in the same manner. Part of our confusion over the relationship of a rabbi to his congregation can be clarified by drawing lessons from the interactions between a rabbi and his students.

### *The Historic Relationship between Rav and Talmid*

Just as one is required to honor his father, one is obligated to honor his rabbi. Indeed, he is obligated to have *more* awe for his rabbi than for his father. The reason given is that while his father gives him life in this world, his rabbi gives him life in the world to come. There is no greater honor than that due to one's rabbi.<sup>1</sup> Rambam offers several examples from the Talmud (*Bava Metzia* 33) to show what it looks like to put one's rabbi before his father. One's own lost article takes precedence over the lost article of either his father or his rabbi. However, the lost article of a person's rabbi takes precedence over the lost article of a person's father, unless the father is a sage. A second example has to do with one's father and teacher carrying a burden. One must first help his teacher, then his father. A third example involves redeeming captives. One must first redeem his teacher and then his father. However, if his father is a sage, then his father must be redeemed first.<sup>2</sup> The *Kesef Mishna* states that "rabbi" refers to one's *rav mvuhak*, one's main teacher. Thus, only one's main teacher would get precedence over his father.<sup>3</sup> It is this main teacher who gives the student the knowledge necessary to have life in the world to come.

The position of a rabbi is so great that how one treats the rabbi is compared to how one treats God. "Awe of your rabbi is like awe of heaven (God)...all who disagree with their rabbi it is as if they have separated themselves from heaven (God)...all who dispute their rabbi, it is as if they have disputed heaven (God)...all who are suspicious of their rabbi, it is as if they are suspicious of heaven (God)."<sup>4</sup> The rabbi teaches the student

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<sup>1</sup> Rambam, *Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Talmud Torah*, 5:1.

<sup>2</sup> Babylonia Talmud, *Bava Metzia*, 33A.

<sup>3</sup> *Kesef Mishna* on Rambam, 5:1.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

the knowledge needed to follow the ways of God. Thus, his teaching is like teaching from God.

Rambam then goes on to explain what constitutes disagreeing with one's rabbi. Serious disagreements could include teaching students without the rabbi's permission and teaching law in front of his rabbi, which involves the distance between the student and the rabbi.<sup>5</sup> There are exceptions made if a person is doing something prohibited, but does not know his act is not allowed. In that case, a student is able to tell the person that it is prohibited, even if the student's rabbi is present.<sup>6</sup> In the *Shulchan Arukh*, Isserles notes that it is permitted to disagree with one's rabbi if one has evidence or precedents supporting his judgment.<sup>7</sup> Thus, a student can disagree in limited instances, but cannot disagree if he does not have evidence to support his judgment.

Additionally, a student must take a variety of actions to ensure that his rabbi is treated in a dignified manner. These actions all cement the hierarchical relationship between teacher and student. A student must call his rabbi by title and not by name. Further, he must not address the rabbi in a casual manner.<sup>8</sup> A student must sit and stand in his rabbi's presence only when told to do so. When sitting, he must not recline. He must rise when he sees his rabbi coming and cannot sit until his rabbi disappears from his view.<sup>9</sup> A student treats his rabbi as a subject would treat a king or a servant would treat a master. If a rabbi does not let a student serve him, he prevents the student from doing acts of kindness, and thus the rabbi exhibits a lack of the awe of heaven.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 5:2.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 5:3.

<sup>7</sup> Isserles on *Shulchan Arukh*, *Yoreh De'ah* 242:3.

<sup>8</sup> Rambam, 5:5.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 5:6-7.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 5:8.

There also are strict regulations about how a student should behave with regard to what he learns from his rabbi. A student must not tell a rabbi directly he is acting incorrectly, but should remind the rabbi what the rabbi has taught. A student must always cite his sources, both teachings he learned from his rabbi and those which he learned elsewhere.<sup>11</sup>

We can see from these sources that the relationship between rabbi and student is a special one, more than simply a relationship between teacher and student. It is true that the student learns from his rabbi, but this learning does not just happen inside of the classroom. A student learns from his rabbi by observing him in all aspects of his life: how he dresses, eats, washes himself, prays, and even has sex.<sup>12</sup> It is because a rabbi guides his student in every area of life that his position is even greater than that of a parent. The rabbi has total control over his pupils. They must serve him as they would a master; they can not contradict him; they are not allowed to teach without his permission. However, Rambam cautions against the abuse of power. The rabbi must also honor his students. “May the honor of your students be as dear to you as yours.”<sup>13</sup> A person is obligated to be careful of his students and to love them as if they are children.” A rabbi is even said to learn from his students.<sup>14</sup> “I have learned much from my teachers, more from my colleagues and most of all from my students.”<sup>15</sup> This is by no means an equal relationship, but rabbis must honor their students and recognize that they have something to offer.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 5:9.

<sup>12</sup> Babylonia Talmud, *Berachot* 62A.

<sup>13</sup> *Pirke Avot* 4:15.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 5:12-3.

<sup>15</sup> Babylonian Talmud, *Makkot*, 10A; *Ta'anit* 7A

The honor that a student is required to give to his rabbi is highly ritualized. There are specific patterns of behavior the two must follow. There are rules for interactions for such seemingly minor incidents as how one should sit and stand or even walk. These patterns define the power relationship and send a signal to the community about the relationship between the rabbi and student.<sup>16</sup> When community members see the way the rabbi is treated, they understand the level of respect he is to be given.

The rabbi is the way that Torah comes into the world. Thus, this chapter begins with the statement that the rabbi brings the student life in the world to come. Through his teachings, the student learns how to follow the commandments, ensuring the student will be a good Jew and thus enter into the life in the world to come. Torah is the truth, and both the student and the teacher are devoted to spreading that truth. The honor with which the student treats his rabbi is a symbol of how much the student honors the Torah that the rabbi teaches.

However, there is sometimes a tension between the values of *kavod*, honor for one's rabbi, and *emet*, the truth. This tension is reflected in the question of whether the student may "disagree" with his rabbi (see above) and is expressed in Rambam's discussion of what to do when one's rabbi speaks incorrectly. A student is not allowed to directly say that his rabbi is wrong because he would violate *kavod*. However, there also is a demand that the truth be told. Thus, a student is instructed to say, "Our rabbi, you taught us such and such."<sup>17</sup> In this way both values are upheld. The student reminds the rabbi of the truth, but says that this truth has originally come from the rabbi. Similarly, when a student sees someone doing a prohibited act, the student should tell him so even if

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<sup>16</sup> Joel Simon, *Setting your own shulkhan*, 74.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 5:9.

his rabbi is present. In this case, the honor of one's rabbi is less important than truth — ensuring that people follow the commandments of the Torah. Dissent is only allowed in very specific instances and must be done in such a way that the relationship between the student and rabbi is protected. Truth is important, but it can be promoted best by making sure that the relationship between teacher and student is preserved, for it is through that relationship that truth is transmitted.

### ***The Modern Day***

The relationship between rabbi and student explained by Rambam is not like the relationship we see today. Then, the rabbi would have a group of students who would follow him wherever he went. These disciples would learn from the rabbi's every action. Their interaction with the rabbi was highly stylized and reflected the high amount of honor paid to the rabbi. The rabbi was the transmitter of Torah, of truth, to the world, and students felt grateful to be able to study with him. Not everyone was a student. The students were a select and relatively small group who were able to devote themselves to learning. The general community saw how to treat the rabbi from watching the relationship he had with his students.

Today, a rabbi functions in a very different way. First, congregants today are not disciples. They might respect their rabbi, but they do not follow him and learn from his every action as disciples used to do. Second, while teaching is still a part of a rabbi's job, he does much more. A congregational rabbi is also expected to lead services, give sermons, provide pastoral care, officiate at life cycle events, and represent the Jewish community. Yet, while a rabbi today has a broader array of responsibilities, like his predecessors it is his Jewish knowledge which sets him apart from his congregants.



Today, congregations are made up of highly educated, professional people. However, these doctors, lawyers and bankers often know little about Judaism. For this specialized knowledge, they turn to the rabbi, much as in ancient times.

We emphasize the teaching aspect of a rabbi's job when we talk about creating a congregation of learners. The Reform Movement is dedicated to lifelong Jewish learning. The Department of Lifelong Jewish Learning within the Union for Reform Judaism has a mission to "support and improve our congregations' Jewish education programs...to help create individuals and communities of Jews...with a deeper and fuller commitment to Jewish living."<sup>18</sup> Many congregations have an educator who often deals with religious school students. Whether they have this person or not, teaching is still an important part of the rabbi's job. He teaches adult education and Torah study and often teaches special lessons in religious school classes. For the congregation of learners, the rabbi is the locus of knowledge. He is often the person to whom they look for answers. Although this is not the rabbi's only function, it is a vital one. In his role as educator and teacher, the rabbi is acting as did the ancient *rav*. In this capacity, the relationship is that of rabbi to student. However, the similarity does not include the rituals described in the Mishneh Torah. While the relationship is similar, the way that it is put into practice is quite different. The rabbi is the purveyor of knowledge in the area of Judaism, but the relationship is much more equal than it once was.

The level of equality in the relationship between a rabbi and his congregation is influenced by modern American values. An ideal of the United States is that it is a land of opportunity where everyone has a chance to "pull himself up by his bootstraps" and to make his own fortune. Americans believe that anyone can attain success and wealth if he

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<sup>18</sup> Lifelong Jewish Learning, <http://urj.org/educate/index.cfm?>, February 11, 2008.

just works hard enough, regardless of his background. There is no aristocratic past or history of treating certain classes of people with deference just because of their titles. These democratic ideals create a "new model for the Jewish community."<sup>19</sup> Congregants come into synagogue conditioned to have more of an equal relationship with their superiors, including rabbis. Rabbis often are expected to be people's friends. The American system of democracy is a break from the "traditional view of rabbinic authority."<sup>20</sup> Thus, synagogues look much more equal than they did in the past.

This increased level of equality also has to do with the sociological situation in the United States. While rabbis might be the kings of the synagogue, they do not have power in every aspect of a congregant's life. The Jewish community is no longer isolated so there are a variety of powerful people whom congregants encounter. These people might include their bosses, the principal of their child's school, and government officials. None of these people are beholden to the local rabbi. Thus, the rabbi only exercises power in a limited domain of a congregant's life, which differs markedly from other periods of time when a rabbi had a much greater measure of control over his students and the broader community. However, traditional sources note that it is important to show respect to one's rabbi even outside the regular place of interaction.<sup>21</sup> It is true that people today do show the same amount of respect to their rabbi when they see him in the grocery store as they do when they see him at services. However, today people like to be equal with one another and the level of respect shown to the rabbi in both situations might not

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<sup>19</sup> Sheila Goloboy, *Kevod Harav: Honoring an Individual or an Ideal? A Study of the Professionalization of the Rabbinate*, 91.

<sup>20</sup> Walter Jacob, "Rabbinic Authority – Power Sharing," in *Rabbinic-Lay Relations in Jewish Law* (Pittsburg: Rodef Shalom Press, 1993), 83.

<sup>21</sup> Shulkhan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 242:17.

be very high. While a rabbi may have a greater amount of knowledge, he is not in as rigid or hierarchical relationship with his congregants as he was in the past.

Another difference between the world that is described in the *Mishneh Torah* and our modern world has to do with the search for truth. As described above, the rabbi brings Torah into the world, and the Torah is considered equal to truth. Today, Reform Jews see Torah as a valuable and valued text, but do not think it represents absolute truth. Learning Torah and rabbinic texts is important, but this learning is not the only pathway to God or to leading a good Jewish life. Reform Jews believe there are many avenues other than learning Torah to being a good Jew. These include doing tikkun olam, being active in the synagogue community, and celebrating holidays. Since there is no longer a belief in the literal truth of the Torah or a demand to live a halakhic life, the study of texts is less important than it was in the past. Reform Jews believe they can live out Jewish values and pass them on even if they do not study very much.

In earlier times, the definition of “Torah” was not as narrow as it is today. Rambam defines “Torah” not just as Jewish learning, but of all types of important learning. This includes physics (*ma’aseh merkavah*) and metaphysics (*ma’aseh bereishit*).<sup>22</sup> However, Torah is now identified specifically with religious learning, which is the realm in which the rabbi has specialized knowledge. Reform Jews see other types of learning (like physics) not as Torah, but as secular. They believe that truth can be found in secular learning—that science can explain the origins of the universe better than the Torah can and that democracy is a better political system than theocracy. This is true of rabbis as well as laity. Thus, there are not the conflicts between truth and honor that occurred in earlier times. A rabbi can disagree with the Torah. A student can disagree

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<sup>22</sup> Rambam, *Moreh Nevukhim*, Introduction.

with his rabbi. Both recognize that neither one has a monopoly on the truth. A rabbi may know more about Judaism than a congregant, but he is not closer to knowing the meaning of life or how one should live it. He does not have a monopoly on truth outside of religious matters.

Most congregants also feel that the rabbi does not have a monopoly on the truth in religious matters. Visit any Torah study and you will see congregants freely offer their own opinions. At the same time, congregants do expect a rabbi to live his life in an exemplary way. There are certain standards of behavior that are expected from a spiritual leader. Much as *talmidim* would study the every move of their rabbi to figure out how to live their lives, congregants scrutinize the actions of modern day rabbis. Congregants expect them to live a more perfect life and to represent the congregation well to outsiders. Additionally, congregants expect a rabbi to be an example of Jewish learning and a master of Jewish tradition. He should have insight into all aspects of Judaism, even though Jewish sources are no longer regarded as the exclusive path to truth. There is a tension, but it is not between the truth and the honor of the rabbi. Rather, the conflict is between the human actions of the rabbi and the desire that he be a perfect Jew. The former has to do with the desire to see one's rabbi as one's equal. The latter comes from a longing to look up to an educated spiritual leader.

### ***Implications for Today's Rabbi***

The rules that we read in the *Mishneh Torah* tell us about the highly ritualized, respectful relationship between rabbi and student. These rules emphasize hierarchy but do not condone abuses of power. They simply show that the rabbi has a special position in relation to his students, and this position must be respected. Yet finding a place of

respect without being untouchable is a challenge for the modern rabbi. Where early Reform rabbis spoke in the booming voice of a prophet, modern rabbis are now drowned out in a chorus of expert voices emanating from our media and our secular institutions. Where our predecessors wanted to be called by their first names because their respected status was assumed and understood, many modern rabbis find first-name disrespectful.

The the sources remind us of the value of honor and hierarchy, but in modern times respect is earned by one's knowledge and one's behavior. We must recognize that a respected status is not automatically granted. It must be earned by virtue of the rabbi's knowledge, behavior, and ability to attract and keep students. It is not our ordination and getting the title that really makes us rabbis. Rather, it is our knowledge and how we behave.<sup>23</sup>

These texts also emphasize the importance of education to our Judaism. Synagogues are no longer just places of worship, and rabbis today are more than teachers. Our congregations are expected to meet a variety of needs. They provide education, social opportunities, mitzvah projects, meals, senior's groups, preschool, cultural opportunities, and more. With so many responsibilities and roles, it is easy for a rabbi to forget to make Jewish education a priority. Yet we still define ourselves as congregations of learners, which means that we see the rabbi as a teacher. This is not simply a holdover from ancient times; rather, it is an aspiration of the congregation. People might expect to find social and cultural opportunities at the synagogue, but they know that they find such opportunities elsewhere. The synagogue, however, is the only place where they can study texts in a religious rather than academic setting. It is this study that can lead to action, to

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<sup>23</sup> This point is emphasized in Sheila Goloby's thesis, 125.

people living better, more meaningful lives. Showing congregants how to lead better lives is essential to a rabbi's job. A rabbi is, at the core, a teacher.

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## Qualifications of Religious School Teachers

### *She'elah*

Our religious school is always in need of teachers. We are only able to pay a modest sum (\$15 for a session) and we often have a hard time finding qualified people. We end up relying on parents and anyone else we can convince to teach. None of these people have any formal teacher training other than what we can provide them. Most do not have in depth knowledge of Judaism. However, most are enthusiastic about teaching. What qualifications, if any, should our religious school teachers have? Are we obligated to pay more in order to hire more qualified people?

### *Teshuvah*

**ANSWER:** Education has long been a top priority in the Jewish community. We are known as people of the book because of our long commitment to education. At times in history when most of the non-Jewish community was illiterate and education was only for the wealthy, we continued to educate all of our children. This education was a responsibility of the whole community. This dedication can be seen from biblical times to the present day. In answering this question, we must look at several topics: the responsibility for education, the development of a system of mass education, personal standards, professional standards, salary, and religious education.

### *The Responsibility for Education*

According to the Torah, education is the responsibility of the parents, specifically the father. The book of Deuteronomy says that a father is obligated to teach his son. It is written, וישננתם לבניך, you shall teach them (the words of instruction) to your children.<sup>1</sup>



This command is reiterated, וְלִמַּדְתֶּם אֹתָם אֶת-בְּנֵיכֶם, you shall teach them to your children.<sup>2</sup>

This commandment concerns the requirement for a student to be taught the words of Torah—religious education. In addition, parents are commanded וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ, they should tell their children why the rituals of Passover are observed.<sup>3</sup> In these verses, education was the responsibility of the father.

Later, children would be educated not in their own homes, but in schools as part of a larger educational institution. The system of mass education (discussed below) was soon supported by the community. The father still had the responsibility to ensure that his child got a religious education, he did not usually teach him directly. Instead, community schools provided a religious education.

### ***Mass Education***

Although early sources envisioned education as the responsibility of the parent, over time there was a dramatic shift. Education became the responsibility of the community. This meant that education was no longer private, but students were instructed in a group. The community had to finance education (see below) and was also responsible for the standards in the schools.

This system of mass education has its roots in the *Tanach*. In Deuteronomy we read that the people should gather to hear the word of God so they can observe all of the teaching. The teaching is done in a large group by Moses, acting as a teacher. There is a special emphasis on the children learning the commandments because they have not directly experienced the wilderness sojourn.<sup>4</sup> Rabbi Elazar taught that the verse, “Assemble the people together, the men, the women and the children (Deuteronomy 31:12)” meant that the men came to learn, the women to hear, and the children so that

those who brought them could be rewarded.<sup>5</sup> We see that although education was no longer done directly by the parent, the reward for providing that education goes not to the teacher, but to the parent who has made sure his child is educated. Today, we would say that it is the responsibility of both parents to make sure their child attends religious school, but the community also bears the responsibility to provide qualified teachers.

Second Chronicles also references a program of mass education. It tells that Jehoshaphat, one of the kings of Judah, sent officers, Levites and priests throughout the land to offer instruction to the people from ספר תורה יהוה.<sup>6</sup> The text also tells us that the Torah was publicly read and explained.<sup>7</sup> This public reading and teaching would evolve into a system of public schools of instruction.

It was during the Hellenistic period that schools for public instruction were established. Tuition free schools, paid for by the community, were introduced in the late third century BCE.<sup>8</sup> Towards the end of the second century BCE, Simean ben Shetah, the head of the Sanhedrin, established a system of public education supported by the community.<sup>9</sup>

As the system of mass education become more complex and widespread, it came under the direction of the spiritual leader of the Jews, the patriarch. He worked to ensure that teachers were qualified (see below) and that there were an adequate number of schools. For example, Judah III made sure that Bible and Mishna was taught in every town.<sup>10</sup> In the fourth century, Raba set down further rules for education, including limiting the number of students in a class.<sup>11</sup>

During the Middle Ages, schools were run by the community.<sup>12</sup> At this point, individual communities were able to supervise their teachers and make decisions about

the school, such as limiting class sizes.<sup>13</sup> From this point on, local communities began to exercise more and more control over their schools and their teachers.<sup>14</sup> Today, we see that local communities, or more often local synagogues, are responsible for the education of children, which means both financing schools and ensuring that there are qualified teachers. Jewish texts take the obligation of establishing schools so seriously that they decree that teachers must be in each province, district, and city. In fact, the people of the town can be excommunicated until schools are established.<sup>15</sup> The establishment of schools is a community responsibility.

### ***Professional Standards***

Jews have always recognized that teachers must know their subject matter. Since the topic of instruction is religion, there are certain standards of what knowledge a teacher must have. A student relies on his teacher to instruct him in the proper behavior, so it is vital that his teacher know the religious texts and rules and teach his students correctly. It is a teacher who leads his students to life in the world to come by this type of instruction.<sup>16</sup>

In the *Mishneh Torah*, Rambam addresses the issue of teacher qualifications. He writes that a teacher must fear God, be proficient in reading, and be strict. Teachers should not be negligent in teaching the children or let the children have a break while they leave.<sup>17</sup>

Having a correct base of knowledge is vital. "Every student who has not reached the point of instruction yet still teaches, behold he is evil, simple and also conceited. About these people it is said, 'for she has slain and cast down many (Proverbs 7:26).'"<sup>18</sup>

In other words, unqualified teachers are likened to murderers; they spread false teachings. A community must make sure that teachers know the material which they are teaching.

In the Middle Ages, Joseph ibn Aknin, a North African Jew, stressed that students must be taught according to their intellectual ability.<sup>19</sup> This means that teachers must not only be able to assess their students' abilities, but also teach at a variety of different levels.

However, it was not until the modern period that there was a sustained focus on teacher training and pedagogy. These concerns entered into Jewish education because of the evolution of educational philosophy in the non-Jewish world.<sup>20</sup> We now know about lesson plans, different modes of teaching, and different types of learning. In order to be as effective as possible, modern teachers should be expected to incorporate these advanced ideas into their own practice of teaching.

### ***Personal Standards***

Throughout the history of Jewish education, the personal qualities of the teacher have been important. Students were expected to learn not just in the classroom, but also from the personal examples set by their teachers. A teacher was expected to model a love for the Torah, for study, and for the observance of the commandments. The students learned as much from observing their teachers as they did from the book lessons. This close relationship between teacher and student formed the basis for productive learning.

In the *Misheh Torah*, Rambam stresses personal qualities. He writes that teachers must be patient. If the students do not understand, the teacher must not get angry or agitated. He must repeat the material until the students understand it.<sup>21</sup> In the Middle Ages, Joseph ibn Aknin (see above), emphasized that teachers must both know the

subjects they teach and model correct behavior. Teachers should be patient with their students and also live an ethical life.<sup>22</sup> In modern times, we continue the tradition of viewing teachers as role models because it is important that students have an exemplar to look up to and to follow.

### ***Salary***

While today we might take it for granted that we should pay those who teach Torah, this practice was not always a given. In his commentary on *Pirke Avot* 4:7, Rambam actually argues that we should *not* pay teachers of Torah. He admits that this his opinion is certainly a minority one and very unpopular, but he still makes a lengthy argument. He writes that rabbis like Hillel historically did not take money for teaching. Taking money would cheapen the act and make teaching Torah a profession just like any other profession. However, teaching Torah should be considered not just a profession but a sacred act. Rambam did make exceptions for people who needed the money in order to survive, but in general, he was against pay.<sup>23</sup> As he concedes, Rambam is clearly in the minority. This is one of the only times Joseph Caro, who wrote a commentary on the *Mishneh Torah*, disagrees with Rambam's opinion.<sup>24</sup> However, we do have a debate about if teachers of Torah should be paid.

Regardless of if a teacher is paid, he has an obligation to teach if he is able to do so. In the *Mishneh Torah* Rambam stresses "a scholar who has reached the point of instruction but does not teach, behold, this prevents Torah and puts stumbling blocks before the blind and about this it is said, 'numerous are those she has killed (Proverbs 7:26).'"<sup>25</sup> So, if one is able to teach but does not, he keeps others from learning, thus

symbolically 'killing' them. People who are able must teach, regardless of the salary they might make.

In general, teachers of younger children were not held in high regard. They did not make much money, but would get gifts from parents on holidays. In contrast, scholars who taught more advanced students were held in high regard. Teachers were paid based on the number of their dependants, which ensured that they could provide for their families.<sup>26</sup>

There has always been a high demand for Jewish teachers because so many students were attending schools.. Historically, teachers were paid not just by the parents of the students, but by the whole community, which allowed for the poor to attend schools.<sup>27</sup> Taxes were assessed specifically to finance education. One such set of rules was laid down in 1432 at the Valladolid synod, which ruled that taxes on meat and wine as well as fees for life cycle events must be dedicated to education.<sup>28</sup> Rabbenu Tam, writing in France, stressed that communities must pay their teachers. If there was not enough money to do so, the community could take from money set aside for other purposes.<sup>29</sup> Despite the hardships, a lot of money was invested in educating the children of the community.<sup>30</sup> We see that the community, and today the synagogue, is responsible for financing education, and it must remain a communal priority even when budgets are tight.

### ***Religious Education***

Until the modern period, Jewish children were taught in schools run by the community. Initially, this study included only religious subjects, but secular subjects eventually were included as well. As political emancipation spread across Europe, Jews

were able to take a more active part in general society, which meant that they had the opportunity to send their children to government schools. Many of these government schools offered religious instruction, including instruction in Judaism, but it was not very thorough. The number of specifically Jewish schools decreased as more and more students took advantage of government education.<sup>31</sup>

In the United States, children attended public schools and got their religious education in supplementary schools. This trend started in the mid-1850's when a secular system of public education became well established. Eastern European immigrants set up neighborhood religious schools. Others centered their schools in synagogues and by the 1940's the synagogue had become the primary locus of religious education. Some students attended Jewish day schools, but the vast majority of Jews were educated in supplementary religious schools run by synagogues.<sup>32</sup> These supplementary synagogue religious schools are often headed by a full time educator. The teaching staff is made up of paid teachers or volunteers, depending on the school. It is these kinds of schools with which our she'elah deals.

### ***Current Considerations***

The questions that are raised in this she'aleh are faced by many congregations. It is not uncommon for congregations to have a hard time finding and retaining quality teachers. Often the pay offered for teaching is minimal and some pressure must be applied to fill all of the spaces.

In addressing the issue of minimum qualifications, we are informed by the discussion above. While it is the obligation of parents to ensure their child attends religious school, the whole community is responsible for the religious education. This

means we are all responsible for establishing schools, for funding those schools, and for finding qualified teachers.

We see in the discussion above that qualifications for teachers are divided into two areas: knowledge and behavior. In terms of knowledge, it is clear that the sources believe in a minimum standard of knowledge. After all, part of the mission of our religious schools is to give students a solid foundation. We recognize that our teachers are asked to be knowledgeable in a wide variety of subjects. Curriculum can include holidays, Torah, history, Israel, liturgy and much more. Additionally, some of our teachers must teach Hebrew, and ideally all would be proficient in reading Hebrew. No one teacher, of course, is asked to teach all subjects, but there is a broad foundation which is needed. Much of the education that takes place in the classroom is informal—certain material might spark a question outside of the preplanned lesson. Our teachers should feel comfortable addressing questions that are not directly a part of their particular lesson or area of expertise.

We are fortunate enough to live in a time when teachers have access to a wide variety of curricula. The Union for Reform Judaism has developed the CHAI Curriculum, which can be taught with little advance preparation or knowledge. It outlines the main ideas (called enduring understandings), questions for the lesson and materials needed. Each lesson has a detailed plan. It does not require much expert knowledge to teach this curriculum. The teacher must look over the lesson to be prepared to teach it, but all of the material is contained in the lesson itself. Having the lesson ready means that teachers can teach a lesson even if they are not experienced in lesson planning or they have little knowledge.



At the same time, our teachers need more than just knowledge about the subject matter to be discussed. They should also know something about teaching. Our sources stress that a teacher must be able to control the students. Indeed, in a time when many students view religious school as a burden, it is important that our teachers are able to create and sustain a classroom environment where learning can happen. This means that they must not only be able to control the class, but also teach lessons in such a way as to engage the students. Even if they are following a prepared lesson, they must be able to add their own touch in order to help the lesson come alive.

A second area that we must address is our teachers' behavior. Throughout Jewish history, teachers have not only imparted subject matter, but also served as role models for their students. A teacher often acted as a mentor to students by modeling the proper behavior to them. This is not a skill that can be taught. Our teachers instruct our children by example—by the way they live their lives. This includes how they interact with the children in the classroom, how they are involved with the synagogue, how they practice their Judaism, and how they act when they are outside of the synagogue walls.

Two earlier responsa have dealt with the issue of how we understand the concept of a "role model." One asked if a Jew married to a non-Jew may become a rabbi. In this case, the committee ruled that rabbis convey their teaching "through personal example" so "rabbi's life and home should embody" the ideal of marrying a Jew. Therefore, an intermarried person could not be a rabbi.<sup>33</sup> However, an earlier responsum stated that a person married to a non-Jew could serve as a religious school teacher. The difference is that a rabbi is held to a higher standard than a religious school teacher by virtue of his full time job and his role in the community. "A Jewish religious professional, whose very life

is dedicated to setting an example of Jewish commitment to which our people should aspire, cannot serve as a 'positive Judaic role model' if he or she is married to a non-Jew."<sup>34</sup> A teacher of Torah should also be "a positive role model for our children, one who embodies the Jewish values we wish to inculcate in them, who has made the sorts of Jewish choices that we hope they will make for themselves."<sup>35</sup> While it might be ideal for teachers to be in-married, the responsum notes the difficulties of finding qualified teachers. It is possible that an intermarried person is the best teacher available. Also, marriage to a non-Jew does not serve as "incontrovertible proof that a Jewish layperson does not and can not live a life of Jewish quality."<sup>36</sup> While "synagogues are entitled and indeed required to ask that those who teach our children be 'good Jews,' positive Judaic role models," marriage to a non-Jew does not disqualify someone.<sup>37</sup> Both of these responsa stress that teachers are role models. But, "each case must be judged on its own merits."<sup>38</sup> Religious school teachers must be positive Jewish role models, but there is no litmus test for just what values or qualities those role models must have.

The individual traits that go into making a Jewish role model may vary from synagogue to synagogue. It is up to each institution to decide which qualities they think are most important and on which they might be willing to compromise. We suggest that synagogues examine a variety of areas as outlined above. You have indicated that most of your teachers are enthusiastic about teaching, which is a good start. We can hope that they also are excited about serving as a model for their students. It is up to you to decide which personal qualities they should have and be able to model for their students.

We note that paying teachers more might attract teachers who have more experience and in this sense they will be more qualified. However, those who love to

teach and see it as an important obligation are unlikely to be swayed by more money. As we noted above, Rambam rules that people should not be paid for teaching. This minority opinion shows that one should not be teaching only for the money. Those who teach should value their position for its own sake. Simply put, those who will serve as role models for our students are likely to teach no matter how little the compensation.

### ***Conclusion***

We recognize that the problem of finding and retaining qualified teachers is a very real one for our religious schools. It is difficult to find those who are knowledgeable about Judaism, know how to teach, and can serve as a role model for their students. Given the constraints, we find that it is more important for a teacher to serve as a Jewish role model than to have knowledge of Judaism. We have noted that the creation of curriculum means that teachers require less ability to plan and even to teach than in the past. We feel that if a teacher is a positive role model, he will more likely be able to win the respect of the students and thus control the class and make it engaging. The question presumes 'qualified' teachers are those with more professional skills. You are not obligated to pay more in order to get these teachers. As noted above, more money will not necessarily attract those who will serve as our students best role models. However, you are obligated to make sure you have teachers who are 'qualified' to be role models. We doubt that most of those teachers would agree to teach simply for more money. However, if a larger salary will help you to fill your school with enthusiastic role models, you certainly must pay to do so. The community has an obligation to financially support its teachers.

In conclusion, we note that education should not stop once religious school is over. Ideally, our students will go on to learn about Judaism in college courses, at synagogues as adults, and in family education when they have their own children. We need to provide students with a foundation, but we realize that we can not provide them with all the knowledge we would like them to have. We can, however, instill in them a love of learning and a love of Judaism. It is these traits that will cause them to become life long learners. A love of Judaism is best nurtured by a teacher who is enthusiastic about Judaism, about learning, and about teaching. A role model who displays this enthusiasm is the minimum qualification for our religious school teachers.

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<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 6:7.

<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 11:18.

<sup>3</sup> Exodus 13:7.

<sup>4</sup> Deuteronomy 31:12-13.

<sup>5</sup> Babylonia Talmud, *Hagigah* 3A.

<sup>6</sup> II Chronicles 17:7-9.

<sup>7</sup> Nehemiah 8:7-8.

<sup>8</sup> Ecclesiasticus 39:1-3, 51:28-30.

<sup>9</sup> Talmud Yerushalmi *Ketubot* 1c.

<sup>10</sup> Talmud Yerushalmi *Hagagiah* 1:7, 76c.

<sup>11</sup> Babylonian Talmud, *Bava Batra* 21A.

<sup>12</sup> Encyclopedia Judaica, *Jewish Education*.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Rambam, *Mishneh Torah*, Hilchot Talmud Torah 2:1; Babylonian Talmud, *Shabbat* 119.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 5:1.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 2:3; Babylonian Talmud, *Bava Batra*, 21.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 5:4, Babylonian Talmud, *Avodah Zarah* 22.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph ibn Aknin, *Cure of Souls*, Chapter 27.

<sup>20</sup> Encyclopedia Judaica, *Jewish Education*.

<sup>21</sup> Rambam, 4:4, Babylonian Talmud, *Eruvin* 54.

<sup>22</sup> Joseph ibn Aknin, *Cure of Souls*, Chapter 27.

<sup>23</sup> Rambam, commentary to *Pirke Avot* 4:7.

<sup>24</sup> Joseph Caro, Kesef Mishna on Rambam, Hilchot Talmud Torah, 3:10.

<sup>25</sup> Encyclopedia Judaica, *Jewish Education*.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.; Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy*, 556.

<sup>28</sup> Encyclopedia Judaica, *Jewish Education*.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>33</sup> CCAR Responsa, 5761.6, May a Jew Married to a Non-Jew become a Rabbi?, <http://data.ccarnet.org/cgi-bin/respdisp.pl?file=6&year=5761>, February 17, 2008.

<sup>34</sup> CCAR Responsa, 5758.14, May a Jew Married to a Gentile Serve as a Religious School Teacher?, <http://data.ccarnet.org/cgi-bin/respdisp.pl?file=14&year=5758>, February 17, 2008.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter One

### One:

- Women, slaves and minors do not have an obligation to study Torah
- Fathers are obligated to teach their children
- Women are not obligated to teach since they are not obligated to learn

### *Reflections*

- Most are contained in the journal under the section women and study
- Today, we would say parents are obligated to make sure that an education is provided for their children.
  - This usually means sending them to religious school (and paying for the schooling)
  - However, it is also important that parents are really able to teach their children directly.
  - How do we provide opportunities for parents to be teachers even if they have a limited amount of Jewish knowledge?

### Two:

- A man is obligated to teach both his child and his grandchild (Deut 4:9)
- All sage is obligated to teach those who want to learn, even if they are not his children. Students are called children.
- However, there is a hierarchy. Your children come first, then your grandchildren, then the children of your friends.

### *Reflections:*

- This provides a basis for the importance of intergenerational learning.
- We might say that not only do grandparents have an obligation to teach grandchildren, but grandchildren have an obligation to learn from grandparents.
- We are reminded that we must take care of our families first, before we attend to other needs.

### Three:

- You must hire a teacher for your child.
- If your father doesn't teach you, you must educate yourself
- Learning → action, but action does not lead to learning.

### *Reflections*

- Again, parents are obligated to make sure their children get an education even if they can not educate the children themselves.
- One must also take personal responsibility for their education.
  - In addition to educating oneself, we might say that people are obligated to take their education seriously and get the most out of it, even if a parent is providing that education.
  - Too often, we see that people do not take their education seriously.
- For thoughts on learning and action, see the journal section on that topic.

### Four:

- Your own study takes precedence over your son's study.
- However, if the son is much smarter, his learning comes first.
- But, even if your son is first, that doesn't mean you don't have an obligation to study.

- You have a command to teach both your son and yourself.

*Reflections:*

- It is ideal that all members of the family are educated, but sometimes resources are limited. In that case we have to prioritize. Here, the focus is on the parent.
  - This is, in a sense, countercultural as we tend to always put the children first.
  - This reminds us of the importance of focusing on adult learning as well.
- We focus so much on educating children that we often forget that there are adult learners in our congregations. We can forget that they, too, have an obligation to study. In fact, rarely speak about that obligation—we are focused on educating the children.
- This text is also a reminder that rabbis continue to study. We are a profession without a continuing education requirement and the profession is based in large part on learning and teaching! In the rush to educate our congregants, we can not forget to keep educating ourselves.

Five:

- A man should study and then marry since he can't concentrate on his studies if he marries first.
- However, if his desire is too great to concentrate on studying, then he should marry.

*Reflections:*

- This is more meaningful if we apply it to any activity that occupies a lot of our time. It could be playing sports, music, reading, time with family, etc.
- This seems little harsh to say that one must be fully engrossed in his studies—today we better understand the importance of leaning in many places and from many people.
  - Informal education is key—Jewish lessons can be learned everywhere.
- This reminds us that we have to be able to give a good amount of attention to study in order to get a lot out of it.

Six:

- When a child starts to talk he should be taught.
- Teaching is according to the child's development.
- At the age of six or seven he goes to school.

*Reflections:*

- Learning should be done according to where the child is. We often think of this as a modern notion but it is right here in the sources!
  - We often forget this in our rush to over program and overeducate our kids. We forget the value of learning outside of school. Here that is emphasized by the fact that teaching occurs before one even enters school. We also forget that children develop differently.
- Teaching in the early years is the responsibility of the parent.
  - Are our parents equipped to teach their young children? Today we send kids to nursery school and preschool. How can we ensure that parents are also teaching Judaism to their kids at this young age?
  - How can we make sure that Judaism is not just confined to the synagogue?

Seven:

- If it is the custom to hire a teacher then one must do so—specifically until the child learns the written law.
- You can take pay for teaching oral but not written Torah.

- Deut 4:5, Moses teaches for free, we should too.
- If you can't find a teacher unless you pay, then you must pay.

*Reflections:*

- These are found in the journal under the section on taking a salary for teaching.

**Eight:**

- Everyone, no matter what their situation, has an obligation to study.
- Even if one is married he must find time to study, day and night (Joshua 1:8)

*Reflections:*

- Deut. places limits on the king. He needs to study Torah so that he won't get too high and mighty.
  - Study should hopefully remind rabbis of the same thing. It should make us more humble in a job where people often place us on a pedestal.
- This again reminds us of the importance of teaching all people and of taking responsibility for one's own study.
- Day and night—part of each? All day and all night? A reminder that we can and should find opportunities to learn at every point in time?
- There are lots of things that call for our attention and our time. We have an obligation to make time for study, even though we are busy.
  - Hillel: do not say when I have time I will study for you may never have time!

**Nine:**

- There were great scholars who worked doing other things (chopping wood, drawing water) and were blind, but they still studied.
- They were part of the chain of tradition.

*Reflections:*

- You do not have to be a prince or a king to study. Anyone can do it.
  - This is a democratization. Learning is the key.
  - Don't need social status to be a great scholar.
  - A restructuring of the social order so that it is not based on money or on family.
    - We could learn a lot from this...we are increasingly focused on both money and family. In our society the rich get richer. Education is an out for some, but it is by no means widely available and public education is, for the most part, not good for those who are poor. This reminds us of the importance of people getting ahead based on their merits nad not their family.

**Ten:**

- One must study until he dies (Deut 4:9)
- If you don't study you forget!

*Reflections:*

- The importance of review.
  - This is especially true for rabbis who are in the field and whose time is often taken up with a myriad of other responsibilities. Study is often pushed to the back burner and the learning done at HUC is forgotten.
    - In order to keep our Hebrew and text skills fresh we have to continue to study.
- We can always learn and it is a life long process.



- Further, we can learn from all others, no matter how old they are.

#### Eleven:

- You divide your time for study into thirds: Torah, Mishna, Gemara
  - Lechem Mishneh (LM): From Kiddushin
  - Don't know how long you will live.
  - Rabbenu Tam says to divide each day into thirds.
- Gemara has to do with comparing things, knowing the permitted from the forbidden, etc.

#### Reflections:

- One must first do the basic learning before they can move on to more advanced things.
- That being said, all learning is important. We need to make sure we are doing a variety of things with our time.
  - How does this relate to what we teach in religious school? We tend to stay on the most basic level. This suggests we should introduce our students to a variety of levels of learning even at the very beginning.
    - How do we include Mishna and Gemara for our students?
    - Does this involve teaching the actual text or just the skills involved in each?
    - Will this method just confuse the students or engage them more deeply in their learning?

#### Twelve:

- Example: a person works three hours a day and has nine hours for study.
  - Three hours for Torah, three for Mishna, three for Gemara.
- The subjects relating to *pardes* are included in Gemara
  - Those subjects have to do with esoteric learning that is only done privately from a teacher.
- Once one knows the Torah and Mishna, he should review it regularly, but then can spend the majority of his time on Gemara.

#### Reflections:

- *Pardes* has to do with secular learning as well, according to Rambam.
  - One can look at physics and natural science as part of this rubric.
  - Studying these things help us to know the origins of the universe and to understand what is going on in Torah.
- This favors active learning and comprehension more than just rote learning. The focus on Gemara is a focus on being able to think, not to memorize facts.
- How much time should be devoted to secular subjects?
  - For Rambam that falls under Gemara and it is okay.
- What does the ideal educated Jew look like?
- How we divide our study time and what our curriculum is says a lot about our values. How do we balance Jewish and secular learning?
  - Today, most of our students get vastly more secular learning than Jewish learning. The pendulum has swung that other way.
  - How do we continue to put a priority on Jewish learning (which is competing with soccer practice, music lessons, etc.)?
  - We are not spending enough of our time on Jewish learning! Can we divide it so that we spend a third of our time there?

### Thirteen:

- A woman who studies Torah gets a reward, but not the reward as if she had fulfilled a commandment (which a man gets).
- A man should not teach his daughter Torah—women don't have the capacity for learning.
- They make it into nonsense.
- If a man taught his daughter Torah it would be like him teaching her *tiflut*.
- After the fact it is okay to teach the written Torah, but it is never okay to teach the oral Torah.

### Reflections:

- See journal section on women and learning.

## Chapter Two

### One:

- Teachers are appointed in every province, district and city.
- If there is no school in a city then it is placed in cherem until there are teachers
  - *Kesef Mishneh* (KM): Bava Batra 21. Yehoshu b. Gamla ruled that there had to be teachers everywhere.
  - Bava Batra cont: people of the community have the power to make takanot and to make sure education is happening.
    - They can keep certain businesses out to maintain a certain quality of life, but can not keep teachers out.
  - KM: Shabbat 119. Dispute about if to put the city in cherem or not. First you put the officials in cherem and then the whole city.
  - The goal is to get people to change their behavior.
  - LM: Rashi: חרם is to lay waste physically. To destroy utterly in the bible.

### Reflections:

- The severity of the punishment reflects the importance of making sure that kids are educated.
- This is a power that the rabbis have—to put people in cherem. It assumes a certain political structure and that people are social. There are also economic consequences.
  - What powers do we have today? How and when should we exercise them?
- What does 'not having a school' look like?
  - Does this include schools that are sub par?
  - So we have an obligation to make sure that our children receive a secular education? That all children receive a secular education?
    - This is clearly not the intention of this teaching, but it does remind us of the importance of education.
- People can not keep children from learning.
  - What about synagogues that don't want the kids in services because they are too noisy? Can they be required to let them in for the sake of education? Do we have to establish a separate children's minyan? How do we deal with competing needs?

### Two:

- Children are taught at six or seven depending on their level of understanding and the strength of their bodies.
- Under six is too young to teach them.

- KM: they go at six if they are healthy and seven if they are weak.
- Avot 5 teaches that they start when they are five.
  - This is not a difficulty, it means when they start their sixth year of life (five years are completed).
- Teachers can punish for discipline but not out of cruelty.
  - Shulkhan Arukh Yoreh Deah 245:10 (Talmud Bava Batra): They may only hit with a shoe strap, and not too much.
    - If you hurt the student you own five types of damages.
    - Teacher can't hide behind the work of teaching and say he can hit the kids.
      - However, a shalach for the court or a rav are not responsible for damages which are done.
  - This skips the positive statements of the Rambam
- They should learn all day and some of the night.
- On Shabbat there are only repetitions, no new material.
  - KM: on Shabbat they don't do new stuff, they review what they have already learned.
  - Nederim 37: Only repeat stuff. Don't look at it for the first time. If you learned new material before Shabbat, you repeat it here.

#### *Reflections:*

- Children learn at different paces and are ready for certain things at different ages.
- It is best to teach the child where he is than to try to hurry him into something he is not ready for. That said, there is a cutoff at which point a child has to go to school.
- Also, at certain ages children are too young to be able to do certain things.
  - We have to realize that our children are individuals and teach so as to address individual needs and developmental stages.
- Teachers can punish for discipline because they need to be able to control the classroom. This is especially true in supplementary school where it is much harder to get children to behave.
  - Social ideas come into play. We often fear of having any discipline because the parents might sue someone.
  - We err on the side of being permissive and letting kids do whatever they want to do.
  - This reminds us that discipline is important too.
- At the same time, the teacher must do this out of love and a desire to make sure that all children learn, not out of cruelty. It is important to act for the right reasons.
- Everyone needs a break from learning. It is not only good to rest, it is vital to review previously learned material.

#### Three:

- A teacher must not leave the kids or do other work with them.
- Those who are lazy in teaching are doing God's work deceitfully (Jeremiah 48:10)
- Teachers must have an awe of heaven, be proficient in reading and be strict.

#### *Reflections*

- We recognize that teachers are not always as diligent as they should be.
- Some get into the profession for the wrong reasons and this means that their students suffer.
  - We are often so eager to find teachers that we are willing to overlook the fact that they can not teach. This is not as important if we can train them to be good

teachers, but if they have no desire to improve (if they got into the profession for the wrong reasons) then we are in trouble.

- It is not enough to have a warm body in the classroom—the person has to be dedicated to teaching.
- We are reminded that teaching is holy work.

#### Four:

- If a man does not have a wife he can not teach kids.
- This is because mothers would bring the kids.
  - KM: Talmud reference
  - Kiddushin 80B: concerns about who can be together and when. A father should not be alone with his daughter, consensual sex might occur.
  - Kiddushin 82A: teacher can't be alone because he might do something he should not with one of the mothers. There is also a prohibition about a married man whose wife is not home being a teacher. The idea is that they need supervision.
  - There is no concern that a bachelor can't teach kids. Israelites are not suspected to be homosexual pedophiles.
- A woman can not teach because the fathers might bring the kids.
  - KM: the way of men is to work (outside of the house) so the woman would be alone with the fathers. There is no chaperone in this case either.

#### Reflections:

- This gets into a difficult area—what happens when you teach children. Here the concern is that the teacher not engage in inappropriate behavior with the parents of a student. However, today our concern is more about the teacher being inappropriate with the students.
- We hear of teachers molesting and abusing their students. We have an obligation to make sure this does not happen and to take precautions (as are suggested above) to keep kids safe.
- At the same time, we can not have so many regulations that we are paralyzed and unable to do anything at all. We have to keep protections while making sure that teachers are still able to teach.
  - This is also pertinent to rabbis who are often in close relationships with congregants and where there is a potential for abuse.
  - We, too, need to be cautious without sacrificing our ability to do our jobs.
- Women can not teach because of the impropriety of being alone with the fathers.
- There is *no mention* of them not being able to teach because they do not have an obligation to study (and thus no obligation to teach). They do not mention that not having an obligation might disqualify someone from doing that act and preventing another from fulfilling the mitzvah.
  - For example, women do not lead prayer because a man is obligated to do so and a woman leading deprives him of an opportunity to do that commandment.
  - However, parents are able to teach their children by hiring someone else to do it so they are able to fulfill their obligation indirectly. There is no need for them to teach.
    - Possibly this is the distinction.

#### Five:

- 25 children can learn from one teacher

- If there are 25-40 kids then you need to have an assistant.
- If there are 40 or more kids, you need two teachers.

*Reflections:*

- The original instance of the importance of class sizes in learning.
- 25 to one is a good ratio, even for today. No matter how well behaved the kids and how good the teacher, optimum learning can not take place if the class is too big.
- Should we enforce a maximum class size in our schools?
  - Should it be different for different subjects? (Fewer students if they are learning Hebrew or are in the younger grades?)

Six:

- A child can move to another teacher who is better.
- This can be done only when there are two teachers in a city and they are not separated by a river.
- If they are separated by a river or are in a different city, children should not be transferred unless there is a good bridge or ford through the river.

*Reflections*

- Adults went from place to place to find the best teachers.
  - This supports living in a certain place because of the good schools in that district or sending your children to private or charters schools so they get a better education.
  - It does not address if one has an obligation to make sure all students receive a certain standard of education. Here everyone is looking out for themselves and there is no sense of communal responsibility to the institution of the schools.
    - This is especially pertinent as public schools continue to fail. We would care more if our kids went there. Do we have a responsibility to those schools even if our kids don't attend them?
- Learning is important, but safety is the primary concern.

Seven:

- If a person wants to be a teacher, his neighbors can no prevent him from doing so.
  - Bava Batra 20B: people can protest against the opening of a store in their neighborhood, but not against someone doing their trade or a school.
    - There is an acknowledgment of the environmental quality of a neighborhood.
  - But, teaching is an exception. Even though it will cause traffic it is okay.
- He is allowed to open a school in the same courtyard as another teacher.
- Isaiah 42:12, God will magnify the law—God wants more Torah taught.

*Reflections:*

- Schools are allowed to compete. There is no restriction on opening new ones. This helps the consumer and it means that education is better and cheaper.
  - It does not help the teachers, they are in competition.
  - Today, we might want to protect our religious schools or require that our member's kids attend our school. This reminds us the competition is healthy and that it helps us to have a better education.
  - We do need to make sure that teachers are paid well despite the competition.

## Chapter Three

### One:

- Israel has three crowns: Torah, priesthood and kingship.
  - The crown of priesthood went to Aaron (Numbers 25:13)
  - The crown of kingship went to David (Psalm 89:36)
  - The crown of Torah is available to all Israelites (Deuteronomy 33:4)
- Torah is the greatest crown of all (Proverbs 8:15-6)

### Reflections:

- This is again a democratization of the tradition.
  - This is not about who your parents were, everyone has the ability to learn.
  - All are equal when it comes to learning.
- Today might we expand our idea of what constitutes learning?
  - We know that not all people are book learners. Some also do their learning in other areas (music, carpentry, mechanics, etc.)
  - We, especially in Judaism, tend to favor book learning, but this is an elitist way of looking at the world. We need to recognize that there are a variety of types of learning.

### Two:

- A scholar who is a *mamzer* (illegitimate child) comes before a high priest who is unlearned (Proverbs 3:15).
- Wisdom is more important than the high priest.

### Reflections:

- The democratizing principle of rabbinic Judaism in a nutshell. The most important thing is learning.
  - Mishna in Horayot talks about priorities. The order goes Cohen, Levi, Yisrael. This is based on an inherited biblical system of how many mitzvot they do.
  - Here, we have a different principle based on learning. A radical restructuring.
- This is an important lesson for us today. We are more and more coming into a society where people are given privileges because of how they were born and who their families are. This is particularly the case in college admissions and in applying for jobs.
- The United States was founded on the principle of equality and of hard work letting you succeed. This is much like Rabbinic Judaism.
  - It is important that we keep this value.
- In our synagogues who do we honor? Those with the most money? The best known in the community? Those who help the synagogue the most? Who are the most knowledgeable about Judaism? Who engage in tikkun olam?
  - How does how we treat people reflect our values?
  - What do rabbis do to earn respect?

### Three:

- The most important commandment is to study.
  - KM: Peah, chapter one: Talmud torah k'neged kulam. Study of Torah is more important than the rest.
- Study leads to action.

### Reflections:

- See section on study vs. action.

- What would people say if we asked them which was the most important commandment?
  - Is study the most important?
    - If so, do we live that out in our lives? Is it reflected in our synagogue?
    - If not, what is the most important value? Is that reflected in how we live?

#### Four:

- If one has before him the choice of doing a positive commandment and studying, and another person can do the commandment, he should continue to study.
- If another person can not fulfill the commandment, he should do it and then continue studying.

#### Reflections:

- This is the practical significance of what we read in 3:3 above—it is how it plays out.
- The mitzvah has to be done, but it does not matter who does it.
  - Things we value in our lives and spend time on can be superseded by other concerns but we have to come back to our core values.

#### Five:

- The first question we are asked when we are judged is if we have studied. Afterwards we are asked about our deeds.
  - Kiddushin 40B: you are questioned about business ethics but you are judged on your study of Torah.
- The sages say that one should occupy himself with Torah. Even if it is not *torah lishma* (Torah for the sake of studying). Through study, it will eventually become *torah lishma*.

#### Reflections:

- Study is the primary obligation.
- It is important to the rabbinic world view, in fact it is the most important, but it is disturbing that deeds are not mentioned here. Of course, the idea that we see in the second half is that through study one will think and act the right way. However, that is a big assumption. Would it not be better to judge one on their actions? Of course, if one does not study, one does not know the correct actions to take and this presents a problem.
  - How do we judge one another? How do we judge ourselves as people and as rabbis?
  - Is study our main criterion? If not, what should be?
- We should do the right things, even if they are for the wrong reasons. We will eventually do them for the right reasons.
  - This is really something which is true about life and which the Reform Movement, especially, can probably take to heart. It is good to do Jewish things even if they are for the wrong reasons. Eventually they will be for the right reasons.
    - This argues in favor of social programming with some Jewish content, encouraging people to be more involved even if they only come for the free food, and making things fun, social and entertaining.
    - However, that can not be all there is. There has to be some substance behind it or people never do things for the right reasons.

#### Six:

- If you want the crown of Torah you can't want other things too (wealth and fame).
- Torah is a life of poverty (bread and water and sleeping on the ground).

- The more you study, the better the reward.
- The reward you get is proportional to the hardship you have.

*Reflections:*

- This sounds like the suffering servant theme in Christianity more than it does Judaism.
- Here suffering and poverty are not only a value, they determine how much of a reward you will get.
  - This is an idealized vision of poverty probably written by people who did not really have to suffer.
- This also has the message of suffering in this world to get a reward in the next world. It doesn't seem very Jewish.
- This is romanticized. Why set the bar so high?
- Do we romanticize poverty in our own time? How?
  - We idealize the 'growing up poor' narrative, but don't really spend time in poor communities. We don't know what poverty is.
    - Should we? Is there a value in that?
    - Does it just make us pity poor people? That is not a productive thing to do.
- Do we romanticize suffering? We do in many ways.
  - Is it important to have suffering in order to show that you are really serious about something?
  - Do we need to have suffering to create a cohesive community (especially in a place where we are not oppressed).
  - How do our views of the Holocaust play into this?

Seven:

- If you try to get money before you study (or even if you try to meet your needs first) then you are not worthy of the crown of Torah.
- Don't just study when you are free, you might never be free!

*Reflections:*

- This is again an idealistic situation. People are supposed to study as their main focus and make earning their living secondary. This is not the real world.
- If study is your focus, you should do that, but not to the detriment of having your needs met.
  - This comes up a lot today with people who want to go into public service. Many law students want to do public interest law, people want to join Teach For America, etc. People start out with high ideals, but then they get into debt and think they will go the 'corporate route' for just a little while to pay off their loans. Twenty years later they are still there. This happens for several reasons.
    - Inertia—they stay where they are.
    - Comfort—they get used to a certain lifestyle and want to keep it up.
    - Priorities change—they are no longer interested in what they once were.
  - No matter what the reason, the passage reflects the truth that it is easy to fall out of following your priorities.
- It is so true that if you wait to have time to study you never will.
  - It is especially important for rabbis to set aside time to study. The job is so busy that this is one thing that will be pushed to the side.



#### Eight:

- The command is not in heaven or beyond the sea (Deuteronomy 30:12-13). It is not with the arrogant
  - Bava Metziah 59A: oven story (my children have defeated me). Torah is ours, we determine its meaning.
  - Eruvin 55A: the Torah is the property of one who is humble in spirit
- Those who busy themselves with commerce do not become wise.
- One should busy themselves with the Torah, and not spend too much time with business.

#### *Reflections:*

- Torah belongs to everyone. That said, it is not just something to be picked up occasionally. This emphasizes that one must engage with it, and busy themselves with it. It takes time.
- Engaging in commerce makes you wise, but a different kind of wise. It is certainly not 'Torah smarts' but it does give you other skills. The wisdom that you have through study of Torah is very different from the kind you get other places (although I hear legal thinking is much like Talmud study.)
- What is the balance between Torah study and other pursuits? How much time should be spent at study? With family? In business?
- For rabbis whose work involves study how do you separate the two? It is important to do so or study will never happen!

#### Nine:

- The Torah is like water (Isaiah 55:1). Water goes down into the flat places just as Torah is found with the lowly.
- The lowly remove cravings and pleasures from their hearts and spend as much time as possible in study.

#### *Reflections:*

- Learning can be found with those who are proud, but not necessarily Torah. Here, Torah is more broad. It includes a way of living, a way of being in the world. It is an attitude that can not be found with those who are stuck up.
- That said, I don't think that you need to be overly humble or destitute to have Torah in your life. Here, it is presented as all or nothing. You have to spend all your time at it. This is clearly an ideal of the rabbis, but one can still learn Torah without just studying.
  - How is the life a rabbinical student like the rabbinic ideal?
  - What does it mean to leave a life of primarily study and go into the working world? What is gained and what is lost?

#### Ten:

- You must not study Torah and depend on charity (since you aren't making a living).
- This will cut you off from life in the world to come.
- It is forbidden to get benefit from the Torah.
  - "You should not make it a spade to dig with." Pirke Avot 4.
- If you study and don't work you are idle and that will lead to sin.
  - In the end, that person will rob people.

#### *Reflections:*

- See journal on this topic.
- This is harsh, much like the earlier statements in nine.

- It is interesting that it is assumed that if you just study you will be led into idleness and thus sin. I would think you would be busy all the time studying. What is really going on here? It is good to have a job, but studying all the time should keep you sin free. After all, you are learning Torah!
- One should have a job, which implies that they should be able to do something in the real world. Many HUC students come right out of college or after working in a congregation. They do not have any experience other than in the Jewish community.
  - How important is it to know something other than Judaism or Jewish texts?
  - In what ways does knowing the world outside of Judaism make you a better teacher and learner and ultimately a better rabbi?
  - Should HUC have a requirement that people do something else for a little while before coming to school? (I'm not totally convinced of that, but it would give a needed sense of perspective).

#### Eleven:

- If you earn a living by working, you will be rewarded in this world and the world to come.
- You will be happy in this world and in the world to come (Psalm 128:2).

#### *Reflections:*

- Again this emphasizes the importance of doing something other than just study.
- Being in the real world gives you a much needed perspective on the texts you are studying.
- There is an acknowledgment that people are probably not doing this now (not working at a trade but being paid to study Torah or be rabbis instead).
- Today, it is virtually impossible for a rabbi to be a full time rabbi and have another trade. Of course, rabbis do much more than just study, but they don't earn a living by the work of their hands.
- Few of our upper class congregants earn a living by the work of their hands anymore.
  - What is the value of working with your hands?
  - What do we lose by not doing any manual labor (even if it is housework or yardwork, which we increasingly outsource)?
  - What obligations do we have to those who do our manual labor for us?
  - What would it look like to have us take care of the synagogue ourselves (clean, garden, etc.)
    - Obviously, this would take a lot of time. Would it have the advantage of increased ownership over the building? Pride? A sense of community?

#### Twelve:

- The words of Torah are only established with one who lives a hard life. You have to sacrifice.
- A man must sacrifice himself in the tents of the wise (Numbers 19:14) in order to have the law really be with him.
- If you learn something through a lot of effort it will stick with you.
- You must read aloud in order to retain what you learn. You can not just whisper it.

#### *Reflections:*

- Again, a life of sacrifice is held up as the way to go. It is romanticized.
  - Why is there this ideal? What is the harm of being rich and also studying?
    - Are the rabbis who write this poor?

- Rabbis today are very well paid. Does this mean that they forget what they have learned?
- It does take some sacrifice to learn.
  - Those things which are the hardest learned are not soon forgotten.
  - We especially see parents who make sacrifices so that their children are able to learn.
- It is true that if you spend a lot of effort learning something it will stay with you. Things that you just breeze through you might be more likely to forget.
  - What are the implications in terms of planning challenging lessons? Students certainly do not like to be bored in class.
- That act of reading and reciting is very important.
  - Reading as a private activity only happens in societies where there are a lot of books. It needs to be a public activity when there are fewer books and fewer resources.
    - Reciting does help you to learn, as does writing things out (more than typing).
    - As we recite less and less, we get worse at it and our memories get worse!
- Chevrotah study is based on reading out loud and discussing—a second step that helps on to cement their learning.
  - This type of study is actually the best for retaining information (look at study groups where people gather together to talk through the material!)

### Thirteen:

- One learns the most at night.
- One should make sure to study at night and not waste time eating, drinking, sleeping and talking.
- If you study at night, you have a thread of kindness with you during the day.
- If words of Torah are not heard in a house at night, it will be consumed by fire.
- One who does not study or who abandons his study is said to despise the word of God.
- If you neglect Torah to get rich, you will end up poor; if you learn although you are poor, you will end up rich.

### *Reflections:*

- Why is night the best time to study?
  - Do you remember more?
  - Does it protect you from the night demons?
  - Are there less distractions?
  - Does it really help you to remember better.
- There is something nice about the notion that something of your study stays with you after you are done (what time of day is of less importance to me).
  - Maybe this ties into the idea of action—that your study will lead to action.
  - Maybe it will just give you a certain state of mind, or you will be happier, it will quiet your mind, you will be more calm about things, etc.
    - There is something about study that we can't quite grasp, but it gives you a special intangible thing of some kind that you can carry with you.
- If you don't study, then you in effect abandon the word of God.
  - Is this because you won't know how to live a good life? That seems to be untrue, you can certainly learn all the commandments from your parents or go to a rabbi to find out even if you aren't learned.

- Is it that studying proves your loyalty? Does this show that you believe in the texts?
  - Can you study and still abandon God's word. Of course! That is certainly possible.
- This ends with a great statement that you will profit if you study. This could mean in this world or maybe even in the world to come.
  - Of course the rabbis want to believe this, just as they want to believe those who do bad things will suffer and the good will be reward. It just doesn't always happen that way and that is just the way life is.

## Chapter Four

### One:

- Only those who are decent and worthy should be taught Torah, not those who are simple.
  - KM: it is not clear if the simple person is good or not.
  - Berechot 27Bff. Rabbi Joshua contradicts a teaching of Rabban Gamliel behind his back, but then in the beit midrash agrees with him. As a punishment, Rabban Gamliel makes him stand while he sat and taught. The people decide to depose Gamliel.
    - They could not replace him with Joshua because he was involved.
    - They could not replace him with Akivah because he did not have the family connections.
    - They could not replace him with Elezar b. Azariah because he was too young.
      - A miracle occurred and his hair turned white so he looked older.
  - Gamliel had said that no one whose interior did not match his exterior could learn. Once he was gone, more benches were added and more people learned.
- If you do bad things, you have to first start living better and then be examined, and then you can be admitted to a school again.
- You should not teach one who is unfit.
- There is only glory in the Torah
- You can not follow a rabbi who does not behave properly even if he is a great scholar and well liked (Malachi 2:7).

### *Reflections:*

- There is a line here between being worthy and being too exclusive. Rabban Gamliel was the latter.
  - Here, we learn that if there is a question you should err on the side of teaching someone.
    - This is a reminder to us that we must teach even the most difficult students (even we don't feel like doing so.) It is so important to let others learn that we must do all we can to teach effectively.
- If someone has a proven track record of bad things, they must show they have changed before they can come back to learning.
  - We can't let people in who will disrupt the class or who will keep the other students from learning. If we invest time, we want to know they are getting some learning too.
  - At the same time, we should do our best to bring all people back to study.
    - Study and education is an important value. We should make it as accessible as possible.

- What are the implications for outreach, especially to non-Jews? Should they have to 'prove' themselves serious before we devote resources to them? If so, what would that look like?
  - How do we balance outreach with the needs of the people who are already there? Who gets our priority?
- Deeds are just as important as knowledge. You have to walk the walk and talk the talk, so to speak.
  - There is more to learning than just the rote learning.
  - Teachers must be role models in addition to being able to teach.

### Two:

- The rabbi sits at the head of the class and the students surround him.
- Either all sit on the ground or all sit on seats.

### *Reflections:*

- They are all at the same level which is not what you necessarily expect. The higher status of the rabbi is not seen in the seating arrangements.
  - This makes things more equal so the students are too scared of the rabbi.
  - Today, we would rarely think of the students having too much fear of the teacher, just the opposite. Perhaps it is better to return to an unequal type of seating to help to install that balance.
    - In fact, we see that usually teachers stand and students sit. This does represent a power dynamic.
    - Is it important, especially in adult education, for the teacher to be seated? How does this change the learning experience?

### Three:

- The teacher either speaks directly to the pupils or through an interpreter.
- If an interpreter is being used all questions and answers go through him.
- He must speak at the same level as does the teacher.
- The interpreter must not change anything which is said unless he is the teacher's father or his teacher.
- The interpreter can mention the name of the person who taught the teacher, but the teacher can not.
  - For example, the teacher says I learned from my master, but the interpreter can say, I learned from my master, rabbi X.

### *Reflections:*

- The interpreter is not necessarily an interpreter, but might just be a 'human loudspeaker.'
- It is disrespectful to mention the name of one's rabbi or one's father.
  - What are the markers of respect which we see today? Obviously we can mention people by name, but should we call our teachers by their last names?
    - How does the culture of a religious school change when teachers are called by their first names rather than their last names? What about the culture of adult education (the rabbi is called rabbi)?
      - How do we find a balance between our teachers being approachable and still respected?
      - How does this play out for younger teachers vs. older teachers?
- Footnoting is important! You have to cite your sources.

- This is seen in the chain of tradition we see in the Talmud. They are concerned with who said what.
- Do we lose something when we just cite 'the rabbis?' Should we be more specific and try to teach (and to learn ourselves) who said what? Do we need to be more careful about citing modern authorities than we do about earlier ones?

#### Four:

- If the students do not understand a teacher should not be upset. He should teach the material over again until the students understand it.
- A student can not pretend to understand if he does not. He must keep asking until he understands.
- If the teacher becomes mad, he should remind the teacher that he has to learn Torah, even if he has little intelligence.

#### *Reflections:*

- This is such good advice on both accounts. Often teachers become frustrated if they feel students are not getting the material and often students are scared to admit that they don't understand what is going on.
  - Both people are human—get mad, upset, etc.
  - The rabbi's actions are not perfect
- How does this/should the play out in cases where there are students of drastically different levels? Can a teacher move on even when not everyone understands the material? If so, does he have an obligation to teach the material to the student after class? At what point does the teacher move on?
  - These are very difficult questions since there are often students of very different abilities in the same class.

#### Five:

- A student should not be embarrassed if it takes him a long time to learn something.
- If you are ashamed you can not learn and if you are precise/passionate you can not teach.
- If the students really don't understand that is fine, but if they are being lazy then a teacher can humiliate them in order to get them to learn.
- A teacher should not be too informal before his students and laugh, eat and drink with them. This is so they will hold him in awe.

#### *Reflections:*

- This ties into the last discussion of what to do about student who are at different levels in the class. If it true that if you are too embarrassed you can not learn.
  - Is there a point at which you should give up? Does every student have to learn the same material or can modifications be made?
- Teachers are cautioned against being too nice to the students by letting them get away with being lazy.
  - A teacher can humiliate—students need to have a reverence for their teacher.
  - This goes against our modern sentiments. We don't think humiliation will bring reverence. However, teachers might need to surprise their students every so often to show them who is in control.
- A teacher should not be too informal, but many of our religious school teachers and youth group advisors are very informal.
  - This works in youth group because of the informal setting. It is not formal education and teaching is done in spur of the moment conversations, not by

following a lesson plan. We gain a lot by having informal relationships with these kids. What do we lose?

- Should classroom relationships ever have an informal component?
- What about youth group?
- Our boundaries probably aren't 'laughing, eating and drinking.' What are they?

#### Six:

- One must wait to question the teacher until his mind is settled.
- Two students can not ask a question at the same time.
- They can not ask about something which is not being discussed so that the rabbi won't be shamed.
- A teacher can ask interesting and difficult questions to test the student's retention of the materials. He can ask a question not being discussed just to urge them on.

#### *Reflections:*

- Letting the teacher settle in shows him respect.
  - What beginning of class rituals can instill this respect? In Korea (and probably in other Asian countries), students stand when a teacher enters a room and stay standing until they have permission to sit. This might not work with us, but are there other traditions (maybe even Jewish ones) we can use to set up this sort of dynamic?
    - The class could all greet the teacher with boker tov.
- Asking on tangential material just to trip up one's teacher is a bad thing to do. However, the nature of learning Jewish texts means there will be a lot of 'unrelated' questions that bubble to the surface in the course of study and this is recognized in the text above.
  - Learning is a cumulative process—thus one can be 'quizzed' on material which is already learned.
  - Teachers have a lot of license if they are doing things in the name of education. When does that stop? What is the line?

#### Seven:

- There can not be questions and answers when standing or at a distance.
- A teacher can only be asked relevant questions.
- Only three questions are allowed on the same subject.

#### *Reflections:*

- These rules show the ability of the students to ask off topic questions and to continue questioning past when it is appropriate.
  - While a student has an obligation to make sure he understands the material, sometimes he might take things too far. This is an example of crossing the line.
  - This keeps the conversation from devolving into 'why?,' 'because I said so.'

#### Eight:

- Priorities in subject matter of the questions.
  - The relevant ones has priority
  - Practice before theory
  - Law before midrash
  - Midrash before aggadah
  - Reasoning before aggadah

- Priorities in which questioner to answer first
  - Scholar before students
  - Student before regular person
  - If they are of the same level, the translator can deal with it!

*Reflections:*

- Clearly there is a hierarchy set up here with law at the top, then midrash, then aggadah.
- The objective of the class is to teach law, so law comes first. However, depending on the objective, one could see that another topic is more important.
  - What topics are most important for us to teach? What would a modern hierarchy look like?
- There is also a hierarchy among the questioners. We see here that the status of the rabbi (and even of the student) is preserved.
  - No democratization here!

Nine:

- You can not sleep in the beit midrash.
- If you nap there your knowledge will be cut to tatters.
- No conversations, only words of Torah!
- The beit midrash is more holy than the beit knesset.

*Reflections:*

- Even back then students would nod off while studying!
- The centrality of the beit midrash is huge in rabbinic literature. It makes sense that it is protected.
  - We might think today that the beit knesset would be the most important part of our building, but here the beit midrash is.
    - We don't have as similar idea that education is the be all and end all of our synagogues. We value it, but it is not consistently the most valued.
- No conversations, only learning is a hard environment to be in. HUC does not have a beit midrash. We have the library, but it is not the same at all. We have lots of conversations about lost of things there, but it is not a place where specifically Jewish learning happens.
  - If we were to have a beit midrash, do our actions in there need to be somehow set apart? Is that what makes it a beit midrash? Is it what is taught? How it is taught? How it is viewed by others? How people act there?

Chapter Five

One:

- One must honor and revere his teacher more than his father. His father gave him life in this world, his teacher in the world to come.
  - KM: only your main rabbi gets preference over your parent.
- If he sees a lost object of both, he must return his rabbi's first.
- If he sees both carrying heavy loads, he helps the rabbi first.
- If both have to be ransomed, he ransoms the rabbi first. This all holds unless his father is learned in which case his father can come before his rabbi.
- One's greatest reverence is due to their rabbi.
- If you argue with your rabbi it is like arguing with the shekiniah (Numbers 20:13)

*Reflections:*



- Not surprisingly, this was written by rabbis who put themselves at the top of the hierarchy.
  - What does one's main rabbi look like today? Is it one's congregational rabbi? Do we want those people honored more than one's parents? Probably not. We don't buy into this much respect for rabbis today.
  - What would be cases when we did want to give more respect to our rabbis than to our parents? Is there ever such a case?
- This is a democratic system. It is not about lineage, it is about how much you know.
- The rabbi is likened to God. Rebellion against him is rebellion against God.
  - Moses was a rabbi! The people are ordered to look up to their leaders and their rabbis. How realistic was this?
- A rabbi's teaching ensures that a student will know the commandments and thus get eternal life. What role did parents have in educating their children? What role do they have now? How can we make sure that parents take a more active role in teaching their children instead of outsourcing that responsibility?
  - We should have religious schools, but parents need to teach their kids too. After all, they see them much more than people at the school.

## Two:

- If you set up a school and teach without permission from your rabbi, you are disagreeing with him.
- One can not teach directly in front of his rabbi. If he does so, he deserves death.
  - Haggahot Maimoniot: you can not answer questions about issues. You can answer theoretical questions. If it is a standard answer you can give it so the person won't make a mistake.
  - SA YD 242:3 Isserles, a student can disagree on a halakhic theory or ruling if he has proof that he has the correct answer.
  - Yisrael Iserlin: There is a tradition of disagreement. You should be able to disagree if you have texts to prove it

## *Reflections:*

- This is a continuation of a system which is meant to have the rabbis on the top in all ways. Here, they are able to control what type of teaching can be done.
- When printed books become available to everyone things change. More people can answer these questions. In fact, the answers are printed right there!
  - This means people are more likely to give a ruling that they know is true.
- The institution does more than restrict information or control the flow of power. It also sets up a way for truth to be transmitted and for Judaism to stay alive.
  - Ideally the law should be about truth, and not who teaches it. But, there needs to be a system for delivering the law and that system relies upon hierarchy.
- What does disagreeing with your rabbi look like in today's world?
- Should our congregants be able to disagree with us? Are there boundaries? What are they?

## Three:

- If a person is 12 miles apart from his rabbi, he can answer questions about the law.
- A student can prevent someone from doing a prohibition even if the student is in the teacher's presence and the teacher does not give permission.
- One should not get too comfortable doing this—it should not be a regular occurrence.

- Only those who are qualified can teach.

*Reflections:*

- When a desecration of God's name is at stake, it trumps honoring one's rabbi.
  - For what might we be willing to give up our honor? What is a modern day desecration of God's name in the Reform world?
  - Reform rabbis are not poskim. Does this mean that we don't care who answers questions? In what ways are Reform rabbis still looked to as authorities (texts, pastoral care, service leading, etc.)
- Not everyone who attains a high level of learning can teach. One must not only have the knowledge, but also have a passion for teaching and an ability to transmit material in an interesting manner.
  - There are some intangibles that we must take into account.
  - It is not just about the level of learning, but about how it is learned.
- Today, the CCAR only accepts rabbis from certain denominations. This is because they are not qualified to teach...they don't share the same theology or worldview as do Reform rabbis.
  - What qualities do we need in our teachers and our rabbis? What are we willing to compromise on?

Four:

- A student who is not qualified to teach but does so anyway is wicked, simple and conceited.
- A scholar who is able and doesn't teach withholds Torah.
- Some want to teach even though they are not ready. That is really bad.

*Reflections:*

- One who teaches even if they do not have the necessary tools to do so brings wrong information into the world. This could cause others to act incorrectly.
- By the same token one has to share what he knows.
  - Today we would say all people have an obligation to share what they are good at and to say away from topics they are not good at.
    - In a rush to find anyone to teach Sunday school, it is good to remember that there should be some knowledge of the subject.
- How can we make the most of our congregant's skills and let them share what they know?

Five:

- A student can not call his rabbi by name—even if he is not there. He must be called by his title.
- This is true even after his death.
- The rabbi must be greeted in a respectful way.

*Reflections:*

- Here the greeting of the rabbi signals the respect in which the rabbi is held.
  - What other ways can we show respect to rabbis (as today, we aren't going to have this happen!)
  - It is important that a rabbi be greeted in a different way than other people?
    - What about when introducing him to someone who is not a part of the Jewish community. Should we use titles then?
  - Where is the democracy now?

- Respect does not only continue while the rabbi is alive.
  - How you treat someone after they have died really shows how you feel about them

#### Six:

- A student can not remove his tefillin in his rabbi's presence.
- He can not recline in front of him.
- He must walk behind him, but not directly behind him.
- He should not sit or stand in his rabbi's presence until given permission to do so.
- He must retreat facing his rabbi.

#### *Reflections:*

- These rules really seem a little bit extreme.
  - We have other instances of people showing respect in these ways.
    - People don't turn their back on the Western Wall.
    - People stand when someone enters a room (so rules of getting up and down generally).
- What are ways we can show respect for rabbis and teachers without going overboard?
- Often today, we err too far on the other side of the equation and don't show enough respect for our teachers.

#### Seven:

- One must rise if he sees his rabbi coming and not sit down until his is out of sight.
- One must visit one's rabbi on the festivals.

#### *Reflections:*

- These sound like rules for how you should treat your grandma rather than rules for how you should treat your rabbi.
  - How do we show respect in the modern world (see above)?
  - What is the value of respecting one's rabbi? Do they have to earn it? How can they earn it?
- How do we build community on the festivals, especially among those who don't have family in town?
  - Invitations to meals at member's homes.
  - More extensive celebrations at the temple.
  - Visiting people in their own homes, especially if they can't venture out.

#### Eight:

- A student should not be honored when his rabbi is there (unless the rabbi honors him).
- A student does the same work for his rabbi that a slave would do for his master.
- If a teacher keeps a pupil from serving him, he has prevented kindness from happening.
- If a student degrades part of the honor of his rabbi he has caused the shekinah to depart from Israel.

#### *Reflections:*

- Again a statement of the importance of the system of honor that is set up.
  - It is largely symbolic. All these things connote honor, but it is the symbolism of that honor. These are public and highly ritualized acts.
  - What ritualized ways do we honor our teachers today?

- Teacher's appreciation night at the synagogue. Usually a special service of some sort so that students and parents can show appreciation. Usually on a Friday night.
- Gifts at the holidays (though not really a religious ritual—a ritual that occurs around a religious holiday.)
- A student acts like a slave towards his teacher—not the relationship we would want to replicate today.
  - How can we keep the respect but get rid of the rigid and over the top hierarchy?
- Allowing someone to serve you is allowing kindness to enter the world.
  - There is great merit in letting others do service.
    - This means accepting help. However, it also means that someone else is able to do the mitzvah of providing that help.
    - One should not give up their independence just to let others do something, but if one needs help he should certainly accept it.
- What does degrading the honor of one's rabbi look like today? What are the consequences?
  - We probably don't think the shekinah departs. Is the rabbi less able to teach? Is a relationship lost?

#### Nine:

- If a student sees a rabbi doing something wrong, he should remind the rabbi that the rabbi taught differently.
- He must cite his sources.
- When his main rabbi dies, the student should tear his clothing.
- Even if he has only learned one thing he must tear his garments when his teacher dies.

#### *Reflections:*

- Even when correcting the rabbi one is sure to preserve his honor.
  - Is this done today? Not really. Is it important? Probably, but I wouldn't go to an extreme to preserve the rabbi's honor.
- Citation is key. The tradition is being passed on and it must be clear who said what.
  - How does citation work today? Should we cite individual rabbis? (See above).
  - Are we fulfilling our obligation to cite non-Jewish sources of our knowledge as well? This does not make us less authentic as Jews, it makes us better learners.
- Mourning rituals are paramount. Once someone is dead, they can't repay you for doing a mitzvah for them. There is no earthly reward for observing rituals for them. You are doing it out of respect for them or because it is right, not in the hopes of what you will get. This makes mourning so meaningful.

#### Ten:

- One does not give an opinion in front of a scholar who is greater in wisdom than he, even if he has not learned from this scholar.

#### *Reflections:*

- People are preceded by their reputations and one shows deference to them based on their reputations.
- Once a person is in this system, the rules apply to everyone he meets, not just to those who have taught him.
- How do we as a Jewish culture show respect not just to our individual rabbi but to rabbis and scholars in general?

- What are the qualifications for the rabbi/scholar to be given respect?
- Is just the title enough? If not what else is needed?
  - Actions?
  - A following?
  - A certain amount of learning?
  - Tzedekah?

#### Eleven:

- A distinguished rabbi may forgo if he wished to do so.
- His students still need to honor him.

#### *Reflections:*

- A rabbi can turn down accolades from someone who is not his direct student, but a student must continue to honor his rabbi (even if the rabbi asks that this not be the case).
  - We often show deference and honor to those to whom we look up the most even if they do not want us to do so.
  - This is not a matter of following some code of conduct we feel we should follow, but of acting on our own feelings.
    - Perhaps we don't need whole code to know what is right, we can just act on what we feel and what we believe.

#### Twelve:

- The students are obligated to honor their rabbi and a rabbi is obligated to honor his students.
- The honor of one's students should be as dear as one's own honor.
- One must take care of their students like they are children—they bring delight in this world and in the world to come.

#### *Reflections:*

- This is a two way street, not an abuse of power.
- While it is an unequal system, safeguards are built in to prevent the abuse of power.
  - As rabbis, we are often looked up to and idealized in some ways. How do we make sure that we don't abuse our power and that we keep the honor of our congregants dear to us?
    - Having a mentor is important.
    - So is being someone's student in addition to being someone's rabbi.
- The text doesn't say this directly, but we are all constantly learning.

#### Thirteen:

- Students add to a rabbi's wisdom.
- A student stimulates a rabbi's learning.

#### *Reflections:*

- The truth that at its best, teacher should learn from their students and be sustained by them.
  - Teaching can be tiring work, but ideally it is also sustaining work. The twigs of the students continue to kindle the fire of the teacher.
- Teachers learn from their students.
  - This is something we say, but we might have a hard time living our lives as if it were true. This might be harder to do with the younger grades, but it is equally true.

- Having this attitude gives one a built in humbleness about their own learning and knowledge, which is probably healthy (especially for a rabbi) to have.

## Chapter Six

### One

- It is a positive commandment to honor every scholar, even if he is not one's teacher (Leviticus 19:32).
- One must stand from when a teacher is four cubits away until he disappears from view.

#### *Reflections:*

- People are honored for their general level of knowledge even if they did not directly teach you.
  - This usually happens with the rabbis in a congregation or in the town, or with big name scholars.
  - However, the command is to honor *every* scholar. This means every person who knows a lot about what they teach.
    - We can broaden this outside of Jewish learning and even outside of learning in general.
    - We can honor all those who have reached a high level of proficiency in their professional work or even in their hobbies.
    - This could mean letting them teach what they know.
    - This teaches respect not just for the title, but for the skills.

### Two:

- One does not need to stand in the bath house.
- An artisan does not have to stand if he is busy at work—he does not have to lose money.
- You can't close your eyes to get out of rising before a sage.

#### *Reflections:*

- There are limits to the honor that is shown to a scholar and they are practical. One does not have to sacrifice his own livelihood.
- At the same time, you can not try to get out of it just to get out of it.
- This is not honor just for power, it is serving a social function in the community and showing what the community values.
  - What does our community value today? To what do we show deference?
    - Is it Jewish teachers? Sunday school? Secular activities? Big Bar Mitzvah parties?
  - We show our values based on what we give deference to and who we allow to break those social conventions.
    - Do we allow people with wealth to break them because they are more important?
    - Our ancestors let the working people break them since they needed to make a living.

### Three:

- A sage should not try to get a lot of people to stand up for him.
- He should avoid having a lot of people go to the trouble of standing up if that is possible.
- He should make detours so they do not walk among people who know them.

#### *Reflections:*

- Why set up an institution just to make sure that it never happens? You should stand before sages, but they should never walk among people who know them so as not to trouble the people.
- Here we see the rabbinic desire to be humble rear its ugly head. They want both the honor and the rabbis to reject that honor.
  - In what ways do rabbis today want it both ways?
    - Just to be a regular person and to be given a lot of respect.

#### Four:

- One stands up for a rabbi riding just like for a rabbi traveling on foot.

#### *Reflections:*

- Hard to do this for rabbis in cars!
- Just a technical explanation of when this applies.

#### Five:

- When three wise people are walking together the teacher should be in the middle and the elder student on the right.

#### *Reflections:*

- The placement has not to do with the amount of learning (which I would have expected), but with age. The elder is given the preference.
  - Are people judged by their amount of learning only when they get to a certain level?
  - What happened to the merit based system we read about earlier?
- Does one have to be a certain age in order to be a teacher?
- How much of a factor is age in hiring religious school teachers. Should we strive to hire older teachers, younger teachers, the best teachers? Who will kids relate to best and learn the most from?

#### Six:

- One rises for a sage when he is four cubits distant and sits down when he passes.
- One rises for the head of the Beit Din when he sees him and sits when he has passed four cubits.
- One rises for the nasi when one can see the nasi.
- The nasi can invite people to be seated when they are in a large group.
- There is also a formal way of greeting the head of the beit din that involves standing.

#### *Reflections:*

- Another hierarchy, this time scholar → head of the beit din → nasi.
- The level of these people can be seen in their treatment *in relation* to one another. Nothing here works in isolation.
- Rising is a sign of respect for those who are aged and for those with learning.

#### Seven:

- People stand when a sage enters.
- If a scholar leaves he returns to his place.
- When the sage's followers have enough knowledge they sit facing their fathers in the audience.

#### *Reflections:*

- More rules for how people should behave in terms of observing the hierarchy.

- In what ways do we observe a hierarchy? How is it helpful? How is it hurtful?
- What is the value of having certain people recognized as leaders by the community?
- What should be the criterion for picking those leaders?
  - Learning?
  - Deeds?
  - Money/who they know?
  - Who the rabbi wants them to be?

#### Eight:

- A student who constantly studies with his teacher only has to stand in the morning an evening.

#### *Reflections:*

- Practically, this means that the student does not have to hop to his feet every time his teacher goes in or out.
- It reflects a special bond between a teacher and his student. There is respect not just in the gestures, but in the ongoing way in which the relationship is carried out—respect happens every day and does not need to be pushed into a certain pattern of behavior.
  - What ways do we show respect for our teachers?
  - How is it different for those with whom we spend a majority of our time?

#### Nine:

- People should stand before an elderly man, even if he is not a scholar.
- Even a young sage stands before an elderly man, but he can do so only partially.
- Even a non-Jewish elderly person should be honored (Leviticus 19:32).

#### *Reflections:*

- Respect does not only come if one has learning, but when one has life experience. There is an acknowledgement that those who are older deserve of respect by virtue of their longevity.
  - How do we make sure we show respect to the elderly?
  - Even if they are not scholars, what can they teach us?
    - How do we show respect to those who live in nursing homes for whatever reason?
    - How do we ensure that as people age and stay alive longer they keep their basic human dignity as well as that measure of respect?
- The way a young hot shot scholar rises can be perfunctory. This seems to take all of the meaning out of the idea of rising in the first place.
  - Why an exception for how they can rise?
  - Is it really giving honor to just rise part way?

#### Ten:

- Scholars do not go out to do manual labor.
- They are not taxed and are not expected to pay any kind of taxes.
- A scholar can sell his merchandise first.
- If he is waiting in court, his case gets priority.

#### *Reflections:*

- So much for democracy! Now we are back to scholars getting special breaks.
  - This is similar to parsonage. Scholars do not have to pay their share of the community taxes.



- In the old days we could argue this was because they were poor as it was and this was helping them live. However, today rabbis are certainly not poor (although Christian clergy are and do need the benefit).
  - Can we take this benefit? What is our moral obligation to the community?
- Scholars get to jump the line, much like rich people do today. This just doesn't sit well. There is a difference between respect and not being fair.

#### Eleven:

- It is a sin to disgrace a scholar.
- This helped lead to the destruction of Jerusalem (II Chronicles 36:16, Leviticus 26:15).
- Anyone who abhors scholars has no share in the world to come. He has despised the word of God (Numbers 15:31).

#### *Reflections:*

- When sins are really bad they are said to lead to the destruction of Jerusalem. That is what we have here.
  - This is not literal, but just a signal of how bad the actions are.
- Scholars deliver the word of God so treating them badly messes up your chances at life in the world to come.
  - Scholars have a ton of power in this system!
- Who had this kind of power in our modern Jewish communities?
  - The rabbi? The funders/big money people? The board?

#### Twelve:

- If there are witnesses to someone disgracing a sage then he can be excommunicated by the beit din and made to pay restitution.
- This is true even if the scholar is dead, although in this case the person can be released if he repents.
- If the scholar, the decision can not be reversed until he gives the okay.
- A scholar can excommunicate anyone who is disrespectful without a warning or witnesses.
- He also has the option of not excommunicating the person.

#### *Reflections:*

- These are some harsh penalties.
  - They are the harshest, perhaps, except for death.
  - Did this ever happen? Was it because of a personal issue between people?
- What penalties do we impose today that seem overly harsh?
  - This is much like the retribution that we see in our criminal justice system.
  - People are locked up for long periods of time.
  - How often did the scholars/do families decide to be lenient?
- What crimes, other than murder, deserve the harshest punishment?

#### Thirteen:

- If a teacher excommunicates someone, his students must follow it.
- If a student excommunicates someone, the teacher does not have to abide by it, but the townspeople do have to.
- If you are excommunicated in your own community you are excommunicated everywhere.

- If you are excommunicated in a community where you are a stranger, you are not excommunicated in your home community.

*Reflections:*

- Again we see a hierarchy. Townspeople→students→teacher.
- Excommunication seems to be a pretty powerful tool to give to students. Did they misuse it and abuse it?
  - If they used it well then why don't the scholars have to follow the excommunication?
- Is this crime really serious enough to warrant this punishment? I don't think so.
- This is all about exerting social control, I'm just not sure an individual should be exerting this much control...maybe it is more the job of the community.

Fourteen:

- The above applies to someone who was excommunicated because of his attitude towards scholars.
- If someone who was excommunicated because of something else then everyone must follow the ban until release is given.
- There are a list of 24 offences for which a person is banned.

*Reflections:*

- We are only tangentially on the subject of learning anymore. We are now engrossed in laws about who is banned and why.
- Here, the ban by the sages is less serious than a general community ban, which makes thirteen above seem a little bit more bearable.
- Some of the offences that merit a ban also seem rather minor such as a butcher who has not had his knife examined by a rabbi and a scholar with an evil reputation. These are bad, but not ban-worthy.
  - For what things should we ban someone in our own time? What do they have to do to be kicked out of the community? What would they have to do to be let back in?
    - How do we protect the members of our community while also meeting the needs of individuals?
    - Should there be some sort of congregational teshuvah system.
  - Are there acts for which rabbis should be 'banned' and not allowed to practice anymore? Who should decide what those are?

Chapter Seven

One:

- An elderly sage or a prince or the head of a beit din is never corrected in public.
- If a scholar deserves punishment, the court should act slowly.
- The sages never ostracized a student.

*Reflections:*

- We have a double standard for justice. Those who are important get more consideration and lesser punishments than those who are not important.
  - Like the modern criminal justice system in America where money and power can buy your freedom.
  - This is not democracy after all.
- Why is it in the interests of the community to have a double standard?

- Does it help them to feel better about their leadership when the dirty laundry is not aired?
- It is just because the powerful wrote this law so they are the ones who are able to benefit from it?
- Do we give rabbis the benefit of the doubt today? If so we shouldn't...clergy messing up is more devastating for a community than lay people doing so.
  - Perhaps we should have harsher standards.

#### Two:

- Excommunication is pronounced orally.
- The excommunicator says it and it is enacted.

#### *Reflections:*

- This is not written, it is just said.
  - Why just spoken and not written as well. It is a court proceeding. There were written records of other legal decisions (like a divorce).
- It must be pronounced by the excommunicator, an official person.
- It can be done when the person is not there.
- There is nothing built into the system for the person to be able to defend himself at all.

#### Three:

- The ban is removed by the person being told they are free.
- If they are not there, someone tells him his is no longer under the ban.

#### *Reflections:*

- It is lifted in the same way it is given which makes sense.
- There seems to be very little ceremony here. This is crying out for a better ritual.
- Just having someone tell the person does not seem like a very 'official' way of going about this process.
- In what ways are we symbolically banned? How are we reintroduced to a community? Ritual is important in helping us to deal with the transitions in our lives.

#### Four:

- If one is banned he does not shave or wash.
- He can not be counted in a mezuza after meals or be part of a minyan.
- Others must stay away from him.
- He can still work.
- If he dies, he is not mourned for.

#### *Reflections:*

- Banning was a form of social control to make sure people behaved the way the rabbis wanted them to.
- If banned, they were cut off from all social contact, from being a member of the religious community, and were not mourned for.
- They were still allowed to earn a living.
- Given these strict guidelines, it would not be surprising to hear that people rarely went against the will of the community.
  - How do our synagogue communities exercise social control today?
  - Who do we exclude and why? Is it intentional or unintentional?
    - Does lack of knowledge keep people out?
    - Socio-economic status?

- Not being born Jewish?
- Not growing up in a certain community?

#### Five:

- There is a heavier punishment for excommunication.
- In this case he is not allowed to study with others or to teach, he can only review on his own.
- He also can not work.
- People can have contact with him only so that he has necessities.

#### *Reflections:*

- This is an even harsher reality.
- Is there an issue of corruption here? The influence of the person is so corrupting that he has to be excluded entirely.
  - He is still learning and/or reviewing. Although he is such a bad Jew it is assumed that he is still studying the very books which he acts in defiance of.
- For what things should we kick people out of our communities?
  - We don't exercise the type of social control they used to, but we can still control membership to the synagogue.

#### Six:

- If you are banned for thirty days and do not ask to be released you are banned again.
- If he stays there for sixty days, he is excommunicated.

#### *Reflections:*

- Presumably the person must go before the court and ask for its mercy.
  - Apparently it is assumed everyone knew about this.
- Not asking for release is not asking for forgiveness and making a public confession. The person must show that they know what they did is wrong and ask for mercy.
  - Parole boards, too, often look for an admission of guilt.
  - In Judaism, too, one should ask forgiveness.
    - The question here is if the person really committed any crimes or if it is just a harsh and extreme form of social control.

#### Seven:

- Three are needed to release a ban. This is if they are uneducated.
- Only one expert is needed.
- A student can do it in place of a rabbi.

#### *Reflections:*

- This seems a rather informal way to release a ban. For something that is so extreme, three laypeople shouldn't be able to undo it.
  - How do you make sure people don't just go around banning and releasing people?
  - If this is a form of social control, then where is the control?
    - There are a specific set of circumstance for which one can be banned. How one is released has not yet been specified.
- At least when a rabbi is doing it there is a measure of learning behind it.
  - Okay, I admit I am being undemocratic now.

#### Eight:

- If the three who made the ban went away, then three others can release a person as long as he repents.

*Reflections:*

- So, three people can pronounce a ban. Do you need three?
- The important thing here is that there is repentance.
  - What does that look like? Is it more than saying sorry?
  - Is teshuvah of some kind required?
  - What should be our requirements for letting someone back into the community?
  - Who should decide when they get back in (or for that matter when they are kicked out)—rabbis, laity, board, the whole congregation?
    - If a rabbi decides it is really a form of social control. Maybe this should be more broad based.

Nine:

- If a person does not know who banned him he should ask the nasi to release him.

*Reflections:*

- How is it possible for someone not to know who banned him? How does he know he was banned in the first place? This is a messed up system.
- The nasi also has to have better things to do than to release people all the time.
  - He is sort of like the Supreme Court.
- This is not an organized court system being set up!

Ten:

- Even if one bans himself it needs to be annulled.
- A scholar can release himself.

*Reflections:*

- It doesn't seem quite fair that a scholar can release a ban on himself with others need to get someone else to do it for them.
- We are far away from the original topic of this section which was laws of Talmud Torah.

Eleven:

- If one dreams they were banned, he needs to get ten men who know the law to release him.
- If he can't find them he needs ten who study Mishna.
- If he can't find them, ten who can read Torah.
- If he can't find them, ten who can read.
- If he can't find ten, three is okay.

*Reflections:*

- Since he dreamed he was banned, it has to be undone.
- Another hierarchy in terms of learning.
- Three is the minimum number for judgment.
- The stipulation is that the ten (or the three) can read. Does this imply that almost everyone could read? It is pretty amazing that it wouldn't be hard to find ten men who read.
  - Was it a symbol of their intelligence?
  - Their learning (and thus their ability to reason)?
  - Why was reading important.

### Twelve:

- If a person is there when he was excommunicated, he must be there when he is released.
- There is no minimum time for a ban. It has to do with repentance.
- Excommunication can last for years.
- One who does not follow the prohibitions of contact with the excommunicated person can be excommunicated himself.
- A sage can excommunicate one who dishonors him, but it is not the best thing to do.
- He should develop a thick skin, that's what people who came before him did.
- This all has to do with things done in secret.
- When a sage is maligned in public he must not forgive. He should avenge first and then forgive.

### *Reflections:*

- A ban can be purely used to whip someone into shape by scaring them for an hour. This makes it seem much less serious.
- There is a need to enforce the rules through excommunication and to enforce excommunication itself. Therefore, if you don't follow the prohibitions regarding contact, you are punished. This makes sure the will of the court is carried out and it is still a punishment.
- It is nice the sages are cautioned against excommunicating a bunch of people because they feel like doing so. It would be an abuse of their power.
- However, shaming a sage in public is different since it undermines the values of the community. This is why it must be dealt with so severely.
  - What things today constitute harsher treatment?
  - How important is it to punish those who don't go along with the punishment?
- After a detour, this chapter returns to the questions of education in terms of how sages should behave.

## Chevrutah Study

One reason I was initially attracted to this project was the opportunity to a lot of learning in *chevruta*. I experienced this form of study for the first time at Drisha Institute in New York and I found it to be a good way for me to learn. I learned better when sitting across the table from someone discussing ideas and sharing thoughts. It was helpful to work through the text together, to look at the big picture and to figure out what it all meant. I also found that I learned well when I talk things out and liked being forced to articulate my own thoughts and feelings.

This project was a chance for me to do long term *chevruta* study once more. I know I learned much better with Laura than I would have on my own. Part of that was being able to talk through the text together. When we got stuck we could look at the issue from a variety of angles and work together to solve it. When we came up with our best guess, we could run our ideas and questions by Rabbi Washofsky who helped to put us on the right path. We often spent a significant amount of time examining one small phrase—something I would have never done on my own.

In addition to helping me with the big picture, studying in *chevruta* helped me with my vocabulary and grammar. Both are difficult for me and much easier for Laura. Reading out loud and saying the words I didn't know (and then being reminded of their meaning) turned out to be a better vocabulary building tool for me than flash cards. I also benefited greatly from Laura's close examination of the grammar (which did border on obsessive at times). I felt like I finally put my grammar I learned in Israel into a context where it started making sense. Being able to ask a question immediately was incredibly helpful.

Learning in *chevruta* allowed me to learn how to explore these texts independently while working with a partner to get a lot more out of them than I would have on my own. I have prepared for all my text classes in *chevruta*, but after this preparation, Laura and I worked through our questions with Rabbi Washofsky. We were able to get immediate feedback on our own work and readings of the text and to see where we went wrong. This was similar to having a tutor in the *beit midrash* to make sure we were progressing well. At the beginning Rabbi Washofsky walked us through the notes, but as the year progressed we were able to look up more sources on our own and begin answering our own questions. Ironically, I feel that I am more of an independent learner after spending so much time in *chevruta*. I now have the self-confidence to tackle a text on my own and the self awareness to know my weaknesses and when I need help. The experience of studying together will help me greatly in the future. Plus, I know that I always have someone I can call when I am struggling.

Another great part of the *chevruta* experience was being able to talk about what the text meant to us (see the conclusion for more on this topic). When I have prepared in *chevruta* before this year, it has always been with an eye towards understanding the text so that I could read and translate it competently in class. In this project there was no pressure of being called on (I know we both would) and we could actually spend time thinking about how to apply the text to our lives and our rabbinate. We talked about adult education sessions and teacher trainings we might do based on what we were studying. We connected these text to those we had read earlier in our four years. We talked about why we agreed or disagreed with what the texts were saying and how they



were applicable in the world today. For me, the talking we did during our study helped these texts to come alive.

Finally, learning in *chevruta* was fun. Often, a thesis project is stressful or lonely. That was not the case here. I really loved meeting with Laura and looked forward to our times together. I learned a lot. I laughed a lot. I rediscovered some of the passion for Judaism and Jewish texts that I had before I came to Hebrew Union College. This wasn't a project I had to do (I could have done a traditional thesis), but one I chose to do. Because I was studying in *chevruta* learning became learning again, rather than class work. This was the type of *chevruta* experience was missing from my previous study at Hebrew Union College. I found it during the course of this project. Not only did I enjoy my study more, I also learned a lot more material at a deeper level because of my *chevruta* experience.

## **Conclusion**

I came into this project wanting to improve my texts skills. I wanted a more intensive text experience than I had in my previous four years at Hebrew Union College. It was important to me that I was ordained with strong text skills. I felt and still feel that I need to have strong text skills in order to be called 'rabbi.'

I leave this project with much stronger text skills and a new ability to open up a text and not be afraid or confused. I certainly did not learn everything I wanted to, but I know that this learning is a process. I took a big step towards my goal and I know where I want to focus my future efforts.

While improving my text skills was my initial focus and reason for doing this project, the main lesson I learned does not have to do with my technical skills at all. Through the course of this project I was able to enter into a dialogue with the text. I have moved from trying to figure out what the text says to focusing on what I think about what the text says. I feel more ownership of the text than I did in the past. I have learned that reading the text is just the beginning—the real learning is what I do with it.

As I have read and studied texts this year I have been able to think about and discuss what they mean in the real world. For me, that was a liberating process. I understand that this is something I should have been doing all along during my studies. I certainly got glimpses of it in some of my classes. However, I was so focused on decoding I missed the meaning.

I now feel empowered to enter into dialogue with these texts, to have an opinion about what they say, to see how they are relevant to my life and to my rabbinate, and to say when they are not relevant. In the course of this learning I have been able to look

back over the previous four years of my classes and find the relevance there as well. Texts that I studied in Israel or in electives I took in Cincinnati now have new, personal, meaning to me. I no longer want to study texts for the sake of improving my skills. I want to see what they say so I can use them in my rabbinate—in teaching, in preaching, in thinking creatively about the issues which face the Jewish community. This self knowledge has been the most important thing I have learned over the course of this year of study.

In conclusion, I have to thank Hebrew Union College and the faculty and administration in Cincinnati for allowing me the opportunity to pursue a Capstone Project. I don't think anyone knew exactly what it would look like at the end. I know I never could have anticipated the amazing learning I have done over the last year. I am thankful that my concluding project gave me the opportunity to pursue a passion of mine. I appreciate that trust this institution placed in me and Laura Baum and in our project. I am grateful for all of the learning I have been able to do.



# COMPOSITION

Eric Senger Ash

Capstone Project

Jarvis

February 2018

100 Sheets • 200 Pages

9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> IN x 7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> IN (24.7 cm x 19 cm)

Wide Ruled

7/25

what we know  $\Rightarrow$  ideas about p-top & or general

- Mishna - Hierarchy: priorities in life serving

- its not birth order, its  $\pi\pi\pi\pi\pi\pi\pi\pi$

- Pankam - own personal stamp, construction of author

A) summarize Pankam's ideal

B) isolate what captures your attention

? is

① -  $\pi\pi$ ,  $\pi\pi\pi$ , no DVO so what makes a person

a  $\pi\pi$ ? diff?

$\Rightarrow$  biblical

-  $\pi\pi$  - touch in proverbs  $\pi\pi\pi\pi$

- 1<sup>st</sup> C,  $\pi\pi\pi\pi$  call themselves rabbis

-  $\pi\pi$  a later title

- DVO only applies in Israel

- in Babylon called  $\pi\pi$  or by 1<sup>st</sup> name

② Puke Avot - see where quotes look @ commentators -

& see what is going on

- it deals w/ imp. of study in general

degraded  
creativity - is there the Talmud? how so?

- or not there & he is going there on his  
own

$\hookrightarrow$  how do we use PA in our teaching

- not a text for a general audience

- better examples of the trad.

③ end quote  $\pi\pi$  ( $\pi\pi\pi\pi$ ), commentators add

- London l'on - printed text, Rav-Cook

111

@ top - lists mitzot

1) activity

2) institutional structure

- whose out, but father obligation to teach

[top commentators are first & not inst generally]

Case: not obliged to teach girls, can't teach servants

- if required to be taught, required to teach self

verse: Deut 11

- what does the midrash say & the rabbinic

trad say about this midrash

- look @ comm and talmed

- look @ MINH AGD ENID

- author Mr. Barenz, also wrote much he shule

- halakhic midrash

- his commentary - need to teach in an intellectually respectful way

1113

- <sup>q</sup>not forbidden to study

- father shouldn't teach daughter

- q'a ~~da~~ da da can't deal w/P, some people can't handle

- oral vs. written, oral Torah tells you what written

means

לפיכך נראה שכלל

q' don't have mental cover

- you act on Torah; prob is that they will act incorrectly & sin

- look at an apparent contradiction

- act of reconciliation is basis for further learning  
introduce C to reconcile A & B, this is the person's own contribution

-  $\text{נחמד}$  vs.  $\text{נחמד}$   $\rightarrow$  deep know  $A \Rightarrow B$

$\hookrightarrow$  fundamental principles, basis of truth 910'

oral  
recap. Torah & outside comm.

Berach Epstein: gives a reason, not just a waste of time, a basis. basis;  $\Rightarrow$  910 capacity for learning

8/2

1:1 further exempt  $\text{נחמד} = \text{נחמד}$  This is  
Talmudic understanding

$\rightarrow$  are we evaluating the verse based on our understanding of the world?

- will go further; not appropriate

1:13 - no prohibition - in written Torah,  $\text{נחמד}$  prohibit  
deeper & merit would that way

- scribble creates form  $\text{נחמד}$  passage in 1:13  
against teaching daughters Torah (R. Eliezer)  
if follow Eliezer must be  $\text{נחמד}$ .

- Rambam 'למדנו' ← 'למדנו'

- even Talmud says it is 'like'  
teaching 'למדנו'

District: only 'למדנו', written Torah only  
prohibited 'למדנו'.

~

- Sava Mishna like R. Men, doesn't follow him if  
it has two names; Ervin 13B?; so good couldn't  
get where he was going; could justify the  
wrong answer  
Logic is immoral

~

Rambam happy with 'למדנו', no discussion of  
extra birak.

WS 111

- 'למדנו' this is Talmud & philo.

- 'למדנו' have reliable foundations; - 'למדנו' has no  
limits

photo - natural reality for words

others - it is a convention we agree upon

- communities of interpretation; agree on  
starting points

↓ - 'למדנו' know that this is how you are  
supposed to make sense of things - not  
in that comm.



- G's brain is so good they sound smart -  
can mislead people

- people know this based on own exp.

ה'ו ה'ו - sharp analysis

ה'ו ה'ו : instructions that lead you away  
from halakot in Talmud, peh'at &  
drash are the same

ה'ו ה'ו p'e'v'v' - א'ו ה'ו ה'ו ה'ו ה'ו  
ה'ו ה'ו ה'ו ה'ו ה'ו ה'ו

→ derive conclusion in accordance of  
its proper meaning.

Tension: right answer vs. brilliance

→ have to keep it separate (have a good foundation)

+ earlier - more lenient earlier

- ripen & spoil,

- have talked seriously about this

- Benham - written okay, where?

ו'ו ו'ו → oral Torah, easier to go astray

- G's who knows Torah

- he is in Be'er: what do sages mean

- teaches to young daughter?

- for most of a waste of time

- if her mind brings her to study Torah

- right thing for right reason

- go ahead, God will help you

- no citations for this!

- why does he put it in here?

- diff time when he is writing

- are the assumptions invalid?

- don't want Torah to look bad compared to  
other learning

- according to TW, oral is okay, written isn't

2/15/07

Sotah 20A

- better to know Torah Ben again

ר' עקיבא - powerless, discerning

Zib: - Gemara adds (ס' י"ב), so Mishna adds it

Rambam: not teach daughter Torah, not ready

- distinction, written & oral

Halevy

- diff trad between Sept & Oct

? - interpret Torah on basis of oral trad. מן דה מן

① need it even more -

② wrong text

③ מן דה מן - can set aside Torah when we need to  
don't use it, no dangerous

Answer

- no 710'K but Rambam learns a prohibition  
- know printed text not same as original written text

- printing all have same version; harder to suggest an emendation

- look at distinction for Rambam...

- 'Be'nei Yisrael' discover Talmudic basis for what is in the SA.

- halakot based in custom

- Nedavin

- can learn oral Torah - custom is to pay so not a full benefit

- can teach children mikvah

==  
- I do great stuff - ~~we~~ know oral ~~text~~ Torah

- reality diff. from what the law says

- maybe law doesn't apply to our circumstances

- IK can't teach, can't have the school teach her;

- also teachers can't ~~be~~ teach, can't say dad asked him to do

- why no prohibition against women, just a father & daughter

- concern for M'D's exists if he (dad) teaches or she teaches herself

217 could mean all, but read as majority

"can learn - can you teach?"

- prohibition is when daughter is young

- how do we know she is ready?

- now & learn - why should Torah be less than other subjects - Torah will come off badly

1/ facts girls learn in H → shows intellectual maturity

- this is not exceptional girls - it is all of them

~

settles rabbi - not good for & to study, have other stuff to do, can learn @ a high level, but not what → learn

~

- have to wait to bring society

Sources refer to this: Keddushin 10B p. 27C 27D - 4 lines down Talmud → much

Baba Kamma 12A 12B bottom 12C 12D → 17A

"17A 17B" - middle

⇒ study or action, what is more imp.

"shilut" - another version

Kiddushin 10B

- Ta'fon = action, Akavat = study

\* all study  $\Rightarrow$  action

BA/BS - better to be created or not? I don't want to choose; here too

yosi - study better, learned before we had to

$\rightarrow$  in general, do study first

- learn what to do by watching people do it

- have to link halakot l'maseh

- apply theory to the real world

- more imp. to do right thing or know the reasons?

- irreversible

- pure learning over practicalities (Torah lishma)

- here anchor in reality; don't praise

pure ~~the~~ study too much

Baba Kama 16B-17A

- 3 days, mat imp.

- this or fulfilled what was said in here

- how to honor now?

- take our Torah, don't place it

- place it, don't say established

- say fulfilled not that he taught

ob

⇒ learn is higher

⇒ study great because it leads to action

- learn is teach

(better)

little

① learn → ②

big

③ teach is greater

Tosefot

2 N 16 11

- addustina - study better ⇒ action

- here gemara suggests action is better

- when say 2"p include that he studied Torah

- teaching greater - brings a large # to actions

Mid'ice

- 8th c

- one of the earliest books of poetic lit.

- from <sup>10th c</sup> <sup>11th c</sup> 2) Ahi

- harmonic presentation

- like Tarkumah → <sup>Mid'ice</sup> Baly equivalent of it

- org. like Torah

- early witness to what Talmud says

- begin in praise of the mitzvah

better:

- ma'aseh, study comes - do right thing

- study - need it to know what to do.

question 2:

- on our study better

- what about teaching others?

- na'aseh a first since R. Eliezer does stuff

↳ before teaching

⇒ not about this necessarily

- this na'aseh comes before teaching

→ kashya - isn't Talmud before?

- our learning might come first

⇒ na'aseh before teaching

- hierarchy in Torah - status

- rabbis make learning the highest value

- to ask <sup>the</sup> is the essential rabbinic function

- other na'asim are mitzvot too

- what do we do when our highest goal is study?

7: find source

Deut 4:5 - in nedavin - source of halakah -  
read it

- Rambam's commentary to Mishna

- PArat, commentary on don't make it

a spade to dig up

- don't take \$1.

MM7

9/4/07

Is it okay to take payment

3.10

אין צורך ללמוד תורה

- can't get benefit here! can in world to come
- not if don't work and just study Torah

אין צורך

- large, Joseph Caro resp to him (and on parashah to the mishna).

- job is learn Torah & teach it, but people are getting \$ for it

→ Rambam's position presents a problem

paper: ideal of Torah study as perfect mitzvah is reality that can't do anything else for \$.

- Torah study is not a profession - all should do it.

- can we explain prof. rabbinate in context of Talmud Torah?

- doctors & rabbis both do mitzvot - shouldn't be paid

- drs. paid for expenses & "down time"

- pay for prep time (bayan)



- ? of dcs. going on strike

- \$ for ed, exp, standard of living in  
enlightened (w<sup>st</sup>) world

- rabbis - what do you compare yourselves too?

- dr, teacher, lawyer

### Rambam on Avot 4:7

- this refers to oral Torah

=

### Torah brings honor

- taxation: Torah → laws of taxation

- lile to say Torah needs to have a salary if  
it is one profession

- look @ Sages

- in geonic period they did take donations  
for yeshivot

- he is looking to the Talmud

- some rich & some poor

### ex: Hillel, Hamaarish

- are these models for the average  
rabbi to imitate?

MANASSAH YES

- If you value something you pay for it,  
but can't do that w/ rabbis - makes it  
look like a profession like all others

- something "skuzzy" about getting \$ for Torah

- in Talmud, those who take it need to do so

- where people take \$ is the exception

- really should turn down the offer

(don't use Elisha passage)

permitted

- need to survive

- can prove someone be your agent

- should only make provisions

- profession only develops when \$ for P

- AMN's argument is not realistic in our times -

but it can be supported

- he says this needs to stay this way

others argue against this point

see how people respond: Care

9/24/07.

Caro - nagged Mishna

- studying Mishna got him into a trance - wrote what a voice told him.

- Best Josef

- Kiesel Mishna

Commentary to Rambam

- wrote on parts of Rambam 331

- find sources, defend Rambam

- 14<sup>th</sup> C rabbi

- in rare circumstances Caro disagrees w/ Rambam - like very long explanation

Rambam - rabbis of his time were taking \$

→ Caro - clear Rambam is in the minority

None of his proofs work.

Hillel

A: only @ beginning; were many students. \$ only given to some of them

B: if you don't want to benefit can choose not to work  
- did he need to chop wood later?

Hanniah

- quoted \$ would have asked God

- talking about people who, in general want \$.

there is not to earn in a forbidden way

⇒ he is not your everyday rabbi

## Karna

- earned \$ another way, but not a fulltime job
- ⇒ if you can earn \$, can't take \$

## Arjuna:

- waters our fields, fire even though he can pay someone to do it

## Yusef - mortar      Shakel: beams

- Shakel: - fountain: spiritual; Pastor: only on snowy days (to get warm)
- Carpenter's apprentice: blind

m

- merchant ships - can get \$ from far off
- Pandur - only takes \$ from merchants because he is ill

## - Drost of verse about students

→ if about <sup>disabled</sup> 0.1111, would take from afar

- all who are sick can do this

## - chose not to find another way out

- 10 an exceptional circumstance

10/3/07

1:8

study day & night

- best limits on King, need to study Torah so he won't get too drunk & mighty
- what does it mean - all day and all night? part of both?

1:9

Chain of transmission

- no one can get out of study
- don't need social status to be a *ḥasid*
- radical restructuring of society

1:10

- will forget if don't study

1:11

- time into 3<sup>rd</sup> S.
- know what the halakha really is
- *ḥasid* not *ḥasid* in earlier manuscripts
  - ↳ logical learning you can do on your own

1:12

- as little time working as possible
- *ḥasid* - esoteric learning
  - ḥasid* - written in books, learn in public
  - ḥasid* - <sup>esoteric</sup> ~~esoteric~~ - only learn from a teacher, never in public

- 2 types of mysticism

- נִסְתָּר - look @ God or his creation

- נִסְתָּר - <sup>physics, natural</sup> secrets of creation

→ speculative learning

- all of this = rational philosophy

↳ must should it study this, he can justify this, it is Torah (know workings of universe.)

- later only, KTC

favors comprehension / active learning over memorization

- 10 programs depending on one's capacity

question here about how much time to devote to secular subjects

- principle, how it legit applies to our <sup>own</sup> time

- liberally educated human as in ideal?

נִסְתָּר - Husick

- practicalities vs. ideals

- Keshet 30A - Hirsch

- what are the values on which we base our curriculum?

- Division of time? do we sacrifice for Hells?

10/8/07

2:1

- teacher, basic level of ed
  - chesem - obligation to have kids study
    - assumes a political structure
  - predicated on the idea that people are social
- YEN 800: takanat to have teachers

BB 21, 22

- power of people of comm to make takanat
  - keep certain businesses out to help quality of life BUT can't keep teachers out
- luring kids into services today is too messy!  
can't keep them out

what to do:  $\text{ל'נ' } \text{ד'נ'}$  - destroy → hyperbole  
 $\text{ל'נ' } \text{ד'נ'}$  - communicate

- first - officials, men <sup>whole</sup> ~~the~~ city

- world exists only because of breath of school children

Lechem Mishna: Rashi,  $\text{ד'נ'}$  - say waste, physically

Bible  $\text{ד'נ'}$  - destroy utterly.

key Mishna: provocal, not just anger

- goal, get them to a behavior

of texts?

2:2

Yosef Meir: 6 - healthy, 1 - weak

about 5, will 5 complete years

Per laura

10/10 - part of relationship of parents & teachers

don't cancel school for anything

→ 10/10 - new stuff

10/10 - 1st time it is reviewed

get Yom Tov off - Simcha!

- Shabbat - only menucha

2:3 teacher not a talmed Torah

- that person is a professional

- teacher is not dedicated to it as he should be, has skill but we need to protect against negligence

- you need a certain quality of teacher

- reality of how this works in institutions?

2:4

the wife will be in the house of the kids so it is okay for the husband to teach

Yosef Meir



- no discussion of protecting the kids

10/18/07

2:2

S"A YD 245:10

Talmud BB - only her a shoe strap - not too much

→ strips positive statements of the Rabbim

- ~~Does~~ this make a difference?

- MM talks about it as positive

- only comment: if you hurt the student you  
owe for the 5 types of damages

- teacher can't hide behind moral grant of  
power to discipline

- an ~~delict~~ for the court ~~of~~ or  
a ~~no~~ <sup>we</sup> not responsible for  
damages done

- what about contemporary discussion?

- little

- to what extent is the ~~delict~~ determined by  
social norms

2:4

kesel  
Mishna

Mishna @ end of Kiddushin B2

80B-

- how far do we take it - how much control  
do people have?

- is it about suspicion?

- concerns consensual sex not w/ rape at all
- father won't want to be w/ daughter

82A

Bachelor can't teach elementary school?

- Israelites are not suspected as homo.
- whole thing w/ being alone is that people want to do things - natural to want to
- prohibition also on one who isn't married & one whose wife isn't there @ the time

Keef Munn

- normally follow some mishna - here follow discussion in gemarah → one w/ wife
- suspicion same on both sides - but a → has a Q at home

- issues of what happens when you teach children

2:5

- adults went from place to place to find the best teachers
- can a kid do?
- line between learning & safety

2:7

- set up shop in neighborhood okay
- God wants more Torah

BB chapt 2 20B

- can protest open market store
- but not someone doing their trade or  
lots of kids around

reasons.

- environmental quality
- economics

Eating is an exception

- even though it will increase traffic/mess  
or you may poison students

- free trade in education - a consumers product -  
schools will compete

- price will go down

- trad. doesn't want too many controls - not  
like the others

- teachers unions

@ the same time some social control/ standards  
of what they should know - a minimum standard

### 3.1

- all can have crown of Torah (unlike priesthood or kingship)
- Torah is better

10/25

- now in general phrase of Talmud Torah
- <sup>Chap</sup> 2 - communal obligations

### 3.2

- this is rabbinic J. in a summary
- mishna or Tosefta talks about priorities -  
based on weighted <sup>biblical</sup> system (how many mitzvot they do)  
Cohen → Levi → Yisrael
- this is a radical reshaping of all

### 3.3

- talmud before ma'aseh
- practical significance in 3.4

### 3.4

- don't stop Torah to do a mitzvah
- yerusalemi - mitzvah has to be done

### 3.5

- study even if for the wrong reasons
- first thing you were judged on the judgment day
- 107:10 408 - questions about business ethics but  
judged on your study of Torah

3:6

- in contrast ~~to~~ to those who make money of

Torah study

- ideal is elitist in its conception

- elite model no one will do

- why set the bar so high?

3:7

- do work occasionally when you have to

- is this meant for real people or just  
pep in the sky

- ideal is real

3:8

- Nitzavim - you can do it, you can follow what  
God wants you to do

BMSIA: - once Torah is ours, God can't  
determine its meaning (even story)

Eravim  
SSA

- here: warn about someone who is arrogant

- prop. of humble in spirit

- if you have to limit, limit your business

3:9

water flows down, Torah to the humble <sup>too</sup>

⇒ Tolakat 10

- central pursuit of your life

- above wealth, business etc

- spend as little time as possible trying

to do it

- accepted religious value of Torah being central.

- why not just do Torah & be supported by the community

- can't use Torah as a source of income

- mitzvah is diff.

- we need scholars in each comm - have to find a way to support them  $\therefore$  pay them to be rabbis

3:11

- good for you to work

just did it - we probably aren't doing it

3:12

- recite - act of reading is imp

- reading as a private activity only happens in societies where there are lots of books

3:13

- might best time to study

- you will get a reward in the end

4.1

11/8/07

- teach to worthy student or a simple one
- pick students carefully
  - you have to have good student
- if bad, bring them back

Kesef Mishna

Be'achot 28A (27B ff)

- R. depute of R. Gamliel i.e. Yehoshua
  - here - how long will this go on?
- D. language = a point of need
  - Yehoshua - no involved party
  - Akiva - not the family connections (family converted)
  - Elazar b. Azariah - rich, learned, 1st gen of Ezra
    - too young - has to
- Gamliel - high standards -
  - only students in Beit Midrash are those whose outside are like inside
  - Talpash is according to me.
  - preventing Torah from people?

=

need to be worthy! But can't make it too exclusive

- if not worthy try to bring back
- if a? teach.

back to 4:1

- don't give Torah to a fool.
- also rabbi - if he is good you try to learn from him
  - quality of it, not birth or caste
- high standards, but not too high.
- what about people on outer margins?
  - outreach vs meeting standards to come in
  - a certain quality

4:2

- all at some level - not what you necessarily expect.
- easier to learn - students have to be able to ask questions - can't be in too much awe

4:3

"human loudspeaker"

- talks loudly for the row - not necessarily a translator in this case



- don't mention name of rabbi or father - ~~you~~ it is disrespectful

- how to relate to teacher when talking to others about ~~what~~ <sup>what</sup> he taught?

- can you disagree

- today when we learn we can disagree - a matter of fact not of authority - can disagree w/ Plato

- teacher's auth not basis of what is T and F

#### 4.4

- tend to keep explaining for the teacher

- student should keep asking if they don't get it

- reminding of the importance of the teaching

- student gives the rabbi an out - not a battle of equals

⇒ now there is a very human feeling - own thoughts / feelings, gets mad etc.

#### 4.5

- picke over quote - need certain ingredients to learn - the ultimate good.

- don't understand

- complex - not smart

- if they're not working you can get mad at them and humiliate them

- note: this is a mitzvah!

- don't want to insult students - keep them from giving up so make the <sup>in</sup>ame of you

4:6

- settle in

- can do stuff to help them learn

- can ask about something unrelated to urge them to study more

- raise other subjects - but not to embarrass them

4:7

- open dialogue

- don't monopolize the discussion

4:8

- law → <sup>ענין</sup> derivation → <sup>ענין</sup> agadah

- yomach shach - just is - nothing to discuss

- can debate <sup>הכל</sup> <sup>הכל</sup> ~ home

- order here - follows the objective of the class

4:9

- school alone or synagogue
- repeats all we are ~~learning~~ <sup>learning</sup> -
- study of Torah is alone it all!

5:1

11/13

- kavod ha'ra'v
- essence of commandment
- institution
- "professional" Torah students
- learning in relation to ra'v

today

- Can we extend this?
- relation of rabbi & teacher
- can't take smicha away
- to what extent does reverence for teachers play an imp. role
- diff now & then

= 2:100

2:100

- material

- figurative - can find ways to justify elevating parent

→ way of expressing seriousness of

נדרים דברים

- levels of knowing

kesef michna : only your "main rabbi"

gets preference over parent

- rabbi who teaches you most

- in rabbinic system not about you

lineage → democratic, not a

priestly lineage

- not measuring your wisdom against  
anyone else's

- ~~Law~~ <sup>Law</sup> teaches you everything

- all revelation is textual

- teacher puts you in connection w/ heaven

- not about priestly / prophetic

- rebellion against teacher = against God

- note Moses a rabbi

- from Talmud - symbolic?

- how far to take it - limitations on  
student

5:2

- can't rule on a case when no is there

- rhetorical move to express disapproval

Muzayyt Mamoniat

- student of R. Meir of Rottenberg

רמ' 3' חק נכוח | כ"ח

questions about issues - don't answer

- theoretical ?'s can answer - not an actual answer to an actual ?

- if a standard answer - you can give the answer  $\Rightarrow$  you don't want person to make a mistake

SA YD <sup>2nd</sup> 242 (16<sup>th</sup> C)

Holukah Z: same

3. Same - teach

1 answer: you can disagree on a talukhi  
 theory or ruling if he has proof  
 that law follows him

15th C Germany (K<sup>+</sup>)  $0.7 \cdot 10^{16} \text{ g}$   $\text{d}(\text{CO}_2)$

-if you have proof it's wrong can you disagree?

- If its kind of clear in texts seem to support talmid, why not disagree?

trad of disagreeing

- some evidence, but not <sup>just</sup> a shadow of  
a doubt

→ case where people can disagree

- printed books available to all - so  
nature of korod ta'row.

One can answer these questions

- you should give a reading you know/or think  
is true

- don't want to undermine the institution  
korod ta'row serves purposes other than  
restricting the flow of info or  
centralizing power.

- halakah should be truth - not about who  
teaches it to you.

5:3

- 12 mil - a far piece - diff comm.

- when truth is at stake - correct action -

then if there is an <sup>idol</sup> ~~idol~~ <sup>this</sup> hump  
korod ta'row

~~raw~~ died → not all can teach, only if  
have proper authority

→ K.D. / K.C.D.E

→ Conn says he has reached  
a point of ~~the~~ being qualified  
to answer questions

→ teacher gives a letter to certify someone has  
learned enough

→ now CCAR only accepts letters from certain  
institutions

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# COMPOSITION

Erica Seeger Asch

Capstone Project

Journal

February, 2006

**100 Sheets • 200 Pages**

**9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> IN x 7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> IN (24.7 cm x 19 cm)**

**Wide Ruled**



# Women & Study

1:13

♀ can get <sup>3x</sup> for study not as much as a

♂, not commanded.  
אין צו:

But - father shouldn't teach daughter

- most ♀ can't handle it

- turn words of Torah to <sup>אין צו</sup>, teaching her <sup>אין צו</sup>

- just oral Torah, written Torah is okay <sup>אין צו</sup>

1:1

♀, slaves, minors are exempt.

But obligation for father to teach son

אין צו <sup>אין צו</sup> דאס איז אים צו לערנען

♀ not obligated to learn so aren't obligated to teach.

1:1

Kesef Mishna Kiddushin 29

- source for all that is above.

1:13

⊗ Sotah 20B/4B

Elder teaching <sup>אין צו</sup> [15:10]

→ added in Mishna because it is in the gemara

→ couldn't literally be true

Proverbs 8:12 is scriptural basis →

when Torah comes so does <sup>אין צו</sup>

Yose: Torah only on one who stands naked before it  
Yochanan: one who makes oneself like they are not  
(<sup>not</sup> in existence)

Question: is it 710K?

- according to Rambam: no <sup>not in written Torah, since</sup> but prohibit it
- according to Elizer in the Talmud: yes

### Reflections

- 113
- Rambam's first statement presents no problem <sup>not a</sup> command
  - prohibition on dod to teach
    - "far away from our study or teaching as commanded?"
    - "only so many hours in the day!"
- BUT that's not the justification, it is about the very nature of Q, which undermines the first statement
- this leads to a distinction between written & oral Torah as basis is now Q's <sup>mental</sup> inherent ~~the~~ ability to get stuff.

1:1 ♀ might not be obligated to learn or teach in the traditional sense (of written or oral Torah), but they are obligated to learn and to teach issues of law as they pertain to the family sphere

- kashrut, Shabbat, niddah, etc.

- while they might not study this, they have to do it correctly

the reading of Deut 11: 19 is a narrow one and it could have easily been read as referring to children, rather than sons

- question of if it is 710K is an important one.

- there seems, to me, to be no scriptural basis for this. The <sup>proverb</sup> ~~proverb~~ verse seems to apply to all people, not just ♀. Also, the explanations by Yosi & Yochanan apply to ♂ and ♀ both.

- ♀ sexuality inherently more dangerous for ♀. probably according to the rabbis.

But this is not explicit sexuality but a sense of being open before Torah not one of the opposite sex.

- in any case - the verse is not a prohibition and even if the Deut verse refers only to ♂ it does not exclude ♀, it just means it is not a mitzvah for them to do so.

דברים י"ט ע"ב

Deut 11:19

- if ones are obligated to teach a person they are obligated to teach themselves
- if not, not
- seems like it is okay to teach ♀ if want to do so.

BUT it is ג'י"ג from Sotah 21B  
 when learn Torah also have <sup>clearness / nakedness</sup> ג'י"ג

Kashi - do things out of sight

halakam - turn to 'י"ג

Fandarin

- ♀ have ג'י"ג, ג'י"ג (Mena'hot 110A proof text)
- possible ♀ will reject Torah, act improperly

## Contradiction?

- Niddah 45B

- I have more  $\gamma \gamma \gamma$  than  $\sigma \rightarrow$

Gen 2:22  $\gamma \gamma \gamma \gamma \gamma \gamma = \gamma \gamma \gamma$  more to  $\gamma$

## Solution

-  $\gamma \gamma \gamma \gamma \gamma \gamma$

↳ fundamental concepts, basis, foundation  
get at at once - propositions  
↳ after  $\gamma \gamma \gamma$ , deep thinking, long trail - proofs.

- need a strong foundation 1st otherwise will go  
astray.

- so, Rabbi E. Rabinowicz is right, it is dangerous

$\gamma \gamma \gamma$  break before  $\sigma \gamma \gamma$  (Niddah 45B)

-  $\gamma \gamma \gamma$  break is too early, it spills

=

Some prohibit teaching Torah (Sotah 21B) <sup>perch.</sup> Sotah 30.  
- Rabinowicz: only oral prohibited, not written

Source?  $\gamma \gamma \gamma \gamma \gamma \gamma$  → only oral Torah, can  
turn  $\gamma \gamma \gamma$  around, lead astray.

### Response:

- ♀ who knows truth
- for most ♀ a waste of time
- <sup>took</sup> - tiffet - young daughter - will go astray
- but if ♀ want to do this go for it, its good

⇒ this is a ep' D

### Reflections

- <sup>starts</sup> ~~sequence~~ and ends of same idea - it is okay.

157 vs 182

- really an interesting way to address this particular problem and to resolve the contradiction
  - a desire to find a <sup>biological</sup> scientific basis as well as a textual one
- ♀ do tend to mature earlier and are generally thought of as more intuitive & less logical (look at recent debates over ♀ in science!)
- a foundation is necessary before going into deeper understanding.

- in general I agree w/ his argument, but not  
that I skip X82 all together - all people  
need a foundation before digging deeper

### - going astray

- how often does this really happen? Maybe  
in the 20<sup>th</sup> C when Epstein was writing  
people were starting to leave the  
community, but its hard to imagine in  
earlier times when communities ~~were~~<sup>were</sup> more  
isolated that people would stop  
following the laws just because they  
were learning.

- How often (for O<sup>+</sup> & ♀) does thinking lead to  
action?

- is thinking the wrong things dangerous in  
and of itself? because it leads to action?

- either way I don't think ♀ are more  
likely to be lead astray.

### - oral vs written

- true that oral is harder to understand, but  
it is all about the context.

- presumably people won't study by themselves - even  $\rightarrow$  are guided to find the right answers in texts.
- in fact I might say studying written Torah w/o proper preparation is more dangerous as it is actually understood. If one studies oral Torah w/o guidance (she is more likely to be confused than draw the wrong conclusions)

### Response

- a mystery to me why this is here at all!
- it seems like it goes against all earlier arguments he made
- maybe has to face the fact that some of us have the intellectual capacity for such study and is up against a tradition that says they don't - hard position to be in and even harder today than 200 years ago -  $\therefore$  tries to find biological basis
- a better argument if this is about people



who are  $\epsilon$  ment capable rather than whole genders -  
(ie not all  $\sigma$  can study mystical texts, are  
great scholars etc.)

- what implications does this text have in terms of  
teaching / study for the mentally handicapped  
(both  $\sigma$  &  $\epsilon$ )?

- teach as they can learn?

- don't teach what might lead astray?

- how do we decide what that is?

## Study and Action

1:3 one must hire a teacher to teach his child  
if ones Father doesn't teach him, he must educate  
himself

study

Deut 5:1 must learn, guard and do them  
also - study before action since study leads to action  
but action does not lead to study

Kaddishin 40B

? study or action greater?

study

Tarten - action ; akivah - study

all: study since it leads to action

Yosi - study better, do it first

- one is first judged on <sup>words of</sup> ~~Torah~~ Torah

Babai Kama 16B-17A

action

- an academy established at Hezekiah's grave

- put a Torah on Aham's coffin and said this establish  
what was written here

Now: take out Torah don't place it

rest it, don't say it was established

note: Fulfilled, not taught

R. Yohanan: asked the question and didn't answer  
until he finished his tasks - implication - action greater

Mur: Study greater, leads to action

Schurin: one refers to study, one to teaching

④ ⇒ study < action < teaching

Tosafot דנא דל.

Rashi - action better?

Kiddushin - study better

so. s"p. includes studying Torah

④ but: teaching brings a large number to  
action so it is greatest

דנא דל

- action better - do right thing - Pirke Arot

- study better - tells you what to do

- restates Kiddushin passage

- Rabbi Yohanan does first - so action first (Baba  
kama)

- his action before teaching but ones

our learning might come first

- difference between ones our actions and  
that of others <sup>teaching</sup>

## Reflections:

1.3

study leads to action

Certainly there is learning about something can lead one to practice it

- note the transformation to

Here students who learn more about ritual in

Jerusalem and then begin

to practice more.

action does not lead to study

J. Disraeli. Look at all the people who take up religious acts and only later learn about them. Actions can inspire

Curiosity. (why do we stand for the Stars when others sit?)

- I do think this is rarer than the first case but it certainly happens - especially if one is offered the opportunity to study.

## Study is teaching

- study is a pursuit that is often done for an individual - even if it is done

in fact it is to further one person.

- teaching is something one does to help a large group of people. It is communal and has a wider impact. Teaching leads to more action (assuming those you teach are studying and are then doing actions)

- it is nice that the rabbis are able to elevate their preferred mode of relating to the world here and in terms of furthering Judaism I agree that teaching is the most important.

But → in order to teach one must first have studied

→ the teacher's actions are important. If they don't take proper actions they will not be able to effectively teach.

- you need to have the respect of your students for them to learn - this is about integrity in actions

So: in order to teach <sup>well</sup>, you must study and act

## action

- in the context<sup>in which</sup> this was written action means following mitzvot. Study is important because it leads to following mitzvot and living your life the way you should.
- what is the action we are looking for in the Reform movement?
  - more observance? (service attendance, tallit, candle lighting, etc)
  - more connection to the Jewish and temple community?
  - tikun olam?
  - greater Jewish identity?
  - I would say all of these - living fuller, more Jewish lives.

But: it is also important to have action in the context of the non-Jewish community - the broader world.

If we want to change the world we need action - working to help others and fight injustice. This is an important part of Reform Judaism we can't just ignore by teaching all the time (or staying in our Jewish world)

- what implications does this text have  
for how we spend our time as  
readers?

1:7

- teaching and action (leading  
services, life cycle meetings, etc)  
are done but study is often  
not

- study is the foundation - we <sup>need</sup> ~~read~~

It if we are to do the other two

- maybe rabbis should have  
continuing education requirements!

3:11

## Money for Teaching

1:7

- if there is a custom to pay a salary <sup>to teach kids</sup> then pay P
- pay until the kids can read the whole written law
- no pay for ~~orals~~ oral Torah
- Deut 4:5 Moses learns from God free and teaches for free  $\Rightarrow$  we must teach for free too
- if you must pay to learn you come
- it is forbidden to take money for teaching

3:10

- if you study Torah, don't work and take charity you are in big trouble (no world to come!)
- $\Rightarrow$  forbidden to benefit from words of <sup>Torah</sup> ~~torah~~
- don't use it to make yourself great or for practical purposes (a spade to dig with)

## Reflections

- not taking money represents an ideal that might not be practical
- today we need to pay those who teach
  - not just rabbis - if we want qualified Sunday School teachers we have to pay them too.



- distinction between written and oral law is interesting
- is written the foundation so you must learn it even if \$ has to happen?
- oral law is nice but not necessary?
- if we have limited resources we should concentrate on everyone getting the basics and sacrifice higher learning
- what implications does this have for how we place our teachers?
- should our more qualified teachers teach lower grades/ more basic subjects since that is the most important learning?
- Torah is set up as above all else - that is why you can't benefit from it.
  - it is important that Torah is given a higher status than, say, geometry but if not paying someone to teach means no one will teach that is cutting off your nose to spite your face

## Random on Avot 4:7

4:7 Don't make the Torah an axe/spade to dig with  
it.

- refers to the oral Torah

### Issue

you shouldn't get \$ for teaching Torah.

- most people won't like what I'm going to say

- don't value Torah as a tool to make a living  
if so (take \$), no life in world to come

- it's now the practice that people are deceived  
into thinking it's an obligation to pay  
their teachers! but this has no  
foundation in the Torah

- the sages didn't take \$ for this

- some rich, some poor but if they needed  
money they worked to get it (not from teaching)

- Hillel had a profession

- Hannuniah ben Dosa subsisted on practically  
nothing

- it's a desecration of God's name to say the Torah  
is work like any other type of work.

- Those in the Talmud who took  $\beta$   
for teaching Torah were either  $\text{שנים}$   
(and couldn't work) or old (and couldn't  
work)

- only choice other than death

- Rabbi Yosi used to carry beams and he said  
it warmed him the heart was happy to  
do the work

- Some use the example of Elsha to say you  
can stay with people and eat their food  
but you really shouldn't do even  
that!

- just meal of matzah allowed

### דעבן

- A man has a vineyard and a  
thief is stealing the raisins he leaves  
out to dry.

- Rabbi Tarfon comes to take the gleanings -  
they are left over and <sup>thus</sup> permitted

- The owner thinks <sup>R.</sup> Tarfon is the thief and puts him in a bag to take him and throw him into the river
- R. Tarfon sees how bad his situation is and says "Woe to you, Tarfon, that this will kill you."
- The thief hears this, knows he has the wrong guy and runs away
- The rest of his life R. Tarfon is distressed. He was saved because of his Torah learning rather than paying the guy (he was rich).

⇒ this is an extreme example of how one should not use his status of scholar even to save his life!

Rambam draws an outer boundary here

## #2: CHA

- in a time of famine R. Judah agreed to feed only the scholars
- R. Jonathan b. Amram came to get food and was not recognized

- he asks for food like one would feed a dog or a crow

- he feeds him.

- Later he is upset about this but learns it is a rabbi and feels better.

H

- okay to give special favors to scholars

- can give them benefits in selling their goods (open early)

- a privilege from God like to be to Levi  
and gifts to  
1. the Cohen

- exempt from certain taxes

- people

## Reflections

- MM provides extreme examples of just how careful one needs to be of benefiting from one's status as a scholar

- this is not workable in the real world. - rabbis need to make a living and do so from teaching.

- However one can support this

Argument and it makes sense that teaching  
Teachers should not be seen as a profession  
Just like any other.

2 issues here:

[A] people who have this as their only  
profession (cabbies)

by 'rubbish'

They must support themselves,  
as they don't have time to do  
any other work.

- people want  
the cabbies to  
have a  
certain  
standard  
of living

- does taking \$ cheapen that?

- worse to take \$ for doing  
life cycle events!

- on call all the time - more work  
than other professions.

- times have just changed!

[B] PS teachers who teach part time.

- can you get qualified people if you  
don't pay them?

- need a certain level of compensation

- for from making the ~~job~~ job looked  
down upon, it makes people respect teachers

more. In our society, \$ is a mark of respect

**Point** This is not realistic

But brings up a good question. we don't want this to be a profession like any other or just a financial transaction

**?**

- How do you find a balance between fair compensation and seeing the rabbi as different than your dry cleaner

Are there certain values we must take with us into contract negotiations?

- does this caution us against excessive compensation?

- is it important for rabbis to find meaningful activities outside of their professional life (yes!) Can we use this as a proof text?

## Caro - kesef Mishna on MT 3:10

- a rare circumstance where he disagrees w/ MM.
- usually defends MM & funds his sources - here he has to speak out. MM clearly in the minority here
- proves MM's groups don't work.

=

Most disagree w/ MM

Hillel: he worked in the beginning before he could support himself w/ teaching

Hanniah: wasn't forbidden for him to take \$, just didn't want to do so

- nothing wrong w/ making if that's what you want to do

- R. Yosi did the work to keep himself warm in the cold. The sweat heated him.

- it really was okay for Eliezer to take the food and housing

there are two ways - to take and not to take. Each is legitimate.

- one should still want to work for the right reasons and not just do it to



get \$, but it's okay to earn a living by teaching as well.

- If you teach for the sake of heaven and you can't make \$ another way, you need the \$  
You can take it

3 divisions

- 1) \$ from parents for teaching
- 2) or \$ from friends & family close to Torah
- 3) give judgements

⇒ only forbidden to take \$ if you have another way of earning \$

- religious knowledge needs to be transmitted so the community can continue.

this requires payment

- for a person wants to get by on his own that is totally fine
- everyone takes \$ - it's needed

- don't want to forget the Torah because there are no teachers.

## Reflections

-This speaks especially to our day as robbers ~~can't~~ can't really do other work and be a robber - there is just no time to do so.

-The caution of doing it for the right reasons is important

-we don't want to have a bunch of robbers who are just in it for the \$

- Should have a love of teaching and learning for its own sake

-transmission of religious knowledge requires full time study (if not) no time to work. How are the students supported? What is the communal obligation to them?

-Should HUC be free?

-should Israel pay people to study all day?

- In a world of limited \$, how  
do you allocate?

- is there value in people  
working outside of the  
Jewish world?

- should it be encouraged  
by paying people less \$?

I can  
imagine  
knowing  
this

- There is a value in paying something  
for ~~an~~ your education - you take it  
more seriously and appreciate it  
much more.

There is a value in doing some kind of  
non-rabbi work to get a taste of  
the real world.

## Reflections on Technology

(A)

- I started out writing my journal as  
can be seen in the previous pages. I did  
this for several reasons

① writing allows for more pictures, arrows,  
circles and more creative placement of  
text

I can  
insert  
know  
insert!

So why list here?

② I didn't want to have my computer in front  
of me when reviewing texts.

it was just - ME (A)

- Text [A]

- Journal [A]

and - Dictionary / other tools [A]

- this felt more authentic - it was the  
way people studied texts for thousands of  
years before computers - it just felt  
wrong to have a screen there  
while working through the text. \*

\* In the interest of full disclosure I did  
occasionally use the computer for vocabulary [A]

③ I wanted to thank ?

- Computers ~~compare~~ <sup>encourage</sup> on  
certain kind of thinking  
[or non thinking]

- LINEAR

- TYPING NOT THINKING

(faster!)

- BULLET POINTS

- TECH

LIMITED

writing requires another kind of thinking

- PICTURES

- DELIBERATE

(slower!)

- MEASURED

- PERSONAL

(Computer not in  
the way)

④ writing requires more deliberate  
choices

- it takes longer so you think  
more carefully

(C) I thought of a journal as "writing" not typing.

- it is not as much stream of consciousness

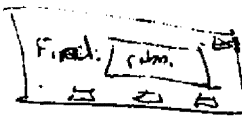
It forced me to summarize and [condense] texts and to think about what they really meant.

(B) after awhile I switched to the computer. I did this for several reasons...

(1) My writing is hard to read <sup>also?!?</sup>  
I can't read what I have written sometimes. <sup>why?</sup>

(2) It is so slow S L O W.  
Typing is much more efficient and was a better use of my time

(3) It is harder to access

→ No word search   
- no scrolling through pages  
- no spell check <sup>1/2</sup>  
- harder to edit

- harder to share with  
others  
lead me  
- bind this as a photo  
copy of Page 8?  
- how do I store this,

### IN CONCLUSION

- It is good to get away from  
the computer every so often.  
It makes me think.

BUT

it is a lot less convenient  
and HARDER to use

The End