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# TOWARD A CONTEMPORARY COURSE OF STUDY FOR THE REFORM JEWISH MIDDLE SCHOOL

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## THE DIGEST

The purpose of offering an alternative program of Jewish religious education in the Reform Middle School is to incorporate what we know about the psycho-social needs of the students into the program. The religious school is faced with the fact that children today are more worldly, in part due to television, and are less interested in hearing than in doing. Sociologists and educational psychologists' surveys relate that the students are in many cases being stifled by the curricular approaches which are used in today's schools.

To the end that some or all of the child's needs should be met, some innovative curricula are now appearing. In the survey taken of Jewish religious schools around the United States, major complaints were related to the lack of motivation of both faculty and students. Educators complained that parents were not committed to religious school programs and this affected their children.

Most of the congregational schools surveyed used textbooks and a more or less "traditional" cognitive approach to the presentation of the course materials. Some educators, however, did take the initiative and wrote their own materials which then were duplicated for the faculty and students to use in addition to or instead of textbooks. The survey also indicated that there is much attention being paid to the place of the Jew in the world which surrounds him.

The desire to stimulate and titulate the interests of the inherently creative students which our schools attempt to teach, led to the idea of presenting them a totally new setting. At the same time that they are learning how to work together and develop their peer groups, they are also creating a production which includes a challenge to all their crea-

tive potential. Now the student has the chance to express himself as he wants to. Expressions of the individual's interests and abilities now can proceed in artistic or creative forms: through poetry, music, painting, singing, talking, baking, sculpture, drawing, etc., as well as essay writing.

Though by no means a panacea, this approach to a curriculum offers the teacher and the student the opportunity to learn the facts, and then to do something with them. The excitement of discovery and creation, the incentive to do what one's talents and predispositions are capable of, and the potential for development of a group of interested and motivated students cannot be overlooked. The television program format is accessible to all subjects and any area or topic can fall into the program. In this approach, the needs of the developing child - both religiously and psychosocially - can be met.

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To all those who love enough

to want to teach, and

To all those who taught me,

that I might teach others.

# PREFACE

The results of some preliminary research suggested that the approximate grade level at which our religious school child was no longer desirous of attending his school was after the third grade. For the first three or four years of student life our Reform Jewish students are happy and actually want to go to the school. Within one, or at the most two, years this desire dissipates. Our question was, "Why?"

To gather more detailed information about this syndrome of religious school life a detailed survey was prepared and sent out. It yielded a fine response from Educators, Principals and Rabbis throughout the country. Most of the collated information that was received was related to the curriculum that the individual school was using, and the effectiveness thereof. As the survey was limited only to grades four, five and six it was set to focus in on the problems of the students in the first years following those in which they become "turned off" toward school.

At the same time, research into the field of educational psychology, human growth and development, and sociology led closer to another real concern: the psycho-social needs of our children in these formative years in their Jewish lives. Without knowing which of these important needs must be fulfilled, even the best program for the school will not enjoy the success that it deserves.

The plan was to cull various curricula, both Jewish and non-Jewish, to find a sampling of the very best that was being offered and then to place that type of curriculum into the Reform Jewish School Grades 4, 5, 6. A number of curricular programs were analyzed, and the results noted. It seemed apparent that both the Jewish and the non-Jewish worlds of education were fighting the battle of student disinterest.

Once the curricula were sufficiently combed, their ideas were

superimposed upon the facts and practices established by the national survey. From the joining of these two parts plus the addition of the analysis of the psycho-social needs of the students of this age/grade level an attempt at a new curricular mode was undertaken. It is called "A Television Program."

"A Television Program" combines affective and cognitive techniques into a vehicle that allows the students freedom to pursue their own talents and creative abilities while learning. Depending upon the motivation and interests of the instructor this program may even be broadcast, but its preparation will give the students a new type of learning experience, and one in which their parents too will be closely involved.

In sum, this is an attempt to stimulate the interests of the students so that they will not be "turned off" to their Judaism as young children. A warm childhood experience lasts a lifetime.

# CHAPTER ONE

## "A Justification for Change"

The world of the seventies and eighties and the nineties is an ever-changing and fast paced one. It is a world which requires a new kind of teaching for a different type of student, and an alternate curricular approach for the new needs which this student faces.

> Then we need a different kind of human being to be able to live in a world which changes perpetually, which doesn't stand still. I may go as far as to say for the educational enterprise: What's the use of teaching facts? Facts become obsolete so darned fast! [1]

Abraham Maslow may have overstated the problem, but his analysis is still valid. The world is changing without concern for those caught up in the race. In our case, the young student is the one most involved in the pursuit of understanding and the desire for knowledge which is ever preceding him. Without an alteration of the contemporary Reform Jewish school approach to the problem of educating children in the age of technology, they will shut Judaism out of their lives as easily as they shut off the television set in the living room.

The environment of the student certainly is one of the most worldly of any age. The bombardment by television, radio, motion pictures, newspapers and the like only heighten the exposure that the child gets to the world beyond his community. Challenged by the outside world, he should be permitted the possibility of learning how to understand himself so that he will eventually be capable of coping with the world.

Of necessity the question will arise: but change what? Are the thousands of years of Jewish history no longer valid in the contemporary milieu? Can we dispense with the study of the traditional sources and

texts, and still maintain a program of study called Judaism?

The proposals to eliminate all or some of the above are in bad judgment. Redefinition of the needs of the student in the Middle-school grades 4, 5, 6, will better provide us with a clue as to how the program should be approached. Sources, texts, music, history are all indispensible parts of the Jewish experience, and are necessary for the study of Judaism. Change must come, however, in the area of how this material is presented to the student and whether he can adapt the importance of the values and concepts of Judaism to his own life.

> No subject matter is a sacred and eternal part of any fixed- for-all-time curriculum...(if) efforts don't fit the particular person...(education) must be at least partially a waste of time. [2]

It is also well to note that not every curriculum will fit into the life pattern of every student. But the attempt to integrate as many students as possible into a learning program has to be the concern.

Our need is not to determine at this juncture what is the best way to promote student involvement, but rather to examine the area of change. Often the failings of the Jewish community fall back on the shoulders of the religious schools for "not doing their job well enough", whatever "well enough" means.

> In seeking the means to assure the survival of the Jewish community, "education" is universally offered as the panacea...so fortunes of money are poured into the building and budgets of schools without any thoughts as to what constitutes a sound Jewish education. [3]

A few years ago, Dr. Solomon B. Freehof offered what he thought was the test of a curriculum's effectiveness when he stated:

> It is our duty in the education of adults and children to establish a firm conviction of God's presence. His beneficent governance of the universe, His infinity yet His nearness to every searching heart. This is

> the ultimate aim af all our education and the test of its effectiveness.

If, as the famed Doctor claims, the requirement is for the student to leave the religious education program of our schools with a greater appreciation of the Master of the universe, then we have to some degree failed. For, as we shall see later (in the conclusions of the Survey) there are too few indications of the teaching of God-related course and subjects.

Nevertheless, Dr. Freehof does cite a major reason for promoting curricular change. Our students have to be made to 'feel' and 'experience' those parts which when put together constitute religion. Additionally, just as religion is expected to provide certain benefits, (i.e. as in time of bereavement), the same religion has to be seen as offering personal opportunities for expression and a better understanding of self. In other words, the Jewish religion is not something which one finds, and extracts from it what he needs at a particular moment. Rather it and Reform Jewish education in particular should avail students of the chance to 'find themselves' before a tragedy forces religion on them.

This sense of 'smorgasbording' - taking from religious education without putting anything of self into it - is reflective of the dissociation from curricula by both faculty and students.

The following analysis of the failings of our religious school programs, gives credence to the proposal for immediate change in our systems to avoid a lack of depth:

> The education provided in the schools by and large makes no greater demands of faith, knowledge, or action commitment than what the mass of people are ready to accept, or indeed have already accepted. In other words, Jewish education can be and often is

as shallow as the life it is purporting to enrich. [5]

If the programs are falling short of their intended purposes, we may face one or more of these problems: 1.) the faculties of our schools are not giving a maximum effort, or 2.) our curricula fails to satisfy the contemporary needs of our students. More than likely the efforts of the teachers will remain a constant, although increased knowledge-input may have some effect on their success in the classroom. Therefore, it is for the builders of curricula to find the point at which students begin to experience for themselves the "value" of what they are doing and learning, so that going to religious school is not a chore but rather something vital and exciting in which to be participating. "The schools should be helping the children to look within themselves, and from this self knowledge derive a set of values." [6]

At the opening ceremony of the Lincoln Center Festival, Archibald MacLeish was remembered.

> Information without human understanding is like an answer without its question - meaningless. And human understanding is only possible through the arts. It is the work of art that creates the human perspective in which information turns to truth. [7]

To the degree that "art" is considered broadly as the expression of the individual among his peers, this statement is valuable for our study. It is not that drawing, painting, singing and dancing are inherently so valuable, though they are important. Rather it is that they permit the young student to more fully bring his personality and abilities into the classroom and onto a canvas or a reel of tape.

Realizing that the "arts" are a medium through which the teacher offers experiences to the usually captive audience of students, the next step is to organize such activities as would "bring out" the child enough to envelop him in the experience. This we shall do in a later chapter.

From the situations with which the student is confronted, the hope is to bring him closer to his Judaism, and make him feel more responsive to the entire Jewish community. It is terribly important that, "Jewishness must become in the child's life not the embodiment of prohibitions but rather a happy and meaningful experience." [8] This is a goal fondly to be pursued throughout all of Jewish education, not merely in the formative years. The effect of a successful system of teaching and learning is in the continuing practice of what was absorbed.

Nevertheless philosophy, theology and history present barriers to younger children because they aren't comfortable with this type of cognitive study. To this problem the instructor must be prepared to translate and apply what is of importance in the study to the life of the individual child. [9] As Hyman Pomerantz maintains:

> A systematic accumulation of facts by our students about our people's history and culture is important - but we must go far beyond this goal. To be effective we must reach the minds and hearts of our students. We must help them develop attitudes and values which will make them finer men and women. [10]

It is this sort of reasoning that prompts the decision to re-evaluate former curricula and to proceed into the realm of a new creative curriculum.

Dewey said, "Education is life, and not the preparation for life." [11] This philosophy sits well with this proposal for changing the curriculum, because for too long Jewish education has attempted to promote books and classrooms as the decisive factors in education. "Classrooms and books are but important instruments to be used in education, the decisive factors are activity, experience, life!" [12]

With the child as the target, the realization of his needs and desires becomes all the more important to the curriculum. Every child is

an entity who possesses inclinations of his own as well as personal interests, and these must be taken into account. To this thrust we add:

> ...the identification for specific educational concern of the non-intellect side of learning: the side having to do with emotions, feelings, interests, values and character. [13]

This helps focus the attachment that may develop between the student and his religion, or between the student and the continuum of tradition which is called Judaism. Now we must explore the question of 'what does the student DO or FEEL?' in order to participate in that continuum. Initially, we know that the child's interest is waning. The first few years of his religious education offer excitement, and challenge and he is almost universally committed. As he approaches the fourth grade a change takes place which places education in the classroom out of his priorities.

A suggestion of a possible course of action comes from the Summerhill project.

> Books are the least important apparatus in a school. All that any child needs is the three-R's; the rest should be tools and clay and sports and theater and paint and freedom. [14]

This is not the perfect answer, for there is no perfect answer. But what Neill does in Summerhill is an attempt to present the child as the center of the educational process, with his needs for creativity and self-expression. In Maslow's The Farther Reaches of Human Nature, he speaks of the stifling of creativeness in later life.

> This kind of primary creativeness is very probably a heritage of every human being. It is a common and universal kind of thing. Certainly it is found in all healthy children. It is the kind of creativeness that any healthy child had and which is then lost by most people as they grow up. [15]

Learning is not just rote, but experience and life. The students of "Summerhill" are taught values, "Not to have much, not to use much, but to be much." No less should the curriculum of the Reform Middle School place its emphasis upon the production of the kind of Jew of whom it can be said, "He is someone of whom to be proud."

At present the religious school structure follows the pattern of the public schools in many ways which are detrimental to its proper functioning. Initially, there is the general assumption that the goal of religious and secular education is some sort of a prize: a diploma, presents, or in the case of the public schools, a good job:

> A kid does eight years of grammar school so that he can make a good high school, and then does four years in a good college so he can make I.B.M. [16]

Maybe the turn should be back to "Torah Lishmah" so that the student will study of his own free will those subjects that arouse his interest and challenge his abilities. But another opinion would have us dissociate from the public school/religious school conflict altogether.

> We somehow see our task as finding a way to give our children as much Jewish education as we can, given the requirements of American education (emphasis is his).. By continuing this division between American studies and Jewish studies we persist in granting authority to American Values (which are dead). ...Is there not sufficient value in Jewish tradition to make it the organizing principle of our children's total education? [17]

The Levy's assumption here is that the educative process begins when the child begins attending school, be it religious or secular. This, in fact, is not the case, for education begins at a very early stage in the life of an individual. More importantly, it is at this age of first-learning that the process must be made palatable and even pleasurable for the child. Education of the young must incorporate the love of learn-

ing so that the child later develops and grows. [18]

> Man's joy in creating seems diminished; the mass of man is engaged in meaningless labor - offering nothing in itself - merely providing buying power through which "real life" is required to begin after five in the afternoon. [19]

Labor certainly is not to be frowned upon, for the Talmud Sanhedrin 29 a mentions the dictum that the obligation of the father is to teach the son both Torah and a trade. This would imply that the creativity of the child would be fostered and not suppressed, for in Judaism the arts are a part of life; creativity in these areas in "natural". [20]

The home is still the most important educational influence in the life of a child, but much of the potential of the home-as-training-ground has been lost and shuffled off on to the religious and secular schools. Parents are delegating the responsibility to others but because of this, the parents are shirking their responsibilities in the areas in which they could be more supportive. Schools are receiving an overabundance of this delegated authority, and this does cause conflicting standards for the young child.

The process of education is multi-facetted receiving thrusts from various sides with differing emphases. Eugene Borowitz suggests the crux of Jewish Education and at the same time mentions the major problem which it faces:

> Jewish education is an act of faith with those who set us in authority...Not one moment of passionate espousal which obliterates all doubts and closes all questions, but a life of doing which...does not deny its duties or reject its responsibilities. [21]

The faith in teachers in our religious schools can only be substantiated by teaching with dimension. When a child hears, he may remember. When he sees, he may understand. But when <u>he does</u>, then he knows. [22] This will be the emphasis of this presentation: to explain that the child has

psycho-social needs which must be met; that he explore by himself, and learn and question that which we loosely call Judaism; and finally that our fourth, fifth and sixth graders need to be involved in their religion in order to maintain their earlier commitment.

Abraham Maslow offers the suggestion that we take the word "religious" out of its narrow context and expand it:

> We must take the word "religious" out of its narrow context...and distribute it in principle throughout the whole of life. Religion becomes then not one social institution among others, but rather a state of mind achievable in almost any activity of life, if this activity is raised to a suitable level of perfection. [23]

This attitude is also reflected in a work much ahead of its time written in 1929 in which Maslow claims that what educators might better look for is the training of a person who is, "the new kind of human being... the process person, the creative person, the improvising person, the self-trusting, courageous person." [24]

In the first three years of Jewish education there is much material from which the instructor can cull to make the activity of the day interesting: holiday preparations, stories and pictures to be drawn, candles and challah and wine, tallit and kipah and shofar, etc. When the child begins to mature both physically and mentally (about the age of 10 or 11) his interest and capacity is beyond this elementary activity plan and he is ready for something else new, challenging and different. And it is for the school to provide this environment for the Middle-schooler who does not outwardly show any Jewish needs.

In some areas of Jewish education we cannot follow Dewey, to cater to the child's overt needs, for he doesn't seem to have any. [25] We begin from a decision that education is appropriate in the Jewish setting and

then have to impose "needs" upon the students, in some cases, so that they will respond to what we see are the 'needs' of Jewish children.

Still there is reason to assume that some curricular change may be accomplished for the wrong reason; namely, that with the increasing emphasis upon Judaism as a culture and as making a thrust into the modern Western World, changes have to be made in the Jewish school curricula to more carefully select the materials which will be offered. As if curricula were shown for the edification of the entire non-Jewish world. [26] This is going beyond the problem of meeting the needs of our children into another realm.

Rather the emphasis of the curriculum for the Reform Jewish Middle School is toward creation of a system of values which the student may carry into life: a system of understandings of what he is, of worth and significance. Regardless of whether our student masters the fact sheets, he will know that he is Jewish and that he has a responsibility to his Judaism because it is important to him. "Our real commitments generally go where our feelings lead them." [27] Rationality without feeling leaves an empty feeling after the insight has faded.

> We cannot think solely in terms of a rational interpretation of the Bible or a rational interpretation of rules of behavior. We have to remember that this must be coordinated with something that they (children/students) will <u>feel</u> and <u>experience</u> in another sense. [28]

Many of our children have not come out of the religious schools happy and satisfied. Rather their attitude is negative and angry. Therefore catering to their psychological and social needs in a new framework of value-exploration may be the approach toward finding the better curriculum. It has been said, "the movement toward psychological health is also the movement toward spiritual peace and social harmony". And after

all, what is Judaism or Jewish education trying to accomplish if not these ends?

# CHAPTER TWO

## "Psycho-social Needs of Middle-schoolers"

The Babylonian Talmud in Tractate Avodah Zarah 16 says that "one learns only what one desires to learn." Therefore it is our responsibility to find out what it is that makes a child of a certain age want to learn one thing, but not another. In other words, we must now explore the factors which act within and upon a child of Middle School age, Grades four, five and six. Based upon the premise that during these years the major rebellion against religious school, parents, etc. begins, works of sociologists, psychologists as well as educators were surveyed and established to find the mind-set of the "average" nine, ten and eleven year old student.

Cognition, according to Dodder, begins between the years of five and seven. [29] By that age the child "behaves as if he intuitively knew what life is about." For our purposes we may assume, therefore, that the child of nine years of age has this faculty and is able to realize the world about him. Havighurst refers to the moment wherein the child is most succeptible to learning as "the teachable moment".

> When the body is ripe, and society requires, and the self if ready to achieve a certain task, the teachable moment has come. [30]

At different stages in his life, the student is capable of performing varying developmental tasks based upon his physical formation, mental stability and personal desires. The challenge of each task comes about through interpersonal relationships with parents and family, teachers and the child's peer group.

During his first few years of religious education, the child is usually excited about attending school. No longer is he a stay-at-home

-child, but a 'big boy' now. This mystique, however, wears off within a few years, and the child loses interest.

> ...there is an almost dramatic and sudden loss of interest and desire to continue the moment some of the basic skills are learned. [31]

This "dramatic" change takes place usually about the fourth grade, at approximately age nine.

If one considers learning as the improvement of the individual, then this change in his desire would doom the youngster to classification as a failure, due to his disaffection to learn or to participate. But learning may also be seen from the point of view of the scientist who sees "a changed response to a stimulus". [32] And also at this point in his life, there are many other factors which are affecting his behavior and life-style. (Many of these we will touch on later in this and following chapters.)

One of the major tasks of reworking a curriculum is that of adjusting the "given" needs of the child to the needs or demands of the society around him. Lest the student be forsaken in the pursuit of synagogal dogmas, the combination of the strictures of the outer-world and the less formal sensitivities of the child's world have to be placed in proper perspective. Dewey's comment that the school is not the preparation for life, but it <u>is</u> life, indicates that curricula must reflect the desires of the child within the framework of the particular institution, but without the institution taking precedence over the child's growth needs.

Dr. Sylvan Schwartzman takes this idea one step further:

> Too heavily weighted in the direction of Jewish sociology, it (curriculum) minimizes Judaism as a religion, scarcely mentioning God, ethical values or our

> faith's capacity to make for happier, more creative personal living. [33]

Judaism is not just an academic study through a microscope, it is - or must become - a lifestyle within which growing students, learning students, will be comfortable. It should offer more than the stories about this, that and the other hero or holiday. Jewish education must begin to present itself and Judaism as something pleasurable, not a burden to bear once a day, once a week, or three times a year. The study of Judaism has to take upon itself more emotional and 'feeling-type' projects by which to capture the heart as well as the mind of the young people which it attempts to educate.

Abraham Maslow redefines the entire process of education (or in our case, religious education) now as more than a learning process for assimilating facts.

> It is now also a character-training, a person training process. Of course this is not <u>altogether</u> true, but it is very largely true, and it will become truer and truer year by year. [34]

Part of the program of Jewish education must soon allow, and be devoted to, the self-examination of the child to the end that he may grow not only in knowledge but in maturity and self-confidence. In his article "Valued Teaching is Teaching Values" Abraham Segal contends that regardless of the intent of a good educational system or curriculum, the student will pick out the important Jewish values by osmosis, if no other way. He will master them, be it unknown to him - because that is what he needs as a Jew for the rest of his life. Segal states further that although content is usually mastered for the agrandizement of the parents or the teacher, mastery over the "content suffused with Jewish values" occurs due to deeper, sub-conscious "needs" which the child has for his

life outside of the Jewish framework.

Once aware of what are loosely called Jewish values, the student becomes aware of their application to his life, and by contrast becomes aware of others. Teaching "Jewish values" can therefore enable the assimilation of Jewish factual knowledge with human values, and self-awareness. Not through memory necessarily, but through subconscious influences the student learns often in spite of the teacher.

An adaptation of Maslow's concept of the Ideal College to our religious schools will show what a major thrust of the Jewish educational curriculum could be.

> The chief goals of the ideal college...would be the discovery of identity, and with it the discovery of vocation. [35]

Were we to juxtapose the words "religion" or "Judaism" for"vocation," then the meaning becomes evident. A goal of the Middle School curriculum would be to offer the child the opportunity to find out about <u>his</u> identity, personally <u>and</u> Jewishly; and to learn how to "feel" have an emotional response to what is Jewish. In addition, he would master skills and tasks which would expose him to a living Judaism which is seldom suitably expressed in the lines and words of a textbook.

Inquiry and exploration are keys in the determination of character and the development of interest. In Dewey's "school of life", which we have mentioned earlier, a child learns to express himself, find his talents, and experience <u>his</u> world. The suggested program is not a dialogue between the teacher's desk and the class desks; it is an open, free activity or pursuit of learning through questioning and trying-out. Until a child is burned by fire or heat, a parent can speak of the danger until he is blue in the face, and the average child will still want to find out

for himself with a lighted match.

To such inquiry and examination the addition of textbooks serves a useful informational purpose. Even the classroom may assist in the child's receptivity to learn. "Classrooms and books are instruments to be used in education but, the decisive factors are activity, experience, life!"[36]

Any Jewish experiences and activities in the Middle School should be geared to help the student of Grades four, five, and six achieve tasks which are important to his growth because:

> There is no developmental task of children or adolescents, which the school can completely ignore, for the reason that the tasks are so closely interrelated that difficulty at level A will become later difficulty in level B.[37]

When we consider that the task of the teacher is to teach not "what to think" but "how to think" it becomes imperative for the teacher to know how to cope with a child who questions as well as the one who only listens.

Before going further into the subject of the psycho-social profile of a young student, we should first define the term "developmental task" (which we have used in the shorter form as "task".) A developmental task:

> ...arises at a certain point in the life of the individual, satisfactory achievement of which leads to happiness and success with later tasks...failure leads to unhappiness, disapproval, and difficulty with later tasks.

These are the tasks, obligatory knowledge, or prerequisites which the student must learn in order to be functional in the life setting.

Failure in developmental task fulfillment may result in disapproval which ultimately leads to the individual student considering himself a failure. Havighurst notes that the individual's success in these matters may provide or deny self-acceptance: "As though his acceptance of himself comes in part from his ability to master different forms of the

world outside himself. [39] This mastery of tasks accounts for the development of the self-image of each student which he brings to bare every time he is faced with another problem or challenge.

In this regard, Maslow claims that in reality "children make themselves into something. "Teachers, parents and all others who come into contact with the child have an effect, but, it is somewhat of the sort that"has to be there" to offer an opposition, to react against if the child presses too hard." [40] Maslow further contends that a certain amount of freedom has to be made available to the child without expectation of results. Without any a priory expectations, "children are more able to be receptive." [41]

Not only does learning require this freedom, but also good teaching. And further it demands another freedom, in terms of space. As Robert Fulbright states, "Good teaching or learning requires involvement of the learner in the learning process. This involvement demands space... a room should say: "come in and get involved." [42]

There are many techniques which may be employed to teach. Two of the most prominent are the cognitive and the affective approaches. The cognitive approach deals with what the person can learn, facts, information, etc. and the intellectual process by which this is accomplished. The affective school touches the emotional or feelings-aspect of the student. It is concerned with the child's feelings about wanting to learn, his feelings as he is engaged in the process of learning, and his feelings afterwards.

> In general the use of affective techniques has resulted in behavioral change on the part of the students that has made them better students, better able to relate to other human beings, and has shown other teachers that motivation, interest, awareness, learning, and so on, can be increased if students are 'tuned in'. [43]

For Gamoran, this is the import of religious education.

> Religious education must lead not only to information and knowledge but also to character growth and personality development. [44]

One of the major emphases of the religious education program should be to instill within the child what may be labelled "Jewish Values." These essential comprehensions are often difficult to describe verbally, but have to be felt through "peak experiences" which will motivate creativity and inspire fervor. [45] Such understandings as conveyed through values: rules about moderation, belief in God, understanding others, are all potential Jewish values, as are many, many more. "The subtle character of values and the difficulties in isolating them must be appreciated."[46] But the instructor should be prepared to teach for these values of Judaism rather than for the purely factual contents of a textbook. The teaching of Jewish values is not new to the educational process. Values are an intrinsic element of that raw material with which every Jewish scholar works," [47] even our young religious school students.

Donin defines all of Jewish education in terms of values, for he states that Jewish education is:

> that education which seeks to instill within the Jew all the values inherent in the Jewish faith in terms of principles and practices...[48]

The thrust has to be, therefore, both sensory and academic. "Membership in the Jewish community can be obtained only through a feeling of emotional and intellectual identification with the fate of the Jewish people."[49]

The importance of the instructor also must be seen as part of the psychological milieu of the student. As so many instructors have found,

> "The teacher is the prophet of the true God, and the usherer of the true kingdom of God". [50]

Initially, (grades K-3) everything that the teacher (or parent) says is true, in the child's eyes. By fourth or fifth grade, there are more con-

cepts which the student, even at that young age, begins to realize. Not the least of these is the fact that he may be ignorant, and can make mistakes. He begins to develop his personal store of knowledge, from which comes the authority to make choices by himself. The final growth step is to use these very choices to secure independence from his parents, later in life. [51] As he gains more independence from his parents, he also gains support from his peer group. It is these peer relationships which are the more important social grouping facing him at this time in his life.

At the same time that this dynamic is occuring, ages nine - eleven, the child's sense of self is rapidly emerging, and his personal identity is forming. "Childhood is the time for working out feelings", [52] and the instructor is important in guiding and reconciling these innermost feelings, and establishing a sense of trust with the student.

One response to the child's creative need in the area of psychological growth is to utilize art in the classroom as more than a medium for painting pretty pictures while the teacher can take a rest.

> Education through art is a kind of therapy and growth technique, because it permits the deeper layers of the psyche to emerge, and therefore, to be encouraged, fostered, trained and educated. [53]

This is not meant to suggest that all forces in the classroom dissipate so that the child is left by himself to draw pictures or color paper-dolls. A different, more subtle type of authority is employed based upon the trust that has been established with the teacher and his student. This employs what Eric Fromm calls "psychic manipulation" and not physical or verbal force as do other methods. [54] The instructor has told the child what he expects and it is the individual who decides whether to obey or not.

Religious education must be concerned also with the moral develop-

ment of the child at the same time it is concerned about his psychological makeup. In this regard, the schools of Freud and Piaget are at odds. Freud, assuming that the negative attitude is inherent at birth and that life actually is the development process of stripping away the non-acceptable instincts, suggests that it is only over a period of years that the societal constraint is absorbed and internalized.

In the other direction, Piaget would have us believe that the child is guided more by his peer group than by any other single factor in his life, societal, parental or social. The peer group tells him what is acceptable, and it is he himself who begins to impose limits on himself. Thus the suggestion of his peer group takes hold in in his life activities, and aid in his growth. [55]

To take a stand and claim that one school of thought on this issue or the other is superior may lead us from the point. It is the effect of these theories that counts, not who said what. Assuming the Piaget approach, the development of the child's personality would indicate that a direction and a guiding factor toward certain goals has been adopted. In other words, learning through a method of discovery and doing things himself, with others reacting to him, yields growth. By his actions, the world is revealed to him. "Let him experience rather than just 'hear'." [56]

With a desire and a need to discover as one of the major characteristics of the maturing middle-schooler, we should look further for some of the other forces that are visible. The child's push to get out of the family circle, and into the world of peers and peer groups, is very strong. Friends that he makes are important for gaining the psychological support which he needs during this time of developing his independence. The physical thrust is another aspect worthy of note. Games and physical

work allow the child of 'middle-childhood' (ages 6-12) to develop his neuromuscular skills which then will be called upon to function in later task undertakings. The third thrust of middle-childhood is a mental or intellectual one. The child makes the attempt to at least understand adult concepts such as logic and symbolism in order to assist him in his everyday communications.[57]

These three thrusts of the growing child - psychological, neuromuscular, and intellectual - almost literally push him from the crib into the arm-chair. As the basis of the skills and tasks that he will encounter in life, these three are not categories of development, and thrusts of middle childhood are tremendously important.

How does identification with a peer group help in the growth of the child? At first it allows for formation of new acquaintances and teaches primary people-to-people conduct. Secondly the child's peer group opinions aid in developing a conscience within the child, based upon a personal scale/hierarchy of values. Third, social attitudes and manners are also a by-product of the peer group relationship. And finally, the child learns and achieves more personal independence and self-confidence by associating with others his own age.

Concern with the deeper psychological basis of this arrangement produces the opinion that the peer group allows the child movement from his nuclear family into another "family" which offers him security and nurture but with different rules. Originally his security was from his family, but now this changes and the transfer to the peer group sustains a need to make a place for himself in the world. He is now vying for the attention of persons who are not required to listen to or always approve of him. Instead of a few, there are now many in number, each with his

own push toward a personal identity.

Piaget calls this the "intuitive stage" in the intellectual development of the child. Between the ages of six and one-half and fourteen and one-half years, the child is advancing toward the capacity to accomplish "concrete operations." He has successfully passed from the "sensorimotor stage" beyond the "preoperational stage" into this "operational stage" wherein formal mental operations are now possible. In other words, the child is now ready and able to accept the world outside from an intellectual and physical point of view, and is able to catalogue and work within it to find solutions to his problems.

Emphasis here is placed upon theories that support the evolving and developmental aspects of the child. Havighurst also sees these tasks of childhood organized into various stages. After the successful completion of each stage and task, the child's mind should be prepared to advance to another more complicated goal or task. Quoting Blumenfield, we note that the purpose of education is "to help him (the student) pass from one problem to another and from one task to another."[58] Concurring with Piaget, Havighurst explains mid-childhood as the time of developing the "morality of agreement" and the "morality of cooperation".[59] These stages prepare the child with a sense of right and wrong so he can now apply them to his relations with an expanding universe.

For comparison, Ericson's Stages of Development locate the Middle School student at the stage of "industry", which includes children from five and one-half to thirteen years of age. To reach this stage in personality development, the child would have already completed the stages of trust, autonomy, initiative and imagination. Yet to be actualized are the stages of personal identity, intimacy, generativity, and integrity.

The personality of a child in the Middle School grades is well developed and is working toward the plateau of personal identity which presents many difficulties to a large section of the children today.

Speaking medically for a moment, the child at the "initiative" stage is between five and one-half and thirteen years of age which means that by this age he is normal-sighted. Before their eighth birthday, children are usually far-sighted so by this time development of his reading skills can be a functional and valuable enterprise where it might be a waste of effort at an earlier stage.

Another characteristic of the middle school child is that he doesn't see "wholes", but seems to attack the oddities and details of historical study. Just before adolescence "far-away and long-ago" has its most appeal. [60] In this regard, Dewey cautions that the teaching of History is only good as a resource for the imagination. "Its end is the ability to add dimension to life, but only when seen as the 'past of the present,'" not as disconnected from it. [61]

Havighurst offers a suggestion as to the attitudes which are learned during middle-childhood. They include: attitudes toward religion, toward social groups, economic groups, and political groups. All of these are formulated during this period of the child's life.

A more specific listing of characteristics of the nine year old, fourth grade student would include these:

He is a little adult; seeks models to emulate; active and enthusiastic, girls begin to mature-but not in height, can work on personal projects, sense of group and fair-play, curious about the unknown, likes facts and not fantasy, people rather than ideas; wants trust, doesn't question religious teachings, sees how Judaism teaches standards through great heroes,

but comprehends facts and events of Jewish history without chronological perspective, can appreciate God as spiritual.

In the fifth grade, age ten, we find the following:

Peak of preadolescent adjustment, good skills, but academic labor is a low priority, male and famale are separating interests which leads to sex antagonism; doesn't conceptualize; enjoys discussions; is aware of tragedy and evil; enjoys family and groups beyond this too; tries to be good, good memorization, has a sense of time and historical chronology; likes people and animals, can have strong feelings and closeness with God. Some questions may trouble his faith; can learn and use facts of the Jewish people, history, and observances.

For the eleven year old, sixth grader we find these characteristics prevalent:

Adolescence is appearing in varying degrees. He is eager to discover the world, wants to figure out ethical and religious problems for himself, and needs help reaching for adult concepts. Sex antagonism is at its height, with the girls taller. He is capable of more emotions; sensitive to criticism; has a greater understanding of reality, which yields a difficulty in finding right and wrong; critical of adults, competitive, likes groups, can have strong feelings toward the synagogue and Jewish religious problems; more explicit, open to teaching for he is maturing and exploring inter-personal relationships. [62]

With the potential for all these different characteristics and abilities to appear at any moment, teachers have to be aware that "life situations and problems differ from day to day, and so do we, both pupils and teachers, change under their impact." [63]

# CHAPTER THREE

## "Survey - Jewish Religious School Practice"

Many polls and surveys are conducted every season for a variety of reasons. Therefore, in the spirit of the late Fall, 1973 and Winter, 1974 seasons, a survey was prepared and mailed out to over one hundred congregations throughout the United States and Canada. Normally the response to surveys is scant, barely meeting the cut-off point for possible analysis of the data. This survey of curriculum practices received a response of 50.5%. In it fifty-two congregations were represented spanning the entire continent East to West, North to South. The number fifty will be used as the calculation constant because two respondents failed to offer any detail on which to calculate.

Congregations were selected at random from the listing of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and appropriate questionnaires (See Appendix) were sent out. All forty-eight adjacent states, Canada and Hawaii were included. The enrollment of the religious schools classified the respondents into five groupings: Very small, under 95 pupils; Small, 96-149 pupils; Average, 150-250 pupils; Large, 251-399 pupils; and Very Large, 400 or more pupils.

The breakdown of the responses was as follows:

| | Actual Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Very small school | 11 | 22 |
| Small school | 5 | 10 |
| Average school | 9 | 18 |
| Large school | 10 | 20 |
| Very Large | +15 | +30 |
| | 50 responses | 100% |

Due to the variety and number of differing data, it was found to be

impossible to organize information based upon the student enrollment size of the fifty or so schools. Information was nevertheless collated which draws attention to the emphasis given certain courses of study and the neglect of or lack of capable faculty to teach others. It should not be misconstrued that because a course listing has few congregational adherents that it is in any way a course to be discarded. As a matter of fact, many of the newest courses and innovative classes are being taught for the first time, and may not have been written up so as to attract the attention of other congregations. Additionally, it may be noted that while emphasis is placed on certain courses, these may not be the actual courses that are being taught, but merely to fall under the rubrics set up in the survey they may have been placed under one heading. Many respondents did however take the time to add specific courses which they are teaching under the available space in the form-survey labelled "other". Incidently, the number of 'other' courses numbers as many as the listed courses, actually more. There were fifteen courses/subjects listed in the survey on pages two and three but respondents added another sixteen of their own to this listing.

Before setting down the data that was received, it is important to understand that although the survey was set up as an evaluation of the educational programs of the many schools throughout the United States and Canada, it also brought in some extra information. For instance, without expecting to, the data on the "number of faculty members in entire school" superimposed on the number of students enrolled allowed for the student teacher ratio to be computed. (Teachers who were listed as teaching more than one class or more than one grade were considered twice when calculating the ratio.)

In the case of the textbooks, a listing had to be prepared because there was no possible way to correlate the textbook with a given grade level, nor to compare the texts used by schools or the same size with other sized schools, nor to suggest that one type of curricular approach might tend to use a specific text as opposed to any other. The section labelled "which texts are used" turned out to be a Pandora's Box.

When the reactions of the students were requested, the majority of responses were the same. The children "love" to do things physical; "despise" the religious school and studying Hebrew; "want more of" field trips and special activities; "complain most about" homework and attendance. In a very few cases, however, the response was that the children are totally happy and desire to attend the school. This was the case in three of the more than fifty responses to that question.

Finally, where the educators were requested to list the goals and objectives of their schools, the majority answered the question by evading the subject. That is, they answered the question about 'goals and objectives' by refering to their course of study and course descriptions which did not set forth objectives, but the specifics about the instruction. This may indicate a very different problem, that the educators may not realize what their goals for a meaningful Jewish education really are. For if the objectives were clear in their minds, they would have been listed, as some did, correctly.

Since the questions were not numbered (there were enough numbers on the page already), the rubrics will be listed here and the data recorded beneath them. Following certain data a section of analysis may prove beneficial and will be included. (Understanding that not all the questions of the survey questionnaire are pertinent to curriculum develop-

ment, only that data which is important is listed here.)

Enrollment of entire school Number of faculty members in school (Faculty Student Ratio)

Average: 1: 13.1

Class HOURS per week:

Average: 3.3 hours

This figure excludes Hebrew School classes, UNLESS they are a mandatory part of the student's curriculum. Also, the hour-number doesn't differentiate between one, two or three day-a-week schools. On the whole, religious school classes met on Weekends and the Hebrew classes were during the afternoon after school, weekday period.

Curriculum plan followed:

| | Number of Congregations | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| U.A.H.C. | 13 | 25 |
| "My Own" | 22 | 42.3 |
| Behrman House | 2 | 3.1 |
| "A combination" | 4 | 6.2 |
| None OR No Reply | 11 | 21.2 |

In this computation all respondents are counted and therefore the rounding off of numbers accounts for the discrepancy in the percentages, which are approximate for purposes of comparison.

Parent Education

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 20 | | |
| No | 27 | No answer | 5 |

| Subjects Taught | Number Of Congregations |
|---|---|
| Bible History | 38 |
| American Jewish History | 25 |
| Holidays | 37 |
| Israel | 36 |
| Bible Heroes | 21 |
| Ritual | 31 |
| Midrash | 6 |
| Talmud | 4 |
| Hebrew | 34 |
| Yiddish | 1 |
| Ethics | 34 |
| Current Events | 26 |
| Dramatics | 11 |
| Arts and Crafts | 13 |
| Music | 21 |
| Others: | |
| Zionism | 1 |
| Holocaust | 2 |
| Comparative Judaism | 2 |
| Bible (Prophets) | 5 |
| Prayer/Prayerbook | 4 |
| History (post biblical) | 4 |
| Theology | 3 |
| Archeology | 1 |
| Dance | 2 |
| Comparative Religions | 4 |

Life Cycle..... 4

Jewish Thought..... 2

European Jewish History..... 2

Jewish Literature..... 2

The Jewish Community..... 2

World Jewry..... 1

This course listing only includes those subjects which are listed as "required subjects" in order to ascertain that the listed course is actually being taught. Elective courses, many of which could be culled from this assortment, were not included because the survey deals with curriculum subjects actually taught, not merely available in a catalogue. Additionally, of the "required subjects" only those which received more than a mediocre emphasis (more than a "5" on the weak emphasis = 1, strong emphasis = 10 scale) were counted as "subjects taught." Finally, the offering of any of these courses in either grade four, five or six if it met the above limitations was recorded as a course taught.

Texts used:

Grade Four: At Camp Kee Tov

Once Upon a Jewish Lifetime

The Children of Israel

Lessons From Our Living Past

God, And the Story of Judaism

The God Around Us

The Jewish Beginning

You and Your Temple

The Great March

"Sefer Ha-Avot-II"

"Shalom Yeladim-II"

"Chumash Meforash"

"Mah Tov" Series

Leaders of Our People

God's Wonderful World

"Olam Gadol"

U.A.H.C.-I.L.U. (Individualized Learning Units)
"Life Cycle"

J.P.S. Torah

Grade Five:

Behold the Land

The Story of the Synagogue

Pathways through the Prayerbook

When a Jew Prays

Pessin series: The Jewish People...

The Right Way

American Jewish Heroes

Israel Today

The Still Small Voice

To Do Justly

The Jewish Community

The Joy of Jewish Living

"Leshoni-II"

Prayers and Holidays for the Student

"Haver L'neviim Rishonim-I"

Grade Six:

Pathways Through the Bible

Pathways Through Jewish Holidays

The Rabbi's Bible - I

When a Jew Celebrates

The Story of the Jewish People

Gamoran's Histories - I, II, III

Heroes of American Jewish History

Beginnings in Jewish Theology

Modern Jewish Life in Literature

The Jew in America (Butwin)

"Ivrit Haya"

Jews of New York

Reform Judaism in the Making

The selection of textbooks for the classroom, and home study, is broad indeed. Some schools indicated that the books were kept in the school library, others sold copies of the textbooks outright. Still other schools used the books only as reference as part of the classroom library. In a few cases, the schools did not use textbooks at all. Their materials were available to all on mimeographed sheets. In addition, this procedure was used by some schools to augment the information of a textbook, or to enhance the knowledge of the instructor.

In a couple of book listings, titles may seem to have been repeated; this is not the intention. Rather, the sketchy title of a text was often written down by the respondent and instead of assuming that it was the more well-known title, all titles were represented exactly as they were submitted. Only a few volumes with Hebrew titles are listed attesting to the fact that in most cases Reform Jewish children study the language in a separate program not under the rubric of "religious school".

Educational goals of the Middle School:

Grade Four: to see an overview of the Bible;

an introduction to the formal study of Hebrew, Jewish events, and literature;

to begin the study of Israel,

Grade Five: post biblical history and the life cycle;

to understand covenants, the Jewish community, festivals and Jewish literature.

Grade Six: to affect a love for Jewish culture and tradition;

learning about American Jewish History and Social Action.

For the Entire Middle School:

to develop a feeling of being "at home" with his religion;

"Jewish learning is for Jewish living";

"to learn that Jewish is beautiful";

"discovery" of basic Jewish principles;

"do justly, love mercy, and walk humble with thy God";

"happy kids - knowledgable Jews - all comes from experimental learning;"

"an introduction to Israel - the role of the synagogue - what is the Jewish way of life";

"to inspire the students to go beyond the school to gain knowledge";

"create a generation of practicing Jews";

"build the spiritual nature of the child";

"to study Judaism through the creative arts";

"the confrontation with questions, not answers";

"to build a zest for Jewish learning";

"to create pleasant associations between Judaism and the world in which we live";

"through a 'project orientation' to learn about our Jewish people and Judaism";

"to prepare the students to study Jewish sources."

Although not written as objectives, these ideas could easily be transmitted into phases which convey the general objectives of the religious schools which were represented in the survey. Only two schools had different sets of objectives/goals for each of the Middle School grades. With the other respondents, whether as a "cop-out" or because it is not the policy to do otherwise, the goals were very broad and general. The few which were cited above suggest the tenor of the many scores of others which were received. In various wordings, the educators set their aspirations toward the ultimate creating of a "practicing Jew" and specifically avoid setting objectives for the individual grade levels or class divisions of whatever sort they use. The objectives are often vague enough that one is not certain what they mean. What is the goal behind studying "X" or "Y" in the classroom or learning center? Why are answers more important than their questions?

Extracting the essence of the listing and the other available responses, we find that the goal of the religious school in the Grades four, five and six is to present Judaism in such a manner that the child will participate in the Jewish community: through worship and study; experience the joy of being Jewish with an association to the synagogue;

and continue his acquisition of facts and feelings of loyalty to the Jewish people.

Educator/Principal's Soundingboard:

IF ONLY... "parents cared";

"parents were concerned about religious education, not Bar Mitzva performance";

"parents would have made Jews of their kids before Grade One";

"we could teach commitment, and the will to identify as Jews";

"we had more Jews in town";

"we didn't have to tailor the program...even to car-pool needs";

"we had more space";

"we had more money";

"we had a Day-school";

"we had more time with the children";

"we didn't have to teach during society's leisure time";

"Jewish education wasn't supplementary";

The above represent the majority of the views that were submitted. It is interesting to note the dichotomy between the educators who begin their complaints with "if only parents" did something, vis-a-vis those educators who see the problem of Jewish education from the perspective of something that they themselves must try to accomplish. In none of the responses were there answers that suggested that BOTH could work together toward the education of the children. To single out a few of the responses for further explanation might prove helpful.

Only one respondent complained about a lack of proper funding; and only one (not the same one) requested a Day-school. Therefore, one may not conclude that these problems are among the major difficulties of the religious education programs. As this section of the survey questionnaire was expected to be a "from-the-heart" answer from the educator of the school, it seems safe to assume that the responses reflected the most pressing complaints that he/she faced at the time. Aside from the responses mentioned already, the others are a sample mirroring the opinions of the rest. The feelings that are conveyed by the few sentences cited are found in the responses to the other survey questionnaires.

An interesting point is made by one educator/principal who noted that indeed we are attempting to teach religion to our Jewish children, when the rest of society is at play. The ramifications of this can be better explained by a psychiatrist, but it is obvious that this must have an important effect on the mind-set of our young people. They are, in most cases, confined to a "place" at a time when others are free to wander.

Student's success/progress evaluation:

There were so many differing methods and combinations of evaluative procedures that no collation was possible. In all fairness to those who DO evaluate their students, it appears that at least some sort of written report is offered during the academic year and at its conclusion. But again, this is not meant to overgeneralize one of the options. Many combinations for evaluation are being used, and the success or failure of the method is the source for another study.

I Wish that I Could...

"motivate parents to take parallel courses to the ones

their children are taking";

"convince people that Sunday school is not a joke";

"open kids' minds to their great inheritance";

"find the magic solution to make Jewish education a viable medium to transmit Jewish values and traditions, and to evoke Jewish consciousness",

"find better trained Hebrew teachers";

"motivate the kids";

"make Jewish education high on the kid's priority list";

"use a camp for more weekends";

"fully train the teachers to teach";

"set high standards for the religious school without congregational interference."

"I wish I could" offered the educator the opportunity to bring out his ideas and hopes for the planting of his school in a Utopian setting. From the answers to the fill-in-the-blank question, it appears that a majority of the answers point in the direction of motivation and proper preparation of the faculty. Those responses which were included are broad in their application to many congregations' schools. The schools, it seems, are boring, and subsequently the teachers are becoming bored. Some curricula are disfunctional, and the monotony is adversely effecting the teacher, and subsequently the pupil. These administrators report that many of their faculty and personnel are not sufficiently trained or equipped to handle today's children. Without placing blame, (for that is very easy and in poor taste to do), one wonders about the motivation of the administrator/educator himself toward finding ways of furthering the teaching success of his/her faculty, and thereby affecting the students. Edu-

cation is not supposed to be a tedious effort all the time, there must be times of excitement and electricity in order to make the endeavor meaningful.

The one congregation which suggested that it needed the use of a retreat camp more often leaves little doubt that its program is expanding and vital in this direction. The educators who claimed too much congregational interference are numerous, so possibly the school committees should get into the schools and out of the realm of "my child - who is about to be confirmed or I'll quit the Temple." Education and politics are uncomfortable bed-fellows. This implies even a more desperate need for the programs to be effective and vigorous, to prove that they can work for everyone with even the highest standards.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## "Survey - Non-Jewish School Practice"

Hayyim Donin quoting Alfred Jospe states:

> ...it is not more religion that we need in higher education, but more higher education that we need in religion. [64]

Having reviewed the survey questionnaire and the curricula of the Reform Middle Schools in the previous chapter, we now turn to the non-Jewish schools to see how the enterprise is fairing in the other ballpark.

A general claim about American education would have us believe that all the schools are a complete failure, for they do not appear to be developing the child's character, which we have seen as one of the foci of some of the new Jewish curricula.

> Nor are American schools doing a very good job, it would seem, of developing character or a commitment to American society. [65]

If this assessment is correct, we should expect to find religious education in the non-Jewish systems also lacking.

Before delving into the non-Jewish curricula, it might be advantageous to review again the function of education. As Maslow has stated, the function of education is, "in a less technical way,...helping the person to become the best that he is able to become." [66] The function of education and its job is to "make real his potentialities," [67] "to help him become the actuality of his deepest potentiality." [68]

> In brief, everywhere we turn we observe modern education helping the child to understand his environment at his own level in order to lay the foundation for successful living as an adult. [69]

Within the educational realm there are theories of learning, tech-

niques for teaching and paradigms for testing. Some are useful and some are not but none are wrong or false, if they attempt to guide the educator. One approach may claim that the only direction to take is to make the school a "singing school" on the premise that "a singing school is a Happy School"; [70] and another may suggest that the authority of the instructor should be supreme.

In reviewing the curricula of three non-Jewish denominations, the ability to tend to the "needs" of the children was viewed from the goals which they set. Funding new projects was not a major problem. The fact of available funding in the Protestant educational world is summed up in three words, "our people care." [71]

The foundation of a good curriculum according to Fulbright is in its ability to involve the learner in a system of discovery and exploration. Therefore, Fulbright sets down his principles for teaching within the church and they are three-fold: 1) respect of each individual for his worth thus aiding his personal development; 2) use of the child's vocabulary in order to assist in his spiritual development; and 3) leadership by the instructor at the right time to offer guidance. [72]

The Universalist Unitarian Church does attempt to teach its students of the cultural and anthropological bases of the creation, although not concerned with the personification of a God. (Universalist Unitarian Association) The study begins with the child learning a little about himself as a small child. Slowly gaining in knowledge, he learns about the world about him. It is totally humanistic and humanitarian in its approach. Since the Creation Story, which is used as the focus of beginnings of the universe by some churches is avoided, the essential genetic organization of life-systems is explored. Children are faced with projects involving

film strips, story sessions, even the study of body systems and the food chain of the world. The attitude taken is"culture is the way we learn to live." 73

Every aspect of the life cycle is provided for the children. They are taught sex-education by participating at the birth of an animal in the classroom, and death likewise from a similar experience or a story. Additionally, the resources of the beautifully illustrated volumes of the Life Nature Series add much color and information to the discussions and programmed projects.

The approach of the Universalist Unitarian Association of America (U.U.A.) is child-centered, and activity oriented. From the materials available in each of the learning packets (units), the instructor is given a wealth of available resources to tap and from which to learn. Guides for the teacher abound, as do reference lists to other materials for him to note and possibly bring into the classroom.

As objectives, the suggestions fall short of saying more than: the goal is to arouse the child's interest. Not to discount this as a valid reason for education, (it is clear that the emphasis is placed in this area) the fact remains that the goals are not spelled out clearly. They are suggestions of things to try, and not achievement tasks nor goals of the student himself.

Although the overall approach is a good one, one criticism might be offered. "What happens if the child doesn't react as the planbook says he will?" The details of each lesson are there, and the books suggest what the reactions of the students will be, but what IF the child hasn't reached this stage of development?

The unit on "decision-making" delves into the personality of each

individual student with the hope of making him more aware of himself. A very important point is quietly slipped into the text. It claims,"it is important to develop a class climate that supports and encourages the free flow of conversation." [74] This, of course, is essential to any curriculum in which the child is to explore and question those subjects that peak his curiosity. In this well-prepared and directive unit, the authors have included much to aid the instructor: an overview of the students and their reactions, the responsible parents' tasks, and the tasks for the teacher himself. Still the responsibility is with the "keepers of the faith" to prepare the materials that they want taught.

A most comprehensive and detailed system for religious education, under one auspices, is that of the United Methodist Churches through their publisher Cokesbury. First of all, the various educational or grade levels each has its own curricular series. This allows for a tangible advancement by the student, even to the degree that different graded, glossy-magazines are available for children of the different grade levels. (Teacher's editions are available also.) In addition to the magazines, (for the fourth through sixth grade: the IV - VI student) there is also a Church Story Paper which appears weekly in full color. It is published directly by the United Methodist Publishing House, and contains stories, cartoons and games from which the child can learn while playing.

The curriculum of the United Methodist Church itself is contained in the publication of the annual Planbook for Leaders of Children. This magazine format edition contains not only the materials and courses of study but, also articles dealing with: relations with students, records-keeping, additional resource listings, and audio-visual resources. [75]

The curriculum is divided into two series: Asbury and Wesley. For

the grades I - III, and IV - VI, the Asbury Series focuses on religious problems in Christian terms, and the Wesley Series focuses on the child and his learning about himself. The Wesley Series also divides the grades differently grouping them by couplets, i.e. III-IV, V-VI. Both curricula are presented in a quarterly publication of Cokesbury entitled Forecast.

Reading the curricular plans suggests that the teacher is expected to present the viewpoint of the Methodist Church, still allowing for the expressions of the individual child. The emphasis is upon learning the Bible and various methods are offered in each area of concern to explain the teachings of the Scriptures. In Grade Four, for instance, the Wesley Series Unit is titled, "Learning About Myself: A Child of God."

> Beginning on a personal level, students will learn that each person is alike and different from every other person. They will come to appreciate others' talents and tolerate their faults as they discover that we are all children of God. [76]

Although weak in its explanation of the unit's goals, this unit-package does contain a filmstrip entitled "Who AM I?" and "Teaching Pictures" which are used to amplify the points that the teacher is attempting to explain. Three additional audio-visual listings are offered, as are seven extra books for the teacher and five more for the students who seek a deeper understanding. The following phrase appears on the title page of Forecast explaining the point of the suggestions in the magazine:

> Forecast is published...to assist...in planning use of the United Methodist church school curriculum. [77]

A less "experimental" type of curricular approach is used by the Episcopal Church. Following the suggestions of the Church as reflected in the Standard Publishing company's curriculum, the study is also very much Bible centered. But the instruction varies from church to church

and the teachers are at liberty to choose from a variety of possible topics for the classroom. Nevertheless, certain subjects must be taught although their placement in the course structure is optional with the instructor.

This very structured material (the "must teach" subjects) does contain project-oriented sections and activity is not stifled in the classroom. Following the Bible closely, the students are guided into projects such as: mapping Paul's journeys, and creating their own felt and burlap banners to represent various teachings of the Church. [78]

As this curriculum can become too structured after a couple of years some congregations are varying their curriculum and are experimenting with new courses including: field trips to churches in our area and "heroes of the Old Testament." Innovations appear to be on the way into the Episcopal Church Curricula, but they will be evolutionary, not revolutionary. Incidently, the goals and objectives of this curriculum do not detail the "how" a child is to accomplish but only the "what" is to be taught to him.

The Methodist curricular plan is based on a year-round academic schedule, as is the Episcopal. But the Episcopal structure is based upon a full six-year overall plan where the Methodist curricula are either biennial or triennial in format.

In comparison with the structures of Jewish education, these non-Jewish sources offer much of the same type of education with the same problems. When we consider the fact that "Jewish education in the United States is based on a three-year program in childhood, most of which is preparation for Bar Mitzva," then the amount of actual input to the child is negligible. [79] Jewish education appears to be more experimentally mo-

tivated than the rather strict curricula of the non-Jewish programs studied and continues in its ancient tradition of changing in the face of societal and educational pressures. Seen from the perspective of a total curricular approach, the Reform Jewish schools offer at least a ten-year program for study where the above mentioned curricula are shorter.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## "A Proposal - A Television Program"

The media of today's student is television. Since he spends hours before the "tube" it would seem possible to focus the curriculum into this area of the child's interest. This observation, coupled with the needs of the child psychosocially and the desires of educators to stimulate the students to "tune-in" to their classes, suggest that a creative program of emotional and talent development would be valuable and would enable our goal of mature and knowledgable students to come to fruition. Therefore, the overall plan of this curricular approach is to set up the child and his classmates in a climate of discovery and exploration, in which he will prepare and produce a TV program for every unit of his study. (One program per class, not per student.)

Each unit will be challenged as a potential for creating a television program. With the current and widespread availability of Videotape equipment, the end result of a well done unit might even be the recording of such a "program", although the emphasis certainly is on the preparation and the learning which must go into the production, and not on the production itself.

Although the variety of needs of the child of this age group were cited in an earlier chapter, it might be helpful to recall that some of these needs could conflict. Therefore, we realize that this approach may not be universally applicable to all children in our middle schools. It may be possible that children who are already "programmed" into the cognitive methodology might feel out of place with the "freedom" that will be given to the student, to explore by himself. So at the outset, it might be important to offer this program for only those who elect it, in order

to establish a cadre of support.

Certain vocabulary changes should be made. The class sessions are to be referred to as "Crew Meetings" in which the instructor is the "producer-in-charge" and the class is the "team" or "crew" working on the unit togehter, although each student works in various areas of individual interest. For each assignment, the "Crew" is divided up into specialized teams each with a specific task (a specific part of the television program to complete) and a given date for its completion. These teams may be concerned with art work, music, research of the related topics, application to the class of the subject, or any of a number of divisions which the "producer" may design.

A single program or unit should consist of no fewer than five meetings and may include as many as needed, depending upon the subject matter used and the depth into which the students delve. As every "producer" and each "crew member" will perceive his television program in different terms, the possibility for variation and creativity is limited only by the amount of inherent desire to create something which has never before existed, and the stimulation to learn more in a free atmosphere.

To facilitate the research necessary for the understanding of most topics, it is suggested that each classroom be provided with a reference library containing enough modern textbooks to accomodate the curiosity of the students in the "crew". A complete library might contain the following: history textbooks, prayerbooks, a one or two volume encyclopedia of Judaism, Hebrew and English dictionaries, and a phonograph with accessible recordings (or a tape recorder, cassette player). In addition, a fully equipped art-room or readily available supplies would be important.

TYPES OF TELEVISION PROGRAMMING:

To aid the hesitant producer, these categories represent the varied kinds of formats of television programs which are generally broadcast:

| | |
|---|---|
| Interviews | News Programs |
| Variety Shows | Straight Drama/Concert |
| Situation Comedy | Discussions |

The combination of different formats yields many other possibilities.

PROCEDURE FOR CREATING THE PROGRAM:

| Crew Meeting: | Subject of Meeting |
|---|---|
| #1 | Hand-out fact sheets about the topic and discuss discuss the facts. |
| #2 | Introduce the 'program' by brainstorming and discussing the material of Fact-sheet. Divide into teams, according to talents and/or interests. |
| #3 | Working session - individual projects in separate areas of the room. Producer always available for assistance and guidance. |
| #4 | Same as #3. |
| #5 | Consolidation of materials and team projects to begin formulating an idea of what the different parts of the topic are all about. |

This may conclude the working sessions, and might conclude the particular program. Other working sessions may be added until completion by the originally established date of the "airing" of the program.

Upon conclusion of the topic under study, the "Crew" again convenes as a group to see the finished product, and to offer suggestions and critiques for the future. The stroking technique of supporting the creativity and expression of another is very important to this group meeting. Suggestions should be aimed so as not to hurt nor harm, but to assist for the future; to build, and not to destroy.

CREW MEETINGS:

#1 - Facts and details are easily absorbed by children of this age bracket, and therefore may be listed with the pertinent details on hand-out sheets. For this meeting, the information on the sheets must be discussed and explained. This means that the instructor will have to be prepared to relate the entire subject all at once, apparently "on one foot." But this is not the case. The introduction of any new subject is usually prefaced by some sort of concise presentation which explains at least the major emphasis of the subject, if not many of the detailed facts. Therefore, this meeting is an extension of the "introductory class" according to the cognitive approach. However, the difference appears when all the facts are presented together. Then this introduction becomes all the more important for the duration of the project is dependent upon it. In this session and a part of the second meeting, the Producer offers the overview of the topic with examples. As the students later assume their responsibilities to create a certain aspect of the television program, they will develop at least one aspect of the topic and see how it fits together with the others. Their knowledge will deepen in at least one area of their choosing, but a general knowledge of the other ramifications of the topic will be observed as the others work in the production crew.

#2 - At this meeting the crew should begin to visualize the potential type of their program. Part of the time should be spent in re-discussing the details of the Fact sheet which was previously mentioned to reinforce its impact. Having heard the facts at least twice at the meetings, and possibly once at home (if the crew members remembered to bring

the fact sheets home with them for the week), the details will begin to filter down into the subconscious of the child and will after a time become part of him. The second half of the meeting should be concerned with developing trust in each other, so that during the subsequent brainstorming session, ideas may be produced and suggested without ridicule. Then, after planning the program in this brainstorming session and deciding upon the track to take, assignments should be made for the teams. At that age (9 - 11 years) there is the developing peer group, and this should and cannot be dissolved, but rather utilized. Members of the crew with like interests are then organized together to form teams which are then responsible to themselves and to the group to offer one part of the television program whenever it is scheduled.

#3 - The producer is most vitally involved by now for the ideas of the crew need guidance and supportive criticism. Until this meeting the discussions centered around what to do, but this is the actual doing. Now the artists study the clothing of the period, the researchers prepare biographies and more information for the writers of the script, the poets read up on their topic, and the musicians practice whatever their project is so that they may coordinate their expression with the final program.

#4 - Based upon the amount of time necessary for the learning-by-doing television program, this working session could be the culmination for the final production, or it might continue to be a working session to further prepare the program for a future date. Nevertheless, the crew is at the point in its work individually and together when an assessment of their progress by the producer is important. It should be offered to the entire crew, together. One more meeting with the entire group could fo-

cus on the problems and the highlights of the project, and may eliminate future problems.

#5 - Whatever the number of meetings preceding this meeting, the final program must ultimately come forth and be coordinated. At this point all the parts are put together and each group adds its individual projects to form the whole show. Whether in the fifth or tenth meeting, every group should be allowed as much time as planned for to display, discuss, or present its production. Following the full presentation, an analysis by all concerned should be made carefully and helpfully to aid each other in the creation of future programs. This period of listening, watching and helping will also assist the producer in establishing more of a comradery between all the members of his Crew.

# CHAPTER SIX
## "In Sum"

The television program approach to curriculum leaves the entire area of the teachers' preparation and level of knowledge open for discussion. At the outset the productions of television formats therefore may be below par. But, as soon as the children pick up on this new idea for creativity and expression, the teachers will hopefully be inspired to jump on the bandwagon and make extra preparations.

Another factor of this program which has been omitted is the participation-potential which the parents and other adult members of the synagogue community may exhibit. When parents observe that the Producer is not omnipotent, as we assume he is not, then their input may truly be needed and if asked they should respond accordingly. In many cases, the adult population of a Jewish community is unrelated to the children's classrooms because they are excluded by accident. They are not sought out for their expertise because we assume that they are not interested.

In those congregational settings where the parents are invited into an educational program the program is invigorated and students and adults parents learn. At the same time that the child is reading over his fact-sheet, the parent could be doing likewise to bolster his knowledge. A case in point occurs with the magazines World Over and Keeping Posted: although written for children, more parents comment on the subjects than do the children. In an unassuming way, without force or coercion, the parents are reading and learning from the materials of their child. So why not incorporate the parents at the outset into the program (ostensibly to offer assistance) and make them into productive, knowledgeable religious school members? Although for the most part their personality

needs will have been met, they have other needs which may be served by participating in the active program of a vital religious school which says, "We need you."

With the potential for creativity that the many new curricula are offering, parents, teachers and children alike will still have to be guided into paths which will introduce them to Jewish values and other subjects. Studies of the needs of the child's psychological development coupled with his Jewish needs are useless if they don't awaken us to the responsibility to teach. Maslow called the teacher a "prophet of truth" but reality says that after a few hours of dullness teachers fail in the child's estimation. Already we are faced with the prospect that at the middle-school level children are starting to "turn-off" in their religious and secular school interests. We cannot allow Judaism to fall by the wayside until such time as the student is in college taking a course in "Comparative Religions" to teach him about his heritage.

Most of the one-hundred or so congregations surveyed responded affirmatively to desires to teach the children Judaism. Many schools operate so that the courses are not required but tailored to the desires of the students in the form of "mini-courses" and "electives" This appears to work well. Education is not a stale profession with more stale professors. Rather it is dynamic and concerned about the lives it is shaping, or should be so concerned. The attitudes which are developed in the classroom, or the playground, or the Sanctuary of the synagogue are in part capable of molding these children's lives into knowledgeable, practicing Jews. At the outset of this presentation we suggested that the contemporary child is faced with the ability to "turn-on" or "turn-off" his relationship to the religious school. Therefore, it is for the educators to

present material which is interesting and contains the capacity of offering to the students both knowledge and individual growth. "You can bring a horse to water, but you can't make him drink" may be a common maxim, but although students cannot be made to learn, they can be shown alternatives which they will find challenging and appealing so that they might even enjoy absorbing the knowledge.

The study of the effectiveness of Reform Jewish education should continue in a variety of different areas. For a more precise interpretation and understanding of the religious school practices across the country, and their highpoints a new questionnaire should be prepared. This questionnaire should be distributed more widely and would thereby yield more detail of each congregational or non-congregational school. It might concentrate on only one aspect of the problems with which this thesis was concerned. Additional emphasis is also needed in the area of creating Teacher Manuals for the less experienced instructor. The elaboration of the materials contained in this presentation could be worked into such a Manual to afford more exact representation of the theory, and to assist in more clearly defining the "Television Program."

Jewish education is not a stagnant science, nor an immobile art. It is rather the dynamic thrust of both aspects toward the goal of establishing knowledgeable and creative students, and as such it must never stop producing new materials.

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# APPENDIX I

(Explanation of the Survey Questionnaire, intent)

2453 Westwood Northern Blvd.
Cincinnati, Ohio 45211
September, 1973

Shalom:

Your religious school has been selected to participate in a national survey of intermediate/middle school religious curricula. Based on the premise that religious school students in Grades K - 3 are still self-motivating, grades 4, 5, 6 have been singled out as the 'turning-point' in religious school education. Therein individual maturation and peer pressure may erect a formidable barrier between the schools and the students.

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for Rabbinic Ordination and the Masters Degree, this survey is geared to report accurate trends in the Reform Jewish middle school in the United States and Canada. In order that the 'best' curriculum may be found, non-Reform and also non-Jewish schools are being included in this survey and in the thesis itself.

Your cooperation and immediate response will assure the success of this venture. Questionnaires should be returned at the latest by October 24, 1973 in order to allow the necessary time for the evaluation and preparation of the responses into a form which will be understandable and useful.

On behalf of all our children, in religious schools everywhere, let me thank you for your concern and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Kravitz

Enc: 1 - Questionnaire

# APPENDIX II

## Q U E S T I O N N A I R E

General Information:

Name of Religious School: _____

Enrollment of entire school: _____
" " Grade 4 : _____
" " Grade 5 : _____
" " Grade 6 : _____.

Number of Faculty Members in entire school: _____
" " Grade 4 : _____
" " Grade 5 : _____
" " Grade 6 : _____.

Does your Rabbi teach? ___ YES, ____NO. (IF YES, what grade?_____)
Does Assistant Rabbi teach? ___YES, ___NO. (IF YES, what grade? _____)
Does your Cantor teach? ___ YES, ___NO. (IF YES, what grade? _____)

Class sessions per week:
Grade 4: _____ sessions/week, @ _____hours/session
5: _____ " @ _____ "
6: _____ " @ _____ " .

who determines curricular choices and changes?
Motivation of the Class _____
Classroom teacher _____
Principal/Edu.Dir. _____
Rabbi _____
Rel. Sch. Committee _____.

which curriculum plan, if any, do you follow? (UAHC, United Synagogue...)
_____

Do you have a graded _____, or a non-graded _____ structure?
Do teachers work individually _____, or in teams _____?

Is worship-service attendance mandatory? _____ YES, _____ NO.
(IF YES, please complete below)-
How often?
Grade 4: _____ services attended/year
Grade 5: _____ "
Grade 6: _____ "
Are the parents expected to attend with their children? _____YES, ____NO

Does the school coordinate Parent Education Classes as a part of its total program? _____YES, _____NO.

Middle School Curriculum: (Grades 4, 5, 6).

| Subjects Taught (Check YES or NO) | YES | NO | Required/Elective (Write in R or E) | Emphasis (Weak=1, Strong=10) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bible History | ____ | ____ | _____ | _____ |
| Amer. Jew. " | ____ | ____ | _____ | _____ |

QUESTIONNAIRE: Page 2

| GRADES 4, 5, 6: Subjects Taught (Check YES or NO) | YES | NO | Required/Elective (Write in R or E) | Emphasis (Weak=1, Strong=10) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Holidays | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| Israel | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| Bible Heroes | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| Rituals | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| Midrash | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| Talmud | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| Hebrew | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| Yiddish | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| Ethics | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| Curr.Events | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| Dramatics | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| Arts/Crafts | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| Music/Song | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| Others: | | | | |
| _____ | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| _____ | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| _____ | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| _____ | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| _____ | ____ | ____ | ____ | ____ |

Are these students involved in any extracurricular activities organized through the school? (IF YES, what activities?) _____.

Are textbooks purchased ____, or are they kept in school Library ____?

Which texts are used, in Grade 4: _____.

Grade 5: _____.

Grade 6: _____.

Student Reactions: (Grades 4, 5, 6 only )****(Use back, if needed.)

In Grade 4, the pupils love to _____

despise _____

want more of _____

complain most about _____

In Grade 5, the pupils love to _____

despise _____

want more of _____

complain most about _____

In Grade 6, the pupils love to _____

despise _____

want more of _____

complain most about _____.

What percentage of students in the middle school grades have relatives in the upper grades, or who are recent graduates? _____%.

(68)

Faculty Concerns:

Kindly rate your faculty: (Average=1, Superb=10)
Total school faculty: _____
Grade 4 " : _____
Grade 5 " : _____
Grade 6 " : _____.

From where do you gather your teachers?; How many? (For Grades 4-6)
Congregants _____ _____
Publ.School _____ _____
Local H.S. _____ _____
" College _____ _____
Retired tchr._____ _____
Parent of student in that class ____ _____.

For which educational specialities do you have 'specialists'?
(for instance: music, drama, conversational Hebrew) _____
_____.

What is the personal level of observance of teachers in Grades 4,5, 6?
(Average = 1, More than adequate = 10)
Grade 4: _____ Grade 5: _____ Grade 6: _____.

Educator/Principal's Soundingboard:

Briefly, what are the educational goals of your middle grades 4, 5, 6?
(Save some time; send me a copy of your objectives - current).
_____
_____
_____

Please complete this statement: "IF ONLY _____
_____
_____

How is a student's success/progress evaluated? How often?
Examination _____ 1 - when needed
Homework _____ 2-- Once annually
Report card _____ 3 - Once per quarter
Attendance _____ 4 - At the semester
Tchr's note _____ 5 - Other (Specify)
Other: _____
_____

(This is the last section, you may now breathe a sigh of relief)
Please complete this sentence: AS THE _____, I WISH
(your title)
THAT I COULD _____
_____
_____.

(Your signature please, attesting to the correctness of this survey.)

_____ . (RETURN TO: Robert L. Kravitz
2453 westwood-Northern Blvd.
Cincinnati, Ohio 45211. )

Dated _____

PLEASE RETURN FORM BY OCT. 24, 1973