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The Rabbis' View of Education and Mentoring : A Comparison

This thesis examines the master-disciple relationship in Rabbinic texts and compares it to the modern concept of mentoring. The goal of this thesis is to determine what is valuable in the Rabbis' legacy for the modern Jewish education.

The research for this thesis was based on Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, Chapter Hilkhhot Talmud Torah. The writer then used the "Kesef Mishneh," a running commentary to the *Mishneh Torah*, to access the primary Talmudic sources about the master-disciple relationship.

This thesis is divided into ten chapters, including the introduction and conclusion. Chapters 2 illustrates G-d as the Ultimate Mentor. Chapter 3 describes the relationship between Moses and Joshua as a paradigm of mentoring in the human realm. Chapters 4 - 9 describe and analyze the development of the master-disciple relationship. At the end of each chapter, the master-disciple relationship is compared to the modern concept of mentoring and other aspects of the modern Jewish education. The conclusion states that both models, the master-disciple relationship and mentoring, have valuable aspects for the modern Jewish education.

By analyzing the master-disciple relationship and comparing it the modern concept of mentoring, this thesis fuses past and present models of Jewish education which can serve as a guide for the teachers and students of Torah in the future.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Mentors have touched my life in a profound way. As a child, my parents raised me with a strong sense of Jewish identity, and they were my formative role models of Jewish values. As a young adult, Jewish mentors inspired me to embrace Judaism independent of my parents and to form my own Jewish identity. My mentor and rabbi at Stanford University, Rabbi Ari Cartun, taught me how the observance of Shabbat could enhance my life spiritually and intellectually. By serving as a female role model, Rabbi Elka Abrahamson taught me that I could become a rabbi and serve the Jewish community just as she had before me. My current mentor, Rabbi Helene Ferris, lives by the Jewish value of *tikkun olam* and thus constantly strives to improve the world around her. Through her model, I have learned how a rabbi inspires a Jewish community through the goal of social justice. As a result of my personal experience with mentors, I sought to study mentoring on an intellectual level through my Rabbinic thesis.

My initial idea was to research the "Rabbinic Ideas of Mentoring in the Student-Teacher Relationship." Since mentors have played a significant role in my life, I wanted to find a Rabbinic parallel to the modern educational technique of "mentoring." I sought to determine the Rabbi's program, concept, and ideology about mentoring. With this knowledge, I hoped to compare and contrast formative Rabbinic ideals about mentoring with contemporary mentoring theory. I hoped to then determine what might be useful in the Rabbis' legacy of mentoring for the modern Jewish education. What I did not realize was that by comparing the modern concept of "mentoring" to Rabbinic texts, I was

imposing the modern Western concept of “mentoring” onto the Rabbinic texts which had a different concept of Jewish education.

Quickly, I learned that today’s concept of “mentoring” is not part of the Rabbinic vocabulary. Today Jewish education involves a teacher-student relationship, but in Rabbinic texts the relationship between a *Rav* and a *talmid* is a master-disciple relationship. The master is a representative of the authoritative tradition. A disciple “serves” his master just as a disciple “serves” G-d. Whereas the modern concept of “mentoring” implies a nurturing relationship in which the “mentor” supports the protégé in his or her professional development, the master is a hierarchical authority who teaches the disciple respect for the tradition. As a result of the striking contrast between the master-disciple relationship and mentoring, it was impossible for mentoring to be the overarching theme of my Rabbinic thesis. Rather, the master-disciple relationship had to be the foundation of my thesis. Instead of evaluating the Rabbis’ ideas about mentoring, I had to determine the function of and values beneath the master-disciple relationship. With this greater understanding of the Rabbis world view of education, I could then compare and contrast the master-disciple relationship in Rabbinic texts to the modern concept of mentoring.

On the advice of my thesis advisor, Dr. Michael Chernick, I began my research in Maimonides’ *Mishneh Torah* in the section of *Hilkhot Talmud Torah*, or Laws Relating to the Study of Torah. This text gives an overview of the subjects and laws relating to the study of Torah. After translating this text, I then used the “*Kesef Mishneh*”, a running commentary of the *Mishneh Torah*, to trace Maimonides’ summary of the laws back to the primary sources of the Talmud. I then looked up the primary sources that related to

the master-disciple relationship. After I compiled the texts, I began evaluating these primary sources for the underlying values of the master-disciple relationship.

With these texts relating to the master-disciple relationship, I arranged the texts into subject categories. Many of the texts could be used to illustrate more than one subject category, so I had to determine which texts best elucidated the subject headings of my thesis. As my research progressed, some subject categories of my thesis changed or were reshaped, so I often had to do more research to find texts that illustrated a new subject category or a new perspective on a subject. After I compiled the *halkhic* statements that related to the master-disciple relationship, my thesis advisor suggested that I also locate Rabbinic parables to illustrate the master-disciple relationship. Through this research methodology, I learned that primary research in Rabbinic texts is a continual process. The more one learns about a subject, the more one realizes what he or she does not know, and therefore, one must do more research in order to understand the subject more thoroughly.

Through my research, I discovered that although the master-disciple relationship may not be a mentoring relationship, the master-disciple relationship has certain aspects of mentoring and serves a greater role than to transmit Jewish information from one generation to another. In addition to transmitting the Jewish wisdom, the master-disciple relationship helps shape a disciple's moral character. To understand the role of education in shaping moral character, I researched "the education of moral character" in contemporary and Jewish education.

At the end of my research, I realized that my Rabbinic thesis could not be entitled the "Rabbinic Ideas about Mentoring in the Student-Teacher Relationship" because the

master-disciple relationship in Rabbinic texts was not a form of mentoring as we know it today. In contrast to mentoring which supports one's character, the master-disciple relationship actually served to shape a disciple's moral character. Therefore, my thesis is entitled, "The Rabbis View of Education and Mentoring : A Comparison" to show the contrast of the Rabbis' view of education and the modern concept of mentoring as we know it today.

CHAPTER 2

G-D : THE ULTIMATE MENTOR

In Pirke Avot 4 : 12 , Rabbi Eliezer ben Shammua teaches, "May the honor of your disciple be as dear to you as your own, and the honor of your colleague as the fear of your master, and the fear of your master as the fear of Heaven." Although this text may teach hyperbolic emotions, Avot 4 : 12 presents an ascending hierarchy of relationships, from the disciple to colleague to master, and concludes with the ultimate relationship with G-d. One's relationship with G-d serves as an overarching paradigm for all other relationships. However, this structured hierarchy of relationship also begins with G-d, the ultimate authority. Through the Torah, the word of G-d, G-d teaches us and serves as the ultimate master, teacher, and mentor.

G-d's designated name, "Master of the World," symbolizes G-d's role as master or teacher through Torah. For example, R. Aha teaches that when G-d was about to teach the Torah to Israel, G-d revised the Torah four times before G-d recited the Torah to Israel. Therefore, the biblical verses, "Then G-d saw it and gauged it, G-d measured it and probed it" (Job 28 : 27) and "G-d spoke all these words, saying..." (Exodus 20 : 1) are interpreted as

G-d preparing and revising the Torah before G-d gave it to Israel.¹ G-d's revision of the Torah serves as a model for humankind to "revise one's lesson ... prior to delivering them in public."² Therefore, the Rabbis teach that a human master must learn from the model of G-d, the Ultimate *Rav* or Master of Torah. Rabbi Akiva is a model of a human *rav* or

¹ Exodus Rabbah 40 : 1.

² Exodus Rabbah 40 : 1.

master who emulated G-d's model of teaching. It is said that once the sexton publicly asked R. Akiva to read Torah, but R. Akiva declined. Later, when his disciples asked him why he did not rise to read Torah, R. Akiva replied, "because I had not prepared myself."³ Therefore, G-d as Master of Torah is a model of perfection to which all human masters should strive to achieve in their teaching and preparation of Torah.

Traditionally, G-d gave the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai. Through this hierarchical image, G-d is the ultimate master and Moses is G-d's foremost disciple. Thereafter, all future master-disciple relationships reflect the absolute master-disciple hierarchy of G-d and Moses. G-d "called" Moses up to the top of Mount Sinai and then commanded Moses to descend and prepare the Israelites to receive the Ten Commandments (19 : 20 - 21). Despite the hierarchy between G-d and Moses, the Rabbis also portray G-d and Moses as a master-disciple relationship in perfect harmony. The Rabbis interpret, "When G-d finished speaking with him (Moses) on Mount Sinai ..." (Exodus 31 : 18) as evidence of a master-disciple relationship between G-d and Moses.⁴ R. Simeon b. Lakish teaches that "When G-d finished speaking with him" (Ex. 31 : 18) can be compared to a disciple whose master taught him Torah. Before the disciple learns Torah, the master recites, and the disciple repeats after him. When the disciple has learned Torah, the master says to him, "Come, let us recite it together." Similarly, at the beginning of the dialogue, G-d, the Master, "spoke" to Moses (Ex. 20 : 1), or recited the Torah for Moses. After Moses had learned the Torah from G-d on Mount Sinai, G-d "finished speaking with him" (Ex. 31 : 18). After Moses, the disciple, had learned the

³ *The Book of Legends*. Eds. Hayim Nahman Bialik and Yehoshua Hana Ravnitzky. (New York : Schocken Books , 1992), 235, no. 160.

Torah, G-d and Moses were able to recite the Torah together.⁵ Thus, the Rabbis interpret "When G-d finished speaking with him" (Ex. 31 : 18) as a reciprocal conversation between G-d and Moses. In comparison to the supreme dialogue between G-d and Moses, there is also potential for reciprocity between the master and the disciple in the human realm. Over time, the master and disciple can develop reciprocity so that they can learn Torah from one another. Therefore, G-d and Moses, the paradigm of the master-disciple relationship, portray the ideal of mutuality to which all master-disciple relationships can aspire.

Through the Torah, G-d portrays absolute grace, humility, and kindness. The primary example of G-d's grace or kindness is G-d's giving of the Torah to Israel. The Rabbis interpret "Your kindness (care, condescension) has made me great" (Psalms 18 : 36) to refer to G-d's giving the Torah to Israel when Israel was unworthy.⁶ By giving Israel the Torah, G-d made Israel "great" or "mighty". When G-d was transmitting the Torah to Moses on the top of Mount Sinai, the Israelites were causing G-d to be angry (through the construction of the golden calf) on the bottom of Mount Sinai.⁷ The Rabbis compare G-d's relationship with Israel to a king's relationship with his subjects. A royal king disowns his subjects when they rebel. In contrast to a king, G-d did not disown Israel when they rebelled against G-d. G-d, the ultimate master of Torah, demonstrated absolute kindness by giving the Torah to Israel regardless of their undeserving nature. However, the human *rav* or master who teaches an unworthy student is like an idolater,

⁴ Exodus Rabbah 41 : 5.

⁵ Exodus Rabbah 41 : 5.

⁶ Exodus Rabbah 41 : 4.

⁷ Exodus Rabbah 41 : 4.

"Anyone who teaches an unworthy student, it is as if he throws a stone at Mercuris ..." ⁸

The master's authority to transmit Torah is limited to those who are morally worthy.

G-d's transmission of the Torah when Israel was unworthy is the ultimate model of grace.

Only G-d has the authority to exercise such grace. All future transmissions of Torah must reflect the Torah's moral value as the word of G-d. Therefore, the master must only transmit the Torah to those morally worthy to receive it.

According to the Rabbis, G-d is also the model of humility. G-d portrayed humility in G-d's relationship with Abraham when the "Lord appeared to him (Abraham) by the terebinths of Mamre" (Genesis 18 : 1). When the Lord "appeared" to Abraham, Abraham was "sitting" at the entrance of his tent (Genesis 18 : 1). According to Rashi, G-d appeared to Abraham to visit him because Abraham was in pain after his circumcision. Therefore, G-d portrayed humility by allowing Abraham to sit while the Shekhinah stood. ⁹ According to R. Yohanan, the Tanakh teaches G-d's absolute power is mediated by G-d's humility because G-d's power and humility are simultaneously portrayed in the Tanakh. ¹⁰ For example, Deut. 10 : 17 states, "For the Lord your G-d is supreme ...", and the following verse states, "... but (G-d) upholds the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and befriends the stranger, providing him with food and clothing (Deut. 10 : 18)." Therefore, through the Torah, G-d teaches that power must be balanced with kindness. Similarly, in the Book of Prophets, "For thus said He who high aloft ... I dwell on high, in holiness, yet with contrite and the lowly in spirit, reviving the spirit of the lowly ... the hearts of the contrite (Isaiah 57 : 15)." G-d's

⁸ BT Hullin 133a.

⁹ Genesis Rabbah 48 : 1.

supremacy is not exclusive, rather G-d's supremacy includes the comfort of the humble and the meek. Thirdly, in the Book of Writings, "Sing to G-d ... extol Him who rides the clouds (Psalms 68 : 5), is immediately followed by "the father of orphans, the champion of widows ... (Ps. 68 : 6)." Thus, the Tanakh teaches that G-d's might or power is tempered by G-d's absolute kindness, thereby serving as a model in the human realm. If G-d, the most supreme and exalted power, is kind and humble toward all humanity, all the more so should human authority be tempered with kindness and humility. The following chapters will illustrate that the human *rav* or master of Torah emulates the image of G-d's authority, grace, and humility. Therefore, G-d's grace, kindness, and humility toward Israel is a model for all future masters and disciples of Torah.

G-d possesses supreme immortality, and the master achieves immortality through Torah, a vehicle of G-d. I Samuel 2 : 2 states, "There is none as holy as the Holy One, there is none beside you ..." R. Judah taught in the name of Menasseh, "Do not read 'beside you,' but read 'to survive you.' Whereas the works of a person survive him, the Holy One survives its' works."¹¹ Whereas G-d's immortality is supreme, the master achieves immortality through the tradition. When a disciple recites a teaching "b'shem omro," in the name of the one who said it, the disciple demonstrates respect for the authority of the tradition. By teaching his disciple respect for the tradition, the master's name survives through G-d's teachings. Through the tradition, the master attains immortality. Through G-d's works which include the Torah, G-d is the ultimate model of

¹⁰ BT Megillah 31a.

¹¹ BT Megillah 14a.

immorality, and the master of Torah achieves immortality through the transmission of the tradition.

The Rabbis portray G-d as the ultimate model of authority and hierarchy. Through the giving of Torah, G-d is the ultimate master, and Moses is G-d's disciple. In addition to the ultimate hierarchical image of G-d, the Rabbis also portray the relationship between G-d and Moses as a relationship in harmony and reciprocity. In comparison to the absolute master-disciple relationship of G-d and Moses, future masters and disciples can eventually achieve mutuality in relationship through Torah. Through Torah, the Rabbis portray G-d as a model of authority and kindness, a balance which all future masters and disciples of Torah can aspire.

Today, the image of a transcendent G-d is problematic for feminists. The depiction of G-d as a hierarchical and authoritarian deity allows for hierarchy and dominance in the human realm, and thus the subordination of women.¹² The Rabbinic images of G-d's power and dominance are "connected to G-d's maleness insofar as they mirror male social roles."¹³ Traditionally, males were in roles of power and authority. Thus, the Rabbinic imagery of G-d's ultimate power and authority is reflective of a male-constructed deity. The Rabbis, surrounded by images of military dominance and authority, depicted G-d according to their world view. In a democratic, egalitarian society, the hierarchical image of G-d as the absolute Master may no longer resonate with us today.

Despite the feminist implications of a hierarchical G-d, authority is still a reality in education and mentoring. Teaching is described as "an activity between unequals, the one

¹² Plaskow, Judith, *Standing Again at Sinai*. (United States : HarperSanFrancisco, 1990), 132.

who is teaching has what others do not ..."¹⁴ Although teaching aims at creating equals, it beings with being directive.¹⁵ Similarly, in mentoring, the authority of the mentor is initially inevitable but fluctuates over time.¹⁶ As a result of life experience in the field, the mentor is the authority of the profession. As the novice, the protégé depends on learning from the mentor's life experience. Since G-d is the Ultimate Authority, it is said that "all authority may be said to reflect a transcendent G-d."¹⁷ Thus, the teacher and mentor's authority in the human realm models G-d's ultimate authority in the relationship between G-d and humankind.

The Rabbinic image of a G-d who supports and nurtures is reflective of the role of a mentor today. A mentor supports, guides, and teaches the protégé. Therefore, G-d provides the prototypical image of a generous mentor who supports and nurtures us through Torah. In the realm of human relationships, we seek the Edenic condition, the condition of harmony or perfect relationship, but as human beings with imperfections it is difficult for us to attain.¹⁸ G-d as the ultimate mentor and Moses as his disciple or protégé are a model of a relationship in the Edenic condition, or a relationship in perfect harmony. Therefore, G-d and Moses in perfect dialogue portray the ideal of reciprocal communication which all teachers and students of Torah can aspire to in a human realm.

¹³ Ibid., 128.

¹⁴ Moran, Gabriel. *No Ladder to the Sky*. (San Francisco : Harper and Row, Publishers, 1987), 150.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Cutter, William, "Hierarchy and Mutuality : Mentor, Protégé and Spirit," *Touching the Future : Mentoring and the Jewish Professional*. Eds. Michael Zeldin and Sara S. Lee. (Los Angeles : Rhea Hirsch School of Education Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, 1995), 46-52.

¹⁷ Ibid., 48.

¹⁸ Ibid., 49.

CHAPTER 3

MOSES AND JOSHUA : A PARADIGM OF MENTORING

By G-d transmitting the Torah to Moses, Moses became G-d's foremost disciple of Torah. Moses' discipleship is illustrated when G-d commanded the angel Michael to bring forth Moses' soul, the angel Michael replied, "Master of the Universe, I was his master, and he was my disciple, how can I witness his death ?"¹⁹ Thus, the angel Michael served as an intermediary between G-d, the ultimate master, and Moses, G-d's disciple. As Moses approached death, Moses appealed to the Lord to appoint a successor over the Israelites (Num. 27 : 15 - 17). G-d commanded Moses to appoint Joshua, the son of Nun, as Moses' successor, and Moses invested Joshua with his authority (Num. 27 : 22 - 23). Through Moses' gracious commission of Joshua, Moses demonstrated the ideal qualities of a mentor. Through Joshua's service and respect for Moses, Joshua portrays the ideal role of a disciple. Therefore, Moses and Joshua serve as a model for all future master-disciple relationships of Torah.

In the human realm, Moses is the foremost master of Torah, symbolized by his title, "Moses, our master." Through the Torah, Moses is a teacher of Jewish wisdom and life experience. For example, Moses' laws are compared to the decrees of a prince.²⁰ When a prince issues a decree to his subjects, his decrees may or may not be obeyed, and if they are, the decrees may only be obeyed during the prince's lifetime. In contrast, the Rabbis teach that Moses, our master, issued many decrees and ordinances through Torah

¹⁹ Deuteronomy Rabbah 11 : 10.

²⁰ BT Shabbat 30a.

which abide forever.²¹ Moses as a master serves as a model for all future masters of Torah. For example, Moses' address to the Israelites, "See, I have taught you laws and statutes just as the Lord my G-d commanded me" (Deut. 4 : 5) is interpreted as an instruction for future teachers, "Even as I teach for free, so you should teach for free."²² Moses is the human prototype of a master who transmits the Torah to his disciples, the people of Israel. Since Moses generously transmits the knowledge given to him by G-d, Moses is a role model of a giving teacher for all future teachers of Torah. For example, before Moses died, Moses said to Joshua, "Ask me about any matters of law which you are in doubt ..."²³ As a master and a mentor, Moses also freely dispenses the wisdom of his life experience. At the hour of Moses' initiation of Joshua, Moses told Joshua, "Joshua, this people that I am handing over to you, not goats but kids I hand over to you ... not sheep but lambs ... for they have not practiced the commandments ..."²⁴ Moses, the master, generously teaches Joshua from the wisdom of his life experience. Therefore, Moses, the foremost master of Torah, transmits the text of Torah and the wisdom about the Jewish people to his disciple, Joshua.

The Rabbis depict Moses and Joshua as the ultimate master-disciple relationship. Through Moses' giving and nurturing nature, Moses is the ideal mentor. For example, when Amalek fought with Israel, Moses said to Joshua, "Choose some men for us, and go out and do battle with Amalek (Exodus 18 : 9)." Because Moses said "choose some men for us" and not "choose some men for me," Moses exemplifies the teaching that a

²¹ BT Shabbat 30a.

²² BT Bekh. 29a.

²³ BT Tem. 16a and En Yaakov, ad loc.

²⁴ Avot de-Rabbi Natan 17.

disciple should be as dear to his master as himself (Avot 4 : 12) ...”²⁵ Moses is also portrayed as Joshua’s master and mentor through his appointment of Joshua as his successor. G-d commands Moses, “Single out Joshua, son of Nun ... and lay your hand upon him” (Num. 27 : 18). The Rabbis interpret G-d’s command as , “Single out, none other, the one known to you, so that the ‘one who tends the fig tree will eat its’ fruit.’ (Proverbs 27 : 18).”²⁶ The Midrash interprets the “fig tree” as “Torah,” for just as figs are gathered bit by bit, so Torah is only learned verse by verse.²⁷ Therefore, Moses “tends” Torah by gradually raising Joshua as a disciple. By appointing Joshua as a successor and ensuring the continuity of the tradition, Moses enjoys the “fruit” of his labors. As a mentor, Moses taught and provided resources for Joshua to succeed as a leader. Before Moses’ death, G-d commanded Moses to appoint Joshua an interpreter.²⁸ An interpreter would allow Joshua to discuss, interpret, teach, and instruct during Moses’ lifetime so that when Moses departed the Israelites would not be able to say, “During his master’s life, he did not teach but now (after his master’s death) he teaches ...” After G-d’s command, Moses immediately raised up Joshua and sat him on the bench (to teach).²⁹ By following G-d’s command and expediently appointing Joshua an interpreter, Moses helps Joshua succeed as a leader. As a mentor, Moses teaches others how to show respect for Joshua. Avot de-Rabbi Natan teaches that “as soon as Joshua entered, Moses quieted the interpreter until Joshua entered and sat in his place.”³⁰ Thus,

²⁵ Mekhilta de-Rav Ishmael, B’Shallah, Parshah 1.

²⁶ Sifre Numbers 140.

²⁷ Numbers Rabbah 21 : 15.

²⁸ Sifre Numbers 140.

²⁹ Sifre Numbers 140.

³⁰ Sifre Numbers 140.

during Moses' lifetime, Moses graciously teaches the Israelites to respect his disciple's authority. Through his giving nature and teaching, Moses helps Joshua succeed as a future leader of the Israelites, thus portraying the role of an ideal mentor.

Just as the Rabbis portray Moses as the paradigm of a master and mentor, Joshua is portrayed as Moses' devoted disciple. In response to Moses' gracious offer to teach Joshua any law of which he is unsure, Joshua responds, "My master, have I ever left you, even for as little as one hour, and gone elsewhere?"³¹ Thus, Joshua as a disciple is dedicated to the service of his master. In the traditional master-disciple relationship, the disciple is not allowed to teach until the master gives the disciple permission or until the master dies. As Moses' disciple, Joshua does not teach until he is given permission by Moses, and when he does instruct, Joshua credits Moses' authority. According to the Rabbis, when Joshua was raised up as a leader by Moses, his first words were, "Blessed is the Lord who gave to the Torah to Israel through Moses, our master ..." ³² Here, Joshua portrays the role of a disciple who cites his master's authority, thereby showing respect for the tradition, and thus for G-d. At the time of Moses' death, "Joshua sought his master (Moses) but could not find him, thereupon he wept ..." ³³ Similarly, Joshua mourns for Moses as a master and father, "...when Moses died, Joshua was crying, shouting, and mourning for him ... saying, 'my father, my father, my master, my master, my father that you raised me, my master that you taught me Torah ...' " ³⁴ Here, the Rabbis portray that Moses served as Joshua's father by "raising him" through Torah.

³¹ BT Tem 16a and En Yaakov, ad loc.

³² Sifre Deuteronomy 305 : 7-8.

³³ Deuteronomy Rabbah 11 : 10.

³⁴ Sifre Deuteronomy 305.

Moses' roles as father and master to Joshua correspond to the supportive and caring qualities of a mentor. Just as in a master-disciple relationship in which the disciple is not autonomous until his master dies, Joshua only attains full authority and autonomy as a leader of Israel after Moses' death. The Rabbis teach that Joshua did not attain the "full glory" of Moses until Joshua led the Israelites across the Jordan, "so that day they revered him (Joshua) as they had revered Moses (Joshua 4 : 14)."³⁵ Therefore, Joshua is portrayed as the ideal disciple who is devoted and subservient to the authority of Moses, his master, and by extension, G-d.

As a mentor, Moses graciously transmitted his authority to Joshua and serves as a model for the transmission of authority from master to disciple. Moses appointed Joshua "just as the Lord commanded him" (Num. 27 : 22). G-d commanded Moses to "lay your hand upon him," but Moses transferred his authority by laying both hands upon him, "Moses laid his hands upon him and commissioned him ..." (Num. 27 : 22). By bestowing both hands upon Joshua, "Moses did (commission him) with a generous spirit."³⁶ Moses demonstrated generosity toward his successor, Joshua. Moses' benevolent nature toward Joshua is compared to a "full and overflowing vessel."³⁷ Moses went and appointed Joshua "with happiness."³⁸ Since Moses demonstrated benevolence toward Joshua, "there was no jealousy between his children and his brother's children."³⁹ As a result of Moses' generous action, "he placed his hands upon him and commanded him," the Rabbis teach that a "person may be jealous of every individual, except of his son and his

³⁵ Yalkut, Psalms Rabbah 21 : 7.

³⁶ Numbers Rabbah 21 : 15.

³⁷ Sifre Numbers 141.

³⁸ Sifre Numbers 141.

disciple.”⁴⁰ Through Moses’ commission of Joshua, Moses teaches all future individuals not to be jealous of their disciples. As a result of the reciprocity between Moses and Joshua, Moses’ commission of Joshua is compared to “one who lights one candle with another (candle).”⁴¹ Just as the flame of one candle lights another candle without its’ own flame being diminished, so, too, when Moses commissioned Joshua, his own power and authority were not diminished. Rather, just as both flames create a greater light, Moses’ honor was enhanced by Joshua’s commission. After Moses’ death, Israelites would compare Joshua’s glory to the full glory of Moses.⁴² Through his gracious and benevolent behavior toward Joshua, Moses is the paradigm of a generous mentor.

Moses and Joshua are portrayed as the paradigm of a master-disciple relationship. For example, Psalms 21 : 6 states, “Great is his glory through Your victory ; You have endowed him with splendor and majesty.” According to the Midrash, the “splendor” refers to the master, and the “majesty” refers to the disciple.⁴³ As the foremost example of a master, the “splendor of the master” refers to Moses whom G-d commanded, “ ... Place your splendor (authority) upon him (Num. 27 : 20).” Here, Moses transmits the “splendor” of his authority to Joshua. As Moses’ disciple, the “majesty” of the disciple refers to Joshua when he led the Israelites across the Jordan, “... they feared him as they feared Moses” (Num. 4 : 14). Thus, Moses is the paradigm of the “splendor of the master” who transmitted the “splendor” to the “majesty” of his disciple, Joshua. As a paradigm of a master-disciple relationship, Moses and Joshua serve as an example to

³⁹ Sifre Numbers 141.

⁴⁰ BT Sanhedrin 105b.

⁴¹ Numbers Rabbah 21 : 15.

⁴² Yalkut, Psalms Rabbah 21 : 7.

instruct future masters and disciples of Torah. For example, R. Elazar came and reported a statement at the study house, but he did not report it in the name of R. Yohanan, his master. Thereupon, R. Yohanan was annoyed. R. Jacob b. Idi said to him, “ ‘Just as the Lord commanded Moses, his servant, so Moses had charged Joshua, and so did Joshua, he left nothing undone from all that the Lord had commanded Moses (Joshua 11 : 15).’ For everything that Joshua said, did he say, ‘Thus, Moses told me,’ rather, Joshua taught and interpreted, and everyone knew that it was the Torah of Moses, so did your disciple R. Elazar teach and interpret, and everyone knew that it was your (teachings).”⁴⁴ Moses and Joshua were so closely aligned as master and disciple that all knew that Joshua taught in Moses’ name. Therefore, R. Idi refers to Moses and Joshua to teach R. Yohanan not to be annoyed that R. Elazar, his disciple, did not teach in his name. Moses and Joshua are portrayed as the model of a master-disciple relationship, and their relationship is the basis of comparison for all master-disciple relationships in the future.

Through Torah, Moses is G-d’s disciple and the human master of Torah. From the legacy of Moses and Joshua, we can learn the ideal characteristics of a master-disciple relationship. Moses as the master taught Joshua, his disciple Torah and thus raised him as if he were a son. As a master of Torah, Moses graciously transmits his knowledge of Torah and the wisdom of his life experience. Through his “service” to Moses, Joshua portrays the ideal role of a dedicated and loyal disciple. As proceeding chapters will illustrate, all future master-disciple relationships reflect the paradigm of Moses as master and Joshua as disciple.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ BT Yebamot 96b.

In addition to being the paradigm of a master-disciple relationship, Moses and Joshua are also a model of a mentoring relationship. Whereas in today's world, we rarely emulate the master-disciple relationship in education, we embrace mentoring as a method of instruction. At the heart of mentoring is a basic trust that each person has in the other.⁴⁵ To establish that trust, the mentor and protégé must come to the relationship with mutual respect for the other.⁴⁶ In the mentoring relationship, both the mentor and protégé bring generosity to the relationship. The mentor generously passes on his or her wisdom, and the protégé shares questions and vulnerabilities.⁴⁷ By generously imparting his wisdom, Moses is the foremost mentor and Joshua is his protégé. At the hour of Joshua's commission, "Moses' strength was increased and Joshua was becoming strengthened in the eyes of all Israel."⁴⁸ Moses and Joshua represent a mentor and protégé who are empowered through their reciprocity. From Moses' commission of Joshua, Moses teaches future mentors that their authority will be enhanced through their protégé rather than diminished. Joshua's respect of Moses teaches future protégées to respect their mentor's life experience and authority. The Rabbis' interpretation of the relationship between Moses and Joshua portray the ideal characteristics of a mentoring relationship.

In the modern concept of mentoring, the protégé travels a path from dependence, independence, and finally, interdependence, the point at which the protégé and mentor

⁴⁵ Zeldin, Michael, "Touching the Future : The Promise of Mentoring," *Touching the Future : Mentoring and the Jewish Professional*. Eds. Michael Zeldin and Sara S. Lee. (Los Angeles : Rhea Hirsch School of Education Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, 1995), 20-21.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 21.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 21.

⁴⁸ Sifre Deuteronomy 305.

become colleagues.⁴⁹ Interestingly, as a protégé, Joshua's travels a path of dependence, interdependence, and finally, at Moses' death, limited independence. Joshua does not receive autonomy as a leader until Moses' commission which occurs prior to Moses' death. According to the Rabbis, Joshua only teaches Torah after Moses' departure as a leader. When Joshua serves as a leader, he does so in the name of Moses. Therefore, Joshua's developmental path as a leader is distinct from the modern concept of mentoring. Today, the protégé achieves independence and then interdependence at which point the mentor and protégé become colleagues. In contrast, a Rabbinic disciple such as Joshua never attains complete autonomy. In forthcoming chapters, the disciple's path toward independence will be more fully explored.

The Torah, the content of Moses and Joshua's mentoring relationship, is still the basis of mentoring in the Jewish profession. In the past as well as today, Torah "is equivalent to wisdom in Jewish tradition ... because ... Torah sets out a blueprint for the world as God desires it to be."⁵⁰ Today, Torah can still serve as the foundation of ideals for the mentor and protégé in the Jewish profession. The Rabbis' description of Joshua's anguish at the time of Moses' departure still resonates with us when we lose a mentor. Finally, the reciprocal respect, trust, and love between Moses and Joshua continues to serve as a model for mentoring relationships today.

⁴⁹ Zeldin, Michael, "Touching the Future : The Promise of Mentoring," *Touching the Future : Mentoring and the Jewish Professional*. Eds. Michael Zeldin and Sara S. Lee. (Los Angeles : Rhea Hirsch School of Education Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, 1995), 17.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 23.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MASTER

In Rabbinic texts, the *Rav* is best defined as master. This definition imparts the Rav's role as the human authority in the transmission of Torah. The *talmid* is the master's disciple. In Rabbinic texts, the teacher-student relationship was a master-disciple relationship. The master is the authority of the tradition, and the disciple serves the master in order to learn from the master's wisdom.

A master of Torah is one who imparts his knowledge to others, mainly disciples. For example, a master is taught to "raise up many disciples."⁵¹ Rabbinic texts describe the master's appropriate teaching manner toward his disciple(s). For example, the master should generously teach the disciple, "One who refuses a (single) *halakhah* from the disciple, it is as if he robbed him of his ancestor's heritage ..." ⁵² One who teaches the disciple "will gain Joseph's blessings, as it is said, 'blessing on the head of one who dispenses it'" ⁵³ Torah knowledge is compared to grain, and thus the master receives "blessings" for dispensing the knowledge of Torah. The master generously transmits his knowledge of the Torah to the disciple. Rabbi Tarfon is an exemplar of a master who generously transmitted the tradition to his disciples. It is said that when a scholar came to him and said, "Teach me," Rabbi Tarfon would cite for him Scripture and Mishnah, Midrash, Halakhah, and Aggadah. When the scholar parted from him, he went away

⁵¹ Avot 1 : 1.

⁵² BT Sanhedrin 91b.

⁵³ BT Sanhedrin 92a.

filled with blessing and goodness.⁵⁴ The master also recognizes that the disciple may be a potential threat as a future master. The Talmud teaches that one should not provoke a humble disciple because he may take revenge in the future.⁵⁵ Thus, the master recognizes that the disciple is a future colleague who may become a rival as a master of Torah. Despite this recognition, however, the master transmits Torah to the disciple in order to ensure the continuation of the Jewish tradition.

In the master-disciple relationship, the master transmits Jewish wisdom to the disciple. Avot 1 : 6 states, "Provide yourself with a master..." Avot de-Rabbi Natan further interprets this Mishnah, "... one should provide himself with a single teacher and study with him Scripture and Mishnah, Midrash, Halakhah, and Aggadah. Then the interpretation which the teacher neglected to tell him in the study of Scripture he will eventually tell him in Mishnah, the interpretation which he neglected to tell him in the study of Mishnah he will eventually tell him in the study of Midrash ..." ⁵⁶ Avot de-Rabbi Natan illustrates that the *rav* or master transmits the textual knowledge of Torah to his disciple. Jewish wisdom is also composed of how to live life as a virtuous Jew. In the master-disciple relationship, the master imparts the practical matter of Jewish wisdom to the disciple. For example, Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai said to his disciples, "Go forth and see which is the good way which a man should cleave." R. Eliezer said, 'A good eye.'⁵⁷ R. Joshua said, 'A good friend.' R. Jose said, 'A good neighbor.' R. Simeon said, 'One who foresees the fruit of an action.' R. Eleazar said, 'A good heart.' He (R.

⁵⁴ Avot de-Rabbi Natan 18.

⁵⁵ BT Pesahim 113a.

⁵⁶ Avot de-Rabbi Natan 8 : 1.

Yohanan) said to them, 'I approve of Eleazar, son of Arach, more than your words , for in his words yours are included.'⁵⁸ Rabban Yohanan teaches his disciples Jewish wisdom which includes the proper path of life as a Jew. Another example is that disciples ask their masters how they managed to live to an old age, and the masters share their Jewish wisdom.⁵⁹ The disciples of R. Eleazar b. Shammua asked, "by what (virtue) did you live to an old age ?" R. Eleazar Shammua taught, "I never made a shortcut through a synagogue, and I never strode on the heads of the holy people,⁶⁰ and I never lifted up my hands without reciting the (priestly) blessing."⁶¹ To the identical question from his disciples , R. Peridah taught, "A person was never before me to the House of Study, I never recited grace in front of a priest, nor have I eaten from a beast from which priestly dues were not taken."⁶² The masters share their secrets of living to an old age, thus transmitting their wisdom of how to live an appropriate moral path as a master of Torah. Therefore, in the master-disciple relationship, the master transmits Jewish wisdom which includes the wisdom of Jewish texts and the wisdom of how to live life as a moral or respectful Jew.

The master teaches his disciples through his personal moral character. If the master strays from an exemplary moral path, he does not teach until he returns to a good

⁵⁷ A "good eye," is a literal translation. It can also be translated as a benevolent eye, meaning good will and a generous attitude. Jastrow Dictionary, p. 1071.

⁵⁸ Pirke Avot 2:8-9.

⁵⁹ BT Megillah 27b-28a.

⁶⁰ BT Megillah 27b. Literal translation. This phrase is also interpreted as "never forced my way through students seated on the floor to get to my chair." *Jastrow Dictionary*.

⁶¹ BT Megillah 27b.

⁶² BT Megillah 28a.

path.⁶³ In addition to his behavior serving as an example, the master teaches the importance of moral character through his choice of students. A teacher does not instruct a student in Torah unless the student is morally worthy through his deeds or unless the student is naïve.⁶⁴ As a role model, the master exemplifies that moral character is accompanied by knowledge, "One is not worthy to be appointed a teacher but one who is G-d fearing, skilled to read, and precise."⁶⁵ A master models behaviors or values which are appropriate for a scholar of Torah such as patience. If the master teaches and his disciples do not understand, the master should demonstrate patience by returning to the matter and teaching it repeatedly until the students understand.⁶⁶ The Rabbis taught that Hillel portrayed exemplary patience.⁶⁷ For example, two men made a bet that the person who would be able to annoy Hillel would win 400 zuz. One of the men said that he would be able to bother Hillel. As Sabbath evening was approaching, the man knocked on Hillel's door, and he said he had a question to ask Hillel. Even though the man interrupted Hillel's Sabbath preparation, Hillel replied, "Ask, my son, ask!" Although the man's question was nonsensical, Hillel replied, "My son, you have asked a great question ..." and proceeded to answer it. The man then proceeded to leave Hillel's house and return with a ridiculous question three consecutive times, thereby trying to arouse Hillel's anger. Finally, the man said to Hillel, "I have many questions to ask, but I am

⁶³ Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*. (Israel : Pardes Publishers, 1955), Hilkhos Talmud Torah 4 : 1.

⁶⁴ Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*. (Israel : Pardes Publishers, 1955), Hilkhos Talmud Torah 4 : 1.

⁶⁵ Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*. (Israel : Pardes Publishers, 1955), Hilkhos Talmud Torah 2 : 3.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 4 : 4.

⁶⁷ BT Shabbat 30b-31a.

afraid that you will become angry.” Hillel replied, “Ask all the questions that you have... Hillel will not get angry.”⁶⁸ Hillel demonstrates extraordinary patience, and his reputation as a “patriarch” or father figure reflects his beloved nature. Thus, Hillel is an example of a master who exemplifies that Torah knowledge is accompanied by moral behavior.

The master also teaches values through his physical method of instruction. The master sits at the head of his students, and the students sit around him in a circle so that everyone will see the master and hear his words. When teaching, the master does not sit on a chair while the students sit on the ground. Rather, the master and his students sit on the ground, or they all sit on chairs.⁶⁹ Through this physical environment, the master teaches that in the realm of learning, the master and disciple can be equal. Therefore, the master teaches his disciples by serving as a role model through his moral character, behavior, and teaching style.

The Rabbis also describe an element of nurturing in the master-disciple relationship. Rava said, “If you see a student whose studies come as hard as iron to him, it is because his teacher does not encourage him.”⁷⁰ Here, Rava portrays that “encouragement” in terms of nurturing is expected to be a component of the master-disciple relationship. Similarly, when a person teaches Torah to his neighbor, Scripture speaks of him as though he had begotten him.⁷¹ For example, in the commandment to

⁶⁸ BT Shabbat 30b-31a.

⁶⁹ Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*. (Israel : Pardes Publishers, 1955), Hilkhos Talmud Torah 4 : 2.

⁷⁰ BT Taanit 7b - 8a.

⁷¹ BT Sanhedrin 19b.

“teach your children”(Deut. 6 : 7), the “children” are interpreted as “disciples.”⁷² A master is compared to a father, for just as a father brings one into this world, one’s master ... brings one into the world-to-come.⁷³ R. Eliezer and his disciples illustrate the parental relationship between a master and his disciples. When R. Eliezer fell sick, four elders came to visit him, including R. Eleazar ben Azaria. Each disciple attempted to comfort R. Eliezer. R. Eliezer ben Azariah spoke up and said to R. Eliezer, “You are more valuable to Israel than a mother and father, for a mother and father (sustain us) in this world, whereas you, my master, (sustain us) in this world and the world-to-come.”⁷⁴ Similarly, the Tosefta quotes the verse “If you produce what is noble out of the worthless, You shall be my spokesman” (Jer. 15 : 19) as a proof-text for the principle that “one who teaches his neighbor Torah it is as if he formed him.”⁷⁵ In addition, one “who brings another with reverence under the wings of Heaven is deemed as though he formed him ... and brought him into this world.”⁷⁶ As a parent-figure, the master guides a disciple’s moral development. If a disciple strays from a virtuous path, the master leads him back to the correct moral path, examines him, and then brings him back to the House of Study.⁷⁷ Therefore, the master is compared to a disciple’s parent who “raises” the disciple in learning. The master “sustains” the disciple with the “sustenance” or knowledge of Torah.

⁷² Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*. (Israel : Pardes Publishers, 1955), Hilkhos Talmud Torah 1 : 2.

⁷³ Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*. (Israel : Pardes Publishers, 1955), Hilkhos Talmud Torah 5 : 1.

⁷⁴ BT Sanhedrin 101a.

⁷⁵ *Tosefta*. Ed. Dr. M.S. Zuckermann. (Jerusalem : Wahrman Books, 1970), Horayot 2 : 7.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*. (Israel : Pardes Publishers, 1955), Hilkhos Talmud Torah 4 : 1.

Through the master-disciple relationship, the master achieves immortality both during and after his lifetime. For example, R. Yohanan asks R. Eliezer if he should spread a cloth over the sukkah to protect them from the sun, and R. Eliezer only replies, "There was not a tribe in Israel from which prophets did not come ..." ⁷⁸ The Talmud teaches that R. Eliezer gave this answer not to divert their minds with words but because "he (R. Eliezer) never said anything that he had not heard from his teacher." ⁷⁹ R. Eliezer regenerates his master's teachings, and through the master's teachings, the master's name endures. R. Yohanan and R. Joshua ben Levi differ about the implication of the verse "who will have no successor" (Ps. 55 : 20). ⁸⁰ One said it refers to a man who has no son. The other said that it refers to man who leaves no disciple. ⁸¹ Thus, both the son and a disciple are a person's legacy and thus are the source of a person's immortality. The master also achieves immortality through the disciple, for the disciple eventually teaches others "in the name of" his master. Disciples cite their master's teachings by speaking, "*b'shem omro*," in the name of the one who said it, thereby giving credit to the master's authority for the teaching. The master may achieve immortality during his lifetime through his teachings. For example, R. Eleazar said in the name of R. Hanina, "One who states a teaching in the name of one who said it (its' originator) brings deliverance to the world, as it is said, '... Esther told the king in the name of Mordekhai ...' (Esther 2 : 22)." ⁸² The Rabbis interpret that Esther's use of the phrase, "in the name of Mordekhai" demonstrates respect for the tradition, and, as a result, Esther helped to deliver the Jews from Haman,

⁷⁸ BT Sukkah 27b.

⁷⁹ BT Sukkah 27b.

⁸⁰ BT Baba Batra 116a.

⁸¹ Ibid.

thereby "bringing deliverance to the world." By citing "in the name of Mordekhai", Esther grants immortality to Mordekhai during his lifetime. Through his teachings, the master also achieves immortality after his death. R. Yohanan said in the name of R. Simeon b. Yohai, "the lips of a (deceased) scholar, in whose name a traditional teaching is stated in this world, move gently in the grave."⁸³ The scholar's "lips moving gently in grave" represent the scholar's immortality when the disciple continues transmitting his master's teachings. R. Tarfon attests to the immortality of the master when he tells R. Eliezer, "You are more valuable to Israel than drops of rain, for drops of rain (sustain us) in this world, while you, my master (sustain us) in this world and the world-to-come."⁸⁴ Therefore, R. Tarfon illustrates that R. Eliezer's teaching will sustain generations of scholars after R. Eliezer's death.⁸⁵ Similarly, R. Hanina teaches that the death of a righteous person is compared to a lost pearl, "Wherever the pearl is lost, it remains, it is only lost to its' owner."⁸⁶ Like the pearl, when a righteous person dies, he is only lost to his generation. The master's teachings are immortal. Through the transmission of Jewish wisdom, the master gains immortality both during and after his lifetime

In order to compare the Rav or master to a mentor, one must first define the role of the mentor. Mentors, principally, are "conveyers of wisdom in practical matters."⁸⁷ The

⁸² BT Megillah 15a.

⁸³ BT Yebamot 97a. *The Babylonian Talmud*. English Translation. Ed. Rabbi Dr. I. Epstein. (London : Soncino Press, 1938).

⁸⁴ BT Sanhedrin 101a.

⁸⁵ *The Book of Legends*. Eds. Hayim Nahman Bialik and Yehoshua Hana Ravnitzky. Trans. William G. Braude. (New York : Schocken books, 1992), 225, footnote 1.

⁸⁶ BT Megillah 15a.

⁸⁷ Zeldin, Michael, "Touching the Future : The Promise of Mentoring," *Touching the Future : Mentoring and the Jewish Professional*. Eds. Michael Zeldin and Sara S.

mentor gives the protégé advice, support, and feedback, thus responding to the protégé's dependence, but simultaneously prepares the protégé to act autonomously.⁸⁸ Both the mentor and protégé bring unique contributions to the mentoring relationship ; the mentor shares her life experience, and the protégé brings the mentor a new, and perhaps, refreshed perspective to her field. Despite the generosity of both parties, it is the mentor who goes beyond generosity because she raises up a colleague who may someday replace her.⁸⁹ Through the mentoring relationship, the protégé learns from the mentor's life experience, and the mentor raises a colleague , and, in so doing, "recreates a part of herself that will touch the future in a way that she herself will not."⁹⁰ Mentoring is "a special kind of immortality, the kind one can experience in one's own lifetime."⁹¹ By raising a future colleague who will use learned skills in new contexts, the mentor achieves immortality both during and after his or her lifetime.

In comparison to the mentor who imparts wisdom in practical and/or professional matters, the master transmits Jewish wisdom which includes textual knowledge and how to live life as a virtuous Jew. Like the mentor, the master also generously transmits knowledge even though the master's disciple may rival him as a master of Torah. Just as the mentor achieves immortality through the protégé, the master has the potential to achieve immortality through his disciple. However, the master achieves immortality

Lee. (Los Angeles : Rhea Hirsch School of Education Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, 1995), 16.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 17.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 21.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 18.

⁹¹ Weber, Sally, "Mentoring, Gratification, Immortality, and Other Thoughts," *Touching the Future : Mentoring and the Jewish Professional*. Eds. Michael Zeldin and

through the disciple's recitations of his teachings which are reflective of G-d. When the disciple recites "*b'shem omro*," in the name of the one who said it, the master achieves immortality through the tradition, rather than as a result of his individual character. In the master-disciple relationship, there are characteristics of mentoring such as the generous transmission of wisdom, mutual respect of both parties, and the ability for the master to achieve immortality through the disciple's recitation of his teachings. However, the mentor's nature is different than that of the master. The mentor is a supportive and nurturing advisor to the protégé. Although the master is like a parent who oversees the disciple's moral development, the master in Rabbinic texts is not supportive and nurturing. The master is an authoritative teacher. Whereas the mentor prepares the protégé to succeed as an autonomous professional, the master as a medium of the tradition continues to exert authority throughout the disciple's lifetime. Therefore, Rabbinic texts do not portray the *rav* as a mentor but as a master of the authoritarian tradition.

The master's authoritative role may also reflect the role of the modern educator. Authority "resides in the community's way of life, so a teacher can claim only to 're-present' the tradition."⁹² The *rav* or master "re-presented" the tradition, and thereby reflected the authority of the community of Israel. Like the modern teacher or educator, the master's authority served a greater purpose than transmitting tradition from one generation to the next. According to Martin Buber, the educator's task is to "introduce discipline and order, he has to establish a law, and he can only strive and hope for the

Sara S. Lee. (Los Angeles : Rhea Hirsch School of Education Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, 1995), 65.

⁹² Moran, Gabriel. *No Ladder to the Sky*. (San Francisco : Harper and Row, Publishers, 1987), 50.

result that discipline and order will become inward and autonomous, and that at least the law will be written in the heart of his pupils.”⁹³ The master taught the disciple to respect his authority in order to teach the disciple to respect the authority of the tradition and G-d. As the next chapter will illustrate, the disciple’s respect for authority was just one of the personality characteristics that the disciple attained through the master-disciple relationship.

From the master-disciple relationship, we can learn respect for the modern-day *rav*, the tradition, and G-d. In the master-disciple relationship, the *rav* or master’s authority is based on the master’s role as the medium of the authoritative tradition. This is an important lesson for our world today. As rabbis of liberal Judaism, we “re-present” the tradition of Torah, and thus our authority is derived from representing the Torah or the “teaching” of Israel rather than our individual status as Jewish professionals. In Rabbinic texts, the master generously transmitted the knowledge of text and the wisdom of life experience. As each generation of Israel seeks to learn from the modern *rav* or master of Torah, the *rav* who generously imparts knowledge to his disciples is a model for the *rav* as a mentor to his or her protégées today.

⁹³ Buber, Martin. “The Education of Character.” *Between Man and Man*. (London : Routledge and Kegan Paul LTD, 1947), 113.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A DISCIPLE

In the master-disciple relationship, the disciple "serves" the master, depicted by the Hebrew verb "*l'shamaish*." For example, Pirke Avot 1 : 3 teaches, "be not like servants who serve the master in order to receive a reward but be like servants who serve the master without receiving a reward, and may the fear of Heaven be upon you." Rabbi ben Levi teaches, "All work that a slave does for his master, a disciple does for his master, except for removing his shoe."⁹⁴ Here, the service of a "slave" and a "disciple" are virtually interchangeable except that the scholar is not absolutely subservient. A disciple's "service" to the master also had redemptive value. It is told that Rabbi Eleazar had a disciple who deserved burning for an offense against G-d. The (Sages) said, "Leave him (alone), he served (*shimesh*) a great man."⁹⁵ In this text, the disciple's "service" to Rabbi Eleazar won him clemency for an offense G-d. In Rabbinic literature, a disciple's "service" or apprenticeship was given higher priority than actual learning. Rabbi Yohanan taught in the name of R. Simeon b. Yokhai, "The service (apprenticeship) to scholars is greater than learning, for it is said, 'Elisha son of Shaphat, who poured water on Elijah ... (II Kings 3 : 11).'" Because the verse states that Elisha "poured" water on Elijah and thus "attended upon" him instead of Elisha who "learned" from Elijah, one learns that the service or apprenticeship to scholars is greater than learning.⁹⁶ In the master-disciple relationship, the master teaches the disciple, and the disciple learns by "serving" or acting as an apprentice to the master.

⁹⁴ BT Ketubot 96a.

⁹⁵ BT Eruvin 54a.

Being a disciple requires more than just learning the tradition. Rather, the Talmud teaches that a disciple should have a moral character worthy of receiving the tradition. One does not teach Torah but to a disciple who is worthy with pleasant attributes.⁹⁷ For example, in *Hullin* 133a, R. Judah teaches in the name of Rav, "One who teaches a disciple who is not worthy falls to Gehinom..." The phrase "is not worthy" implies that the disciple is required to be morally suitable for the master-disciple relationship. Similarly, in *Taanit* 7a, R. Yohanan compares the biblical verses "For man is a tree of the field" and "You may eat of them, but you must not cut them down" (Deut. 20 : 19) to a scholar. According to R. Yohanan, "if a scholar is worthy, 'from it you may eat and not cut down,'" (Deut. 20 : 19) thereby referring to the scholar who is morally suitable for the study of Torah. If a scholar is not worthy, "you may destroy him and cut him down," thereby referring to a scholar who is not worthy of the tradition. A disciple or scholar's "worthiness" refers to the scholar's moral character and his suitability for the study of Torah.

Similarly, in *Yoma* 72b, Rava taught "Every scholar whose inside does not match his outside, he is not a scholar." Therefore, a scholar is judged both for his pure intention matched by appropriate outward behavior. In *Yoma* 72b, "enemies of the scholars" are defined as those who "occupy themselves with Torah but do not fear heaven." An example of one whose "inside" matched his "outside" is Rabbi Akiva. It happened that one of Rabbi Akiva's disciple's became sick, but the sages did not visit him. Thereupon, Rabbi Akiva visited the disciple, and because Rabbi Akiva swept and

⁹⁶ BT Berakhot 7b.

cleaned the house for him, the disciple became well. The disciple then said to him, "Rabbi Akiva, you brought me back to life." Rabbi Akiva then went forth and expounded, "One who does not visit the sick, it is as if he had shed blood."⁹⁸ Thus, as a master, Rabbi Akiva exemplifies that Torah knowledge should be accompanied by moral behavior such as visiting the sick.

According to *Kiddushin* 40b, a scholar's knowledge should shape his moral behavior, "One who has knowledge of Bible, Mishnah, and secular pursuits will not easily sin..." A rabbinic parable illustrates how Rabbi Akiva's lack of knowledge of the tradition caused him to transgress the commandments. While walking on a road, Rabbi Akiva came upon the body of a slain man. Rabbi Akiva carried the body a distance of four miles until he came to a burial place where Rabbi Akiva interred him. When Rabbi Akiva related the incident to R. Eliezer and R. Joshua, they told him that he had sinned because he should have buried the corpse where he had first seen it. After this incident, Rabbi Akiva began "*l'shamaish*," to serve or attend the sages in order not to sin when he meant to do an act of benevolence.⁹⁹ Rabbi Akiva teaches that knowledge of the Jewish tradition guides a person toward appropriate moral behavior. Similarly, "One who studies Bible, Mishnah, serves the disciples of the scholars, is honest in business with gentleness toward people ... it is said about him, 'Happy is his father who taught him Torah, happy is his master who taught him Torah.'"¹⁰⁰ An example of one whose knowledge of Torah shapes his moral behavior is Simeon ben Shetah who received a donkey from an

⁹⁷ Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*. (Israel : Pardes Publishers, 1955), Hilkhos Talmud Torah 4 : 1.

⁹⁸ BT Nedarim 40a, En Yaakov.

⁹⁹ PT Naz. 7 : 1, 56a.

Ishmaelite. His disciples found a pearl entangled in its' neck and then praised G-d for their master's good fortune. However, Simeon ben Shetah said, "I will take the donkey but not the pearl." He went and returned the pearl to the Ishmaelite. As a result, the Ishmaelite praised the G-d of Simeon ben Shetah.¹⁰¹ Therefore, Simeon ben Shetah illustrates that a disciple or scholar is more than one who learns the Jewish tradition. Rather, the tradition shapes his moral being.

Rabbinic texts also define what constitutes moral behavior for a scholar. For example, a disciple must learn to control his anger. In *Pesahim* 66b, "Resh Lakish said: As to every person who becomes angry, his wisdom departs from him, if he is a sage, his wisdom departs from him, if he is prophet, his prophecy departs from him." Moses is an example of a sage and a prophet whose wisdom departs from him as a result of his anger. It is written, "Moses became angry with the managers of the army (Num. 31 : 14)." Then, it is written, "Eleazar the priest said to the troops who had taken part in the fighting, this is the law which G-d has commanded Moses (Num. 31 : 21)." According to the Rabbis, Moses' anger caused him to forget the law, and Eleazar the priest had to instruct the troops in the place of Moses.¹⁰² Anger precludes rational thought. When a disciple becomes angry, he cannot think clearly, and thus, he is unable to recollect his scholarship. In contrast, when a disciple learns to control his anger, his character is strengthened. *Berakhot* 63b quotes Proverbs 30:33, "As milk under pressure produces butter, and a nose under pressure produces blood, so patience under pressure produces

¹⁰⁰ BT Yoma 86a.

¹⁰¹ *Sefer Ha'aggada*. Eds. and Trans. Ch. N. Bialik and Y. Ch. Ravnitzky. (Israel : Dvir Publishers Ltd., 1987), 165, n.3.

¹⁰² BT Pesahim 66b.

strife." According to *Berakhot* 63b, the "nose under pressure produces blood" refers to a disciple whose master gets angry at him. When it happens the first time and the disciple remains silent, he is found worthy of distinguishing between ritually pure and impure blood. The "patience under pressure produces strife" refers to a disciple whose master continues to become angry at him. If the disciple remains silent the first and second time, thereby controlling his anger, the disciple is found worthy of being able to distinguish between civil and capital cases of law. In more divisive cases such as capital law, one needs to remain calm in order to think clearly. Therefore, each time the disciple learns to remain silent in the face of derision, he demonstrates patience and stability, thereby gaining respect as a leader. These texts illustrate that the master-disciple hierarchy builds character by teaching the disciple to control his anger.

Controlling contentious behavior is also part of the moral character of a disciple. Avot 5 : 17 states, "Every argument that is for the sake of Heaven, its' end will be established, but (every argument) that is not for the sake of Heaven, its end will not be established." The purpose of an argument should be for "the sake of Heaven," or to increase knowledge of Torah. The arguments between the School of Hillel and the School of Shammai are examples of controversy for the sake of Heaven. R. Abba taught in the name of Samuel, "The School of Shammai and the School of Hillel argued for three years, ones saying, 'The law is according to our views,' and the others saying, 'The law is according to our views.' Then a divine voice went forth and declared : These and these are the words of the living G-d, but the law is according to the School of Hillel."¹⁰³ Since the halakhic arguments between the Schools of Hillel and Shammai are described as "the

words of the living G-d," this is an example of controversy for the sake of Heaven, or discerning Torah. In contrast, the disciples of R. Meir demonstrated contentious behavior which impeded learning. After the death of R. Meir, R. Judah told his disciples, "Do not allow the disciples of R. Meir to enter here, for, being contentious, they come not to learn Torah but only to put me down with citations of halakhah."¹⁰⁴ One of the main objectives of the master-disciple relationship is to transmit the tradition, and contentious behavior impedes learning. Since the master is a vehicle of the authoritative tradition, a disciple who persistently argues against his master is actually arguing against the authoritative tradition. *Sanhedrin* 110a negates arguing for the sole purpose of argumentation, and interprets such contention as rebellion. According to *Sanhedrin* 110a, one who maintains a contention transgresses the negative command "not to be like Korah and his company" (Num. 17 : 7). Therefore, *Sanhedrin* 110a specifically negates contentious argumentation. According to R. Hisda, "One who disagrees with his master it is as if he disagrees with the Shechinah..." Further, according to R. Hana, "One who quarrels with his master it is as if he quarrels with the Shechinah..." R. Haninah teaches, "One who rebels against his master it is as if he rebels against the Shechinah ..." Through the use of different Hebrew verbs, *Sanhedrin* 110a portrays that all types of contention such as disagreement, arguments, rebellion, and criticism of one's master for its' own sake are unacceptable. In order to transmit the tradition through the master-disciple relationship, a disciple should only argue to discern the Torah and ascertain the truth about the appropriate moral path of a Jew.

¹⁰³ BT Eruvin 13b.

¹⁰⁴ BT Naz. 49b-50a, BT Kid. 52b.

Sanhedrin 5b portrays that a scholar should be committed to community. In *Sanhedrin* 5b, Rabbi went to a certain place and observed the inhabitants making dough that was ritually impure. When he asked them why, they responded that a "disciple came here and taught us that pond water does not rend food liable to become unclean." However, the residents had misunderstood the disciple. In reality, the disciple had said "eggs", but they had misunderstood him and instead heard the word "pond waters." Here, the Talmud illustrates how a community is adversely effected by a disciple who does not remain in a community long enough to observe whether or not his teachings are understood by the community. Instead of a migrating disciple, *Sanhedrin* 5b teaches that a disciple should become established in a community and be accessible for questions regarding his teachings. Similarly, *Sanhedrin* 5b teaches that Tanhum son of Rabbi Ammi was in Hatar. He expounded to the residents of the community that it is permitted to stir the grain in water before grinding for Passover. They responded to him, "Does not Rabbi Mani of Tyre live here, and it is taught that a student does not teach halakhah in the place of his master unless there is a distance of three parasangs ... He said to them, I did not know."¹⁰⁵ Here, the Talmud teaches that a disciple should not travel and then teach communities at random. Rather, a disciple should settle in a particular community and dedicate himself to learn and teach in that community. In *Avot* 2 : 5, Hillel taught, "Do not separate yourself from the community." Instead, the Rabbis teach that a person should suffer along with the community."¹⁰⁶ In the battle against Amalek, Moses is the prime example of a master who suffered along with the community. In this battle,

¹⁰⁵ BT *Sanhedrin* 5b.

¹⁰⁶ BT *Taanit* 11a.

whenever Moses lifted his hand, Moses prevailed, but whenever he let it down, Amalek prevailed over Israel. Moses suffered through the battle with fatigue, "But Moses' hand became heavy, so they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat upon it, while Aaron and Hur, one on each side, supported his hands, and thus his hands remained steady until the sun set (Exodus 17 : 12)." Moses' perspective during the battle is interpreted as "since the children of Israel are steeped in distress, I will be with them in distress."¹⁰⁷ Moses suffered along with Israel, and, as a result, was blessed to witness Israel's military victory. Moses is an example of one who suffers along with the community, and, therefore, "will merit and see the consolation of the community."¹⁰⁸ The case of Eleazar ben Arakh illustrates the negative effects of divorcing oneself from community. After Yohanan ben Zakkai died, his disciples went to Yavneh, except for Eleazar ben Arakh who joined his wife at Emmaus. He waited for others to come to him, but they did not. He remained in Emmaus until he forgot his learning.¹⁰⁹ Thus, in the aftermath of Yohanan ben Zakkai's death, a time of distress for his disciples, Eleazar ben Arakh separated himself from his community, and, as a result, Eleazar lost his knowledge and merit as a scholar. Therefore, these texts teach that a disciple should be established, accessible, and committed to community.

Rabbinic texts portray a disciple or scholar as one who is humble. *Pesahim* 66b specifically states, "Whoever is boastful, if he is a scholar, his wisdom departs from him, if he is a prophet, his prophecy departs from him ..." One learns from Hillel that "if he is a sage, his wisdom departs from him." The Master taught that "He (Hillel) began to chide

¹⁰⁷ BT Taanit 11a.

¹⁰⁸ BT Taanit 11a.

them with words. Then he said to them, I have learned this **halakhah**, but now I have forgotten (it).” By rebuking his students, Hillel boasted of his higher status as a scholar, and, as a result, forgot his knowledge of the halakhah. The Rabbis also portray Deborah as a prophet whose prophecy was diminished as a result of her arrogance. It is written , “ ‘The rulers ceased in Israel, ceased until I arose, Deborah, a mother in Israel’ (Judges 5 : 7). Then it is written, ‘Awake, awake, Deborah, awake, awake, utter a song’ (Judges 5 : 12).”¹¹⁰ Because Deborah boasted of her status as a ruler, a “mother” in Israel, her ability to prophecy ceased, and she had to be urged to spiritually awaken and prophecy through song.¹¹¹ Therefore, the arrogant always fail. Similarly, *Eruvin* 55a states that a scholar should not be arrogant. In *Eruvin* 55a, Raba interprets the biblical phrase “it is not in the heavens” (Deut. 30 : 12) to mean that the Torah is not found in one who lifts his mind (raises his pride) high above the heavens because of his Torah knowledge. R. Yohanan also interprets “it is not in the heavens” (Deut. 30 : 12) as “the Torah is not found in the arrogant.” In contrast to arrogance, R. Akiva illustrates the model of a humble disciple. Upon leaving the house of R. Dosa, R. Dosa’s brother, Jonathon, met him with hostility. Jonathon raised objections to R. Akiva, and R. Akiva did not respond to them satisfactorily. Thereupon, Jonathon said to him, “Are you Akiva whose name rings from one end of the world to the other ? Blessed are you, that you merited such a name, and you still have not reached the rank of oxherds.” Akiva

¹⁰⁹ Avot de Rabbi Natan 14.

¹¹⁰ BT Pesahim 66b.

¹¹¹ BT Pesahim 66b. *The Babylonian Talmud*. English Translation. Ed. Rabbi Dr. I. Epstein (London : Soncino Press, 1938), Tractate Pesahim, 337.

replied to him, "Not even to that of shepherds."¹¹² When Jonathon insults Akiva's wisdom, R. Akiva portrays humility by comparing his wisdom to less than that of shepherds, thereby implying that his scholarship has not raised his status to even that of his former social class. Similarly, Avot 2 : 4 teaches "do not to trust in yourself until the day of your death." In other words, one should never be too self-assured. These texts clearly teach that a scholar's behavior should not be arrogant. Rather, as *Taanit* 7a teaches, "... Just as water flows from a higher to a lower place, so, too, the words of Torah only reside in one who is humble." Humility is the appropriate moral behavior of a scholar or disciple.

A scholar or disciple is one who is constantly progressing -- spiritually, mentally, and working to improve the world around him. For example, *Shabbat* 114a asks, "What are the *builders*?" Rabbi Yohanan responds, "these are the scholars who are busy with building the world all their days." Here, "building" means "building up" the world in knowledge through education and/or training. Scholars are defined as those who are occupied by teaching the world around them, thereby "building up" the world in order to improve it. Shammai states this concept succinctly in Avot 1 : 15, "Say little and do much." Action is emphasized as the appropriate moral path. *Berakhot* 64a also portrays scholars as constantly striving spiritually and mentally. In *Berakhot* 64a R. Levi the son of Hiyya teaches that "one who goes from the synagogue into the House of Study and studies Torah, he is found worthy to receive the Divine Presence ..." Here, R. Levi depicts a scholar as one who balances spiritual progression with Torah study. R. Yohanan b. Zakkai exemplifies the productive life of a scholar. It is said of him that "never in his

¹¹² BT Yebamot 16a.

life did he go four cubits (without studying) Torah ... he never slept in the House of Study ... no person ever preceded him in the House of Study and he never left a person in the House of Study when he went away He never sat in silence but he taught and interpreted (Torah)..."¹¹³ As a result of a scholar's constant work, Rabbi Hiyya teaches, "There is no rest for the scholars, not in this world and not in the world-to-come..." Therefore, these texts portray a scholar as one who is actively teaching and improving the world around him, increasing his Torah knowledge, strengthening his spiritual connection to G-d, and modeling this progression to the community.

Rabbinic texts teach that the disciple or scholar is one who is well-rounded in knowledge and practical matters. *Shabbat* 114a asks, "Who is the *talmid hakham* or scholar who is appointed as a leader of the community? He who is asked a matter of *halakhah* in any place and can state it, even if in the tractate of Kallah." Therefore, in order to be appointed as a leader, a scholar must retain a broad amount of knowledge and be able to apply it in practical matters such as being able to answer questions from the community. For example, it is said that because the disciples of Hillel and Shammai had not served the scholars sufficiently, arguments increased in Israel. From there, it was written and sent forth "One who is a sage, humble, and whom the people find agreeable, shall be judge in this city."¹¹⁴ Therefore, the ideal leader of a community is knowledgeable, has an upstanding personal character, and has the ability to get along with others. A leader must have an upstanding reputation in the community so that the

¹¹³ BT Sukkah 28a, En Yaakov ad loc.

¹¹⁴ BT Sanhedrin 88b.

people will accept his rulings.¹¹⁵ Similarly, in *Kiddushin* 30a “to teach diligently” means that the words of Torah “shall be well-cut in your mouth” so that “if a person asks you a matter (of halakhah), do not hesitate but respond to him immediately.” A scholar must be apply to apply his Torah knowledge for practical matters. For example, in *Hullin* 9a, R. Yehudah taught in the name of Rav, “A scholar needs to learn three things, writing, slaughter and circumcision.” To this list, R. Hanania adds that a scholar must also learn the art of forming the knot of the Tefillin, the wedding benedictions, and the art of binding tzitzit. These practical skills are essential for a Jewish community to function. Since a scholar will eventually serve a Jewish community, his practical skills are of primary importance. Rabbinic texts also emphasize the importance of practical knowledge. If a master is asked two questions, one in the subject of Midrash, and one in the subject of *halakhah*, the *halakhic* question takes priority.¹¹⁶ By answer the *halakhic* question first, the master teaches that practical Jewish knowledge takes precedence because *halakhah* teaches how to live a Jewish life. Samuel the Little portrays the importance of practical knowledge in the life of a disciple. It is told that Rabban Gamaliel once told seven scholars to meet him in the upper chamber in the morning to intercalate a month in a year. When Rabban Gamaliel arrived, he found eight scholars instead of seven. Samuel the Little then declared, “I came ... because I felt the need to learn the practical application of the law (of how to extend the year).”¹¹⁷ A scholar, therefore, is defined by

¹¹⁵ BT Sanhedrin 88b. Interpretation with aid of *Talmud Bavli*. The Schottenstein Edition. Tractate Sanhedrin.

¹¹⁶ Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*. (Israel : Pardes Publishers, 1955), Hilkhhot Talmud Torah, 4 : 8.

¹¹⁷ BT Sanhedrin 11a. Interpretation with aid of *Talmud Bavli*. The Schottenstein Edition. Tractate Sanhedrin.

having a broad range of knowledge and the ability to appropriately apply it in his community.

Rabbinic texts also depict a scholar as having strength of character. *Eruvin* 54a teaches that Rabbi Eliezer had a disciple who learned in a whisper. After three years, he forgot his learning..." Furthermore, Samuel said to Judah, "Speak distinctly, open your mouth and read the Scriptures, open your mouth and learn the Talmud, so that your studies may be retained and you may live long." Thus, a disciple should learn and recite his learning assertively. Since Samuel scolds Judah, a disciple must also be able to endure harsh criticism. *Taanit* 4a teaches that "every scholar who is not hard as iron is not a scholar ..." The sugiya interprets the phrase, "A land whose stones are like iron" (Deut. 8:9) as "A land whose builders are like iron", thereby referring to the scholars who are "builders" through education and training. Learning requires discipline and assertiveness, and thus a scholar must be able to withstand the rigors of intense study. As a leader of a Jewish community, a scholar must be able to bear the burdens of the community as well as his own personal burdens. Since a scholar often endures public scrutiny, a scholar's character must be strong enough to withstand his demanding public role. Thus, a strong personal character is a requirement for a disciple or scholar.

Despite a scholar's strength of character, there are limits to a scholar's iron-like persona. A scholar's resolute character should be tempered with gentleness in his interaction with others. The Rabbis teach that a person should be soft like a reed and not hard like iron.¹¹⁸ It is taught that R. Eleazar b. R. Simeon once left his teacher feeling satisfied with himself because he had studied much Torah that day. R. Eleazar then met a

man that was exceedingly unattractive. The man greeted him respectfully, but R. Eleazar did not respond in kind. Instead, R. Eleazar responded "You worthless creature ! How ugly you are ! Are all the people of your city as ugly as you ? " Later, when R. Eleazar arrived at the man's city, people greeted R. Eleazar, "Peace to you, my master... my teacher..." The man replied to them, "Who do you call my master ... If he is a master, may there be no more like him in Israel !" After learning from the man and his community about his inappropriate behavior, R. Eleazar expounded that a person should be soft like a reed and not hard like iron.¹¹⁹ Therefore, this text teaches that although a scholar's character should be strong, a scholar's behavior should not be callous toward others.

Another example is Joshua b. Levi whose resolute character caused him not take a moral position in the face of danger. Ulla B. Koshav was sought by the government, so he fled to R. Joshua b. Levi at Lyddia. Thereupon, officers surrounded the province and said to them, "If you do not deliver him to us, we will burn the province." R. Joshua b. Levi persuaded Ulla B. Koshav, "It is better that you should be killed than the community to be killed on account of you." Ulla B. Koshav allowed himself to be persuaded and then surrendered. As a punishment for R. Joshua b. Levi's involvement in this incident, Elijah the prophet stopped appearing to Joshua B. Levi. Joshua b. Levi fasted for thirty days, and then Elijah appeared to him. When Joshua b. Levi asked Elijah why he had ceased appearing to him, Elijah replied, "Am I the companion of informers ?"¹²⁰ When Joshua b. Levi protested on the basis of a teaching, Elijah responded, "Is this the teaching of the

¹¹⁸ BT Taanit 20a.

¹¹⁹ BT Taanit 20a-20b.

¹²⁰ *Sefer Ha'aggadah*. Eds. and Trans. Ch. N. Bialik and Y. Ch. Ravnitzky (Israel : Dvir Publishers, LTD., 1987), 214, note 392.

pious ?”¹²¹ From Elijah’s criticism of R. Joshua b. Levi’s involvement in the incident, one can interpret that the moral position would have been to defend Ulla B. Koshav to the government. As a Rabbi, Joshua b. Levi should have tried to advocate for Ulla b. Koshav instead of persuading him to surrender to be killed. Therefore, a disciple’s resolute character should not impede him from taking a moral position for the benefit of others.

Taanit 4a also qualifies a scholar’s iron-like persona, for Ravina taught “despite this ... a person should train himself to be gentle, for it is said, ‘Remove anger from your heart (Eccl. 11 : 10).’ ” For example, Rabbi prepared a feast for his disciples. He brought before them hard and soft tongues of meat. The disciples began selecting the soft tongues and removing the hard tongues. Rabbi then told them, “My sons, Learn from what you are doing. Just as you select the soft tongues and remove the tough ones, so may your tongues be soft towards one another.”¹²² Therefore, a disciple or scholar’s personality should be a balance between assertive strength and gentleness.

The master-disciple relationship serves a greater purpose than the transmission of Jewish wisdom. The master-disciple relationship forms the disciple’s character into a Rabbinic personality. Through the disciple’s “service” to the master, the master develops the disciple’s character into the appropriate moral behavior for a scholar. In comparison to the master-disciple relationship, the purpose of mentoring is the “deliberate induction of novices into a profession.”¹²³ Mentoring helps a protégé attain professional skills. In the

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Leviticus Rabbah 33 : 1.

¹²³ Zeldin, Michael, “Touching the Future : The Promise of Mentoring,” *Touching the Future : Mentoring and the Jewish Professional*. Eds. Michael Zeldin and Sara S. Lee. (Los Angeles : Rhea Hirsch School of Education Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, 1995), 16.

master-disciple relationship, the disciple learns Torah and the appropriate practical skills required of a Jewish leader. However, the master-disciple relationship also cultivates behaviors in the disciple such as patience, humility, refraining from contentious argument, etc., to prepare the disciple for eventual leadership. Therefore, the goal of the master-disciple relationship in shaping a Rabbinic personality differs from the mentoring relationship's goal of inducting a protégé into a profession.

In the modern educational realm, Martin Buber writes that the "real goal" of education should be the shaping of a "great character."¹²⁴ The master-disciple relationship reflects this educational goal. In Rabbinic literature, the master shapes the disciple's moral character to prepare him for his future role as a leader. In the shaping of moral character, one educates toward the form of G-d.¹²⁵ The forming a figure in the image of G-d is the only "indefinable, only factual direction of the responsible modern educator."¹²⁶ The master-disciple relationship served to cultivate certain personality characteristics within the disciple such as servitude, humility, patience, discipline, and gentleness. These characteristics reflect a leader who serves the community of Israel in the image of G-d. Through the master-disciple relationship, the master shaped the disciple's moral character in the image of G-d.

¹²⁴ Buber, Martin. "The Education of Character." *Between Man and Man*. (London : Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1947) , 113.

¹²⁵ Buber, Martin, "Education." *Between Man and Man*. (London : Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1947), 102.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

CHAPTER SIX

HIERARCHY IN THE MASTER - DISCIPLE RELATIONSHIP

In the master-disciple relationship, the master is the human authority of the tradition. The master is a vehicle of Torah, and Torah is the word of G-d. Therefore, the master is a medium for the word of G-d and the authoritative tradition. Through the disciple's service to the master, the disciple also learns how to serve the Torah and, ultimately, G-d. Some texts illustrate that the disciple learns hierarchical values through physical actions such as rising before a master or distancing oneself from a master in prayer. Other texts instruct the disciple how to behave in the master-disciple relationship in order to transmit values that are necessary to serve the master, the Torah, and G-d.

Avot 4 : 12 teaches that the disciple's reverence for his master or teacher of Torah should be modeled on the disciple's reverence for G-d, "R. Eliezer son of Shammua said, May the honor of your disciple be as dear to you as your own, and the honor of your colleague as the reverence (fear) of your teacher, and the reverence for your teacher as the reverence of Heaven." G-d, the giver of Torah, receives the highest degree of reverence. Avot 4 : 12 teaches that the teacher or master, the medium of Torah, deserves reverence modeled on the reverence for G-d. Through the master-disciple hierarchy, the disciple learns that the authority of the master is based on the model of the authority of the Torah and G-d.

The method by which the Torah is transmitted from the master to the disciple is also illustrative of the master-disciple hierarchy. One sits at the feet of the scholar, absorbing every word in detail, "... Let your house be a house of assembly for sages, sit

at the dust of their feet, and drink their words thirstily.”¹²⁷ Avot de-Rabbi Natan 6 : 1 further illustrates the hierarchical method of transmitting the knowledge of Torah. “Sitting at the dust of their feet” (Avot 1 : 4) is interpreted as “... sit before him on the ground. And every word which comes forth from his mouth take in with awe, fear, dread, and trembling, as our fathers received (the Torah) from Mount Sinai with awe, fear, dread, and trembling.”¹²⁸ Although this scene may express hyperbole, the underlying concept is that the *talmid hakham*, or scholar, transmits Torah, and as a result, deserves respect. The image of G-d giving the Torah at Mount Sinai to the Israelites is the ultimate hierarchical image. G-d, the Transmitter of Torah, is a model for all future transmitters of Torah such as scholars.

In the master-disciple relationship, the disciple demonstrates respect for authority through physical actions. *Kiddushin* 33a teaches that a disciple rises before his master if the master is within four cubits of him. Rising before a master when he is within four cubits of the disciple is a uniform demonstration of respect in the master-disciple relationship. However, Abaye teaches that rising within four cubits is appropriate for a master who is not one's major teacher. According to Abaye, for a teacher who is the major teacher, a disciple should rise whenever that master is within eyesight of the disciple.¹²⁹ Thus, Abaye teaches that a disciple should differentiate among his masters. However, Abaye's system of differentiation creates a tension between a master and disciple. When Abaye was riding along the bank of a river, his disciples who were sitting on the opposite bank did not rise for him. Thereupon, Abaye concluded that they did not

¹²⁷ Avot 1 : 4.

¹²⁸ Avot de-Rabbi Natan 6 : 1.

consider him their major teacher. Since R. Abaye's theoretical teaching caused tension in practice, perhaps the Talmud illustrates that rising within four cubits of every master is a preferable demonstration of respect for authority. In a disciple's lifetime, he will have many masters and thus attain a vast knowledge of the tradition. Here, the Talmud teaches that just as the disciple shows uniform respect for his master's authority by rising within four cubits of him, so, too, the disciple should respect the many forms of Torah.

Megillah 21a further illustrates the correlation between showing respect for the master and thereby showing respect for the tradition, "The Rabbis taught: From the days of Moses until R. Gamaliel, the Torah was studied only while standing. When R. Gamaliel died, laxity descended on the world, and they studied the Torah while sitting. Such is the implication of what we learned: 'From the time Rabban Gamliel died, honor ceased to be paid to the Torah.'"¹²⁹ In this text, Moses and Rabban Gamliel are the archetypal masters of Torah. Thus, standing while studying with them is the absolute demonstration of respect for the tradition's authority. Through a physical act such as rising before a master, the disciple learns the hierarchical value of respect for authority which corresponds to his evolving understanding of the Torah's authority.

Berakhot 27a-b teaches that a person (*adam*) should not pray in front of his master or in back of his master. R. Eleazar teaches that one who prays behind his master, addresses or responds to his master with the ordinary greeting of "shalom", disagrees with his master's school of thought, and teaches something that was not heard from his master, causes the Shekhinah to be removed from Israel. R. Jeremiah the son of

¹²⁹ BT Kiddushin 33a.

¹³⁰ BT *Megillah* 21a.

Abba taught that R. Eleazar's teaching refers to a *talmid haver*, a disciple who is also a colleague. The Talmud teaches that the lack of physical distance between a person or disciple and his rabbi in prayer leads to the breakdown of the hierarchy in everyday behaviors such as greetings, study, and teaching. When the disciple respects the physical boundary between a disciple and his master in prayer, he learns respect for authority. Just as a person/disciple must demonstrate respect for his master through keeping a distance in prayer, he must also learn respect for the master in everyday behavior. R. Eleazar teaches that the degeneration of physical boundaries leads to the lack of respect in everyday behaviors. Maimonides teaches that a disciple greets his master by saying, "Peace to you, my teacher, my master" rather than just an ordinary greeting.¹³¹ Through physical demonstrations of respect such as distancing himself from his master in prayer and greeting his master appropriately, the disciple learns respect for authority.

The master or teacher is a medium for Torah, G-d's word, and through the master, the disciple learns respect for G-d's authority. Rabbi Akiva portrays that the master is a vehicle for the disciple's respect for authority. Rabbi Akiva interprets the Hebrew word "et" in "You shall fear the Lord your G-d" (Deut. 6 : 13) as "You shall fear the Lord your G-d, that is, including the scholars."¹³² However, the disciple should not blur the distinction between the master, a vehicle of G-d's word, and G-d. A disciple always sits before his master (in learning) and does not stand before him except during the evening and morning prayers so that "the disciple's respect for his master is not greater

¹³¹ Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*. (Israel : Pardes Publishers, 1955), Hilkhot Talmud Torah.

¹³² BT Kiddushin 57a.

than his respect for Heaven.”¹³³ According to the Tosefot, a disciple does not pray in back of his master so as not to prostrate himself before his master rather than G-d.¹³⁴ Similarly, Pirke Avot 6 : 3 teaches, “one who has learned from his friend one chapter, one halakhah, one verse, one statement ... needs to show him honor.” However, this Mishnah then clarifies, “... honor is due only for the Torah.”¹³⁵ Therefore, the master receives honor as a result of his knowledge of Torah, and this honor should not be confused with honor for his individual status. *Kiddushin* 32b also illustrates the tension between demonstrating respect for the master and for the master’s learning. It is told that R. Joshua and R. Zadok were sitting at the wedding feast of the son of Rabban Gamaliel. Rabban Gamaliel stood before them and served them a drink. R. Eliezer refused the drink, but R. Joshua accepted it. Thereupon, R. Eliezer said to Joshua, “What is this, we are sitting, and Rabban Gamaliel is standing and serving us !”¹³⁶ Rabbi Joshua then pointed out that a greater man such as Abraham served others, so they should allow Rabban Gamaliel to stand and serve them. Finally, R. Zadok teaches them, “How long will you set aside the honor of G-d and occupy yourselves with the honor of humankind ? Behold, the Holy One causes the wind to blow, brings clouds, causes rain ... and we shall not allow Rabban Gamaliel to serve us !”¹³⁷ R. Zadok illustrates that the disciple can become consumed with demonstrating respect for the master instead of G-d. Similarly, it is told that Rabbi was praising R. Hiyya the Elder in the presence of R. Ishmael son of R.

¹³³ Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*. (Israel : Pardes Publishers, 1955), Hilkhot Talmud Torah, 6 : 8.

¹³⁴ Tosefot to Berakhot 27.

¹³⁵ Pirke Avot 6 : 3.

¹³⁶ En Yaakov, Kiddushin 32b.

¹³⁷ En Yaakov, Kiddushin 32b.

Yose. One time, R. Ishmael saw him in the bathhouse, and he did not stand up before him. Later, Rabbi questioned his disciple, "Why did you not stand up for him?" He replied, "I was reading the Aggadah on Psalms." Thereupon, Rabbi appointed two disciples to accompany R. Hiyya so that he would be safe to read while walking.¹³⁸ Here, R. Hiyya's absorption in the tradition takes precedence over showing respect to a master. The disciple's respect for the master's authority should not be confused or supersede the respect for the Ultimate Authority. Through the master-disciple hierarchy, the disciple learns to demonstrate respect for the master's authority, and, by extension, the disciple learns respect for the authority of Torah and G-d.

The master is a role model, and he maintains the master-disciple hierarchy through his physical actions and behavior. If the master teaches, and the students do not understand, the master should be patient and continue teaching until his students fully comprehend the *halakhic* concept.¹³⁹ However, if the master knows that the students do not understand because they are lax, the master is obligated to get angry at them and shame them through words in order to sharpen them.¹⁴⁰ In the master-disciple hierarchy, the master exercises his authority to teach his students. When students are lazy, they show disrespect for the master, and thus the tradition, and the master rebukes them to teach them respect. Although the disciple should only ask the master questions related to

¹³⁸ Genesis Rabbah 33 : 3.

¹³⁹ Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*. (Israel : Pardes Publishers, 1955), Hilkhhot Talmud Torah 4 : 4.

¹⁴⁰ Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*. (Israel : Pardes Publishers, 1955), Hilkhhot Talmud Torah 4 : 5.

the subject which they are studying,¹⁴¹ the master has the authority to question them in different subjects in order to arouse the students' interest.¹⁴² Through his actions and behavior, the master teaches his disciples respect for authority, and thus respect for the tradition. R. Abba the priest once said, "Whenever I saw a group of people, I used to take a different route ... so that they would not see me and stand up for me."¹⁴³ When R. Abba told the matter to R. Jose b. R. Zebida, he told R. Abba, "It is your duty to pass before them so that they may see you and stand up for you, and in this way you make them G-d fearing ..."¹⁴⁴ The master also demonstrates behavior that reflects his role as a vehicle of Torah. Thus, it is inappropriate for a master to behave "light-headed before his students. He should not laugh in front of them and not eat or drink with them so that they will fear him and learn from quickly."¹⁴⁵ For example, in a sugiyah about the obligation to recline at the Seder, it is asked whether a disciple is obligated to recline in his master's presence. Abaye said, "when we were at the Master's house, we used to recline on each other's knees, but when we came to Rav Joseph's house, he said to us, 'It is not necessary. The fear of our master is as the fear of heaven.'"¹⁴⁶ As a role model and medium of Torah, the master demonstrates behavior that is reflective of the master-disciple hierarchy. When it is necessary, the master exercises his authority to maintain the

¹⁴¹ Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*. (Israel : Pardes Publishers, 1955), Hilkhos Talmud Torah 4 : 6.

¹⁴² Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*. (Israel : Pardes Publishers, 1955), Hilkhos Talmud Torah 4 : 6.

¹⁴³ Numbers Rabbah 15 : 17.

¹⁴⁴ Numbers Rabbah 15 : 17.

¹⁴⁵ Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*. (Israel : Pardes Publishers, 1955), Hilkhos Talmud Torah 4 : 5.

¹⁴⁶ BT Pesachim 108a.

master-disciple hierarchy, and thereby teach his disciples respect for the authority of the tradition.

The hierarchical relationship between a master and disciple is often compared to the hierarchy between a servant and his master. In *Ketubot* 96a, R. Joshua the son of Levi teaches that all types of work that a servant performs for his master, a disciple performs for his master except for taking off his shoe. Although the disciple is subservient to his master, the disciple's social status should not be confused with that of a slave who removes the shoe from his master. A disciple's servitude to his master teaches loyalty and humility. These qualities are necessary for the disciple's transformation from a disciple to a master. The disciple must learn loyalty and the willingness to serve because eventually he will serve a community and to do this well he will need to be loyal. But he cannot be taught to be completely submissive if he is to carry out this role. Removal of his master's shoes would therefore put him in the position of absolute subservience. As a leader, the disciple must remain humble. Through serving his master, the disciple learns what it means to serve authority, thereby preparing the disciple to serve the higher authorities of Torah and G-d. The text portrays the importance of servitude as a learning model. R. Hiyya son of Abba stated in the name of R. Yohanan that one who refuses his disciple from serving him, it is as if he refused him from performing an act of kindness. R. Nachman the son of Isaac further expounds that one who deprives his disciple from serving him loosens the fear of Heaven. The master-disciple hierarchy thus becomes a paradigm of the disciple's service to Torah and G-d.

Baba Batra 119b also upholds the master-disciple hierarchy. Numbers 27 : 2 states that, "They (daughters of Zelophehad) stood before Moses, Eleazar the priest, the

chieftains, and the whole assembly, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting ..." *Baba Batra* 119b then asks whether it is possible that the daughters of Zelophehad addressed a descending order of authority – from Moses, and after not receiving a response from him, Eleazar the priest, the chieftains, etc. R. Yoshiyah explains the verse by inverting its' order; the daughters first addressed the whole assembly, and after not receiving an answer, inquired of the chieftains, until they came to Moses, the highest human authority. According to R. Abba Chanan, in Numbers 27 : 2 the whole community, including Moses, was sitting in the House of Study, so that the daughters of Zelophehad addressed Moses in the presence of the whole community. The underlying dispute of this text is whether or not respect may be given to a disciple in the presence of his master. Since R. Yoshiyah interprets the verse by inverting its' order, he argues that one may not give respect to a disciple in the presence of his master, thereby supporting the master-disciple hierarchy. However, R. Abba Chanan argues that one may give honor to a disciple in the presence of his master since the daughters of Zelophehad addressed Moses, the master, in the presence of community, his disciples. The Talmud resolves the contradiction by stating that R. Yoshiyah's statement refers to a master who does not defer to a disciple, whereas R. Abba Chanan's teaching refers to a master who defers to a disciple. According to this text, one may give honor to a disciple in his master's presence if the master himself defers to the disciple. However, if the master does not defer to the disciple, then one may not bestow honor upon a disciple in his master's presence. This text portrays the tenuous balance between master and disciple. Treating the disciple autonomously and giving him respect when his master does not defer to him may upset the delicate hierarchical balance between master and disciple. The disciple should not be

treated autonomously until the master has deemed he is ready. *Baba Batra* 119b supports the master's authority in the master-disciple relationship, thereby keeping the master-disciple hierarchy intact until the master determines that the disciple is equipped to be treated autonomously.

Rabban Gamaliel II and Rabbi Joshua portray the tension of the master-disciple hierarchy. It is taught that once two witnesses came before Rabban Gamaliel and attested to seeing the New Moon on its' proper day, but were unable to see it the next evening. Rabban Gamaliel accepted their testimony as valid. However, R. Dosa b. Harkinus ascribed them as false witnesses, and Rabbi Joshua said to R. Dosa b. Harkinus, "I approve of your opinion." Thereupon, Rabban Gamaliel sent for R. Joshua to come to him with his staff and money on the day which R. Joshua had accounted as Yom Kippur. R. Joshua went to R. Dosa b. Harkinus, and R. Dosa b. Harkinus said to him, "If we reinvestigate the decisions of the Beit Din of Rabban Gamaliel, then we also need to reinvestigate each and every Beit Din that has existed in Israel from Moses until today!"¹⁴⁷ R. Joshua took his staff and money in his hand and went to Rabban Gamaliel at Yavneh on the day that R. Joshua had accounted as Yom Kippur. Rabban Gamaliel stood and kissed him on his head and said to him, "Come in peace, my master, my disciple. My master in wisdom, and my disciple that you upheld my words."¹⁴⁸ When R. Joshua supports an opinion which opposes his master's opinion, he questions authority. By questioning authority, R. Joshua himself is questioned and humiliated as a scholar. By coming to Yavneh with his staff and money on the day which he had accounted on Yom

¹⁴⁷ BT Rosh Hashanah 25a, En Yaakov.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

Kippur, R. Joshua calls other to question the authority of his own rulings. The relationship between Rabban Gamaliel II and R. Joshua is not restored until R. Joshua accepts Rabban Gamaliel's rulings, thereby demonstrating that he has learned to respect the tradition's authority. Rabban Gamaliel bestows praise on R. Joshua by referring to him as "my master in wisdom." R. Joshua is a master of wisdom because he has learned the Jewish wisdom of respecting authority. Rabban Gamaliel calls R. Joshua "my disciple that you upheld my words." By obeying R. Gamaliel and coming to Yavneh on the day he had accounted as Yom Kippur, R. Joshua upholds the master-disciple hierarchy between Rabban Gamaliel and himself. Therefore, this text illustrates the tension in the master-disciple hierarchy and the importance of upholding it for the sake of tradition.

In these Rabbinic texts, the hierarchy between the master and disciple teaches the disciple respect for authority and how to serve authority. Through the master-disciple relationship, the disciple learns how to serve the higher authorities of Torah and G-d. The disciple also must understand authority because one day he will serve as the master of a community. Therefore, the master-disciple hierarchy serves to instruct the disciple for his future role as a master who teaches others how to serve Torah and G-d.

In comparison to mentoring, at the beginning of the mentoring relationship, the authority of the mentor is also inevitable.¹⁴⁹ In the mentoring relationship, the mentor transmits his or her wisdom to the protégé, and the protégé depends on the mentor for guidance. Ideal mentoring works toward openness and mutuality, and a breaking of

¹⁴⁹ Cutter, William, "Hierarchy and Mutuality: Mentor, Protégé and Spirit," *Touching the Future: Mentoring and the Jewish Professional*. Eds. Michael Zeldin and Sara S. Lee. (Los Angeles: Rhea Hirsch School of Education Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, 1995), 47.

boundaries between the mentor and the protégé.¹⁵⁰ The goal of teaching is to create equals.¹⁵¹ As previous chapters have illustrated, the master-disciple relationship served to transmit the tradition and shape the disciple's character. The master is a medium or teacher of the authoritative tradition, and not a mentor. In the following chapter, the master and disciple can be equal during the study of Torah. However, hierarchy is a permanent aspect of the master-disciple relationship. Throughout his life, the disciple continues to serve the master, the tradition, and G-d, the ultimate authority.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 46.

¹⁵¹ Moran, Gabriel. *No Ladder to the Sky*. (San Francisco : Harper and Row, Publishers, 1987), 150.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FROM DEPENDENCE TO RECIPROCITY

As previous chapters have illustrated, the master-disciple relationship is a relationship based on hierarchy. Despite the hierarchy and authority of the master, masters and disciples can also achieve mutuality in their relationship. An example of a reciprocity between a master and disciple is the relationship between Rabbi Yohanan and R. Eleazar ben Arakh. After R. Yokhanan's son died, R. Yokhanan's disciples attempted to comfort him but they were unsuccessful. Finally, R. Eleazar comforted R. Yohanan through a parable. R. Eleazar compared R. Yokhanan's loss to a person (R. Yohanan) with whom a king (G-d) had deposited an object (R. Yokhanan's son). A person who returns the object to a king is relieved of the king's trust. R. Yokhanan's son studied Torah and departed the world without sin. Therefore, G-d entrusted R. Yohanan with R. Yohanan's son, and R. Yohanan upheld G-d's trust by returning his son in a pure state. Therefore, R. Yohanan said, "R. Eleazar, my son, you have comforted me the way men should give comfort!"¹⁵² Since R. Eleazar, the disciple, comforts R. Yohanan, the master, through a Rabbinic parable, R. Yohanan and R. Eleazar portray that the master and disciple can attain equality. Thus, the master-disciple relationship evolves from the disciple's dependence on the master to the master and disciple achieving equal status through the tradition and Torah.

The Hebrew verb that is frequently used in association with Torah study is "*l'haded*," to sharpen the wit or whet the mind. In Rabbinic texts, Torah study is portrayed as a challenging learning exercise which requires the disciple or scholar to think

critically. For example, it is said that when one saw Reish Lakish studying Torah, it would appear as if he were uprooting mountains and grinding them against one another.¹⁵³

Thus, by comparing Torah study to the physical strength required to uproot mountains, Reish Lakish illustrates the critical and challenging nature of studying Torah. In Torah study, the master teaches his disciple to think critically by intentionally making mistakes and challenging his disciples to notice them and correct him. The disciple learns the challenging technique of Torah study, and disciples "sharpen the wit" and challenge each other. At some point, the disciple learns a sufficient amount of Torah to eventually "challenge" his master, thereby achieving the stage of reciprocity between master and disciple.

In the master-disciple relationship, the master "sharpens" the minds of his students, thereby representing the master's authority and knowledge of the tradition. For example, R. Yehudah taught that when R. Akiva stated that the "*halakhah* is in accordance with the disciple" he did this in order to "sharpen the wits of the disciples."¹⁵⁴ R. Akiva intentionally made a mistake in teaching for the purpose of exercising the critical thinking of his students. R. Akiva, the master, models for his disciples the art of "sharpening" the mind in Torah study. R. Akiva also teaches his disciples to object in a *halakhic* debate when it is appropriate to do so. Similarly, in *Nazir* 59b, R. Joshua raises an objection to Ben Zoma's teachings in regards to the nazirite and his offerings. By raising an objection in a *halakhic* debate, R. Joshua teaches his students not to hesitate but to raise objections confidently even if one is uncertain about the validity of his

¹⁵² Avot de-Rabbi Natan 14.

¹⁵³ BT Sanhedrin 24a.

objection. R. Judah then explains that R. Joshua raised this objection only to “sharpen the wits of the disciples.” Therefore, according to R. Judah, R. Joshua not only taught his disciples to object, but he taught his students to analyze his objection. The master, the vehicle of Torah, raises objections to hone his disciple’s critical thinking skills. The master teaches the disciple to challenge him, and since the master is a vehicle of Torah, the master teaches the disciple to critically evaluate the Torah itself. These texts represent the initial stages of the master-disciple relationship. The master is the authority of the tradition and thus “sharpens” the minds of his students. Through the master-disciple relationship, the disciple learns the technique of critical thinking which he can apply to future learning environments.

As the disciple moves from dependence to interdependence, the disciple exercises the “sharpening” or critical thinking skills he has learned from his master. Disciples “sharpen” or challenge each other’s Torah knowledge. In *Taanit* 7a, the biblical phrase “iron sharpens iron” (Prov. 27 : 17) is interpreted as “just as iron sharpens one another, so, too, do two Torah scholars sharpen each other in halakhah.” The disciple learns the skill of “sharpening” from his master and then applies it in his relationship with other scholars. *Shabbat* 63a illustrates that the Rabbis look favorably on disciples teaching one another, “... Two scholars that sharpen each other in halakhah, the Holy One makes them successful ...” When the disciples “sharpen the wits” of each other, they do so independent of their master. However, since the “Holy One” is the ultimate cause of the disciples’ success, the disciples are still dependent or subservient to G-d. Perhaps an initial stage of the disciple’s autonomy from the human master is disciples studying

¹⁵⁴ BT Eruvin 13a.

amongst themselves, "sharpening one another" in *halakhah*. The disciple gains independence from the human master, yet continues to serve the ultimate Master. The challenging nature of Torah study is also portrayed to the extreme. Rabbi taught, "Once I sent to study at (the house of) R. Elazar ben Shammua, his disciples surrounded me like cocks of Beth Bukya, and they did not allow me to study more than one ruling in this Mishnah we are studying."¹⁵⁵ This example illustrates how disciples can become too critical in Torah study, thereby inhibiting the learning process. As the disciple gains knowledge, he gains the authority of the tradition. With this authority, the disciple challenges or "sharpens the wits" of other disciples within limits of respectful criticism.

At some point in the master-disciple relationship, the master and disciple arrive at a stage of reciprocity in which the master and disciple learn from each other. In *Taanit* 7a, a comparison is made between a "small tree" which can "set aflame a big tree" and "younger scholars" who "sharpen the wits of the elder (scholars)." Therefore, Torah study can inverse the hierarchical learning structure of the master-disciple relationship, for masters can learn from their disciples. *Baba Metzia* 84b illustrates the exceptional case in which disciples are elevated to masters through Torah study. In this text, the masters, Rabban Shimon and Rabbi Joshua were sitting on benches, while their disciples, Rabbi Eleazar and Rabbi, sat on the ground. Rabban Shimon and Rabbi Joshua said to one another, "We drink their water, and they sit on the ground? They prepared for them benches, and they were promoted."¹⁵⁶ This text illustrates this specific case in which masters "drink from the water" or are sustained by the learning of their disciples.

¹⁵⁵ BT Yebamot 84a.

¹⁵⁶ BT Baba Metzia 84b.

Although these master-disciple relationships may have been exceptional cases because of the unique status of the disciples, the text illustrates the potential for the master and disciple to have equal status in the study of Torah, and thus before G-d. R. Hanina also inverts the hierarchy of learning between the master and disciple relationship, "I have learned much from my masters, and from my colleagues more than from my masters, but from my disciples more than from them all."¹⁵⁷ For example, R. Ishmael the son of R. Yose and his disciple were in a marketplace in Zion. The disciple noticed that R. Ishmael was afraid of something. The disciple said to him because he must have sinned because it is said, "The sinners in Zion are afraid (Isaiah 33 : 14)." R. Ishmael replied that it is also written, "Happy is the man who fears always" (Prov. 28 : 14). The disciple said to him, "That verse refers to words of Torah."¹⁵⁸ In this example, R. Ishmael's disciple teaches him about the meaning of a verse, thereby teaching R. Ishmael about his everyday behavior. R. Akiva also illustrates the potential for a disciple to rise to the level of his master(s) in learning. After learning the whole Torah, R. Akiva went before R. Eleazar and R. Joshua and said to them, "My masters, reveal the sense of the Mishnah to me." Eventually, after carefully analyzing each halakhah, R. Akiva returned to his masters, asked them questions, and reduced them to silence.¹⁵⁹ R. Akiva, the former disciple, supersedes his masters in learning, and through his acumen, confounds his masters to silence. Therefore, R. Akiva represents the ability of a disciple to attain equal status to his master(s) in learning. These texts illustrate that at some point in the master-disciple

¹⁵⁷ BT Taanit 7a.

¹⁵⁸ BT Berakhot 60a.

¹⁵⁹ Avot de Rabbi Natan 6.

relationship, the master and disciple can learn from each other, thereby reaching a level of equality and reciprocity in the master-disciple relationship.

In the master-disciple relationship, the physical structure of the learning environment depicts the potential for equality in learning. In *Moed Katan* 16b Rabbi Abbahu interprets “These are the names of David’s warriors : Josheb—basshebeth ...” (II Sam. 23 : 8) as “David, the one who sat in the yeshiva.” Rabbi Abbahu teaches that “at the time he (David) sat in yeshiva, he did not sit on mattresses and chairs but on top of the ground.” David’s master, Ira the Irite, taught the rabbis (sitting) on mattresses and chairs. After Master Ira the Irite died, David “taught the rabbis on the ground. They said to him, ‘Master, sit on mattresses and cushions,’ but he would not agree.”¹⁶⁰ By continuing his “yeshiva” learning style as a master, David illustrates that in the context of learning, masters and disciples can have equal status. David also does not elevate himself to the physical level of his former master, thereby portraying his subservience to his master even after his master’s death. According to Maimonides , the physical learning environment teaches equality, “How do they (the masters) teach ? The master sits at the head and the students sit around him as a crown ... the master does not sit on a chair and the disciples on the ground , rather, everyone sits on the ground or everyone sits on chairs ...”¹⁶¹ Through the image of master and disciples learning at the same physical level, these texts illustrate the potential of reciprocity in learning.

The master-disciple relationship also teaches mutuality of respect between the master and the disciple. In *Kiddushin* 30b, the father and son or the master and his disciple

¹⁶⁰ BT Moed Katan 16b.

who study the same subject become “enemies” of one another. However, they “do not move from there until they love one another.” In other words, the initial hierarchy in learning between the father and son or master and disciple must also be accompanied by mutual respect. The Talmud teaches that R. Akiva had twelve thousand disciples, and all of them died at the same time, because they did not treat one another with respect.¹⁶² In contrast, R. Yermiah teaches “two scholars who are amiable with one another, the Holy One listens to them ...”¹⁶³ Mutual respect is part of the learning process. Even though *Taanit 4a* defines a scholar as one who is “hard as iron,” the same text simultaneously teaches that scholars should be “gentle” and to “remove anger from your heart.” These texts teach that the critical learning environment has the potential to adversely affect a disciple’s behavior. Therefore, the sharp wit necessary for academic astuteness must be tempered with respect and gentleness in personal interactions. By “sharpening” the wits of other disciples while demonstrating respect, the disciple learns to balance critical thinking with respect. The disciple’s interaction with his colleagues becomes a learning context for his future interactions with his master and the tradition. Just as the disciple learns to balance criticism and respect among his colleagues, the disciple learns to challenge and to respect his master, colleagues and the Torah.

In comparison to mentoring, the hierarchy between the mentor and protégé can be lessened through mutual communication and mutuality in professional life.¹⁶⁴ As the

¹⁶¹ Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*. (Israel : Pardes Publishers, 1955), Hilkhos Talmud Torah, 4 : 2.

¹⁶² BT Yebamot 62b.

¹⁶³ BT Shabbat 63a.

¹⁶⁴ Cutter William, “Hierarchy and Mutuality : Mentor, Protégé and Spirit,” *Touching the Future : Mentoring and the Jewish Professional*. Eds. Michael Zeldin and

mentoring relationship proceeds, the protégé travels a path from "dependence to independence and then on to interdependence."¹⁶⁵ Although the mentoring relationship begins with the mentor as the authority, "reciprocity and mutual respect are hallmarks of the mentoring relationship."¹⁶⁶ The ideal mentoring relationship works toward openness and mutuality, and a breaking of boundaries between the learner and the teacher.¹⁶⁷ Reciprocity requires a common ground be established between the mentor and protégé.¹⁶⁸ Therefore, the mentor and protégé work toward achieving reciprocity in the professional realm until they are colleagues, and thus professionally equal.

The master-disciple relationship reflects a similar pattern to the developmental cycle of mentoring. In the beginning, the disciple is dependent on the master, for the master transmits the authoritative tradition and his wisdom. Over time, however, the disciple gains theoretical and practical skills which he can demonstrate independently of the master. Eventually, the disciple has a sufficient amount of knowledge that he can actually teach the master, thereby symbolizing the developmental stage of interdependence between master and disciple. However, in contrast to mentoring, the master and disciple only achieve reciprocity through the study of Torah. When the master

Sara S. Lee. (Los Angeles : Rhea Hirsch School of Education Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, 1995), 46-47.

¹⁶⁵ Zeldin, Michael, "Touching the Future : The Promise of Mentoring, " *Touching the Future : Mentoring and the Jewish Professional*. Eds. Michael Zeldin and Sara S. Lee. (Los Angeles : Rhea Hirsch School of Education Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, 1995), 17.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 20.

¹⁶⁷ Cutter, William, "Hierarchy and Mutuality : Mentor, Protégé, and Spirit," *Touching the Future : Mentoring and the Jewish Professional*. Eds. Michael Zeldin and Sara S. Lee. (Los Angeles : Rhea Hirsch School of Education Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, 1995), 46.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

and disciple learn from each other, they are equals in the pursuit of the knowledge of Torah. Through Torah, a vehicle of G-d, the disciple experiences equality and mutuality, thus encouraging him to continue pursuing his studies. In contrast to mentoring, however, the master-disciple relationship does not work toward "breaking the boundaries" between the master and disciple. Although the master and disciple may attain equal status in knowledge, the master's authority remains constant over a disciple's lifetime. In contrast to the mentor whose authority is derived from professional experience, the master's authority is derived from the tradition, an aspect of G-d. Therefore, in the master-disciple relationship, equality and reciprocity are confined to the realms of learning Torah.

On the subject of education, Martin Buber writes "however intense the mutuality of giving and taking with which he is bound to his pupil, inclusion cannot be mutual."¹⁶⁹ Although the educator may experience the "pupil's being educated, the pupil cannot experience the education of the educator ... the educative (sic) relation would be burst asunder, or change into friendship."¹⁷⁰ Despite the mutuality in learning, in the master-disciple relationship, the master is the authority, and the disciple is his servant. Today, students are not subservient as disciples. Yet, the master-disciple relationship teaches us that a certain hierarchy must be maintained for learning to take place. Once the disciple or student learns respect for authority, the teacher and student can be equals on the path to knowledge.

¹⁶⁹ Buber, Martin. "Education," *Between Man and Man*. (London : Routledge and Kegan Paul LTD, 1947), 100.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 100-101.

CHAPTER EIGHT

COMMUNITY : THE CONTEXT FOR JEWISH LEARNING

On the subject of the master-disciple relationship, one must refer to the well-known teaching of Joshua the son of Perahyah, "Provide oneself with a master, and acquire for oneself a fellow disciple (colleague) ..."¹⁷¹ The master transmits Jewish wisdom to the disciple, and then disciples or students then learn in the company of one another. The third part of Joshua the son of Perahyah's teaching states, "and judge each person according to the scale of merit."¹⁷² As a previous chapter illustrated, the purpose of a disciple's scholarship is to apply it in the context of community, so the instruction to "judge each person according to the scale of merit" is an illustration of Jewish wisdom being applied in community. Joshua son of Perahya's teaching thereby illustrates all three components of Jewish learning – the master-disciple relationship, the *hevruta* or group learning process, and Torah being applied to community. This chapter will explore the "*hevruta*" or group learning process.

In the master-disciple relationship, the disciple or scholar teaches and/or learns in community. R. Yochanan said, "One who studies Torah but does not teach is like a myrtle in the wilderness."¹⁷³ Therefore, just as no one derives pleasure from a myrtle in the wilderness, no one receives benefit from one who has the knowledge of Torah but does not teach it. Therefore, one should not be "like a myrtle in the wilderness" and retain one's Torah knowledge. By extension, the study of Torah is also not meant to be

¹⁷¹ Pirke Avot 1 : 6.

¹⁷² Pirke Avot 1 : 6.

¹⁷³ BT Rosh Hashanah 23a.

pursued in isolation. Rather, learning and teaching Torah should occur in the context of community. R. Yehuda interprets the verse, "Moses and the levitical priests spoke to Israel, Observe and Hear Israel, today you become a people unto the Lord your G-d ..." (Deut. 27 : 9) as a proof-text for communal learning.¹⁷⁴ R. Yehuda interprets that the Hebrew word "*Hasket*" which means to "look or observe" means that Moses commanded Israel to make "*kitot*" or classes and "study Torah, for Torah knowledge is only acquired through the company of others."¹⁷⁵ Thus, R. Yehuda teaches that by forming "groups" in order to learn, Israel would be more able to "hear" or "understand" G-d's word. The "*hevruta*" or the "group" of scholars is the locus for the disciple's learning. R. Ammi teaches that "two scholars who sharpen one another in *halakhah* are counted as three."¹⁷⁶ The number three symbolizes a community in which decisions are rendered. Therefore, this text illustrates that a group of three is more preferable in Torah study than two individuals because three symbolizes community. Similarly, Avot 3 : 3 teaches that "two that sit together and words of Torah are exchanged between them, the Shekhinah dwells among them ..." ¹⁷⁷ Similarly, R. Halafta teaches, "ten that sit together and study Torah, the Shekhinah dwells among them ..." ¹⁷⁸ R. Halafta then continues to prove that the Shekhinah dwells among five who study Torah, three, and then two. Finally, this Mishnah states, "From where can it be proven even if one studies Torah ? Because it is said, In every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come and I will bless

¹⁷⁴ BT Berakhot 63b.

¹⁷⁵ BT Ber 63b.

¹⁷⁶ BT Ber. 47b.

¹⁷⁷ Pirke Avot 3 : 3.

¹⁷⁸ Pirke Avot 3 : 7.

you ...”¹⁷⁹ From the descending order of ten to one, the Mishnah illustrates that a community is the preferable context for learning. The Rabbis interpret “Is not my word like fire ?” (Jer. 23 : 29) as “Just as fire does not ignite of itself, so, too, the words of Torah do not endure with him who studies alone.”¹⁸⁰ R. Hanina taught that “destruction comes upon ... such scholars who confine themselves to private study.”¹⁸¹ Instead, the “*hevruta*” or fellowship of scholars serves as a model for the role of community in the disciple’s future. By learning in community, the disciple learns to value and respect community. As a future leader of a community in Israel, he must learn to value and respect the community whom he will eventually serve.

The community is the disciple’s context for learning. Traditionally, the Israelites learned together from their acceptance of the covenant at Mount Sinai. The image of G-d transmitting the Ten Commandments to Moses and the community of Israel is the absolute image of learning in community. Avot de-Rabbi Natan teaches that an example of an assembly for the “sake of Heaven” is “the assembly of Israel before G-d to receive the Ten Commandments (at Mount Sinai).”¹⁸² This absolute image of G-d teaching the community of Israel is the prototypical image of learning in the context of community.

From Mount Sinai through Rabbinical texts, the community serves as the center or field of the disciple’s learning. In a community, the disciple learns whether or not he is considered a scholar. For example, in the recitation of the *Birkhat HaMazon*, the blessing after the meal, Rabbi teaches that one who recites “by G-d’s goodness we live” is a

¹⁷⁹ Pirke Avot 3 : 7.

¹⁸⁰ BT Taanit 7a.

¹⁸¹ BT Taanit 7a.

¹⁸² Avot de-Rabbi Natan 40.

scholar. However, one who mistakenly recites, "(by G-d's goodness) they live" is an ignoramus.¹⁸³ By reciting "we live" instead of "they live," the disciple includes himself as part of the community, thereby proving himself a scholar. Traditionally, the *Birkhat HaMazon* is only recited aloud when three males are present. Thus, the context of reciting the prayer aloud teaches that the number three represents a community. By "proving" oneself a scholar through the recitation of the *Birkhat HaMazon*, the communal atmosphere following a meal provides a setting for the disciple to apply his scholarship. Ben Zoma illustrates a person's ability to learn from each person, "Who is wise? The one who learns from each person (*adam*) ..." (Avot 4 : 1). Ben Zoma teaches that the entire community of Israel is a potential context for learning. Just as the disciple/scholar may learn from a younger scholar, colleagues or master, so, too, the disciple may learn from the entire community of Israel.

The role of community may play even a greater role than the context for learning. Community helps shape moral behavior. A person's character functions in a social environment, and the social environment can enhance or suppress morality.¹⁸⁴ According to Thomas Lickona, author of *Educating for Character*, people "learn morality by living it. They need to *be* (sic) a community – to interact, form relationships, work out problems, grow as a group, and learn directly from their first-hand social experience, lessons about ... cooperation, forgiveness, and respect for the worth and dignity of every individual."¹⁸⁵ The disciple who learns in community learns morality. By learning in

¹⁸³ BT Berakhot 50a.

¹⁸⁴ Lickona, Thomas. *Educating for Character*. (New York : Bantam Books, 1991), 63.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 90.

community, a disciple becomes invested in the others' learning as well as his own. In *hevruta*, the disciple helps others to learn and also learns from others. As a result, the disciple potentially develops respect for his colleagues through the group learning process. Therefore, not only does the community provide the context for the disciple's learning, the experience of learning in community helps develop the disciple's moral character.

Just as the disciple learns in the context of community, the protégé learns in the field experience. The field is the center of the mentor-protégé relationship.¹⁸⁶ Mentoring requires a mentoring community in which the idealistic values of mentoring are embodied in society.¹⁸⁷ Mentoring teaches that valid theory cannot exist removed from the context of human experience."¹⁸⁸ Thus, mentoring as an educational tool fuses theoretical and practical learning in the context of the professional field experience.

One element of learning is to "provide oneself with a master," the transmission of Jewish wisdom from the master to the disciple. Jewish learning is also composed of the disciple learning in a community of his colleagues. As a disciple learns in community, the community simultaneously teaches the disciple the value of community. The "community" also has the function of developing the disciple's moral character. Through learning in community, the disciple learns moral values. In mentoring, the "field" is the professional field experience and the center of the mentor-protégé relationship. In the master-disciple relationship, the "field" is the community of Israel. Thus, the community of Israel may

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 39.

¹⁸⁷ O' Gorman, Robert T, "Mentoring as Problem Setting, Not Problem Solving," *Touching the Future : Mentoring and the Jewish Professional*. (Los Angeles : HUC – JIR, 1995) 36.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 44.

also serve as a "mentoring" community. Ideally, the community of Israel is the field in which the disciple learns and practices Jewish wisdom.

In contrast to these Rabbinic texts which teach the value of community, our society teaches individuation and isolation. Today, we respect others who succeed as a result of their individual abilities. These texts teach us that we need to return to the "*hevruta*" style of learning in Jewish education. By learning and studying Judaism in community, we learn to value the community in which we will worship, raise children, celebrate and commemorate life cycle events. As Jewish leaders, we must value and love the community that we will eventually serve. In today's world, we have memorized how to "provide oneself with a master." We have "mastered" the hierarchical learning of teacher-student relationships. Too often, we forget the second component of Jewish learning, "acquire oneself a colleague." These texts teach us that Jewish learning also occurs in the context of community so that we learn to value, respect, and cherish the community of Israel for the rest of our lives.

CHAPTER NINE

AUTONOMY

One of the main purposes of the master-disciple relationship is to transmit the Jewish tradition from the master to the disciple. Since the master is the medium of Torah, the disciple is dependent upon his master for his textual knowledge and the wisdom of his life experience. As the disciple gains knowledge of Torah, the disciple gains authority of the tradition and is able to challenge and learn from his colleagues. As discussed in the previous chapter, the disciple eventually learns enough Torah that he can teach his master. Despite this level of equality in learning between the master and disciple, the disciple's autonomy as a scholar is ambiguous.

In Rabbinic texts, a disciple is forbidden to teach until he receives permission from his master. According to Maimonides, "Who contends with his master? One who ... sits, interprets, and teaches without the permission of his master..."¹⁸⁹ R. Eleazar ben Hyrcanus is an example of a disciple who would not teach without permission from his master, R. Yohanan ben Zakkai. R. Yohanan ben Zakkai urged R. Eleazar ben Hyrcanus to deliver a discourse in the presence of himself and Hyrcanus, R. Eleazar's father. R. Eleazar initially replied, "I am unable to speak (deliver a discourse)." When R. Yohanan and his disciples urged him to speak, R. Eleazar stood and delivered a discourse which no person had ever heard before.¹⁹⁰ Since R. Eleazar did not begin without R. Yohanan's permission, R. Eleazar illustrates that a disciple did not teach and give a lecture in his master's presence without his master's permission. Respect for the

¹⁸⁹ Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*. (Israel : Pardes Publishers, 1955), Hilkhot Talmud Torah, 5 : 2.

master's authority restricts the disciple's personal autonomy, thereby teaching the disciple that his personal autonomy will also be constrained by the tradition and thus G-d.

In the master-disciple relationship, there is a tension between the disciple's dependence and independence. In addition, the developmental cycle of the disciple's dependence to independence is not clear. The disciple is forbidden to teach until his master dies or unless he receives permission from his master.¹⁹¹ One who teaches *halakhah* in his master's presence merits death.¹⁹² However, if there were 12 cubits or miles between him and his master, and a person asks him a matter of *halakhah*, he is permitted to answer.¹⁹³ If a disciple sees someone performing a forbidden act because the person did not know it was forbidden, then he is permitted to teach him that it is forbidden even if he is in the presence of his master or even if he has not received his master's permission to instruct.¹⁹⁴ Rabbinic parables illustrate the varying degrees of the disciple's autonomy. It is taught that R. Hisda never replied about the permissibility of eating an egg with *kutah* (a preserve of sour milk, bread, and salt) during the life of R. Huna.¹⁹⁵ This text illustrates that R. Hisda, the disciple of R. Huna, strictly observed the prohibition of teaching *halakhah* in the lifetime of his master by refraining from giving even the most basic legal instruction during the lifetime of his master, R. Huna. Rabbinic texts also portray the outcome of a disciple who instructs when he is not permitted to do

¹⁹⁰ Avot de-Rabbi Natan 6.

¹⁹¹ Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*. (Israel : Pardes Publishers, 1955), Hilkhot Talmud Torah, 5 : 3.

¹⁹² Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*. (Israel : Dvir Publishers, 1955), Hilkhot Talmud Torah, 5 : 2.

¹⁹³ Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*. (Israel : Dvir Publishers, 1955), Hilkhot Talmud Torah, 5 : 3.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

so. For example, Abaye is asked by a sharecropper when it is permitted for him to remarry.¹⁹⁶ Abaye teaches the rulings of R. Yehudah, R. Hillel, Ulla, and Mar Ukva who permitted remarriage after fifteen months. Later, Abaye related the incident to R. Yosef, his master. R. Yosef corrected him by stating that the correct time period was twenty-four months. Realizing his mistake, Abaye ran after the sharecropper but did not overtake him. Thus, Abaye referred to R. Huna's principle "that a person is not permitted to rule in the place of his teacher" not even about the permissibility of eating an egg in *kuta*.¹⁹⁷ According to his master, Abaye incorrectly instructs the sharecropper. Thus, Abaye illustrates the negative outcome of a disciple who teaches before he is prepared or given permission to do so. Therefore, these texts portrays the varying degrees of a disciple's autonomy.

Some texts depict the extreme restrictions on a disciple's autonomy. For example, R. Eliezar spent the Sabbath in the Galilee in the sukkah of Yohanan. When the sun seeped through the sukkah, Yohanan asked R. Eliezer if he should spread a cloth over the sukkah. R. Eliezer only replied, "There was not a tribe in Israel from which prophets did not come ..." The Talmud teaches that R. Eliezer gave this answer not to divert their minds with words but because "he (R. Eliezer) never said anything that he had not heard from his teacher."¹⁹⁸ Here, R. Eliezer's is completely subservient to his master's authority. R. Eliezer interprets the biblical phrase "after the death of Aaron's two sons" as a punishment that "Aaron's sons died because they gave instruction of a law in the

¹⁹⁵ BT Eruvin 62b.

¹⁹⁶ BT Ketubot 60b.

¹⁹⁷ BT Ketubot 60b.

¹⁹⁸ BT Sukkah 27b - 28a.

presence of Moses, their master.”¹⁹⁹ Here, R. Eliezer teaches that Aaron’s sons disrespected Moses by teaching in his presence, and therefore disrespected the tradition, and, as a result, were punished by the wrath of G-d. These texts teach that a master’s authority is absolute and reflective of the absolute authority of the tradition, and by extension, G-d. Therefore, one’s respect or lack of respect for the master’s authority is a reflection of one’s respect or lack of respect of the tradition, and thus G-d.

It is unclear when a disciple receives autonomy from his master. R. Hiyya the son of Ammi taught in the name of Ulla, “a person should always dwell in the presence of his master. During the time that Simeon son of Gara was alive, Solomon did not marry the daughter of Pharaoh. There is no contradiction between the teaching that ‘a person should always dwell’ and the teaching that a person ‘should not dwell’ (in the presence of one’s teacher) because the former teaching applies to one who yields to his master, while the other teaching applies to one who does not yield to him.”²⁰⁰ According to this text, a disciple who yields to his master’s authority lives in his master’s jurisdiction, thereby remaining subservient to his master and restricting his own ability to teach. Conversely, a disciple who does not bend to his master’s authority is rebellious. This text depicts the tension in the master-disciple hierarchy. In order to gain autonomy as a scholar, the disciple must rebel and/or distance himself physically from his master. As far as the research for this thesis extended, the master-disciple relationship does not have a natural course for the disciple to attain autonomy other than rebelling against and/or physically distancing oneself from the master.

¹⁹⁹ BT Yoma 53a.

²⁰⁰ BT Ber 8a.

Even if the disciple gains autonomy from his master, the disciple is never completely autonomous. For example, the disciple does not have the personal autonomy to decide whether or not he will teach Torah. A scholar who is permitted to teach and doesn't, it is as if he refuses Torah and places a stumbling block before the blind.²⁰¹ R. Yohanan taught that "one who learns Torah and does not teach it is like a myrtle in the desert from which it is impossible to derive benefit from it."²⁰² Since a disciple or scholar's knowledge is composed of Torah, and Torah is the word of G-d, the disciple does not gain possession of Torah through his learning. Rather, the disciple's knowledge is reflective of G-d, and thus eternally subject to G-d's authority. Since the master is a vehicle of Torah, the word of G-d, the master is a physical representation of the limits placed on the disciple by the tradition. Therefore, the disciple's limited autonomy as a scholar teaches that he will always be subject to the authority of the Torah and G-d.

Despite the disciple's reputation as a scholar, the disciple's autonomy will always be restricted in the presence of his master. Restricting the disciple's autonomy teaches the disciple humility. According to Martin Buber, in order to be effective, the educators "need the humility to recognize that they are only one element in the lives of their students."²⁰³ Humility teaches the disciple or scholar that the burden of the Jewish people does not entirely rest on him. Rather, the disciple or scholar is a single individual subject to the authority of his master, the tradition, and G-d. The master-disciple relationship

²⁰¹ Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*. (Israel : Dvir Publishers, 1955), Hilkhoh Talmud Torah, 5 : 4.

²⁰² BT Rosh Hashanah 23a and En Yaakov, ad loc.

²⁰³ Elias, John L. on Martin Buber. *Moral Education*. (Florida : Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1989), 152.

teaches the disciple humility so that the disciple will remain humble in his future role as an educator of the next generation of disciples.

In comparison to the master-disciple relationship, the protégé travels a path from dependence to independence. In the beginning, the protégé depends on the mentor to set direction, establish expectations, provide feedback, etc. In mentoring, it is also difficult for the mentor to achieve a balance between deliberate guidance and *tsimtsum* (withdrawal) by which the mentor encourages the protégé's independence.²⁰⁴ However, the goal of the mentoring relationship is for the mentor to prepare the protégé to act autonomously. The departure of the protégé in some ways is the most complex aspect of the mentoring relationship. When the protégé departs from the mentor, he becomes the mentor's colleague and thus professional equal.²⁰⁵

The master-disciple relationship follows a developmental cycle similar to the cycle of mentoring. In the master-disciple relationship, the disciple progresses from complete dependence on the master for learning to eventually being able to teach the master. With the master's permission, the disciple also gains permission to teach outside the master's community. However, the disciple is never granted complete autonomy. Through the master-disciple relationship, the disciple's learns that his autonomy will always be restricted. Throughout his life, the disciple is always subject to his master's authority, and subservient to the authority of Torah and G-d.

²⁰⁴ Zeldin, Michael, "Touching the Future : The Promise of Mentoring, " *Touching the Future : Mentoring and the Jewish Professional*. Eds. Michael Zeldin and Sara S. Lee. (Los Angeles : Rhea Hirsch School of Education Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, 1995), 18.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

The Rabbinic concept of restricted autonomy is strikingly different to liberal Judaism in our world today. One of the main principles of Reform Judaism is personal autonomy, the individual's right to make personal decisions regarding religious practice based on informed choice. In the Rabbinic world, even if a disciple physically distanced himself from his master, the disciple was still subject to the tradition's authority. In the master-disciple relationship, there was not a definitive path toward a disciple's independence. Today, in the mentoring concept of education, the mentor's goal is to help the protégé succeed autonomously. Therefore, the Rabbinic world of restricted autonomy is a striking contrast to the autonomy in mentoring and liberal Judaism in our world today.

CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSION

The central theme through this thesis has demonstrated that the master-disciple relationship is not a direct parallel to the modern concept of mentoring. The *rav* or master represented the authoritative tradition, and the disciple "served" the master as an apprentice of Torah. Through the master-disciple relationship, the master transmitted the tradition to the disciple and shaped the disciple's moral character into a Rabbinic personality. In contrast, the modern mentor is an advisor who supports the protégé's individual development. Mentoring inducts novices into a professional field and is distinctly different from the master-disciple relationship.

When one considers the model of the *rav* as the medium of Torah in our modern society, it is clear that Jewish education and teaching is changing in step with the education in the secular world. Just as knowledge is becoming easier to obtain in all facets of life, so it is that the "*rav*" is no longer the exclusive source of Jewish wisdom in society. Rather, Jewish wisdom is widely disseminated through lay-people, books, magazines, films, the internet, etc. We live in an equal opportunity society in which Jewish knowledge is widely available to all. Therefore, today we are less likely to "revere" the *rav* as the source of Jewish wisdom because the entire community of Israel can gain access to Jewish knowledge. Theoretically, each individual Jew can become a *rav* or an authority of the Jewish tradition.

Through the master-disciple relationship, the disciple learned that he was subject to the authority of the tradition and G-d. The disciple's autonomy was restricted in that he was expected to abide by the master's authority. In addition, it was expected that the

master and disciple would live in close proximity to one another. As a learning process, the master-disciple hierarchy was expected to unfold, develop, and be strengthened over time because the master-disciple relationship was expected to endure throughout the lifetime of the master and disciple. Today, however, it is common for a student to live across the world from his former teacher. After completing a formal course of study, a student may move and never come into contact with that teacher again. Since the *rav* may only be an intermittent influence on a student's life, the *rav* is less likely to be an authoritative figure. Instead of demonstrating authority, today the *rav* is more likely to demonstrate the value of Jewish learning and transmit resource skills so that the student will independently pursue his or her studies in the future.

Similarly, the model of a disciple who "serves" his master is no longer appropriate for our world today. In the master-disciple relationship, subservience and domination were used as teaching methods. The master was permitted to "hit" children to bring fear upon them because fear and domination taught the child or disciple respect for authority.

²⁰⁶ In modern education, we do not expect nor desire a student to be completely submissive to authority. Instead, education facilitates the development of a student's individual character and judgment. In addition, we are acutely aware that a teacher may abuse hierarchical teaching techniques, thereby damaging a student's psyche. A learning structure that is hierarchical, authoritarian, and demands subservience enables the subordination of peoples, specifically minorities. Thus, the traditional master-disciple hierarchy is no longer deemed appropriate for a democratic, egalitarian society.

²⁰⁶ Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*. (Israel : Pardes Publishers, 1955), Hilkhos Talmud Torah, 2 : 2.

The master-disciple relationship and mentoring differ in their goal, foundation, developmental process, and final result. The goal of the master-disciple relationship is to transmit the tradition and shape the disciple's moral character, whereas the goal of mentoring is the "deliberate induction of novices into a profession."²⁰⁷ The master's authority is based on the knowledge of the Jewish tradition. In the master-disciple relationship, Torah is the blueprint for the world as G-d desires it to be.²⁰⁸ Mentoring is an interpersonal professional training technique that is independent of a traditional structure. In contrast to the master's authority based on Torah, the mentor's wisdom is derived from his or her years of professional experience.²⁰⁹ The mentor and protégé work together to create an ideal vision of their professional field. In terms of developmental process, the master-disciple relationship is hierarchical whereas mentoring is based on reciprocity and mutuality.

The final outcome of these educational processes is also distinct. The master raises up a disciple who serves him, and the disciple remains subservient to the master, tradition, and G-d. The mentor encourages the protégé to develop his or her unique professional style, thereby encouraging individuation.²¹⁰ The final stage of mentoring is interdependence between the mentor and the protégé. The mentor helps the protégé develop into an independent professional colleague.²¹¹

²⁰⁷ Zeldin, Michael, "Touching the Future : The Promise of Mentoring, " *Touching the Future : Mentoring and the Jewish Professional*. Eds. Michael Zeldin and Sara S. Lee. (Los Angeles : Rhea Hirsch School of Education Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, 1995), 16.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 23.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 22.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 19.

²¹¹ Ibid., 21.

In today's world, mentoring is an appealing method of education because it reflects modern values. In a democratic society, we value openness, and mentoring is based on reciprocity and mutual respect.²¹² We value equality. The master-disciple relationship is a male-dominated tradition, and modern *yeshivot* are still male-dominated. In contrast, mentoring is equally accessible to everyone. In a society that encourages individuality, mentoring is favorable because it encourages individuation. Mentoring encourages the individual protégé to develop his or her potential. We value freedom, and the mentoring relationship is based on freedom of choice. The mentor and the protégé have the freedom to choose their counterpart, or the freedom to reject entering in a mentoring relationship. In today's world, we also value independence. The goal of the developmental process of mentoring is to produce an independent professional colleague. The liberal Jewish community values personal autonomy. Mentoring reflects personal autonomy because mentoring is autonomous from the restrictions and demands of the tradition. Since the mentoring relationship lacks a traditional basis, the mentor and protégé can choose the mentoring methodology that is best suited to them as independent professionals.

Mentoring is also appealing because it is a personal, intimate relationship between the mentor and the protégé. In American society, we value individual success. Although an individualistic society builds personal character, it also breaks down interpersonal relationships. Therefore, since mentoring is a one-to-one relationship between the mentor and the protégé, it has the potential to overcome some of the barriers that the modern world presents in establishing bonds with our colleagues.

²¹² Ibid., 20.

In the Jewish educational system, just as within the secular education system, it is important that education promote a sense of self-worth and achievement. Since the mentoring relationship is uniquely created by the mentor and the protégé, mentoring has the potential to enhance a protégé's self-confidence. We are accustomed to competitiveness, and competitiveness breeds hostility. Conversely, mentoring provides a supportive and nurturing atmosphere for the individual to develop his or her potential. In the trusting environment of mentoring, a protégé is free to explore his or her talents without fear of criticism from one's peers.

Today, we embrace mentoring as an educational technique whereas we reject many forms of the traditional master-disciple relationship. However, the Rabbis' legacy teaches that values are still important for our world today. Rabbinic texts about the master-disciple relationship reminds us of the value of community. The disciple learned in a *hevrah* or community, and the *hevrah* taught the disciple to love and respect community. As a result of learning in community, the disciple would value the community he would eventually serve in his future role as a Jewish leader. Rabbinic texts emphasized that a disciple or scholar should respect, commit, and be accessible to a community in which he teaches. Therefore, the Rabbis remind us that a scholar's training should occur in community so that he or she will value the Jewish community in the future rabbinate.

The research for this thesis did not reveal our modern concept of Torah *l'shma*, learning for its' own sake. Modern science has created a value of pure, objective knowledge. Therefore, perhaps we impose our modern value of pure, theoretical knowledge on the term Torah *l'shma*. A general assumption in the liberal Jewish community is that Torah *l'shma*, or "learning for its' own sake" means learning for the

sake of pure knowledge, learning as an end unto itself. However, learning was applied to the community. In Rabbinic texts, practical knowledge such as *halakhah* was emphasized over theoretical knowledge because practical knowledge was applicable to Jewish communal life. The master learned in order to teach disciples. The disciples studied in order to become scholars and/or leaders of a Jewish community. Therefore, Jewish learning was applied to ensure the continuity of the Jewish people. In today's world, we often forget that the final goal of Torah "*l'shmah*," learning for its' own sake, is for the modern scholar to apply her or his learning for the benefit of the Jewish community.

Another conclusion from this thesis is that the master-disciple relationship served to develop a disciple's character into a Rabbinic personality. As a role model, admired for his behavior and knowledge, the *rav* or master transmitted Jewish values in addition to Jewish texts. In liberal Jewish religious schools, we teach the "facts" of Judaism -- how to read Hebrew, how to celebrate Jewish holidays, how to pray a Jewish worship service. However, in the context of my experience as a religious school teacher, the liberal Jewish religious curriculum lacks the transmission of Jewish values. As a result, the religious school student who learns the facts about how to live as a Jew still lacks the understanding of why living as a Jew is morally valuable. The value of the master-disciple relationship is that it teaches us that the Jewish knowledge is composed of both Jewish texts and Jewish values.

In the liberal Jewish world, we are quick to abandon tradition for modernity. Thus, we are inclined to reject the model of the authoritative master and embrace the modern concept of mentoring. However, as this thesis has illustrated, both the legacy of the master-disciple relationship and mentoring have positive contributions for modern

Jewish education. From the master-disciple relationship, we learn that Jewish education is composed of Jewish wisdom and Jewish values. Also, Jewish learning takes place in the context of community, and the purpose of Jewish knowledge is to apply it for the benefit of the Jewish community. From the tradition, we learn that the *rav* served as a medium of Torah. Despite today's diverse sources of Jewish knowledge, the *rav* is still a vital part of Jewish education, not so much for the "facts" he or she imparts, but for the moral values he or she communicates and from being a religious role model. Mentoring teaches us that the modern Jewish student needs support, encouragement, and the ability to develop his or her individual potential in a respectful environment. For modern Jewish education, we must reinterpret the word "master" in the teaching "Provide oneself with a master" (Avot 1 : 6) to mean a "master" of Jewish wisdom and values and a mentor of the individual soul.

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