Vol. II. Issue 43
5 Iyar 5779 / 10 May 2019
TheLehrhaus.com

LEHRHAUS Over Shabbos

CONTENTS:

KEDOSHIM

COMPARTMENTALIZATION AND SYNTHESIS IN MODERN ORTHODOX JEWISH EDUCATION

DAVID STEIN is the Director of Judaic Curriculum and Instruction at Shalhevet High School in Los Angeles, CA as well as the Co-Founder and Managing Director of the LaHaV Curriculum Project.

"The great problem of modern American Orthodoxy," wrote Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm in the May-June 1969 edition of *Jewish Life* magazine, "is that it has failed to interpret itself to itself."[1] Rabbi Lamm's critique of the young movement was scathing - he pointed to "a remarkable intellectual timidity" as the root cause of its struggle to find its ideological voice. Yet he also suggested a powerful antidote, arguing that Modern Orthodoxy must articulate a worldview "that is halakhically legitimate, philosophically persuasive, religiously inspiring, and personally convincing" in order to survive.

In many ways, however, Rabbi Lamm's challenge was never sufficiently addressed. By 1982, David Singer would lament that "Modern Orthodoxy did not fail - it never happened."[2] Indeed, as Charles Liebman first described it in 1976,[3] American Jews were increasingly exhibiting a phenomenon described as "compartmentalization," an orientation defined by "a marked decrease in the centrality of traditional religious values and way of life."[4] In a word, instead of a sweeping, integrated, and inspired religious experience, sociologists were quickly finding that Modern Orthodoxy, in practice, was defined by deep segregation between the modern world and Jewish tradition. Judaism was reserved for Shabbat and the *shul*, while the boardroom or courthouse were the places that the *kippah* came off. Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein, himself one of the most powerful champions of an integrated religious worldview, lamented the contemporary state of Orthodoxy in a public lecture first published in 2003, quoting the haunting words of the Irish poet William Butler Yeats: "the center cannot hold."[5]

The challenges facing Modern Orthodoxy can also be seen in recent demographic data. Indeed, despite the findings of the 2013-2014 Jewish Day School Census, which demonstrated that enrollment within Modern Orthodox day schools has remained roughly constant over the past 15 years,[6] the 2013 Pew study showed that Modern Orthodoxy is facing a dramatic demographic decline: while 43% of Orthodox Jews aged 50–64 consider themselves to be Modern Orthodox, only 9% of those aged 18–29 similarly identified with Modern Orthodoxy. The challenge facing Modern Orthodoxy, then, is not just an abstract sociological question - it is an educational one as well: our students are rejecting the values we seek to instill within them.[7] As Moshe Krakowski has recently pointed out, religious schools serve "simultaneously as educational institutions and as religious socializing agencies." In other words, we teach reading, writing, and arithmetic, *and* our schools are the vehicles for inculcating our communal values and ideological worldview.[8] As Krakowski notes,

> the ways in which students come to understand their own religious identities within these schools is central to the communal crisis modern Orthodoxy is facing...instead of pursuing a robust modern-Orthodox identity, many students have chosen to become either ultra-Orthodox or non-Orthodox.[9]

[1] Cited in Zev Eleff, *Modern Orthodox Judaism: A Documentary History* (Philadelphia: JPS, 2016), 189.

[2] David Singer cited in "A Symposium: The State of Orthodoxy," *Tradition* 20:1 (Spring 1982): 69.

[3] Charles S. Leibman, "Orthodox Judaism Today," *Midstream* 25:7 (Aug-Sept 1976): 25.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein, "Centrist Orthodoxy: A Spiritual Accounting," in *By His Light: Character and Values in the Service of God* (Jerusalem: Maggid Books, 2017), 193-220.

[6] Marvin Schick, "A Census of Jewish Day School in the United States." Avi Chai Foundation, 2014.

[7] For a recent critique of Modern Orthodoxy issued by a self described "normal Modern Orthodox kid, who goes to a normal Modern Orthodox high school," see the recent Times of Israel article published by Eitan Gross at http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/modern-orthodoxy-from-a-teenagers-perspective/. Gross points to the "glaring hypocrisy" and "internal contradictions" of the movement, arguing that "Modern Orthodoxy tries to create a balance that, at the moment, cannot work."

[8] Moshe Krakowski, "Developing and Transmitting Religious Identity: Curriculum and Pedagogy in Modern Orthodox Jewish Schools," *Contemporary Jewry* (2017): 1-24.

[9] Ibid., 2.

Make no mistake about it: if Modern Orthodox day school education does not sufficiently foster deeply integrated Modern Orthodox identities among its students - encoding, as Krakowski put it, "the norms and patterns of engagement in society" - then our schools will cease to be relevant, especially in a world of rising tuition costs.[10] This paper will examine how we instill and inspire Modern Orthodox identities within our students by analyzing three separate facets of the school system that serve to communicate our values: the structure of the school itself, the curriculum taught in the school, and the pedagogies employed by its teachers. Along the way, I seek to identify the factors within schools that reinforce the reality of compartmentalization, while also highlighting initiatives that may allow for a more integrated religious educational experience within Modern Orthodox day schools. To paraphrase Rabbi Lamm, I hope to both understand and suggest improvements to the way we "explain ourselves to ourselves."

Structural Challenges

Modern Orthodoxy is a worldview that encompasses intellectual, social, spiritual, cultural, and professional dimensions, and which recognizes that there exist multiple - and competing - values in our world, all while upholding the primacy of Torah learning and observance. All too often, however, it gets reduced (at worst) to an ideology of compromise, or (at best) a superficial pairing of general and Judaic studies. Educationally, then, we're charged with identifying the values in our world and in our tradition, articulating ways in which they can be balanced, highlighting the relationships between them, and helping our students apply them to our lived spiritual and human experiences. Yet the barriers to doing so are extensive, and begin within the communal and institutional structures of the Modern Orthodox day school system itself. As early as 1986, Jack Bieler argued that "The modern Orthodox school itself is undermining rather than supporting the religious outlook that it should be encouraging within its student body."[11] Samuel Heilman, in his landmark 2006 study of the American Jewish Orthodox community, describes several factors that have contributed to this reality.[12] First, he notes that with increasing professional specialization and training in fields of medicine, law, and business, Modern Orthodox parents find themselves without the religious training or free time to be actively engaged in the education of their children. As Heilman puts it, "The school had hoped not to replace the family and community, but in practice in the modern world it did."[13] This growing divide between the roles of parents and teachers - indeed, between school and home - means that students' lived communal and familial experiences develop separately from their educational encounters; they often learn one thing at school and then see something very different at home. To make matters worse, the very teachers that students engage with at school are often at odds with the core values that Modern Orthodoxy espouses. This reality creates significant additional barriers to communicating a Modern Orthodox worldview within our schools, as Heilman further notes that

> the teachers in their schools and many rabbis did not share their values and remained unprepared to endorse the modern orthodox life trajectory even tacitly… the teachers often did not share the same neighborhoods and certainly not the same community as the families of the students they taught.[14]

Indeed, identifying, recruiting, and hiring Modern Orthodox faculty role models (especially for *limmudei kodesh* classes) is a such a daunting task that Heilman estimates that by 2003 up to two-thirds of Judaic studies teachers in schools were *Haredi*. At the very outset, then, the school system itself often suffers from a failure to align its educational prerogatives and professional staff with the families and communities that it serves. While it may be that some parents may *prefer* the Haredization of school faculty as a correction for perceived deficiencies of Modern Orthodoxy, it goes without saying that such a perspective would point to a complete breakdown of our educational mission and ideological platform. Faced with this disconnect between faculty, parents, and school, then, it is no wonder that students struggle to identify with the religious values and philosophical worldview that we seek to inspire within them.

Furthermore, Bieler has also noted that the seemingly rote questions of scheduling classroom hours within schools can communicate an institution's stance towards integration.[15] Indeed, scholars of educational culture have described the bell schedule as one of the most powerful cultural features of a school, determining where students should be and what they should be doing at all times.[16] It should be unsurprising, then, that in many of our schools where Judaic studies are exclusively taught in the morning, with general studies classes meeting in the afternoon, students can easily begin to compartmentalize the disparate classrooms that they occupy without identifying relationships or connections between them. These types of organizational structures are so powerful, in fact, that several meta-analyses of educational research have found that a school's culture, values, and systems are often the most powerful determinants of student outcomes.[17] In essence, researchers have shown that actions speak at least as loud as words, and so while a school's mission statement may preach the values of Modern Orthodoxy, if everything from role models to class schedule - as well as field trips, assemblies, outside speakers, school policies, and even the posters in the hallways - doesn't also reflect our ideological values, then we implicitly send a powerful message about where our priorities really lie.

Strategies to address these structural issues within our schools are both obvious and frighteningly difficult to implement. On the one hand, it should go without saying that hiring teachers who are

[10] Ibid.

[11] Jack Bieler, "Integration of Judaic and General Studies in the Modern Orthodox Day School," *Jewish Education* 54:4 (1986): 18.

[12] Samuel Heilman, *Sliding to the right: The Contest for the Future of American Jewish Orthodoxy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

[13] Ibid., at 103. On this point, see as well Haym Soloveitchik, "Rupture and Reconstruction: The Transformation of Contemporary Orthodoxy," Tradition 28 (Summer 1994): 64-130.

[14] Heilman, 110.

[15] Bieler (1986), 15-26.

[16] See, for example, Owens and Valesky, *Organizational Behavior in Education*, 11th Edition (2015).

[17] C.R. Cook, K.R. Williams, N.G. Guerra, T.E. Kim, & S. Sadek, "Predictors of Bullying and Victimization in Childhood and Adolescence: A Meta-Analytic Investigation," *School Psychology Quarterly* 25(2) (2010): 65–83. A. Thapa, J. Cohen, S. Guffey, & A. Higgins-D' Alessandro, "A Review of School Climate Research," *Review of Educational Research* 83(3) (2013): 357-385.

ideologically aligned with the mission and values of a school would make an enormous impact on the school's ability to communicate its values. Yet actually doing so is not so simple. In a recent personal conversation, the Dean of the Azrieli Graduate School for Jewish Education at Yeshiva University reported that out of a yearly class of thirty-five Master's degree students at the school, many candidates are already employed as teachers.[18] The efforts of this program to bring new educators into the field while also providing growth opportunities for current teachers are undoubtedly essential to our schools. At the same time, however, there is simply no way that we are meeting the demand for qualified Jewish educators in our schools - even with an optimistic estimate of total graduates entering the field from other institutions as well. The reasons for this are obviously complicated, but economics are one starting point: unless we pay more for our teachers, we're less likely to attract top talent to Jewish education.

Two promising initiatives - adult education programs and scheduling changes aimed at reducing compartmentalization - may be somewhat easier to achieve but also require extensive effort, planning, and investment. At Shalhevet High School in Los Angeles, for example, the Shalhevet Institute was established as a center for learning, conversation, and scholarship for the entire community, and it has helped transform the school into a driver of ideas and education for parents and adults, thereby bridging the gap between school and community. The Shalhevet Institute's programs - courses for parents built around content that the school's students are studying, *Shabbatonim* designed to allow community members to engage in immersive learning, and scholars in residence who communicate the school's mission and generate dialogue within the community - are all designed to connect parents to the ideas and values that the school seeks to instill within its students. Recently, SAR High School established Machon Siach, a project that seeks to foster "collaboration among the school, community, alumni, and parents while engaging in research around crucial issues affecting Jewish education."[19] Taken together, these initiatives point to a growing recognition that in order to effectively communicate its values, the school must leverage its resources to engage both students as well as adults throughout the community.

Scheduling changes to the school day offer another opportunity to achieve integration within our educational institutions. While there may be many logistical or personnel factors that shape a school's scheduling decisions, growing adoption of block scheduling systems at Modern Orthodox day schools offers important opportunities for reducing compartmentalization. Under these systems, which allow for classes to meet for longer periods on a rotating basis (i.e., each class does not meet every day), students alternate between their science, Talmud, literature, *Tanakh*, or math courses, helping to facilitate maximal cross-pollination and connection between seemingly disparate fields.

The Written Curriculum

It also matters what students actually learn in their classrooms. We must ask ourselves, then: what does a Modern Orthodox curriculum actually look like, and how should it be taught? Should Modern Orthodox Torah learning aim to be essentially identical to what is being studied in the *yeshivot* of Bnei Brak - with the only difference being that we *also* value the science laboratories or literature classroom - or must we chart out new curricular approaches to communicate our values?

Several authors have made important contributions to the question of what a Modern Orthodox curriculum should look like. Among them, Alex Pomson has argued that the problem of compartmentalization can be traced back to the challenges (and failures) of developing "integrated" curricula.[20] Building off of the work of Robin Fogarty, [21] Pomson proposes that curriculum integration - by which he means weaving together multiple disciplines (or "multiple experiences within a single discipline") in order to construct knowledge - can allow students to "make connections within and across" a particular discipline.[22] For example, Pomson suggests that a study of the laws of *mishloah manot* can be combined with a project to deliver food packages to a local nursing home - requiring students to calculate and plan a budget and consult with elderly caregivers, while demonstrating mastery of the rules and regulations behind *mishloah manot*. Similarly, Pomson proposes that the study of *Megillat Ruth* in a *Tanakh* class can allow for integration with several other disciplines by engaging the Drama department in a musical production of the story, the English department in script writing, the History department in studying the role of minorities within society, and the Literature department in reading similar stories about outsiders or converts. For Pomson, then, integration of disciplines around shared ideas or themes can allow for a Modern Orthodox school to escape the trap of compartmentalization by creating meaningful connections across Judaic and general studies.

In a similar vein, Moshe Krakowski proposed using problem- (or project-) based learning (PBL) in Modern Orthodox schools in order to "build connections between abstract Jewish text based legal codes and everyday Jewish practices,"[23] and a related effort has been spearheaded by Tikvah Wiener at the newly founded Idea School in North Jersey. There's obvious value in these approaches: by empowering students to connect ideas and values across disciplines while harnessing the creativity and engagement of these project-based pedagogies, we can reduce compartmentalization by ensuring that Judaic studies are not relegated to the sidelines of students' educational experiences.[24] Along the way, a powerful model for

[18] Dr. Rona Novick, personal communication, October 8, 2018. Shared here with permission.

[19] www.machonsiach.org.

[20] Alex Pomson, "Knowledge that Doesn't Just Sit There: Considering a Reconception of the Curriculum Integration of Jewish and General Studies," *Religious Education* 96:4 (2001): 528-545. For a review of Pomson's and other approaches towards integrated curricula, see Jon Levisohn, "From Integration of Curricula to the Pedagogy of Integrity," *Journal of Jewish Education* 74(3) (2008): 264-294.

[21] Fogarty, Robin, "Ten Ways to Integrate Curriculum," *Educational Leadership* 49:2: 61-65.

[22] Pomson, 534.

[23] Krakowski, 10.

[24] The educational world is somewhat split about the efficacy of problem based, or "constructivist" approaches to learning. See, for example A. Kirschner, J. Sweller, and R. Clark, "Why Minimal Guidance During Instruction Does Not Work: An Analysis of the Failure of Constructivist, Discovery, Problem-Based, Experiential, and Inquiry Based Learning, *Educational Psychologist* 41(2) (2006): 75-86, in a journal volume devoted entirely to debating this question. Yet as Tikvah Wiener recently put it to me in a personal conversation, there is obviously no single educational

Modern Orthodoxy can be constructed echoing Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein's assertion that "the final word" on the synthesis between Torah and general knowledge "is with integration and harmony."[25]

However, beyond the value of integrating disciplines within the PBL model, two important questions must be raised as we chart out a Modern Orthodox curriculum. First, we must consider the question of the *limmudei kodesh* curriculum itself: what should the study of Judaic texts look like? What skills or dispositions should be developed? What topics should be included in the curriculum? Should a school focus on Jewish holidays? Everyday rituals and regulations? Talmudic case law? Before embarking on the path of synthesis and integration with other disciplines, then, we must first consider what Modern Orthodox students should actually be learning in their Judaic studies courses in the first place. And here Michael Rosenak has identified an additional question for our consideration.[26] As opposed to Rav Lichtenstein's thesis of integration and synthesis, Rosenak has suggested that the hallmark of a Modern Orthodox curriculum should instead be defined by "dichotomies and tensions" - echoing the complex and multivariate nature of the world around us.[27]

What would such a curriculum look like? Truth be told, dynamic tension is almost definitional to Jewish law and tradition. As Rav Lichtenstein has written elsewhere, to open and learn a page of Talmud is

> to gain access to a world in ferment. It is to enter a pulsating bet midrash, studded with live protagonists; to be caught up, initially as witness and subsequently as participant, in a drama of contrapuntal challenge and response, of dialectic thrust and parry; to be stimulated by the tension of creative impulse.[28]

Yet our students don't generally experience the majesty of this encounter with Torah learning. Instead, all too often, students feel disengaged from their *limmudei kodesh* classes in our schools, reinforcing the reality of compartmentalization by relegating Talmud study to the sidelines of their interests and focus - an ancient and arcane discipline that simply does not relate to the world around us. Simply put, if students don't value or are not motivated to engage in Torah study, then there is nothing to "integrate" with their secular subjects and cultural experiences to begin with. And while conclusive data on the subject is limited, the data we do have certainly isn't positive. A 1991 study in Israel found that *gemara* was the least favorite class among Israeli students, while a 2009 dissertation by Aaron Ross found that motivation to study Talmud depended largely upon students' general academic motivation as well as their relationships with their teachers.[29] Taken together, these studies suggest that *gemara* learning is often of little intrinsic interest to our students, a reality which - if true - is an existential threat to integration. Reversing this trend and reigniting student interest in *limmudei kodesh* is therefore essential to any efforts toward reducing compartmentalization within the Modern Orthodox community and building recognition within our students of the ways in which Jewish learning can inform our engagement with the world.

In order to tackle the need for a curriculum that effectively communicates the values that we're trying to instill within our students, Noam Weissman and I created LaHaV, a *limmudei kodesh* curriculum project that provides content and training for schools and educators across the world. At its core, the goal of LaHaV is to reframe Torah learning for students in our schools along the lines envisioned by Rosenak, and so the curriculum itself is designed to focus on the dynamic tensions within our tradition. How, for example, does *halakhah* balance between the will of the majority and the needs of the minority? The Mishnah in *Eduyot* 1:5 - which establishes the legal norm of recording minority opinions along with those of the majority, along with the famous narrative of *Berakhot* 27b - where Rabban Gamliel is removed from his leadership of the

---

approach that works best here, and that the best pedagogies balances between student inquiry and direct instruction.

[25] Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein, "A Consideration of Synthesis from a Torah Point of View," in *Leaves of Faith* Vol. 1, (Brooklyn, NY: Ktav, 2003), 89-103. Shortly after Rav Lichtenstein *zt"l* passed away, someone commented to me that "Rav Lichtenstein didn't really value integration - he spent his life in the *Beit Midrash*!" My own experience learning from Rav Lichtenstein, however, was marked by an overwhelming sense of his educational synthesis and integration of disparate values, sources, and ideas in his *Talmud Torah* in much the same way that Krakowski is arguing for. His writing on the topic is marked by both a serious openness to curricular innovation away from traditional *gemara* learning [as expressed in his 2007 essay published by ATID - see Aharon Lichtenstein and Yehudah Brandes, *Talmud Study in Yeshiva High Schools* (Jerusalem: Academy for Torah Initiatives and Directions, 2007)], along with an emphasis on the need to find an appropriate balance between *kodesh* and secular studies in the "Consideration of Synthesis" article quoted here. At the same time, however, there is no question that Rav Lichtenstein saw intensive, focused, and independent Torah learning as an ideal pursuit. See, for a forceful example, Aharon Lichtenstein, "Why Learn Gemara?" in *Leaves of Faith* Vol. 1 1-18.

[26] Michael Rosenak, "Towards a Curriculum for the Modern Orthodox School," in Jonathan Sacks (ed), *Orthodoxy Confronts Modernity* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Pub. House in association with Jews' College, London, 1991.

[27] Ibid., at 65. It should be noted here that "integration and harmony" and "dichotomies and tensions" are two very different visions of what Modern Orthodoxy is really about. While Rav Lichtenstein certainly argued for and modeled the integrative approach (within limits), others, especially Rav Soloveitchik, wrote extensively about dialectic and tension within religious experience. See, for example, Rav Soloveitchik's famous introduction to *The Lonely Man of Faith*: "it would be presumptuous of me to attempt to convert the passional, antinomic faith-experience into a eudaemonic, harmonious one" (p. 2), as well as the tensions layed out in his 1964 essay, *Confrontation*. Between the worldview of "harmony and integration" and the vision of dynamic tension lays a deep chasm at the heart of what it means to be Modern Orthodox - an ideological divergence that may explain why we've failed to articulate what the movement actually stands for.

[28] Aharon Lichtenstein, "Why Learn Gemara?" in *Leaves of Faith* Vol. 1, 1-18.

[29] S. Weiser and M. Bar Lev, "Teaching Talmud in the Yeshiva High School: Difficulties and Dangers" (Hebrew), *Nir ha-Midrashiah* 8 (1991): 233-56. For Ross' dissertation, see http://lookstein.org/articles/motivational_issues.pdf.

Sanhedrin after humiliating Rabbi Yehoshua over a halakhic dispute - highlight this tension and articulate potential solutions that should be included in a Modern Orthodox curriculum. What about fostering both unity and diversity within our communities? Here again, our tradition grapples with this fundamental question, as in the *gemarot* in *Eiruvin* 13b, *Hagiga* 3b, and *Rosh Hashanah* 25a. Should *halahkah* be guided by looking to previous generations (an approach championed by R. Yosef Karo in his introduction to *Beit Yosef*), or should it be decided based on communal norms of the current generation (as advocated for by R. Moshe Isserles in *Darkhei Moshe*)? Our Sages recognized similar creative dialectic between the role of the people and the Rabbis within *halakhah* (*Pesahim* 50b, *Avodah Zarah* 36a), as well as the ways in which individual needs may override halakhic norms, such as the role of *kavod ha-beriyot* (human dignity - *Berakhot* 19b), *makom tzarah* (sickness or pain - *Ketubot* 60b), and *makom mitzvah* (performance of a *mitzvah* - *Pesahim* 66b) in allowing for leniency within *halakhah*.

Yet the ways in which *Hazal* balanced competing values within a complex world aren't always apparent to the casual student of Talmud - the discipline isn't organized around these issues, and so we've spent years researching and selecting Talmudic *sugyot* to weave together into a fully structured and spiralled curriculum. In these cases and many more, we've attempted to identify areas of dynamic tension within our tradition, and to use these tensions to engage our students in deep and sophisticated learning that communicates the complex system of conflicting priorities that *Hazal* attempted to balance. Today, we're working with schools across the U.S., Canada, Australia, and Israel - and while our curriculum is certainly not the right fit for every school out there, I've argued previously at the Lehrhaus that any responsible approach to Jewish learning for our students must focus on deliberately and consciously engaging students with the competing values that can be found behind any Talmudic *sugya.*

Dialogue

Articulating a compelling Modern Orthodox worldview, however, isn't just a question of who is doing the teaching or how the curriculum is defined. Modern Orthodox education is also about *how* we teach - and what we're willing to talk about with our students. If Modern Orthodoxy is an orientation that recognizes that the world is filled with competing values that coexist with the primacy of Torah learning and observance, then these values must always be in conversation with one another. In the final analysis, then, we must ask ourselves how to facilitate these conversations. Do we talk with our students about the moral, religious, spiritual, and political conflicts that we encounter in our lives and our communities - or do we simply reduce these conflicts to easy choices shaded in hues of black and white? On this issue, Devra Lehmann has highlighted the ways in which the classroom discourse within Jewish schools can create cultural barriers to integration as well. Lehmann analyzed the basic norms of speech and interaction that govern the discourse of general studies and Judaics classrooms - and here she found a stark difference between the two. She describes that in the classrooms she observed,

> English teachers wanted to develop independent readers who could make sense of the text on their own, who could find ways to support their own views even when they encountered the critical tradition, and who could feel free to express their views in assertive or even strident ways...*humash* teachers, on the other hand, wanted above all to develop Jews who were committed to their tradition. This commitment entailed not only knowledge of the tradition, but also a sense of one's own smallness in relation to its wisdom and authority.[30]

As one student put it in an interview, "in secular classes you get to think, but in Jewish studies classes you just spit back whatever they tell you." [31] Lehmann's work therefore suggests that compartmentalization is not just a function of curricular content or communal integration within our schools. Rather, Lehmann argues that on a much deeper level, the very nature of our classroom discourse influences the ways in which students relate to the course material - and that there exist serious differences here between Judaic and general studies classrooms. To the extent that students get to think, explore, or question in secular classes but not with *limudei kodesh,* then, we risk our students developing very different orientations towards these disciplines, sabotaging integration and cross-pollination between the two.

In a very real sense, Lehmann's work forces us to ask ourselves how we view the students that we're charged to inspire: do we see them as passive receptacles for a static tradition, or as essential links in a dynamic conversation that has spanned generations and which must be continued in order for us to address the challenges facing our community and our world? *How* we talk in the classroom, then, may be just as important as *what* we're teaching. Are we developing a culture of inquiry and critical thinking? Do we encourage creativity and originality within our *limmudei kodesh* classrooms? Are we willing to speak about the issues of our day - gender, truth, economics, otherness, and more? Does the ideology of *Torah im Derekh Eretz* (a philosophical forebearer of Modern Orthodoxy) permeate our sense of mission to develop moral thinkers as well as *talmidei hakhamim*? Ultimately, Lehmann's analysis forces us to consider the pedagogies, norms, and discursive cultures that are encountered by students within our classrooms. If - to paraphrase Rav Soloveitchik - we seek to create students "who long to create, to bring into being something new, something original,"[32] then we must treat our students as such by fostering personal creativity and connection within our classrooms.

The issue of *how* to teach in a Modern Orthodox school is certainly the most expansive of the issues tackled in this essay, and obviously may take any number of forms. Yet it should go without saying that the modality of a classroom focused on project based learning or *havruta* study communicates a far different message about the nature of authority and the value of creativity than one in which a rabbi stands in front of the classroom and reads from a *gemara*. Similarly, the way we discipline our students and respond to their challenges (and mistakes) must also be part of our thinking about how we help them recognize and embrace the responsibilities and conflicts that they must navigate in their encounter with the world. Democratic educational approaches - often the mark of "progressive" schools - which focus on student empowerment, autonomy, and responsibility within the classroom, are another potential avenue for creating and modeling an authentically Modern Orthodox discourse within our schools. In truth, this type of dialogue is the legacy that

[30] Devra Lehmann, "Calling Integration into Question: A Discourse Analysis of English and Humash Classes at a Modern Orthodox Yeshiva High School" *Journal of Jewish Education* 74 (3) (2008): 295–316.

[31] Ibid., 316.

[32] Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man* (Philadelphia: JPS, 1983), 100.

Hazal imparted to us in pages of Talmud filled with running disputes, attempted resolutions, and continuous inquiry. And if we are to successfully inspire our students to embrace this heritage, then, Talmudic discourse shouldn't only be encountered in the classroom - it needs to be modeled in our hallways as well. *Mahloket* and dialogue are not just the hallmarks of our tradition; they must be the watchwords of our movement, along with a wariness of simplistic answers, and a recognition that we may not always find resolutions to our many questions.

At the end of the day, then, I'd argue that Modern Orthodoxy isn't about compromise - it's about embracing dynamic tension and attempting meaningful harmonization. And, if we are to survive, we must build educational institutions that can inspire our students to engage in that process. To do so, we must think carefully about whether the structures in our school are designed to communicate these tensions, how our curricula provide students with the tools to navigate conflict, and whether we are sufficiently empowering them to find their own voices within these essential conversations. While no two schools will take the same path to build these systems, as a community and a movement, we need to do a better job of explaining ourselves to a generation of students who are wondering what role Torah learning should have in their lives and in the world around us.

Catching up to Israel: A Yom Ha'atzmaut Reflection on the Post-Pesah Parshah Gap

SHMUEL HAIN is the rabbi at Young Israel Ohab Zedek of North Riverdale/Yonkers and Rosh Beit Midrash at SAR High School.

Here is the dilemma: a family in my synagogue suddenly decides to move to Israel, realizing a lifelong dream on the heels of a fantastic job opportunity.[33] Their children are being pulled out of school mid-year, making a difficult transition especially challenging. On top of that, shortly before their lift departs, the parents realize that their son's bar mitzvah, long reserved on our *shul* calendar for June 1, 2019/*Parshat Behukotai* is now going to be celebrated in Israel, where *Parshat Bamidbar* will be read on June 1. There is not enough time or emotional bandwidth for an *oleh hadash* to learn a new *parshah* in a few short months. Returning to America to celebrate the milestone is also not an option. Hence, the halakhic query: may a pre-bar mitzvah boy *lain Behukotai* in Israel on Shabbat, May 25, the Shabbat right before his thirteenth birthday?

******

Though I have had many congregants from our *shul* move to Israel over the years,[34] this particular scenario pushed me to reflect more deeply on my identity as a Religious Zionist in America. Through the process of researching the narrow question about the propriety of a minor reading the Torah on behalf of the community, I began wondering why this was even a question in the first place. The facts of the accepted practice are straightforward:[35] during a leap year, when the eighth day of Pesah in the Diaspora falls out on Shabbat, the Torah reading in Israel is *Parshat Aharei Mot*. Here in the diaspora we don't read *Aharei Mot* until the following Shabbat, while in Israel they read *Kedoshim*. This *parshah* gap continues until August, when the diaspora combines *Matot* and *Masei*, finally catching up to Israel.

But why should this pattern persist? Why don't we in the Diaspora simply combine *Aharei Mot* and *Kedoshim* on the Shabbat right after Pesah, and synchronize with Israel as soon as possible? If we did that, by the time we reached June 1 we would all be reading *Parshat Bamidbar*, and this boy would never have learned the "wrong" *parshah* in the first place.

Remarkably, 5779 is the second consecutive year when the Diaspora will fall a week behind Israel for an extended period of time after Pesah.[36] 5778 was a non-leap year when the eighth day of Pesah also fell out on Shabbat. In a non-leap year, there is an equally simple solution. All that is needed to synchronize the two communities is for Israel to separate *Tazria/Metzora* or *Aharei Mot/Kedoshim*. Instead, those *parshiyot* are combined, and Israel and the Diaspora do not realign until *Parshat Bamidbar*, after Israelis read *Behar* and *Behukotai* on separate weeks. In the non-leap year scenario, the question is equally obvious: why doesn't Israel separate one of those earlier double *parshiyot* so as to synchronize with the Diaspora as soon after Pesah as possible?

Of course, it's not just bar and bat mitzvah Torah readings that are impacted by the Diaspora/Israel divide. Those who travel midweek to Israel from the Diaspora after Pesah miss a whole Torah portion, unless they conduct a reading of their own. And those going in the opposite direction, who dutifully attend shul, will hear the same *parshah* in the Diaspora as they heard the week before in Israel. More broadly, in our hyper-connected global world, it seems inconvenient and strange at best, and needlessly divisive at worst, to have two different Torah readings the same week. Why not do

[33] I want to express thanks to my friend and colleague Simon Fleischer for his many helpful suggestions on an earlier draft, and for his determination to help me personalize this piece. I also want to thank Eitan Cooper, who sparked my initial interest in this subject when he gave a shiur on the topic at Young Israel Ohab Zedek of North Riverdale/Yonkers over Shavuot last year. Eitan directed my attention to an article by Chaim Simons which surveys sources related to the differences between Torah readings in Israel and the Diaspora. For an in-depth look at the division of the *parshiyot* more generally, see this article in Volume 2 of *Hakirah*.

[34] I think I may have written more "*Aliyah* Letters" in the past five years (some 60 plus at last count!) attesting to the Jewishness of congregants than any other rabbi in North America, a distinction which gives me a great deal of pride but is also bittersweet, as Israel's gain has been our community's loss.

[35] There were a number of other practices during the medieval period, as attested by the author of the Kaftor va-Ferah, and Meiri in his work *Kiryat Sefer*. See this source sheet for exact citations and sources.

[36] Next year will give us the third consecutive year with a gap, this time when day two of Shavuot coincides with Shabbat. The Diaspora will catch up a few weeks later when they combine *Hukat* and *Balak*. See the Simons article above for further details on this scenario.

everything we can, calendrically and otherwise, to unite the Jews of Israel and the Diaspora?[37]

But the more I considered this *parshah* paradox, the less absurd it seemed. Truth be told, the misalignment may even capture a certain feeling I have at times as a Religious Zionist living in the Diaspora. It's not just the time difference, though being seven hours behind certainly makes staying meaningfully connected with family and friends in Israel more challenging. It's deeper than that. There is a disconnect that I experience, even and especially when I visit Israel and spend time in the communities and around the people with whom I should feel most aligned.

It is the slight disconnect I experienced when I was in Israel for the night of Yom Ha'atzmaut several years ago, and was overwhelmed by the many liturgical elements added to a meaningful and joyous service in my siblings' shul in Raanana. They pulled out all the stops: *shofar*, full *Hallel* with a *berakha* (at night!), *yom tov nusah*, and additional recitations on top of what was printed in the Koren Siddur. Not only did I have a hard time following, I felt as if I did not fully belong at this over-the-top religious celebration of statehood.[38]

I experienced a different, albeit related, disconnect this past year when I participated in an exchange between a group of North American Modern Orthodox rabbis and prominent Religious Zionist rabbis from Israel. Many of the Israeli participants were scholars and leaders whom I admire greatly. The goal of the exchange was to discuss remedies for the seemingly ever-widening rift between parts of American Jewry and Israel. Somewhat astonishingly, two of our colleagues from Israel spent a good deal of our time together sharing, with a great deal of pride, how they had never stepped foot outside of Israel. When I noted that this kind of talk was not furthering our stated goal of narrowing the chasm between Israeli and Diaspora Jewry, the chastened rabbis responded that they did not mean it personally; they were just sharing their halakhic view that no Jew is ever allowed to leave *Eretz Yisrael*.

Maybe these moments reflect my own feelings of inadequacy over not having made *aliyah,* but I don't think that insecurity as an American Religious Zionist fully explains what transpired on these occasions. These vignettes highlight a disconnect when it comes to assessing the relative importance of the Israeli and Diaspora Jewish communities more generally, and the alienation experienced by Diaspora Religious Zionists in the face of a "*shelilat ha-golah*/negation of the exile" ideology espoused by our Israeli counterparts.

And so, not being in lockstep with Israel and their Torah readings no longer feels so ill-conceived. The *parshah* gap has begun to resonate with me, a minor misalignment providing metaphoric space for the independent significance and stature of both the Israeli and Diaspora Jewish communities as part of the Jewish nation.

This perspective is borne out by the two sixteenth century halakhic sources that justify the post-Pesah *parshah* gap in its two iterations (leap year and non-leap year). First, some background: the Bavli in *Megillah* (31b) states that there are two poles for determining placement of *parshiyot* in the Jewish calendar:

> It is taught: Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar said: Ezra enacted for the Jewish people that they should read the curses in Leviticus before *Atzeret* (Shavuot*)* and the curses in Deuteronomy before Rosh Hashanah. What is the reason for this? Abaye said, and some say Reish Lakish: In order that the year may conclude its curses (and the new year begin without the ominous reading of the curses). Granted, with regard to the curses in Deuteronomy, this makes sense: in order that the year may conclude together with its curses, (for Rosh Hashanah is the beginning of a new year). However, with regard to the curses in Leviticus, is *Atzeret* (Shavuot*)* a new year? Yes, indeed, *Atzeret* is also a new year, as we learned (*Mishnah Rosh Hashanah* 16a): And on *Atzeret*, divine judgment is made concerning the fruit of the trees (indicating that Shavuot also has the status of a new year).

Tosafot (ad loc. s.v. *kelalot*) add that the ideal fulfillment of the requirement to read the portions containing the admonition prior to the "new years" of Shavuot and Rosh Hashanah actually entails reading one additional portion before these holidays, so as to establish a buffer between the curses and the blessed new year. Thus, Tosafot explain, our practice is to read *Bamidbar* prior to Shavuot and *Nitzavim* (or *Nitzavim/Vayelekh*) prior to Rosh Hashanah.

R. Joseph Trani (Shu"t Mahari"t *Helek Bet*, *Orah Hayyim*, 4) utilizes Tosafot's ruling to answer our question about a leap year scenario such as this year.[39] Maharit explains that Tosafot's requirement for a one-week *Bamidbar* buffer following the curses is precise; the buffer must be one week and no more:

> Just as we do not delay the reading (of *Bamidbar* until after Shavuot), so too we do not advance it and read it two Shabbatot before Shavuot, because then it would not be clear that we are completing the reading of the curses in advance of the "New Year." That is only clear when we read the curses close to the end of the year (and have just one portion in between)... In Israel during a leap year when they read *Aharei Mot* on the seventh day of the *Omer*, there is no choice but to have two weeks of interposition (*Bamidbar* and *Naso*) between the curses and Shavuot. But outside of Israel, it is appropriate to maintain the usual practice of *"manu ve-atzru"* (the aphoristic shorthand that the portion of the census "*manu*"-*Bamidbar* be immediately followed by *Atzeret*-Shavuot).

According to Maharit, the residents of Israel are forced to compromise on the ideal *parshah*/calendar cycle during a leap year

[37] Indeed, see Rav Amnon Bazak's recent Facebook post, which proposed that the Chief Rabbinate in Israel and/or religious leaders outside of Israel should unify Torah readings as soon as possible.

[38] For an overview of sources in support of reciting Hallel with a blessing on the night of Yom Ha'atzmaut, see here.

[39] Here is the text of the question:

> What is the reason in a leap year, such as this year, when the eighth day of Pesah coincides with Shabbat and those in Israel read *Aharei Mot* on that day and those outside of Israel read it the following week, and what emerges is that we are separated from those in Israel for every Shabbat until *Matot*/*Masei*? Why don't we just combine *Aharei Mot* and *Kedoshim*, the Shabbat right after Pesah, like we combine them in all non-leap years?

when Pesah coincides with Shabbat. They have no choice but to read *Naso* before Shavuot. This off-kilter adjustment is not necessary outside of Israel, nor should it be adopted, in Maharit's view. Therefore, we in the Diaspora delay combining the weekly Torah portions and synchronizing with Israel until after Shavuot.[40]

Maharit's explanation highlights a significant historical point. The annual cycle of Torah readings was a Diaspora invention that was only later imported to Israel. In Israel, up until the thirteenth century, the triennial cycle was in place. So when the annual Torah reading cycle was originally instituted and practiced (in the Diaspora), reading *Naso* before Shavuot was not a possibility. As a result, Maharit maintains that it is ideal for those outside of Israel to retain the original system and tradition of Torah readings, as designed by and for Diaspora Jewry.

Turning our attention to the non-leap year scenario, Tikkun Yisaschar (R. Yisaschar ben Mordekhai ibn Shoshan, 16th Century, Safed), a work devoted to issues related to the Jewish calendar, addresses the extended gap and the question of why residents of Israel do not separate *parshiyot* right after Pesah. After initially justifying the combining of *Tazria* and *Metzora* to avoid doubling the number of Shabbatot where the Torah reading deals with the distasteful topic of *negaim*, the author acknowledges that this does not explain why Israel does not split *Aharei Mot* and *Kedoshim* in order to harmonize with the Diaspora sooner. Tikkun Yisaschar therefore explains that a larger value is at stake. The *parshah* gap, in his view, cuts to the very core question of hierarchy between the Jewish communities of Israel and the Diaspora:

> If residents of Israel were to split these earlier *parshiyot* to harmonize with residents of the Diaspora it would make the "primary ones" (those living in Israel who observe one day of Yom Tov) dragged along to follow the halakhic practice of the "*benei ha-minhag*" (non-Israeli residents who observe the custom of *yom tov sheni*). It is incorrect to relegate the primary ones to secondary status, and, if we were to separate those earlier parshiyot, it would elevate those outside of Israel by making the residents of Israel follow them. (*Sefer Ibbur Shanah*, p. 32b)

Because the Jewish community in Israel should never be perceived as an afterthought, Tikkun Yisaschar concludes that the proper practice is for residents of Israel to wait until just before Shavuot (splitting *Behar* and *Behukotai*) to close the gap. In this way, the residents of Israel properly sequence the curses, *Bamidbar*, and Shavuot, without prematurely broadcasting that Israel is getting in line with the Diaspora order of *parshiyot*.

These positions on the weekly Torah readings have broad implications regarding peoplehood, *Medinat Yisrael*, and the relationship between the Jewish communities of the Diaspora and Israel. Maharit's explanation for Diaspora Jewry to maintain the *parshah* gap in a leap year expresses one critical message about living outside of Israel with religious integrity. As Religious Zionists in the Diaspora, ideal Jewish practices and values should always be promoted, even if that occasionally creates space between, and even tension with, our brothers and sisters in Israel. In a word, the *parshah* gap underscores and fosters the significance of a strong Diaspora Jewish community.

At the same time, Tikkun Yisaschar's argument for Israel to maintain the gap in a non-leap year must also loom large for Religious Zionists living in the Diaspora. The people and practices of those residing in Israel represent an ideal. We must retain the perspective of Israel's centrality as the corporate headquarters of the Jewish people, even if at times that creates a disconnect with those of us in the Diaspora. We should not expect or encourage Israel to just follow our lead, even when it comes to the Diaspora's annual cycle of Torah readings.

This *parshah* gap has brought to the fore my own self-contradictory feelings as a Religious Zionist in America, contradictions that I have come to believe are religiously valid and rooted in halakhic sources. I should feel discomfort—but I should also feel proud.

On the one hand, the disconnect of the post-Pesah *parshah* gap speaks to the anxiety I feel about the life which I have completely slipped into in the Diaspora. I speak the language of Religious Zionism every time I *daven*, yet I am about to embark on a major expansion project of my shul, a building campaign that concretizes and promotes the permanence of my roots outside of Israel. On the other hand, I should take pride in the accomplishments of our community, and not just because so many of our members and their adult children have made *aliyah* and support worthy causes in Israel. In deepening religious practice and values, unifying a diverse membership and neighborhood, and creating a spiritual and intellectual home for so many people, our *shul* has played a transformational role.

However, beyond the impact of any single *shul*, the perspective that American Jews bring to Jewish identity in the twenty-first century is critical and distinct. Living, and thriving, as a minority in this always great country, has taught us to be mindful of the diverse and interconnected world in which we live. This mindfulness is not just about political correctness; it is a religious value. The challenging, multi-faceted nature of the society in which I live, work, and worship ultimately brings me closer to God. These are values that Diaspora Jewry must transmit to the totality of the Jewish people, alongside the spirit of nationalism and singular responsibilities embedded in the enterprise of building the Jewish state, values which Israelis uniquely contribute to Jewish Peoplehood.[41]

******

Today, on Israel's Independence day, I am thinking about the pre-bar mitzvah boy and his family celebrating their first Yom Ha'atzmaut in Israel as citizens. Less than three weeks from now, they will celebrate his bar mitzvah on *Parshat Behukotai*. Much to my congregants' relief, numerous authorities rule that a minor may read the Torah for the community in extenuating circumstances such as these.[42] The young man will read *Parshat Behukotai*, a week earlier than

[40] See further in Maharit's responsum for an explanation of why we don't combine *Hukat* and *Balak* this year. See also the Simons article for sources attesting to alternative practices to avoid reading *Naso* before Shavuot, including splitting *Ki Tisa* into two *parshiyot*.

[41] For further analysis of the two centers of Jewry, and citations to much of the literature on this subject, see this paper by Rabbi Tully Harcsztark on the topic of Israel, Diaspora, and Religious Zionist Education.

[42] For a brief summary of the issues see the audio shiur here. I also want to express my thanks to Rav Yoni Rosensweig who wrote up a comprehensive response to my specific question in the classical form of a responsum, available here.

anticipated, and across the ocean from the original plan. I will miss the celebration but look forward to catching up with them and the rest of Israel: first, the following week, when we in the Diaspora will read *Parshat Behukotai*; and several months later, when we finally reconnect and harmonize our Torah readings, affirming the interdependence of the Jewish communities of the Diaspora and Israel. This calendrical quirk generates a powerfully symbolic space, one I aspire to fully inhabit this Yom Ha'atzmaut: We may be different, but we do not stand alone.

LEHRHAUS EDITORS:
YEHUDA FOGEL - LEAH KLAHR - DAVIDA KOLLMAR -TZVI SINENSKY- MINDY SCHWARTZ ZOLTY - SHLOMO ZUCKIER