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## OVER-CONFIDENCE

Every action, the physicists tell us, has a reaction. This rule holds true for man and society as well as nature. Thus, there was a time when parents sheltered their children much more than was necessary or advisable. The reaction in our times is — to expose them prematurely to the rigors and risks of adult life. And we rationalize our deeds with pious expressions, such as: "I have confidence in my children."

Of course, over-sheltering growing children is both unnecessary and harmful. But ought we not also refrain from over-confidence, which results in pushing children unprepared into the maelstrom of adult life in our complex society? Are we not wronging them with our misplaced and excessive faith in them?

What brings on this thought is the recent news concerning a speech by the

dean of one of the nation's foremost women's colleges concerning the moral character of the student body. Whatever the propriety or exactitude of the dean's speech, this much is certain: the lack of morality that prevails on the nation's campuses is shocking to anyone of sensitivity.

Let us be frank about the temptations open to a young High School graduate suddenly thrust into a new environment away from home. Unless parents have investigated the kind of general standards that prevail on the campus, sending a youngster to an out-of-town college can become a criminal act of over-confidence. Unless Jewish parents have made sure that there exists in that school a group of conscientious religious Jewish students and proper facilities for observance, and hence the



proper society for the young Jew or Jewess, they may be guilty of undoing years of Jewish upbringing and education.

There are those who justify this policy by pleading the necessity for exposing young people to "real life." Forgetting the question of what "real life" really means, it should be remembered that there is nothing magical or mystical about the age of eighteen, when most young people enter college. Maturity does not erupt full-blown with a High School diploma. And few youngsters of that age are sufficiently prepared to live Jewishly in a basically hostile environment into which they are introduced suddenly.

When the Almighty took the Children of Israel out of Egypt, He did not bring them immediately into the Promised Land—not only because they were unprepared for freedom, but also because the environment of the Land discouraged the values He desired to inculcate in them. The "adjustment" took no less than *forty* years, during which, on Shavuot, He gave them the Torah.

We ought allow our own children at least another *four* year before thrusting them into our competitive, amoral, and changing society, so unreceptive to the spiritual and moral teachings of Torah. The extra few years of parental guidance and a more gradual training in mature personal independence will make better Jews and more morally stable adults of them. If we are not overconfident now, we will find our children more deserving of confidence later.

NORMAN LAMM

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