

THE JEWISH PARENT

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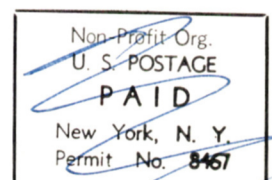
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this month's cover

Summer time is camp time—whether a day camp near home, or a bit of paradise in the airy green bosom of Mother Nature. But wherever it is, it's a time for rest and relaxation, preparing the body for next year's work.



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ANY carefully prepared program for the religious education of our children must take into cognizance the realities of the adult world into which they are growing. Only by first analyzing the basic religious weaknesses of their elders can we possibly prevent these weaknesses from being imposed on the youngsters, from having the sins of the fathers visited upon the children.

On the one hand, we have the painful phenomenon of Jews who are ritually observant but who are ethically, and perhaps morally, deficient. And on the other hand, we have the equally painful phenomenon of the Jew who is intellectually or sentimentally committed to the ethics of Judaism, but is ritually unobservant. This is the breed of "good heart" Jew, whose self-righteousness and ignorance are legend by now. Actually, both these opposite types are symptoms of the same disease: the splitting of the body of Judaism, the justification of a dichotomy between the ritual (*Mitzvos She'Bein Odom La'Mokom*) and social-ethical (*Bein Odom La'Chaveiro*), between Religion and Character. The nub of the problem is the false assumption that one can practice one-half of Judaism and still be entitled to the honorific title of "good Jew."

Rabbi Norman Lamm, spiritual leader of the Kadimah Synagogue in Springfield, Mass., delivered this masterful dissertation at the PTA New England Regional Conference in March of this year.

The problem of a religious training geared to the present realities is, therefore, one of teaching the values and practices of the rituals and the social ethics of Judaism as one and indivisible, of showing their interpenetration and interdependence. There must be a *unified approach*.

In order to prevent this fragmentation of the Jewish body, and present both aspects of Torah to the child as indivisible and inseparable parts of one integral whole having equal validity, we must make the child conscious, at all times, of the very basis of all *mitzvos*: the presence of G-d Himself. This should be the compelling reason for loyal observance of either the *mitzvah* to *daven* or the *mitzvah* to respect parents. Without this G-d consciousness, the entire matter of observance cannot have lasting value. Habit-formation is extremely important in the performance of *mitzvos* by the child; but it is not sufficient. *Kavanah* — intent, awareness of what is being done — is the ultimate meaningfulness of the life we want these youngsters to lead. Without this G-d consciousness you have either the religion-by-rote of those who neither understand nor feel, or the spot-ceremonies of the Purim Dance and Chanukah Carnival variety, the Center-type "Jewish content," all jumbled and pasted together by a watery sentimentalism that now goes by the name of Religion.

This G-d consciousness — which can be introduced as a

UNIFIED APPROACH

• RABBI NORMAN LAMM

"lesson" based on *shivisi Ha'Shem le-negdi somid*, and carried over into all phases of the child's ritual, academic and personal life — is what will remain with the child even after he has left the school, and which will serve as the mortar to bind both these noble aspects of Judaism taught to him by us. It is the very essence, not only theologically but pedagogically, of all observance.

This awareness of *shivisi* is something that is taught not only by text or word, but by a teacher who is personally convinced of it and who can therefore impart it by a feeling, an intangible attitude, a subtle child-like wonder. The child must come to accept the fact that G-d is always everywhere, and that His commandments are a sufficient cause in themselves. We may want to explain supplementary reasons for individual performances. But the main reason should always be: G-d so desired — the G-d who is there to make sure I do not misbehave (*midas ha'din*) and the G-d who is there to protect me and love me and watch over me (*midas ha'rachamim*). Then a child's ritual observance will no longer be perfunctory; his ethical character will be meaningful to him; and finally, he will learn to know Torah as an indivisible totality, an unfragmentized unit given by One Indivisible G-d.

With this understanding that an intimate and personal awareness of the religious imperative must underlie all religious training, let us give two examples of how both the ritual and ethical aspects of Judaism can be taught through a unified approach.

First example of Unified Approach: Gratitude (Hakoras Tovah).

Here we have a working concept which, according to Rabbi Bachya Ibn Pakudah, is the primary principle of Judaism. It is simple enough to explain to a child. Here we shall show it applied successively to Esthetics, Ritual, Ethics and Etiquette:

1. *Esthetics*. Children are taken for a trip through a park, and have the beauties of the natural world pointed out to them (or zoo, or snowflakes, etc.). The real enjoyment inherent in esthetic appreciation is brought home to them, and then they are encouraged to discuss the origin of these natural beauties. They are referred to the first chapter of *Chumosh* they studied: *Vayar Elokim ki tov*. The *tov* here means esthetic perfection (according to some medieval exegetes). G-d, therefore, decreed the beauty of the world which He created — *B'reishis bara*, etc. — G-d created this beautiful world; hence, we must

feel eternally grateful to G-d for all the beauties we are permitted to enjoy. This naturally leads to:

2. *Ritual*. We feel grateful to G-d not only for Beauty, but also for the love of our parents, for health, for comfort — for our very life. G-d is the Author of all these, and hence we must express our gratitude to Him. How? — by the *modeh ani l'fanecha* we recite on arising every morning.

3. *Ethics*. We now make the easy and uninterrupted transition from Man-G-d relations to Man-Man relations. Just as we feel gratitude to G-d for what He gives us, we feel gratitude to people who are kind to us. Thus: our parents support us, love us, clothe us, etc. We must return this kindness with love for them, with respect, with reverence, with tolerance. That is why *kabeid es avicha v'es imecha* (basing the ethical norm on the religious imperative). That is why, too, respect must be given to a teacher or Rabbi — our gratitude for spiritual kindness and favor.

4. *Etiquette*. With this concept of gratitude, which derives from the Man-G-d relationship, simple etiquette is not only taught as such to the children, but it becomes so much more meaningful. They are taught the importance of the words "Thank you." It is *Hakoras Tovah* — of the same kind that derives from esthetic appreciation, from ritual observance in prayer, from obedience to parents and teachers.

We have, thus, in one lesson, taught Ritual, Ethics, Esthetics, Etiquette — from a religious idea.

Second Example of Unified Approach: Private Property (and the Creation).

This is the Jewish concept that since G-d created all, all belongs to Him, and what He gives He gives only as a trust. We must be therefore very careful of violating the "private" property of G-d or of those to whom He entrusted it. The starting point is unimportant; it can be the first chapter in Genesis, any prayer demonstrating G-d's creation of the world, or an incident in class where it is important to teach that one child must not take the other's pencil without his permission. The following can be included in this lesson, and with older children it can include the whole idea of Sabbath services as Man's return of the control of Nature to G-d who created it (Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch's idea).

1. *Ritual*. Since the entire universe really belongs to G-d, we actually have no right to use it or benefit from
(page 18, please)

Most parents may also not agree with me, but I firmly believe that this is still the best method developed and never fails to produce the proper results. Since Rochel must have a good reason for crying, then I say give her a good reason. This should be a firm spanking in which the role of your proper authority in this case will not be questioned. Rochel will not be hurt (except her pride) and she will understand that you mean business . . . strictly.

Our old-fashioned parents, G-d bless them, did not go to college, did not study child psychology, did not talk themselves hoarse, did not get nervous breakdowns or heart attacks and knew very well how to bring up children. Actions spoke louder than words, they believed and carried out the thought with a whipping.

It never failed to get results and in the right places. Old-fashioned, you say, and certainly should not be used in this "modern generation," but have you ever found a better method to

give a child a good reason for whining and crying. It certainly should not be used without exercising self-control and patience in trying to reason with the child. But then, as a last resort, it can and should be used to have a desired effect.

Finally, we have type number four. Solomon is growing up to be a *lawyer*. Of course, you encourage him in this direction. He is so wise, he knows how to argue so well. He knows how to best you in an argument and get what he wants. Brilliant, you say, and gloat over his victory. At times you can't stand the arguments. You try to explain why he can't do what he wants. Solomon is now getting warmed up. Soon both of you enter the debate stage.

Here you are licked. His lung power gets stronger and stronger. The words flow faster and faster. Didn't you say how brilliant he was? Didn't you say he was going to be a lawyer? Naturally he uses you as his first test case. Your resistance lowers. You are

completely exhausted and give up. Chalk up another victory for Solomon. Take my word for it — no child in this world has ever lost an argument so long as you are the opponent. Do you know why he never loses an argument? You continue to answer him and try to show him how wise a parent you are.

Now, what can you do in this case? My method is the most successful but unfortunately the most difficult for the parent to follow. It is a very simple method — *remain silent*. Don't answer the argument. Don't get into a discussion or a debate. Learn the lesson of silence and you win by default. Condition yourself to remain silent. You will win, always and forever.

I realize that my suggestions may not find favor in many circles. Nevertheless, I am convinced that they are helpful and in many cases absolutely necessary. You have nothing to lose by trying.

a united approach

(Continued from page 5)

it in any way. If we do use it without permission, we are actually stealing from G-d. How then may we use it? G-d tells us how: *birchos ha'nehenin*. The blessing is the Torah-way of saying "Please." When we praise G-d in that particular way, we are granted Divine permission to use the world for our benefit.

2. *Etiquette*. Just as all in the world belongs to G-d, and we must say "Please" to Him, so must we understand that He gave property to human beings as trusts — and that other humans must respect this partition of the world by G-d. Hence, when you want something from another person — anything — you must first ask permission — the use of "please."

3. *Ethics*. When such permission is not requested, or not granted, it is sinful to use the object, to violate property rights: *lo signov* (Thou shalt not steal). From this we derive further ethical principles. *Lo signov* leads to *g'neivas daas*. Stealing has a form called deception. Cheating on exams is *g'neivas daas*. And though the teacher can be fooled, you can't fool G-d, because *shivisi Ha'Shem le'negdi somid*, He is ever present . . . (thus a religion-oriented honor system). All these, actual property violation or deceit, involve encroaching on someone else's domain. Now, all three — ritual, ethical and etiquette — can be combined in the concept of:

4. *Tzedokoh*. Since all the world is the Lord's, and since whatever He gave to me is only because G-d wants me to have it, then if G-d asks me to relinquish some of it I must obey — it is G-d's in any case. If private property is not absolute, but based on G-d's creation, then it involves duties as well as rights. Therefore, if G-d commanded me to help the poor, it is only just (*tzedokoh* is etymologically derived from *tzedek*) that I transfer G-d's substance from my keeping to the next keeper. The lesson can include actual *tzedokoh* contributions by the children, and a discussion of the various ways of giving.

What we have tried to show is that it is necessary to educate our children to integrated Jewishness by making them G-d conscious and by adopting a unified approach to the teaching of Ritual and Social Ethics without emphasizing one at the expense of the other. This need not be done only in formal lessons as outlined above. It can be brought to bear in every kind of classroom activity. *Tzitzis* comes to mind as an example; the symbol of all 613 commandments is an opportunity to stress the interdependence of both kinds of religious duty.

It should be obvious that not every teacher is capable of teaching in such a manner. It requires personal knowledge as well as pedagogic competence. The teacher must himself be religiously inspired if he is to inculcate that G-d-consciousness, and he must have a good grasp

and understanding of the classical sources of the Tradition if he is himself to detect the underlying unity of Torah. It demands piety, it demands knowledge, and it demands a knack for teaching in this manner.

The problem we are tackling is the lack of religious enthusiasm, performance by rote, inadequate teaching of ethics and character-building, and — the source of the whole trouble — the sore cleavage, the artificial distinc-

tion between both parts of Judaism. The solution we have proposed is only a modest beginning at dealing with this irritating situation.

I believe it is worth a serious attempt. For our Rabbis say that G-d, Israel and Torah are one. The Ethics of Israel and the Ritual of Torah, when based on a profound, intimate and uninterrupted awareness of G-d, are an indivisible entity.

the "real" battle

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is of paramount importance is the teacher, not the integrated program versus Hebrew in the morning and English in the afternoon. The teacher in the Hebrew department must be a person who honestly loves children, a person who has had a thorough Jewish training, a person who believes with all his heart and soul that the Torah was given at Sinai by the Almighty, and that the Torah way of life is the *only* way of life there is for the Jew. He makes his student identify himself with his heritage.

My eldest son, whose name is Yitzchak, came home one day and said to me, "You know Mommie, Avraham

put me on the *akaydah* and was going to kill me, but *Hashem* didn't let him. *Hashem* saved me!" Yitzchak's first grade teacher certainly did not tell it that way, but he must have told it in such a manner that my son felt himself living history!

Parents and principals want teachers who can imbue their children with a love for Torah and Judaism which they can never lose. That basically is what we want: Children who will grow into adulthood with love and pride in their Jewish heritage; adults who will continue the wonderful and inspiring chain of Torah-true Judaism.

Naturally, no one will dispute the fact that the principal must see to it that the teacher in the English department knows what the goal of the school is, and that he is acquainted or made acquainted with Jewish history and tradition so that he may use suitable methods of motivation.

There also will be no dispute, I am sure, with the statement that if integration is necessary anywhere, it certainly is between the home and the Yeshiva. If the parents will do their utmost (of course, some can do more than others) to work in harmony with the Yeshiva, then I am sure that with the help of G-d we will come close to our goal if not reach it: Torah-true Jews.

the Jewish child and his school

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ideas. Mr. Davis was excessively authoritarian in his insistence upon Morris' meticulously carrying out his every wish. In the course of our contact we learned that Morris had at one time attended Talmud Torah, but because of his inability to adjust, was discharged. Morris told us that he felt Judaism to be a burden, to be cast off as soon as possible. He did not like his father and everything his father stood for.

We worked with Mr. Davis and helped him to understand his son's feelings. We pointed out to him that his son missed affection, permissiveness and warmth in the home, and thus had not developed an inner spiritual self which would permit him to live at peace in a hostile world. We assisted Mr. Davis to modify his rigidity and strictness towards his son. Furthermore, we helped Morris to accept himself as a Jew, to accept his father, and to develop a love for the culture and the history of the Jewish people.

Very frequently the Jewish school is successful in situations where other agencies are not too helpful. The parents who come with their problems feel at home with us. They find that we are kindred spirits who understand their suffering, their struggles, and their

aspirations. The child, too, who comes to us with a great feeling of insecurity, is able to develop in this emotional climate. He finds that we are friendly, are acceptant and tolerant of what he has to tell. In this atmosphere the child can reveal himself, discuss his feelings and attitudes, and develop a new perception of himself. Here he finds individuals who are Jewish, who follow the Jewish traditions, are interested in Jewish affairs, who are looked up to, are respected, and are leaders in their communities. He begins to identify with them and absorb their values. He learns to accept and be comfortable with himself, and becomes an integral member of the Jewish community.

Until the age of about four, the average child feels that everyone is like his parents, or himself, and he is not aware of religious or national differences. He is usually open hearted and readily accepts children and grown-ups. It is, therefore, a severe shock for such a child to meet frustrations or rebuffs. Some children cannot take it at all. Others take it with very little grace. Very few remain unscathed as a result of this experience. It is the cardinal principle of psychology that no child should be frustrated until he is emotionally ready for it, and that one should not needlessly create severe emotional stresses and strains which may wreck the delicate balance of a

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