

This new group which we convene and found this day, has three elements or foci which constitute its raison d'etre. These three are: Torah, specifically the study of Torah; the openness to worldly wisdom, often termed secular culture, and which we designate as Madda; and the importance of the State of Israel, or Medinah. These will form the basis of our discussion.

Torah is not just one of three items that concern us; it is the foundation of all else. Torah which is an add-on is not Torah; for it is the framework, the context, the validation of all else that we do and to which we aspire. We must never take its primacy for granted.

As educators, we must set before ourselves the goal of developing in our charges the desire for life-long learning. By word and by example, we must inspire them to appreciate that the study of Torah is a desideratum for all ages, and not simply a pediatric exercise, a school-related "subject." In certain areas and environments, such direction is more difficult to convey than in others. Nevertheless, this is a worthy and necessary goal.

In teaching Torah, תורה שבעל פה must be given priority--priority but not exclusivity. I refer not only to the obvious need to teach Tanakh and related subjects, but to accommodate instructional material and emphases to the individual student. Those who are intellectually capable of mastering Gemara should certainly be encouraged to do so. But not everyone has the talents peculiar to this difficult discipline, namely, Talmud. Other students, whose general intellectual capacities may be no less than those who opt for Gemara but do not share the same bent, should not be allowed to think less of themselves as students of Torah. תורה שבכתב is also Torah... and such young people should be helped along the road to excellence in מחשבה, מדרש, פרשנות, etc.

One more point: there is a growing tendency for girls to show vivid interest in learning Gemara. They should be encouraged, not discouraged. The rationale that the Chafetz Chayyim proposed to permit girls to learn תורה שבכתב obtains with at least equal cogency to תורה שבעל פה in our times. The intellectual-spiritual talents possessed in abundance by one half or more of our population should not be wasted. This has nothing to do with feminism, pro or con. It has everything to do with אהבת התורה and הרבצת התורה.

Medinah, the place of the State of Israel and religious Zionism in our schools should be obvious. In a sense, the attitude of religious Jews to Zionism has been part of our outlook on other, non-observant Jews. Those who, like R. Samson Raphael Hirsch, were exclusivist in their attitude to non-Orthodox Jews, developing the *Austritt* policy that guided his followers for over a hundred years, also led to his anti-Zionism, including anti-religious Zionism. Hirsch found it much easier to wax eloquent about Goethe and Schiller than to say a good word about some of the literary and intellectual stars in the firmament of the Haskalah.

Our approach should include both Israel (and Zionism) and relations with those outside the camp of Orthodoxy. We recognize full well the underlying fears of the exclusivists--and we should respect their sincerity and their intellectual honesty. But

we need not and should not agree with them. Not all risks are mortal dangers. There *are* risks in establishing friendly communal relations with those who do not subscribe to the discipline of Torah and Halakha. But there are greater risks in confirming and exacerbating the rift between "us" and "them," a split that is rapidly becoming an abyss that is unbridgeable and that threatens to divide *Am Yisrael* permanently into two hostile camps. If, Heaven forbid, that is the way we are heading inexorably because of the continuing unraveling of Jewish identity in the Diaspora--along with judicial and political enmity towards Orthodoxy in Israel--at least we will have acquitted ourselves well before the bar of Jewish history in making a heroic attempt to avoid this horrendous rupture. So we must teach our children to be passionate in their commitment to Torah, and at the same time to be tolerant, open, understanding, and sympathetic--and the maturity to appreciate that the two are not necessarily in contradiction to each other.

M*adda*, in the Maimonidean sense, refers to the broadest reaches of knowledge, including all the intellectual disciplines of mankind and culminating in the knowledge of God.

I have written about this theme extensively, and so will not elaborate on it here, except for a comment or two about the new prominence being given to a pseudo-Torah Umadda ideal, namely, "*Torah im Parnasah*."

Now, there is nothing wrong with making a living. The Torah never denied to Jews the right to their *parnasah*; on the contrary, תורה חסה על ממונם של ישראל, the Torah is considerate of Jews' possessions, and does not wish to cause them financial grief. But this hardly calls for the launching of a new ideology...

"*Torah im Parnasah*" is not and never will be an adequate substitute for Torah Umadda in confronting modernity--which is one of the two greatest intellectual problems of our era for Orthodox Jewry. And it has no claim on intellectual effort in dealing with such serious issues. The challenge to Torah comes from *Madda* or *Hokhmah*, wisdom, the term most often used in our classical literature and especially by Rambam to designate what we today call "secular studies."

A number of years ago, the late Prof. Isadore Twersky ז"ל listed the places where Rambam, in his halakhic writing, uses the term *Hokhmah* even where the Talmud speaks only of *Torah*. Let me present one other such instance, not mentioned by Prof. Twersky.

The Torah decrees exile (*galut*) to the "cities of refuge" for one who killed a human being unintentionally. What happens if the manslaughter was accomplished in the course of performing a mitzvah? The Talmud (*Makkot* 8a) offers a number of such cases where the manslaughterer is exempt from *galut*. Prominent among them is that of a father who, in the course of disciplining his son while teaching him a trade, overdoes the corporal punishment and accidentally kills his child. The other is where the father is teaching his son Torah. This is how the Rambam codifies these laws:

האב שהרג את בנו בשגגה גולה על ידו, במה דברים אמורים בשהרגו
שלא בשעת לימוד, או שהיה מלמדו אומנות אחרת שאינו צריך לה,
אבל אם יסר בנו כדי ללמדו תורה או חכמה או אומנות ומת פטור
--ה"ל רוצח ושמירת הנפש פ"ה ה"ה

Note that where the Talmud mentions the teaching of Torah and *umanut* (a trade) only, the Rambam introduces as well *hokhmah*, wisdom, or an intellectual enterprise.

From this it is evident that *umanut* and *hokhmah* are not identical. Hence, *parnasah* is not on par with and not to be confused with *madda* or *hokhmah*.

Hence, "*Torah im Parnasah*" is not an ideological substitute for Torah Umadda. It has nothing to say to people struggling with living a full life of Torah and Mitzvot while actively engaged in the world around us, without retreating from society and without dodging the scientific and philosophical challenges of modernity.

If further proof is needed (and I do not believe it is), listen to the following words by the great Maharal of Prague, in his *Netivot Olam*, I, pp. 59-60:

כי יש ללמוד חכמת האומות, כי למה לא ילמד החכמה שהיא מן השם
יתברך, שהרי חכמת האומות גם כן מן השם יתברך שהרי נתן להם
מחכמתו יתברך

The Maharal declares it proper to study "the wisdom of the nations" (read: secular studies) and is astonished that one should forbid them, in light of the fact that they too stem from the Almighty, for everything comes from Him! Later in the same discourse he asserts that such wisdom is universal and not only the wisdom of *goyim* and therefore very much an area for study by Jews. And note that the Maharal speaks of *hokhmah*, not reducing it to mere *parnasah*.

Torah Umadda is thus a desideratum, not a concession. And it has other and highly significant consequences: such virtues as tolerance, open-mindedness, moderation, and the courage to hold on to your views even under sustained attack.

Surely, our pupils in our day schools and high schools are worthy of receiving this kind of education. And they are worthy as well of our best efforts and encouragement.