

Oct 28, 1959

TALK TO A DAY SCHOOL P.T.A.

- I. 1) Story of the Eleventh Speaker with one man left in audience -- who says, "I am the twelfth speaker."
2) Story of Minister and suspender buttons and cough drops.
- II. One of the functions of a P.T.A. is that every member become a missionary to friends and neighbors who have young children, bearing to them the noble message of the day school movement. We must each be super-salesmen.

Every idea goes through three stages -- a) when it is ridiculed and ignored, b) when it is fought, c) when it vanquishes.

We are now in the second stage. We have come to be respected and resisted.

Therefore, in order to fulfill this function properly, we must "know how to answer the sceptic," as our rabbis commanded us.

This training in how to meet the questioning challenger has two purposes. a) so as to convince the person whom you are encountering, and b) for Chizuk, for strengthening your own convictions.

There are generally three main arguments presented against the day school system of education.

- III. 1) Value free education. "I want my child to choose by himself." The enormity of this fallacy makes it almost impossible to meet the question head-on. Abdication of parental responsibility. Would never be tolerated with regard to a general education.

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Or hygiene. Or morality. In Jewish tradition, freedom of choice is meaningless in a state of ignorance. Only a person who knows the facts can make an intelligent choice. Otherwise what may seem to be a free choice is really merely the result of being abutted by ignorance and prejudice.

2) "I don't want my child to be a rabbi." To a layman that argument may not be too offensive, but it always rubs a rabbi the wrong way. Parents generally take attitudes of, "My best friends are rabbis."

a) Colleague in Boston put in bulletin a fictitious letter by parent to principal of schools complaining that she didn't want her child to learn how to brush his teeth in hygiene class because "I don't want to make a dentist out of my child."

b) This is a statement based upon a profound philosophical fallacy, and that is -- that especially the non-Orthodox have come to transform Judaism into a kind of Catholic, priestly religion, where the rabbi, cantor, organist and choir officiate as if their magical pronouncements and formulae could influence the Deity, whereas the laity sits about and observes in respectful, silent awe. This is the fallacy of assuming that Torah and the study of Torah is relegated to a special, select and exclusive priestly caste. Actually, Torah is Yerushah, the possession of every Jew and there is absolutely no distinction between rabbi and layman in this respect. If a rabbi has a congregation which is ignorant then his rabbinate is bankrupt.

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3) Segregation.

a) A terrible word in the dictionary of naughty words of the American Jew of our day. Other such words: Orthodox, parochial.

b) The Quakers at Swarthmore, the Catholics at Notre Dame, the Episcopalians and Presbyterians and Congregationalists all over the country in their universities

c) These very people segregate themselves in Y.M.H.A.'s, Jewish centers, Jewish camps even if non-kosher, Jewish country clubs.

d) Based upon the erroneous philosophy, which was fashionable during the 1920's and after every immigration period, of the "melting pot." Today we prefer cultural pluralism -- "the mosaic."

e) We want well-rounded, well-integrated children. Our greatest contribution to America is made when we bring to it an original, ancient cultural strain, not when we come to America to get from it -- but bring nothing new to it.

IV. All the above, especially the segregation arguments, are ultimately based upon an unarticulated and sometimes unconscious reason, which is the real reason for most of the resistance to the day school -- CONFORMITY.^{al} The word "segregation" comes from -- to take oneself out of the "greg," out of the flock. To conform to other parents and the rest of society merely for the sake of conformity is an animal act,

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whereas to determine voluntarily my own destiny is the most single human act possible.

b) Hassidic comment on Midrash on Justice versus Truth and Peace on the Creation of Man. Why did God eliminate truth to break the tie, instead of eliminating peace? — Because truth must prevail against all odds. There is no majority or minority with regard to truth. We too, if we think we are espousing a true cause, must be courageous enough and proud enough to act upon our convictions despite the fact that we are in the minority.

c) Story of Herman Wouk and Sholom Ash.

d) We must become the pace-setters, the "directors" of "outer-directed" society. Let them conform to us