

## TORAH UMADDA -- SUGGESTIONS FOR SLIGHT REVISION

January 4, 2004

At the lecture I gave for ATID in Jerusalem in October, I was asked pointed questions about whether Torah Umadda is meant for everyone or only for the elite.

I insisted it was meant for everyone.

The same question was directed to me by a number of students and alumni.

I have been considering the question seriously, especially from students (at my dinner meeting with the Semikhah I students a month or so), who insisted that it is virtually impossible to do justice to both during the college years, and one must favor either Torah or the Madda side.

I now believe that there are some unusual individuals, brighter than the majority, and this elite can manage to juggle both at the same time and with the same amount of attention, and still do well in both. Most students, however, have to "major" in one area and "minor" in another area.

This is akin to the dilemma faced by Orthodox students in the Israel Defense Forces, who have to choose between the military and the academy, between total loyalty to IDF and full-time study of Torah. Stuart A. Cohen, in "Dilemmas of Military Service in Israel: The Religious Dimension" in the *The Torah Umadda Journal*, volume 12 (2004), pages 1-23, describes this in detail. He writes that, "most young national religious conscripts tend to think in 'either-or' terms." The Hesder Yeshivat "in effect, becomes the domain solely of these young men who feel capable of charting a course between these two poles." They try "to harmonize their theological belief with their patriotic duties. The products of those efforts -- both institutional and intellectual -- in many respects deserve to be considered some of the most significant developments in the entire world of contemporary of Modern Orthodoxy."

Much the same can be said about the American equivalent of the young national religious people in Israel.