

Modern Orthodox Jewish Day Schools and Non-Jews

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Does a particular articulated educational goal of Jewish day schools ever become actually realized?

A review of many Orthodox day schools' mission statements¹ will reveal that one of the core values to which these schools are ostensibly committed is fostering "good citizenship" within their student bodies.^{2,3} Not only do the Mission Statements express an avowed interest in acquainting students with the wisdom of the Jewish and secular worlds, but they similarly call for those who complete the schools' educational programs to be both practicing Jews and active participants within the society at large.

Milton Himmelfarb,⁴ writing at a time when the day school movement was in its relative infancy, although raising questions regarding the quality of the education being provided by these schools, was nevertheless resolute in his defense of the day school's preparing their students to participate fully in American society. "Though day schools do not give their pupils a school experience with children who are not Jewish, the pupils are apt to be taught respect for others quite insistently. There is research to show that an essential part of the defensive ideology of the day schools,⁵ hammered home to their students, is an emphasis on American pluralism. A few years ago, an astute researcher found that as far as he probed in the direction of ultra-Orthodoxy, the day school children he interviewed were fully committed to intergroup liberalism, among the other articles of the American creed."

In a more recent article extolling the accomplishments of day schools, Jack Wertheimer⁶ writes, "Not only do they steep young people in Jewish learning, instilling

in them the ‘habits of the heart’ for a lifetime of Jewish experience, they do so without in the least compromising their young charges’ American identity.⁷ To the contrary, by communicating in the strongest way possible that it is entirely proper to live as Americans strongly engaged with Judaism and the Jewish people, these schools hold out the promise for a generation equipped as perhaps none other before it to contribute meaningfully to the civic life of its two worlds.”

Striving to become good citizens of a secular, non-Jewish state presumes a certain positive predisposition towards the people of that state as well as to the cultural and moral climate extent within it. Increasingly, the Orthodox world is portraying general society as validating mores and lifestyles antithetical to religious values and behavior, and the majority of individuals who comprise that society as fundamentally different and even alien from the type of people who can serve as appropriate representatives of a Divinely Created world. In an article reporting on the New Jewish High School in Waltham, MA, an institution that sees itself as a community day school⁸ in contrast to explicitly Orthodox day schools, Peter Beinart⁹ writes, “The Orthodox community, for its part, has rarely celebrated the melting pot, and generally worries less about total acceptance by the broader culture.” Beinart’s point is truer of recent years than it was only a few decades earlier. Consider for example the submission twenty five years ago of Shubert Spero¹⁰ to a Symposium entitled, “The Jew in America”:

In one fundamental respect, however, the modern Orthodox American Jew is at one with the earliest Jewish arrivals in Colonial days. Like them, we seek an integrated community and not an isolated one as in the Amish community. Unlike our Hassidic groups in Williamsburg and Crown Heights, we wish to participate not only in the general economic sphere but in the cultural arena as well and even on the social level to a degree compatible with the norms of Halacha. The degree of assimilation sought after by modern Orthodox American Jews (creative involvement in the

university, theater, arts, in dress, and living habits) is not a “compromise” we make in order to “make it” economically, but is a well-formed decision based upon a considered judgment as to what is the Torah ideal.

A more contemporary perspective voiced by Emanuel Feldman, the current editor of the journal of Orthodox Jewish thought, Tradition, supports Beinart’s contention that Orthodoxy posits an ever-increasing alienation from the values and mores of contemporary life:

So does society slide down the slippery slope of contemporary morality. There are no absolutes. All is relative. Even religion itself is no longer a matter of strong belief and of absolutes, but of preference and choice. I prefer chocolate to vanilla. I prefer Judaism to paganism. Do you wish to know what is right and what is wrong? The answer lies not in your Bible but in the latest polls. In our time, the old joke about Moses and the Ten Suggestions has been apotheosized.

The fact that this is not an isolated view, but represents the perspective of many mainstream Orthodox Jews is powerfully symbolized by the assumptions inherent in one of the questions posed to the thirty three participants in a 1998 Tradition¹¹ article, entitled, “The Sea Change in American Orthodox Judaism: A Symposium”:

(5) As a believing Jew, what facets of Torah life give you the most personal strength to thrive spiritually as an Orthodox Jew **in a hedonistic environment that is not conducive to Torah values?**¹²

In light of such current assessments, the question must be asked: can commitment to social action and conscious efforts to advance the quality and interests of such a society continue to serve as an appropriate educational ideal for the Orthodox day school?^{13,14} Furthermore, even if one were to contend that a positive attitude towards seriously engaging general society is both viable and desirable, given the present Jewish educational context, i.e., current day school curriculum, personnel, and school structure,¹⁵ is it realistic to anticipate that students will have been encouraged to think and act along

these lines? In response to such questions, it is appropriate to reflect upon and investigate 1) whether the aspiration is in fact compatible with Jewish education as it is currently being delivered, and 2) what changes could/should be initiated in order to more realistically pursue such a goal, assuming that it is in fact a value that should be preserved in Jewish day schools' missions?

Understanding what constitutes being a “good citizen” from the secular perspective

While an argument could be made that being a “citizen” is a matter of right and privilege rather than obligations,^{16,17} which would limit the extent that one would need to actively contribute to the surrounding society, a different connotation appears to traditionally have been applied to the concept in the American context. In the forward of The American Citizen's Handbook,¹⁸ the following code appears:

To be a good father, mother, sister, or friend,
To be a dependable, faithful, and skilled worker in home, school, field,
factory or office,
To be an intelligent, honest, useful, and loyal citizen, with faith in God
and love of fellowman,
To recognize the brotherhood of man and to live by the Golden Rule,
These are the aspirations that have brought happiness and achievement to
the America we all love.

Some social critics have argued that in the aftermath of World War II, a change has taken place in the manner that average Americans approach their citizenship.¹⁹ Nevertheless, current advocates of civic education in schools are as insistent as ever regarding what is to be taught concerning the nature of the **responsibilities** of citizenship.^{20,21} Todd Clark²² writes, “...the most important reason for civic education (is) the creation of a sense of membership in one's local community, a knowledge of its institutions, a willingness to participate, and a passion to solve its problems.”²³

While such civic expectations have been usually only implicit for non-Jews at times when the masses were granted rights and privileges within their societies, Jewish minorities throughout their history have been overtly confronted by the need to accept upon themselves clearly delineated social responsibilities vis-à-vis their non-Jewish fellow citizens in order to be accorded the privilege of citizenship.

The first time that the expectations of citizenship for Jews in a non-Jewish country were clearly formulated, was during the early stages of the Emancipation, when the French Sanhedrin,²⁴ attempting to lend credibility to the principles enunciated by the Assembly of Notables, gave the following answers to two of the twelve questions posed to them by the French government:²⁵

that every Israelite is religiously bound to consider his non-Jewish fellow citizens as brothers, and to aid, protect, and love them as though they were co-religionists; that the Israelite is required to consider the land of his birth or adoption as his fatherland, and shall love and defend it when called upon.²⁶

The converse of such demands in the form of an anti-Semitic attack is asserted by the Midrash and Targum to have comprised the essence of Haman's argument to Achashveirosh that the Jews not only should not be considered to be citizens of Persia, but should not even be allowed to continue to live.

... There is one nation that is scattered and spread among the peoples, nations, and languages, and a few of them reside in each of the provinces of the kingdom, and the rules of their Torah are different from those of any other people, our bread and cooked foods they refuse to eat, our wine they refuse to drink, our holidays they refuse to observe, and our customs they do not follow, and the decrees of the laws of the king they do not adhere to, and the king gains nothing from them, and what benefit does the king receive from them by allowing them to continue to exist?"^{27,28}

We are consequently faced with the question of not only of answering the Haman's of the world can be answered, but also can (should?) the Orthodox day school be expected to

convey the message to its student body that an observant Jew is expected to be a “good citizen” of the non-Jewish state in which he resides, recognizing the tensions that will be created between Jewish religious practices, beliefs, and values and the practices, beliefs and values of the general society and its constituents.²⁹

Jewish primary sources on the question of interaction with and respect for non-Jewish society

The Midrashic interpolation of Haman’s canard against the Jews, while painful to read, is nevertheless not without some merit, in light of the primary sources of Jewish tradition.³⁰ Whether speaking generally, e.g., (Leviticus 20:24,26) “I am *HaShem* your Lord, **that separated you from the nations**; And you will be to Me holy, because I am holy *HaShem*, **and I separated you from the nations to be Mine,**” or specifically, e.g., (Ibid., 18:3) “**And like the behavior of the land of Egypt** wherein you resided do not do, **and like the behavior of the land of Canaan** where I am bringing you there, **do not do and in their statutes do not go,**”³¹ the idea is reiterated throughout *TaNach* that Jews are to avoid at all costs having more to do with those in the surrounding society than is absolutely necessary. RaShI’s (Solomon ben Isaac; 1040-1105) commentary, citing *Torat Kohanim*, on Leviticus 20:24, suggests that the entire system of ritual commandments is designed for no other purpose than to emphasize the separation and difference of Jews from non-Jews.

“I am the Lord, your God, Who has divided you from the nations.”

RaShI: If you are separated from them, then you are Mine; but if not, you belong to Nevuchadnezzar (the Babylonian King)³² and his colleagues. R. Elazar ben Azarya says: From where is it learned that a person should not say, “I am disgusted by pork, I have no desire to wear mixtures of wool

and linen,” but rather one should say, “I really want to do these things, but what can I do? My Father in Heaven has decreed upon me (that I not do them.)” The Torah teaches “And I will separate you from the nations to be Mine”, that your separation from them should be for My Sake, one should separate himself from prohibited activity and accept upon himself the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Another Midrashic³³ approach to the issue of differentiation as enunciated in Leviticus 20:26, sees ritual law as not only setting Jews apart, but that these rules actually take mundane actions and force Jews to perform them differently from their non-Jewish neighbors.

Said R. Levi: All of the activities of the Jewish people are different from those of the nations of the world, with regard to their ploughing, their sowing, their harvesting, their bundling, their threshing, their storing in granaries, their wine pressing, in their counting and in their tallying. (Deuteronomy 22:10) “Do not hitch together an ox and a donkey for ploughing”; (Ibid., v. 9) “Do not sow seeds in your vineyard to produce mixed species”; (Leviticus 19:9) “And the droppings of your harvesting do not pick up”; (Deuteronomy 24:19) “And if you forget a bundle...”; (Ibid., 25:4) “And you shall not muzzle the ox while it is engaged in threshing”; (Ibid., 15:14) “And you shall surely give (the newly released Jewish servant) from your flock, from your granary and from your winepress”; non-Jews count (their calendar) in accordance with the sun and the Jewish people count in accordance with the moon.

Bilaam enunciates a poetic statement to this effect³⁴: “Behold it is a nation that will dwell in solitude, and not reckoned among the other nations.” R. Meir Simhah Ha-Kohen of Dvinsk (1843-1926),³⁵ attributes self-conscious legislation designed to keep Jews separate from the surrounding society to the forefather Jacob. When contemplating the dangers of assimilation and extinction confronting his family once they take up residence in exile, the commentator asserts that the cultural differences that marked the Jewish sojourn in Egypt³⁶ were actually rules imposed upon the family by the patriarch prior to their leaving Canaan. The commentator suggests that it was obvious to Jacob that “seventy individuals in the midst of a powerful and aggressive nation would assimilate

and be nullified, each one being faced with hundreds of thousands (of those unlike him.)”³⁷ Jacob’s legislative response to the specter of the loss of Jewish identity due to having to reside within a hostile majority culture for a significant period of time, was later emulated by Ezra when he made the cornerstone of his program for the restoration of the Jews to Israel following the Babylonian exile the dissolution of intermarriages,³⁸ as well as by later Rabbinic leaders when they included among eighteen pieces of legislation laws declaring off-limits to Jews the bread, oil, wine, and daughters of non-Jews as a deterrent to intermarriage.³⁹

Even without availing oneself of Biblical commentaries or Talmudic discussion, an unembellished review of recorded events and laws in the books of the Bible that involve non-Jews readily creates the impression that non-Jews are hostile, pose threats to Jewish continuity, and must be placed under Jewish subjugation in order to alleviate the threats that they pose.^{40,41} While there are sources and traditions within mainstream Jewish thought⁴² which could be used to balance, if not refute, the negative impressions associated with non-Jews left by this type of cumulative reading of traditional material, to what extent are these counter sources well-known, particularly to those who are not truly conversant with the materials of Jewish tradition? In an educational context like that of a day school, such sources would obviously have to be self-consciously inserted into curricular studies in order to assure some sort of balance in terms of how to relate to non-Jews and non-Jewish society in a fair, even-handed manner. It is safe to say that for the most part, they are currently not part of the standard day school curriculum. Should they be?⁴³

A psycho-social rationale for emphasizing and engineering differences between Jews and non-Jews that suggests that mitigating the effect of dwelling upon the hostility of the non-Jewish world might actually be counterproductive in terms of Jewish continuity

From a psychological and social perspective, the statements, stories, and pieces of legislation casting a negative light upon the non-Jewish world would appear to be designed to impress upon each Jew that s/he along with his/her people have been and continue to be under siege. Mortimer Ostow⁴⁴ writes, “Cohesive groups tend to reinforce their cohesion by elaborating on their common origin...Among the most powerful of such (accounts) are stories of origin and crisis. In the former, the origin of the group is portrayed as a remarkable event that came to pass despite the **hostility** of the environment. In the latter, the existence of the group is threatened by an **enemy** or a natural event. An actual threat to a group impels its members to reinforce their commitment to each other for purposes of defense of the group; a recollected threat exerts similar influence.”⁴⁵ Ostow’s analysis serves as the basis for Lucy Dawidowicz⁴⁶ describing how the parental generation of various cultures seeks to inculcate loyalty and commitment to family traditions: “Modern Jewish mothers...like mothers in all cultures, classes, and societies, rear their babies into awareness that the world is divided into two camps: We and They. The Italian mother draws the perimeter of We around the family, excluding the rest of the world. The Greek mother extends the community of We to include the village. The Jewish mother enlarges the We to embrace all Jews, those living now and those of the past, those living here, there, and everywhere.”

While Dawidowicz and Ostow speak in general terms about the development of Jewish identity, Sol Roth⁴⁷ specifically addresses the challenges that in his opinion face Orthodoxy.

The essential problem to which Orthodoxy must address itself is forming parameters for *Havdalah* (separation) that will assure the transmission of tradition from generation to generation. I do not believe that Jewish tradition can be preserved successfully in the general Jewish community...in the face of a policy that recognizes no limits to the extent of Jewish immersion in the life of American society...To encourage the selection of the Jewish option, it is necessary to maximize Jewish life and experience it in the context of a Jewish community in which Judaism is lived intensively, that is to say, it is necessary to stress *Havdalah*.

Although Roth⁴⁸ in an earlier article, lists “positive” attitudes that contribute to the advancement of a sense of Jewish community, including a) the love of the members of the Jewish people, b) a covenantal sense of religion, c) holiness in terms of a relationship with the Divine, d) the connection to the land of Israel, and e) reconciling living Jewishly with the demands of a democratic society and a scientific world, the “negative” attitude with which he **begins** his analysis of how Jewish community can be preserved, is *Havdalah*.

Judaism urges the Jew, in some important way, to separate himself from the non-Jew. This demand is, at least from a logical point of view, not unreasonable. Every community which sees itself as distinguished in character, and which seeks to preserve itself, must recognize that it is different, and therefore separate from others. Definition logically involves differentiation.⁴⁹

Thus it would appear that a positive case could be made for stressing the differences between Jews and non-Jews from the perspective of Jewish identity and continuity. But what price is paid by such an emphasis with respect to being willing and able to take one’s place in the general society in which one lives? Will a point be reached as a result of the emphasis upon not only difference, but also perceived threats and hostility, where a person will be dissuaded from making a whole-hearted effort to engage with the world at-large? And since identity-formation is an extremely pertinent consideration for students of day school age, particularly adolescents in Middle and High School,⁵⁰ to what extent

should Jewish identity in general and *Havdalah* in particular be the overarching aim of curricular and extra-curricular day school programming?

Considering the day school setting in light of the Havdalah issue

While an array of references can be brought to bear with regard to the question of how interaction with non-Jews is discussed in traditional Jewish sources, the manner in which this topic is presented in an educational setting is a related, but nevertheless significantly different, issue. Students on the elementary, middle, and high school levels seldom are confronted with comprehensive, thorough, and scholarly reviews of a given topic in Jewish studies. Curriculum is often designed in disciplines such as Bible, Prophets, Mishna, Talmud and Jewish law, to cover massive quantities of material in terms of pages, chapters, and verses, combined with some attention devoted to literacy skill development, rather than in-depth thematic approaches to significant topics.⁵¹

As a result, the impression that students receive regarding an issue such as interaction with non-Jews will usually be based upon side comments made in various classes by diverse teachers reflecting different points of view, and rare prolonged discussions, the latter certainly not lasting longer than a portion of a learning period on a given day.⁵² Only within the context of an individual research project would there even be the possibility for a student⁵³ to investigate a particular issue in-depth. And even under such circumstances, what is to guarantee that the work will be sufficiently thorough to yield an adequate and representative result?

In order to investigate the contexts in which these typically occasional interchanges would arise in the classroom, I carried out an informal survey among my

colleagues at the Melvin J. Berman Hebrew Academy in January of this year (2001). I sent each Judaic studies faculty member a letter requesting him or her to share with me in whatever format made him or her most comfortable—verbal or written—experiences that they had where the topic of non-Jews had come up in their classes over the course of the term.⁵⁴ I also spoke to the school psychologist, asking that she describe to me conversations that she has had with individuals seeking counseling as a result of issues arising from discussions concerning non-Jews in the classroom.

Since the Judaic studies faculty at this particular day school is comprised of individuals of various ages and social, religious, and educational backgrounds, all adhering to the tenets of Orthodox Judaism, it would appear impossible to generalize with regard to the approach or orientation of the faculty as a whole. Students attending the school run the gamut from Nursery through grade 12, coming from families that could be categorized as ranging from Traditional Conservative to Traditional Orthodox. One would expect a rich assortment of situations and topics to arise.⁵⁵

Most of the responses that I received dealt with themes in Bible and Prophets. One teacher cited a number of topics that were raised during the course of the *Parshat HaShavuah* (review of the weekly Torah portion in anticipation of its being read in the synagogue on the upcoming Sabbath) presentation.^{56,57} Another instructor listed a number of classroom discussions taking place in his Prophets class, including the perspectives offered by students in response to the Biblical passages.⁵⁸

Time devoted to current events, particularly those effecting Israel, was another context when discussions would turn to how to relate to non-Jews, and how they in turn relate to Jews in general and religious Jews in particular. Yet another faculty member

noted that when he taught the incident of Moses killing an Egyptian taskmaster in defense of a Jew who was being bludgeoned (Exodus 2:11-12), he cited an Halachic source that considers the incident a legal precedent for future physical conflicts between Jews and non-Jews.⁵⁹

The Jewish history teacher asserted that the entire course is in effect a study of how Jews and non-Jews interacted with one another, and for the most part, since Jews have historically been cast in the role of victims, the contexts of non-Jewish activity are overwhelmingly negative.

With respect to Talmud, since the entire high school studies the same Tractate, in this case the third chapter of Tractate Sukka, a section lent itself as a test case with regard to the issue of the portrayal of non-Jews. The Talmud presents the situation of Jews purchasing from non-Jews myrtle branches for use in the *Sukkot* festival ritual of holding and waving four species (Leviticus 23:40). Rabbi Huna instructs the purchasers to acquire these branches in a particular manner because it is presumed that the non-Jewish sellers had stolen the land upon which they are growing their merchandise. The issue is further complicated by the textual emendation of RaShI⁶⁰ that suggests that there is a qualitative difference between stolen property that was originally a Jew's as opposed to that which was stolen from a non-Jew.

Whether an instructor draws attention to this issue, and the extent to which he decides to explore its parameters becomes a litmus test for how non-Jews are presented in a Judaic studies class context. It would appear that some classes did take up the matter, while others avoided it.

A Hebrew language teacher remembered that several of the stories in the text *Ivrit Shitatit* (Systematic Hebrew) (Dr.'s Shahar and Rina Yonay, Vol. 1, Shai, New York, 1997) dealt with non-Jews in a positive light, including the case of Dama ben Netina, the individual who exhibited exemplary respect for his father, despite thereby sustaining a significant financial loss.^{61,62} Yet another teacher recorded that he presented R. Akiva's comment in Avot 3:14 dealing with *Tzelem Elokim* (the assumption that man was created in *HaShem's* Image—Gen. 1:27) as applying to all human beings, including non-Jews.

The school psychologist noted that on a number of occasions students had sought her out after teachers had made disparaging comments regarding non-Jews, particularly when the student was aware of a conversion or an intermarriage in his family or if s/he had non-Jewish friends.

From the responses of faculty members, it was readily apparent that the subject of interaction between Jews and non-Jews generally arose as a reaction to a particular text, subject matter unit, or student query, as opposed to a pro-active, premeditated initiative on the part of the teacher him/herself. Assuming that this is representative of Orthodox day schools, to what extent should these schools be encouraged to engage in specific programming designed to specifically address this issue?

To obtain a sense of the lasting impressions that were being made on the students in the same school, I asked the students in my Talmud classes, ranging from 7th through 12th grades, to respond to a questionnaire as well.⁶³ I have to emphasize very strongly that these comments come in response to **anything** that was said, discussed, and/or learned over the course of 7-12 years of Jewish education as presented by various teachers and students. Furthermore, since a significant number of students have transferred into the

school from other institutions over the years, they may be citing incidents and/or comments that occurred in venues other than this particular school. Another factor to be considered in evaluating these surveys is that for one reason or another, comments that would have cast a more favorable light on this subject as well as upon certain staff members may have been forgotten or not heard. What is remembered could be an unfair representation of the bulk of these students' experiences.

However one wishes to view the process by which these impressions were obtained, attention has to be paid to these cumulative effects and decisions made as to whether they must be self-consciously addressed. Responses could be categorized as dealing with 1) curricular issues, 2) comments and opinions volunteered by teachers, 3) sentiments expressed by peers, and 4) impressions received by dealing with non-Jewish students in athletic and other out-of-school settings.

1. With respect to curricular matters, students seemed to have difficulty in world studies when other religions and cultures were presented. While the students can be faulted for not being open-minded and intellectually curious, one also has to wonder whether the teachers' presentations were accessible and not oversimplified.

Jewish history was perceived as a basis for confirming that non-Jews were uniformly hostile to Jews. Such a conclusion was reinforced by sources in Torah and Prophets that portray persecutions and discriminations at the hands of non-Jews on the one hand, and the superiority of Jews over non-Jews on the other. Apparently there is a "catch-22" when one attempts to build up Jewish pride and self-esteem by dwelling on the themes of Chosenness and being a treasured people (*Am Segula*) and the implied converse with respect to those that are not so chosen and treasured.

One student was disturbed by what he perceived as a double standard with respect to how Jews as opposed to non-Jews were treated before the law.⁶⁴ The line in the prayer “*Aleinu*”⁶⁵ that states that others worshipped deities of nothingness and emptiness offended some students, who were upset that teachers went out of their way to insist on the recitation of this line, that had for many years fallen into disuse due to censorship. While some students apparently were ready to include all non-Jews in this negative evaluation, others felt that distinctions had to be made between contemporary forms of religion and those of the ancient past. Students expressed the sentiment that creating an “us-them” dichotomy in so many areas was disrespectful and even counterproductive.

2. Teachers’ opinions and side comments also apparently make long-lasting impressions. One student recalled that when someone stood up for non-Jews in a disagreement, the teacher said, “You sound like a non-Jew.” Another⁶⁶ faculty member stated that non-Jews were unintelligent.⁶⁷ Yet another directed invectives against Arabs as a result of the ongoing Israeli situation. Another staff member reportedly opined, “Non-Jews have been torturing Jews for no reason for years.” Not surprisingly, more tolerance was evidenced on the part of General studies teachers than Judaic studies teachers.⁶⁸

3. Comments made by fellow students, also generated concern. It appears that some students, particularly those with either non-Jewish relatives or non-Jewish friends and/or neighbors took particular umbrage when fellow students would make bigoted or racist remarks. Furthermore, students who spent time in public or non-Jewish private schools commented that they were not made to feel self-conscious of their Judaism in

those contexts, and therefore it was difficult for them to understand the apparent prejudice that they encounter in a Jewish day school.⁶⁹

It is reported that some students would laugh when non-Jewish teachers would stumble on the Hebrew names of the members of their classes, it being unclear if this was directed only at the teacher's error or an indication of a lack of tolerance for someone coming from a different culture. (There were several comments to the effect that the non-Jewish teachers' interest in things Jewish and their high moral and professional deportment mitigated a great deal of the negative impressions given by the curricular material that was studied in school.)

Students also called attention to fellow students referring to peers attending less religious day schools as "*Goyim*" suggesting not only a disdain for those students, but also for the group with whom those students are being associated. And it was pointed out that for many day school students, the less they have in common with others, the more intolerant they are, with greatest disdain reserved for racial minorities.

4. The experiences that students have with non-Jews in out-of-school contexts (4) yield mixed results. While some students comment that they are put off by the promiscuity and other aspects of personal behavior that they observe on the part of fans at games or when they participate jointly with non-Jewish schools in a cultural event, others say that they have always been treated with great respect and even enjoy the attention received when students would ask them about the meaning of particular Jewish practices.

Students attending mock trial matches are impressed by the respectful and appropriate behavior evidenced by their opponents and opponents' fans, perhaps suggesting that different populations within a given school will react differently to

interactions between themselves and those who adhere to different religions and traditions.

Conclusions

Jewish day schools have a complex task to satisfy, among others, two self-contradictory ideals. On the one hand, they are expected to serve as powerful fortifications against the onslaught of Jewish assimilation that is currently taking place in the United States. To this end, time is spent helping students understand the positive aspects of their heritage in order to gain maximum loyalty and commitment to that tradition. Yet, when unchecked, such a presentation can result in students concluding that they not only have nothing in common with the society surrounding them, but that there is no point in attempting to establish any sort of meaningful two-way interaction.

The Jewish mission must simultaneously address not only Jewish identity and commitments and responsibilities to one's co-religionists, but also the responsibilities of participating as a productive member of the society in which one finds him. To this end, the following recommendations are made:

- a) All teachers must be regularly sensitized to the effects of their teachings and comments upon their students. The leadership of the school must determine what sort of balance to strike between Jewish and general commitments, communicate these expectations to the entire school community, and hold all school constituents to advancing this policy and outlook.
- b) Specific curricular units should be introduced that would counterbalance the more overtly particularistic aspects of the present curriculum in order that

students can strike an appropriate balance between these two powerfully competing interests.

- c) Individuals, such as non-Jews who sheltered Jews during the Holocaust, members of other faiths who have exhibited extraordinary personal behavior towards not only Jews, but all of humanity, individuals who have accomplished outstanding things in terms of improving general society, should address the student body from time to time, in coordination with Jews who have achieved heroic things in terms of their interactions with the greater society, in order to create an alternate image of how not only Jews can be holy, idealistic, and admirable.⁷⁰
- d) Well-controlled social service projects should be undertaken that would allow Jewish students the opportunity to get to know and to appreciate the human qualities that members of other faiths possess.⁷¹

In this manner our day schools can begin to realize both of the goals that they so proudly proclaim in their mission statements and public pronouncements.

¹ While educational institutions may write mission statements, there is no guarantee that the schools will attempt to adhere to them. It is the contention of the author that the mission statements ought to be carefully formulated; arrived at by building a consensus of staff, students, parents, and other key constituents; posted publicly throughout the school; and regularly referred to in terms of curricular and program development, as well as with respect to the implementation of everyday school business.

² E.g., an excerpt from the Mission Statement of the Melvin J. Berman Hebrew Academy, Rockville, MD:

The MJBHA is an Orthodox Community Torah Day School committed to providing a comprehensive Jewish and secular education within a strong atmosphere of Torah values and academic excellence, as well as inspiring the student body to reach for the highest standards of morality and citizenship....The BHA strives to enable its graduates to become Halachically observant, well-educated Jews who feel comfortable within as well as enabled to contribute significantly to the rapidly changing world in which we live...

An excerpt from the Statement of Philosophy and Objectives of the Ramaz School, New York, NY:

The Mission of the Ramaz School...is to educate its students in the two civilizations of which they are a part. The first is the world of Torah, mitzvot, the Jewish people and its culture, Zionism and the State of Israel. Simultaneously, and with equal emphasis, we teach our students the disciplines

and the finest values of western civilization and the American democratic heritage... We also endeavor to develop within our students a commitment to the ideals of freedom, democracy, human dignity, justice, and fairness. We foster a spirit of objectivity, an awareness of and respect for a diversity of views among ourselves and in American society, and an understanding of the equality and dignity of all people and their God-given opportunity to realize their potential...

An excerpt from the Mission Statement of the Kushner Yeshiva High School, Livingston, NJ:

Western Culture and American democratic values are embraced at Kushner Yeshiva High School as important vehicles in the formation of *Adam HaShalem*—the fully developed individual... They develop a keen sense of justice and are taught to behave as responsible citizens in American society.”

An excerpt from the Mission Statement of Maimonides School, Boston, MA:

To produce religiously observant, educated Jews who will remain faithful to their religious beliefs, values, and practices as they take their place as contributing members of the general society.

³ A possible change in attitude and orientation can be perceived with regard to the issue of citizenship in American society when one notes that the latest forms of the Mission Statements of some schools traditionally associated with Modern Orthodoxy, have, at best, de-emphasized the issue.

An excerpt from the Mission Statement of Fuchs Mizrahi School, Cleveland, OH:

The school is committed to the unity of the Jewish people, the inculcation of ethical standards and the belief in the dignity of every human being. Of paramount importance is the teaching of values inherent in Torah-based moral practice. A FMS education strives to enable each student to achieve the love of God and humankind, and be imbued with the joy found in these relationships.

An excerpt from the Mission Statement of Yeshiva University High School for Girls, Queens, NY:

The High School offers academic excellence in an atmosphere that encourages the young women to adhere to the traditional ideals and practices of Orthodox Judaism, while finding a place, a niche in the modern world.

⁴ “Reflections on the Jewish Day School”, in *Commentary*, July 1960, p. 32.

⁵ Could the current de-emphasis upon citizenship in the Jewish day school at least partially reflect a sense of increased security and acceptance on the part of the Orthodox community within American society, whereby it no longer feels that it has to justify its existence to Americans who do not share its beliefs and commitments?

⁶ “Who’s Afraid of the Day Schools?” in *Commentary*, 108:5, December 1999.

⁷ The assumption that developing the student’s American identity is an important aspect of the mission of a Jewish day school located in the United States would appear to contradict another cornerstone of Orthodox day schools’ mission statements, commitment to Israel as a Jewish State in which all Jews should aspire to reside. The school should determine whether for this particular school community, living in the United States is a *LeChatchila* (a priori) or *BeDi’avad* (a posteriori) concern, and program accordingly.

⁸ The following excerpts from community day school mission statements reflect their particular ideological orientation:

a) Kehillah Jewish High School, Palo Alto, CA

“Kehillah Jewish High School is open to students and families from a wide range of Jewish backgrounds, including those with no prior Jewish day school education. The school welcomes family involvement to build a vibrant Jewish community. Kehillah Jewish High School nurtures the particular religious convictions of every family while emphasizing the covenantal bond shared by all Jews.”

<http://www.kehillahigh.org/about.html>

b) The Jewish Academy of Metropolitan Detroit, Detroit, MI

“The Jewish Academy of Metropolitan Detroit affirms that the normative practice of Judaism guided by halacha sanctifies the lives of both individuals and the Jewish community. As our students come from diverse Jewish backgrounds, we seek to inculcate among them a belief in God and knowledge and appreciation of traditional Jewish texts within a pluralistic spirit that transcends denominational boundaries.”

<http://www.jamd.org/mission.htm>

c) Geshher Jewish Day School of Northern Virginia, Fairfax, VA

“Gesher is a community Jewish Day School that respects the wide range of Jewish observance, practice and tradition, supported by a strong partnership among students, their parents and the faculty.”

<http://www.gesher-jds.org/newpage1.htm>

⁹ “The Rise of Jewish Schools”, in The Atlantic Online, October 1999,

<http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/99oct/9910jewishschools.htm>

¹⁰ Tradition, 16:2, Fall 1976, p. 11.

¹¹ Vol. 32 No.4, Summer 1998.

¹² The only response that appeared to qualify the underlying assumption that all things associated with the non-Orthodox world is antithetical to Torah values, was submitted by Walter Wurzburger:

While I recognize that the ethos of modern culture is flawed and poses many challenges to my spiritual integrity, I do not reject it hook, line, and sinker. There are many valuable insights in modern literature, philosophy, and various other branches of the humanities. Torah is not an escape mechanism from the harsh realities of life, but a *Torat hayyim* which directs me, not to withdraw, but to address all facets of human existence. I therefore neither endorse nor reject modernity but confront it critically in the light of my understanding of what Torah demands of me....

¹³ The case of the “Yale Five” could be viewed as an example of day school products striving to afford themselves a superior secular education, yet avoiding what they perceive as the pernicious aspects of the lifestyle associated with such an education. These students sued the university in order to be exempted from living on campus and thereby being exposed to “the rampant immorality” that pervades the co-ed dorms. When asked why the classroom discussions involving the same students who inhabited the dorms was not deemed equally if not more objectionable, one of the plaintiffs, Batsheva Greer responded, “When something is said in a classroom, you can listen and write notes and it doesn’t make an impression on you... But when you’re in an immoral environment, it has a detrimental effect. Actions are just more detrimental than words. They aren’t good for one’s soul.”—quoted in Samuel G. Freedman, Jew vs. Jew: The Struggle for the Soul of American Jewry, Simon and Shuster, New York, 2000, p. 261. While a number of factors certainly contributed to the development of these students’ decision to challenge Yale in court, schooling must play some role in their decision to adopt the strong stand that they have taken.

¹⁴ In addition to observing the reticence exhibited by many day school graduates when it comes to participating fully in campus life, parallel attitudes manifest themselves in terms of the increasing numbers who refuse to attend a secular university, as well as those who are uninterested in obtaining a college education at all. Not only will day school students who do opt to attend university avoid aspects of student life that they deem compromising, but they also tend to prefer pre-professional courses of study, as opposed to exploring the liberal arts. Disciplines such as history, literature, and psychology are all means by which an individual can become more familiar and empathetic with those who comprise general society, and day school graduates who do not engage in such courses of study either reflect their disinterest in, or their antipathy to, the assumptions and values of general society.

¹⁵ When the administrators, curriculum developers, and faculty members of day schools are comprised of individuals who themselves are either indifferent, or even hostile, to general societal attitudes and assumptions, and who are lacking general education themselves, the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual atmosphere pervading the school will mitigate against forming a positive approach towards participation within general society, regardless of what a school’s Mission Statement might advocate.

¹⁶ “Citizen”—1) an inhabitant of a city, often of a town, especially one possessing civil rights and privileges, a burgess or a freemason of a city. 2) ...in USA, a person, native or naturalized, who has the privilege of voting for public offices and is entitled to full protection in the exercise of private rights.—The Oxford English Dictionary, Second Edition, prepared by J.A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989, p. 250.

“Citizenship”—The position or status of being a citizen, with its rights and privileges.—Ibid.

¹⁷ During my tenure at the Ramaz School in New York City, a number of lectures were presented to my Talmud classes by an attorney conversant with Jewish law, comparing Torah and secular civil law. One of the points that he repeatedly impressed upon the students was that whereas Halacha was concerned with obligations, secular law was mainly focused upon rights and privileges. Although he was addressing high school students and presenting them with a quick overview rather than an in-depth legal analysis of the two systems of law, in light of the assumptions of civics education, i.e., that participation in secular society does

in fact entail considerable responsibility and obligation, it is interesting to consider the effect that such a point would make upon the students at whom it was directed, particularly those who do not go on to study law. In an attempt to highlight a cornerstone of Jewish tradition, was general society possibly short shrifted?

¹⁸ An anthology of patriotic poems, speeches, hymns, anthems and stories, published in 1941 by the National Education Association, quoted in Brian Burrell, The Words We Live By: The Creeds, Mottoes, and Pledges that have Shaped America, Free Press, New York, 1997, p. 42.

¹⁹ “Postwar Americans tended to regard public concerns much as they did economic interests: in terms of pursuing their advantage, if need be, by striking advantageous bargains with others. Citizenship in practice exhibited the qualities typical of marketing and exchange. Furthermore, as government resources were put to ever new uses, Americans increasingly defined citizenship in terms of the claims they could legitimately argue they had, as individuals and as members of a special category to some of those resources. Claimant politics began to overshadow civil politics.”—Robert N. Bellah, et al, The Good Society, Vintage Books, New York, 1992, p. 61.

²⁰ “National Standards for Civics and Government 9-12”, distributed by the Center for Civic Education (<http://www.civiced.org/912erica.htm>), page 51 ff. Lists the following as **responsibilities** of citizens: Personal Responsibilities (taking care of oneself, supporting one’s family and caring for, nurturing, and educating one’s children, accepting responsibility for the consequences of one’s actions, adhering to moral principles, **considering the rights and interests of others, behaving in a civil manner**); Civic Responsibilities (obeying the law, being informed and attentive to public issues, monitoring the adherence of political leaders and governmental agencies to constitutional principles, and taking appropriate action if the adherence is lacking, **assuming leadership when appropriate**, paying taxes, registering to vote and voting knowledgeably on candidates and issues, serving as a juror, serving in the armed forces, **performing public service**.)

²¹ Perhaps it is the perception of the change in common understanding of the implications of the concept of citizenship, as well as the sense that students are lacking a sense of responsibility to the greater society, that has spurred on educational leaders to promote courses on civics and citizenship while younger citizens are still attending school.

²² “Rethinking Civic Education for the 21st Century”, in ASCD Yearbook 1999: Preparing Our Schools for the 21st Century, ed. David D. Marsh, ASCD, Alexandria, VA, 1999, p. 66.

²³ An even more radical conception of the duties of citizenship is described by James MacGregor Burns and Stuart Burns (A People’s Charter: The Pursuit of Rights in America, Knopf, New York, 1991, p. 462):

Citizenship, rather than merely an “outer frame” of duties such as voting, paying taxes, and obeying laws, would be experienced as “the core of our life,” in Michael Walzer’s formulation, which “assumes a close knit body of citizens, its members committed to one another.” Such an activist citizenship would express itself through the development of participatory democracy, an ideal crystallized in the 1962 “Port Huron Statement” of Students for a Democratic Society: “...As a social system we seek the establishment of a democracy of individual participation, governed by two central aims: that the individual share in those social decisions determining the quality and direction of his life; and that society be restructured to encourage both autonomy and common participation.”

²⁴ While it can be argued that the answers that this assemblage produced were exercises in apologetics designed to gain a political end, i.e., citizenship for French Jewry, nevertheless in the words of Professor Jay R. Berkowitz in “Changing Conceptions of Gentiles at the Threshold of Modernity: The Napoleonic Sanhedrin” (p. ____ of the present volume), “...the Sanhedrin provided the authoritative interpretation of emancipation; its answers and doctrinal decisions formed a new and central text for subsequent generations.”

Professor Berkowitz also notes that the Consistory enacted legislation requiring the answers of the Sanhedrin to be recited in the course of *Shabbat* services as well as requiring reproduction of its text in textbooks approved for use in Jewish schools. It would be difficult to point to parallel educational initiatives in contemporary day schools, at least outside of Israel, in terms of direct and prolonged discussions concerning responsibilities toward the broader society within the context of Judaic studies, as opposed to general history or civics subject matter.

The Washington Institute for Jewish Leadership and Values, directed by Rabbi Sid Schwartz, and

utilizing a grant from the Jim Joseph Foundation, has developed a course for day schools, entitled, “Jews, Judaism, and Civic Responsibility.” It is being field tested in a small number of schools and hopefully will become a frequently taught elective, if not a required course, in day schools throughout the country. Further information can be obtained from the Institute, located at 11710 Hunters Lane, Rockville, MD 20852; WIJLV@aol.com

²⁵ Question 5: What conduct does Jewish law prescribe toward Frenchmen not of the Jewish religion?

Question 6: Do the Jews born in France and treated by law as French citizens, acknowledge France as their country? Are they bound to defend it? Are they bound to obey the laws and follow the directions of the civil code?—Quoted in “Sanhedrin, French”, in The Jewish Encyclopedia, man. ed. Isidore Singer, Vol. 11, Ktav, New York, 1901, p. 46.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 48.

²⁷ Targum on Esther 3:8.

²⁸ In Pharaoh’s attribution to the Jews the intention to join any attackers of Egypt in an effort to overthrow the reigning authorities (Exodus 1:9-10), one encounters an even earlier, albeit less detailed, instance of an accusation against the Jews depicting them as a separatist, divisive, and potentially dangerous force, that has to be reigned in, before “it is too late.” Another Biblical anti-Semitic attack is to be found in Ezra 4 when the opponents of Judah and Benjamin (Samaritans) accuse the Jews of wanting to rebuild the Temple in order to mount a rebellion against the ruling authorities.

²⁹ Whereas certain activities associated with participation in general society could potentially compromise one’s religious values and practices, e.g., serving in the armed forces at times that do not qualify as situations of *Pikuach Nefesh* (life and death), supporting the rights of certain elements within the greater society to pursue lifestyles that are deemed deviant by the standards of Jewish law, or engaging in aspects of citizenship where in order to succeed apparently dishonest practices must be undertaken, etc., other aspects of citizenship should be quite compatible with living a committed Jewish life. Therefore it would be interesting to investigate the extent to which day school alumni vote, serve on juries, and participate in community civic associations as compared to others within the society at large as well as to Jews who did not receive day school educations.

³⁰ See Joshua Berman, “Aggadah and Anti-Semitism: The Midrashim to Esther 3:8” in Judaism, Vol. 150, 38:2, Spring 1989, pp. 185-96 for the variations in the Midrashic approach to this verse down through the years, reflecting the range of nuances in these accusations doing various historical periods.

³¹ Rabbinic interpretation, as exemplified in RaShI on Leviticus 18:3, *d.h. U’BeChukoteihem Lo Teileichu*, and RaMBaM, Mishna Torah, *Hilchot Avodat Kochavim* 11:1, has expanded the connotation of this verse from merely a rejection of the sexual and pagan mores of the Egyptian and Canaanite societies, implied by the preceding verses, to include issues of dress and cultural activity. A review of various positions taken by Halachic decisors regarding this matter can be found in Rabbi Zvi Teichman, “Chukat Ha’Akum: Jews in a Gentile Society”, in Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society, Vol. 1 No. 2, Fall 1981, pp. 64-85.

³² Why *Torat Kohanim*, and subsequently RaShI, should be citing specifically Nevuchadnezzar as the exemplar of the nations of the world, is explained by Avraham Berliner (RaShI Al HaTorahh, J. Kaufmann, Frankfurt on Mein, 1904, p. 257). He notes that, as in *Pesikta Zutrati*, the text should read “*Harei Atem LeUmot HaOlam*” (Behold you will belong to the nations of the world.) Berliner states that out of fear (of repercussions due to censorship) the text was changed in both *Torat Kohanim* and RaShI.

³³ *Pesikta Rabbati* 15:5.

³⁴ Numbers 23:9. Since the premise of the prophet’s pronouncements assumes that despite his attempts to curse the Jewish people, all that he could muster were blessings, rather than being viewed as a negative trait or imposed punishment, being alone and separate is apparently considered a virtue.

³⁵ *Meshech Chachma* on Leviticus 26:44.

³⁶ *VaYikra Rabba* 32:5 lists the defining qualities of the Jews that made them deserving to be redeemed from Egyptian slavery as their not having changed their names or language, their having refrained from reporting on one another to the non-Jewish authorities, and their sexual propriety. *Pesikta Zutra* on Exodus 6:6 adds that the Jews retained distinctive dress as another means for preserving their ethnic identity. (The devotion to these manifestations of cultural uniqueness stands in stark contrast to the implication of commentaries like that of RaShI on Exodus 12:6 to the effect that the people had ceased observing circumcision prior to their redemption from Egypt.) Commentaries such as RaShBaM, *Lekach Tov* and RITVA associate these Midrashic traditions with the interpretation found in *Haggadat Pesach*,

(Deuteronomy 26:5) “‘And they became there a nation’—to teach that Israel was *Metzuyanim* (outstanding, markedly different) there (in Egypt).”

³⁷ *Meshech Chachma, ibid.*

³⁸ Ezra 9,10.

³⁹ *Mishna Shabbat 1:4; Talmud Shabbat 17b.*

⁴⁰ In Genesis alone, the following themes can all contribute to a sensibility that surrounding nations are threatening and lacking in basic morality:

Gen. 12:10 ff.	Sara being threatened by Pharaoh. (It is only with the Divine Selection of Abraham and his offspring that the Biblical saga of the Jewish people begins in earnest. Therefore events effecting the likes of Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel and Noah do not enter into consideration with regard to the particular theme in question.)
Ibid., 13:13; 18:20, 19 Ibid., 14	The evil of the people of Sodom and Amora. Wars, kidnapping, selfish division of spoils perpetrated by local potentates.
Ibid., 15:13-14	Future exile and suffering at the hands of an alien nation prophesied for the Jewish people.
Ibid., 20:2 ff.	Sara being threatened by Avimelech.
Ibid., 21:25-6	Philistine responsibility for the filling of Jewish wells.
Ibid., 23:16	The exorbitant price exacted by Efron for the grave of Sara.
Ibid., 24:29 ff.; 29:13 ff; 30:27 ff.; 31:2; 32	Lavan’s shrewd negotiating first with Eliezer and then with Jacob.
Ibid., 26:7 ff.	Rebecca threatened by Avimelech.
Ibid., 26:15 ff.	Further controversy regarding wells.
Ibid., 26:35, 46; 27:2	Displeasure with Esau’s foreign wives.
Ibid., 34	Dinah, Shechem, rejection of intermarriage and assimilation, destruction of Shechemites.
Ibid., 37:36	Joseph is sold to either Ishmaelites or Midianites.
Ibid., 39:7 ff.	Potiphar’s wife makes sexual advances towards Joseph, which leads to the latter’s imprisonment.

A glaring exception to these examples is the behavior of Malki Tzedek (Gen. 14:18-20), which could be interpreted as serving as a foil to the actions of the King of Sodom (Ibid., 17,21). On the other hand, although Ishmael and Esau begin as siblings to the forefathers Isaac and Jacob respectively, their hostility eventually symbolize civilizations, Islam and Rome, which not only compete with, but also attempt to destroy the Jewish people. Therefore, at a certain point, they too number among the “others” against whom the Jews struggle for survival.

As for the laws of the Bible, negative impressions of non-Jews can similarly be derived: Exodus 21:20-21, 26-27; Leviticus 25:44-46	Aspects of the institution of non-Jewish slavery. (This is in contrast to Jewish slavery, which appears as a form of indentured servitude rather than total bondage which non-Jewish slavery appears to entail.)
Exodus 23:32-33	The need to banish and not make treaties with former inhabitants of Canaan.
Leviticus 18:27-28	The sexual perversions of which the Egyptians and Canaanites were guilty are not to be emulated by the Jews.
Ibid., 25:47-54	The need to ransom a Jewish slave, particularly from a non-Jewish master due to the latter’s possibly interfering with the former’s practicing of his religion.
Deuteronomy 7:2	In addition to not entering into agreements with former inhabitants of Canaan, no positive considerations, e.g., gifts, compliments, etc., should be extended to them.

Ibid., 7:3-4	Prohibition against intermarriage, with the explicit rationale that there is fear that the Jewish member of the marriage will become alienated from his/her religion under the influence of his/her non-Jewish spouse.
Ibid., 17:16	Returning to Egypt in order to settle must be avoided by Jews at all costs.
Ibid., 20:18-10-18	Inhabitants of Canaan can make peace and remain in their land only in a state of subjugation to the Jews.
Ibid., 21:10-14	The non-Jewish war captive.
Ibid., 23:4-9	The restrictions on dealing with Amonites, Moabites, and Egyptians.
Ibid., 23:21	Interest on loans can be taken from non-Jews.
Ibid., 25:17-19	Eternally remembering how Amalek attempted to destroy the Jews.

⁴¹ The depiction of other groups as threatening and deserving of radical intervention on the part of a specific religious community, is not indigenous to any particular religion. Nel Noddings writes, "...violence is part of the history of all major religions, and the desire to destroy the wicked can be easily aroused. For some groups, the wicked must have performed horrible acts in order to qualify as "wicked", thereby deserving retribution. For others, the wicked are simply those who do not believe or believe differently. In the latter case, violence may be direct and physical if religious belief is combined with political power, or, in the absence of such power, it may be threatened at some later date..."

--Educating for Intelligent Belief or Unbelief, Teachers College Press, New York, 1993, p. 56.

⁴² Such themes and approaches include the following:

- a. Are the non-Jews mentioned in Biblical sources comparable to non-Jews being encountered contemporaneously? (Views of RaMBaM, *Meiri*, *Tosafot Yom Tov*, *Tiferet Yisroel*, *Tora Temima*, etc., would counterbalance the implications that all non-Jews are to be categorized in the same manner.)
- b. Are the nations that inhabit the geographical areas of Egypt, Moab, Amon, etc., the actual descendants of the peoples mentioned in the Bible? (To what extent has this been rendered moot by the Talmudic assumption that no one is any longer living in their indigenous land due to the administrative policies of Sanherev, King of Assyria ("Sanherev Ba U' Bilbail HaOlam")—see e.g., Berachot 28a; Yomah 54a.
- c. Jewish responsibility to be a "Light unto the nations" and therefore undertake to participate in the broader world, despite possible risks of assimilation or even destruction. (Isaiah 42:6 and associated commentaries and sources.)
- d. The necessity to perpetrate acts of "Sanctification of the Divine Name" in order to win admirers for God and monotheism. (Leviticus 22:31-33 and related materials)
- e. Non-Jewish individuals who adhere to the seven Noachide commandments are to be considered among the "righteous of the nations of the world" and merit a place in the World-to-Come, something that can be forfeited by Jews not living up to their ritual responsibilities. (RaMBaM, *Mishna Tora*, Laws of Kings)

⁴³ The same charges of apologetics and inauthenticity precipitated by pressures from without that were leveled at the work of the French Sanhedrin, could similarly be brought to bear upon positions cited in the previous footnote. On the other hand, it could be contended that at least some of these approaches are legitimate and defensible, if not during all periods of Jewish history, than at least during our current period. However, it is obvious that as long as these perspectives are not formally incorporated into day school curricula, the overwhelming majority of students will never be exposed to them.

An ongoing experience that I have had reinforcing such a contention is the annual presentation that I make to the OU interns, a program that brings to Washington observant college students who spend their summer working in various Congressional and Senatorial contexts. In addition to their work experience, these interns meet with a number of individuals who discuss with them aspects of the political experience that is unique to Orthodox Jews. For the past four years, I have given a talk based upon sources such as those mentioned above, that I discussed in a paper entitled, "A Religious Context for Jewish

Political Activity” (*Tikkun Olam: Social Responsibility in Jewish Thought and Law*, ed. D. Schatz, C. Waxman, N. Diament, Jason Aronson, Northvale, NJ, 1997, pp. 145-58). Although the participants in the OU program, virtually all having attended day school, are obviously self-selecting in terms of being at least somewhat interested in participating in the federal political process, it has seemed to me that they never have previously encountered the Jewish sources that directly address the nature of what they have chosen to do for the summer.

⁴⁴ “Determinants of Jewish Identity”, in *The Israel Annals of Psychiatry and Related Disciplines*, 15:4, December 1977, p. 317.

⁴⁵ Ironically, the emphasis upon how Jews have had to struggle against their enemies for time immemorial can in some cases have just the opposite effect, i.e., instead of solidifying one’s loyalty to his/her people, an individual can be driven to separate himself from them because s/he is unwilling to cast him/herself as the victim of ongoing oppression. Jerry V. Diller (“Identity Rejection and Reawakening in the Jewish Context” in *Journal of Psychology and Judaism*, 5:1, Fall/Winter 1980, p. 41) writes, “If...a person has internalized the majority culture’s values, particularly its negative attitude towards one’s ethnic group, one may reject one’s Jewish identity and the self on the basis of its dictates.” See Helen Epstein’s fascinating account of the effects of the Holocaust upon the children of survivors in *Children of the Holocaust* (Bantam Books, New York, 1979).

⁴⁶ *The Jewish Presence: Essays on Identity and History*, Harcourt Brace Janovich, New York, 1978, p. 5.

⁴⁷ Contribution to “Symposium—State of Orthodoxy” in *Tradition* 20:1, Spring 1982, p. 67.

⁴⁸ *The Jewish Idea of Community*, Yeshiva University Press, New York, 1977, pp. 17-19.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁵⁰ While teenagers are considered to be most acutely in the throes of identity formation, in light of the following statement by Robert Coles, attention must be paid to Lower School students as well in this regard.

“So many younger schoolchildren are eager to embrace the imaginary—indeed their minds are often afire with it. Given a choice, they will leap into one or another scenario, be it historical or contemporary, factual or fictional, and bring to it their very own moral or intellectual assumptions.”

The Moral Intelligence of Children, Random House, New York, 1997, p. 121.

“No question, the early school years that precede the onset of adolescence (grades one to six, say) matter a great deal, morally—and not only as a consequence of home life. At this time, the voices and actions of **teachers and coaches** and the parents of friends become alternative examples, complementary and supplementary and sometimes contradictory in nature, to be the substance of what is implied, suggested, enacted, with respect to the values at home.”

Ibid., p. 130.

It is notable that a number of responses from students in the student survey that I summarize later in this paper commented that they found teachers in the lower grades more closed-minded and doctrinaire with regard to the issue of interaction with non-Jews compared to teachers in the higher grades. Whether this is age appropriate, a reflection of the types of individuals who are drawn to teach in the different divisions of the school, etc. would have to be considered if this observation is given credence.

⁵¹ During 2001, a prolonged interchange on the Bar Ilan University listserv for Jewish education, Lookjed, discussing whether preparing students for confronting the challenges that they might face in general society ought to occupy a significant portion of curricular time in day schools, at the possible expense of further development of Jewish study skills and information acquisition, illustrated the preponderance of thinking among many day school staff members that concern for the more existential and philosophical issues is not a priority. Naturally one could speculate whether this has basis in a true appreciation of the educational context, or whether this has to do with the predisposition of the particular individuals participating as well as their own training and sense of competency with regard to philosophical and theological conundrums.

⁵² Occasions when comments about non-Jews and non-Jewish society unrelated to specific curricular issues are particularly common, are societal celebrations generally deemed pagan in origin and therefore inappropriate for Orthodox Jews, e.g., Halloween, Dec. 25th, Jan. 1st, Feb. 14th, and March 13th. The Halachic controversy swirling around the celebration of Thanksgiving centers around whether or not the

commemoration is essentially religious. See Rabbi Michael Broyde, “Thanksgiving: Secular or Religious Holiday” in *The Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society*, No. 30, Fall 1995, pp. 42-65. Naturally Kristallnacht and Yom HaShoah similarly elicit presentations and/or comments about general non-Jewish complicity or mere indifference regarding the atrocities perpetrated during the Holocaust.

⁵³ This would usually only involve a single student, since generally different topics are assigned or chosen in order to insure a modicum of originality and independent research.

⁵⁴ The text of the letter that I sent to my colleagues read:

I am doing research regarding if and how non-Jews are discussed within the context of Judaic studies in the day school setting. This year, whether you are teaching *Gemora*, *ToshBa*, *Chumash*, *Navi*, *Ivrit*, or Jewish history, there may have been issues that arose either directly from the curriculum, or in the course of classroom discussions that impacts in one way or another on this theme. I would very much appreciate it if you could describe these discussions to whatever extent you are able. If there were occasions where you pointedly avoided bringing the topic up, or told the student that there wasn’t time to go into the issue, I would be interested not only in the context in which this happened, but also why you chose to respond in the manner that you did. If you like, you could write your impressions and recollections on this page or send me email at ...

Thanks for your time and thoughtfulness. Sincerely,

⁵⁵ My investigation method was unscientific and hardly comprehensive. To better make the case, a more rigorous instrument has to be devised, a higher response rate has to be pursued, and a number of variables have to be taken into account, such as what teachers are likely and/or unlikely to report due to being wary of admitting to extreme positions, what teachers are expecting me to be looking for, teacher’s reflectiveness and ability to recall passing conversations over the course of the school year, etc. I would also be significant to compare teacher reports from several different Orthodox schools in different locales, featuring faculties of varying backgrounds, and drawing upon different economic strata in terms of student body. Comparing day schools of different denominations with regard to this issue would also be of interest.

⁵⁶ The teacher’s report mentioned the following examples:

a) *Parshat Chaye Sara*—

- 1) (Gen. 23:6) Abraham was respected by the non-Jews that he encountered upon searching for a grave for Sara, due to his reputation for being exceptionally ethical and considerate.
- 2) (Ibid., 23:15) Ephron’s questionable conduct when selling the burial cave to Abraham.
- 3) (Ibid., 25:6) The gifts that Abraham gives to the children of Ketura before sending them away.

b) *Parshat Toldot*—

- 1) (Gen. 26:17 ff.) Isaac having to live by his wits to survive in Gerar. “The wisdom required in dealing with non-Jews, including the qualities of patience, courage, and guarded respect. The knowledge of differences between us and them as well as how to handle delicate situations without compromising our beliefs and values. The courage, tenacity, pride, and consistency necessary to earn respect.” (*The above is a verbatim rendering of the teacher’s submission. It should be obvious that depending upon the tack that the teacher takes, such a lesson could be constructive or destructive in terms of how children will internalize the lessons of the Torah vis-à-vis how to approach the non-Jews that they will encounter during their own lives.*)
- 2) (Gen. 26:35) *Morat Ruach* (bitterness of spirit). The attitude of Isaac and Rebecca to their son’s marrying Hittite women.

c) *Parshat VaYetze*—

- 1) (Gen. 29:13 ff.) Interactions between Jacob and Laban. The principle of “*Kabdeihu VeChashdeihu*” (respect him but be suspicious of him)
- 2) (Ibid.) Jacob and Laban’s usage of the term “*Ach*” (brother)

d) *Parshat VaYishlach*—

- 1) (Gen. 33:12-14) The meeting between Jacob and Esau. “*Harchek MiShachen Ra*” (distance yourself from an evil neighbor)

⁵⁷ The fact that these themes would be addressed as part of the *Parshat HaShavua* lesson as opposed to the daily curriculum, lends further credence to the contention that these ideas will more often than not be presented in passing, rather than being well-developed and thoughtfully constructed. If the regular curriculum is based upon the concept of a rapid survey of primary texts and commentaries, the *Parshat HaShavua* slot, which might occupy no more than a small portion of the time allotted to Bible study, will usually entail that much more of a quick overview of the material due to time constraints and the pressure to review as much of the Torah portion as possible.

⁵⁸ The teacher's report mentioned the following examples:

- a) Judges 5:31 (the final verse of the Song of Debora): "So shall You cause all of Your enemies to be destroyed, *HaShem*." Students defined the "enemies" of today as "Arabs". (*Consider comments by Moshe Greenberg, translated from his HaSegula VeHaKoach [Kibbutz HaMe'Uchad, 1986, pp. 15-6]*)

"The greatest difficulty entailed in teaching the book of Joshua is the danger that the student will apply the message of the book of conquest to our situation today: the Canaanite enemy = the Arab enemy, and the prophetic method of dealing with the situation is expulsion and destruction. This danger is so great that there is room to ask whether it is appropriate for us today to teach this book in our state."

While the writer obviously has a particular political perspective that causes him to view these Biblical passages with greater concern than many others, nevertheless the red flag that he raises is representative of many parallel issues throughout Jewish primary sources. Even were we not to adopt the drastic course of banning material in our canon from being taught in Jewish schools, the question remains: what precautions can be taken so that lessons inimical to what is being studied will not be derived, in this case concerning contemporary non-Jews?)

- a) I Kings 8:41-43 Solomon's request to *HaShem* during the course of his consecrating prayer for the newly built Temple that the prayers of non-Jews be heard along with the prayers of Jews. A comparison of verses 39 and 43 interpreted by RaDaK suggests that deserving or not, the Divine Answering of prayers offered by non-Jews will constitute a Sanctification of *HaShem*'s Name. Aside from a discussion of the nature of what qualifies as a "Sanctification of *HaShem*'s Name", students discussed the possibilities for conversion to Judaism and the place of the contemporary synagogue, serving as a substitute for the now-destroyed Temple. The discussion then proceeded to address inviting non-Jews to one's *Bar Mitzva*, what should be expected of these individuals when they attend in terms of headcovering, the concealing of symbols associated with other religions, etc.

⁵⁹ RaMBaM, *Mishna Torah*, Laws of Kings 10:6, based upon Sanhedrin 58b, states that a non-Jew striking even a glancing blow upon a Jew, is culpable for the death penalty, since Moses executed the Egyptian who was striking the Jew. (While RaMBaM states that this crime is not enforceable in a Jewish court, but rather, in the words of R. Yosef Karo's commentary, *Kesef Mishna*, would only constitute a death sentence in the Heavenly Court, how this was exactly presented to the class is of interest. If the caveat that this is not a practical *Halacha* was not explicitly made, is it likely for students to think that such a punishment should be physically carried out today? Furthermore, the language in the passage both in the Talmud as well as in RaMBaM is "AKU'M", the acronym representing "Ovdai Kochavim U'Mazalot" (the worshippers of stars and planets, i.e., idolaters). Once it is posited that this is not simply a censor's gloss (see fn. 17 above), to what extent should the statement have been further qualified regarding whether an equation can be made between this particular Egyptian and non-Jews that are encountered today?)

⁶⁰ Sukka 30a, *d.h. Mai Ta'ama Setam AKU'M Gazlei Arata MiYisroel Ninhu*.

⁶¹ The original source for this story is in Kiddushin 31a. Once again one has to wonder how the content, as opposed to the vocabulary, grammar, etc., was presented by the teacher to the students. Were they given and did they receive the impression that Dama ben Netina was the rule or the exception? Aside from the positive reinforcement of the commandment to act appropriately towards one's parents, what sort of lesson either explicitly or implicitly was learned regarding how to view non-Jews?

⁶² It would be interesting to investigate whether the decision to place such a story in the text was taken, at least in part, to make the text acceptable to a broader range of schools. In a program for character development, "Project *Derech*" there are six different versions in an attempt to incorporate a school's specific religious outlook within the examples given and lessons drawn. One of my colleagues, once sensitized to my interest, excitedly brought to me a book that one of her students had used upon which was

based the *Parshat HaShavuah* lesson that the student had presented to her classmates. The story centered around the activities of a righteous non-Jew. Upon inspecting the book, I noted that it was published by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Reform Judaism's administrative organization. I once again wondered if casting positive light on non-Jews in educational texts could be demonstrated to be denominationally distinctive.

⁶³ Students were given the following:

I am currently doing research on the manner in which non-Jews are discussed, dealt with, thought about, etc., in Jewish day schools. I would appreciate it if you would not take a few minutes and jot down some impressions that you have had over the years when you were in either this day school, or some other regarding non-Jews. You may have gained these impressions because of subject matter that you studied, comments that have been made in class by teachers or friends, interactions that you have had while involved in extra-curricular activities, etc. Your comments will be kept anonymous and you don't have to sign this page if you do not wish to do so. Thanks for your help, Sincerely...

⁶⁴ Examples of some of these issues include the manner in which suits arising from one person's animal injuring another are adjudicated, the relative severity of the punishments applying to the Noachide laws as opposed to the same laws vis-à-vis Jews, the difference in the obligation to give charity to Jewish as opposed to non-Jewish needy, it is permissible to speak *Lashon HaRa* (statements of fact designed to place the object of the conversation in a less than flattering light) regarding non-Jews, and the exemption from returning a non-Jew's lost object as opposed to that of a Jew.

⁶⁵ "*SheHeim Mishtachavim LaHevel VaRik, U'Mitpallelim LeEil Lo Yoshia*" in e.g., The Complete ArtScroll Siddur, ed. R. Nosson Scherman, R. Meir Zlotowitz, Mesorah Publications Ltd., New York, 1984, pp. 158-9, and see *Ibid.*, fn. *SheHeim Mishtachavim*...

⁶⁶ Since I did not ask students to identify who was making these specific comments, I suppose that it is theoretically possible that only one or two staff members are volunteering these extreme opinions, and others are not. But I think this unlikely.

⁶⁷ An Anglicization of "*Goyische Kopf*"?

⁶⁸ Yet students quoted non-Jewish faculty members to the effect that they feel that they are not as respected as Judaic studies teachers, and that there can be felt an "us vs. them" quality not only throughout the school day, but even during professional days.

⁶⁹ An interesting approach to address this phenomenon is suggested by the psychologist Beverly Tatum.

The parts of our identity that *do* capture our attention are those that other people notice, and that reflect back to us. The aspect of identity that is the target of others' attention, and subsequently of our own, often is that which sets us apart as exceptional or "other" in their eyes... People are commonly defined as other on the basis of race or ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, and physical and mental ability. Each of these categories has a form of oppression associated with it: racism, sexism, religious oppression/anti-Semitism, heterosexism, classism, ageism, and ableism respectively. In each case there is a group that is considered dominant (systematically advantaged by the society because of group membership) and a group considered subordinate or targeted (systematically disadvantaged). When we think about our multiple identities, most of us will find that we are both dominant and targeted at the same time. But it is the targeted identities that hold our attention and the dominant identities that often go unexamined."

--"Why are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?" and Other Conversations about Race, Basic Books, New York, 1997, pp. 21-22.

Within the day school context, being Jewish is dominant, as opposed to being non-Jewish, leading students to be less introspective about their Jewish identities than they would be were they to attend a public or non-Jewish private school. On the one hand, this is the very reason why day schools have been established, i.e., to afford students the opportunity to feel more natural and uninhibited about their personal identities and Jewish development. But the concomitant result is a particular attitude, sometimes discriminatory and stereotypical, regarding non-Jews with whom they have far-less interaction. The question then presents itself as to whether the present balance is the only one possible if it would be concluded that a more even-handed experience would be more educationally and socially desirable.

⁷⁰ It is not necessary to place a greater emphasis upon presentations dealing with this issue than upon those

that serve to reinforce and inspire commitment to Judaism and the Jewish people. All schools should regularly schedule appearances of outstanding individuals who can raise important issues and model exemplary service and accomplishment to their student bodies. The above proposal is merely to advocate that included within these presentations are individuals who have successfully lived in both worlds and who see such lives as meaningful and appropriate.

⁷¹ Once again, such projects should not be the only objective of a community service program. Service to exclusively Jewish causes is naturally crucial in the development of *Chesed* (compassion) during the years to come. But serving the general non-Jewish community should also be included and not be belittled.