

One of the great errors of our day is that we do not teach our children how to fail. Everyone in life ultimately fails. There will always be somebody who will run faster than we can, be smarter than we are, and be more successful than we are. Our very physical bodies will weaken and eventually fail. No doctor in the long run ever saves a patient. He may restore a patient's health for a few years but eventually the patient's body will cease to function. In our success-oriented society we have, by our undue stress on fleeting worldly success, maimed ourselves and our children. We have taught them that they can not be happy unless they always succeed. This is completely false.

Judaism does not measure the worth of a man's life based on the criteria of worldly success. Whether you are a successful doctor or lawyer or accountant or businessman is irrelevant. Whether you became a millionaire or big politician does not really count. What counts is whether you have tried your best and were able to expand the realm of the good and raise a family who, too, is interested in expanding the realm of the good in this world. If a person tries his best, raises good children, and does good deeds then, by Judaism's standards he is a very, very successful individual. That's why the greatest tribute that can be paid to a person after he is gone is for his children to light a yahrzeit lamp, come to the Synagogue, and conduct the service. This symbolizes that a person left behind children who are also interested in expanding the realm of the good in this world. Of course, if a person's children are complete bums and no-good-niks, saying Kaddish does not help. To raise a child who will follow in the path of the good and right is the greatest thing that a person can do in Judaism.

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We believe in the conservation of morality. Just as there is a scientific law of the conservation of matter and energy which means that no matter or energy can ever be destroyed. (Since Einstein, we learned how to change matter into energy ~~and~~ not destroy it.) So, too, we believe that there is a law of the conservation of morality. No good deed that a person ~~ever~~ does in this life is ever lost. It continues and, based on it, the world can become better and better. A person who always tries his best and does *all* the good deeds ~~that come to his hand~~ <sup>he can</sup> and raises children who also recognize the importance of doing good deeds is, according to Judaism, a very successful person even though he may have failed at business, may never have gotten a college degree or any acclaim or money. By all the standards of today, he might be a failure but, according to Judaism, he is a huge success.

Many of these thoughts are emphasized on the holiday of Shavuot. The Rabbis have arranged that almost always we will read the Torah portion Bamidbar before the holiday of Shavuot. Only exceptionally, like this year, do we read the next Torah portion, Naso. Both of these Torah portions have to do with <sup>the</sup> counting <sup>of</sup> the Jewish people. Bamidbar begins the count. In the Torah portion Naso we conclude the count. Over and over again we are told that the Jewish people were to be counted "by their families according to the house of their fathers". The expression "by their families according to the house of their fathers" recurs constantly. This repetition of the phrase "by their families according to the house of their fathers" was meant to teach us that the Jewish people could not receive the Torah until they demonstrated <sup>that</sup> they ~~have~~ <sup>had</sup> ~~valuable~~ <sup>viable</sup> families. Families are the basis of everything in our religion. Without families, the Torah cannot be implemented. Where are we to learn compassion, self-sacrifice, and the importance of the spiritual over the material except in a family? Where are ~~they~~ <sup>we</sup> to learn that relationships are more important than things? Only in a family.

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A family, in order to be effective, must have a father and a mother and children. That's why the expression "by their families according to the house of the fathers" is used over and over again.

In the Jewish tradition, we are taught that in many ways women are considered superior to men. It was the women who would not worship the golden calf. It was the women who paid no heed to the evil report of the spies who came back with a bad report of the land of Canaan. It was because of the moral strength of the women that the slavery in Egypt came to an end. The Rabbis teach that what was created later in the description of creation was on a higher level. Woman was created after man. They, also, say that when a woman thanks G-d for being created according to His will only she can make that blessing because she is closer to G-d's will than is man. A man has many more violent aggressive impulses than does a woman. The Rabbis, also, teach us that when G-d came to give the Torah to the Jewish people He said "thus shall you say to the ~~h~~ouse of Jacob and tell the ~~C~~hildren of Israel". The ~~H~~ouse of Jacob refers to the women. - ~~T~~he ~~C~~hildren of Israel to the men. The women were given the Torah first because G-d knew that if they would not accept it, the Torah would not endure in Judaism. A woman's unique moral courage is the necessary component to insure that the Torah will continue and be implemented.

Men do not have ~~to~~ risk their lives to bring forth life. Men do not have to face death in order to produce children and, because of this, men know that women are innately more courageous than men. Perhaps, this explains why men throughout the centuries have sought violence and war to demonstrate their own bravery. The bravery of men, though, in these circumstances does not produce life but the horrors of war. This is why the expression "the ~~H~~ouse of the ~~F~~athers" is used over and over again in discussing

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families. We might think that the raising of children should be left exclusively to women. This is not so. The self-sacrifice and willingness on the part of the man to share what he has and work for his wife and children is an essential component in the teaching of compassion and the importance of relationships over things, ~~to the next generation~~. Households that are headed only by mothers, unfortunately, are not as effective in bringing up children as households of two parent families. It is very, very difficult to raise a child in a one parent family and to inculcate into him or her the correct values. The self-denying example of the father as well as the moral courage of the mother is required.

In nature almost always the father has ~~almost~~ nothing to do with raising children. His job just takes a few seconds and he is gone. In many animal species if the male has not ~~left~~ already the female pushes the father away after children are born and attacks him if he comes near. When a child is born it is part of the mother and only very remotely of the father. The father does not have the same ties to it that the mother usually has. In the animal world this is very pronounced. We, though, are not animals. A father, by the very fact of his staying on and providing for his family, teaches his children through example the importance of self-sacrifice and self-abnegation. The father does not just pick up and spend the money all on himself. He does not leave the mother. If he does, then the children are scared and it is very hard to teach them the values of the Torah. However, when a father is devoted and a child sees the unselfishness of both his parents then he learns how to be compassionate and concerned for relationships rather than things. Immediate self-gratification is not stressed in a family. The good of the total family is stressed. One family member is willing to sacrifice for another. The spiritual, the unseen, the family bond is stressed, not things. This is what is required before

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we could receive the Torah, a sense of the importance of relationships, of the spiritual over the material.

The Rabbis teach us that on Shavuos we received the Ten Commandments because of the merit of Jacob. It does not mention the other patriarchs. This is because only Jacob succeeded in raising a family who all stayed together, who in the end helped and supported each other. We received the Ten Commandments on stone. The word for stone in Hebrew is "Even", which is a combination of the word Av and Ben, father and son. Only when father, son, mother, and daughter are together will the Ten Commandments endure. The family is the foundation stone upon which the Torah is based. Relationships are important, not things. Things may fail but relationships endure.

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The fourth book of the Bible begins with a census of the Jewish people. It tells us how many were in each tribe and it outlines the duties of the tribe of Levi according to their three clans. The Torah portion ends on a peculiar note. It says "and they shall not come to see as a sanctuary is being taken apart lest they die". Usually a Torah portion must end on a happy note. In fact, one of the difficulties of dividing up a Torah portion in order to get the required number of aliyahs and especially on Bar Mitzvahs when people want more aliyahs is that each Torah portion must end on a happy note. Here we see that a whole Torah portion ends on a sad note "lest they die". How can this be? What's more, what is so bad about people seeing the tabernacle being taken apart? After all, that was the purpose of the portable tabernacle. It was to be taken apart so that it could travel with the people. Also, what does the description of the Leviites' duties have to do with the census? It is true that people have to belong, that unless people feel that they belong they are not happy. It is one of the most unfortunate statistics during times of war mental illness decreases because people then know that they are part of something greater than themselves. They feel part of a whole. This Torah portion teaches everyone that he has a place, that he is needed and that he counts. This feeling of unity is important. Unfortunately, many times people try to forge this type of unity in a negative way. They try to incite the people against things instead of unifying them around positive things. For example, Argentina is having many economic problems, they have suppressed freedom, the junta there has killed between 10,000 and 15,000 people, they have problems with Chile so the only way they can achieve unity was to start up with the Falkland Islands. It is easy to achieve unity through destruction. It is easy always to get a crowd together who are willing to criticize others. It is easy to get people together to point out the faults of Synagogues or other institutions. It is hard, though, to get people together to work for positive things. People rely so much on appearances. The way things look on the outside is so important to them. Sometimes appearances are deceiving. What goes on beneath is what really counts. It takes, though, a very special kind of individual to watch when things are being taken apart and not to become disgusted or join in the boos. This Torah portion really ends on a happy note

not a sad note because it says that it is possible to unify people around positive things not negative things. You do not have to start a war in order to unify a people. We are not supposed to look at the negative things, at taking people apart and we do not have to. Each man can stand by his flag. Each person can have a part to play. We do not need to knock each other down. Unity can come from positive experiences. Let us not always look at appearances. Let us look at what is really deep down. This reminds me of a story about a woman who brought her husband to see a doctor. After the doctor examined the husband he took the wife aside and said, "You know, I don't like the way your husband looks", and the woman said, "Well, doctor, to tell you the truth, I don't either but he is good to the children". Each of us should remember we can unify people around positive experiences. If we are just going to unify people around negative things we will only destroy not build.

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In the Torah portion Bamidbar we learn how at the very end of the Sedra the Levites from the sub-clan of Kahas were to carry the furniture of the Tabernacle when it was to be moved. We learn "in this do for them and they shall live and will not die when they approach the Holy of Holies. Aaron and his sons will come and appoint each one to his services and burden and they will not come to see when the holy things are taken apart and die." This is a very strange statement. Firstly, because why should they not see when the articles of the Sanctuary were taken apart? Why could they only carry them after they were covered and, what's more, we have a principle that no Torah portion ends on a sad note. In fact, you

many times to add an extra Aliyah, but here we see that the whole Torah portion ends on a sad note. Some Rabbis say that the lines actually belong to the next Torah portion and that in the course of time some rabbis decided to end it here. However, others say this could not be so. We also have another strange concept. We learn in this Torah portion also about how the Levites had to be ritually clean. We learn that a vessel cannot become unclean unless it is whole. A broken vessel, even if it contains something, could not become ritually unclean. Only a whole vessel can become ritually unclean. The question is asked many times, how do we get inspiration? Where does inspiration come from? The reason why the Rabbis tell us the Levites could not see when the Tabernacle was taken apart was not only because it is depressing to see things taken apart and it is a lot easier to put things back together than take them apart, but also because we are to learn something about inspiration. In Judaism we do not believe that the total is equal to the sum of the parts. You can have all the parts present except one and yet fail. Inspiration is similar to electricity. You can have a billion dollar power plant and a million dollars worth of elevators, lines, and generators, but if one five-cent switch is not working you will not get any electricity. Inspiration comes when all the essential parts are working, when there is a connection between all the parts. It is true that if there is not a rug on the floor it will not affect the current. Too many people today are only concerned

about appearances. Judaism cannot work if we only have beautiful Shuls, if the essential ingredient which connects you to your G-d and fellow man is not meant. The Levites could not see the Tabernacle taken apart because the religion was not whole then. These parts could then become idolatries if worshipped alone. They have to stand as a connection between man and G-d, man and man, and man and community. If they do not then they are just objects of worship which then becomes idolatry. Inspiration and the strength of our religion comes from knowing you are connected. This is the same reason why only a whole vessel could become ritually unclean. A defective vessel does not even have the possibility of being impure. It is true that electricity is not only a benefit, but if used wrong it can harm a person but if you are not connected with the sources you cannot find inspiration. It is true some people may interpret the sources incorrectly and do wrong things but it comes from being connected. Judaism has lived for 3500 years because it has given inspiration to the people. It is not a fake or a phony, but you just cannot take a part here and a part there. You have to be connected as much as you can. I am reminded of the story of the teacher who asked her pupils who invented Communism. Nobody knew. She said, "I'll give you a clue. Was it a philosopher or scientist?" One boy said, "It must have been a philosopher." The teacher asked, "Why do you say that?" He replied, "Because if it would have been a scientist he would have tried it on animals first." Judaism has existed because it satisfies man's needs. It is tried and tested and can give you inspiration if you are connected.

# What A Jewish Education Must Have?

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We are all in agreement that Jewish education is essential if we are to be able to survive as Jews. Without Jewish education, Judaism will not survive. The problem is, what constitutes Jewish education? What is it that we must have in order for Jewish education to succeed? Just sending children to any kind of school whose curriculum may be filled with Jewish trivia will not assure that they will grow up to be committed Jews. A generation ago when Jews still married early and when we had lots of Jewish children (unlike today), most of them received some sort of Jewish education. Although they learned about the Holidays and how to daven and were prepared for their Bar Mitzvah, many of them turned their backs on Judaism by intermarrying and joining cults, and others became indifferent to Judaism by becoming non-affiliated. It seems that the Jewish education that many of them received was not sufficient to cause them to want to remain committed Jews.

In the Torah portion, Bamidbar, we have a strange statement. It says that the members of the subclan of the Tribe of Levi, called Kahas, when they went into the portable Tabernacle to carry its furniture to the next location in the desert, were not to see the Sanctuary when it was being taken apart lest they would die. This sentence is ~~doubly strange because it is found as~~ the last sentence in the Torah portion. We have a tradition that a Torah portion must always end on a happy note. This is one of the difficulties of dividing up a Torah portion because we must always end every Aliyah on a happy note. ~~Many times~~ when we want to split an Aliyah, we ~~not only~~ <sup>not only</sup> have to be careful that ~~not only are~~ <sup>are at least</sup> there three sentences ~~left in~~ <sup>from</sup> the end of paragraph, and that ~~not only are there are~~ <sup>at</sup> least three sentences from the beginning of the paragraph, but we also ~~have to~~ <sup>have to</sup> make sure

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that this Aliyah ends on a happy note. How can we possibly say that this Sedra ends on a happy note?

There are many types of learning. One type requires us to disassociate ourselves from the subject matter we are studying. We are supposed to try to not become involved with our subject matter. We are supposed to be merely objective observers of interesting phenomena. We are not at all to be emotionally involved. This is not Jewish education. Jewish education is meant to affect us. It is meant to motivate us to want to live a life filled with Jewish values. Jewish education is meant to teach values not just facts. Facts, alone, do not constitute a Jewish education. Moreover, when Jewish education becomes just the learning of a bunch of disjointed facts out of context, the whole enterprise can become absurd.

When the Tabernacle in the wilderness was being taken apart, those who were to carry it were not to see it being taken apart. The reason for this was that they would lose all respect for it. They would see individual pieces and snatches here and there and would not understand that all these fit into a harmonious whole. When you take something out of context, you can make it look ridiculous. This is what happens with a lot of Jewish experiences. When they are taken out of context, they are made to look ridiculous, and people do not any longer respect them or appreciate them. How many bad jokes have been made about the mikvah? It is very strange, too, since the whole Christian concept of baptism comes from our mikvah. Today, too, in an era in which women's rights are trumpeted, it is hard to understand why the mikvah, which gave and gives women great dignity and control over sex, is still disparaged. The same goes for many other Jewish concepts.

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We now understand the importance of the food chain and the effect of ingested chemicals on man, yet kashruth is still ridiculed, etc.

Learning isolated disjointed facts does not lead to a correct appreciation of a way of life unless that way of life is the basis of the culture and everyone understands the basic premises upon which that culture rests. In America today everyone understands the basis of America: freedom, self-government, respect for the individual, etc. Therefore, learning individual facts of American history buttresses and enhances an already previously made commitment to a particular way of life. The same is true of Judaism. Learning isolated disjointed facts can only be useful if there is a prior commitment to the Jewish way of life. That's why the rabbis tell us the fire that burned on the altar of the Tabernacle was never allowed to be extinguished. Even when the altar was moved along with the rest of the portable Tabernacle, the fire was never extinguished. Even when the altar was covered with a cloth, a metal plate separated the fire from the cloth covering and allowed it to keep burning. Fire, of course, is a symbol of commitment in the Jewish religion.

The Ner Tamid, or eternal light, which burns in every synagogue, is a symbol of the Jewish people's eternal devotion to Judaism. The most important ingredient in any Jewish education is commitment. A student should not be learning things in order to pass a test or even to acquire a skill. A student should learn things which will allow him to live a more meaningful life and, through the things he is learning, bring redemption to the world. The student must be made to feel that not only do the things he learns enhance his life but they are important for the world, too. The world needs

him to be a Jew.

One of the reasons why the Zionists at the turn of the century were successful was because they were not just creating a Jewish State for themselves, but they were creating it to be a light unto the nations. We are Jews not just for ourselves, but because the world needs the message of Judaism. That's why we learn that if the Jewish people on Mount Sinai would not have accepted the Torah, G-d would not have permitted the world to exist any longer. The most important elements in Jewish education should be the realization by the students that they are learning something which they need in order to lead a fulfilling and meaningful life, and which the world needs if there is ever going to be peace, justice, and brotherhood in the world. They are not just learning quaint customs. They are learning how to be a light to humanity.

Many times you will find that students who come from homes in which there is a great deal of Jewish observance but whose parents mock their own observances by always excusing themselves by saying, "This is the way I grew up" or "I can't help being this way", end up almost always abandoning most Jewish observances while, on the other hand, children who are raised in homes where the parents who, for one reason or another have not been able to observe as much of the Jewish religion as they would like but who know Judaism's importance and who try to impress upon their children that importance of Judaism for their lives and the world, end up to be more observant than their parents.

It is this commitment to see Judaism not as a group of customs and

