

Near the end of the Book of Devoreem (Numbers) in the Sedra of Mattos we have recounted a very interesting episode. The Bnei Yisroel, the Jewish people, have completed the conquest of TransJordan and are about ready to enter the Promised Land, the land on the other side of the Jordan. Moshe has been told that his days are numbered, and he has already appointed Joshua as his successor. It was then at this point in Jewish history when the promise that G-d had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was to be vindicated. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Mannaseh stepped forward and told Moses that they did not want to enter into the Promised Land, but that they would like to settle in the rich TransJordan plain, the other side of the Jordan. At first Moshe was aghast and severely chastized them for repeating the grievous sin of the generation who died in the wilderness - their lack of faith in their ability with G-d's help to conquer the land. These two and a half tribes quickly put Moses' mind to rest by reminding him that they were shepherds and that the land of TransJordan was perfect for grazing and that far from shirking their duty, they were willing to send all their armed men to fight with the other tribes until the land of Israel was subdued. All they wanted, and this is what is interesting, was to build pens for their sheep and fortified cities for their children first.

Sometimes we today, in our zeal to help our brethren elsewhere, especially in the land of Israel (and we would be committing a terrible sin if we would not), forget that we must secure our children. I am sure that none of us forget to pen our sheep - secure our livelihood. We fail to provide an education and educational facilities for our children. This we must do otherwise we may help others secure their places, but ours will be lost.

JULY 1981 - MASSEY
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

Many people have come to me and said, "Rabbi, what I expect from religion is peace of mind, what I expect is that my religion will cause me to be at peace with myself and with my surroundings and will assure that I will have no more anxieties and, what's more, that's what I expect of a Synagogue service, too. I expect to find in a Synagogue service peace and serenity, an uplifting otherworldly experience which will free me from all emotional turmoil and care". These people may believe that this is the function of religion and religious services but this is not Judaism's concept of religion or religious services. The Jewish religion does not offer peace of mind and does not even claim that this is something worth striving for. Other religions may strive in their religious services to transport man to a heavenly setting. We try the exact opposite. We try to bring G-d down to earth. That's why aesthetics have never been a major concern of Jewish worship. Aesthetics are meant to influence the worshipper from the outside, to take the worshipper from where he is and to transport him to a different realm which will then leave its impress on him when he descends back down to earthly concerns. Jewish worship has been concerned with man in the midst of his earthly human concerns, and strives to influence the worshipper from the inside, from where he is. It does not try to transport man up to heaven. What it tries to do is to bring G-d down to earth. It tries to say that we can sanctify even our weaknesses, that G-d is with us even in our troubles as long as we strive to lead the moral life. It does not try to remove our humanity from us. It, instead, tries to impress upon us that in spite of our troubles and because, and only because, we are human can we serve G-d and do great things. In other words, we do not try to escape our human condition but we say that it is because of our human condition that G-d wants and needs us as His junior partner in creation.

JULY 1981
PAGE TWO
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

Judaism does not try to escape the world. It tries to sanctify it. Because we are in this world, we are going to be met with inevitable frustration and pain, but this should not deter us. It should not cause us to despair and it should not cause us to lose hope. The purpose of religion, as we see it, is not to give us peace of mind but to allow us to be G-d's partner in creation. Being creative is, in itself, very anxiety-producing. We are always trying to improve, to do better. If we have complete peace of mind, according to Judaism, something is the matter with us. We have failed religiously.

Our religion should always make us feel a little uncomfortable. That's why even though a Sefer Torah is our most precious object, it is not to be venerated. We do not worship it. Physical contact with a Torah will not purify us. In fact, the exact opposite is true. When a person touches a Sefer Torah he becomes ritually impure. Ritual impurity was a psychological state not a moral state. Any time we would touch the dead or come into contact with things that might depress us or cause us to lose hope, we became ritually unclean. The Torah, too, may make us feel uncomfortable because we know we are not living up to everything in it, but ^{written} ~~it~~ ^{the Torah} is

? supposed to ^{make us feel uncomfortable} It is not supposed to give us peace of mind. It is supposed to give us meaning and purpose and goals in this life. Peace of mind

~~actually~~ does not bring happiness, ^{Working} for positive goals with others ~~is~~

? ^{brings happiness} ~~does~~. Jewish worship is, also, meant to stress the fact that we must be creative. Jewish prayer is not passive. Everybody says the ^{all words of G-d} prayer, and the Cantor ~~only~~ ^{just} repeats the last line. It, also, stresses that we live in this world surrounded by others, that we need them and that they need us.

A Minyon is necessary for worship. Every Jew prays himself, but the prayers ⁱⁿ of others around him strengthens and helps him.

JULY 1981

PAGE THREE

Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

Many of these thoughts are found in the Torah portion, Massey, which talks about the stages of the journey of the Jewish people from Egypt to Israel. It says "that they went from place to place" without going into great detail. It states, "and these are their Maasayhem L'Motzeayhem," their journeys according to their going forths." We have here a redundant expression. It would have been sufficient to just say "according to their going forths" or "according to their journeys," but the idea expressed here is that life, itself, is a journey. Nothing is static in life. We cannot have peace of mind. We cannot create islands of time and even of place. The winds blow and the storms come and nothing ever remains exactly the same. Our journey in life, though, should be marked by our going forths, by our endeavors to mold and shape the forces about us so that they will be beneficial and productive and produce a more balanced and better world.

The Jewish religion's primary concern is with balance, with synthesis. That's why in every generation we need to have Halachic authorities and cannot rely wholly on the past. All the forces must be constantly evaluated. We have a living Torah. Precedent, per se, is not binding in Jewish law. That is the reason there is no conflict between science and religion. Science tries to analyze how everything works. Our religion strives to put everything together. Judaism is not primarily interested in how things are or were but what man, ~~we~~, should do now. New discoveries, new modes of life must always be taken into consideration and brought into the consensus. We are not Amish who reject electricity or automobiles, etc. but all new knowledge must be brought and applied within the Jewish framework. This requires effort and striving. We will never be finished with the job and we will never be able to achieve so-called peace of mind. Our religion calls for continuous creativity.

JULY 1981

PAGE FOUR

Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

During this month we will observe the fast of Shiva Oser B'Tamuz which commemorates the breaching of the walls of Jerusalem which culminated in the destruction of the Temple. It, also, commemorates the breaking of the first tablets of the Ten Commandments which were given to Moses. Moshe had no difficulty breaking these tablets even though they were given to him by G-d because they, intrinsically, ^{they} were of no value. Their only value ^{lay} ~~was~~ in teaching people how to live. The people who worshipped the Golden Calf thought they could gain security and peace of mind worshipping the Golden Calf. The Ten Commandments were not for them. The Ten Commandments can only be given to those who realize that what is necessary is a continual struggle to make this world a better place. It will not be easy and it will not be simple. It has its ups and downs. Jerusalem was destroyed, but it can be rebuilt and it is now being rebuilt. Jewish worship tells us that G-d will help us if we will help Him by trying to live good and moral lives. We are not supposed to ascend to heaven when we pray. We are supposed to open our hearts so G-d can enter, so He can give us the strength to help Him make this a better world. Peace of mind is not for this world. Meaningful moral creativity is. *no, he's not*

A3.
MASSEY 1982
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

This Shabbos we read the two portions of Mattos/Massey. In it we learned about the difficulty of dealing with people, of dealing with each other. We learn that it is not just simple to list a list of rules and say everybody must abide by them, because there are always exceptions. We started the Torah portion by learning about vows. Judaism discourages vows because we are not always in the position of being able to keep our vows. Many times conditions arise which make it impossible to keep our vows. There is a procedure which we can go through to free ourselves of our vows, but it is a very unsatisfactory situation. In life things are not always so simple. When we deal with people we have to know what is really troubling them, what the problem is. We do not just act on intellect. Many times we know exactly what is right or wrong, but we still do the wrong thing anyway. We all know that smoking leads to cancer but very few people have quit smoking. When we deal with each other we have to deal with each other on an emotional as well as an intellectual level. We have to continue living with each other. In the Torah portion, Mattos, when we learn about the war that Moshe waged against the Midianites we learn that he waged it as G-d had commanded which means that when he besieged the cities he had to leave one side open so that those who wanted to could flee. Those who chose to fight were dealt with very harshly, but those who wanted to flee could do so. Moshe is a symbol of Din, of rules and regulations. He is a symbol of the intellect. When the Jewish people came back from the war and had not followed all his rules correctly he became very angry. Right afterwards we learn because he became angry G-d's spirit left him and it says Elazer, the Kohen, said to the men of the army, "This is the Chukas of the Torah". A Chok in Judaism means something that cannot be changed. It is just arbitrary. Elazer then proceeds to say that non-kosher vessels that were used on the fire must be cleansed by the fire. Others can be cleansed by water. The Rabbis believe this has a larger meaning. Those who have gone through an emotional experience can only be cured through an emotional experience. Those who have had an intellectual experience can be cured by an intellectual experience. Unfortunately, many of us get these levels mixed up. People who have had emotional experiences cannot be set right just by a torrent of words. They must be given warmth and kindness, comfort, etc. We exist on both

intellectual and emotional levels. There are many people who have keen intellects but emotionally they cannot handle their problems at all. That's why rules alone cannot control anything. We Jews are known as a people of law. We have Din. We also have Chesed. You cannot have one without the other. We realize that there are always extenuating circumstances. Rules have to bend whether it is dues evaluation, community, etc. It is like the story my brother tells me about a man in Israel who got in trouble with the police. He said, "I understand I am entitled to one phone call". The jailor said, "Yes, that's right". He said, "But, I have to call my mother and my wife and my lawyer and my sister-in-law.....". The jailor said, "O.K., but no more than ten". You can just imagine that in America. We need rules, though, to avoid anarchy and chaos. On the other hand, rules alone just will not work. People suffer and have emotional problems and it takes more than just explaining rules to get them back in shape. In the Torah portion, Massey, we learn about Aaron's death. We are given the exact date of his death, the first of Av. His yehrzeit will be this Tuesday night and Wednesday. We are not given the date of anybody else's death in the Torah, only Aaron's. Aaron was a symbol of peace and understanding. He could deal with people on an emotional level. He knew how to bring them back when they did bad things. When he died the whole people mourned. When Moshe died only the elite, a few of his students, mourned. After all, only a few people have I.Q.s of 180, but everybody has emotional needs. Aaron died on the first of Av. On the 9th of Av terrible things happened to our people. I do not think that it is a coincidence that the Torah mentions his death on the first of Av. We are to learn that without understanding we will destroy people not save or help them. The Talmud says we are to push away with the left hand and draw close with the right hand. It is not enough to just say someone broke a fule and I am going to cut him off completely. It just does not work. We also learn in the Torah portion, Massey, that if someone killed someone accidentally but with contributory negligence he had to go to a city of refuge and there he had to live until the Kohen Godol died. The Gemora says that the mother of the High Priest used to bring food for these really imprisoned men so that they should not pray for the death of her son. The Rabbis all ask, "Well, what if they should pray

MASSEY 1982
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky
PAGE THREE

for the death of the Kohen Godol? Would that make any difference? Is G-d going to listen to the prayers of violent men to kill a good man?" The answer, obviously, is no. There are many reasons given but the one I think is the best is that even though these people were being punished according to the law kindness and consideration should be given to them even though the mother of the Kohen Godol knew they were probably praying for his death. We need both Din and Chesed. We need both Moshe and Aaron. Many times people do crazy things and with a little understanding we can bring them back to the right path. There is a cute story I heard the other day. A man came into a psychiatrist's office. He was dressed like Napoleon. The psychiatrist asked him who was he. He said, "Napoleon". The psychiatrist asked him what was wrong with him. He said, "Nothing, I am here because of my wife, Josephine". The doctor said, "What's wrong with Josephine?" The man answered, "Well, she runs around the house all day claiming she is Sadie Rabinowitz". Let us use both Din and Chesed in our dealings with people.

MASSEY 1984
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

In the Torah portion Massey we learn about the various stops that the Jewish people made on their journey to the Land of Israel. We learn that their journey has its ups and downs. There were some places which were bitter and other places in which they made great progress. It says, "And Moshe wrote their going outs according to their journeys according to the Word of G-d," and then it says, "These are their journeys according to their going outs." Why did the Torah have to mention their going outs according to their journeys twice, and why, the second time, didn't the Torah put their journeys according to their going outs? One was according to the Word of G-d, and the second time it does not say it was according to G-d. Why, too, did the Torah list all these stops? The Torah, which is usually so terse with language, why did it say they traveled from Miska and they camped in Chashmona, and then they traveled from Chashmona and camped in Moseirus? Why should the Torah mention all this? It seems to me that here we have something very important which is being missed by modern man. There is a great deal of unhappiness today and a lot of unhappiness is caused because people do not realize what life is all about. Life is a journey. Life is never static. Things are always in flux, constantly changing. We can never rest in this life. We never can achieve a certain plateau and then everything will be hunky dory. We just do not get married and live happily ever after. We can get married and live happily ever after, but it takes a lot of work. Life's changes are constantly bombarding us. In America today we feel that if we do one certain thing we will get instant happiness. If a person will only lose 30 pounds he will be assured the good and wonderful life. If a person will jog every day everything will turn out perfect. If a person will use this beauty cream he or she will have instant happiness. It never works. People conceive of life as a war. We will win the battle and then have peace of mind. There is no such thing. Jacob thought that he would go back to the Land of Canaan, that Jacob will sit, everything will be okay, you have to wait for Laban, he made peace with Esau, but things were not all right. He then had the terrible problems with Joseph and the rest of his sons, slavery, etc. In life we are constantly being buffeted by problems and challenges and changes. That's why immediately after we learn about how

MASSEY 1984

Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

PAGE TWO

the people came to the Land of Canaan, we learn that they were commanded to destroy all the idols in the Land of Canaan. Idols are static. They do not grow. They do not change. This was what was wrong with the golden calf. Gold does not rust or change. It stays the same. In life we have to recognize that there must be constant changes, and we have to grow with them. We have to mold these changes so that they will lead us to a goal of a moral and just society and allow us to become a better person. There are two ways a person can handle change. One is to start with the going out and to look toward the goals. He can take change and try to mold it and shape it so he will become a better person and society will become better. Other people start the opposite way. Their goals are determined by their going out, by what they are now. All they want to do is to protect what they have. They want to stop change. They usually are never successful because change cannot be stopped. They end up doing hateful things because they resent the march of time: mothers who do not want their children to grow up, people who are still being controlled and manipulated by parents and grandparents who are long gone. We can handle change by molding and shaping it the right way always maintaining the right values or we can try to just maintain what we have trying to keep all change away and end up being hateful and spiteful people. Each of us must grow and our society must grow. We can never be satisfied with being what we are otherwise we will retrogress, not progress. This is the meaning of the story a Chassidic rabbi used to tell about a king who went into a rebellious province. A sharpshooter took aim at him, but a soldier next to him pulled up the king's horse and saved him. The king asked the soldier, "What can I do for you?" The soldier answered, "I have a mean sergeant. Please remove him." The king said he would but he looked at the soldier and said, "Why didn't you ask to be a sergeant or lieutenant or captain?" That's the trouble with many people. They do not look to mold and shape events of the future, to make things better for everyone and themselves. They are only looking to guard their own little bailiwick. That's like the story I heard that when Noah's ark rested and he and his family left with all the animals, Noah's wife said, "Noah, this ark is a blight on the landscape. It looks terrible. It's cluttering up the whole atmosphere."

MASSEY 1984

Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

PAGE THREE

Noah answered, "Dont' worry, I left two termites there." Unfortunately, that's the problem with many people. Instead of taking an ark which is now useless and using its boards to make beautiful buildings or in order to construct a factory, all they can think about is getting rid of it. What G-d wants us to do is to let us use change to make life better and to grow both our society and ourselves.

MASSEY

Education, Automatic Responses to Thinking

JULY 1985

Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

There are two different types of education. There is a type of education which teaches us a skill, and a type of education which teaches us to think. These two types of education are almost always mutually exclusive. They cannot be ^{taught} given at the same time in the same course. When we learn a skill, we must learn the skill so well that the skill becomes second nature to us. We do not want to think about how we should perform this skill when we are performing it. If we think about what we are doing when we are doing a particular skill, we will not be able to do it well. When a person types his fingers should go automatically to the different letters. ^{to type,} He should not consciously have to think where to put the index finger or little finger, etc. ~~in order to type.~~

The purpose of this first type of education is to teach us to perform skills automatically without any type of awareness or self-consciousness. When we are driving a car and see a red light, we should automatically put our foot on the brake without even thinking about it. This type of education's purpose is, so to speak, to put a computer program in our brain entitled "Driving a Car," "Typing," "Arithmetic," etc. Any time we want to call on these skills we, so to speak, push a button and they work themselves.

The other type of education is meant to teach us how to think. In this type of education, we do not want things to be automatic. We are taught to examine everything critically, even the things we have taken for granted since childhood. One of the marks of a creative person is that he is able to immediately spot the things that we do automatically, question them, and then propose alternative solutions.

JULY 1985

Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

PAGE TWO

Most of the time, creative people's ideas are not accepted immediately because the people around them have been taught to look at the problems the creative man is dealing with in an automatic way. They have to, so to speak, turn off their programs before they can appreciate what the creative person has created.

Both these types of education are crucial in a society. We need them both. We need to learn how to automatically respond. This helps in communications. Everybody then knows what certain things mean. That's the reason many firms today only want to hire college graduates. Most of the time these firms place college graduates in jobs that have nothing at all to do with their majors in university, but the reason they want to hire college graduates is because all college graduates generally react automatically ^{the} ~~to~~ same to any given situation. They can communicate easily. It is essential when people work together that they know what each other means. ^{the} otherwise the office or factory will degenerate into a group of bickering people.

That's, too, why ~~when~~ ^{who} people come from other cultures ~~they~~ have a hard time in America. In America the things we do automatically many times have a different meaning in another culture, and certain things done in other cultures automatically give off wrong signals here in America. For example, in Arab countries it is considered a sign of friendship, and only friendship, for men to walk down the street holding hands. In America, of course, this would have an entirely different meaning.

Most education in America today is really geared to teaching skills.

