

54. "Leadership Development Programs in the Conservative Movement, A Response," *The Melton Journal* #16 (Spring/Summer, 1983), pp. 20-21. This article was a strong denial of the statement by Chanan Alexander in the previous issue that some of Ramah's early leaders had "sought spiritual rejuvenation through charismatic rather than normative forces." *The Melton Journal* #15 (Winter, 1983), p. 25.
55. "Ramah—The Early Years," p. 22.
56. "Jewish Education," p. 153.
57. See "A Paradigm for Jewish Education," *Op. cit.*
58. This is a point which Dorph made several times in his dissertation.
59. Shlomo Shulstinger, founder of Massad and its director for almost forty years, attributed the camps' closing to three major factors: incompetent administration, which resulted in financial difficulties; precipitous changes in educational policy, and oppressive religious fanaticism. See "On the Demise of the Massad Camps," *Bizaron* 5 (N.S.) (September 1983): 103-6.
60. "Jewish Education," p. 153.

Taly: A New Alternative in Israeli Education

Walter I. Ackerman and Gerald L. Showstack

In mid-July, 1984, Israeli newspapers gave prominent coverage to a heated controversy between two groups of parents in Gillo Aleph, a section of a sprawling neighborhood in south Jerusalem developed in the aftermath of the Six Day War. At issue was the proposed opening in September, the start of the 1984-85 school year, of a new elementary school in the area.

The seeds of the strife had been sown a year earlier when, in anticipation of the 1983-84 school year, a group of parents had organized a registration campaign for the establishment of a Taly class in one of the neighborhood's existing schools. Taly is an acronym—*Tigbur Limmudei Yehadut* (Augmented Jewish Studies). According to the circular distributed by "Parents for Taly in Gillo" the proposed class, a first grade, was to be the beginning of an educational program whose goal was "... to educate our children for a Jewish way of life based on the values of the Jewish tradition... and to teach them tolerance, openness and respect for their fellows." The mimeographed notice stressed that the organizing committee was composed of people of divergent views and different approaches to Judaism and its traditions. All of them, however, were united, according to the flyer, in the feeling that existing programs—in both the State and State Religious Schools—limited the range of choice necessary for the autonomous development of "their children's identification with the Jewish tradition." More specifically, Taly was presented as an attempt "(1) to develop an appreciation of Judaism by emphasizing the variety of its customs and the daily experiences it provides; (2) to stimulate an awareness of the problem of Jewish identity in Israel and the Diaspora and to heighten identification with Judaism through familiarity with its many different facets; (3) to educate children to relate to others in the spirit of the *mitzvoth* which govern man's behavior toward his fellow;

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(4) to encourage teachers and pupils alike to engage in self-inquiry in all that pertains to the tradition and other areas of instruction." The enrollment campaign stressed the desire of its organizers to bring together children from families of all shades of opinion and attitude. At the same time, it informed prospective parents that the daily regimen of the class would include prayer and that boys would be required to wear *kipot* during those parts of the day devoted to *Limmudei Kodesh* (Jewish Studies).

Opposition to Taly: Symptomatic of Israeli Cultural Tensions

The apparent success of the single first grade class, conducted as a "track" in the Gilo Aleph State Elementary School, despite the objections of the school's principal and its Pedagogic Council, encouraged supporters of Taly to plan for the expansion of the program. The prospect of additional Taly Classes at Gilo Aleph spawned a determined opposition among other parents. Against this background the Ministry of Education and Culture announced the opening of a Taly school, to be housed in a separate building belonging to Gilo Aleph, which would consist initially of four grades.²

Opponents of the proposed school charged, among other things, that the real motive for its establishment was the desire of certain parents to remove their children from the integrated neighborhood elementary school. "Only a small percentage of the parents are interested in Augmented Jewish Studies; what they really want is a selective, elitist school."³ One of the leaders of the opposition put it another way: "... why should state funds be used to cater to the 'caprice' or 'hypocrisy' of parents who want another variant of religious education? The father doesn't pray but he wants his child to pray in school; what kind of joke is that?"⁴ Still another parent wondered why the Ministry had not opened the proposed school to children from the entire district instead of limiting enrollment to those in the Gilo Aleph registration area, thereby encouraging the "skimming off" of pupils from that school.⁵ Yitzhak Welber, the Secretary General of the Teachers Union, echoed these sentiments when he observed that "Parents who want to establish classes which offer 'Augmented Jewish Studies' are snobs who don't want their children in the underachieving State Religious School."⁶ Other critics of Taly saw the program as an attempt by the Minister of Education and Culture, Mr. Zevulun Hammer of the National Religious Party, to introduce religion into the secular State Schools. Welber again spoke for many when he stated, "I don't object to Jewish Studies in the State (non-religious) schools. But not Jewish Studies in the religious sense. If the Minister of Education were not religious himself, I would have no qualms. As it is I think that the goals of the Ministry are not so innocent."⁷ Despite all these objections and others which challenged the legality of the Minister's move, the Taly school in Gilo Aleph opened as planned.

The line of argument drawn against Taly in Gilo Aleph, although unusual in its intensity, was not unlike that used by its opponents in other parts of the country. The fact that a program voluntarily chosen by its parents for the instruction of their children in Judaism and its religious practice could engender such controversy tells much about the social climate of education in Israel: the rigid wall of separation built by the State Education Act of 1953 which divides between State Schools and State Religious Schools; the widely varying levels of scholastic achievement which reflect and exacerbate differences in socio-economic status; the tensions created by a policy of integration whose aim is to bring together deprived children, mostly Sephardic, and their more advantaged peers, mostly Ashkenazic; the contradictions inherent in the attempts of a structurally centralized school system to encourage the autonomy of local schools; the sense that State Schools have lost direction and suffer a lack of transcendent purpose. As is often the case in public education, in Israel and in other democratic countries, the introduction of a new educational program became the occasion for the airing of deep-seated grievances which obscure the purport of the innovation.

Taly Reflects Parents' Concerns

The children who entered the Taly school in Gilo Aleph in September, 1984, were part of a network of thirty classes in various parts of the country—some of them "tracks" in State Schools and others schools in their own right. At the start of the 1985-1986 school year, the number of classes had increased to 48 with a population of approximately 1500. Officials of the Ministry of Education and Culture report that they have received inquiries regarding the establishment of additional Taly classes from newly organized parent groups in several major communities.⁸ Numbers alone, however, do not convey all that is involved in the growth of Taly. The significance of the program stems from attributes of process which are perhaps as important as its content. The introduction of Taly in each location has been, by and large, the product of parent initiative. It has required the coming together of a group of parents who were willing to devote time and energy to dealing with local education authorities, not always cooperative or sympathetic; organizing a registration campaign, sometimes at personal expense; and involving themselves in unold details spared the family which chooses the regular route of a State School or a State Religious School. The dedication and involvement of parents not only give Taly much of its *elan*; they teach that determined effort can breach the walls of an entrenched and often self-protective bureaucratic system.

The steady if not spectacular growth of Taly reflects the dissatisfaction felt, in some quarters at least, with the approaches to Judaism and religious practice in both the State and State Religious Schools as well as concern over the divisiveness which has characterized Israeli society in

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recent years. Some parents have undoubtedly used Taly for purposes other than those for which it was intended, not unlike families in the United States who enroll their children in a Jewish day school in order to "escape" from the public schools. The vast majority, however, would clearly subscribe to the sentiments expressed by the chairman of the Parents' Committee of the Taly school in Hod Hasharon: "The Taly program is an initiative of parents who want their children educated in the spirit of the values of the tradition and love of country. As educators and citizens who are concerned about our people and country, we felt compelled to enrich the curriculum of the State School in which our children are enrolled with these elements. We want our children to grow into a generation which has a deep connection with itself and its country and not one whose roots are shallow and suffers from alienation and indifference. The Taly program is based on principles of *Torah im derekh eretz*, toleration and understanding, walking humbly with the Lord, and the spirit of God rather than force and might so that our children will grow to respect all men—Jew and Arab, religious and secular—and all expressions of all religions."⁹ That statement resonates with the strains which mark life in Israel today.

Taly and the Masorti Movement

The origins of Taly date back to the opening of the Masorti School in the French Hill section of Jerusalem in 1976. Starting out as a branch of an existing school, within two years the Masorti School became an autonomous institution. The school's rapid growth encouraged efforts to establish a secondary school informed by similar aspirations. The idea of an alternative to the State and the State Religious School originated with parents critical of both; many of them were *olim* from the United States who had been identified with the Conservative movement. The religious public school was unacceptable because, while it "... stresses the cultivation of values and a commitment to tradition, [it] tends towards dogmatism, is intellectually stifling and demands a prior adherence to a fixed way of life." The State School was equally lacking because, even though "... characterized by intellectual openness and because, even though the regnant intellectual currents of modern society, [it] almost ignores the Jewish moral and religious component." What these parents sought was a Jewish education for their children which "... would cultivate Jewish and universal values together with a positive commitment to Jewish tradition... [and] draw upon all spheres of scholarship—both traditional and modern—while focusing on the unique nature of Jewish founders as developed and experienced throughout the ages."¹⁰ The founders of the Masorti School wanted, among other things, to escape the harmful polarization, reinforced by the two parallel public school systems, which sets the secular against the religious; their goal was to demonstrate that it was possible to inculcate a commitment to the tradition without

becoming "... entrenched behind the walls of an inflexible Judaism, largely shaped in the Diasporas of Europe and the Orient, which is increasingly irrelevant to the realities of modernity."

From its very inception, the school developed a pattern of observance which was intended less as a prescription for personal behavior than as an opportunity to experience an important aspect of the Jewish tradition. Daily prayer at the start of the school day is considered an initiation into a regimen of obligation; at the same time it comes to acquaint the youngster with a world of thought and feeling not easily transmitted "if not altogether neglected, in other settings. Significant rituals in the life of the school emphasize religious motifs and declare its purpose to be something more than to provide its pupils with "a little Yiddishkeit." For example, in State Schools the beginning of the formal study of Bible is marked by a ceremony, generally held during the school day and attended by those parents who can free themselves from other obligations, in which each child is given a *Tanakh*. In the Masorti School, the occasion, one of the highlights of the elementary school years, is celebrated in a synagogue as part of the Havdalah service. The shift in time and setting not only permits the participation of the entire family; it also creates an opportunity for the development of a sense of community. At the same time it teaches parents and children alike the details of a ceremony probably not observed at home and, perhaps most important of all, indicates that the Bible is primarily a religious document. "The "essential qualities" of the Masorti School, at least as perceived by those responsible for determining its character, are spelled out in a curricular statement prepared early in its history. That document posited an openness to individual modes of teaching and learning which would parallel the school's stance as an institution which strives to bring together children from all varieties of outlook and practice without dictating patterns of personal observance. It stressed the commitment of the school to questioning and exploring new interpretations of the Jewish tradition "... while confronting the richness and knowledge and interpretations accumulated in the past." It challenged the school to provide its students with opportunities and experiences which foster the skills and aptitudes necessary for responsible choice; the curriculum was to be a framework for the identification of "significant questions" and an avenue of search for answers of personal meaning."¹²

From Slogans to Reality

The translation of the slogans of educational aspiration into the language of everyday school practice is a difficult and complicated task under any circumstance. Some sense of the issues confronting the Masorti School and the manner in which they were addressed may be gained from the following discussion:¹³

Aurham: At our last meeting we began to talk about prayer. I see four possibilities: (1) prayer is not required and the school just disregards that

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area; (2) prayer is not obligatory but the school encourages initiatives and works towards helping them come about; (3) two separate kinds of activities—traditional prayer and an alternative in the form of a workshop; (4) one framework—obligatory prayer on some days and workshops on others.

Yossi: There should be prayer in the school. Choosing will be difficult for the kids. I personally am in favor of the third option.

Shalom: There's a kind of contradiction in what we're doing here—if we think that prayer is a meaningful experience, then there's a danger in letting the kids decide whether or not to pray.

Mikhal: We had two meetings with eighth graders. In the first meeting they were somewhat negative about prayer; they also argued, however, against leaving the choice to them . . . they were hesitant about having to choose. Some of the kids suggested that everybody pray but that the format be changed from time to time.

Yossi: We have to get straight about our goals when we talk about prayer in the school. I'm not ready to give up on the idea that a pupil in our school ought to know something about the values of prayer and internalize them; and as much as possible without being forced. But there has to be some obligatory minimum. That minimum ought to expose the kids to prayer as a central element of Jewish culture.

Shalom: I'm interested in exposing our pupils to the development of prayer in the Biblical and rabbinic periods. The way it took form afterwards and in modern attitudes.

Aterah: That sounds like a course in the history of prayer.

Shalom: It is a course. But that's how I understand prayer. Those are the things that should come out during prayer.

Mikhal: I think there are two kinds of prayer, personal and public. Personal prayer is more important to me even though I know that the public side is more developed in Judaism. I would really like the school to emphasize personal, creative prayer. It's important to me that there be something special about prayer in our school . . .

Yossi: I've done creative prayers in class. I'm sure it wasn't according to halakhah. I don't think we did anything wrong. But . . . still there has to be some sort of framework.

Ruti: I agree with Yossi. Traditional prayer is important. A pupil has a right to learn something about a specific Jewish activity called prayer. Our kids should feel at home in prayer and the Siddur.

Shalom: I'm against using prayer as a way of creating identification with the Jewish people. I'd rather the kids identify with Judaism, that's what forms Jewish identity.

Aterah: We ought not allow individual choice in the seventh and eighth grades. The whole class should decide how they want to run prayer and a workshop. I don't think we should be bound by halakhah. Let each class work out its program. In the ninth grade each kid can choose what to do . . .

When the Masorti School first began in 1976 the pupil population reflected the predominantly middle class character of the neighborhood.

English speakers had a high profile. Both of these factors led to accusations that the school was an Anglo-Saxon preserve created to escape integration. Three years later, when the newly independent school consisted of three grades, 85% of the sixty new first graders were the children of native Israelis. A determined registration campaign had also succeeded in bringing a number of children from Musrara, one of the Jerusalem's most disadvantaged neighborhoods, into the school.

In pressing for the creation of a new kind of school not easily accommodated by existing frameworks, the French Hill group resorted to a little-known and less frequently used provision of the State Education Act of 1953 which, under certain conditions, permits parents to determine 25% of a school's curriculum. There is no little irony in the fact that a section of the law, intended originally to protect the unique character and ideology of kibbutz schools from encroachment by legislation which wrested control of education from political parties and vested the State with the authority to conduct public schools, was used to provide the legal basis for a religiously oriented school.

The early effort in Jerusalem, with only the support of Mr. Yosef Gadish who then headed a bitterly opposed municipal office of education, was sustained and even encouraged when Mr. Zevulun Hammer became Minister of Education and Culture. Attacked on both the right and left—by Orthodox quarters for legitimizing a form of religious education which they claimed teaches the philosophy and practice of the American Conservative movement, and by secularists for attempting, however gently, to introduce religion into the State Schools—Hammer has justified his position in several ways. The recognition granted the approach to Judaism and Jewish studies championed by the Masorti School may be seen as but one example of his efforts as Minister to make the school system more responsive to the needs of specific sectors of the country's population and of his belief that education is best served by a pluralism which affords individual schools the freedom to develop distinctive styles and programs. "More specifically, Hammer's belief in the formative power of the Jewish religious tradition led him to view his tenure as Minister as an opportunity to expose children in the State Schools to the teachings of classical Judaism and . . . to build a bridge between the religious and non-religious sectors, and to enhance the role of a Judaism that discharges its responsibilities to the entire community."¹⁵ Hammer has been forthright in stating his conviction . . . that the persuasive power of the Torah is so strong that many will come to observe its precepts, but only because they want to. "In turning to the non-observant public he suggested a "non-coercive covenant": "I said I would not impose a religious way of life on anyone, but that you must commit yourselves to open the books of Jewish tradition that had been closed to you . . . No one is going to force the non-Orthodox to pray, but they should at least know the Shema Yisrael."¹⁶ He indicated that, were he to remain in office, he would expand this type of program to include 200 schools; he was determined in his resolve "not to

let an atheistic minority dictate the contents of education for all elements of the population." It is worth noting that Hammer had originally proposed that Taly be incorporated within the State Religious School System. That offer was rejected outright.

The success of the Masorti School in Jerusalem spurred parent groups in other parts of the country. Similar classes and schools were established in Beer Sheva, Hod Hasharon, Tel Aviv and Ramat Gan. The responsibility for guiding these schools, designing curricula, providing in-service training for teachers and stimulating further growth was assigned to a Department of the Ministry created earlier by Hammer, "the unit for the deepening of Jewish education." The name Masorti adopted by the schools, because it is also used by the Conservative movement in Israel, was replaced by Taly.

"The Real Problem is the *Daavening*."

The change in name calls attention to the claims of the Orthodox opposition which views Taly as an effort by Conservative Judaism to establish a network of schools in Israel. That perception is not altogether incorrect, even if exaggerated in its attribution of some "grand design" to the American movement. In more than one locality, the founders of the Taly school, even though acting as individuals and not as representatives of an organization, were Americans who had been affiliated with the movement, either as professionals or lay people, prior to *gilyah*. Discussions as to the nature and philosophy of Taly reflect Conservative ideology; actual practice has invited comparison with the Solomon Schechter Schools in the United States. In addition, the Conservative Masorti foundation, even though remaining in the background and somewhat ambiguous about its role, has provided Taly with support in a variety of ways.

The assigning of responsibility for Taly to a unit of the Ministry has been variously interpreted. There are those who view it as a measure of cooption designed to set certain limits. A more positive appraisal understands the move as an indication of the Ministry's readiness to support parents who are prepared to exercise their legal right to promote school programs suited to their needs. Supporters of Hammer consider the decision of a piece with the policy which led him, early in his tenure, to create the "unit for the deepening of Jewish education." That unit, a committee of the Pedagogic Secretariat and thus structurally independent of the departments for the State and State Religious Schools in the Ministry, was established in order to stimulate study of traditional Jewish texts and practices in the State Schools. The approach of the unit is perhaps best exemplified by its B'nai Mitzvah program, widely used in junior high schools.

The formal recognition granted the hitherto local efforts of parents has important implications for Taly. The looseness of independent effort was

joined to an agency responsible for offering definition and providing direction. The former director of the "unit for deepening Jewish education" viewed Taly as a significant breach of a school system which made no provision for families whose beliefs fell outside the simplistic categories of secular and religious. The promise of Taly, as far as he was concerned, and what set it apart from previous programs aimed at heightening the "Jewish consciousness" of pupils in the State School, was the readiness of parents, generally non-observant, to expose their children to a pattern of religious observance. The regimen of mitzvot as it evolves in each school provides the "experiential context" without which "the study of Judaism can have no real personal meaning." At the same time, the very idea of religious practice in a State School, even if chosen voluntarily by parents, stirred opposition to Taly in and outside of the Ministry: "No one knows or really cares about what is taught in class; the real problem is the *daavening*."¹⁷

Another official of the "unit for deepening Jewish education," like the former director an Orthodox Jew who is more directly involved in developing policy and programs for Taly, while not denying the symbolic significance of prayer, for both supporters and opponents, did not think it the central issue. According to him the most troublesome problem was the lack of a coherent ideology which would serve as a framework for dealing with specific issues. The fact that Taly schools begin the day with prayer, recite blessing on various occasions, and have made other religious observances a regular part of classroom routine is not of itself a criterion which provides guidance for dealing with a host of nettlesome questions—what form and content should prayers assume; will boys be required to wear *tzitzit*; if some ceremonies are observed, why are others neglected; what is to be included in Jewish studies; how will traditional texts be treated? Put another way, the issue is whether Taly will become just a watered down version of the State Religious School or whether it will develop a unique character rooted in a distinctive philosophy.

Within the Ministry however, and among those in the school system whose positions require contact with Taly, the issue of religious observance is central. The position of personnel associated with the State Religious School is clear. "If they want to teach about mitzvot, that's all right . . . but if they want to observe mitzvot, then they belong in the religious school."¹⁸ There is little difference between the content and intent of that statement and one made by a senior official of the State School system: "I hope the kids will learn Judaism . . . let them know some Rambam, some *Pirkei Avot*! But if the parents want *kippot*, they have to send their children to a religious school."²⁰ The former, mindful that Taly presents an option to some parents who might otherwise send their children to a religious school, seeks primarily to maintain the suzerainty of Orthodoxy and to prevent recognition of any other expression of religious Judaism. In like fashion, the latter is protecting his turf from

incursion by an unwanted element. Politics does indeed make strange bedfellows!

Ministry officials and supervisory staff on the district level are, of course, several steps removed from the day-to-day activities of schools. While their opinions are important factors in the determination of policy, the success or failure of Taly, as well as of any other program, depend in large measure on the school principal. The vehement opposition of the principal in Gilo Aleph to the establishment of a Taly class in her school is one end of a continuum of attitude which runs through guarded acceptance to enthusiastic support. The attitudes of principals, however, are sometimes colored by extraneous factors. The head of a school who was informed one day before the start of a new year that he was to receive a Taly class can hardly be faulted for a jaundiced view of the prospect. In many cases the introduction of a Taly class means that an already overburdened principal must find space in an overcrowded school, deal with pupils different in background and experience from the majority of the school's population and contend with parents who, having bested the bureaucracy, are emboldened to want a say in the conduct of the program.

On the substantive issue of religious practice, the attitudes of non-religious principals whose schools house Taly programs range from grudging acceptance to willing cooperation. In general they tend to view Taly less as a form of religiosity than as an expression of cultural distinctiveness which helps a child from a non-religious home "... see himself as a Jew in the same sense that a Danish child sees himself as a Dane. Some thought Taly important because it forced an examination of what is the Jewish nature of Hebrew education in Israel; how is it different from Dutch education in Holland?"²¹

Taly and Its Teachers

Whatever the merits of Taly as perceived by principals and parents alike, there is unanimous agreement that the future of the program depends on the qualities of its teachers. Israel's *seminarim l'morim*, institutions which prepare teachers for elementary and junior high schools, and, like the public schools, are divided between religious and secular, make no provision for the sort of training required for Taly. Efforts to establish pre-service programs geared to the needs of Taly thus far have been unsuccessful. A high percentage of the teachers in Taly today come from the religious sector; they bring a background of style and content which differs considerably from the approach of Taly. The difficulties of staffing Taly with appropriate personnel are captured in the observation of a parent who thought that "The ideal [teacher] would be a graduate of a *yeshiva* who today isn't *dati*. I would perhaps prefer a *yeshiva* graduate who is still *dati*, but he wouldn't accept me and I wouldn't accept religious coercion." The high hopes of parents who were willing to "risk" a pioneer venture for their children create a demand for a kind of teacher not easily

found anywhere. One principal, sensitive to the unique requirements of the program, wanted teachers "... who know and have self-assurance *vis à vis* Judaism, have good didactic skills, ... are willing to sacrifice of their times for community activity, and ... themselves feel the lack in terms of values in Israeli society and education."

The attention given highly visible religious practice and observance tends to obscure an equally important aspect of Taly: the content of the course of study and the manner of its treatment. While no definitive curriculum is available—such a statement would run counter to current curriculum theory—and violate the pluralism which frees individual schools from the constraints of a single design—material prepared at Tel Aviv University for the "unit for deepening Jewish education" provides some sense of the ideational thrust of the program.²² One instructional unit, intended as a guide for teachers, deals with the High Holy Days and presents a wealth of material drawn from traditional and modern sources, including the findings of archeological and Biblical research. On that score, however, the unit does not differ from similar material prepared for State Schools. The telling characteristic of the particular unit is found in the explanations and interpretations it provides. They are suffused with the vocabulary of religion. The summary statement of the section in the unit which deals with *berachot* is illustrative:

In what way are the blessings we give one another—when a person blesses someone else—different from the blessings we offer to God?

When we bless one another, we are expressing a hope, a wish. When we bless God, we are giving thanks.

Why this difference? Can we bless God in the same way we bless one another? Let's look at this.

God is perfect; He lacks nothing. There's nothing we can ask for Him, nothing we can wish Him. We can only ask of Him and then give thanks. When we bless God, we are thanking Him.

What do we thank Him for? What do we mean when we say "Blessed art Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the universe who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to . . . ?" We thank Him for having given us *mitzvot* which make us holy. There are no holy men in Judaism, like in other religions. The *mitzvot*, however, sanctify those who observe them.

Taly: A Challenge to Parents

The findings of a survey²³ of parents indicate that they are more comfortable with Taly as a way of teaching about Judaism than as a setting which engages participants in a search for patterns of personal observance. Indeed, these parents generally view religious practice as a valuable cultural artifact rather than as a form of behavior intended to give transcendent meaning to life. While they want to spare their children the embarrassment they themselves have felt because of not knowing what to

do in the synagogue ("They ought to know how to find something in the Sidur and not hold it upside down; they should know what to do when called to the Torah"), they do not want the school to teach that observance is obligatory. "A *dai* says 'if you don't do' . . . ; I say, 'without knowledge you are half a Jew.'" The emphasis on knowing and the muting of behavioral imperatives is seen by some as a way of avoiding conflict between home and school and guaranteeing the pluralism which fosters freedom of inquiry. Parents also shy away from attempts to give more precise definition to the nature of observance in the school. While some feel that something is lacking—"The tone has been set, but not the line"—others fear the divisive effect of premature closure. The attitude of the latter may explain, in part at least, why many Taly parents seem uninterested in new expressions of ritual behavior and prefer that the schools follow traditional forms. Few of them are sensitive to the irony of wanting their children to know and feel at home with patterns they themselves have rejected.

Some parents in our sample send their children to a Taly School because they think it better than any other in the area; they consider the curriculum of "Augmented Jewish Studies" a form of intellectual enrichment, and religious observance the price one pays for higher standards. Most parents, however, become involved in Taly because they are concerned about the Jewishness of their children; they question the conventional wisdom which claims that living in Israel is sufficient guarantee of Jewish identity. They want their children to study *Humash* in the original rather than from an abridgement or an adaptation, as is often the case in State Schools, because that seems more authentically Jewish. They want history to be taught in a way which distinguishes between great personalities of the Jewish past and heroes of other nations. Ceremony and ritual are important because they reflect the uniqueness of Jewish experience and provide a link with Jews in other parts of the world. They look to the school and its practices to help their children understand the significance of a Jewish State ". . . because otherwise they come up short-handed when they ask what we're doing here in 'just another country' with so many problems."

What Future for Taly?

It is difficult to predict the future of Taly and its long-range influence on education in Israel. There is presently no data available which indicates whether or not the attitudes of parents cited here are widely shared and if like-minded people around the country feel strongly enough to assume the task of organizing Taly classes or schools in their localities. Moreover, parent initiative, so central to past effort, may not today receive the support and encouragement which is a necessary condition of further growth. The present Minister of Education has thus far displayed little interest; his public posture can best be described as one of "benign

neglect"—and that either because the issue does not concern him or because he fears the political consequences of active advocacy. High ranking officials in the ministry—of both the State and State Religious systems—are tolerant but not enthusiastic, a tenable position so long as growth is contained. The current fiscal crisis of the State, a time of severe budget cuts in the public sector, provides a convenient and easily justifiable reason for delaying the development of the support system—teacher training, curriculum design, supervision staff, facilities and equipment—without which significant expansion is seriously constrained. Proponents of Taly must at the same time address themselves to several key issues. We have earlier alluded to the need for definition in several areas of school practice; the structure of Taly is an equally important matter. At present Taly is organized in one of two ways—either as an independent school or as a "track" in an existing State School. A choice in favor of either seems less dictated by educational consideration than by concern for space, personnel or budget. Taly classes which are part of a regular school labor under considerable handicap; the overall school climate which is so essential to the effectiveness of schooling is determined by a principal and a majority of teachers who generally neither share the assumptions of Taly nor identify with its goals. Children and teachers who find themselves in such a framework often complain of being in a "ghetto" and cite the difficulty of shaping an environment appropriate to their needs. Independent schools, by contrast, enjoy the freedom to develop in a manner consistent with the goals of the program; they need not expend precious time and energy in carving out their corner in "foreign" territory. The direction Taly takes in the future may depend on the resolution of this issue.

Whatever the future of Taly, the experience of Taly thus far calls attention to two aspects of education in Israel. The introduction of a variant of the State and State Religious Schools, a product of private initiative, is a reminder of the pluralism and innovative spirit which characterized schooling in the pre-State Yishuv and suggests the possibility of greater differentiation in the public school system. The example of Taly inspired a group of Jerusalem parents to establish a public school based on "the values of Labor." Even though the latter remains an isolated case, together with Taly it points the way to the creation of a variety of "alternative" schools.

Taly, when viewed in historical perspective, may also be understood as the most recent effort of non-Orthodox Zionists to come to terms with Jewish tradition. The militantly secularist stance of early Zionist thought and practice sought "to create public space for Jewish existence in a world where that public space could not be determined anymore by solely religious normative Judaism."²⁴ The tradition, in its religious sense, was rejected outright by many and transvalued by others. From the days of the Second Aliyah which stamped the character of modern Jewish education in the homeland until recent times, secular schools have attempted to

define Jewishness and Judaism in ways which used the materials of the tradition stripped of their religious significance. Periodic criticisms of that approach have spawned a succession of school programs intended to heighten "Jewish Consciousness," none of them particularly effective. The founders of Taly, themselves the products of "Hebrew national education," have rejected the prevailing of the State School. Undererred by attacks from religious²² and non-religious alike, they have invested time, energy and their children in the development of an educational setting which hopes to meld religious tradition and modernity. Whether or not a religiously oriented school can influence the attitudes and behavior of children from non-observant homes remains to be seen. As one Taly father put it, "Ten years have passed since the opening of the forerunner of the Taly schools, ten years of investment and experience. The time has come to investigate if something different has in fact been created."

NOTES

1. June 8, 1983.
2. *Ha'aretz*, July 10, 1984.
3. *Ha'aretz*, July 13, 1984.
4. *Jerusalem Post*, July 27, 1984.
5. *Ha'aretz*, July 13, 1984.
6. *Ha'aretz*, July 12, 1984.
7. *Jerusalem Post*, July 27, 1984.
8. Personal Communication, January 12, 1986.
9. *Ha'aretz*, July 18, 1984.
10. Personal Interview, May 8, 1985. Interviews with parents connected with the Taly schools were granted on condition that their names not be used.
11. Personal Interview, May 8, 1985.
12. Yigal Bruckenstein, *Towards a Curricular Guideline: A Working Document for the Masorti School*, Jerusalem, 1980.
13. From minutes of meetings of the committee charged with the responsibility of developing the program for the secondary school. The names of the participants have been changed.
14. *Jerusalem Post*, July 29, 1984.
15. *Jerusalem Post*, June 18, 1984.
16. *Ibid.*
17. Personal Interview, March 1, 1985.
18. Personal Interview, March 3, 1985.
19. Personal Interview, May 12, 1985.
20. Personal Interview, April 24, 1985.
21. This section is based on information gathered from interviews conducted with a selected sample of school principals, Spring, 1985.
22. *A Program for the High Holy Days*, Unit for Research and Development in Jewish Education, Tel Aviv University, n.d.
23. Personal interview of a sample of parents from four schools, Spring 1985.
24. Shlomo Avineri, quoted in *Bnei Brith Jewish Monthly*, December 1985, p. 10.
25. At the start of registration for the 1986-87 school year, the Chief Rabbis of Israel issued a "great cry," printed on the stationary of the office of the Chief Rabbinate, which warned parents against enrolling their children in "... Conservative schools which pretend to offer religious education in accordance with the Torah." The Chief Rabbis of Jerusalem went even further and declared that Jewish law forbids enrollment in a Taly school.

"In His Image": A New Blessing, An Old Truth

Robert Gordis

(In memory of Rabbi Max Geb 5717)

For centuries three of the Preliminary Blessings in the Morning Service *shelo 'asani goy, shelo 'asani eved, shelo 'asani israh*, "Who has not made me a gentile, a slave, a woman" have been a source of embarrassment and controversy in Judaism.¹ It is quite likely that traditional rationale offered for these benedictions, already proposed in the Talmud, is correct. The intent was to emphasize the high sense of privilege that the male Jew feels in having a greater number of *mitzvot* to observe than the non-Jew, the slave or the woman.²

Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the negative form in which these blessings are couched has been, at the very least, unfortunate. The sense of joy in Judaism is far more beautifully expressed at many other points in the liturgy: *חַי וְקַי וְשָׁלוֹם וְרַחֲמֵי מַלְאָכָא דְּקַדְשָׁא* "Happy are we. How goodly is our portion, how pleasant our lot. How beautiful our heritage."³

As for the traditional concept of the election of Israel, it, too, is frequently expressed elsewhere in positive terms. What is more, it is linked with the gift of the Torah and the *mitzvot* in such prayers as *'ahavah rabbah*, and in the blessings at the Reading of the Torah.

Nor can it be gainsaid that for the masses of the people, at least, these Preliminary Blessings were regarded as establishing an invidious contrast, validating a sense of superiority by the Jew over the gentile, the free man over the slave, and the man over the woman.

The first of the three benedictions, "Who has not made me a gentile," has been the primary object of attack for centuries. In the Middle Ages, the Christian censors came to the aid of printers of Jewish books. They compelled them to change the text in *Menzhot* to read *she'asani yisrael*. It is noteworthy that several prayer books and important traditional authorities preferred this reading.³

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