

CHANGE IN TALİ TEACHERS: Two Case Studies

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Change is a journey, not a blueprint.
(Fullan, 1993, 24).

The first Tali school, founded by parents in 1975 in French Hill, Jerusalem, opened its doors as a new school. Unlike that first Tali school, most of the more recently founded Tali schools are a result of the transformation of existing state schools (mamlachti) into Tali schools. In addition, some state schools have opened a Tali track, which means that one or two classes on each grade have adopted a Tali curriculum. In both cases, the parents and/or the principal wanted a more intensive Jewish education for the students, but not the kind offered in the state-religious system. Among the various Tali schools, there are those who interpret this to mean that the Tali schools are to provide a liberal religious education, including daily prayer, while others view the Tali schools as educational frameworks offering an enriched program in Jewish culture and values. The founders envisioned Tali graduates as tolerant human beings, committed to Jewish, Zionist and democratic ideals, and contributing to building a society which embodies those ideals.¹

When a state school adopts the Tali philosophy, the teaching staff must learn to teach Jewish studies differently from the way they taught it previously. These teachers have not

had the experience of being a student in a Tali school and are graduates of either the religious school system and its teachers' seminaries, or of the state school system. For both groups of teachers, the Tali educational philosophy may be new in its emphasis on a liberal religious approach and pluralism, on experiential learning and in its openness to a critical approach to Jewish texts. Thus, any teacher joining the staff of an established Tali school or teaching at a school when it is in the process of becoming a Tali school must undergo some process of change.

Fullan has pointed out that

there are at least three components or dimensions at stake in implementing any new program or policy: (1) the possible use of new or revised materials (...curriculum materials or technologies), (2) the possible use of new teaching approaches (i.e. new teaching strategies or activities), (3) the possible alteration of beliefs (e.g. pedagogical assumptions and theories underlying particular new policies or programs) (Fullan, 1982, 30).

The Tali framework demands change of teachers in all three areas which Fullan describes, but especially in the area of beliefs, for the Tali ideology raises basic questions about the aims of education, the vision of the ideal graduate and the ideal society, and the priority of certain values and knowledge over others. It also raises questions as to the contents of one's Jewish identity and one's relationship with the Jewish tradition. Thus, teachers must

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examine their own beliefs in the light of the new framework in which they are working, and learn new materials and teaching strategies in the process of internalizing the Tali ideology. This is often a difficult process, for new programs often

challenge the core values held by individuals regarding the purposes of education; moreover, beliefs are often not explicit, discussed, or understood, but rather are buried at the level of unstated assumptions (Fullan, 1982, 34-35).

I shall present how two teachers, one religious and one secular, met this challenge while teaching at a Tali school with a liberal religious philosophy, and will conclude with reflections on how it is possible to apply what we learn from these two teachers to the growing number of new Tali schools. This paper also has implications for fostering change in similar frameworks of liberal religious education in the Diaspora, in which the faculty is often composed in part of secular or religious former Israelis.

METHODOLOGY

I decided to trace this process by adopting the methodology of Irving Seidman and others, that of in-depth interviewing, at the root of which "is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (Seidman, 1998, 3). I conducted three one and a half hour interviews with two Tali teachers, one religious and one secular. In addition, I observed two classes of each teacher, to ascertain how the views expressed in the interviews are reflected in their classrooms. I also interviewed the principal in order to learn how she viewed the professional development of these two teachers and of her plans for fostering change among her entire staff.

Ivor Goodson has written:

In understanding something so intensely personal as teaching, it is critical we know about the person the teacher is...Studies of teachers' lives thereby reassert the importance of the teacher: of knowing the teacher, of listening to the teachers, and of speaking with the teacher (Goodson, 1992, 234).

In that spirit I will bring the voices of these two teachers, Rivka, the religious teacher, and Sarah, the secular one, both in their early 40's, with over twenty years of teaching experience, ten in Tali. These two teachers were pointed out to me as effective Tali teachers by their principal. Their names are pseudonyms, and the school in which they teach will remain anonymous and will be called "Tali," in order to protect their privacy. I will focus on their family background, which I will summarize, their experience in becoming Tali teachers, and their view of how that experience influenced them.

The generalizations that emerge from this research are what Stake calls "naturalistic," which "seldom take the form of prediction but lead regularly to expectation. They guide action, in fact, they are inseparable from action" (Stake, 1978, 6). Thus, this qualitative research paper can help shape our expectations as to the desired changes among Tali teachers, as well as teachers from similar backgrounds in Diaspora schools, and aid principals and supervisors in planning activities to further these changes.

RIVKA: FROM RELIGIOUS TOWARDS RELIGIOUS PLURALIST

Rivka grew up in a religious family that arrived in Israel in the early 50's, as part of the mass immigration from Islamic countries. She studied in a non-religious elementary state school because her parents were dissatisfied with the academic level of the neighborhood religious school, and then in a liberal religious co-ed high school and a religious teachers' seminary for women. Rivka views herself as

different from her siblings. As the youngest child in her family of eleven children, she was able to participate in all sorts of enrichment activities, such as dramatics and music, which were economically out of bounds for her older siblings, and which she felt contributed to her openness.

Both Rivka and most of her numerous siblings are teachers, which she sees as following a family tradition, for her grandfather was a teacher in a Talmud Torah. She doesn't remember wanting to be anything but a teacher all her life. Even when she baby-sat for her nephews, she always prepared a program for them. In addition, she was a youth group leader for two years. She has a vivid memory of receiving a school assignment at the age of fourteen to write on where she will be in another fourteen years, and she wrote about the visit of a supervisor to her class as she, the teacher, taught a specific song. As she says,

I suppose it's a family thing but also a matter of my own soul wanting to be a teacher. It fit the place and time and family in which I grew up.

Because of a lack of jobs in the religious school system upon her graduation from the teachers' seminary, Rivka taught in one state school, and then another, each of which closed as the neighborhood aged.

Like many Tali teachers, she came to Tali "by chance" (Brody, 1994, 227), meeting a Tali teacher she knew on the bus. She mentioned she was looking for a job. At that point there were no openings, but the teacher took her phone number, and three weeks later she received a phone call from the principal inviting her for an interview.

Rivka knew very little about Tali when she came for the interview:

What I knew about Tali is that Judaism is taught there, that the children are not religious...I didn't understand the religious significance of this.

Her first year was difficult because of the heavy involvement of the parents, among other reasons. She was not used to their challenging, for example, the school's choice of the yearly educational trip for her class. Due to the help of her colleagues, she learned how to work with the parents and to appreciate their contribution to school activities.

Rivka had to adapt to additional aspects of Tali, which challenged her conceptions of the purpose of Jewish learning and of the nature of her students' commitment to Jewish tradition:

In the beginning I felt a certain frustration [about teaching what the children don't observe]. It was a bit of a problem because I was educated that one learns in order to do, and here [in Tali] one learns to know and maybe to do... It took me the whole first year to understand that this is the way to teach it...

I understood that this is something I can't change, and I thought that there are certain things that remain in one's consciousness, even if they are not evident now they will present themselves at a certain time.

The frustration lessened with time, because I saw that something stays with the children. I hear about them, they don't go to regular army, they go to an army unit of Noam [the Conservative youth movement], and something stays deep within their heart.

Rivka had to re-define her sense of efficacy, an important element of a teacher's feeling of job satisfaction (Mei-Ling, 1990, 6). She knew what it meant to teach Judaism in the state schools in which she had previously taught: "as a historical thing." She also knew what it meant to teach it in the religious school system: as something that had to be observed. She now had to find meaning and a sense of efficacy in teaching it in a way suitable to Tali. One way was by believing that the graduates of the Tali school are more committed to Judaism than the graduates of the regular state school, even if

the expression of their commitment is different from hers. The other way of finding efficacy was by learning to see value in knowledge:

I would rather have children know even if they don't do. I really believe this. I think to myself, one more generation, two generations, we're raising children in the state school who know nothing about religion. This is terrible.

An additional challenge for Rivka was in dealing for the first time in her life with a movement of Judaism different from that with which she was familiar, for the ceremonial events at the school were held at a Conservative synagogue;

It wasn't easy. I thought to myself, if I'm teaching in this school, then the activities in which I have to be there I'll be there with my whole soul. If it has to be on Shabbat and in the Conservative synagogue and the girls read the haftara, I have no problem with that. This year I even read the prayer for the welfare of the soldiers, which in another synagogue no one would have dared to give me. Someone said, "Whoever has a child in the army is invited to bless the state and her soldiers."

In making a professional commitment to teaching in Tali, Rivka made the decision that everything that is entailed in being a Tali teacher she will do "with her whole heart," even if it included participating in activities outside the norms of her experience and that of her family and community. However, she learned to value certain aspects of this experience on a personal level, such as being asked to say the prayer for the welfare of the soldiers, which is not done by women in Orthodox synagogues. She also disparaged the point of view of some parents who do not consider a Conservative synagogue to be a "real" synagogue:

I heard a funny thing after that Shabbat in the synagogue. Parents who traveled on Shabbat to

get to the synagogue, and some who even smoked cigarettes outside, asked me how I can pray there. One parent said to me, "What kind of prayer is this?" because men and women sit together, because the girls read the haftarah...this was not a conventional synagogue that he knew. And I thought to myself, he traveled to synagogue, and he's making a comment. So I said to him, "I can pray here."

The view among large sectors of Israeli society, that "there are religious Jews and secular (non-religious) and anything in between them is simply a watered down version of the real thing" (Kopelowitz, 2000, 160) became unacceptable to her.

The difficulties of that first year were compensated by Rivka's feeling of liberation after teaching Jewish studies in two state schools:

I immediately felt comfortable in Tali, because suddenly it was permissible to teach Torah the way it should be taught and see all the beauty in it, and suddenly it was permissible to talk about a festival and to understand the commandments and the customs ... For example, in the state school when they asked me if one must do them I said, "These are the commandments and these are the customs and some people go according to these commandments, and other people don't." At Tali I say, "It's very important that you should know what to do so that if you want to observe them, you can," and that's very different.

The way "Torah should be taught" is the way she learned to teach it in the religious teachers' seminary, as a model for living. The only proviso was that in Tali she must present the halachic way of life as an option, not as a given, because few of her students lived accordingly.

As an observant Jew, Rivka viewed herself as eminently suitable to be a Tali teacher: "I teach knowledge, values, experience, I'm a personal example in all sorts of things." Al-

though Tali is a state school, it's clear to Rivka that it deals with the religious experience, even if differently from the state-religious schools in which her own children are educated:

I see Tali as a school with a religious dimension, because there's prayer and because we teach what needs to be taught before the holidays in the most respectable way, you just need a little bit more, and you do it, out of joy, and not out of coercion... Tali... relates to the experiential part of religion. I say to the students. "When you get to the army and someone will ask you if you can complete a minyan, you won't ask, "What's that?," you'll know what it is. And if someone asks if you can join the kaddish, you'll know what it's about and even if someone will ask you a question on a television [quiz show] you will not demean yourself by not knowing what Kol Nidrei is [this actually happened on an Israeli quiz show], you'll know. It's impossible to be a Jew without knowing something about our religion. We're not just Israelis, we're Jews and even if you don't observe you must know what it is that you're not observing.

Rivka greatly values Tali's success in building a school culture in which the Jewish tradition permeates every school activity:

Everything is done through the prism of love for the tradition. If we visit old people it's not just because we are a community school. "Show deference to the old" is what's behind this. [In] the animal corner in school, there has to be a verse from the Torah that tells us how to relate to animals. That is, everything is from a religious orientation...these are the sources that guide us.

Her classes bear out her contention that she teaches so that her students should know, and in the two lessons I observed, one on the customs connected to the holiday of Shavuot, and the second on a prayer chanted on Rosh Hashanah, she indeed taught lessons which were packed full of information about the holi-

days, lessons which also had the potential to help the students feel comfortable that they had the knowledge to observe the holiday of Shavuot or to pray on Rosh Hashanah, if they chose to do so.

Teaching at Tali influenced her not only in her role as teacher, but also as a person. Rivka notes the influence of Tali on the way she looks at her fellow Jews and their various religious beliefs:

[Tali taught me] to look at things from all points of view, not just from one... I was already in the direction of openness, since I studied in an open high school. [But] this opened a window to something I didn't know about, a different kind of religiosity... All of a sudden I learned that there are people who want to keep Judaism in their own way. I think this made me into a more open person.

The openness [in Tali] stems from a clear intention to accept the children as they are, with their background, with everything they bring with them. There's no one good and no one no good. You too can participate in this community.

She found that this newfound openness to different forms of religious expression influences the way she relates to her own son, a soldier:

Many times there's something that's on the border of religious non-observance, like my son not praying, or his wearing jewelry, or a ring that has his initial on it, which I don't like, but upon which I don't comment. They [my brothers] say, "It's because you teach in Tali. You learned to be more forgiving about things connected to religion, and that's why this is happening."

They're right that it made me more forgiving. It's a fact. I think I have the openness that everyone should have. If it didn't come to me this way, it might have come to me a different way, maybe, but maybe not... I can be stringent about my own practice, but not about someone else's.

I tell them [my brothers and sisters] that there

are things that we see now and there are things that we can see only as the years pass. And if in the years to come I'll feel that my children are not religious as I would like them to be, I still think I was a good mother, and I don't think that education by coercion is a better education. I don't believe in that kind of education.

Rivka also found that being a Tali teacher reinforced her opposition to stereotyping different sectors of society:

My extended family sees people who are not religious as being on a lower level, and I feel that I act as their advocate. The stigma and the polarization bother me a lot. Many of them [my siblings] say that I've become ruined.

At one point Rivka entertained the thought of sending her own daughter to Tali, because of its concern for the individual and its enriched program, which she found lacking in the local religious state-school. She quickly dismissed that thought because of a number of reasons, the most important being that her daughter would have few friends from Tali who were observant.

It's important to note that there are limits to Rivka's openness. Although claiming to accept all forms of religious expression, Rivka would not participate in an in-service education course offered at a certain institution because she did not want to "legitimize" that institution by her presence. Her professionalism led her to accept the framework in which she taught, and her personal tendencies allowed that ideology to impinge on her personal life, but she preferred not to be exposed to additional forms of religious expression.

SARAH: FROM SECULAR TOWARD TRADITIONAL SECULARIST

Sarah too grew up in a family that came to Israel at the same time as Rivka's. Her father, observant in the Moslem country in which he

was born, ceased observing most rituals upon his immigration to Israel as a young man, as did many of his contemporaries. However, he continued to make kiddush and went to the synagogue on the Sabbath; her mother lit candles on the Sabbath and holidays, which were commemorated by family gatherings.

Sarah studied in state schools, where she remembers the teachers as being supportive and caring. She had always wanted to be a nurse, but after volunteering at the Magen David Adom first aid station, she "began to be afraid of blood and to have an obsession about disease." Her parents advised her to choose teaching, for they saw it as a respectable and prestigious profession. Sarah enrolled in a teacher's seminary, studying to be a kindergarten teacher, because she "thought that work with little children is easier, nicer."

Her first few years of teaching gave her little satisfaction, as she worked with large groups of forty children in the kindergarten of a development town burdened with many social problems. Sarah decided that she would rather teach in an elementary school, and enrolled for retraining at a teachers' seminary.

She too came to Tali by accident, for she happened to be placed there for her student teaching assignment. She became enamored of the school, the teachers, and the student population, and decided to stay when offered a job.

At that point in her life she had a clear sense of her identity, considering herself secular.

I think that I was secular because of the extreme of Orthodoxy...as a reaction...to their viewpoint about religion, to their fanaticism. There is only one way, this is the way it's supposed to be, and left and right are not possible. There's no compromise, no middle, no understanding...I knew about the existence of the streams of "knitted kipot" [a reference to those belonging to the national religious camp], but I didn't talk to them. They didn't interest me. My reaction was of not talking and lack of interest, that is, distanc-

ing. I didn't want to meet this and deal with it. Looking back, I see that was my reaction.

Sarah had no desire to explore different viewpoints within Judaism until she came to Tali. Interestingly enough, even though her father went to the synagogue, prayer to her was an act connected to the ultra-Orthodox. Like all the women in her family, she attended synagogue only on Yom Kippur. Now she was teaching at a school where she had to pray with the children, and she saw this as part of her job that she had to learn to do right. She relates:

In the beginning it was a little strange, because there were prayers and at home we're secular. Then I didn't know the prayers but after I experienced them and I saw how it was done, in a different way, not the way I thought it would be done...[What I had seen about prayer was] through the media. Seeing the haredim [ultra-Orthodox] and how they pray... and the meaning of prayer for them, that's what I thought it is...It was very coerced: truly one must pray with all this devotion and joy to one who doesn't pray and the way they wear a dress or a kipa, the separation between men and women...

[In Tali] it's done differently, with changing tunes for all the prayers. We discuss the prayers, there's room for the children to say their personal prayers; they're not something closed and limiting.

I got into it. I'm a person who adjusts, so I adjust to any framework that I like. It's a function of my personality. It's not something that I closed off and to which I felt opposed. Maybe deep inside, the tradition from my house and the prayers remained and I connected to them.

Thus, what might have been a daunting endeavor proved to be not such a difficult one, not only because of Sarah's flexible personality, but also due to the support of her colleagues and to the in-service education she received:

I had to understand what the shemoneh esreh [silent devotion] is. I had to pray with the children - indeed I did pray. I didn't understand the meaning so much, but after the in-service courses I understood what's happening...A lot of people taught the courses, the principal and teachers from the outside...Today I teach the shemoneh esreh differently from previously, with the meaning, not just technically, which was to sing it and have them imitate me. To teach the contents is to talk about each and every prayer in the shemoneh esreh. What's the meaning for the children. To connect it so it should be authentic for their everyday life. To use very specific events and to connect it immediately to the prayer...

I can't say it was hard, because I didn't have to deal with it [the ceremonies of the children receiving the prayer book and the ceremonies of receiving the Sabbath] alone. In our school there's excellent cooperation among staff...The colleague who's stronger in these areas, she teaches, and we do the work together.

As Sarah continued to learn she felt comfortable enough to take on additional roles in the school, such as coordinator of her grade level.

Not only did Sarah learn to understand the prayers, but she also confronted her own Jewish identity, and began questioning her own self-definition:

Until I came to Tali there were either religious or secular, and I was secular...After I came to Tali I saw that we can be Jews in different ways. There are additional movements and one doesn't have to be at the extreme of secularism or religiosity.

I underwent a revolution.. It became very difficult to define what I am. Am I secular? Am I religious? Am I traditional? I had a lot of difficulties with these questions since I came to Tali.

She sums up, "I'm a traditional secularist."

This new self-definition expressed itself not only in Sarah's new appreciation of the Jewish tradition and in her ability to teach it well, but also in her relationships with her family:

The change is that when we make kiddush at my parents', I'm part of it. I'm also the initiator in singing zemirot, and also encourage everyone to join me, which was not true earlier [before Tali]. Before it was a burden, another kiddush.

Of her parents and siblings, she had the most tolerance for her brother, who became newly religious at the age of twenty-nine. She attributes her special connection to him to the knowledge and attitudes she learned at Tali:

When my brother came on the Sabbath [to my parents home], [the reaction] was: What?! He's not going to tell us if we should turn on the television...I'm more sensitive to him...He comes once in a while, we can give up on the things we're used to.

We connect differently [than the rest of the family]. When he comes to my parents we sit together and I show my knowledge...All the newly religious think they know everything. And then I tell him how it's supposed to be. Then he asks the rabbi and it's like I told him...It's fun and it makes me proud and he sees me as one with a religious bent. We communicate.

Sarah's dismay at the lack of Jewish knowledge of her oldest son as he had approached his bar-mitzva influenced her to consider sending her youngest son to a Tali class at the local state school. When her son expressed opposition to the idea because of daily prayer in Tali, Sarah tried to persuade him by reminding him that he liked going to the synagogue with his grandfather on Friday night. He wasn't persuaded, and she sent him to a regular class, because she thought that forcing him to go to a Tali class would increase his opposition to prayer, and

because she doesn't believe in coercion.

Sarah would like all state schools to be like the Tali school in which she teaches, for

it teaches Jewish values and it wrestles with all sorts of dilemmas and difficulties, like Sabbath observance and belief in God, and doesn't try to escape from them... The secular avoid them and the religious deal with them, but not in the way I would like. I think that all Israeli children should be connected to their roots.

Sarah's lessons indeed opened up the opportunity for her students to connect to their roots. Her second-grade class sang the prayers enthusiastically. In her lessons on the morning blessings she demonstrated how the blessings are connected to the everyday activities of her students. However, in her second lesson on Hanukkah, in which she taught about the decrees against the Jews, she had a telling interchange with the students that demonstrated that she hadn't completely internalized the Tali ideology as espoused by her Tali school. She wanted to teach that the royal decrees were aimed at eradicating all the elements of Judaism that set Jews apart, and asked, "What sets us apart?" When a student answered, "Sabbath observance," another said, "I don't observe the Sabbath." After a futile attempt to demonstrate that his family observed some aspects of the Sabbath, such as lighting candles or making kiddush, she realized that in his home none of these rituals were observed. Sarah then explained that once many years ago people walked to the synagogue on the Sabbath and were careful about observance, but today, in the modern world, people think that turning on electricity is not a problem, and instead of observing all the restrictions, they spend the day in family and social gatherings. The children, the vast majority of whom were not observant, could probably identify with Sarah's understanding of the Sabbath, and her presentation of Sabbath did help this particular stu-

dent feel comfortable with the way the Sabbath is observed in his family. However, the ideology of the school did view ritual observance as an option, but for Sarah it belonged to the past, at least in this lesson.

Sarah related a story in which she was viewed as the "religious teacher," as opposed to teachers from other Tali schools:

Two years ago I was in a course for Tali teachers [from different Tali schools]... The first conversation was a complete shock, as to how the other teachers understood Tali. They don't pray in the morning, they don't do the things I'm used to in my Tali. They didn't understand what Tali is, they understood that our Tali is very religious, haredi.

When I met them...I was the religious one. I asked, "What - you don't pray in the morning? ... You don't teach this content?" It turned out they don't, because there are different interpretations [of what is Tali]. Then we discussed: What is Tali? What is the meaning of Tali? It's open to a lot of interpretations. We came to the consensus that ...everyone who does something about Tali - it's better than doing nothing.

In one school the principal forced the Tali stream and there was a great deal of bitterness [among the teachers]. When we talked about teaching the portion of the week... there was opposition: how can one? And: I don't have the credentials to do this; this is coercion. We tried to clarify to them that it could be very enjoyable and experiential... But they were anti, anti because they weren't at all ready to accept. There was close-mindedness, real close-mindedness.

Thus, Sarah has become an advocate of the way the Tali ideology is enacted in her school, even though she may not always be consistent in relaying that ideology to her students. This anecdote exemplifies what Connelly and Clandinin (1996) have pointed out, that there is great wisdom in the stories that teachers tell, for this story embodies the difficulties that many

teachers from secular homes may have: their feelings of lack of competence and their lack of empathy for the material they must teach. It points to the truth of Fullan's contention, that any change involves the teacher's search for meaning in the new material, as well as knowledge of the material and of teaching approaches.

CHANGES IN RIVKA AND SARAH: COMMON AND DISPARATE ELEMENTS

Although Rivka and Sarah come from different religious backgrounds, they have much in common. Both were introduced for the first time to different forms of Jewish religious expression in their encounter with Tali. Both attribute their adjustment to Tali partly to personality characteristics, Rivka to her openness and Sarah to her adaptability. Their view that being a professional means doing what the job demands, even if it's something they don't normally do in the course of their lives, contributed to their ability to be effective Tali teachers. Both teachers point to the support of the principal and colleagues, which eased their transition to Tali.

However, the changes they underwent were not limited only to their professional persona. Their empathy with the Tali ideology also influenced their personal lives, expressing itself in relationships with family members, as well as in considering enrolling their own children in a Tali school, even if they did not do so,

Both Rivka and Sarah felt that their visit to the United States helped them understand the meaning of religious pluralism through their exposure to the Jewish community in the Diaspora. Rivka spent a month as a teacher and resource person on Israel at a Solomon Schechter school, and Sarah visited different educational and communal institutions as part of a Tali delegation.

It's important to note that both teachers are limited in their openness and acceptance of

various models of Jewish living. Sarah did not present ritual observance as a viable option to her students, even when attempting to teach about it, and Rivka would not set foot into a certain institution for an in-service education course.

The two teachers differ in their conception of Tali, each seeing Tali through her own eyes. Rivka sees Tali as a school with a religious aspect, presenting the possibility of religious observance to the children, while Sarah sees it as a cultural Jewish school, in which Israeli children learn about their roots and values. They also differ in their perception of the time it took them to adjust to Tali. Sarah felt it took her five years to become a true Tali teacher; Rivka felt it took her one year. Interestingly, the principal agreed with Sarah's perception, but felt that Rivka was a competent Tali teacher immediately. She attributed this to the fact that Rivka had a good Jewish studies background.

THE CULTURE OF THE TALÍ SCHOOL

Many teachers with backgrounds similar to those of Rivka and Sarah teach in Tali schools, and do not undergo the type of change that they did.² This points to the fact that perhaps the most important factor at play in this case is the culture of the particular Tali school in which they taught. The principal helped create the environment that made change possible, in accordance with Sarason's theory:

The theory of change which is evolving clearly points to the importance of peer relationships in the school. Change involves resocialization.

Interaction is the primary basis for social learning. New meanings, new behavior, new skills depend significantly on whether teachers are working as isolated individuals...or exchanging ideas, support and positive feelings about their work (Sarason, 1972, 71-72).

The principal related in an interview how

she helps new teachers adjust to Tali. First, the principal discusses the ideology of the school with each new teacher. Then the teacher is paired with a mentor who teaches her how the ideology is translated into action and is reflected in school routines, such as daily prayer or selecting a committee for visiting the sick. In addition, each teacher works with a parallel teacher, so that she need never be alone in dealing with difficult issues.

If a new teacher needs more help, the parallel teacher is freed from some of her class hours to help the teacher and model for her how a certain subject, such as Bible, should be taught. The principal believes that every teacher can be helped, if she so desires, but every so often agreement is reached between the principal and a certain teacher that Tali is not the place for her.

The on-going in-service education at the school supplements the initiation process of the new teacher, and assures the continued growth of the entire faculty. Once a week the entire staff participates in an in-service education course, which has three components: 1) Jewish studies content, 2) another discipline, which changes every year, such as mathematics or science and 3) general pedagogic issues. Thus enrichment in Jewish studies is provided to the teachers throughout the year. The principal has the good fortune to be able to turn to a number of Conservative and Reform rabbis who volunteer to teach subjects such as prayer and holidays, so there is less of a strain on the school budget. These lectures supplement those of the pedagogic advisor sent by Tali headquarters.

Furthermore, at the end of each school year and before the opening of the following one, teachers participate in four in-service education days, which include formal studies as well as planning for the following year. The Tali principles, as formulated by the school, are referred to often, and viewed as a guide in deciding what are the priorities of the school when presented with countless new programs.

This Tali school is a "learning organization" (Sharan et al, 1999, 7), involving continuous feedback to the teachers. This feedback is based on numerous classroom visits by the principal, grade coordinators and subject coordinators, who identify pedagogic issues, which are then dealt with in the weekly in-service education sessions. When necessary, they turn to people outside the school for help. Caring and the quality of human relationships also play a major role, as befits a community school which it purports to be. The culture of the school allows the teachers to share their "secret stories", that is, what actually happens in their classroom, while learning to internalize the "sacred stories" of the school, which embody what is expected of them as teachers, and to deal with the tension between the two stories (Connelly and Clandinin, 1996).

Thus the school culture enabled the teachers "to unlearn and learn - to give up highly over learned ways of thinking at the same time that they were required to learn new procedures and new ways of conceptualizing" (Sarason, 1972, 41). Rivka had to unlearn that one teaches Judaism only for the purpose of observance of the commandments of the Torah, and Sarah had to unlearn her negative attitudes towards prayer and other Jewish content. They succeeded in learning new concepts and new materials because the school provided the social relationships and the opportunities for discussion which allowed them to deal with "the conflicting, the affective and the deeply personal" and because the school had formulated a clear statement of the behavioral regularities expected of the teachers and students (Sarason, 1972, 173).

IMPLICATIONS

Horowitz (1990) has described the relationships among the parents, the Ministry of Education, the principal and outside agents in the process of transforming a state school into a

school espousing the values of the Labor movement. We can learn from her description of the various difficulties the process faced and of the importance of parent support. Therefore the following implications for school change apply with the proviso that the parents are, in the main, supportive of the Tali philosophy, and even in that case there is always a need for on going work with the parents.

Helping teachers to change is a difficult endeavor, for the process deals with the affective and impinges to a certain extent on their personal lives. Thus, the principal and pedagogic staff, when planning activities that further teacher movement towards the values that Tali embodies: knowledge of the Jewish tradition and empathy with it, as well as pluralism, must take this into account as they transform a state school into a Tali school. Therefore, it seems that in-service education similar to that described above should become part of the culture of every Tali school, with variations according to the ideology of the particular school. It would be helpful to investigate teachers in a state school as it becomes a Tali school, to learn of the differences in their experiences from those of teachers entering an already established Tali school.

As a result of her experience with a workshop for Tali teachers which seemed to have little long-range impact on their work, Ben-Peretz (2000) makes a number of recommendations as to the setting and content of effective in-service education courses, most of which are already in place in the Tali school under study. An important addition is her suggestion that analysis of cases be one component, and that discussions of the teachers on pedagogic issues become the basis for the writing of more cases.

Portraits of Sarah and Rivka in the form of teaching cases could be introduced into the in-service education of Tali teachers and become the basis for reflection of teachers about their own Jewish identity and their own feelings of

competence. Discussions around these portraits might help more rigid teachers wrestle with the issues that Sarah and Rivka confronted, and might speed up the process even for open and adaptable teachers.

In the in-service education of new Tali principals, the "commentary" on the case (Shulman, L. S., 1992) could be the description of the induction of a new teacher into the Tali school and the model of in-service education presented by the principal, as described above, as well as short summaries of theories of change, such as those of Sarason and Fullan.

This use of portraits builds on the writings of Sarah Lightfoot-Lawrence, who suggests that when portraits resonate with universal themes, then the audience will see themselves reflected in it and will feel identified (Lightfoot-Davis, 1997, 14). It also expands on the work of Judy Shulman and others (1987), but suggests that cases can be used not only in pre-service education, but also in in-service teacher education. This use of cases is only one component in an entire school culture that fosters teacher change.

In describing a program to foster teacher change in Jewish schools in the United States, Holtz and Rauch raise serious ethical question as to "the parameters of community intervention into the private lives of individuals," which they attempt to answer (Holtz and Rauch, 1988, 66). Their questions are especially pertinent in light of the fact that the Tali schools in Israel are public schools, unlike the private Jewish schools of the Diaspora. Thus, in the on-going discussions among the staff of the Tali headquarters, principals and teachers, these ethical issues must be addressed.

Concern with teacher change in Jewish education is a central issue in the Diaspora as well as in Israel, and the issues raised by Rivka and Sarah are of concern in Jewish schools all over the world, with variations due to the differences in cultural contexts. Thus, these cases could be introduced as well to the teaching staff and principals of liberal religious schools in the

Diaspora, as part of in-service education courses.

In the stories of Rivka and Sarah resonate the themes of secular-religious tensions in Israeli society with its attendant stereotypes, as well as the lack of knowledge of Judaism and of different forms of Jewish religious expression. As the number of Tali teachers increases, and as they come to understand the principles of Tali, perhaps Tali can become what its founders envisioned it to be: an agent for the promotion of a commitment to Jewish learning and tradition as well as to pluralism in Israeli society as a whole, as it was in the personal and professional lives of Rivka and Sarah.

ENDNOTES

¹For an account of the founding of the first Tali school by a parent-founder, see Levine (1995). For an overview of this addition to the Israeli educational scene, see Ackerman and Showstack (1987). As of September, 2001, there were thirty Tali schools, Tali classes within twenty state school, and fifty-one pre-school frameworks (nursery and kindergarten). "Tali", which should properly be spelled "Taly," is an acronym for "Tigbur Limudei Yahadut," the Hebrew term for "the intensification of Jewish studies."

²Research on teachers has focused on the impact of their values and beliefs on their teaching and on the way they implement curriculum [(Bacon (2000), Connelly and Clandinin (1988), Loudon (1991), Millies (1992), Paris (1993)], but not on the way teaching at a specific school impacts on their professional and personal lives. It would be interesting to investigate to what extent teaching at other types of schools with clearly formulated educational ideologies, to which the teachers are not necessarily committed at entry, influences teachers and has an impact on their teaching philosophy. An example of this is an ultra-orthodox non-Zionist or anti-Zionist teacher who teaches at a modern Orthodox Zionist school. Tamar Horowitz (1990) has traced the process of turning the Givat Gonen school from a regular state school to one reflecting the spirit of the values of the Labor movement, but devotes very little space to the teachers who participated in this process.

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