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Enhancing the Coherence and Efficacy of Modern Orthodox Education

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When reflecting upon the current state of Modern Orthodox education in America, it is disconcerting to observe that many graduates of Modern Orthodox high schools fail to understand the complexity and nuances within Modern Orthodoxy and its *Torah u-Madda* approach, and thereby often neglect to internalize its ideals in their mentality or lifestyle. Such a reality, I believe, can be attributed to a host of factors, including the focus on autonomy and individualism in society, education, and adolescence, coupled with the lack of transmission of religious meaning and values in the Judaic and secular studies classroom. During the adolescent stage of development, when the individual is naturally questioning and exploring his identity, the influences of contemporary society and liberal educational methodology encourage him to be autonomous in his quest. The dual

curriculum in many Modern Orthodox high schools, however, is not being taught in a manner that transmits religious meaning and values, but instead often focuses on students' mastery of textual materials and skills to the exclusion of more affective objectives. As a result, students relate to both the Judaic and secular components of their dual curriculum as compartmentalized academic disciplines, devoid of much accessible religious inspiration, which does not enhance, or even substantiate, their religious commitment. Considering these causes and employing potential countermeasures will enable Modern Orthodox educators to create a more coherent and effective educational narrative for adolescents, affording them a greater understanding of Modern Orthodox ideals that can inform their outlook and practice well beyond high school.

AUTONOMY AND THE LACK OF RELIGIOUS MEANING

Students today are the product of a far more autonomous age than that of previous generations. As a result, many adolescents have adopted the anthropocentric attitude of their environment and approach all aspects of their lives from the perspective of how it can serve them. In the religious realm, the quest for personal spirituality seems to be replacing adherence to institutional religion. Christian Smith describes current societal conditions:

American youth, like American adults, are nearly without exception profoundly individualistic, instinctively presuming autonomous, individual self-direction to be a universal human norm and life goal. Thoroughgoing individualism is not a contested orthodoxy for teenagers. It is an invisible and pervasive doxa, that is, an unrecognized, unquestioned, invisible premise or presupposition.¹

As an educator in a Modern Orthodox high school, I frequently encounter this attitude of autonomy in students' comments: "I am committed to do those commandments that make sense to me," "Why should I recite words in prayer that I didn't compose and are

not meaningful to me?” or “I find the way I dress to be modest even if it doesn’t conform to the standards prescribed by religion.” Such sentiments expressed by students reflect a fear of giving up freedom and submitting to an overarching, non-negotiable authoritative system. Taught by their surroundings that the sovereign self reigns supreme, students reflect the attitude that every Jew has the ability to personally define Judaism. These students lack a sense of commitment or loyalty to tradition. Jonathan Sarna notes,

Once upon a time, most people in this country adhered to the faith and ethnicity of their parents: their cultural identity was determined largely by their *descent*. Now, religious and ethnic loyalties are more commonly matters of choice; identity, to a considerable degree, is based upon *consent*.²

Many students do not internalize the primacy of obligation as the guiding principle of Modern Orthodoxy and, as a result, they neglect strict adherence to the standards of Orthodoxy while they participate in that which modern society and culture has to offer. Educators are not adequately teaching the definition and explicit values of Modern Orthodoxy, and students, therefore, choose to interpret their Modern Orthodox identity as one in which their autonomy enables them to pick and choose those Orthodox standards which they feel should be maintained in the modern era. Even among students who are able to articulate ideals of Modern Orthodoxy, few internalize them in their own practice. For many, the conception of Modern Orthodoxy is lax observance, with the focus more on the “modern” engagement in society and less on the “Orthodox” religious practice. These students are not self-confident in their Modern Orthodox identity and feel, instead, that much of what they choose to practice is based more on convenience than on idealism.

Additionally, students in Modern Orthodox educational institutions often misunderstand the *Torah u-Madda* approach as simply attributing value to learning a dual curriculum of Judaic and secular studies, but neglect to identify with its notion that secular

knowledge strengthens an understanding of and commitment to Torah. *Torah u-Madda* does not encourage vacillation between Judaism and secularism, but instead, the embracing of secular wisdom and its integration with Torah. High school students, often not adequately committed to the primacy of Torah as a way of life, instead view the dual curriculum as compartmentalized studies. This is far from what Dr. Norman Lamm had in mind:

Torah Umaddah is an opportunity, because of all its creative tensions, for ultimate inner harmony, a way to unite [one's] deepest Torah commitments with his growing experiences as a modern person living in a scientific technopolis, in an open and democratic society and in a culture that, despite all its terrible failings, is vibrant and progressive.³

Students in many Modern Orthodox high schools often maintain their misconceptions about *Torah u-Madda* because their schools present non-Judaic subjects as devoid of religious messages and separate from the Judaic component of the dual curriculum. As a result, students fail to recognize the religious nature of the pursuit of knowledge and the spiritual value of secular studies, which they often consider of higher priority than Judaic learning. Furthermore, Judaic studies classes themselves often fail to relay religious messages to students, especially those courses which focus on academic excellence and emphasize skill acquisition and mastery of textual material. Many teachers do not devote time to the affective component of religious education, but expect it to emerge naturally from the curriculum taught. Rabbi Jay Goldmintz, of the Ramaz Upper School, argues that “it emerges naturally only if students see the text as having that potential from the start and, even then, they may need assistance.”⁴ Many of today's students in Modern Orthodox educational institutions do not enter the classroom with such expectations, and therefore do not derive much affective meaning from their Judaic courses.

Professor Moshe Sokolow, in an article in *Meorot: A Forum of Modern Orthodox Discourse*, delineates “what a yeshiva high school graduate should know, value and be able to do.”⁵ In a comprehensive

and ambitious outline, he points out four attitudinal objectives and then develops a far more extensive and specific set of textual curricular goals. While he explicitly articulates how to rigorously study Judaism, he does not elaborate upon how to add meaning to its teachings and practice. Sokolow's curriculum accurately reflects many Modern Orthodox schools' focus on the mastery of textual content and skills, rather than on affective education, even though many of these schools would acknowledge that their ultimate goal is to transmit life-long values. Most respondents to Sokolow's article noted that within his curriculum, more emphasis is placed on what students should know rather than what they should do and be. I acknowledge that the minimal discussion of attitudinal objectives could reflect the fact that affective meaning is very difficult to teach. I also recognize that in some schools religious inspiration is being transmitted, to some extent, in the informal educational realm and through teachers' modeling of such values. From the outset, I want to make clear that I am in no way minimizing the importance of teaching curricular content and improving students' textual skills. Those certainly are, in my opinion, critical educational goals that I devote much time and effort to achieve in my teaching. I argue, however, that focus on such goals in the classroom, to the exclusion of others, may prove to be a disservice to our students. While students may be religiously inspired informally at a *shabbaton* or *hagigah*, such emotional and experiential inspiration can be short-lived when their emotional high dissipates, if not substantiated through more consistent means in the formal educational environment. Additionally, teachers' modeling of Modern Orthodox values can have a far greater impact if students have a thorough understanding of the actual values and how they are embodied in real life (beyond merely the physical appearance of their teachers). Lastly, cognitive material and skills must be taught in a sophisticated and compelling manner; however, educators can present such knowledge in a relevant and meaningful way without detracting from its rigor. I do not believe that the study of textual skills need be at the expense of religious meaning; however, I also do not believe (and many students have attested) that the study of textual skills is, in and of itself, inspiring.

The focus on autonomy can also be perceived in the liberal educational theory advocated by some Modern Orthodox schools. Several years ago, a faculty committee at Harvard University concluded that the aim of a liberal education is “to unsettle presumptions, to defamiliarize the familiar, to reveal what is going on beneath and behind appearances, to disorient young people and to help them to find ways to reorient themselves.”⁶

Such an approach encourages individuals to question existing norms, break free from the preconceived notions of their upbringing, and examine life by thinking for themselves in order to arrive at their own conclusions. The emphasis of such an approach is on the autonomy of the individual. Liberal educational theory has a great deal to offer us as Modern Orthodox educators—including the importance of critical, rational, and rigorous analysis in every academic discipline, including Judaic studies.⁷ While students are encouraged to draw their own rational conclusions, Modern Orthodox educators are not also conveying to students that there are matters beyond the limits of human comprehension. We need to convey the legitimacy of accepting and believing that which is not necessarily rationally conclusive. Furthermore, schools and communities do not sufficiently emphasize the obligation to demonstrate loyalty to religious authority, and Modern Orthodoxy’s ideals are, therefore, not being internalized or actualized by many of its students. Instead, many Modern Orthodox adolescents are, understandably, approaching religion with a wholly autonomous attitude. This, coupled with the methodology of their education and the models they observe from their parents and communities, leads them to conclude that they will believe and observe only whatever makes rational sense to them. I have heard students express their attitude toward religious commitment as: “Prove it to me and then I will be committed.” I do not believe that submission *per se* is the challenge for students, since obedience to moral and social norms is demanded by society and acceptable to its citizens. The difficulty for many students is commitment to incomprehensible and often burdensome and restrictive commandments whose benefits that make such restrictions worthwhile are not necessarily evident. Students often take no issue

with observing God's social and moral commandments, which they do not always even consider to be religious observance.

Students' neglect to internalize religious values in high school can have long-term ramifications, since the high school years are a critical time in the adolescent's religious development and identity formation. Such a stage can also be characterized by the quest for autonomy. Erik Erikson explains that during the high school years, adolescents seek to rid themselves of their preconceived understanding of religion and begin to explore more critically in search of who they are. According to Erikson, even the most well adjusted adolescent experiences some role identity diffusion, rebelliousness, and self-doubt and seeks someone to inspire him as he gradually develops, through experimentation, a set of personal ideals most suitable for him.⁸

Sharon Parks, based on James Fowler's theory of faith development,⁹ suggests that in the adolescent stage of development, the individual deviates from his previous childhood stage by beginning to think about his thinking.¹⁰ The absolute form of knowing from his childhood cognitive stage breaks down and he is able to view things from perspectives other than his own. As the individual grows in self-awareness, he no longer looks only for truth or falsehood, but comes to realize that every opinion may be as worthy as any other. Authorities are, at times, found to be in error, undependable, or in conflict. The adolescent, therefore, begins to question and challenge authority that was familiar and dominant in his childhood as he realizes that all knowledge is relative to perspective. That is why adolescents occasionally reject belief in God, even when they do not necessarily have an alternative belief in a Higher Being.

Just as absolute authority and dependence on a single authority eventually break down, the monolithic nature of the community breaks down as well. The adolescent is no longer as willing to define himself solely as a member of one particular community and becomes more open to expanding the notion of community. The limitations of homogeneous communities are recognized, and the ideas and beliefs espoused by others are found to be valid. Adolescents experience a slow and sporadic transition from full dependence upon parents or authorities to independence and autonomy which can result in a loss

of faith.¹¹ Such recognition signals a developmental step forward. However, these new thought processes can lead to identity crises in a period of great ambiguity and uncertainty for individuals in their spiritual development. When the adolescent realizes that his view of the world is untrustworthy, he struggles to make sense of competing authorities, of his growing sense of self-awareness and self-authority, and of the multiple communities he experiences. It is at this stage that a “mentoring community,” a compatible social group that espouses and reinforces the values that the adolescent is seeking to develop, is beneficial. Educators are not currently entirely successful in transmitting Modern Orthodoxy’s values to adolescents in this critical stage in the formation of their identity, due partially to the lack of reinforcement of such values in adolescents’ homes and communities, since it is very difficult for educators to have an impact on students if such influence conflicts with what is promoted elsewhere. Students in many Modern Orthodox educational institutions today experience one set of standards in school and a wholly different one outside of school.

COUNTERMEASURES

Upon considering societal, educational, and psychological contributors to the autonomous culture and the paucity of religious meaning incorporated in the formal curriculum, I believe measures can be taken to improve Modern Orthodox education and help graduates develop an appreciation for its ideals. Adjusting existing school practices in key areas may prove more beneficial than proposing radical changes to which established schools and their accustomed students may not be receptive. It is constructive for schools to convey to students the value of autonomy and the individual’s quest for meaning. Educators, however, can do more to additionally promote the importance of institutionalism and the obligatory nature of religious commitment within which one can strive for individual expression. Furthermore, schools can stress the significance of liberal educational methods both in Judaic and secular studies, and simultaneously explain to students that rational conclusions need not be the sole arbiter of truth. Finally, at the developmental stage when impressionable adolescents are gaining

exposure to diverse influences, it is important for teachers, parents, and community members to serve as mentors to reinforce the Modern Orthodox values promoted in the school.

It is useful for educators to articulate to adolescents that the Modern Orthodox community does not seek to isolate itself from society at large, but rather to gain from and contribute to many of the advances that this autonomous age has enabled. Teachers, however, simultaneously can convey that there is, additionally, value in the institutional mentality which is often overshadowed by modern man's autonomous and individualistic quest in society. Hugh Hecló articulates this distinction in *On Thinking Institutionally*:

Institutionalists see themselves as debtors who owe something, not as creditors to whom something is owed. As debtors they have been freely given a world charged with meaning and calls to commitment. What is on offer is an invitation to engagement that goes well beyond self-engagement. Faithful reception gives life meaning by establishing a connection with exterior referents from the past that have, in a sense, already gone beyond and outlived you, and done so to your benefit. . . . To live in a world of nothing but institutional thinking would be a monstrosity. By the same token, to live in a world in which institutional thinking is absent, or so heavily discounted as to fade into insignificance—that, too, would be a monstrosity.¹²

In transmitting the message of the importance of institutionalism, teachers can demonstrate the value of such a mentality by drawing upon relevant contemporary examples to which students can relate.¹³

Students' ability to identify with Sandberg's sentiments regarding his institutional respect for his baseball predecessors and for his link in the chain of baseball history may help them begin to think about their sense of belonging to a community, the value of reverence for their (rabbinic) ancestors, and their role in the perpetuation of the legacy of Jewish history.

Educators can explain to students that they appreciate the desire to make religion more personally meaningful, and that there is room for autonomy and rational understanding within religion.¹⁴ The challenge for an autonomous Jew is to navigate through the conflicts between Jewish law and personal conscience by striving to preserve his identity without abandoning his steadfast commitment to the Divine covenant.¹⁵ It is important for educators to help students conceptualize a mitzvah as not simply a meritorious act that one can choose to observe, but as an uncompromising obligation.¹⁶

Greater emphasis can be placed on this distinction in Tanakh and Talmud classrooms as students learn about Israel's covenant with God and the halakhic process. It is important for students to be cognizant of these competing social values and of the importance of affording reverence to the institution to which they belong while engaging individualistically in society.

Respect for religious authority is difficult to convey to adolescents who are no longer satisfied with simplistic theological conceptions. By adolescence, many students seek a rational understanding of their religious identity as they are exposed to competing values. With sensitivity to students' intellectual and emotional maturity and level of academic preparation, the challenge for high schools, in dealing with their adolescent population, is to teach about religion in a challenging yet accessible manner in order for students to integrate what they are learning with who they are becoming. It is constructive for educators to show students the intellectual substantiation for religious commitment through science, history, philosophy, and other secular studies, as well as from their Judaic learning. Schools can convey to students the nuances of the *Torah u-Madda* approach by demonstrating throughout the curriculum how Judaic studies can be integrated with other disciplines, affording students a deeper and more meaningful understanding of each subject by viewing their interconnections. Educators can show students how religious meaning can be derived from all disciplines, in order for them to develop a comprehensive, multifaceted religious faith and live an integrated existence in which the embracing of all realms of life enhances their commitment and informs their lifestyle. Modern Orthodox beliefs and values can

pervade all areas of school life and can be clearly demonstrated in all academic disciplines through a cross-curricular approach. For instance, science and history courses can teach theological lessons by giving students a more elaborate and intricate understanding of God's physical creations and providential role in history. Educators can demonstrate how nature reflects divine wisdom and providence, and thereby show that understanding and utilizing science to promote human welfare is not devoid of religious significance, but rather an expression of man's providential relationship with God. Additionally, the cognitive components of faith and philosophical dogma can be taught in order for students to achieve the appropriate conceptions of God to accompany halakhic practice. Such an approach can help eliminate the bifurcation between students' learning and their lives.

It is important that Judaic teachers, too, present rational, relevant, and meaningful lessons in order to allow students to internalize their messages. Within the formal curriculum, educators can find opportunities to broach and rigorously explore the most complex and challenging religious issues with which adolescents grapple. For instance, it is fitting to address conflicts between science and religion in the Creation story in *Bereishit*, religion's demand of morality in the Binding of Isaac episode, free will and Divine justice in the Pharaoh narrative in *Shemot*, theodicy and the problem of evil in *Iyyov*, the meaning of life in *Kohelet*, to name just a few. Similar opportunities can be found within the Talmud, Hebrew language, and Jewish history curricula. Analytical study need not be mutually exclusive from applied, contextualized, values-driven learning. Students should not feel that their curriculum is antiquated and irrelevant to their lives or that their intellectual curiosity needs to be stifled regarding religion. As Dr. Norman Lamm writes, "you cannot close your mind to falsehood without risking the exclusion of truth."¹⁷ By creating a comfortable environment within the classroom, teachers can encourage students to think about the curriculum taught and to discuss how it can be integrated into their identity and lifestyle.

As much as it is constructive for educators to reassure students that Modern Orthodoxy is not afraid to deal with difficult questions and theologically challenging materials, it is also important for them

to teach students that one's faith and observance need not be reliant on clear-cut resolutions (which are sometimes elusive). Such an acknowledgement has strong philosophical support, as a contemporary trend in religious epistemology demonstrates the limits of philosophical argumentation.¹⁸ It is important for educators to encourage students to think through, challenge, and arrive at personal understanding in every realm, including the religious, but also to convey reverence for tradition, acknowledgment of that which is beyond their limited human comprehension, and the legitimacy of the emotional, experiential, and intuitive components (in addition to the cognitive) that make up their religious identity. Students should be taught that rationality can support their religious identity but need not be the sole arbiter of religious truth. As much as students can be encouraged to question, critically evaluate, and apply philosophical analysis to better understand and find meaning in their religious beliefs and practices, they simultaneously can be taught humility in the intellectual realm. As Maimonides explains in *Hilkhot Yesodei ha-Torah* (Basic Principles of the Torah) 2:2,

And what is the way that will lead to the love of Him and the fear of Him? When a person contemplates His great and wondrous works and creatures and from them obtains a glimpse of His wisdom which is incomparable and infinite, he will straightway love Him, praise Him, glorify Him, and long with an exceeding longing to know His great Name; And when he ponders these matters, he will recoil frightened, and realize that he is a small creature, lowly and obscure, endowed with slight and slender intelligence, standing in the presence of Him who is perfect in knowledge.¹⁹

While not every adolescent will be receptive to the idea of the incomprehensible, I believe that it is nonetheless important for educators to articulate such values, because they may have a long-term impact, only realized later in life.²⁰

In addition to deriving religious meaning from the cognitive realm, educators can convey the multifaceted nature of one's relationship with God and the legitimacy of substantiating such a relationship with other factors in addition to the intellect. As John Kotter, a leadership expert at Harvard Business School, writes, "People change what they do less because they are given an *analysis* that shifts their thinking than because they are *shown* a truth that influences their *feelings*."²¹ It is valuable for teachers to explain to students that their religious commitment need not be dependent on the rational vindication of their beliefs, but on their total existential experience. Rabbi Shalom Carmy explained to a theologically alienated student that ultimate questions are most effectively dealt with by utilizing all human capacities and the broad range and depth of experience. Healthy people, he argues, do not proceed through life by "reasoning everything out from scratch, or by waiting for undisputed empirical data to accumulate," but by relying on the "cognitive counsel of emotions" and intuitions."²²

Similarly, William James argues in *The Will to Believe*, "Our passional nature not only lawfully may, but must, decide an option between propositions, whenever it is a genuine option that cannot by its nature be decided on intellectual grounds."²³

One's rational self is not the only criterion for belief. Rather, we often make decisions based on passions and emotions. James furthers his argument:

To preach skepticism to us as a duty until "sufficient evidence" for religion be found, is tantamount therefore to telling us, when in presence of the religious hypothesis, that to yield to our fear of its being error is wiser and better than to yield to our hope that it may be true. . . . Dupery for dupery, what proof is there that dupery through hope is so much worse than dupery through fear?²⁴

James suggests that the religious believer and the skeptic are both driven by emotions; the believer decides to believe in an effort to seek truth,

while the skeptic denies belief in an effort to avoid error. Therefore, the skeptic's position is not more compelling than that of the believer.

David Hume, among others, taught that many ideas are taken for granted without rational proof, such as the regularity of nature and the reality of the external world, yet the lack of intellectual certainty does not impact one's beliefs, and therefore it is inappropriate to be overly rational and expect intellectual arguments in every realm.²⁵ While reason is an instructive force in our lives, it does not determine all that we think or do. Dr. David Shatz notes,

We are possessed not of minds alone, but of hearts, emotions, needs, instincts, habits; and inhabit social contexts. Obviously, without the use of reason, anarchy enters; still, in most areas of belief and practice, we don't—and shouldn't—let philosophical worries get to us.²⁶

I have found that such realizations help make the leap of faith in religion more palatable to students and have responded to students' struggles with doubt and to arguments that they should only believe and practice that which they find rationally compelling. It is important for such lessons to be transmitted in the classroom, where cognitive teaching is primarily emphasized, in order for students to realize the need for affective and experiential learning, as well, in order to fully understand their religious identity. Curricula that incorporate affective lessons into classroom teaching will enable students to derive greater meaning from formal educational settings on a consistent basis, in addition to emotional and experiential informal programming in schools, camps, and *shabbatonim*.

Some may argue that exposure to theological ideas, even though the clear intention is to strengthen faith and commitment, may cause dissatisfied students to question more, or may not be constructive for students who are not questioning at all. As I stated earlier, the intellectual and emotional maturity of students must be considered, as well as their level of academic preparation, before raising such issues. I believe that broaching such topics in the high school classroom is

more beneficial than detrimental, since it gives questioning students the opportunity to discuss their theological struggles in a safe environment. To do this at a time in their lives when they are gaining exposure to many competing values, instead of forcing them to stifle internal tensions that they feel it is inappropriate to voice, is surely preferable to the alternative of their encountering such questions in a later context when they may not have the guidance and ability to maintain their beliefs. Additionally, many students do not question at all not because they have achieved a thoughtful and satisfying status in their Jewish identity, but because they are indifferent and disinterested in their Judaic learning. Broaching such issues with apathetic students can encourage them to think seriously about their Judaism, their life choices, and their overall outlook.²⁷

Even though my focus has been primarily on improvements that can be made in the educational realm, it is necessary, when considering the adolescent stage of development and students' exposure to competing influences in this vulnerable time in their lives, to acknowledge that religious identity cannot only be addressed in the school environment. It is important for communities to embody and reflect Modern Orthodox ideals in order for students to recognize the expression and implementation of what they are being taught in the classroom. At this critical time in adolescent development when identity is challenged and redefined, it is extremely valuable for students to be surrounded, both in and out of school, by a "mentoring community" made up of people who are living examples of the fusion of religion and culture, to help guide and inspire their religious development. Students are often more influenced by the personal conduct, passion, and values of a role model than by the formal curriculum taught in the classroom. In addition to the curricular suggestions I have made, teachers' modeling of passion and commitment, coupled with an open and honest acknowledgment of personal religious struggles, can have a profound impact on the transmission of such values to students. The school can generate similar models within the mentoring community outside the school by engaging parents and community members (through adult education lectures, parent-child learning programs, family holiday celebrations, and other informal educational activities)

in order to demonstrate to students the community's commitment to its ideals. Since religion provides a coherent perspective on life, all influences on the adolescent's experience need to be considered in his development.

CONCLUSIONS

The affirmation of faith and commitment on the cognitive, affective, and experiential levels, the internalization of integrated ideals, and the reinforcement of such values in the home and community will provide students with a solid foundation to achieve greater appreciation for their beliefs and practices as they continue their educational narratives in Israeli yeshivot and universities where they may be exposed to ideas which conflict with their Modern Orthodox upbringing. With a committed yet enlightened backbone, influences to the right in Israeli yeshivot (which may lead to short-lived intensified religious practice) and to the left, via the intellectual and social temptations of independent life in secular universities (which may motivate students to deviate from religious norms) need not cause confusion, but can rather substantiate identity. Greater Torah knowledge learned in Israeli yeshivot will enhance students' foundational understanding of themselves as Jews even if they do not agree with all of the yeshiva's *hashkafot* (religious orientations). Greater exposure to the sophistication of secular studies in university will enlighten their understanding of their Modern Orthodox identity, so long as they integrate such materials in ways that enhance or broaden, but do not threaten, their religious foundation. While I recognize that such teachings will not resolve all tensions in high school and beyond, such measures will, at a minimum, help students understand and develop an appreciation for Modern Orthodox ideals. There is no simple formula for transmitting religious meaning to high school students, and religious passion can be difficult to foster in an intellectual environment. However, if educators devote more time and effort in their classrooms to promoting the meaningful internalization of curricular content, I believe the goals of Modern Orthodox education can be better met.

NOTES

1. Christian Smith, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 143.
2. Jonathan Sarna, "The Secret of Jewish Continuity," *Commentary* 98, no. 4 (October 1994): 57.
3. ³ Norman Lamm, *Torah Umadda*. (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1990), p. 212.
4. Jay Goldmintz, "Religious Development in Adolescence: A Work in Progress," *Tradition* 37, no. 4, (2003): 59.
5. Moshe Sokolow, What Should a Yeshiva High School Graduate Know, Value and Be Able to Do? *Meorot: A Forum of Modern Orthodox Discourse*, 2009, <http://www.yctorah.org/content/view/552/10/>
6. "General Education Gains," *Harvard Magazine* (July–August 2007), <http://harvardmagazine.com/breaking-news/general-education-gains>
7. As a student and teacher of philosophy, I engage in such critical evaluation in my own studies and demand it of my students on both the high school and college levels. I utilize rigorous philosophical methods and analysis in my research and in my teaching to elucidate biblical, rabbinic, and Jewish philosophical texts which have enriched my own understanding and belief system, and hopefully those of my students as well. In my personal quest for meaning, I have been motivated to seek rational substantiation for my beliefs and practices in an effort to lead a deeper and more fulfilling religious life, and I encourage my students to do the same.
8. Erik Erickson, *Childhood and Society* (New York: Norton, 1963); idem, *Identity, Youth and Crisis* (New York: Norton, 1968).
9. James Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1981); idem, *Faithful Change: The Personal and Public Challenges of Postmodern Life* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996).
10. Sharon Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults and the Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000); idem, *The Critical Years: Young Adults and the Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1986).
11. Patrick Love, "Comparing Spiritual Development and Cognitive Development," *Journal of College Student Development* 43, no. 3 (2002): 357–365.
12. Hugh Hecló, *On Thinking Institutionally* (London: Paradigm, 2008), pp. 98, 183.
13. Ibid., p. 3. See www.baseballhalloffame.org/news/2005/sandberg_speech.doc. For instance, Hecló quotes Ryne Sandberg's speech at his induction into the Baseball Hall of Fame as an illustration of the value of commitment to something that is beyond oneself and to the perpetuation of tradition:

Respect. A lot of people say this honor validates my career, but I didn't work hard for validation. I didn't play the game right because I saw a reward at the end of the tunnel. I played it right because that's what you're

supposed to do, play it right and with respect. . . . If this validates anything, it's that guys who taught me the game . . . did what they were supposed to do, and I did what I was supposed to do.

14. Joseph Soloveitchik, *Halakic Man* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1983), pp. 78–82; Moshe Sokol, “Personal Autonomy and Religious Authority,” in *Rabbinic Authority and Personal Autonomy* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1992).
15. Kenneth Seeskin, “Autonomy and Jewish Thought,” in *Autonomy and Judaism*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp. 22.
16. Aharon Lichtenstein, “Mitzva: A Life of Command,” in *By His Light* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 2003), p. 5. As Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein writes,

A person cannot come and sit in judgment upon Torah, and upon the Almighty, and enter the world of Torah and *avodat Hashem* as if he were shopping in a department store. One shops in a department store precisely in response to one's own needs and desires. It is part of self-indulgence and self-fulfillment. But one cannot shop around in God's world. Either one understands what it means to accept the discipline of *avodat Hashem* or one doesn't. . . . Judaism is built on the notion of nullifying your will before God's, of defining your existence as being called and commanded.
17. Norman Lamm, *Faith and Doubt: Studies in Traditional Jewish Thought* (New York: Ktav, 1972), p. 16.
18. See Peter van Inwagen, “Is it Wrong, Always, Everywhere, and for Anyone to Believe Anything Upon Insufficient Evidence?” *Faith, Freedom and Rationality*, Ed. J. Jordan, D. Howard-Snyder. (MD:Rowman & Littlefield,1996). Robert Merrihew Adams, “The Virtue of Faith.” *Faith and Philosophy* 1 (1984):pp. 3-15. Stephen T. Davis, *Faith, Skepticism and Evidence*. (PA:Bucknell University Press, 1978).
19. Translation from Isadore Twersky, *A Maimonides Reader* (Springfield, NJ: Behrman House, 1972).
20. The lack of internalization and expression of Modern Orthodox values during adolescence may reflect what psychologists call the sleeper effect. The sleeper effect suggests that the persuasiveness of a message often increases, rather than decays, over time. This effect is often observed when an individual's agreement with a persuasive argument is greater a long time after exposure to it than immediately thereafter. Although the content of the communication may be learned well at the time, the message may be discounted because the individual is either not ready to accept it or not receptive to the deliverer of the message. Over a period of time, however, the discounting factor may be forgotten more rapidly than the content of the message. The result would be a delayed increment of change due to the persuasiveness of the communication. For further discussion, see Joseph Priester, “Examining the Psychological Process Underlying the Sleeper Effect: The Elaboration Likelihood Model Explanation,” *Media Psychology* 1, no. 1 (1999); Walter Weiss. “A ‘ Sleeper ’ Effect in Opinion Change,” *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* (1953): 48.

21. John Kotter, *The Heart of Change* (Harvard Business School Press, 2002), p. 1.
22. Shalom Carmy, *Notes from ATID: Forgive Us, Father-in-Law, for We Know Not What to Think: Letter to a Philosophical Dropout from Orthodoxy* (Jerusalem: ATID, 2004), pp. 14, 17.
23. William James, "The Will to Believe," in *Philosophy and Faith* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2002), p. 487.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 491.
25. David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1989).
26. David Shatz, "The Overexamined Life Is Not Worth Living," in *God and the Philosophers: The Reconciliation of Faith and Reason* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 268.
27. In my personal narrative, philosophical and theological topics were never discussed in my school, and while I graduated committed to my beliefs and halachic practice (which was partially due to my familial upbringing), as soon as I began my year of study in Israel and the subsequent year at an Ivy League university, I began to question why I believed and practiced. The motivation for my questioning was not out of rebellion, but rather a sincere attempt to understand what was dictating my life. When I asked these questions of my *rabbeim* and teachers, hoping to find clear-cut resolutions to substantiate the lifestyle to which I was accustomed, I quickly realized that finding the answers was a life-long pursuit with which they, too, struggled. It was then that I began reading and learning (and eventually teaching) philosophy and theology in order to substantiate and find meaning in my own beliefs and practices, and to help my students do so. I believe I would have benefited from broaching such topics in high school, which would have provided me with guidance as I embarked on my personal journey of religious growth. I have dealt with many high school students from Orthodox and non-Orthodox backgrounds who have expressed that such classroom lessons have enhanced their understanding of their identity at a critical point in their adolescent development. Numerous students in my Jewish philosophy courses at Stern College have told me that college was their first exposure to a sophisticated and enlightened study of philosophy and theology, since such topics were never incorporated into their high school curriculum. Many described feeling stifled and discouraged from asking questions in search of deeper understanding in high school and expressed that they would have benefited greatly from a more open environment to provide them with guidance.