

"Leading Change in Jewish Day Schools: A Process, Not an Event"

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I. Introduction

There is practically a consensus in the literature on school change that the educational leader of the school is the most important player in effecting changes in school culture. Yet, much of the literature also acknowledges the complexity of school change, and the fact that it frequently fails. In fact, a 2017 report on a study conducted by Hill, Mellon, Laker, and Goddard of how school leaders create enduring change recorded that of 411 leaders of UK academies included in the study, only 62 (15%) of them managed their turnaround successfully and sustainably transformed their school.¹

How can we explain this phenomenon?

- One conclusion would be that school leaders – the primary change agents - lack the training or skills to effect meaningful change. While this may be an issue in some cases, it is hard to understand or believe how such a reality can be so pervasive as to account for the extent of this problem.
- Another possibility is that there is a gap between the theories of educational change and the existential realities of schools, such that either the theories themselves do not factor in the nuances of educational institutions, or that the change agents themselves implement the theories without sensitivity to the existential realities of their particular institutions.

Indeed, in the aforementioned study, Hill et. al. described the difficult realities of school change as follows: “Transforming a school is a long, hard, and often lonely task. Some people want change, others don’t, and some simply aren’t prepared to wait for results to show. As a school leader sets off on this journey, how do they know what to do, when to do it, who to listen to, and how to manage critics along the way?”² In a similar vein, Fullen noted that schools exhibit a characteristic resistance to change that he attributed to a cultural ambiguity regarding the relationship between educational methods and desired outcomes.³

¹ Alex Hill, Liz Mellon, Benjamin Laker, and Jules Goddard, “Research: How the Best School Leaders Create Enduring Change, *Harvard Business Review*, September 2017, <https://hbr.org/2017/09/research-how-the-best-school-leaders-create-enduring-change>

² *Ibid.*

³ Fullen, *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, (New York: Teachers College Press, 2007), pp. 23-24

If the cultural reality in schools in general creates confusion for change agents and fosters resistance to change, we might expect that the situation in Jewish day schools is more severe because of their unique cultural elements that are not consistent with schools in which most educational research is conducted.

In this paper, I will attempt to analyze the issue of school change in Jewish day schools from the perspective of the second vantage point mentioned above, using an emerging and somewhat unconventional approach called auto-ethnography.

What is Auto-ethnography?

In order to understand the approach of auto-ethnography, let us first explore the broader research approach called ethnography.

Ethnography is a type of qualitative research that involves immersing oneself in a particular community or organization to observe existing behaviors and interactions up close. Rather than aiming to verify a general theory or test a hypothesis, it aims to offer a rich narrative account of a specific culture, allowing the researcher to explore many different aspects of the group and the setting.⁴

The three main ethnographic methods are participant observation, interviews, and archival research. Usually, researchers use all or a mix of all these ethnographic methods to collect data for their study.⁵

One form of ethnography called “portraiture” was utilized by Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot in a work entitled *The Good High School* in which she studied six schools that had earned reputations for excellence to understand what makes a good school?⁶ By creating verbal “portraits” of these institutions, she sought to identify the common elements of their cultures that contributed to their excellence, as well as other characteristics that were unique to each school.

Thus, ethnography, in contrast to classical educational research, is designed to identify good practices and to attempt to generalize where possible, but with the understanding that each organization will exhibit unique elements that inform applications.

In contrast, auto-ethnography combines characteristics of autobiography and ethnography. It differs from ethnography in that auto-ethnography embraces and foregrounds the researcher's subjectivity rather than attempting to limit it as in empirical research. To form the autobiographical aspects of the auto-ethnography, the author will write retroactively and

⁴ Jack Caulfield, “A Guide to Ethnography”, (Scribbr, March 13, 2020)
<https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/ethnography/>

⁵ Delve, <https://delvetool.com/blog/ethnography>

⁶ Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot, *The Good High School*, (New York: Basic Books, 1983)

selectively about his/her own past experiences.⁷ Unlike other forms of research, the author typically did not live through such experiences solely to create a publishable document. Rather, the experiences are assembled using hindsight.

Adams, Jones, and Ellis define a primary goal of auto-ethnography as a conscious effort to "extend existing knowledge and research while recognizing that knowledge is both situated and contested."⁸ Ellis and Bochner posit that the subjectivity of the researcher is assumed and accepted as the value of auto-ethnography.⁹ They consider that a useful aim of personal narratives "... is to allow another person's world of experience to inspire critical reflection on your own".¹⁰ Thus, the aim of auto-ethnography is to recreate the researcher's experience in a reflexive way, aiming at making a connection to the reader which can help him or her to think and reflect about his or her own experiences.¹¹

As such, auto-ethnography does not attempt to apply general theory to specific cultures, nor does it attempt to generalize systematically from specific cultural dynamics to the broader world of education. Rather, it presents a subjective narrative of a particular culture from which practitioners may be able to gain insights that can inform their own practice, consistent with their own existential realities.

Why Auto-ethnography?

As previously indicated, classical empirical research on school change, which forms the basis of much professional training and literature on the subject, is conducted in school settings that differ significantly from Jewish day schools. The same is true of ethnographic and other qualitative studies. Thus, despite the commonalities that exist between Jewish day schools and both public and private non-Jewish schools, Jewish day school leaders find themselves ill-equipped to interpret and apply the literature to effectively promote school change in their own settings. Auto-ethnography offers a less complicated approach to providing Jewish day

⁷ Tony E. Adams, Carolyn Ellis, and Stacy Holman Jones, "Autoethnography" in Jörg Matthes, Christine S. Davis, and Robert F. Potter (eds.), *The International Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*, April 24, 2017.

⁸ Tony E. Adams, Stacy Holman Jones, and Carolyn Ellis, (2015), *Autoethnography: Understanding Qualitative Research*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

⁹ C. Ellis, and A. P. Bochner, A. P. (2000). "Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: Researcher as subject" In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, (London: Sage, 2000), pp. 733-768.

¹⁰ A. P. Bochner, and C. Ellis, "Talking over ethnography" In C. Ellis & A. P. Bochner (Eds.), *Composing Ethnography: Alternative Forms of Qualitative Writing*. (Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press, 1996), p.22.A

¹¹ Mariza Méndez, "Autoethnography as a research method: Advantages, limitations and criticisms", *Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal*, Vol. 15, Number 1, 2003

school leaders with insights into school change that are more readily applicable to their schools. Another advantage of an auto-ethnographic study of school change in a Jewish day school setting is that it can provide a context that aids in understanding and interpreting the general literature on school change and the role of the school leader in school change efforts.

In this paper, I will reflect on my experience as the educational director of the Hebrew Academy of Montreal from 1992-1998. This was a period of significant cultural change within the Hebrew Academy community. We will focus on the following two case studies and the multiple changes that they entailed:

- Broadening the school's target population by promoting diversity.
- Strengthening the school community, its identity and self-image.

Our examination of these initiatives will shed light on the following topics in educational leadership literature as they relate to schools in general, and to Jewish day schools in particular:

- School Structure
- Transformational vs. Transactional Leadership Styles
- Shared Leadership
- Professional Learning Models
- Overcoming Resistance to Change

As in all cases of auto-ethnography, this study is a subjective view of the processes described, and others may certainly view them differently. Since 25-30 years have passed since the processes described in this paper took place, it is virtually impossible to include an interview component. I have therefore relied largely on archival material from the school newsletter and personal correspondence to support my observations and perspectives. It is my hope that this effort will contribute to the field of Jewish day school leadership.

II. The Theoretical Backdrop

My familiarity with many school change theories came after my school leadership experiences, and my understanding and appreciation of those theories was definitely enhanced by those experiences. Nevertheless, I present them here before reflecting on those experiences because I feel that they provide a good context for understanding the case studies that will follow.

School Structure

Many school leaders make the mistake of relating to the school based on a business model of a hierarchical top-down organization. This model, termed a “rational bureaucracy”, is a formally organized social structure with clearly defined patterns of activities and a clear set of goals that are assumed to be shared, or at least accepted by all staff, and which serve as a guide for decision-making. The bureaucracy has a formal control system including required behaviors enforced through a downward delegation of authority, and a system of feedback designed to improve compliance. It is a highly integrated organization with each component contributing to overall goals.

Karl Weick of the University of Michigan School of Business has posited that schools, in contrast, function as what he terms “loosely coupled” organizations.¹² He describes the loosely coupled organization as follows:

- An organization in which goals are ambiguous, hierarchies of authority are not effective mechanisms of integration, technologies are unclear, and participation is fluid.
- Interdependence is minimized, and individuals work in solitary settings in which they are free to make important decisions guiding their work on their own.
- There is a lack of connection between the management activities of the organization and its core operations.

Indeed, Weick’s definition seems to apply to most schools, commonly characterized by teachers who work in relative isolation, principals who have little direct impact over daily instruction, and instruction in which the relationship between the teachers’ performance and student outcomes is at times unclear (for example, a lesson that works beautifully with one group of students may fail with another for no apparent reason). These characteristics are exacerbated in Jewish day schools for a variety of reasons. Most significantly, Jewish day schools contain a dual curriculum of Jewish and general studies, which are dissimilar in a number of ways:

¹² Karl Weick, “Administering Education in Loosely Coupled Schools,” *Phi Delta Kappan*, June 1982, pp. 673 ff.

- Jewish studies curricula are generally less well defined than general studies curricula, lacking clear behavioral objectives, support for innovative teaching methods, and standardized assessment instruments.
- Jewish studies teachers often lack the formal pre-service training enjoyed by the general studies staff, and have less opportunities for in-service professional development opportunities that address their specific needs.
- The Jewish studies curriculum focuses more significantly than the general studies curriculum on the affective and values realms of education in which it is more difficult to define and measure success.

In addition to the impact of loose coupling on school change in general, this duality makes it more unrealistic, and even perhaps undesirable, to promote top down changes with expectations for uniform implementation and accountability in the Jewish day school.

What are the practical implications of the loosely coupled organizational structure? While the loosely coupled system appears by definition to be less responsive to institutional change, Weick suggests that loose coupling has some interesting advantages over the rational bureaucracy, including that it has greater flexibility, is a more sensitive mechanism for detecting the need for change and the readiness for change, and can adapt quickly to localized needs than the rational bureaucracy.

Relating to the school as a loosely coupled system demands a paradigm shift on the part of school leaders that suggests adopting a differentiated approach to school change. Effective change may occur when the leader is able to identify and work with classes or divisions that are more open to proposed changes, to adopt a gradual process of change that views larger change goals as a puzzle consisting of smaller components, and to accept the reality that meaningful change may occur even when the implementation rate is well below 100%. Hopefully, this point will be evident when we examine anecdotal accounts of real change processes later on in our case studies.

Leadership Style

Psychologist Bernard Bass has promoted a popular theory of leadership that distinguishes between “transactional leadership” and “transformational leadership” styles.¹³ Transactional leaders achieve their goals through a process of negotiation with subordinates in which workers are compensated for compliance or sanctioned for non-compliance. Transformational leaders, in contrast, formulate a vision for the organization, and try to inspire their subordinates to internalize the vision and strive for its implementation. The transactional approach is often

¹³ Bernard M. Bass, Ronald E. Riggio, *Transformational Leadership*, (London: Psychology Press, 2005)

associated with what we might call management, while the transformational approach is associated with the term leadership. The following chart contrasts the two approaches:

	Transactional Leadership	Transformational Leadership
Concept	A leadership style that employs rewards and punishments for motivating followers.	A leadership style in which the leader employs charisma and enthusiasm to inspire his followers.
Goals	Execution - Maintenance of status quo; Maximizing the existing organizational culture.	Innovation - Challenge to status quo; Changing the existing organizational culture.
Starting Point	Reactive	Proactive
Leader's Source of Power	Rank, Position	Character, Values, Charisma
How many leaders can there be in a group?	Only one	More than One
Desired Subordinate Response	Compliance	Commitment, Innovation
Supervisory Focus	Behaviors	Attitudes, Values
Supervisory Approach	Monitor and Control; Standardized Evaluation	Promoting personal and institutional growth; Empowerment
Primary Rewards	Pay, Promotion	Pride, Self Esteem

Interestingly, in a study of leadership style, Gregory Adams posited the compatibility between transactional and transformational leadership: "A given leader may exhibit varying degrees of both transformational and transactional leadership. The styles are not mutually exclusive, and some combination of both may enhance effective leadership."¹⁴ Indeed, Bass himself asserted that "the best leadership is both transformational and transactional."¹⁵ There are situations in which transactional leadership may be more effective, and situations in which transformational leadership is demanded. For example, in our context, a transactional approach may be most effective in supervising a novice teacher or one experiencing significant difficulty, while a transformational approach may be most effective when dealing with an experienced and successful teacher.

¹⁴ Gregory Adams, Transformational and Transactional Leadership: Association With Attitudes Toward Evidence-Based Practice, *Psychiatric Services*, August, 2006, https://ps.psychiatryonline.org/doi/10.1176/ps.2006.57.8.1162?url_ver=Z39.88-2003&rfr_id=ori:rid:crossref.org&rfr_dat=cr_pub%20%20pubmed

¹⁵ David Waldman, Bernard Bass, & Francis Yammarino, "Adding to contingent-reward behavior: The augmenting effect of charismatic leadership", *Group and Organization Studies*, 1990.

This having been said, it would seem that in general, transactional leadership would have a greater degree of application in the rational bureaucracy, while the loosely coupled character of schools would benefit from a transformational approach. In addition, the leadership structure of most Jewish day schools and the place of the educational leader in that structure would also support adopting a predominantly transformational leadership approach.

The Role of the Educational Leader in the Jewish Day School

Another challenge for Jewish day school educational leaders is in understanding the role of the head of school vis-à-vis the other players in the school leadership team.

Essentially, the day school leader is equivalent to the CEO (chief executive officer) in a business organization. Even in a business organization, the relationship between the CEO and the board of directors is not set in stone and can be a bit unclear. Essentially, however, the board of directors sets the long term goals and policies of the organization, and is responsible for hiring, supervising, and, when indicated, firing the CEO. Yet, the CEO has full responsibility and authority for implementing the organizational goals and policies on a day to day basis.

So too, the head of school is the board's chief executive officer. The head of school must comply with the board's general policy directions, but otherwise has complete discretion to manage the day-to-day administration of the school as he or she sees fit. Yet, there are two important elements that create challenges for Jewish day school leaders:

1. Jewish day school boards tend to be poorly structured and directed. ISM (Independent School Management) recommends that the board consist of between seven to twenty members in order to balance diversity of experience and manageability.¹⁶ Furthermore, it suggests that parents comprise about 60% to 70% of the board in order to preserve confidentiality and to prevent inappropriate parental involvement in the school operations. Board members who are parents need to be given careful instruction in differentiating their roles as parent and board member, reminding them that they should not base governance decisions on their personal experiences with their own children, and that they must be careful to maintain confidentiality. ISM also recommends that board members be “profiled” for specific relevant skills and experience that they bring to the task.

It is safe to say that Jewish day school boards rarely, if ever, follow these guidelines. They are generally inordinately large, with parents representing almost 100% of the board membership, if not 100%. As a result, it is not uncommon for Jewish day school boards to overstep their bounds, to make unprofessional decisions, and to intervene inappropriately in the operations of the school.

Many Jewish day school leaders deal with this situation either by pushing their own agenda even at the expense of developing at times a confrontational or adversarial

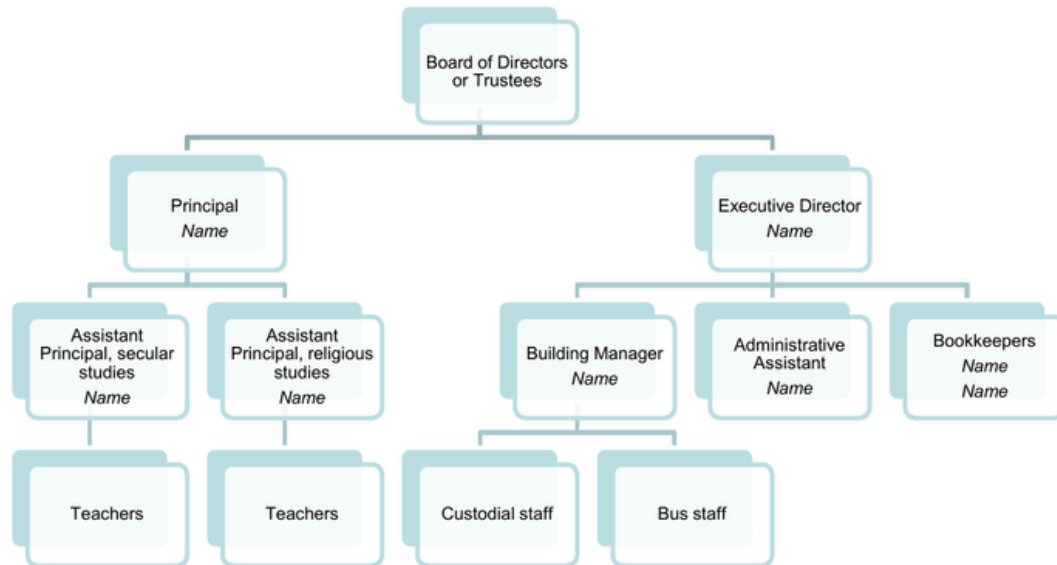
¹⁶ Independent School Management, *Board Building*, (Wilmington: ISM Publications, 2002)

relationship with the board, or by maintaining a non-confrontational relationship with the board by acquiescing to their demands whether appropriate or not. I pursued a different course that I believe to be the appropriate relationship between a school leader and the board – to engage the board as active partners in developing the school. Here again, the school leader must assume a transformational leadership approach vis-à-vis the board that inspires them to cooperatively pursue the vision of the school in a manner that is ethical, equitable, and professional. I met regularly with the school president who chaired the board to discuss long term goals, consider strategic planning, and cooperatively plan the agendas for monthly board meetings, standing committees, and ad hoc committees. I attended all board meetings and sat next to the president so we could consult throughout the meeting and deal with issues that might arise. My role included the following components:

- To deepen their understanding of the school vision; and its relationship to governance issues;
- To clarify their legitimate governance role and empower them to perform it well; and
- To make connections between the school vision and governance activities.

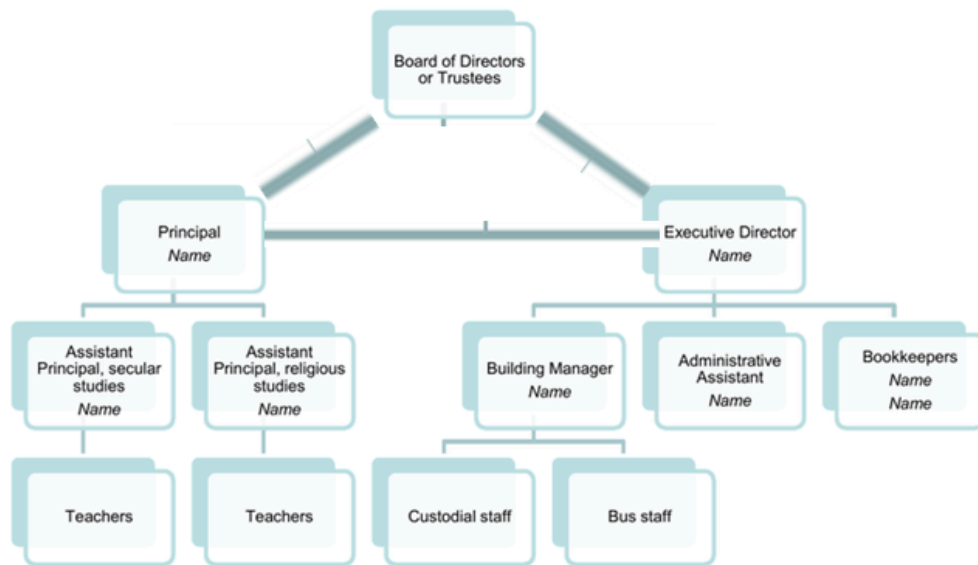
Practical applications of this approach will be demonstrated later on in our case studies.

2. There is also often lack of clarity regarding the relationship between the educational leader of the school and another leadership position that is often called “executive director” or “director”. The director is responsible for the financial functions in the school, essentially the equivalent of the CFO (chief financial officer) in a business organization, and supervises all logistical areas of the organization. In a business organization, the CFO is a high level position, but is hired by the CEO and subordinate to him/her. In a Jewish day school however, the hierarchy is a bit different. The director is generally hired by the board and answers directly to the board. The following is an organizational chart that reflects the reality in many schools:



In this diagram, the educational leader of the school (listed here as the principal) and the executive director supervise two divisions of the school that are organizationally distinct from each other. This was in many ways the way that my school in Montreal functioned prior to my arrival. The educational leaders of both Jewish and general studies would submit their needs for the preparation of a budget that would be prepared by the executive director and approved by the board, with sensitivity to the fiscal realities and limitations facing the school. This, in my opinion, is an unfortunate model, as critical funding decisions about the educational program are ultimately made without significant involvement of the educational leaders.

I chose to forge a different relationship with the executive director at Hebrew Academy that could be called shared or cooperative leadership. It might be depicted in the following organizational chart that incorporates a subtle change from the chart above:



In this chart the relationship between the educational leader and the executive director is direct and does not go through the board. Rather, we worked closely together on developing a budget to be presented to the board for approval, based on a shared vision for the organization that included a commitment to erasing the existing \$500,000 operating deficit while developing the school culture in a varied and balanced manner. While we continued to supervise distinct domains within the school, those domains became more supportive of each other in a manner that led to improvements in the educational culture of the school while maintaining a balanced budget and steadily improving the financial standing of the school. This approach reflected what Karl Weick defined as the role of the leader in a loosely coupled organization - to "tighten" the coupling within the organization by reducing isolation and creating a common language.¹⁷

Visionary Leadership

The application of the organizational theories discussed above to the unique organizational realities of schools in general, and the unique elements of Jewish day schools in particular, leads to the conclusion that a transformational leadership approach is demanded in many aspects of the work of a Jewish day school leader. Another term for transformational leadership in the

¹⁷ Weick, *supra*, note 12.

literature on organizations is “visionary leadership”. Pennings, among others, contends that a primary characteristic of transformational leadership is creating shared vision and goals.¹⁸

What is the source of this vision? Penning elaborates that the transformational leader creates a new vision out of an old vision – i.e. a vision that is significantly tied to the guiding vision and mission of the organization from its inception, which is always in need of review and revision over time. Larry Lashway implies that the vision need not be tied to an old vision, but may spring from the mind of a strong leader with the imagination to jump-start the organization into a major transformation, or it may be a shared vision developed by the leader in conjunction with other stakeholders in the organization.¹⁹ In any case, as Fritz indicates, as long as the vision is one that people in the organization can embrace, authorship is irrelevant.²⁰ No matter who creates the vision, there seems to be a consensus that the principal must be its chief instigator, promoter, and guardian. For example, in her study of shared decision-making, Weiss found that little changed in schools without the active leadership of the principal.²¹

From my perspective, all three of these approaches are correct to a degree. The school leader must be the visionary leader, but the vision that he promotes must be developed with a sensitivity to both the tradition of the school and the values of stakeholders. In order to understand this, it would be helpful to understand what a vision is and what it isn't. A vision is not an ideology or a mission. Most organizations do not frequently change ideologies, nor do most ideologies frequently change basic principles and values. Often, therefore, the role of the visionary leader is not to reformulate an ideology for the school, but rather to interpret the school's ideology and values as they relate to the current reality, and to ensure that they are applied and find expression effectively and maximally in the school program and culture. Thus, visionary leadership often involves:

- Articulating and communicating the school vision to all stakeholders;
- Developing a long term plan designed to embed the vision in the school culture;
- Modifying and/or initiating programs that promote the school vision; and

¹⁸ Rhonda Pennings, “Transformational Leadership: How Do We Get There?”, Delivered at Chair Academy Conference, 2007, https://www.imd.org/uupload/IMD.WebSite/BoardCenter/Web/213/Literature%20Review_Transformational%20Leadership.pdf , p.2.

¹⁹ Larry Lashway, “Visionary Leadership”, Eric Digest, January 1997, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED402643.pdf>

²⁰ Fritz, Robert, *Corporate Tides: The Inescapable Laws of Organizational Structure*, (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1996).

²¹ Weiss, Carol H. "The Four "I's" of School Reform: How Interests, Ideology, Information and Institution Affect Teachers and Principals." *Harvard Educational Review* 65, 4 (Winter 1995): 571-592.

- Supervising and evaluating the implementation of the school vision.

Since the goal of a visionary leader is to move the institution and the people involved to greater levels of achievement, the leader should aspire to growth that is within the zone of proximal development, as we do with learners in the classroom. This means that the goals should be within the reach of the community, and within the financial and human resources of the school.

Let's take a brief look at one example to better understand these ideas. One element of the school vision may be attaining academic excellence. The school leader must interpret what excellence means, and how it can be achieved in a manner that is consistent with other elements of the school vision. One leader might believe that this is best achieved by changing the admissions policy to accept only high achieving students, or at least not to accept students who are challenged. Another leader might think alternatively that excellence is achieved by diversity, but only when the educational program is sufficiently differentiated or develops higher level thinking, which require a serious professional development program. After considering these and other options within the context of other elements of the school vision, the resources available, and the impact on the school community, the leader must develop a plan, articulate and communicate it to the stakeholders involved in the change, implement it, and evaluate its success.

Hopefully, the concepts that we have discussed in this section relating to organizational theory will become better understood as we proceed with our auto-ethnographic case studies.

III. Case Study 1: Broadening the School's Target Population by Promoting Diversity

Context

Hebrew Academy is located in Montreal, the largest city in the Canadian province of Quebec. Quebec, originally a French colony that was subsequently captured by the British and incorporated in the Canadian federation, includes a large percentage of French speaking Canadians. From the 1950's, the province had two school systems, the Catholic School Board that generally included schools classified as French schools, and the Protestant school Board that was mostly comprised of schools classified as English schools. In 1967, the French nationalist *Parti Quebecois* political party came to power in the province and passed a number of "language laws" designed to revive and give prominence to the French language in Quebec society. Some of these laws impacted on the schools. School curricula were now required to include a prescribed amount of French, including instruction of various disciplines in French. This requirement applied with different levels of intensity both to English schools and French schools. In addition, a law entitled "Bill 101" was passed, mandating that all students must study in French schools unless at least one of their parents had studied in an English school in Canada.

The rise of the French led government with its declared intent to secede from Canada, had a significant impact on the Jewish community of Montreal. The size of the Jewish community declined progressively after the rise of the Parti Quebecois, as reflected in the following chart:

Year	Montreal Jewish Population
1971	112,020
1981	103,765
1991	101,405
2001	92,970
2011	90,211

What appears to be an almost 20% decrease in population actually reflects a more significant demographic change. The population in 1971 was primarily an Ashkenazi population that developed from immigration from Europe. By 2011, the population was almost 25% Sephardi, including over 22,000 French speaking Jews, mostly of North African origin, primarily the result of a wave of immigration following the rise of the French party in 1967. Thus, the decline in the largely English speaking Ashkenazi population during this period is probably closer to 35%.²²

Upon my arrival in Montreal, there were 16 Jewish day schools, and over 50% of Jewish children were enrolled in Jewish day schools. Some of the schools were classified as French schools,

²² Demographic figures are taken from Harold Waller, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, (Detroit: Gale, 2008); Charles Shahaar, 2011 National Household Survey Analysis of the Jewish Community of Montreal, CJA.

while others, including Hebrew Academy, were classified as English schools. The demographic figures attest to the challenge faced by the English schools as a result of the Bill 101 legislation.

Hebrew Academy 1992

When I arrived in 1992, the Hebrew Academy had an enrollment of approximately 425 students in Pre-school through grade 11 (in Quebec, high schools end after grade 11), and was meeting in a rundown, rented facility. However, the board had initiated the building of a beautiful new campus, that was ready for occupancy by November, 1992. This reflected the forward looking perspective of the school's lay leadership, and their desire for growth. Yet, it was unclear from where that growth would come.

Hebrew Academy was an Ashkenazi school that catered to the English speaking population. By definition, the school was a modern Orthodox, Zionist school. All of the school's religious practices and the curriculum were based on Ashkenazi tradition. Although classified as an English school, the program was actually tri-lingual with the elementary school week broken down as follows: 14 hours of instruction in French (including French language, social studies, science, physical education, and part of the math program), 12.5 hours in Hebrew (all Jewish studies), and only 9 hours in English (English language and most of the math program). In the high school, all of the Jewish studies were ostensibly taught in Hebrew, and all of the general studies were taught in English except for French language, social studies, and physical education, which were taught in French.

In addition to the Bill 101 restrictions, the school population was also somewhat restricted by self imposed admissions parameters. The school sought to limit admissions to families that were Shabbat observant. Also, because the Jewish studies program was taught in Hebrew, mid-stream admissions were ostensibly limited to students with a sufficient level of Hebrew proficiency. In addition, the school was very cautious about accepting students with special needs.

The school actually had begun to move forward a bit in the area of special needs when my predecessor instituted ILP (Individualized Learning Program), a pull-out tutoring program designed to provide extra support for students experiencing difficulty in the classroom. This focused largely on what we referred to as the Montreal learning disabled student – i.e. a student who could have succeeded in a one language program and held his/her own in a dual language program, but was overwhelmed by a trilingual program. Nevertheless, the school was still reticent to accept students with more pronounced learning challenges.

I believed that the school needed to broaden its scope vis-a-vis both the language issue and special needs for a variety of reasons.

Case Study 1A: Adding a French Section

I concluded that the school should increase its appeal to the French speaking population. As indicated by the demographics, this would be one way to address the challenge of enrollment

growth. However, this goal was also consistent with my vision of how the school should fulfill its mission as a Modern Orthodox, Zionist school.

The Vision

- With 16 Jewish day schools in Montreal, each school had its own particular niche. The Hebrew Academy was the only school that serviced the Modern Orthodox, Zionist population. As such, I viewed it as a type of “public school” that was required as best possible to service all Montrealers who believed in that philosophy. Some French speaking families had found a way to fulfill the Bill 101 requirements, but they were relatively small in number. It was thus incumbent upon the school to find a way to give access to families who identified with the school’s ideology. But did not have Bill 101 status.
- A second value driving my thinking was that of diversity. My interpretation of Religious Zionism, with its focus on *kibbutz galuyot* (ingathering of the exiles), values diversity within the community. In addition, my educational vision views diversity as a positive element of a rich learning environment.
- A third value behind this goal was that of *kiruv*, trying to strengthen the commitment of Jews who are not yet completely observant. The Sephardi community includes within it a noticeable percentage of Jews who are called “traditional” in Israel. This means that they observe *kashrut* and *taharat hamishpacha* (ritual purity), and are at least partially Shabbat observant. I believed that students from such a background who wished to attend the school and accepted its guidelines should have access to the Hebrew Academy education and community.

The Plan

In reality the difference between an English school and a French school in Quebec is simply that the requirement for instruction in French in a French school was 17.5 hours per week, just 3.5 hours more than the number of French hours in the Hebrew Academy program. Thus, by teaching the entire math program in French to those not eligible for Bill 101 status, we could create a French section, or in other words, a French school within an English school in the elementary school.. This entailed a relatively minor financial investment for a potentially significant gain. While we could have significantly reduced the investment by making the elementary school totally into a French program by teaching math to all of the students in French, this change might not have resonated well with some of the English speaking families who did not want to compromise the English education and who had a great sensitivity to the encroachment of French culture in Quebec society.

Yet, eligibility was only part of the issue. The second issue was modifying the school program to more fully integrate Sephardi families into the school communities. I was concerned, even for the Sephardi students already enrolled in the school, that there was a certain degree of dissonance between the customs that they experienced at home and the practices in the school

and parts of the school curriculum dealing with Jewish observance. I therefore began considering in collaboration with the teaching staff, appropriate modifications.

The Implementation

In implementing this plan, I distinguished between governance issues, relating to policy and budgeting, and programming issues. I also considered points of potential resistance, and ways of overcoming them.

- Clearly, the addition of a French section and the associated budgetary issues needed to be ratified by the board. In collaboration with the executive director and the board president, we worked on the governance issues. This was relatively easy, since the benefits were quite clear, and many of the board members were probably aware of what they might have called “Hebrew Academy families” who were currently unable to attend the school because of problems with Bill 101. Any concerns related to religious or cultural issues were perceived largely as admissions issues, which were in my purview, and not as governance issues.
- In meeting with the Jewish studies faculty, we discussed ways in which Sephardi customs could be incorporated meaningfully in the program. It should be noted that while the Jewish Studies faculty was predominantly Ashkenazi, there were quite a few Sephardi teachers, so the discussion itself was enhanced by the diversity of the group. It was agreed that Sephardi customs would be taught alongside Ashkenazi customs where possible; in learning about Jewish practices, students would be asked to share their family customs; and some Sephardi tunes would be added to the morning prayers (such as the Moroccan tune to *Az Yashir*). A number of other programs were initiated to give expression to Sephardi culture within the school. For example, in the high school, in 1994, a *slichot* program was held for parents and students in which Rabbi Moise Ohana, principal of Ecole Maimonide (French school) and Rabbi of a Moroccan synagogue, spoke about the Sephardi tradition of *slichot*, and the chanting of several Sephardi tunes were incorporated (see appendix 1). The next year, we initiated a Sephardi *minyan* that met separately twice a week for morning services. This *minyan* was attended as well by some Ashkenazi students and some parents (see appendix 2).
- As the Sephardi population in the school grew after the addition of the French section, we were proactive in trying to promote diversity and a healthy respect for different cultures. One example is a retreat program for parents and students in grade one that used traditional Jewish sources and informal education methods to transmit the concept of creating a “common language” within a diverse group (see details in appendix 3).

Case Study 1B: Special Needs

My desire to broaden the scope of our attention to special needs was not related at all to increasing enrollment, but was driven strictly by values – both religious values and educational values.

The Vision

- In a message that I wrote to the community in one of our school newsletters, I presented the Pesach seder as a model for Jewish education:

The seder is a lesson in Jewish values and history that is taught to students on a variety of levels. Any child that wants to participate is included and is addressed on his/her level. The wise son receives a lesson on the intricacies of the laws of Pesach on a very high level, while the simple son is simply told the story. As for the son who does not know how to ask the question (i.e. he is too young, he is not motivated, or he is delayed), we must open up this beautiful world for him. ... The seder proceeds to demonstrate a model of multi-level instruction. Besides involving the participants in classic textual analysis, the seder employs drama, music, audio-visual aids and experiential learning to transmit its message. All of the senses are employed in order to ensure that the lesson is internalized. ... One might think that Torah scholars who are celebrating the seder together could dispense with the non-academic portions and concentrate on Torah study. The Gemara tells us, on the contrary, that even if two scholars are having the seder together with no children present, they must ask each other the four questions. The Rabbis realized that multi-level instruction not only makes the lesson accessible to those who are less academically capable, it enriches the learning for all.

This, I believe expresses well the Jewish vision for inclusive, differentiated instruction, a concept that is explicitly expressed as well in Proverbs 22:6 – “Educate the child according to his way ...”

- Certainly, inclusion is also a Jewish social and moral value. The Torah records that all people are created in the “image of G-d”.²³ In addition, the Torah warns against harming people with disabilities, particularly the deaf and the blind.²⁴ There are many reports that the Chazon Ish would rise in the presence of developmentally delayed children because he believed that they had “holy and uplifted souls”.²⁵

²³ Breishit 1:27.

²⁴ Vayikra 19:14.

²⁵ See, for example, Yaacov Menken, “In the image of G-d”, Torah.org, <https://torah.org/torah-portion/lifeline-5760-bereishis/?printversion=1>

- From an educational standpoint, I have always felt that special education is good education. A culture that recognizes different learning styles and embraces differentiation of instruction will ultimately benefit all of the students, since each child has his own unique qualities and potential.

The Plan

In order to open the Hebrew Academy to a wider range of students with special needs, it would be necessary to build a supportive infrastructure and environment. This would involve sensitizing and training the teachers, and giving them meaningful support. In addition, it would involve sensitizing the school community to be more accepting of people with special needs, and to convince them that accepting students with special needs would not drain the school's resources and reduce the quality of education. At the same time, it would require prudence in the acceptance process to refrain from accepting students whose needs were beyond the capabilities of the school.

The Implementation

- It was very important in this instance to begin on the governance level, as the proposed change required a change in policy and considerable financial resources that would not be recovered through tuition, as well as an attitudinal change on the part of the community at large. For this purpose, the president and I worked together to appoint a special subcommittee on special needs to examine the school policy and to recommend changes. To head the committee, we identified a board member whom we knew to be a strong personality, well respected and accepted in the community, and very sensitive to the issue of helping people with special needs. She did an admirable job, and was successful in getting support for a more liberal policy on accepting students with special needs.
- While this was happening, I began working with the coordinator of the ILP tutoring program who would be a key player in providing for more challenged special needs students. She was a very capable educator with a rich background in special education, but she saw her role as supporting and advocating for the students with less focus on the needs of the teachers. I saw that the teachers felt put upon when interfacing with her program. I encouraged her to spend more time with the teachers explaining the challenges faced by their student and suggesting methods that might help them address the students' needs within the classroom, instead of just finding out what material they had covered so the tutors could help the students keep up with the class. This was a successful intervention, as she became more sensitive to the needs of the teachers, the teachers felt more supported, and we gradually went from trying to help students keep up with the class to modifying their program to help them learn differently.

- At the same time, I began to sensitize the teachers to the need for greater sensitivity to the individual styles and needs of students, and the values behind a differentiated approach to instruction. For example, at the introductory teachers meeting of the year, I discussed with them the first chapter of the *Little Prince*, in which the boy draws a picture of a boa constrictor that swallowed an elephant, which the grownups thought was the picture of a hat. When he redrew the picture so they could see the elephant inside the snake, the grownups advised him to “lay aside [his] drawings of boa constrictors, whether from the inside or the outside, and devote [him]self instead to geography, history, arithmetic and grammar. That is why, at the age of six, [he] gave up what might have been a magnificent career as a painter. [He] had been disheartened by the failure of [his] drawing number 1 and [his] drawing number 2.”²⁶

I recall similarly conducting a professional development session with the Jewish studies teachers in which I brought a packet of professional literature on special education. We went around the table reading selections, but in two of the packets, I had placed the pages out of order. When I called on those teachers to read a certain page, I feigned impatience when they had difficulty finding it, and just moved in to someone else. This exercise served as the basis for helping us understand how a learning challenged student may feel in the classroom. These are just two examples of numerous methods that were used to share an educational vision with stakeholders who are on the front lines of implementation. To paraphrase a well known idea about change, sharing a vision “is not an event, it is a process” – and understandably so.

Outcomes

The changes described in the case studies in this section led directly and indirectly to deep sustainable transformations in the Hebrew Academy and its culture.

- **Enrollment** – The addition of the French section together with the improved image of the school in the general community led to a significant increase in enrollment from 425 in 1992 to almost 600 in 1998, an increase of 40%. Already in 1998, just 6 years after completing the new campus, a new wing was developed to handle the increase in enrollment and the additional space needed for enhanced programming (see appendix 4). Despite the demographic trends in the Montreal Jewish community discussed above, the Hebrew Academy has maintained its enrollment levels over the last 25 years. The Hebrew Academy website today indicates an enrollment of 601 students. During this same time, many of the non-haredi schools in Montreal have experienced a significant decline in population, with the two largest systems closing and amalgamating their multiple campuses. It has been reported to me informally that a larger percentage of the Hebrew Academy population today is Sephardi, which some people view positively and

²⁶ Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Le Petit Prince*, (Gallimard : Paris, 1943), Chapter 1.

some negatively. Interestingly, today, the Sephardi *minyán* in the high school takes place daily and is quite vibrant.

- Academics / Programming / School Culture – The focus on individual needs and differentiation helped to generally improve the educational program as well as attitudes and sensitivities among the Hebrew Academy students. This came to expression in the following three ways:
 1. The school broadened its parameters for the admission of special needs students. I must admit that not every admission that I accepted was necessarily appropriate – i.e. that it did not work out so well for the students and/or it placed undue pressure on the teachers. In general, however, we met with successes on different levels. In one instance, we accepted a child on the autism spectrum into grade 7. This child had previously been denied admission to the Hebrew Academy elementary school and had attended another day school. After meeting him, observing him in his school, and talking to his teachers and principal, I concluded that he could succeed in the Hebrew Academy. He subsequently succeeded well beyond expectations on both the academic and social levels. He had such a wonderful nature that he endeared himself to his schoolmates (quite an accomplishment within a group of high school students) and personally sensitized them to the acceptance of people who are different than them. In another instance, we thought out of the box to include a blind student in our pre-school program on Fridays. In this way, although we could not provide for his educational and developmental needs at this stage, we could make him part of our community. As attested to in the artifact in appendix 5, this was wonderful for him and for the school community. I learned further about the inherent importance of integrating special needs students into the community from a third instance in which we accepted a student with serious learning challenges into the high school. Although his academic success was limited, the following artifact, a letter from his mother when he graduated from high school, attests to the fact that this was indeed a successful inclusion:

It is very hard to find the words to appropriately express the appreciation we feel for the enormous amount of work and dedication that went into creating a special program for our son. At a time when all doors seemed to be closed, you generously and unconditionally opened the doors to Hebrew Academy and gave us a warm and compassionate welcome. Most importantly, you made it possible to ensure that an Orthodox child, though below average academically, would be kept within the appropriate milieu. ... Although, from the outside, it does not seem to have been a major success academically, those of us familiar with the situation can appreciate and be proud of the accomplishment of the Hebrew Academy staff, and especially Karen, the [special needs] coordinator, without whom this would not have been possible. ... We thank G-d that in Hebrew Academy, we found a haven where success is

not measured strictly by numbers and report cards, where self worth and individuality are recognized and allowed to grow within certain limits and guidelines.

2. One of the concerns of members of a school community that includes students with special needs is that it will reduce the academic level of the school. It was, therefore, important that we simultaneously extend the sensitivity to special needs to students on the higher end of the academic spectrum. Advanced tracks were developed for Torah, Talmud, and Math. The crowning glory of the advanced Talmud program was the highest *shiur* given by Rav Avraham Niznik, the Av Bet Din of the Montreal Rabbinic Court, and subsequently the Chief Rabbi of Montreal. This *shiur* was created in response to a group of parents who were looking for a higher level of Talmud study for their children. The following are the reflections of one of those students, written during his post high school study at Yeshivat Har Etzion in Israel:

I had the opportunity to walk into a shiur every day to greet Rabbi Abraham Niznik, a tremendous personality recognized throughout the Torah world. A few months ago, I attended a shiur given by Rabbi Binyamin Tavori in which he quoted a ruling rendered by Rabbi Niznik. Before I could think, I piped up from the back of the room, "He's my Rebbe!" As I began to blush, I felt great pride in knowing that I had had the merit of learning with him for 3 years. ...While recently leafing through books in the Yeshiva library, I came across one about the experiences of the Mir Yeshiva as they travelled to escape the Nazis. I recognized Rabbi Niznik in one of the pictures and all of the stories he had told us came flooding back to me. Knowing that I was taught by a student of Rav Elchonon Wasserman who was a student of the Chafetz Chaim makes me feel connected to that illustrious line of Torah learning.

In addition to offering advanced levels of learning in some disciplines, we also broadened our offerings through an elective program that featured a variety of options in the arts and other activities that fall outside of the core academic curriculum (see appendix 6). This enabled the school to address different learning styles and intelligences, as well as varied student interests.

Although perhaps unrelated directly, as these programs developed, the academic achievements of the Hebrew Academy students increased and became recognized. The most pronounced achievement was the ranking of Hebrew Academy students on the provincial high school matriculation exams among the 148 English schools in the province. From 1994-1998, Hebrew Academy ranked first among the Jewish day schools, and was at least among the top six English schools in the province. In 1996, Hebrew Academy ranked first in the province (see appendix 7). This achievement certainly helped to improve the image of the school in the Montreal Jewish community.

3. As evident in some of the artifacts, an additional outcome of the new approach to special needs was a greater sensitivity of the Hebrew Academy community to special needs students and the value of integrating them in the Jewish community. During this period, Hebrew Academy students spearheaded the development of a Yachad NCSY chapter in Montreal. Yachad is dedicated to enriching the lives of Jewish individuals with disabilities and their families, by enhancing their communal participation and their connection to Judaism through social and educational programs and support services. Besides planning Yachad events and hosting them in the school, the Hebrew Academy students involved students from other schools in the project as well (see appendix 8).
- Budget and Finances – Although the goal of these changes was not primarily to enhance the financial situation of the school, increased enrollment inherently creates more financial resources, especially in Quebec where the government subsidizes schools generously on a per capita basis. In addition, with a more positive image and a larger base, fundraising becomes more robust. During the first few years of my tenure in Montreal, the executive director skillfully erased the deficit and was actually able to create surpluses that enabled us collaboratively to fund initiatives and improvements in the school program, including adding to the physical plant (see appendix 4). It is my understanding that the school has sustained a very good financial profile since that time.

Takeaways

Many of the takeaways from these case studies confirm the applicability of the theories of loose coupling and transformational leadership to achieving meaningful change in Jewish day schools.

- Clarify, articulate and communicate your vision, and connect it as much as possible to the school mission and ideology.
- Identify how the proposed change affects and is affected by all of the stakeholders. Distinguish between governance and implementation issues, and identify the key partners who will be responsible for execution.
- Do not bulldoze the change or utilize a top down approach. Rather, seek to inspire the key players who are needed to effect the change in various spheres of influence, including the board, the administrative team, the teaching staff, and the school community (both parents and students).
- Identify key allies among all relevant stakeholders who are sympathetic to the proposed change as well as potential pockets of resistance. Proactively try to turn potential resisters into allies.

- Identify the timing aspects of the proposed change. Realize that some processes are sequential, such as policy changes that must precede some elements of implementation, while other methods of promoting the change may be independent and can be worked on simultaneously while other elements are in process.
- Take a balanced approach to change, ensuring that a proposed change is not perceived as coming at the expense of another valued part of the school program.
- Recognize that change is a process and not an event. It must be patiently nourished to take off, and continually supported to be sustained.
- Continue to communicate about the change even after implementation, and tie it to the school vision.

On the last note, I would like to point out that the artifacts in the appendices are from a newsletter that I initiated called the *Shofar* that was designed to communicate happenings in the school to the Hebrew Academy community and the community at large. Here too, I identified two parents who were deeply committed to the school and its vision, and they ran with the project. The purpose of the newsletter was to help crystallize the identity of the school community around its core values, and to improve the image of the school both internally and externally.

In examining the selections related to these and subsequent case studies, you will notice how the school vision is woven into the content of the articles, and sometimes explicitly referenced. There are other subtle ways in which the vision is transmitted, such as in the variety of topics that collectively demonstrate the balance between competing values within the school, and the use of both French and English that identifies Hebrew Academy as a meeting place for the Ashkenazi and Sephardi communities. You will also notice that the editors often recruited other parents, alumni, and students to write articles, thus extending the web of engagement in the development of the school's identity and image.

The impact of the twelve issues of the *Shofar* that were published during my tenure in the school was invaluable.

IV. Case Study 2: What is a Religious Zionist School? - Strengthening the Identity of the School Community

Background: The Challenge

Even when a school has a well defined mission, it is not always the driving force in the life of the school, and its ramifications and nuances are not always clear to the stakeholders. As one Hebrew Academy parent expressed it in a farewell letter to me:

I know all too well that we are a diverse and sometimes difficult bunch, and that at times we don't have a very clear idea at all about who we are and where we wish to go, all of which presents a tremendous challenge. ... I have always been extremely impressed by your ability to capture and communicate a vision of what our school should be.

This issue came to my attention already when I interviewed for the position of educational director. One of the parents on the committee said, "The problem in the high school is that they start the day with *tefillah*." When I indicated that this seemed natural for an Orthodox school, she explained that it is such an unpleasant experience for the students, that it was a bad way to start the day. The teachers would take attendance and scowl at students who arrived late, and would cajole students whom they felt were not praying properly.

Hebrew Academy was not different from many other Jewish day schools in this regard. In many schools, even schools that ostensibly promote an integrated life of Jewishness and worldliness, the Jewish elements of the school in practice occupy a less important and respected place than do general studies and other aspects of contemporary culture. The theoretical litmus test is this: if a student would have two tests in one day – a math test and a Chumash test – and he could only study for one of them, which one would take precedence in his eyes and in his parents' perception? Very often, even deeply committed parents and students will prioritize general studies in such a situation, the rationale frequently being that a good grade in math is important for the child to get into a good college on his way to a profession. The Chumash grade is nice, yet less consequential in their eyes.

It is, perhaps, not surprising that Hebrew Academy would exhibit this type of dichotomy its ideology in theory and in practice. The ideology of Religious Zionism, clearly defined as the ideology of the Hebrew Academy, is often associated with the so-called Modern Orthodox ideologies of *Torah Umada* (Torah and knowledge/science) and/or *Torah Im Derech Eretz* (Torah and worldliness). It is, in reality, a confusing ideology that can be interpreted in various ways and can be easily misunderstood, particularly in light of conflicting views that prevail in the ever-strengthening surrounding environments of western culture on the one side and *charedi* Orthodoxy on the other. Bieler asserts that Modern Orthodox schools are "inherently more likely to be figuratively 'schizophrenic' and literally compartmentalized with respect to their educational vision."²⁷

²⁷ Jack Bieler, Vision of a Modern Orthodox Jewish Education, <https://www.lookstein.org/resource/vision.pdf>, p. 1, note 1

This issue manifests itself in a number of ways in schools like Hebrew Academy, and as we confronted it, it became evident that there were a number of factors that needed to be addressed.

- The Teachers: A significant factor in the gap between Jewish and general studies in Modern Orthodox schools such as Hebrew Academy is the status of the Jewish studies teachers. As compared to their general studies colleagues, the Jewish studies teachers have less access to quality pre-service and in-service professional training that is tied to their subject area. In addition, they often lack the detailed curricula and sophisticated learning materials available to the general studies teachers. As a result, they generally present a less professional posture than their general studies counterparts, and Jewish studies instruction is frequently less engaging than the general studies. This reality leads both to academic deficiencies in the Jewish studies program, as well as a morale problem among the Jewish studies faculty resulting from diminished prestige in the school community and a diminished self-image.

Another aspect of this issue as it relates to the Jewish studies teachers is the issue of staffing. It is very difficult to find Jewish studies teachers in general, and even more difficult to find teachers who ascribe to the Religious Zionist ideology. How can the school ensure a school culture that reflects the school vision if the teachers do not all manifest those core values? This issue was exacerbated in the Hebrew Academy, whose teachers were members of a strong labor union. As a result, most teachers had tenure, making it difficult to promote change through staffing changes.

- The Parents and Students: The aforementioned compartmentalization and skewed priorities of parents and students relating to the valuation of the Jewish elements of the school vs. the general studies and culture is not a conscious negation of the ideology, but an inability to grasp its nuances. This problem is twofold in the Religious Zionist milieu:
 - Modern Orthodoxy does not necessarily reflect an integrated approach. While the *Torah Umada* ideology theoretically promotes integration and equal valuation of both sides of the equation, the *Torah Im Derech Eretz* ideology generally places a greater valuation on Torah study and views general studies as a pragmatic tool for entering professions. Yet, even proponents of the *Torah Umada* approach often compartmentalize the two elements. A prime example is Yeshivah University, the bastion of *Torah Umada*, that offers parallel college and *yeshivah* programs with very little integration between them. The reality is that when compartmentalization occurs, one side will be valued more than the other, usually based on the values in the prevailing surrounding society, which in the case of the Hebrew Academy community was the university oriented society.
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- Promoting Zionism in a diaspora setting is also confusing. Many diaspora schools that define themselves as Zionist have a policy of not promoting *aliyah* (immigration to Israel). Rather, they promote support of Israel and participation in Israel programs. Hebrew Academy did not have this problem. The school had a strong Zionist tradition and unabashedly promoted *aliyah*. Perhaps because of the large degree of emigration from Montreal among the English speaking population, *aliyah* was also viewed by parents as a positive viable option. In addition, a large percentage of Hebrew Academy students participated in the Bnai Akiva youth movement, the Bnai Akiva *Machach Ba'aretz* summer Israel program, and post high school “gap year” *yeshivah* and seminary programs in Israel. Yet, the Hebrew Academy suffered from a different problem regarding the Zionist part of Religious Zionism – that it basically contracted out some of the more powerful elements of Zionist education to Bnai Akiva. Shortly after coming to Montreal, I realized that all of the non-charedi high schools in Montreal had a summer Israel program, except for Hebrew Academy, because Hebrew Academy students who wished to spend the summer in Israel participated in the Bnai Akiva program. I felt that this situation was not positive, as one of the most powerful Zionist educational experiences was formally outside of the school experience and could not play a significant role in forging the Zionist element of the school identity and image.
- **Governance:** The parental ambivalence regarding Religious Zionist and Modern Orthodox values was also reflected in the governance of the school, which is to be expected given that the vast majority of board members are parents in the school. The governance issues are often subtle, relating to budget allocations, physical plant, and logistics rather than policy. Yet, these subtle differences make a big impact. They are part of what is known as the “hidden curriculum” of a school – “an implicit curriculum that expresses and represents attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors, which are conveyed or communicated without aware intent.”²⁸ I will illustrate with two examples
 - The first example relates to the physical plant. As mentioned previously, the school moved into a beautiful new campus during my first year in Montreal. In a walk through the building, it was clear that the most impressive room in the building was the gymnasium. Following that were the library and the science lab, and subsequently the computer lab. In comparison, the “*Beit Midrash*” lagged far behind. The *Beit Midrash* was centrally located in the building, but was an unimpressive room. Besides serving as the location of the morning prayer services of the high school, it was also used as a multi-purpose room, and it had that feel. The

²⁸ C. D. Jerald, “School Culture: The Hidden Curriculum” (Washington, DC: The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2006), quoted in Merfat Ayesh Alsubaie, “Hidden Curriculum as One of Current Issue of Curriculum” *Journal of Education and Practice*, Vol.6, No.33, 2015, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1083566.pdf>

aron kodesh housing the Torah was an unimpressive portable ark, and the room did not house a collection of classical Jewish texts that characterize a *Beit Midrash*. It also had a tile floor rather than a carpeted floor, as did the library. It was not surprising that the *Beit Midrash* was not a focal point for Jewish learning and informal educational activities.

- Another area that gives a strong message is scheduling. The school schedule in the high school was “egalitarian” in that it integrated Jewish and general studies randomly throughout the day. In other words, it did not prioritize, for example, that the students begin their day with Torah or Talmud study as do many Orthodox high schools. In addition, the scheduling was contracted out to a company that used a computer to create the schedule after receiving input from the school. Thus, key decisions were made by a computer that was probably supervised by a non-Jew, making certain that nuances and delicate balances might be overlooked.

Fostering a Pervasive Vision

It was clear to me that the identity of the school community had to be strengthened. This did not require revisiting and modifying the school mission. The ideology of the school was very straightforward, was appropriate for the school community, and was even in theory ascribed to by a majority of the families affiliated with Hebrew Academy. Rather, what was necessary was that it be interpreted, articulated, communicated, and given expression pervasively in the life of the school.

The Plan

I set out to ensure that the school vision would permeate the school program and the school community. This would be accomplished by simultaneously addressing the various stakeholders discussed above – the teachers, parent and students, and board members.

In order to unite the school community around a common vision, it was important that the much needed strengthening of the Jewish elements of the program not be accomplished at the expense of the general studies. On the contrary, the *Torah Umada* philosophy also required that we simultaneously strengthen general studies in the school. Similarly, we did not want to compete with Bnai Akiva in strengthening the Zionist identity of the school.

Another important element of the plan was that it not create internal competition or animosity within the Jewish studies faculty that was diverse in its ideology. In this sense, the loosely coupled nature of the school would allow us to embrace the diversity of the staff while still strengthening the religious Zionist identity of the school.

Our ultimate goal was to improve the attitudes of students toward the Jewish elements of the school. In discussions with my predecessor during my transition, it became clear to me that the school had employed a disciplinary approach to promote student compliance, but that this

approach had been ineffective, and had in fact contributed to the problem. We would therefore need to engage students positively in the Jewish life of the school by breaking the disciplinary approach that had seemingly been a factor in student estrangement.

The Implementation and Outcomes

The following are some of the major steps taken to address the aforementioned issues with the various stakeholders.

The Teachers

My efforts to bolster the morale of the Jewish studies staff began even before the start of school in my first year on the job:

- I met with one of the Jewish studies teachers who I knew was not highly regarded by my predecessor. He had just returned from a sabbatical year in Israel. When we met, he shared with me a workbook that he had created when he was on sabbatical. I looked it over, and told him that we would print it so he could utilize it in his classes. This small gesture had a big impact on his morale. He became a very positive force among the teachers, and a good friend and ally for me, helping in many ways with change initiatives and with troubleshooting.
- I decided to schedule a retreat for the Jewish studies teachers the week before school started. The plan was to go out to a camp in the outskirts of Montreal for a half day of professional development, a nice lunch together, and a half day of recreation. I was warned by a veteran member of my administrative team that this would not work for a number of reasons, most significantly the fact that the teachers would not buck the union demand that no teacher go into the school to work until 2 days before the start of the school year. In the final analysis, all but one of the Jewish studies staff members participated, and the program was very successful. I don't recall what we did at the professional development session, but I am certain that it was an opportunity for me to share with them my vision of student-centered education that fosters higher order thinking, and to apply it to text study. The retreat definitely helped consolidate the Jewish studies staff and to raise their morale as we entered the school year.
- Subsequently, I continued to combine professional development with morale building by developing a professional learning community for the elementary school Jewish studies teachers. We would meet on a regular basis, and teachers would take turns sharing real lessons that they had prepared for instruction followed by a peer review session. The results of this program coincided with the research on professional communities which indicates that they significantly improve teacher job satisfaction, teacher morale, and

teacher efficacy.²⁹ It also reflected most of the elements of effective professional development found in the literature, including content focus, active learning, collaboration in job-embedded contexts, modeling of effective practice, opportunities for feedback and reflection, and sustained duration.³⁰

Another way of improving teacher morale was by giving support to individual teachers. Contrasting the following two examples enables us to examine how different responses to a similar situation can be most effective. In both situations, a teacher with very high standards was having difficulties meeting the needs of all of the students in the class.

- The first example involved an elementary school teacher who, as a third year teacher, was up for tenure. I was told to “build a file on her” to prevent her from getting tenure. I observed her class early in the year, and found that she was a committed teacher, but a bit harsh and demanding, or in other words, not sensitive to differentiation within the class. She was teaching *Sefer Shemot* to the 5th grade, so I shared with her a program put out by Matach in Israel that included three levels of workbooks for *Shemot*. She tried out the approach, internalized it, and ultimately modified all of her teaching, utilizing the same method of differentiation. This transformed her instruction and the way that she related to the students. She received tenure, was a very successful teacher, and is still a valued member of the faculty today. This teacher became an inspiration for colleagues as well, as reflected in the following excerpt from a letter written by the principal of another elementary school in Montreal:

I would like to commend you for the initiatives that you have taken at the elementary level, particularly for bringing in the Matach materials and approach to Torah studies. For several years now, Hebrew Academy has successfully piloted this program in the school, and we were ecstatic when you extended an invitation to see the program in action. Our teachers came away inspired and we are now considering adopting this program for our school as well.

- The second example involved a veteran high school teacher who was also succeeding well with part of the class, but experiencing disruptive pushback from another segment. Here the problem was not specifically an issue of academic levels, but of learning style.

²⁹ Shirley Robinette Weathers, “A Study to Identify the Components of Professional Learning Communities that Correlate with Teacher Efficacy, Satisfaction, and Morale, Doctoral Thesis, Georgia Southern University (2009), <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1313&context=etd>

30 Linda Darling-Hammond, Maria E. Hyler, and Madelyn Gardner, Effective Teacher Professional Development, Learning Policy Institute Research Brief, May, 2017, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED606741.pdf> . This represents six out of seven elements of effective PD identified by the research of the authors. The seventh is that it provides coaching and expert support.

This was a teacher who was highly successful with and highly regarded by students who appreciated her teaching style, but less well received by those who did not appreciate her methods. I felt that I would not succeed by trying to change her methodology nor by taking a strict disciplinary approach. I decided instead to divide and conquer. I divided the class into two parts and brought in another teacher to cover the same material with the group that had previously been uncooperative. This was successful academically, but also softened negative vibes emanating from both the teacher and the students. This teacher was taking a wait and see attitude regarding her attitude toward my leadership, with noticeable apprehensions. This solution turned out to be a step toward developing a very positive collegial and personal relationship.

This experience supports the idea of differentiation in supervision of instruction. Teachers have different backgrounds, temperaments, and needs, and therefore may require different types of support.

One final note regarding working with teachers: Unrelated to change strategy, I always taught approximately two periods a day, which is considered a lot for an educational director. I once heard that the term principal was coined in England to refer to the “principal teacher”. The essence of education is teaching, and I believe that every administrator should teach in a substantive way. Of course, it goes without saying that when you teach, you need to serve as a good role model for effective teaching, including on-time performance and good preparation. A side effect is that it places you on a more collegial plane with the teaching staff, who cannot view you as an out of touch administrator who has no idea what it is like to be in the trenches.

The School Community

We took every opportunity to communicate and promote the school’s ideology and core values among the parents and students. I will describe here two of our main efforts in this regard:

- Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, the most prominent proponent of Modern Orthodoxy and Religious Zionism in North America, passed away in April, 1993. Following his death, I shared information about Rav Soloveitchik and his ideology with the parents and students. Subsequently, a *shloshim* memorial observance, which featured a prominent guest lecturer from Yeshivah University, was held in the school under the auspices of Rabbinical Council of Canada. The program was well attended and impactful. In conjunction with a committee of interested parents, we decided to conduct a memorial program for Rav Soloveitchik’s first *yahrtzeit*. We came up with the idea of a “*shavua limud*”, a week of learning, which would feature guest lectures for students and parents by prominent students of Rav Soloveitchik. This was a tremendous success (see details in appendix 9), and we decided to run the event on an annual basis. I believe that this program was most instrumental in crystallizing the school vision for the school community.

- I took seriously the aforementioned comment in my interview that the high school *tefillah* was a bad way for our students to start the day. Not only did it reflect the negative relationship that our students had to prayer, which is such a fundamental part of a religious life, but was also endemic of their attitudes toward the Jewish elements of the school in general. I wanted to change this negative dynamic as a first priority, and began already at my orientation meeting with the high school students. I dispensed with the lengthy yearly ritual of reviewing the rules and consequences listed in the student handbook, explaining that as veteran students they knew the content of the handbook much better than I, a newcomer. I suggested instead that we learn a selection of laws from the Rambam's "Laws of Repentance" in advance of Rosh Hashanah. I briefly reviewed two laws from the tenth chapter that distinguish between repentance based on fear and repentance based on love, and concluded by expressing my hope that we could work together to create an atmosphere of love rather than one of fear. When I dismissed them after 15 minutes, in contrast of the 2 hour orientations to which they had become accustomed, they were in shock, but also pretty much convinced that "this guy will never last." I had to overcome their skepticism with some concrete practices that would embed the idea in the school culture.

After a few weeks into the school year, I raised the *tefillah* conundrum with the high Jewish studies faculty. One of the teachers made a counter-intuitive suggestion that we stop taking attendance in the morning at *tefillah*. Some teachers supported the ideas, while others hated it. I liked it, and decided to implement it. I introduced the new policy at a meeting of the high school students. I informed them that we would no longer be taking attendance at morning *tefillah*. This, I explained, did not mean that they were exempt from attending or arriving on time. Rather, it meant that their attendance was not to be motivated by our enforcement, but by their personal responsibility "to a higher authority". I further informed them that nobody would force them to pray, since it is impossible to force anybody to pray properly. However, I added that their conduct would be limited by one rule – that they were not allowed to disturb the prayer of other people. At a prior staff meeting, I had discussed the new policy with the teachers and asked them to simply serve as role models for good *tefillah* at services and to leave the disciplining to me. If there ever was a child who was disturbing during *tefillah*, I would approach him/her and say, "This is not a punishment, but you are disturbing other people's *tefillah*, so please leave." I don't think that a student ever took advantage of this free pass. They simply stopped disturbing. We did not take attendance, but if I noticed a child who was not attending or chronically late, I would discuss it with them at another time, but not during *tefillah*. Did on-time attendance improve? I'm not sure – but it certainly didn't get worse. However, over time, the quality of the *tefillah* and the *tefillah* experience definitely improved dramatically. Some parents even joined the *minyán* because they enjoyed the *tefillah*, and the teachers who had opposed the change came on board. I will add one anecdotal reflection: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin used to visit the school annually to interview students for his *yeshivah* in Efrat. When he came a year or two after we had instituted the change, he was in the year of morning after losing one of

his parents, so he led the services in the morning. Afterwards he asked: “What did you do with the *minyan*?!! It is like a “*yeshivish*” *tefillah*!!

In parallel with the change in the *tefillah* policy, we tried to give the high school students responsibility in other areas as well. We encouraged them to start a newspaper that they would independently edit with limited adult supervision. We also empowered the student council to implement activities that they wanted to initiate. It became an activist student council and our role was empowerment. For example, a couple of times when there were demonstrations on behalf of Israel in the community, the students decided that they wanted to participate. We provided a bus, but it was completely their initiative. Ultimately, the students helped promote the image of Hebrew Academy in the community. I recall getting off of a bus with the students at an Israel rally, and hearing an adult participant remark admiringly, “Those must be the Hebrew Academy students.”

Gradually, the attitude toward the Jewish culture of the school and the dynamics between the students and both the teachers and administrators improved. That is not to say that there were never disciplinary issues – of course there were. But they could now be handled within an environment of greater mutual respect.

While many aspects of school change are the result of a calculated strategy, sometimes we are faced with events that demand an immediate response. One such case was the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin in November, 1995.

- The assassination was perpetrated by a person who identified with the Religious Zionist community, and it was ostensibly committed in the name of Religious Zionism. This was a shocking event with potentially dramatic ramifications including the possibility of internal trauma and the certainty of external criticism. I decided to confront the issue head-on by immediately sharing a letter with the school community in which I unequivocally condemned the assassination and discussed the resulting moral dilemma facing the religious Zionist community (see appendix 10). I reiterated the basic principles of religious Zionism that had been violated, and discussed the responsibility of its leadership to be careful with their words, as indicated in Pirke Avot and in the ritual of the *eglah arufah*. The letter was subsequently published in *The Shofar* and shared with the community at large. From the feedback that I received, this letter helped our community cope with the trauma of the assassination, and served to deepen and clarify their understanding of the core values of the community.

Governance

- As mentioned previously, I worked closely with the executive director to ensure that critical aspects of the Jewish and general studies programs were adequately funded. I also arranged with her to “repatriate” the high school scheduling by having it completed in house rather than being contracted out. This was not a hard concept to sell, as it meant a savings in costs. Instead of paying for a consulting service to perform this task, I

took it upon myself. I did the scheduling manually, which enabled me to be sensitive to nuances that were important both from a learning standpoint and a hidden curriculum standpoint. The most significant change that I made early on was that I was able to schedule all of the high school students for two periods of Talmud or Chumash during the first two periods of the day. This sent a strong message about the centrality of these subjects in the life of the school, and also allowed for cross grade special programming as discussed later. I was careful to make sure that this change did not come at the expense of general studies. In reality, the first period was not always coveted by the general studies teachers as it was often shortened by longer *tefillot* on special days, Rosh Chodesh celebrations, and special programs. Since these events were most often associated with the Jewish elements of the school, it was more natural that they take place during Jewish studies time.

- I was also able to get a green light from the board to develop an Israel program for the school. We decided to offer a unique program, called *Lehava*, that would enable students to begin the school year studying in Israeli high schools. In order to not compete with Bnai Akiva, we decided to begin our program at the conclusion of Bnai Akiva's *Machach Ba'aretz* program, so students could theoretically participate in both. Early on during my first year at the school, we had an information meeting with students and parents regarding the program to try to gauge interest. To my surprise, almost all of the families in the class were represented at the meeting, and subsequently, almost all of the students in the class registered for the program, which took place at the beginning of the next school year. Admittedly, this was a difficult program to run from my perspective. The administrators on the Israeli end were not always responsive to the needs of the students, and the integration into the school did not always go smoothly. Also, students coming off of the Bnai Akiva trip had difficulty adjusting to a more disciplined school-based environment. I felt that students were having a difficult time, and it demanded a lot of my energies, including an emergency "troubleshooting" trip to Israel during the first year of the program. I was not certain that this program was a success, although we did decide to run it again in ensuing years. In one of the subsequent programs, we invited graduates of the first program who were studying in Israel to join the group for a shabbaton. At the shabbaton, I heard one of the graduates who had had a particularly hard time transitioning from the Bnai Akiva trip to the *Lehava* program, talking to one of the current students. I was pleasantly surprised to hear her indicate that she had been on a number of Israel programs (including Bnai Akiva and March of the Living), but had found that this program had ultimately had the most impact on her. Similar sentiments were voiced by a student in the *Shofar* in a retrospective look:

Another program that had tremendous benefits for me was the Israel study program which involved my spending three months at Netiv Meir, one of the top Israeli Yeshiva high schools. This gave me a view of Israeli religious life which cannot be fully understood from the Diaspora. I reached such a level of integration into the institution that when they first saw me,

they thought I was an Israeli. My Hebrew obviously improved and I formed friendships that are still with me today. The common feeling in the Yeshiva was that religion and nationalism are eternally bound. This ideology became a part of me, and I began studying the writings of Rav Kook with my chavruta. This experience gave me a greater understanding of Israeli history as well as current events. ...

It is hard to judge the long term impact of this program, but I believe that at least in the short term, it was an important cog in strengthening the Zionist identity of the school.

- I also worked with the executive director and board president to upgrade the *Beit Midrash*. We embarked on a remodeling project that was actually funded by the person who had funded the gymnasium. He brought in his own designer to create a very special *aron kodesh* (see picture in the article in appendix 10). The room was carpeted, and a standing library of classical Jewish works was added. The *Beit Midrash* soon became a hub of Jewish learning and activity (see appendix 11). For example, in conjunction with the aforementioned scheduling change that enabled all high school students to begin the day with two periods of Talmud or Torah study, a *chavruta* learning program was initiated in which students would come to the *Beit Midrash* on a rotating basis to learn independently in study pairs. The enhanced role of the *Beit Midrash* in the school ethos was a deep transformational change. The year after I left Montreal, the school established a Kollel Mitziyon program, in which 5-6 young men from Israel established a *kollel* in the school's *Beit Midrash*. These young men, all of whom ascribed to a Religious Zionist philosophy, would spend part of their day aiding in the formal education program, part of their day involved in their own learning in the *Beit Midrash*, and the latter part of their day learning after school with interested students and even some parents. Not only did the *Beit Midrash* become a vibrant and influential locus of Torah learning, but Religious Zionism became a vibrant part of the very fabric of the school. This latter aspect was augmented by a parallel program that brought young Religious Zionist women from Israel to do their national service in the school to enhance the formal and informal educational programs.

It seems clear to me that the confluence of this range of efforts geared toward the various stakeholders achieved the desired result. The vision of the school was effectively expressed both explicitly and implicitly.

It is important to note that although we did of course not achieve full buy-in from all teachers and students, the desired change in school culture was realized. Furthermore, as discussed previously, some of the high school Jewish studies teachers did not ascribe to the Religious Zionist ideology, but as long as they did not negate the school's approach, their Torah contribution was a positive piece of the puzzle.

In the final issue of the *Shofar*, published a year after I left the school, the editors took a retrospective look through past issues and identified what they considered to be the four strengths of the school: innovation, academic excellence, enrichment, and Zionism. They concluded as follows: “Besides these accomplishments, our walk through the pages of past issues of *The Shofar* leaves us with the impression of a school that has emerged with a strong identity, sense of purpose, and sense of community.”

Additional Takeaways

In addition to the confirming the takeaways that were derived from Case Study 1, the following are added takeaways that arise from Case Study 2:

- One of the most important factors in the change process is that of relationships. Develop a relationship of trust, respect, and support with teachers, and students. Keep the parents connected through ongoing communication and adult education programs.
- Recognize the differences in your teachers and adopt a differentiated approach to supervision of instruction.
- Recognize that teachers learn in many ways similarly to students and they benefit from common modalities of learning such as differentiated instruction, active learning, cooperative learning, and the like. Promote a robust program of professional development that is grounded in the research on effective professional development in that it:
 - 1. is content focused;
 - 2. incorporates active learning utilizing adult learning theory;
 - 3. supports collaboration, typically in job-embedded contexts;
 - 4. uses models and modeling of effective practice;
 - 5. provides coaching and expert support;
 - 6. offers opportunities for feedback and reflection; and
 - 7. is of sustained duration.³¹

A good model to consider is the professional learning community that has demonstrated a positive effect on teacher morale and teacher efficacy.³² Additional studies have also demonstrated a connection between transformational/visionary leadership, professional learning communities, and successful school reform.³³

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Weathers, *Supra* note 29.

33 Weathers, *ibid.*, quotes Hipp and Huffman (2010) as follows: “The primary reason school reforms don’t work is due to the failure to create a school vision that supports teachers’ development and professional learning

- Pay attention to the hidden curriculum in the school and proactively ensure that it coincides with the vision that you are trying to promote.
- Be proactive in confronting unexpected challenges.
- Realize that you do not need 100% buy-in from relevant stakeholders for a change program to be effective. In fact, a change can be effective with much less than 100% buy-in, as long as you make sure that key players are on-board.

V. Conclusion

This auto-ethnographic study of school change in a Jewish day school is not designed to serve as a guide for school change in Jewish day schools. All schools have their own unique qualities, and all situations are nuanced. However, since there are some characteristics that are common to many Jewish day schools, it is hoped that the subjective reflections of what was, I believe, a successful and deep change in the culture of the Hebrew Academy of Montreal will be helpful to school leaders in considering school changes in their own contexts, and in the processes of planning and implementation.

communities, both of which are critical to the success of school reforms." See also Jia Zhang, Qinan Huang, and Jianmei Xu, "The Relationships among Transformational Leadership, Professional Learning Communities and Teachers' Job Satisfaction in China: What Do the Principals Think?", *Sustainability*, 2022, <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/14/4/2362>: "Results showed that transformational leadership had a significant effect on all five components of PLCs (i.e., shared purpose, collaborative activity, collective focus on student learning, deprivatized practice, and reflective dialogue), and all five PLC components significantly predicted teachers' job satisfaction. The five components of PLCs significantly and partly mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and teachers' job satisfaction."

Appendices

Appendix 1:



LES SELIHOT MINHAG SEPHARADE À L'HONNEUR

mélodies prenantes qui s'échappaient des synagogues à chaque coin de rue du Mellah.

Les Sélihot sépharades sont pour la plupart des chefs-d'oeuvre poétiques. Nous en devons la langue exceptionnellement, riche et les thèmes évocateurs et profondément émouvants aux grands maîtres de la poésie sépharade à travers les âges.

Les mélodies, sur lesquelles ces textes sont traditionnellement chantés, remontent également loin dans le temps et ont été fidèlement transmises de génération en génération. Analysant un passage de Sanhédrin 98a, le Rabbin Ohana a insisté sur l'importance que le Talmud attache à une telle transmission. Les éducateurs de l'école juive se doivent d'investir davantage en termes d'apprentissage du rituel, pour que l'insertion harmonieuse des enfants dans le vécu synagogal et communautaire se fasse de la manière la mieux assurée.

La tradition sépharade n'aime pas beaucoup laisser la conduite des offices aux seuls professionnels. Elle aime impliquer le Kahal et l'associer au chant et au service, toutes les fois que le bon ordre, le décorum et l'harmonie n'en souffrent pas.

À l'invitation de Rabbin Peerless et de Rabbin Yamin Benarroch qui conduisaient le service, trois morceaux choisis du rituel sépharade des Sélihot ont été incorporés dans le service et chantés par le Rabbin Ohana, le Rabbin Yossef BenHarosh, professeur à l'École, Itshak Dahan, directeur du Centre de l'Aliyah, accompagnés des autres sépharades de tradition marocaine présentes et du Kahal.

Qu'il nous soit permis d'exprimer ici notre appréciation au Rabbin Ohana pour la chaleur de son message et sa clarté, et pour la petite fenêtre ainsi ouverte à notre Kahal - jeune et moins jeune - sur ce bel aspect de l'héritage sépharade, Ko Lehar.

Dans le cadre des activités prévues pour nous sensibiliser aux traditions sépharades, le Rabbin Dr. Moïse Ohana, chef spirituel de Or Hahayim et Directeur des Études Juives à l'École Maimonide, a pris la parole devant un groupe de parents, diplômés et élèves avant les prières de sélihot.

Le Rabbin Ohana a d'abord évoqué, avec nostalgie, l'atmosphère de ferveur et de prière qui enveloppait le quartier juif de Meknés, sa ville natale au Maroc, dès les premières lueurs de l'aurore, tout le mois de Eloul durant, et les

Appendix 2:

OBSERVING DIFFERENT TRADITIONS - A SEPHARDIC MINYAN

by Rabbi Yamin Benarroch

As part of an ongoing effort to create an enriched educational environment that meets the needs of its varied population, the Hebrew Academy has initiated a weekly Sephardic minyan in the high school. This initiative

also extends to learning special Sephardic minhagim throughout both the elementary and the high school. Approximately 35 students regularly participate in the minyan which is largely student run. Secondary III student Yonatan Abenaim has done an outstanding job as the gabbai of the minyan. The minyan has enabled Sephardic students to attain a greater knowledge, appreciation and expression of their minhagim. At

the same time, it has given some Ashkenazi students an opportunity to learn more about Sephardic culture. Shoshana Peerless, an Ashkenazi student who participates in the minyan on a regular basis, said that she attends the minyan because "of the melodies, and the togetherness that she feels."

A number of parents have come to participate in the Sephardic minyan, as well. On one special occasion, Sephardic Cantor Mordechai Rouimi, a Hebrew Academy grandparent, treated the students to beautiful Sephardic melodies. This minyan demonstrates that, despite our diverse backgrounds, at Hebrew Academy we are united by one Torah.



Appendix 3:

PAGE 2

BUILDING COMMUNITY: IDENTIFYING A COMMON LANGUAGE

Français page 3

According to the Biblical account, the building of the Tower of Babel was thwarted by the lack of a common language. On Sunday, December 14th, twenty grade 1 families began a unique day together at Camp B'nai Brith by collaborating on the building of towers in search of a common language. Each group of three families was given a variety of materials and was asked to create a tower that would stand firm. The activity enabled the families to get to know each other and to learn an important lesson about building - that each individual brings unique talents and perspectives to the building process that together enable the creation of a strong structure.

The tower building project was the first in a series of recreational and informal educational activities that made up this innovative program. The participants also collaborated on the creation of commercials designed to market the values



of the Hebrew Academy community. After studying their topics, writing scripts, making props, and practicing, the parents and students videotaped their commercials relating to Shabbat, kashrut, prayer, modesty, chesed, and Torah study. Following a barbecue lunch, the group came together to view the commercials. The day in the country also included a number of recreational activities including arts and crafts, tobogganing, game room activities, and just singing around the fireplace.

Rabbi Peerless addressed the group to summarize the events of the day: "We have found that the basis of a strong Jewish community is not in language or in cultural background. The common language of the community is, rather, the Jewish values on which it is based. A beautiful aspect of the Hebrew Academy is the meeting of various cultures and backgrounds that takes place within its walls. The strength of the Hebrew Academy family is the 'safa meshutefet', the common language of Orthodox Jewish values that has been fostered within the school community."

Rabbi Peerless also praised Eta Blitzer, Daniel Amar, Robert Abitbol, and Linda Lieberman who planned and coordinated the program. All of the participants left with a feeling of accomplishment. Not only was it a fun time, but all agreed that it was an important step in cooperatively building a strong and enduring community.

PAGE 3

LE DEVELOPPEMENT DE LA COLLECTIVITÉ: LA CRÉATION D'UNE LANGUE COMMUNE

English page 2

La Bible nous enseigne que la construction de la Tour de Babel a échoué à défaut d'une langue commune. Le dimanche 14 décembre, 20 familles du premier niveau ont vécu ensemble une journée unique au Camp B'nai Brith en collaborant à la construction de tours destinées à la recherche d'une langue commune. Chaque groupe de trois familles recevait un ensemble de matériaux afin de construire une tour solide. Cette activité permettait aux familles de mieux se connaître et d'apprendre une leçon importante en matière de construction: chaque personne apporte des talents et des perspectives uniques au processus de construction, ce qui permet d'ériger une structure solide.

Le projet de construction de la tour est le premier d'une série d'activités informelles récréatives et éducatives au centre de ce programme innovateur. Les participants ont également collaboré à la création d'une série d'annonces destinées à promouvoir les valeurs communautaires de l'Académie hébraïque. Après avoir étudié leurs sujets, écrit leurs textes, préparé leurs accessoires et fait leurs répétitions, les parents et les étudiants ont ensuite filmé leurs annonces concernant le Shabbat, le kashrut, la prière, la modestie, la chesed et l'étude de la Torah. Après un dîner barbecue, le groupe s'est réuni pour visionner les annonces ensemble. Cette journée à la campagne comprenait également un certain nombre



d'activités récréatives dont l'artisanat, les glissades en toboggan, les jeux d'intérieur et les chants autour du foyer.

Le rabbin Peerless a pris la parole devant le groupe afin de résumer les événements de la journée :

« Nous avons découvert que la base d'une communauté juive forte n'est pas la langue ou l'origine culturelle. La langue commune de la communauté est plutôt les valeurs juives sur lesquelles elle repose. À cet égard, la rencontre des cultures et des antécédents est l'un des aspects les plus remarquable de l'Académie hébraïque. La force de la famille de l'Académie hébraïque repose sur la « safa meshutefet », soit la langue commune des valeurs juives orthodoxes que l'Académie s'est toujours efforcée de promouvoir. »

Le rabbin Peerless a également adressé des félicitations à Eta Blitzer, Daniel Amar, Robert Abitbol et Linda Lieberman qui ont assuré la planification et la coordination du programme. Les participants au programme étaient tous fiers d'avoir accompli quelque chose. De l'avis de tous, la journée n'était pas seulement une activité amusante, mais aussi une étape importante dans le processus coopératif qui mène au développement de valeurs communautaires fortes et solides.



Appendix 4

COMPLETION OF NEW WING REFLECTS GROWTH IN SIZE AND SCOPE

When the Hebrew Academy moved into its new facility in 1992, it seemed that the building would be more than adequate to meet the needs of the school for the foreseeable future. Few would have believed that in just five years the school would have to undergo a significant expansion. Nevertheless, planners wisely included a large unfinished area in the basement of the building to facilitate any future expansion needs.

At its February meeting, the Hebrew Academy Board of Directors approved the completion of a new wing to include three classrooms, a new pre-school gym, an enlarged computer lab, a second Beit Midrash, a fine arts center and a high school

ILP center. This expansion reflects a significant growth of the Hebrew Academy in both size and scope.

In 1992, the enrollment of the Hebrew Academy High School numbered 114 with many one-stream classes. The overall school population at that time totaled 423. Enrollment projections for 1998 include 220 for the high school and a total population of 585. This year the school will graduate its last one-stream class and will add a second class at the three-year-old level, as well.

The school has also added a number of programs since 1992 including an extended individualized learning program (ILP), a section française in the elementary school,

and advanced tracks in the high school in Math, Talmud and Torah. The inclusion of a fine arts center in the new wing is designed to enhance the elementary school arts plastiques program and to facilitate a new fine arts elective program in grades 7 & 8 that will include offerings in art, drama, choral music and instrumental music.

Hebrew Academy Executive Director, Linda Lehrer, expressed excitement about the building of the new wing: "The fact that we need to expand our new facilities demonstrates how successful our school has been in recent years, and bodes well for the continued growth and development of our program in the future."



Appendix 5:

LES VENDREDIS DE JOSHUA À L'ACADÉMIE HÉBRAÏQUE

par Liliane Sidoun

Chaque vendredi matin, au petit déjeuner quand Toby annonce à son fils qu'on est vendredi, Joshua s'arrête de manger, se lève de sa chaise et commence à sauter de joie dans toute la cuisine. Car chaque vendredi matin depuis fin septembre Joshua va à l'Académie Hébraïque dans la classe de Garderie de Mora Ziva et de Mora Chara. Vous me direz qu'on est bien à l'Académie Hébraïque mais de là à sauter de joie? Ou peut-être pensez-vous que sa joie vient du fait que justement le vendredi est la journée la plus courte? Vous n'y êtes pas du tout! Si la journée était plus longue, Joshua sauterait encore plus haut!

Joshua a cinq ans. Aveugle, il va quatre jours par semaine dans une école spécialisée. Malgré tout, ses parents voulaient qu'il reçoive une éducation religieuse et surtout qu'il puisse déjà partager une atmosphère juive. Ils ont donc rencontré le Rabbin Peerless. Celui-ci, à leur grande surprise, a accepté d'emblée. En effet, ayant déjà intégré des enfants handicapés visuels dans l'école de l'Ohio où il était précédemment directeur, il a consenti avec enthousiasme à recevoir Joshua avec son accompagnatrice Stéphanie, une fois par semaine à l'Académie Hébraïque.

Cet article pourrait s'arrêter là, montrer l'ouverture de l'Académie Hébraïque aux enfants handicapés, la joie de Joshua, son apprentissage des brachot, et du déroulement collectif du shabbat.

Ce serait déjà beaucoup, mais certainement pas suffisant. Car il y a d'autres choses à relater, peut-être plus significatives. Les enfants de cette classe et des classes voisines connaissent tous Joshua. Certains savent qu'il ne suffit pas de lui lancer un "bonjour" mais qu'il leur faut aussi lui toucher les mains pour qu'il les reconnaisse. Deux enfants l'ont déjà invité à leur anniversaire car, bien que venant une fois par semaine, il fait partie de la classe.

Et puis, Joshua a une sœur à l'Académie Hébraïque, Samantha, qui est en Grade 1A. La classe de Madame S-T-R-O-L-O-V-I-T-C-H, a

organisé une fête en l'honneur de Joshua: the "J" Party. Les enfants de première année ont, grâce à Joshua, et à leur façon, appréhendé le monde des non-voyants. Ils lui ont confectionné la lettre J dans différentes textures. Ils ont aussi accompli, les yeux bandés, différents exercices de toucher.

C'est encore une fois une façon de montrer comme il ne s'agit ni de charité, ni de bienveillance mais bel et bien d'un partage, d'une connaissance et d'une reconnaissance mutuelle. Ainsi, si jamais le vendredi, vous croisez Joshua et que vous lui souhaitez "Shabbat Shalom", n'oubliez pas de lui serrer la main. Il sera très heureux de vous la serrer en retour.



JOSHUA'S FRIDAYS

Every Friday morning at breakfast when Toby tells her son that it's Friday, Joshua stops eating, jumps up and starts hopping around the kitchen, dancing for joy. Why? Every Friday Joshua goes to Hebrew Academy to join Mora Ziva and Mora Shari's PreNursery. You might think that it's fun at Hebrew Academy, but would a child be dancing for joy about it? Or you might think that he's dancing for joy because it's Friday, the shortest day at school? If that's what you think, you're way off the mark. If Friday was the longest day at school, Joshua would be even happier!

Five-year-old Joshua is blind and attends a special school four days a week. In spite of his impairment, his

parents wanted him to have a religious education. In particular, they wanted him to experience the Jewish educational atmosphere. To this end, they met with Rabbi Stanley Peerless who, much to their surprise and delight, enthusiastically agreed to have Joshua and his shadow Stephanie, attend the PreNursery once a week. Rabbi Peerless had already integrated visually impaired children when he was principal of a school in Ohio.

This article could end here, just demonstrating that Hebrew Academy is open to disabled students, highlighting Joshua's joy and how he is learning brachot and sharing in the Shabbat experience in PreNursery.

But there is much more to the story than that. There are other, perhaps more meaningful, things to report.

The children in the PreNursery and the other pre-school classes all know Joshua, and some even know that it's not enough to just say "hi" to him. They know that they also have to touch his hands, so that he can recognize them. Two children have already invited Joshua to their birthday celebrations, since he's part of the class, even if he comes just once a week.

Joshua's sister Samantha is in Grade 1A. Ms. S-T-R-O-L-O-V-I-T-C-H, as the children call their Language Arts teacher, recently organized a "J" party for Joshua. The children learned a little about the world of those who cannot see. They made the letter "J" for Joshua in different textures. With their eyes covered, they did certain exercises on the sense of touch, thus learning how important this sense is for the visually impaired.

This is one more way to show that having Joshua in their midst is not a matter of charity or good deeds, but rather a true act of sharing, of knowledge and of mutual recognition. So, if you are ever in the school on a Friday and you meet Joshua and wish him a "Shabbat Shalom," remember to shake his hand. He will be very happy and he'll shake yours in return.

Appendix 6:



SHOFAR

703

A Publication of Hebrew Academy of Montreal

VOLUME 3: No. 1

NOVEMBER 1996 / 5757

NEW ACTIVITY PROGRAM IN HIGH SCHOOL



A visitor to the Hebrew Academy High School on a Friday morning in late October might have thought that he was in the wrong place. Instead of seeing students pouring over a Talmudic text or a math book, he would have found them involved in a variety of different activities. In one room he would have found artists applying paint to canvas, in another thespians preparing a dramatic presentation, and in yet another young journalists working on a school newspaper. In the library, he would have found chess players gaining insight from a master, in the cafeteria students learning the art of self defense, and in the lab a class in sculpture.

No, this visitor was not in the wrong place. He was observing the initiation of the new Hebrew Academy high school activity program. This program offers students the opportunity to participate in an activity of their choice for one hour per week during an eight-week session. In addition to the aforementioned activities, students could choose to participate in judo, aerobics, chidon hatanach, debating and yearbook. The day and time of the activity period varies from week to week in order to minimize the loss of class time from any particular subject.

The Hebrew Academy philosophy of Torah Im Derech Eretz mandates a broad offering of curricular and extra-curricular programs. The length of the school day, however, made it difficult for students to pursue interests that are offered as after-school activities in most schools. The activity program was instituted to

alleviate that difficulty and enable students to broaden their interests and skills. The activities offered are designed to develop creative expression, higher level thinking skills, physical dexterity, leadership skills, and self-confidence.

Current plans call for two eight-week sessions, one in the fall trimester and one in the winter trimester. Rabbi Peerless expresses great excitement about the activity program which he sees as an essential component of the Hebrew Academy program. "The elective nature of the activity program allows us to provide for the individual interests and talents of our students. These offerings complement our intensive academic program and enable us to more fully fulfill the Hebrew Academy mission." Students are also enthusiastic about the new program. Student council president Yael Alt sees it as one example of the school becoming more responsive to student needs. "Many students were frustrated by their inability to express themselves in ways other than those offered during the school day. They voiced their desire to apply their many talents, be they in art, drama, music or journalism. The students are extremely excited that the activity program has been put into effect and are anxious to participate."

So, if you happen to visit the Hebrew Academy High School and find students involved in art, judo, chess, or drama, you'll know that you are in the right place - the school that strives to enable its students to realize their full potential.



Appendix 7: Matriculation Results

1995	<div data-bbox="496 268 1269 583" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <p style="text-align: center;">MINISTRY EXAMINATION RESULTS, JUNE 1995 Top 6 private schools in the Montreal area (reprinted from the Gazette)</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">School</th> <th style="text-align: left;">Municipality</th> <th style="text-align: right;">Success Rate %</th> <th style="text-align: right;">Average Mark %</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1. École Allemande Alexander Von Humboldt</td> <td>Baie-D'Urfé</td> <td style="text-align: right;">100.0</td> <td style="text-align: right;">84.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Collège Sainte Marcelline</td> <td>Montreal</td> <td style="text-align: right;">99.8</td> <td style="text-align: right;">84.1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. École Selwyn House (Camp.2)</td> <td>Westmount</td> <td style="text-align: right;">99.6</td> <td style="text-align: right;">82.3</td> </tr> <tr style="background-color: #e0e0e0;"> <td>4. L 'Académie Hébraïque</td> <td>Côte St-Luc</td> <td style="text-align: right;">99.3</td> <td style="text-align: right;">82.8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5. Collège Charlemagne</td> <td>Pierrefonds</td> <td style="text-align: right;">99.3</td> <td style="text-align: right;">82.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6. Les Écoles Juives Populaires et les Écoles Peretz</td> <td>Côte St-Luc</td> <td style="text-align: right;">99.3</td> <td style="text-align: right;">80.3</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div>	School	Municipality	Success Rate %	Average Mark %	1. École Allemande Alexander Von Humboldt	Baie-D'Urfé	100.0	84.5	2. Collège Sainte Marcelline	Montreal	99.8	84.1	3. École Selwyn House (Camp.2)	Westmount	99.6	82.3	4. L 'Académie Hébraïque	Côte St-Luc	99.3	82.8	5. Collège Charlemagne	Pierrefonds	99.3	82.0	6. Les Écoles Juives Populaires et les Écoles Peretz	Côte St-Luc	99.3	80.3							
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1998	<div data-bbox="581 1192 1188 1852" style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <p style="text-align: center;">HEBREW ACADEMY STUDENTS CONTINUE TO SHINE ON MATRICS</p> <p>The Ministry of Education recently released the results of the 1998 matriculation exams. Once again, Hebrew Academy placed first among the Jewish Day Schools, the fifth year in a row for this accomplishment. The Hebrew Academy students also placed sixth among the 148 private schools in the province of Quebec.</p> <p>The success of Hebrew Academy as a multi-lingual institution is reflected in the scores on the English and French matriculation exams. The Hebrew Academy students placed third in the province among the 33 schools writing the English exam. Furthermore, the students writing French as a Second Language exams placed third, fifth, and sixth in French reading, speaking, and listening, respectively. The ongoing success of the Hebrew Academy on the matriculation exams reflects the fulfillment of the unique Torah Umada philosophy of the school that strives for excellence in both Judaic and general studies.</p> </div>																																			

Appendix 8:

YACHAD SHABBATON

It may seem unusual for a group of high school students to spend their free time singing, dancing, eating, praying, and playing with a group of their peers who are developmentally delayed. But these activities have become quite normal for Hebrew Academy High School students. Hebrew Academy activities with Yachad, an organization dedicated to providing mainstream Jewish experiences for developmentally delayed teenagers and young adults, reached a crescendo in the second annual Yachad Shabbaton that was held in conjunction with Congregation

Ahavat Yisrael on the weekend of October 14th. Thirty Hebrew Academy students participated with twenty Yachad members from Montreal and seven from Toronto in this inspiring and fun event. This Shabbaton marked the fulfillment of the creation of a vital Yachad chapter in Montreal, an effort that was initiated by Rabbi & Mrs. Mordechai Glick and the Hebrew Academy Student Council following the first Yachad Shabbaton in May, 1993. With the help of a number of community leaders, this dream has become a reality.

(Continued on Page 6)



YACHAD SHABBATON

(continued from page 1)

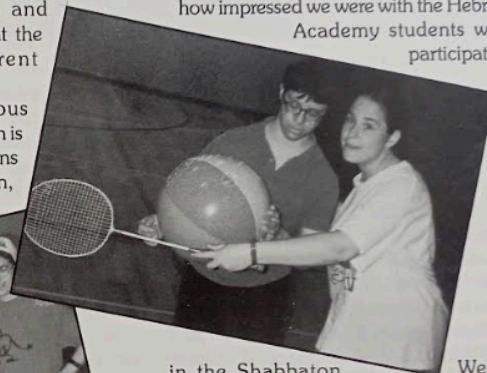
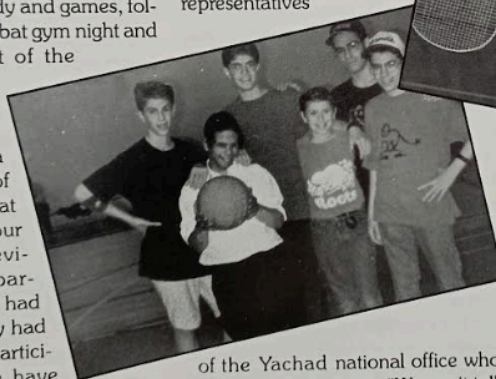
An additional feature of this Shabbaton was the involvement of a number of students from Herzliah and Bialik High Schools, reflecting the leadership role of our students in trying to involve other high schools in this worthwhile cause.

The Shabbaton featured a Shabbat filled with tfillah, meals, song, dance, divrai torah, study and games, followed by a motzei Shabbat gym night and kumzits. The impact of the event can best be summed up in the comments of student coordinator Shoshana Peerless: "At the end of the Shabbaton, we all sat in a circle and shared our impressions. It was evident that all of the participants felt that they had gained more than they had given. Through our participation in Yachad we have come to appreciate the special qualities of

the Yachad members and through them to look at the world from a different perspective".

The tremendous success of this Shabbaton is evident from the reflections of Gil and Yair Elmaleh, representatives

how impressed we were with the Hebrew Academy students who participated



in the Shabbaton. We go to many Shabbatonim, and we have rarely seen a group respond to our Yachad members with such warmth and respect. The entire Shabbaton was filled with warmth and rouach. Each participant deserves a tremendous Yasher Koach for helping to make this Shabbat so outstanding!

of the Yachad national office who coordinated this activity: "We can't tell you



SHAVUA LIMUD*

The Hebrew Academy Beit Midrash was a bee-hive of activity during the weeks prior to Pesach. Hundreds of students, alumni, parents, and community members prepared for the holiday by participating in a series of shiurim that were held to mark the second yearzeit of Harav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik Z"TL. The Shavua Limud (week of Torah study), organized by the Hebrew Academy Beit Midrash Committee, featured two of Rav Soloveitchik's outstanding students, Rabbi Benjamin Tabori, an instructor at Yeshivat Har Etzion, and Rabbi Avishai David, an instructor at Yeshivat Or Etzion and at the Michlala College for Women.

The opening event of the week of study was a Malave Malka hosted by Mark and Choula Friedman. Over 100 people participated in this activity which featured a shiur by Rabbi Tabori entitled "Standing Before G-d: The Shalosh Regalim in the Hashkafa of the Rav." Rabbi Tabori demonstrated how the festivals and Eretz Yisroel provide venues of time and place for Jews to create a special connection with G-d.

The week of study continued with several shiurim given by Rabbi David. In two mid-week shiurim, Rabbi David examined the mitzvot of retelling the story of the Exodus (sippur yetziat mitzraim) and of reciting Hallel at the

seder. Both shiurim emphasized the manner in which Jews uniquely transport themselves through time to relive the Exodus in a personal and emotional way. At both shiurim, a Dvar Torah was also delivered by Joseph Bensmihen, an alumnus of the Hebrew Academy.

On Shabbat Hagadol, approximately 70 people came to the school Beit Midrash to participate in Rabbi David's fascinating Shabbat Hagadol Drasha on the topic of "Matza Shmurah".

Throughout the week, students in Secondary III, IV, and V were treated to special shiurim presented by both guest speakers. The program enabled all of the participants to gain a greater understanding and appreciation of the exceptional Torah scholarship of Rav Soloveitchik.

The Shavua Limud concluded with the David Reiss Memorial Lecture which was also delivered by Rabbi David. Rabbi David reviewed the reflections of the Rav on the Hagadah with a particular emphasis on the relationship between freedom and historical perspective. The evening also included Divrei Torah from Chief

Rabbi Hirshprung and a memorial to David Reiss Z"l delivered by his son, Moshe.

The Hebrew Academy has been widely recognized for its leadership role in perpetuating the memory of the Rav through innovative programming such as the Shavua Limud. Organizational co-sponsors of this event included the

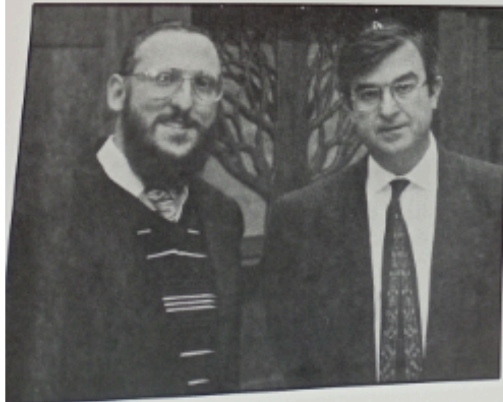


Canadian Friends of Yeshiva University, Mizrahi, Emunah Women and the Rabbinical Council of Canada. Individual sponsors included the Reiss Family, the Freedman Family, the Peerless Family, the Cola Family, the Aspler Family, the Hascalovici Family and the Lieberman Family.

LE BETH MIDRASH DE L'ACADÉMIE HÉBRAÏQUE

par Lillane Sidoun

Depuis de nombreuses années, le Beth Midrash de L'Académie Hébraïque joue un rôle essentiel dans le rassemblement de la communauté de notre école autour de l'étude et de la prière juive. C'est ainsi que vous, anciens élèves, parents, professeurs, venez et participez activement à nos cours. Outre l'enrichissement personnel, il est certain que cet engagement motive nos propres enfants. Ils constatent ainsi que leur école n'est pas seulement un lieu de rencontre, d'échange, d'étude, et de prière, qu'enfin l'Académie Hébraïque constitue une véritable communauté. D'autre part, ils s'aperçoivent que l'étude du judaïsme peut et doit se poursuivre une fois l'école terminée. Le Beth Midrash veut ainsi stimuler la curiosité et le désir d'apprendre car l'émulation créée entre les parents et leurs enfants nous semble essentielle.



Appendix 10:

YITZHAK RABIN Z"l

This issue of the Shofar goes to print at a particularly distressing time in the history of our people. Our strong sense of mourning for Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin Z"l flows from our commitment to Torah values and to the ideals of Zionism. This is a time when we thirst for Torah and Jewish communal leadership. As demonstrated in the number of articles in this and past issues of the Shofar, this is a role that has traditionally been filled by the Hebrew Academy Community - faculty, parents, alumni and students. It is in this tradition that we wish to share with our readers the following letter that was sent by Rabbi Peerless to our parent body on the day of Mr. Rabin's funeral.

It is with great sadness that we mourn the loss of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin Z"l. Prime Minister Rabin devoted his life to the Jewish people in both the military and political arenas. In his early career, he fought the Nazis and then the British in the battle to secure a safe haven for the Jewish people. His illustrious military career in tza'hal included his tenure as chief of staff during the Six Day War in June 1967. It was under his leadership that Yerushalayim was reunited and the military supremacy of the Israel Defense Force established. As a political leader, Yitzhak Rabin served twice as Prime Minister of the State of Israel. In his recent administration, he pursued a peace process that achieved the long sought after peace with Jordan and a number of other Arab states. Even those who opposed his policy of rapprochement with the PLO must recognize that he courageously pursued the course that he believed would ultimately secure the welfare of the Jewish People. He was a great and devoted leader of our people and his loss will leave a void that will not be easily filled.

The shocking circumstances of Prime Minister Rabin's assassination are a matter of great concern to our community. Although this was the act of a sick individual, there is no doubt that many will lay blame on the religious Zionist movement. Religious Zionism was founded based on the following tenets:

1. The religious validation of the secular Zionist movement, and subsequently of the State of Israel.
2. The fostering of Achdut Ha'am, the unity of the Jewish people, as a primary religious value.
3. The establishment of a society in Eretz Yisroel based on the values of Torah V'avodah.

This heinous act is certainly a violation of all of these principles. It is clearly contrary to the goals of religious Zionism.

This having been said, we must, as a people and as a movement, enter a period of cheshbon hanefesh,

of introspection and soul searching. The Torah tells us that if a stranger is found murdered between cities, the elders of the closest city must vow, "Yadeinu Lo Sha'fchu Et Hadam Hazeh," "Our hands did not spill this blood." Rashi asks: "Would anyone assume that the elders of the city are murderers?" but, he answers, they must swear that they did not see the stranger in their city and allow him to go without proper sustenance and escort. In other words, the Torah ascribes responsibility to community leaders even for very indirect involvement in the death. We must demand from our leaders that they ask themselves "Did our hands spill this blood?" The demonization of the opposition by all parties to the controversy has helped to create an atmosphere conducive to such acts. Rabbinical leadership carries with it an additional degree of responsibility as indicated in the Mishna in Pirkei Avot (1:11):

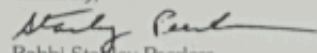
Avtalyon said: Scholars, be cautious with your words, for you may incur the penalty of exile and be banished to a place of evil waters. The disciples who follow you there may drink and die, and consequently the name of heaven will be desecrated.

We cannot allow the few who have violated this precept to be viewed as mainstream leaders. We and our leaders must, rather, follow the dictates of the subsequent Mishna (1:12):

Hillel said: Be among the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving people, and bringing them closer to Torah.

In the wake of this shocking event, we must rededicate ourselves to the basic Torah values of respect for human dignity and human life, and to the concept of national unity. In this way, it will help to ensure that Mr. Rabin's memory will be a blessing.

Sincerely,



Rabbi Stanley Peerless
Educational Director

Appendix 11:

IF THE WALLS COULD SPEAK by Jewel Sarna

Rav Nechunya ben Hakaneh used to say the following short prayer as he left the Beit Midrash: "I give thanks to Thee, O L-rd my G-d, that thou has set my portion with those who sit in the Beit Midrash." (Brachot 28b)

Situated in the heart of the school building, the Beit Midrash has become a focal point for the Hebrew Academy community. Just as the scholars of the Mishnah were drawn to the Beit Midrash, so too are students, alumni, faculty, and parents drawn to the Hebrew Academy Beit Midrash. If the walls of the Beit Midrash could speak, they would describe a series of activities that reflect the dual nature of the Beit Midrash as a "house of prayer" and as a "house of Torah study".



A glance around the Beit Midrash at the beginning of the school day reveals high school students arriving for davening. Teachers and students greet one another as the boys put on tefillin and the girls take their places in the ezrat nashim. One often sees parents rushing in with their high school children to share in the davening experience. They find the student-run services to be of the highest quality. Alfred Weigensberg, who participates frequently in the shacharit services, explains: "I appreciate the opportunity to daven with my boys within the school setting. Today Joshie davened at the amud, Arye passed around the pushka, and I shepped nachos. It is a nice minyan, friendly yet serious. It's good for my kids and it's good for me." Mothers also attend the davening periodically, usually on Rosh Chodesh or for special occasions such as Bar Mitzvah celebrations. Other frequent



participants in the minyan are alumni who are drawn to the Beit Midrash as a means of reconnecting with former teachers and friends. Even on days when school is not in session, such as ere Rosh Hashana or Hoshana Rabba, the minyan at the Hebrew Academy Beit Midrash has become the minyan of choice for many students, teachers, alumni and parents.

In addition to being the focal point of prayer activity, the Beit Midrash is the center of Torah learning in the school. Four mornings a week, the Beit Midrash is filled with a strong Kol Torah



as high school students participate in the new chavruta learning program. In the chavruta program, high school boys learn Gemara in pairs, preparing and reviewing their material in traditional beit midrash style. Their teachers circulate among the various groups, offering help to some, challenging and prompting others. As Rabbi Peerless explains: "The goals of the program are to promote independent learning skills and to give the students the feel of a yeshiva beit midrash atmosphere. Studying cooperatively in a large room with a background of many voices prepares our students for future yeshiva experiences in Israel or elsewhere."

The Beit Midrash also serves as the venue for advanced and enriched Torah learning. Rav Niznik's advanced Gemara shiur meets daily in the Beit Midrash. The high school bekiut program also offers additional learning for students after their regular school day. In this program, alumna Atara Miller teaches the girls Mishneh Torah of the Rambam and Rabbi Shtivi teaches the boys Masechet Ta'anit.



Elementary students have also found their place in the Beit Midrash. Grade 5 and 6 students participated in the Teshuvathon between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur in which they raised funds for Yad Eliezer while learning Hilchot Teshuva of the Rambam. Many of the students also participate in the extra-curricular Mishmar program taught by Rabbi Hagler.

A number of guest speakers frequent the Beit Midrash to deliver shiurim and lectures. On the first night of selichot, Rabbi Peerless gave a shiur to alumni and parents on the topic of teshuva. High school students have enjoyed shiurim on the prayers of the Yamim Noraim delivered by Rabbi Benoliel of Beit Rambam and by Rabbi Steinmetz of T.B.D.J. On the day before Yom Kippur, Dr. Moshe Szyf gave a lecture on the machzor to students and parents. On Tuesday evenings, Rabbi Nessim Bensimon gives a shiur for parents in French on parshat hashavuah.



One of the primary goals of the Hebrew Academy program is to encourage in its students a desire to study "Torah Lishma" (Torah for its own sake). A measure of its success is apparent when one sees graduates, fresh from their first year at yeshivot, choose the school's Beit Midrash as a place to meet for chavruta study.

When one enters the Beit Midrash late at night, the darkness and silence belie the activities of the day. Lights over the Aron Hakodesh spread a serene aura over the room. The eye is drawn away from the shelves of tefillin and tallit bags, past the sefarim scattered on the tables, to the wood and brass tree of life that decorates the ark. The verse engraved above it expresses the symbolism of the design: "It is a tree of life to those who take hold of it." If the walls could speak, they would tell the story of students, alumni, teachers, and parents who find their source of strength in Torah. They are grateful that they have found their place among those who sit in the Beit Midrash.



A Flair for Art

Artistic expression is fostered at Hebrew Academy in the Images D'Art Program, through special projects in other courses, in extra-curricular activities, and through informal educational activities such as Color War. We invite you to turn the page and enjoy a sample of our students' creations.



Dear Friends,

What is education?

Many people consider the process of education to be the transmission of knowledge to students. The job of the teacher is to transmit the facts and the figures, the job of the student is to assimilate them and to recall them on an examination. Certainly, the learning of factual knowledge is an important goal in education. Educational research indicates, however, that a good percentage of the facts learned in school are soon forgotten. This type of learning cannot by itself define education.

The higher goal of education is the development of the thought process. The greatest achievement in traditional yeshiva learning is the תירוץ, the innovative idea produced by the student. The ideal product of this educational system is the student who can think independently and express himself creatively. The sophisticated academic institution is one that imparts to its students the wisdom of the past and enables them to build upon it new and creative ideas.

In this issue of the Shofar, we focus on ways in which Hebrew Academy fulfills this ideal. Our extensive use of the Beit Midrash for chavruta learning is designed to give our students the ability to learn independently. Our art program and our extra-curricular activities foster higher level thinking and creative expression. The proof of the pudding is in our alumni, many of whom return to the school to contribute their own unique perspective.

This educational ideal is reflected in the lighting of the Menorah in the Temple that we recall in our Chanukah celebrations. When G-d instructed Aaron on the lighting of the menorah, he used the term "בהעלתך את הנרות", meaning literally "when you raise up the lights". Rashi explains: "the term denotes going up, for he must kindle the light until it goes up by itself".

Best Wishes for a Chag Chanukah Sameach.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Stanley Peerless
Educational Director

