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Inside...

It is the subtext that most often determines a controversy's outcome.

Do we seek to vanquish? punish? mend?

Do we differ over goals or over strategies toward the same goal?

Do we seek reconciliation or rupture?

Four authors explore the shaky foundations of today's Jewish unity and suggest ways to shore it up.

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Sh'ma

A JOURNAL OF JEWISH RESPONSIBILITY

Disputes that unite ■ David Kraemer

Common stereotypes portray Jews as an uncommonly contentious people, and insiders (that is, Jews among Jews) know that the phrase "two Jews" is completed with the words "three opinions." That there is some truth to these characterizations is unarguable. Something in the nature of traditional Jewish discourse allows (or, perhaps more accurately, *encourages*) us to disagree passionately with one another, sometimes so passionately that the fabric of our community appears in danger of unraveling.

But the Jewish tradition of dispute, originating in the Talmud, declares that the benefit of "dispute for the sake of Heaven" far outweighs any imagined dangers. How could different rabbinic voices, differing so vigorously, find a peaceful home side-by-side? Why, in rabbinic culture, did dispute draw the disputants together, while in our day it seems destined to tear us apart?

Entering The Dispute

To answer these questions, let us take a specific talmudic example and see if we can understand what made such respectful dispute possible—even desirable—in traditional Jewish culture. The *mishnah* in chapter 8 of tractate *Hullin* records the following opinions:

R. Akiba says: [The prohibition of mixing] wild animals and fowl [with dairy] is not from the Torah...R. Yosi the Galilean says: "Thou shalt not seethe a calf in its mother's milk"...excludes fowl, which has no mother's milk.

At first glance, R. Akiba and R. Yosi seem to be saying almost the same thing (at least with respect to the status of fowl) in slightly different ways; R. Akiba declares that the separation of fowl and dairy is not from the Torah, while R. Yosi provides the specific Torah-source for the exclusion of fowl from this prohibition. But according to the Talmud's interpretation of their teachings (found at *Hullin* 116a), they do dispute, and their dispute is not insignificant.

Framing The Dispute

As the Talmud understands him, when R. Akiba says that the prohibition pertaining to fowl "is not from the Torah," he means to suggest that it *is* from the Rabbis. Whatever the source, he agrees that chicken parmesan (for example) would not be kosher. But R. Yosi believes that fowl is completely excluded from this prohibition so, as the Talmud reports, "in the locale of R. Yosi the Galilean they would

eat the flesh of fowl with milk." The Talmud follows this report with another showing that this practice was not limited to R. Yosi's generation. Others later followed his position and their alternate practice was respected.

In the world of Jewish observance, such a difference of opinion and practice has potentially serious consequences. If I belong to a group of Jews who categorize poultry flesh as meat, I will probably not be able to eat at the home of my neighbor who views chicken as *parve*. If we have difficulty eating together, we will have a difficult time maintaining our common bond and we will grow apart socially. I may begin to claim that my more lenient neighbor is wrong, that he misinterprets the Torah, that he has little regard for Jewish unity. If I gain control of the community's *kashrut*-granting apparatus, I might refuse to certify his restaurant. Less significant differences might perhaps be tolerated, but *kashrut* is a central marker of Jewish observance and identity. How can we accept such differences when the stakes are so high?

Common Commitment As Common Bond

The probable explanations of the tolerant rabbinic attitude toward disputes range from the mundane to the profound. At first glance, it seems obvious that the fact that R. Akiba (presumably) and R. Yosi (explicitly) could both offer proofs of their positions (in this and other matters) based upon close readings of the Torah meant that they had to be taken seriously. Their source was the recognized, authoritative source of Jewish practice, so the foundation of their teachings was strong. But, in reality, this would have made little difference if they were not respected voices in the rabbinic community, for it is possible that a particular reading of Torah could be declared "wrong." So the question must be, why did the rabbinic community respect these and other voices, even when they were in serious disagreement?

To answer this question, again the example of R. Akiba and R. Yosi is instructive. Whatever their interpretation of the Torah in this or any other case, it is beyond question that they were profoundly committed to the Torah, its God, and its people. This common commitment allowed for respectful dispute where lesser commitment would not. These rabbis, who lived in the aftermath of the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, shared a common history—an ancient history that included the revelation of Torah at Sinai and, as importantly, a more recent history of struggle against an insensitive, sometimes tyrannical imperial force. By virtue of this common

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history, they also shared a common sense of purpose—the need to uphold (and therefore transform) the covenant in the face of radical upheaval. And they understood the challenge and the risk; simply put, if they could not work together to forge an inclusive vision of Judaism after destruction, the Jewish community at large, leaderless and directionless, might disappear.

Overcoming Our Differences

There is another factor that we might easily overlook. At the beginning, in the decades following the destruction of the Temple, the rabbis were a small movement, living, for the most part, in close proximity, composed of masters and their disciples. And even when the rabbinic movement grew in number and spread, it remained a relatively small proportion of the Jewish population as a

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whole. Let us not forget, we preserve the disputes of *rabbis*, not of rabbis and common Jews. Moreover, the rabbis and their disciples instituted rituals of gathering and study (the *kallot*) which assured that they would be together, study together, live and express their common commitment and faith. In such settings, among loved and trusted companions, they could disagree even forcefully without risking a serious rift. Needless to say, the same disagreements they could allow in the company of rabbis they would not share with outsiders.

All of which demands that we evaluate contemporary Jewish disputes with considerable sobriety. I have argued that the rabbis could tolerate and respect dispute because of their common sense of history, purpose and fate—and because of the lives they shared. If we are honest, it will be difficult to claim that the same can be said of large segments of the Jewish community today. Our size and diversity make it difficult for us to share our Jewish experiences in any immediate sense. The size of the world we live in allows us to live separated lives—Israelis from American Jews, Orthodox from liberal Jews, *dati* Jerusalemites from secular residents of Tel Aviv. With different experiences, we will interpret our covenantal commitments differently (or not at all), we will develop different opinions regarding the purpose of Jewish existence and the fate of Jews and Judaism in the next century.

Leap Of Commitment

Our only hope is a “leap of commitment”. Given the diversity of the contemporary Jewish community, we must commit to one another not merely because it is pragmatically necessary but as an act of faith. The problem with the purely pragmatic approach is that, though many of us would agree that we need the cooperation and support of Jews unlike ourselves, selected Jewish groups might conclude that they can survive without other Jews: *Haredi* without secular, Israeli without American. Pragmatism is a cold, uncaring calculation. But if we believe that we are all children of Abraham and Sarah, all

receivers of the Torah of Moses, all fellow survivors of the massacres of Hadrian and Hitler, then we will be less quick to dismiss others who interpret their covenantal commitment differently. Of course, belief is not enough; if we do not *act* with covenantal commitment, we *should* be dismissed by those who have taken up the yoke of the covenant. But if we act on this faith, struggling seriously with the responsibilities of Jewishness, we will be compelled to respect our differences. We will disagree, but as covenantal partners.

I am aware that this is an idealistic vision, a dream that many will dismiss as beyond reach. It is for this reason that I offer it with sober hesitation. Still, the “realistic” alternative is too awful to speak. ✦

Shared vision

Murray J. Laulicht

For the past several years, we have witnessed a seemingly endless barrage of verbal and physical attacks by Jew(s) against Jew(s). These assaults culminated just over two years ago in the murder of the Prime Minister of Israel by an ostensibly religious Jew. Almost as shocking as the assassination itself is the fact that a not insignificant percentage of Israel’s Jews believe that the killing of Yitzchak Rabin *z”l* was justified.

Where Are We Going?

A few weeks ago, we stood again at the edge of the precipice. On October 27, 1997, it looked as though the Ne’eman Committee would be disbanded, the Reform and Conservative movements would reactivate their litigations, and the Knesset would then codify the Chief Rabbinate’s control of conversions in Israel and Orthodoxy’s control of the Religious Councils. As a religiously-committed Federation President in constant contact with leaders and members of each of the Jewish religious movements, I know that the non-Orthodox American Jewish community would regard the enactment of the conversion legislation as a direct attack on them and their movements. Forced to choose between the State of Israel, which seemed to disown their sense of Jewish-

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ness, and their synagogues and Rabbis, who were fighting their fight, I have no doubt that the vast majority of America's three million Conservative and Reform Jews would essentially abandon their commitment to Israel. A dagger would be thrust into their Jewish *neshamot*.

Fortunately, reason and good will prevailed. The Ne'eman Committee continues to search for a solution to the vexing problems of reconciling Israel's democratic and religious ideals—in a country in which only 20 to 30 percent of Israelis are committed to Jewish observance, the majority of Israeli Jews are essentially unconcerned with religious issues and practices, and perhaps as many as 200,000 *olim* from the former Soviet Union are not Jewish by any standard, though they are obvious candidates to become Jewish as they live in the Jewish State and have Jewish relatives.

In Search Of A Common Vision

How should we respond to these intense and competing centrifugal forces? Forging Jewish unity requires not only mutual respect and love for our fellow Jews, but also the sharing of a common vision and hope for our people. We have survived and now flourish as a people because we have cared for and protected each other without regard to differences in our religious ideologies. Of course, there have been exceptions to this rule. But, in general, we have taken seriously the commandment in Leviticus 19:18, to love thy neighbor as thyself. According to the same Rabbi Akiva cited by Dr. Kraemer, this is the over-arching principle, the *klal gadol*, of the entire Torah.

We should not only want a loving peoplehood, but a knowledgeable one as well, informed and respectful of our traditions, and anxious that Judaism and Jews shall continue into the next generations. Numbers are also important—we need millions of Jews to support our institutions, maintain Israel's military capability, exert political influence and even to convince our children that they will not be alone if they keep their Jewish identities. In the aftermath of the Holocaust and in the throes of assimilation, no Jew is redundant.

Despite the distress of the moment, the birth and growth of Israel's Conservative and Reform movements present us with tremendous opportunities in Israel and in the United States. In Israel, thousands of people who would not otherwise venture into a synagogue or a religious school are attending Conservative and Reform services and giving themselves and their children a Jewish education and the joy of experiencing *mitzvot* firsthand. In the United States, consider not only the anguish but the Jewish pride and self-identification

reflected in the question, "What do they mean I'm not Jewish?" and in the statement, "I want my children and grandchildren to be recognized as Jews."

Living With Conflict

On the evening of September 1, 1997, someone firebombed the nursery school maintained by Kehillat Mevasseret Tzion, a Reform congregation on the outskirts of Jerusalem. Less than three weeks later, I was part of a UJA Mission attending a Friday afternoon *Kabbalat Shabbat* in the renovated nursery. More than 40 children, accompanied by 10 or 15 mothers, sang *Lecha Dodi*, tasted wine and *challah* after reciting the appropriate *brachot*, and listened to the wonderful story of an ox that refused to work on Shabbat. That evening, I attended Shabbat services at the Kotel with some Orthodox friends and told them what I had seen at Mevasseret Tzion. They all agreed that the nursery's *Kabbalat Shabbat* was wonderful.

Instead of questioning each other's motives, behavior and thoughts, we need to realize that, in our diverse ways, we are in fact striving towards the common goals I mentioned above. To reach these goals, we must remember: "*Dracheha darchei noam, vchol nesivoseha shalom.*" Our ways should be paths of pleasantness and all of our by-ways should lead to peace. We must ever recall the Psalmist's exhortation:

Come my children, listen to me, I shall teach you the fear of heaven.

What man longs for life, loves days of seeing good?
Guard your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking falsehood.

Turn away from evil and do good, seek peace and pursue it.

PSALMS 34:13-16.

It is true that we have a long history of disputation and confrontation. Our leaders, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and others from Job to Jonah to Tevya, all argued with the Almighty. Our very name, "*Yisrael*," is symbolic of our struggling with God and with man. Not a page of the Talmud can be turned without finding one dispute after another. Our *Shulhan Arukh* codifies, side by side, the very divergent *halakhic* opinions and practices of Sephardim and Ashkenazim. Yet, we accept the Talmudic dictum that even directly contradictory positions express the words of a living God. Indeed, the word *halakhah* itself denotes a walking dynamism, not stasis.

Our fear that controversy is indigenous to Judaism is not necessarily accurate. The American legal system is an adversary one, premised on the theory that truth emerges

out of the clash of conflicting ideas. The same approach is suggested by the aphorism cited by Dr. Kraemer, "Two Jews, three opinions." If there are only two Jews, why are there three opinions, not two? Perhaps because out of the conflicting individual opinions, a third one emerges—one that is best for the Jewish community and closest to the truth.

We have much to learn from each other, no matter what our denomination. This is a time to build each other up, with warmth, love and respect. Let us use religious pluralism to enhance and increase religious life in our precious homeland and around the world, not to divide us. †

The challenge of shared communal identity

Donniel Hartman

It is within society, and as a result of social processes, that the individual becomes a person, that he attains and holds onto an identity, and that he carries out the various projects that constitute his life.

(Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*)

A group, as distinct from a crowd, is a set of individuals joined by something they share in common. It is within the context of such a collective framework that the individual member or citizen can expect to share with others a common understanding and commitment to the good or goods that inform their communal way of life. Some form of commonality is necessary to lay the foundation of community by providing a compelling rationale that binds individuals to a particular group of people. An essential dimension of the individual Jew's self-understanding is communal identity as members who belong to the Jewish people. This membership and belonging is not only a normative experience in terms of rights and obligations, but is also the source of his/her particular identity.

It is precisely from this perspective that we as Jews find ourselves today most vulnerable and threatened. It is becoming increasingly clear to a growing number of contemporary Jews that what we share in common as a people is becoming less and less evident. In the past, communities in general and the Jewish people in particu-

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lar were united by common concerns and values such as family, collective memory, normative practices and beliefs, geography or some other basis of distinctiveness.

But, differences in beliefs, practices and ideologies among various denominations of Judaism today, as well as the social, cultural and territorial diversity characterizing modernity, have created a reality where it is difficult—if not impossible—to identify the common ground upon which to base our common enterprise. While the claim that this situation is unique to our times is debatable, it is clear that the differences undermining our collective unity are growing at an alarming rate and that despite our persistent calls for Jewish unity and solidarity, more and more Jews are reaching the conclusion that the idea of a single Jewish community, united by a common vision of life, may be a thing of the past.

Seeking What We All Reject

As a result of this realization, our efforts at building bridges of understanding, tolerance and mutual respect among rival factions in the Jewish community are up against very difficult obstacles. The appeal to pluralism is questionable and somewhat irrelevant in a society that lacks the minimal consensus necessary for forging a common identity. Pluralism cannot be a substitute for a positive communal identity. Whereas communities often thrive and develop best when their members believe in and practice pluralism, they are not *founded* on pluralism but on the common principles, beliefs, practices or vision of life that their members share. Once functioning as an entity with a collective identity, a community must deal with the questions of the balance between commonality and diversity amongst its members, the limits of legitimate diversity and at what point does tolerance threaten the foundation of social commonality. It is here that pluralism plays a vital role. However, these questions are essentially second-order issues which presuppose an agreed understanding of what makes a given social reality into a community.

The most important task before us as a people is to begin the process of rebuilding a new communal identity. The preferred direction will involve reconstructing the basis of a shared identity by trying to reformulate a new version of the Ten Commandments, the Thirteen Principles of Faith, or some other manifesto of beliefs or practices that would be shared by all Jews and thus bind all Jews together. However, given the deep-seated disagreements among the various members and factions of our people today, this is a nearly impossible task. In the current intellectual and cultural climate, each denomination is often ready to offer only its own distinctive

beliefs and values as the evident first principles of Jewish life. As a result, despite the significance of this undertaking for the future of Jewish identity and continuity, I believe that at this point in history pursuing this approach will not be fruitful.

An alternative direction which I believe will enable greater progress is one in which we focus not on what we should all accept, but rather on what we should all reject. Rather than attempting to define the boundaries of our identity by asking "Who belongs?" it would be more fruitful to ask "Who does not belong?"

Two thousand years ago, the Rabbis, in the *Sifre* on Deuteronomy, suggested a definition of Jewish identity along these very lines. They said: "Anyone who accepts idolatry rejects the whole Torah, and anyone who rejects idolatry accepts the whole Torah." While Jewish life clearly includes more than the rejection of idolatry, an individual could not be part of this religious tradition without turning away from idolatry. Although it fell short of a complete and adequate definition of an ideal Jewish way of life, the rejection of idolatry served as a necessary, though not sufficient, definition of how to begin the process of shaping communal identity.

Finding An Ultimate, Essential Belief

Given the monotheistic nature of the Western cultural tradition, I do not believe that the rejection of idolatry is a compelling motive for a new shared Jewish identity today. Nevertheless, I wish to emphasize the creative approach this rabbinic statement suggests. Our challenge today is to identify a contemporary equivalent to idolatry, a "new idolatry" that must be rejected by anyone wishing to belong to the Jewish people.

While I shall not expand on this topic because of the constraints of space, I suggest considering some of the important characteristics of the idolatry model as a *via negativa* approach to re-defining Jewish identity. Like traditional idolatry, the "new idolatry" must be of great importance, something which warrants being categorized *yehareg ve-al ya'avov*, i.e., something worthy of ultimate concern and self-sacrifice. Secondly, it must be something that can provide a person with a distinctive, if not unique, identity.

Adhering to both characteristics—"ultimate significance" and "distinctiveness"—simultaneously is necessary in order to avoid the mistakes that emphasizing either one alone can produce. While choosing a universally accepted and valued principle, e.g., the rejection of murder, may seem a simple way of generating common concern, this would not provide the socially distinguishing binding force necessary for sustaining a vital particular identity.

On the other hand, choosing a belief or practice which is distinct and even important, but which is not of "ultimate significance," *yehareg ve-al ya'avov* is equally doomed to failure. Ultimate significance is essential to prevent the selection of particular denominational principles as suggestions for the basis of our communal identity. While these suggestions may reinforce the commitment of Jews to a particular denomination, they do not serve us in our attempt to find meanings for our communal identity which will be inclusive of all members of our people.

For some Jews, the loss of a shared communal identity is a tragic situation challenging us to change the course of our history, while for others, it is merely an unfortunate historical phenomenon which only confirms their belief that their particular approach to Judaism is the true and objective standard for membership in the Jewish people. The above suggestions presuppose a conversation with those who share the first perspective. I believe it is only a small minority of Jews who do not recognize and appreciate the importance of finding some direction for overcoming the problematic lack of shared communal identity in our times. We must focus our efforts on the needs of the majority, and persevere in the quest for new and creative approaches to building shared foundations for a meaningful identity for all Jews in the modern world. †

Balancing the divine energy

Daniel Siegel

I am grateful that Dr. Kraemer was willing to explore the question of controversy in Judaism. His serious and carefully chosen words should help us come to terms with the disagreements concerning us today, particularly as these disagreements become expressed in an exclusionary language which threatens to separate Jews from each other. Dr. Kraemer is honest in describing how shared history, commitment to God and Torah, and the experiences of defeat and exile, could shape a world view. The bonds created by these experiences and commitments outweighed any separateness brought on by differing opinions on matters of practice. His words call not for further disagreement, but for expansion and strengthening.

RABBI DANIEL SIEGEL, completing 10½ years as Jewish Chaplain at Dartmouth College, recently dedicated the first Center for Jewish Life at Dartmouth College. He now serves as Executive Director of Aleph: Alliance for Jewish Renewal.

Ta sh'ma

We invite you to send us your favorite text and comment. Submissions should not exceed 200 words. Be sure to include proper citation of sources. Hebrew will appear in transliteration.

■ Bernard S. Raskas

One who says, "What's mine is mine and yours is yours"—this is the average person. But there are, those who say this trait is the characteristic of Sodom.

PIRKEI AVOT 5:12

This is the ethic of "I don't want to get involved." Small wonder then that some rabbis would compare this to the sin of Sodom, which was inhospitality, selfishness, and lack of concern for the plight and the feelings of other human beings. Sodom wanted to isolate itself from people, and in the end all were destroyed. It was self-destruction.

There is a remarkable passage repeated in rabbinic literature (*Seder Eliyah Zutah, Midrash Lekah Tov, Ta'anit 11a*) that teaches, "Let not a person see the problems of a community, then go home, eat and drink and think, 'peace be upon my soul.' It is wrong."

This concept is deeply embedded in Jewish thought. The Bible (*Leviticus 19:16*) exhorts, "Do not stand idly by." This is echoed by a saying of modern moralists based on Dante: "The hottest places in hell are reserved for those who are neutral." The last word, of course, belongs to Elie Wiesel, who noted, "Indifference is the worst sin."

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interact with each other in the field of this world, called the kingdom (*malchut*) which is also the *shechinah*, the divine indwelling, and which, according to Mendel Vitebsker, is also the human being. Thus, each of us is a part of the divine. The way in which we make our behavioral decisions depends on which of the spheres we believe best channels the transcendent divine energy needing to manifest in the world at a particular moment. That decision-making process, the weighing of whether to be inclusive or exclusive, lenient or strict, is a dispute for the sake of heaven.

The specific issue Dr. Kraemer uses to illustrate just how much is really at stake in talmudic disputes also manifests another aspect of how controversy is treated by the rabbis. We have here not just two disputants, Rabbi Akiba and Yosi, but also "the Talmud." It is "the Talmud" which reports that the difference of opinion is in fact about something of substance and not just apparent. "It" then goes on to demonstrate anecdotally that what it believes is the true nature of the dispute is, in fact, manifested in real life: Rabbi Yosi's followers actually ate fowl with dairy. Thus, before any effort is made to decide which of the two rabbis is correct, a third party to the conversation, "the Talmud," plays its own role by "helping" the disputants clarify their disagreement and better understand each other.

As a person trained in the skills of conflict resolution, I recognize this as very similar to the role I play when I mediate. The purpose of this activity is to help the parties arrive at a mutually agreeable resolution of their problem by helping them to understand each other, appreciate the consequences of not finding a solution, and by emphasizing the valuable relationship they share.

Reframing Disputes

Another look at the passage in *Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers)*, to which Dr. Kraemer alludes in his second paragraph, can help to make this more clear. In that *mishnah*, the rabbis say that the destiny of a dispute for the sake of heaven is that it will endure, while a dispute which is not for the sake of heaven will not endure. At first glance this might seem strange, for why would one want any controversy to endure? Yet, in mediation, that is exactly what happens. If the parties focus on what will happen "from now on," appreciate and understand each other's positions, and acknowledge the importance of their relationship, then they can agree to disagree over the facts of what happened (*e.g.*, who is responsible for the breakdown in the Jewish community over the correct way to prepare and then initiate people into Judaism) while still coming to an agreement over what the *halakhah* needs to be from now on. My own experience demonstrates that such outcomes are possible even when the stakes are very high.

I have learned the following from R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk about "disputes for the sake of heaven": Each of us is a world in miniature. Thus, we are the site of the interplay of the six spheres representing the major forces whose dynamic interrelationship and balance is this universe. These include expansive love (*hesed*), power and focus (*gevurah*), mercy and grace (*tiferet*), perseverance (*netzach*), beauty (*hod*), and physical/sexual energy (*yesod*). All these

Meetings between us become meetings of one divine energy with another, and the awareness of the divine transcendence is the unifying force. When we externalize this process and see the other not as a part of the divine and thus of ourselves, but rather as the embodiment of falsehood as we become the embodiment of truth, then this is a dispute which is not for the sake of heaven and it should be discontinued immediately. In the language of conflict resolution, it needs to be "reframed" into one which is for the sake of heaven.

Seeing The Blessings Within Disputes

Dr. Kraemer wrote of our need to reconnect to our shared experiences, that we are "all fellow survivors of the massacres of Hadrian and Hitler." Let me add that these experiences we have shared over the past decades, not only the Holocaust but the powerful effects of modernity itself, the changes in social and economic structure, the failure of material plenty to result in true happiness, and the end of the fixed and solid universe in the relativism of Einstein, have been profoundly unsettling for us all. And if Job could question the justice of God based on his personal experience, why not any and all of us? If Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev could "sue" God over the treatment the Jews were receiving in his day, is it not obvious that any survivor of the camps could also do so? Our certainties over the correctness of our positions, be they on the traditional or the liberal side, only mask the deep insecurity and confusion we are really feeling within.

A dispute for the sake of heaven is not defined by the subject matter of the dispute. Rather, and this is what makes controversy sacred, it is defined by the way in which we conduct that dispute. What endures is this process of determining the correct balances of divine energy appropriate to each moment within the context of the covenantal relationship with God and in which we all share. My prayer is that we can learn to approach each other again acknowledging how much we need each other, how troubled we all feel, and how much we would gain from engaging in disputes for the sake of Heaven. ✦

But others say about...

Gen X Jews

While I share some of Mik Moore's frustration with day school education (I'm a product of both a Conservative elementary school and a traditional "community" high school), I'd like to remind *Sh'ma's* readers that for the most part, the conservative and/or racist/sexist/homophobic/classist attitudes of today's generation of Jewish communal leadership were not shaped by an intensive Jewish day school education. Had contemporary Jewish leaders attended Jewish day schools, they would have been exposed to at least some of Judaism's rich heritage, complete with its diversity, disagreements and range of opinions.

Diversifying communal leadership and welcoming previously silenced perspectives is critical for the future health of Jewish communities and North American Jewish life. However, to exclude people from taking a role in Jewish leadership simply because they are Jewishly well-educated smacks of the same exclusivity which Mik Moore abhors.

Susan Sapiro
New York NY

Notes to our readers

Dr. Rela Mintz Geffen's correct title should read, "Professor of Sociology and Coordinator of the Programs in Jewish Communal Studies at Gratz College (*Sh'ma* 28/542).



Happy Hanukkah

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