CCAR Journal
The Reform Jewish Quarterly

Sacred Teaching and Spiritual Learning

Contents

FROM THE EDITOR
At the Gates — בכניסה אל שערי בית הכנסת ........................................ 1

ARTICLES
Introduction to This Issue by the Guest Editors ...................... 3
Sandy Eisenberg Sasso and Michael Shire

SECTION ONE: THE STATE OF JEWISH SPIRITUAL EDUCATION
Beyond Romanticism: Having Something Spiritual to Say ...................... 9
Lawrence A. Hoffman

The Middle Realm, the Creative Process, and the Creator in Religious Education ............... 21
Jerome W. Berryman

A Transformational Model for Jewish Education .................... 41
Rami Shapiro

SECTION TWO: CHILDREN’S JEWISH SPIRITUAL EDUCATION
Avirah Ruchanit—Creating a “Spiritual Atmosphere” for Jewish Teens ....................... 57
Moshe Ben-Lev

Good Grief: Helping Jewish Children Live with Death ............. 74
Jennifer Gubitz

Choose Life: Identifying and Addressing the Spiritual Needs of B’nei Mitzvah Students and Families .................. 89
Goldie Milgram

Winter 2014
CONTENTS

An Experiment in Spiritual Education: Teacher as Researcher, Student as Theologian ................. 104
Joel Mosbacher and Wendy Grinberg

Practices that Nurture Young Jewish Children’s Spiritual Development ......................... 116
Deborah Schein

“I Knew That Within Me There Was God”—Teaching Spiritual Awareness to Children ............. 134
Amy Scheinerman

SECTION THREE: JEWISH SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE AND FORMATION
The Quest for Meaning: Insights on Nurturing Adult Spiritual Development .................. 150
Roberta Louis Goodman

Jewish Spiritual Direction: Developing a Vocabulary for the Experiences of Our Inner Lives .......... 164
Jacob J. Staub

The Practice of Teaching Jewish Spirituality: Some Lessons I Have Learned ...................... 176
Sheila Peltz Weinberg

SECTION FOUR: THE ARTS AND JEWISH SPIRITUALITY
(Re)Learning L’Hitpaleil: The Performance of Prayer as Spiritual Education ..................... 190
Tamar Heather Havilio

Jewish Early Adolescent Spirituality ................. 207
Micah Lapidus

Storytelling and Spirituality: Sacred and Shared between Generations ......................... 220
Peninnah Schram

POETRY ON THE THEME OF THE SYMPOSIUM
She Said Yes ............................................. 235
Barbara AB Symons

Akiva ......................................................... 236
Joseph Black

Hide and Seek ............................................. 238
Brad L. Bloom
CONTENTS

Morning Prayer ................................................. 239
Tamara Cohen

Astronauts......................................................... 241
Judy Katz
Join the Conversation!

Subscribe Now.

Engage with ideas about Judaism and Jewish life through essays, poetry and book reviews by leading scholars, rabbis, and thinkers.

A Journal for All Jews
The CCAR Journal: The Reform Jewish Quarterly
$125 for one year subscription
$175 for two year subscription

For more information and to order, go to:
www.ccarpress.org or call 212-972-3636 x243
CCAR | 355 Lexington Avenue | New York, NY 10017
At the Gates — 

Many rabbis have influenced and helped me, both before and after ordination. But three men (as it turns out) were indispensible to my becoming a rabbi, each in his own specific way: Norman Hirsch, Richard Levy, and Lennard Thal. Along with Laura Geller, Lisa Edwards, the late Carole Meyers, and others, they taught me, directly and indirectly, that being a rabbi is holy work in which spiritual awareness plays an important role.

Thus I responded with enthusiasm when Michael Shire proposed to the Journal editorial board the topic of this symposium issue. With Marcus Burstein, two years ago Michael guest-edited “Finding our Path: Becoming a Rabbi After Ordination,” and colleagues continue to refer back to that issue. A teacher of rabbis and scholar of Jewish Education, Michael invited Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, a pioneer in the field of children’s spirituality, to join him in conceptualizing and actualizing what became “Sacred Teaching and Spiritual Learning.”

Working with Michael and Sandy on this issue has special resonance because it’s my final one as Journal editor. When it arrives in my mailbox months hence, I will open it as one among other CCAR members. The past five years have gone by in a flash, even while being filled with new learning and relationships. I am grateful to Jonathan Stein and Steve Fox for their confidence, as well as their help during the early and some later periods of my tenure.

I am also grateful to Hara Person, whom we are most fortunate to have as director of the CCAR Press, and whom I have sometimes referred to as my “boss.” Hara’s ability to see the large and small pictures simultaneously, to know when to be honest and when diplomatic, complement her skill and good taste in rabbinic as well as publishing matters. I could not have gotten through the steep learning curve period without her, and she has continued to advise me all along. My thanks also go to Debbie Smilow and Ortal Bensky of the CCAR office.

Further gratitude goes out to our partners in the publication process that brings the CCAR Journal to its readers: our typesetter Publishing Synthesis and our copy editor Mike Isralewitz.
Deborah Constantine and Otto Barz of PS and Mike stand at the top of my list of cyberspace good friends. While they are professionals compensated for their work, Deborah and Mike go well beyond contractual terms to make our publication look good and read well. Mike has become my model of what it means to avoid a rosh katan: he feels responsible to the overall project and the people involved, and so continually goes beyond the call of duty.

And finally, I am grateful to those colleagues who’ve served as guest editors of symposium issues and on the editorial board during my tenure. Book Review Editor Larry Edwards and Poetry Editor Adam Fisher have been pleasures to work with, full of energetic responsiveness and creativity. To their ranks as section editors was added Dan Polish, who helped conceptualize the new Maayanot (Primary Sources) rubric and continues to develop it. I will restrain myself from listing the twenty-five current and past board members, who have given of themselves as reviewers and collaborators in deliberation. I believe deeply in rotating leadership, a lesson learned years ago from Richard Levy in the context of a faculty discussion group. In the context of the CCAR and the Journal, such leadership means that editorial board members rotate off after one or two terms—and that one editor is succeeded by the next to produce a strong, multi-link chain.

Providing the next link in this shalshelet is our colleague, the new editor, Paul Golomb. Paul continued on the editorial board when I took the reins, and he rejoined the board recently. He’s published in the Journal and elsewhere while serving in a range of rabbinic settings. It’s been a pleasure implementing an orderly transition with Paul, ensuring that planned issues move along and authors don’t fall through the cracks. Because of the long lead-time for each issue, by the time you read these words, Paul will have been functioning as editor for some months. Hopefully he’s enjoying the wide range of responsibilities; I’m sure he’s enjoying the opportunity to connect with colleagues and serve the Reform Movement.

I would be remiss to conclude without thanking my supportive, loving family. Most affected and supportive of all has been my beloved husband, John Antignas. May he and I share God’s bounty, for which we are most grateful, well into the future. And may the Reform Jewish Quarterly be there with, and even beyond us, flourishing and contributing.

Susan Laemmle, Outgoing Editor
Introduction to This Issue
by the Guest Editors

Sandy Eisenberg Sasso and Michael Shire

This issue of the CCAR Journal, entitled “Sacred Teaching and Spiritual Learning,” and part of the Spring 2014 issue are devoted to examining ways in which Jewish educators and clergy see their teaching role as holy work and encourage spiritual awareness among young people and adults. This symposium responds to the following questions:

1. In what ways can we provide Jewish spiritual education to children and adults?
2. What is the impact of teaching for spiritual awareness? Why is it important?
3. How can we prepare educators to view Jewish education as holy work?
4. What do we know about children’s spirituality? What does Jewish tradition have to teach? What can we learn from other spiritual traditions about transmitting spiritual practice in an authentically Jewish mode?

RABBI SANDY EISENBERG SASSO (RRC74) holds an MA from Temple University, a D.Min. from Christian Theological Seminary (CTS), and honorary doctorates from a number of institutions including RRC in 1999 and HUC in 2013. She has Emerita status at Congregation Beth-El Zedeck in Indianapolis, where she was senior rabbi from 1977-2013. Sandy is director of the Religion, Spirituality and the Arts Initiative at Butler University and CTS. She has written award-winning children’s books and essays on nurturing the spiritual imagination of children, as well a book for adults, Midrash: Reading the Bible with Questions Marks. She is among the editors of Nurturing Child and Adolescent Spirituality: Perspectives from the World’s Religious Traditions.

RABBI DR. MICHAEL J. SHIRE (LBC96) holds an MARE from HUC-NY and a Ph.D. from HUC-LA96, and was awarded an honorary doctorate from HUC in 2008. He is dean and professor of Jewish Education at the Shoolman Graduate School of Jewish Education at Hebrew College in Newton Centre, Massachusetts. Michael has written widely on Nuturing the Spirit of the Child in Jewish Education, including "Spirituality: The Spiritual Child and Jewish Childhood” in the International Handbook of Jewish Education, Springer 2011.
5. What are the different ways of introducing children or adults to traditional and nontraditional modes of spiritual practice in ritual, prayer, or the performance of mitzvot?

6. How can Jewish spiritual practice be an integral component of the goals for Jewish education?

Along with our contributors, we as guest editors ask the question what would Jewish education look like if it had at its heart a Jewish spiritual pedagogy, if it cared as much for enriching souls as it did for expanding knowledge, if it offered not only ritual practices but purpose to our hands, feet, and speech? What is it we are seeking to achieve in Jewish education? Do we believe that spirituality is innate and needs to be nurtured or that it is something that must be explicitly taught? Do we currently look for ways to deepen Jewish practice, to go beyond performance to the experience and meaning underlying it? Do we seek to create religious individuals, open Jewish minds, touch Jewish souls, and foster communities of holiness?

Many Jewish religious educators are not just looking for new programming but a transformation of Jewish education. We want to explicitly address sacred teaching and spiritual learning as an integral part of our vocation. We want a new generation to have deep religious experiences, to struggle with life’s essential and enduring questions of meaning and purpose, to recognize what it might mean to encounter the presence of the Divine. How do we educate for this religious awareness?

Jewish education in the post–enlightenment age has been mainly about constructing the “Educated Jew.” In the nineteenth century, that meant a Jew tutored in Western Civilization in order to become integrated into modern society, to be enlightened.

In the last generation, constructing the “Educated Jew” has come to mean something else: a Jew educated in his/her own forgotten heritage, reaffirming or discovering his/her Jewish identity among a series of postmodern identities and engaging with a tradition and text and community that has been neglected.1

Is Jewish education now ready to make another paradigm shift? As we struggle with a sense of the purposes of teaching Torah in its widest sense, we may ask: What is the ideal outcome of attending Jewish schools and synagogues, camps and youth programming, early childhood and adult classes? Is it to solely affirm an
identity, develop cultural literacy, construct lenses to view the outside world, develop skills for Jewish living, build pride and joy in being part of Israel—people, land, and destiny?

Something is missing here. For years, books about God were put aside for fear there was not enough time to transmit the vast body of Jewish knowledge. The larger questions about our purpose in life, what happens when we die, and why life is unfair were postponed until a child could demonstrate proficiency in Hebrew, rituals, and liturgy. Yet research shows that we are all born with an innate spirituality; what we lack is a language to express it. Jewish education needs to discover how to provide that language and to honor the spiritual yearnings of the soul. How can we be sensitive and aware of our spiritual searching? How do we understand the process of our religious growth? How do we educate for spirituality and religiosity, and find approaches to learning that foster the qualities of being tamim (wholehearted) that integrates explicit and implicit connections to God, the sacred, personal faith, and community holiness?

In his article in this issue, Larry Hoffman diagnoses the problem: “The underlying cause of this conversational lacuna is our Jewish prejudice against ‘God-talk.’ Single-mindedly committed to the world of science, Jews feel self-conscious discussing matters of the spirit. Believing that linguistic statements must correspond to empirical reality, we balk at theological conversation that operates according to other criteria of meaningfulness.”

A new paradigm of Jewish education needs to address questions of meaning and probes these issues of the spirit. Bahya Ibn Pakuda (eleventh century) was open to understanding his quest for a wholehearted Judaism when he described the Duties of the Heart as the primacy of Jewish growing and learning. At its core, learning about and from a religious tradition is for all who seek a way to be more fully human, more fully faithful to a vision of the good life. As Professor Art Green has written, “It is striving for the presence of God and fashioning a life of holiness appropriate to such striving that defines a spirituality in Judaism. Knowledge of Torah and the performance of mitzvot may bring a sense of accomplishment, but it cannot refresh the soul, deepen sensitivity to life, or help us see reverence in our daily life.

Professor Eugene Borowitz, in a seminal article published in Religious Education in 1980, writes that we need to find a way to take people “Beyond Immanence” to balance their religious devotion
with a sense of the transcendence in their lives. As an early advocate of a pietistic Reform Judaism, he proposes three ways that educators might foster this spiritual quest: through the tradition of marking moments in time with the recitation of *b’rachot*, through the powerful meanings expressed in Psalms, and through verbal and nonverbal expressions of our spiritual and religious yearnings. A quarter of a century later, we have yet to find compelling ways to use these rich traditional tools in Jewish education to inculcate spiritual awakening and build a Jewish spiritual practice for our young.

In regard to the fourth child at the seder who does not know how to ask, Mordecai Kaplan reminds us that it is the parents’ responsibility to teach the child to ask: “That is the sum and substance of education. Its main purpose would be to educate people to ask the right questions about the world and themselves.” He writes how even some higher education provides a “kind of intellectual suntan,” when what is needed is the kind of education that gives birth to wonder.

Jewish education needs to grapple with what it means not only to teach the mind but to nurture the soul, to help us grow as human beings and to understand the nature of the holiness in childhood. What does the very nature of childhood have to say about the seemingly natural and quintessential human-Divine encounter—the nature of play, laughter, spontaneity, and wonderment that is so richly a part of childhood? Even as Jewish education began to recognize the spiritual needs of adults, it ignored children, falsely believing that God and the sacred could only be encountered at an age where abstract language was fully formed. Without providing stories, experiences, and conversations about the holy, individuals came to assume that Jewish learning was only about facts, information, and skills.

In *The Chosen*, Chaim Potok highlights one of the major purposes of a Jewish education when he laments the sole brilliance of his son: “I went away and cried to the Master of the Universe, ‘What have you done to me? A mind like this I need for a son? A heart I need for a son, a soul I need for a son, compassion I want from my son, righteousness, mercy, strength to suffer, not a mind without a soul!’”

The articles in this symposium encompass a wide variety of attempts to grapple with these crucial questions for Jewish education.
Our call for papers elicited twenty-two strong and substantial submissions, which turned out to be too much material for one issue. Thus we have divided the articles into five sections, with the fifth section slated to appear in the Spring 2014 issue.

This issue contains:

Section 1: The State of Jewish Spiritual Education
The authors in this section help define Jewish spiritual education and discuss its possibilities for transforming Jewish life and learning. (Lawrence Hoffman, Jerome Berryman, Rami Shapiro)

Section 2: Children’s Jewish Spiritual Education
These articles uniquely demonstrate innovative practice in the work of Jewish spiritual education with children. (Moshe Ben-Lev, Jennifer Gubitz, Goldie Milgram, Joel Mosbacher and Wendy Grinberg, Deborah Schein, Amy Scheinerman)

Section 3: Jewish Spiritual Guidance and Formation
In this section, practitioners and educators describe the work of Jewish spiritual guidance and formation across the Jewish community. (Roberta Goodman, Jacob Staub, Sheila Peltz Weinberg)

Section 4: The Arts and Jewish Spirituality
This section explores the use of the expressive arts as ways to open up new dimensions of a spiritually motivated Jewish education. (Tamar Havillo, Micah Lapidus, Peninnah Schram)

The Spring 2014 issue will contain Section 5: Nurturing the Sacred in Individuals and Community: Engaging Prayer and Theology
Its articles focus on engaging and teaching prayer and theology as a means to form and nurture God’s presence in the lives of individuals and communities. Those articles are by Mike Comins, Jeffrey Goldwasser, Arthur Green, Saul Kaiserman (with Daniel Reiser, Lisa Kingston, and Hannah Goldstein), Rex Perlmeter, Marcia Plumb, and Seymour Rossel.

We have been blessed by the wonderful and creative contributions of our fellow educators and clergy, including the Rev. Jerome Berryman, whose pioneering work in spirituality and children and the theology of childhood has influenced our thinking about Jewish spiritual pedagogy. We hope that this symposium represents the beginning of sustained and deliberative development of a religious and spiritual Jewish education.
Notes


2. Bahya Ibn Pakuda (eleventh century) calls for a spiritual integration of the duties of the limbs and duties of the heart to a state termed *tamim*. Michael Rosenak, z”l in his Commandments and Concerns (JPS, 1980) also refers to an explicit and implicit religion to which religious education needs to integrate.


