

Time for Parenting

■ Re Rabbi Yaakov Shapiro's article, "What Can a Parent Do?" in the Summer 5759/1999 issue of *Jewish Action*, I would like to point out that Rabbi Shapiro's suggestions for more effective Jewish parenting all demand the one unique commodity that today's Jewish parents find almost impossible to provide: time.

It is inordinately time-consuming to listen, understand, and be there (physically and emotionally) with our children when there are so many other vital demands on our time: work, career, communal and social responsibilities, financial worries, religious obligations, etc. All this besides time for fulfilling one's own pressing, personal needs. There is just so much a parent can be expected to do and just so much time to do it in, and I would venture to say that the majority of today's parents are stressed-out without being asked to find even more time for parenting.

Our society – even its supposedly spiritual components – is basically action- and material-oriented. We use "things" to get other things "done." By suggesting that wiser, more effective parenting requires more thought, more love, more time rather than more money, directives or material things (and I am referring to positive, educational "things" such as camps, computers or activities), Rabbi Shapiro may be on target, but it's a tough target to hit. It will take major reorganization of priorities, values and lifestyle. In short, it means bucking – or changing – the entire system. And that is going to require a lot of parents' time.

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Rabbi Shapiro Replies:

What would we say to someone who claims to have no time to put on tefillin

in the morning because he is too busy with his religious obligations? How would a doctor respond to a heart patient who says he doesn't have time for exercise because he is too busy taking care of his health?

Please note: Your children are your religious obligations. They are your personal needs. They are your responsibilities, your work, your very life. And they are the foremost of all of the above. And if all parents would realize this, those who deal with "at risk" youth would have less "communal obligations."

Bringing up children wisely is not easy. But it is easier, and a great deal less stressful, than bringing them up unwisely and then having to deal with rebellious, angry, defiant, emotionally needy children who scour the street corners in search of what their parents would not provide for them at home. My heart breaks for the thousands of parents who would gladly give any amount of time, energy and money to get their rebellious children back; but I have yet to meet parents who cry themselves to sleep at night wishing they would have put less time and effort into raising their children.

As far as the unfortunate trends of society that we may find hard to "buck," well, we know what we would tell our children if they would make such a claim; and similarly I ask: If everyone would throw their children off the roof, would you do it too?

Rav Moshe Feinstein, ז"ל, was more occupied with "communal needs" than you or I, and, I imagine, was more concerned with "religious obligations." Still he found time to be a loving and affectionate father. His son, Rabbi Reuven Feinstein, said that he and his siblings always knew by Rav Moshe's actions that he loved them dearly: For example, every winter morning, Rav Moshe would quietly slip into their room before they would awaken and spread their clothing out on the radiator so that their

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clothes would be warm when they put them on.

Rav Moshe was a devoted father not despite his commitment to religious or personal obligations, but because of them. Rav Moshe had his values - religious and personal - in proper perspective, and knew that his children's development is primary among both.

Emotional nurturing and attention are as vital to children's development as food and shelter. And their need will not be denied. These are our options: Either we listen to our children and be there for them, or they will find someone else who will. And when children do not find happiness in their parents' home, the odds are that the next place they look will not have a similar value system or lifestyle.

It is not so much a matter of time management as it is attitude. Parents who focus on the pricelessness of their children in general, and the primacy of their children's wellbeing in particular, find ways and means to protect and nurture the most valuable item in their lives. Those parents may spend less time at Chinese auctions, but their prize lasts forever, is infinitely more valuable, and the odds of them winning it are much greater.

Where have the *kehillot* gone?

■ Rabbi Shelomoh Danziger's recent review of *Rav Breuer: His Life and His Legacy* [Summer 5759/1999] exhibited the characteristics which we have come to expect from his pen: lucidity and God-centered passion. The reader invariably emerges from his writings with some valuable insight for future spiritual quests.

However, there were a few comments in the review which touch on matters requiring some further reflection. Rabbi Danziger posits that "mobility" and "changing neighborhoods" are not "*kehillah* friendly," thus attempting to explain the unraveling of the Hirschian *kehillah* in America and "*kehillahism*" in general. Geographical permanence thus becomes "a critical factor in the perpetuation of the Hirsch-Breuer ideology." This is cer-

tainly true to an extent, but a lack of these same factors have not undermined the loyalty of many Chassidic groups to their respective ancestral traditions. Viznitz, Skver and Satmar, for example, have devoted satellite communities throughout the New York area created by those who moved away from "headquarters." In fact, the abandonment of Hirschianism had begun in the KAJ itself long before the exodus from Washington Heights. (Rabbi Danziger himself noted and lamented this fact as early as June of 1965 in a *Jewish Observer* article.) The question is, why?

Perhaps Rabbi Danziger unwittingly supplies an explanation as to why Chassidism survived just as TIDE was dwindling, when he writes that the Breuer *kehillah* has adjusted itself to the American Torah community by the "adoption of the yeshivah *derech halimud*...which defines one's Torah commitment in our time more than *kehillah* and *minhag*."

In truth the Breuer community adopted far more from the yeshivah world than the Brisker approach to a *blatt Gemara*. It has, essentially, although not explicitly, jettisoned almost all of the Hirschian world view. Firstly, the very notion that knowledge and beauty are ultimately divine and hence their study (in proper context) is a means to approach Hashem is rarely mentioned. Second, the belief that Torah has a message relevant to the *derech erez* or raw material of the contemporary world (both in terms of speaking to the world as well as incorporating, through an adequate filter system, its positive aspects) is no longer spoken of. These are the basic Hirschian messages and Rabbi Danziger, who has long, hard and clearly defended them in the past, should realize they have been surrendered by the Breuer *kehillah* steadily over the last four decades.

Thus, the failure to maintain allegiance to *minhag* and *kehillah* and the subsequent loosening of the ties which once firmly bound this community may be understood simply as the fear

and inability to state with resolve what Hirschianism is and how it differs fundamentally on many issues from the yeshivah world - and to put those ideals into practice.

Three other examples of this retreat come to mind. 1) True Hirschianism would never have countenanced the spreading of extended *kollel* study to the masses with its attendant economic, social and moral crises. Today many former Hirschians and their children are active participants in this trend. Of course, all are summoned to pursue Torah at daily set times. I refer to the conversion of *shevet Levi* into a norm. 2) Hirschianism was staunchly anti-Zionist. Rav Hirsch did not oppose the movement to establish pre-Messianic Jewish political sovereignty over *Eretz Yisrael* because, coincidentally, most early Zionists weren't Orthodox or threatened Orthodoxy but, *intrinsically*, because he saw it as a rejection of *galus* and our tasks therein. (This point was forcefully argued by Rabbi Danziger in *Tradition* of Summer 1964.) Since the yeshivah world has adopted the post-1948 Agudah approach, which is best labeled non-Zionism, KAJ has also abandoned its traditional position. 3) Rav Hirsch and Rav Breuer did not advocate total social separation of the sexes. In fact, Rav Breuer felt it to be counterproductive. (His views on this question were in *Mitteilungen* of February/March 1966.) This is also no longer part of "yeshivah Hirschianism."

I offer no personal comments on any of the three just cited innovations. They are certainly not as basic as surrender on the first two doctrines noted above. Indeed, the last mentioned was based on Rav Breuer's sense of modern social realities and his personal assessment of how best to defeat "evil thoughts" in youth. Nonetheless, they reflect the abandonment of a specific world view and approach.

In order to salvage *Torah im Derech Eretz*, Rabbi Danziger advocates two endeavors. The first is the establishment of a yeshivah which would

embody the commitment to knowledge and beauty (and may we add basic honesty, integrity, *menschlichkeit* and *Kiddush Hashem*) of Rav Hirsch's vision combined with Eastern Europe's ideal of scholarly piety. Of course, this would be a welcome venture, but Rabbi Danziger has been bemoaning its lack of implementation for decades. In the *Jewish Observer* of 1965 he described the realization of a "mature form of *Torah im Derech Eretz*" as a "goal (which) has not been achieved to date. It is worthy of our utmost effort and strivings." In the current review he still "hopes a way will be found" to do this. Is not the delay of this long overdue venture, in part, due to the lack of Hirschian *gedolim* in Agudah circles who would view this type of yeshivah with enthusiasm?

Two, he envisions the formation of "an informal association of various communities...subscribing to the Hirsch-Breuer worldview...and bound together by gatherings and functions and a common periodical – a kind of greater KAJ." This, to my mind, is a splendid concept, but the painful question is, do such communities exist any longer?

Or – deeper still – did they ever exist? Is the combination of clear Orthodoxy, Torah scholarship and piety, immunity to trendy movements, openness to the beauty and bounty of creation and the dignity of *Kiddush Hashem* taken together, a bit much for all but a few? In Rav Hirsch's own IRG only a quarter joined him in *austritt*. The IRG failed for close to 20 years to financially support the yeshivah established by Rav Shelomo Breuer in its midst.

Perhaps, we must yet await the playing out of other options. The failure of the yeshivah/Chassidic worlds to deviate from the "Torah only" concept has created many crises which are intensifying as their populations grow. On the one hand, those not skilled in learning grow resentful of a faith which is defined solely in terms of Talmudic ability. On the other hand,

there are many, whether or not successful in learning, who have other talents and interests (academic or aesthetic), the fulfillment of which is currently denied them. These factors combined with a frightening irresponsibility in providing dignified means to earn a living create many religious and economic *korbanos*.

Modern Orthodoxy, far from a monolith, has witnessed in recent decades an explosion of Torah study and halachic commitment. In many ways the *baalei batim* and *lomdim* forming this vanguard are de facto Hirschians. (Of course, this trend has also created a leftist counter reaction which poses grave dangers.)

Thus, despite the KAJ's surrender, the time may still approach when Hirschianism, nurtured by the best of other Torah worlds, will speak again and this time be heard.

**Rabbi Mayer Schiller
Monsey, New York**

Rabbi Danziger responds:

I am in agreement with most of Rabbi Schiller's eloquent, challenging and analytically incisive pro-Hirschian letter, but with one correction, one clarification and one reservation.

Correction:

I did not write that geographical permanence is "a critical factor in the perpetuation of this Hirsch-Breuer ideology," with the implication that without such geographical permanence the ideology cannot be perpetuated. I wrote that "the centrality of the kehillah concept in the ideology and accomplishments [of the past] in Frankfurt and Washington Heights" can no longer be relied on because of social mobility "which severely limits the reliability of the kehillah infrastructure as a critical factor in the perpetuation of the Hirsch-Breuer ideology." We can no longer depend on kehillah as a critical factor. We must rely on other factors as critical to the preparation of the ideology. Perhaps there was a failure of the lucidity which Rabbi Schiller so kindly attributes to my pen.

Clarification:

Rabbi Schiller writes that Rav Hirsch was staunchly anti-Zionist "because he saw it as a rejection of galus and our tasks therein." Some readers might infer mistakenly from this expression that galus was considered the ideal by Rav Hirsch and that he favored it. Obviously, such an inference would be false. Rav Hirsch wrote of galus: "It is for this sad disfigurement of the Torah that Jewish tears are shed and Jewish hearts grieve. Not for his own Galuth, but for the Galuth of the Torah does the Jew mourn" (Collected Writings 1, p. 345). The galus and its tasks were imposed on us by divine decree to punish and purify us spiritually. Therefore, according to Rav Hirsch, it is our duty to end the galus through spiritual, rather than political, means. Of course, this is also what Rabbi Schiller meant, but I wished to add this clarification.

Reservation:

All segments of Orthodoxy, of course, are welcome to adopt the Hirschian ideal of Torah im Derech Eretz. However, a curriculum of Torah study and halachic observance, plus the pursuit of general knowledge and esthetic values, does not necessarily a Hirschian make, not even de facto. This is merely a Hirschian curriculum. It is only when the curriculum is motivated and inspired by the unifying philosophico-religious idealism, the soaring spirit and the yiras Shamayim that radiate from Rav Hirsch's writings that one becomes a Hirschian. Without this spirit we are ersatz, not de facto, Hirschians. With this spiritual motivation, what would otherwise be mere intellectual Torah and academic study, is inspired to become a living expression of avodas Hashem [divine service], Kiddush Hashem and an experience of kirvas Elokim [divine nearness].

Rabbi Schiller suggests that such an ideal may be "a bit much for all but a few." Perhaps so. But so is every worthwhile, lofty goal. The many pursue it, the few achieve it and, in the process, all benefit.

Coming Home

■ The return of so many Jews to Torah-directed lives, as detailed in the collection “Coming Home” in the Summer 1999 issue, is truly a *simchah*. Yet despite the call in the column by OU President Mandell Ganchrow to move away from the insults and sarcasm of the past when discussing Jews outside Orthodoxy, such rhetoric continued to color some of the essays in the “Coming Home” collection, most notably Rabbi Lawrence Kelemen’s “Tracing the Tree of Life.”

We are wont to interpret the rise and popularity of non-Orthodox movements as recurrences of the revolt of Korach against *Moshe Rabbeinu*. But we forget that Moshe was the humblest of men, and that his one act of pride prevented him from his goal of entering *Eretz Yisrael*. Are we striving to demonstrate that same humility in our own dealings with other Jews, or will we fail in our goal of *am echad*, of restoring unity to the Jewish people?

It is simplistic and wrong to ascribe the abandonment of tradition by many American Jews during the past century to their seduction by a few men. Far more Jews were pushed away by our arrogance than were pulled away by desire for a Torah-free life. Mocking the ignorance of the Reform rabbinate or belittling the Conservative movement’s halachic interpretations does nothing to build our esteem in the eyes of the majority of American Jews, whom we so desperately want to return to Torah.

If there is a lesson to be taken from these stories of *baalei teshuvah*, it is how an initial, humble act of lighting candles or saying *Kaddish* blossomed into a more completely Torah-directed lifestyle. Orthopraxy leads to Orthodoxy, or to put it in a more familiar way, “*Naaseh v’nishma*.” As Jewish movements outside our own increasingly embrace *mitzvot*, we should be supportive of this embrace even though we may not accept their justification for it. The examples from these stories demonstrate that when

Jews become receptive to fulfilling *mitzvot*, they also become more receptive to a more complete acceptance of Torah. Insult and invective will only harm our efforts at encouraging more Jews to return to Torah.

Michael Meckler
Columbus, Ohio

Lawrence Kelemen responds:

Despite the many appreciative letters and phone calls I received from non-Orthodox Jews around the world who received copies of my contribution to the “Coming Home” forum from their Orthodox friends and relatives, I wasn’t writing for the non-Orthodox. I wrote to tell my story, to describe what drew me home. And I wrote to my community – the Orthodox – in the journal of the Orthodox community, published by the Orthodox Union – in our beit midrash, so to speak – to remind us that Judaism is almost entirely an oral tradition, that our precious gift is this unwritten mesorah, and that even those of us who weave religious observances and textual study into our lives remain beyond the pale until we make intimate connections with our generation’s sages. I wrote to inspire pride among those who have a rebbe who had a rebbe who had a rebbe... and to inspire caution among those who don’t have a rebbe – to remind the latter group that they are closer to Judaism’s edge than they might suspect. All references to the history of non-Orthodox break-off groups were meant to illustrate what the future holds for us should we fail to fulfill God’s command, “Aseh lecha rav – get yourself a teacher.”

Indeed, as Dr. Meckler implies, we must put all of our efforts into making our own community into a model for the non-Orthodox. When each of us is a living example of the ideal – of good mid-dot, of uncompromising mitzvah observance, and of rock-solid connection to the divine mesorah that produces such character and observance – then, with love and admiration, we will achieve the goal Dr. Meckler eloquently described as “am echad” – then all Jewry will come home.

Legal-ease

■ In the last issue of *Jewish Action* [Fall 5760] I am quoted [in the “Legal-ease” column] as ruling that men should answer as “outsiders” when women make a *zimun*.

I’d like to state for the record that there are two worlds: *halachah* and *halachah lemayseh*. It is my halachic opinion that women’s *minyanim*, Bat Mitzvah celebrations that simulate Bar Mitzvahs, and the like, are prohibited by the Torah because they are consequences of the feminist movement. I would not answer even as an “outsider” in front of the women, since this could be construed as giving assent to actions that I find objectionable.

I feel that this is analogous to the *halachah* which looks askance at praying with outstretched hands although this was once the preferred stance, but became objectionable when the idolators did so; similarly building *matzeyvos* which were once pleasing to God when the Patriarchs did so became prohibited later.

What was once considered commendable becomes improper when it is done to further an agenda which, to my mind, negates those forces of *halachah* and *mesorah* which have sustained us.

Rabbi David Cohen
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