

Yirat Shamayim
The Awe, Reverence,
and Fear of God

EDITED BY
Marc D. Stern

Robert S. Hirt, Series Editor

THE MICHAEL SCHARF PUBLICATION TRUST
OF THE YESHIVA UNIVERSITY PRESS
NEW YORK



THE ORTHODOX FORUM

The Orthodox Forum, initially convened by Dr. Norman Lamm, Chancellor of Yeshiva University, meets each year to consider major issues of concern to the Jewish community. Forum participants from throughout the world, including academicians in both Jewish and secular fields, rabbis, rashei yeshivah, Jewish educators, and Jewish communal professionals, gather in conference as a think tank to discuss and critique each other's original papers, examining different aspects of a central theme. The purpose of the Forum is to create and disseminate a new and vibrant Torah literature addressing the critical issues facing Jewry today.

The Orthodox Forum
gratefully acknowledges the support
of the Joseph J. and Bertha K. Green Memorial Fund
at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary
established by Morris L. Green, of blessed memory.

The Orthodox Forum Series
is a project of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary,
an affiliate of Yeshiva University

In Memory of My Parents
Herman and Marion Stern

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Yirat shamayim : the awe, reverence, and fear of God / edited by Marc D. Stern.
p. cm.

ISBN 978-1-60280-037-3

1. Fear of God – Judaism. 2. Orthodox Judaism. I. Stern, Marc D.

BM645.F4Y57 2008

296.3'11 – dc22

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Distributed by
KTAV Publishing House, Inc.
930 Newark Avenue
Jersey City, NJ 07306
Tel. (201) 963-9524
Fax. (201) 963-0102
www.ktav.com
bernie@ktav.com

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This book was typeset by Koren Publishing Services

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“The Beginning of Wisdom:” Towards a Curriculum of *Yirat Shamayim* in Modern Orthodox High Schools

Mark E. Gottlieb

Almost forty years after Robert Bellah’s groundbreaking study of the then regnant religious ethos in contemporary American culture, the Lily Foundation commissioned the first and most statistically-significant survey of the actual beliefs and practices of over three thousand American adolescents aged thirteen through seventeen.¹ Perhaps unsurprisingly, the findings from the National Study of Youth and Religion, presented to the public in *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*,² echoed some of Bellah’s most memorable and striking claims. In a chapter suggestively titled “God, Religion, Whatever: On Moralistic Therapeutic

Deism,” sociologists Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, describe the process of adolescent religious development as something which “is simply happily absorbed by youth, largely, one might say, by osmosis, as one sixteen-year-old white Catholic boy from Pennsylvania stated so well: ‘Yeah, religion affects my life a lot, but you really don’t think about it as much. It just comes natural I guess after a while.’”³

Smith and Denton conclude, however, that despite this claim for the intuitive and fundamental nature of adolescent religious experience, in reality “only a minority of United States teenagers are naturally absorbing by osmosis the traditional substantive content and character of the religious traditions to which they claim to belong.” “For,” Smith and Denton say, “it appears to us [that] another popular religious faith, Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, is colonizing many historical religious traditions and, almost without anyone noticing, converting believers in the old faiths to its alternative religious vision of divinely underwritten personal happiness and interpersonal niceness.”⁴ With Bellah and, now, Smith and Denton, it certainly seems like modern American teenagers preternaturally anticipate – and pretty accurately reflect back – their parents’ highest hopes and most gripping fears about God, man, and the cosmos.

Although clearly a critical educational desideratum, to date, no data-driven study either informing an anecdotally detailed portraiture of “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism” or presenting a more compelling alternative has been replicated in our own community.⁵ Still, the ideological muddle many Modern Orthodox educators encounter in our schools on an almost daily basis would seem to confirm these broader observations about the minimalist or “thin” quality of our students’ religious experience.⁶ Despite our strong numbers and increasingly professionalized infrastructure, ask a Modern Orthodox educator how our community is doing, and you’ll likely hear ambivalence or frustration, at best, apocalyptic predictions of the imminent demise of our movement, at worst. Alternately identified as an eclipsing of *yirat shamayim*, a lack of passion or punctiliousness in *shemirat ha-mitzvot*, a religious behaviorism that belies the

richness and depth of an authentic religious sensibility of inwardness and meaning, or some other such critique, this prognosis now coexists side-by-side with the increasingly clichéd “slide to the Right,” and the dreadfully-feared phenomenon of “Flipping Out.”

Our educational institutions, starting first with the family, are engaged in nothing less than a counter-cultural struggle against the forces of consumerism, sound-byte oversimplification, and functionalism, on the one hand, and an often disdainful and stifling parochialism that denies the Divine Presence in the totality of the order of creation, on the other. Unsurprisingly, the sociological and cultural dispositions of both these unhappy alternatives feed off each other in a vicious circular frenzy, further eroding the chances for a healthy and vibrant culture of critically engaged and serious Orthodoxy. To name these troubling spheres of influence for the hearts and minds of our children and students is not to equate the threat posed by each to the religious well-being of our constituent population. The one necessary thing, the cultivation of an unapologetic life of *avodat Hashem*, must always be paramount. But the emotional and intellectual fallout from this communal tug-of-war has created nothing short of a profound crisis of meaning for many of our students.⁷

In what follows, I’d first like to offer a tentative analysis as to just what is entailed by saying that our schools and students are missing a more robust and essential realization of *yirat shamayim*; next, I present a framework for understanding what *yirat shamayim* might mean in a specifically educational or pedagogical context, and finally, I offer some modest programmatic suggestions of just how our schools might go about addressing this perennial religious educational problem. As an appendix to the argument articulated below, I’ve included an outline of a high school course in Jewish Thought that was developed at the Maimonides School in Brookline, Massachusetts, as a case-study of *yirat shamayim* education in action. Of course, this is simply one educator’s vision of what *yirat shamayim* education might look like, with no pretense or presumption of comprehensiveness. If the interested reader finds this particular approach meaningful, I will have satisfied my rather circumscribed goals for this conversation.

A PEDAGOGICAL PRIMER: ON THE DIFFICULTY OF DEFINING *YIRAT SHAMAYIM*

Despite (or, perhaps equally, because of) its centrality in our religious tradition, defining *yirat shamayim* in a clear, unequivocal way is difficult. The term itself remains terribly elusive, both conceptually underdetermined and colloquially overextended. It is more often intuitively identifiable in the embodied lived lives of simple, pious Jews or knight-saints of the faith than discursively described or discretely analyzed. Covering a range of actions and attitudes, thoughts and feelings, *yirat shamayim* includes a number of different religious and educational goals which may require multiple modalities of instruction and expression. With this caveat in mind, we might identify two basic dimensions within the general category of *yirat shamayim*, one broadly cognitive, the other, affective. While the language and context of most biblical and talmudic references to the normative obligation of *yirat shamayim* convey a strong sense of affective or emotional engagement and response to the Divine,⁸ there is also a significant tradition, mostly in the medieval and modern literature on the topic, that depicts *yirat shamayim* as a kind of intellectual or cognitive apprehension, a comprehensive religious perspective, a way of understanding God and world that informs our entire orientation to existence.⁹ Interestingly, both the cognitive and affective expressions of a comprehensive and thoroughgoing religious consciousness are interwoven in one of the most foundational formulations of *yirat shamayim*, found in Rambam, *Hilkhot Yesodei HaTorah* (2:2):

And what is the way that will lead to the love of Him and the fear of Him? When a person contemplates His great and wondrous works and creatures and from them obtains a glimpse of His wisdom which is incomparable and infinite, he will straightway love Him, praise Him, glorify Him, and long with an exceeding longing to know His great Name; as David said, “My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.” [Psalms 42:3] And when he considers these matters, he will recoil frightened, and realize that he is a small creature, lowly and obscure, endowed with

meager intelligence, standing in the presence of Him who is perfect in knowledge. And so David said, “When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers – what is man that You are mindful of him?” [Psalms 8:4–5]

According to Rambam, an intellectual or cognitive apprehension of the sheer vastness and complexity of the natural order yields, apparently willy-nilly, an affective, almost palpably physiological response in the attentive *oved HaShem*. This continuum of cognitive and affective moments in the total *yirat shamayim* experience suggests a holistic quality to the normative obligation, a kind of “feeling intellect” or “logic of the heart,”¹⁰ widening the range of the educational goals necessary to foster its realization in our students and schools. The challenge here, of course, is to not define *yirat shamayim* so broadly or diversely as to nearly preclude the educator’s ability to create clear and realizable educational goals for text and non-text study towards passionate religious engagement with reality.

As Lewis Carroll famously reminds us, when you don’t know where you’re going, any which way will get you to your destination. Needless to say, the lack of a deliberate, consistent, and systematic definition of *yirat shamayim* makes it very hard, if not well nigh impossible, to create clear and developmentally appropriate educational goals, curricula, and forms of assessment, for our students and schools.

A THEOLOGICAL COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE: EDUCATION AS A COUNTER-CULTURAL ACTIVITY

The late cultural critic Neal Postman, Professor of Communication and Media Studies at New York University and student-colleague of Marshall McLuhan, suggested that schools and larger educational communities serve as an important corrective, a kind of barometric counter-balance, to the philosophical and social excesses, the cultural and political hegemony of the larger surrounding setting.¹¹ In Postman’s model, schools are meant to be purposely counter-cultural, cultivating their own alternative intellectual and ideological environment for their students. In a contemporary culture often inimical

to our most basic values of modesty, purity, community, thrift, piety and virtue, the cultivation of a compelling, alternative culture, embodying religiously-appropriate and even edifying forms of art, communication, recreation, information-transmission, etc., must be an educational priority.¹² In addition to these frequently hidden elements of the modern curriculum, there is often a strong, unidentified, cognitive component to what is missing in our educational institutions, one that may account for the dissonance experienced by many of our Modern Orthodox students.

Recent conversations, mainly in Israel but slowly trickling stateside, on the omnipresence of Talmud in the traditional Yeshiva High School curriculum and the perceived crisis of value looming in the *dati-leumi* horizon have sharpened the focus of this educational deliberation on the religious development of adolescents.¹³ Much of the discussion to date has centered around the question of “relevance” in our contemporary Talmud curriculum, with the sides of traditional Brisker *lomdus* squaring off against the newer schools of applied, contextualized, values-driven interpretation and teaching. I also want to raise the issue of relevance, not only in the relatively thin sense that *shor she-nagach et ha-parah* will not naturally resonate with today’s suburban students as much as it did with our agriculturally knowing ancestors but, far more significantly, in the more robust, foundational sense that our students do not perceive the worlds of knowledge, experience, or meaning through the lenses of a Torah-centered consciousness.

Simply put, Modern Orthodoxy struggles to articulate and transmit a coherent, compelling, and systematic worldview for her students, one which gives consistent meaning and value to the welter of experience comprising our engagement with reality. This lack of a comprehensive worldview impacts many areas of a student’s religious life and development, from an inability to identify and articulate basic theological principles and commitments to a widespread confusion regarding the viability and parameters of our community’s engagement with modernity, civil society, and culture, both high and popular. Not only are the vast majority of our students unable to articulate what an authentically traditional position

might be on a host of live issues facing them in today’s world, that is to say, *what* to think Jewishly, they appear even far less equipped to begin the deliberation of *how* one would go about thinking Jewishly, how to frame or perceive an issue from a place of authority, meaning, and Jewish understanding. In brief, our boys and girls are not educated to know, perceive and feel with *yirat shamayim*. After briefly surveying some classic formulations of *yirat shamayim*, we will attempt to sketch a view of what *yirat shamayim* might look like as an educational or pedagogical principle.

**FROM ONTOLOGICAL DEPENDENCE TO
EPISTEMOLOGICAL COMPREHENSIVENESS:
YIRAT SHAMAYIM AS WORLDVIEW**

The Maharal, living and teaching on the cusp of modernity, offered an approach to *yirat shamayim* that emphasized the relational aspect of created and Creator, of human object and ultimate Subject.¹⁴ *yirat shamayim* consists precisely in the acknowledgement that Man is utterly and radically dependent upon God for his very essence and existence:

The essence of fear is that man is an effect in relation [to Hashem who is] the Cause, and this is the quintessence of fear. And by virtue of the fact that man is an effect, he is considered as nothing in that he is an effect dependent upon his Cause.¹⁵

God’s ontological exclusiveness – as the Rav *zt”l* formulates it, “God and reality are identical; to exist is tantamount to abiding in God,”¹⁶ – yields a kind of totalizing consciousness, in which our encounter with the worlds of knowledge and experience in and around us is mediated by our ontic dependence on God. In other words, a religious reading of reality, the activity of giving a comprehensive account or narrative of our life’s experiences informed by our textual and lived traditions, is really the epistemic correlative of Maharal’s metaphysic.¹⁷

Understood this way, *yirat shamayim* defined as man’s total dependence on God in the ontological plane of Being, yields a second, derivative variety, one eminently suited to the educational context

we are focusing on here. If *yirat shamayim* is, ontologically-speaking, the acknowledgment of one's essential dependence on God, then we might say that *yirat shamayim* is also the epistemological activity of giving a comprehensive account, a religiously-coherent and complete narrative of one's encounter with reality – *b'Orcha nireh Or* (Psalms 36:10).¹⁸ It must emphasized, however, that this understanding of *yirat shamayim* as Worldview, a comprehensive account-giving and cognitive-experiential orientation towards man and world, does not presuppose the existence of a single, exclusive, particular, or monolithic Orthodox Jewish Theory (or Theology) of Everything. I am not suggesting that there exists some particular, privileged account of reality that embodies the traditional Jewish way of thinking about x, y, z or any given topic of interest. Indeed, we can easily conceive multiple models of worldview thinking within a traditional scheme, from Maimonidean rationalist orientations, to those embodying more mystical approaches (both Hasidic and Lithuanian versions), to Musar and personalist models (perhaps themselves subject to various distinctive versions, e.g., a Slobodka “worldview” would differ in perhaps some significant ways from a Novordock or Kelm Musar orientation). But the common denominator between all such individual models would be a comprehensiveness of scope and a commitment to developing and articulating a systematic way of thinking about any given topic or area of human engagement.

Thomas Mann once defined authenticity as a kind of “life full of citations,” a way of being that draws on our lived and total engagement with our textuality, which constructs our consciousness out of the shared storehouse of our sacred scriptures, texts, and sources. Our educational institutions fall far short of this ideal not just in the obvious inability of the vast majority of students to quote or even simply recognize *pesukim*, *ma'amarei chazal*, or other *mekorot* that would inform one's cognitive perspective on any given matter. More than this: Torah doesn't merely have something to say about everything we encounter in our lives, public and private, from politics to popular culture (often confused these days in our media-drenched society), economic theory to sports, and everything in between; it is

the very ground of our thinking, the prism through which we ought to understand all reality. This is first an epistemological claim, and only secondarily a pedagogical one. In both keys, this lack of a coherent and comprehensive *hashkafat olam* precludes our students from seeing knowledge, beauty, and experience in a religiously relevant fashion.¹⁹ There are, blessedly, study halls in Israel that are just beginning to seriously engage in this explicit work of worldview-formation from the rich depths of our *mesorah* and its robust application to the realia of cultural and political life.²⁰ Modern Orthodox education in America, however, seems to be stuck in a sort of collective communal time-warp when it comes to our Talmud Torah, bound by modes of mechanical mastery of a technical or conceptual nature. Without the cultivation of a comprehensive account of meaning and experience, informed by the reflective study of halakhic axiology and practice we’re describing here, Modern Orthodoxy in America will remain a religiously minimalist community of affluence and mediocrity, a spiritual half-way house for those on a serious quest for meaning, unable to provide its adherents with the religious and cultural resources to realize its ambitious and holy mandate.

FROM THEORY TO PRAXIS: SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR RENEWAL

To illustrate what I’m trying to capture in this call for a cognitively-grounded understanding of *yirat shamayim* – namely, the cultivation of a comprehensive worldview, a theological anthropology or contemporary theology of culture – I want to briefly focus on one particular area where I think our failure is most obvious and acute. Before articulating what one such model of worldview-thinking might look like, it is important to emphasize again that this is just one possible expression of *yirat shamayim* as worldview-thinking, not by any means an exclusive one. Another traditional model or comprehensive religious account may express different foci, to take just a single example, on the relative balance between the dignity and measure of man and the need for epistemological modesty in all things. What I am offering here is simply one narrative among

perhaps many others that captures the comprehensive, not to say totalizing, quality of a coherent and reflective orientation, one we are calling a *yirat shamayim* perspective.

For all the talk about the primacy of *mitzvot bein adam l'chaveiro* in our tradition, I submit that our yeshivot and day schools would look very different if we didn't merely pay lip-service to this domain of religious life, but, instead, really lived like our faith requires. What would our curriculum look like if we really took seriously Hillel's maxim that the entire Torah can be distilled into the principle of *ve-ahavta le-reakha kamokha*, and that the rest of the Torah is simply an elaboration of this ideal? What would our day school and yeshiva graduates look like if they lived their lives as if the closest we came to the Divine Other in this world was in the divine face of the human other, if they really internalized C.S. Lewis's powerful expression from his wartime sermon, *The Weight of Glory*, "There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal... but it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit?" Something like Levinas' transformational reading of Rav Hayyim Volozhin or Rav Simcha Zisl's ideal of acquiring Torah by "bearing the burden of the Other," is what we're programmatically – in the most tentative, telegraphic form – grasping at here.²¹ Let me leave the reader with a couple of suggestions towards cultivating a more comprehensive theological-grounded consciousness, a *yirat shamayim* worldview, in our educational communities, one curricular, the other centered around school culture, before closing on a more hopeful note.

First, our choice of texts and topics – more, the way in which we study *all* our traditional texts – should more concretely reflect this goal of making *explicit* the mostly implicit value-system, or worldview, contained within our *masorah*. From *Nezikin* to *Nashim*, as well as in the more straightforward areas of ethical inquiry embodied in the *halakhot* governing *shemirat ha-lashon*, *tzedakah*, *bikkur holim*, *ribit ve-ona'ah*, *kibbud av ve-eim*, *tzni'ut* and *kavod ha-briot*, to name just the most obvious cases, our curriculum must raise the questions of human value, notions of personal identity and agency, conceptions of gender and community, of social and political justice,

and, above all, the radical commitment to a thoroughgoing ethic of religious humanism. Obviously, more attention should be paid to classics in *machshava*, *Musar*, and *Chassidut*, which treat these concerns in a direct manner (again, read and studied in a deliberate and reflective fashion – *Mesillat Yesharim* can be taught, and usually is, I’m afraid, in a way which bypasses almost all of these concerns, making it less, not more, of a source of real, transformative power), but the *Yam shel Talmud* and *Halakha* are still the most significant sources for this sort of study.

Second, our schools and yeshivot need to create the spiritual space for faculty, rebbeim and teachers, to engage in their own religious and ethical growth and development, a personal-pedagogical discipline of *cheshbon ha-nefesh*. Rav Dov Zinger, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Makor Hayyim in Kefar Etzion and one of our community’s most thoughtful educators, once told me that when his Yeshiva’s students are not experiencing *tefilla* with the proper *kavvana*, are becoming too competitive and not forming a cohesive cohort, the faculty look inward, and search within themselves for the latent sources of dysfunction. Institutional and classroom leaders must model this kind of introspective habit, this practice of educating toward *yirat shamayim*, if our students are to see spiritual practice in action and be receptive to its proper place in their own lives.

In 1789, Samuel and John Phillips founded their academy in Andover, Massachusetts and wrote the following lines, elegantly articulating the very kind of comprehensive religious and moral educational vision we’ve just outlined:

But above all, it is expected that the Master’s attention to the disposition of the minds and morals of the Youth under his charge will exceed every other care; well-considering that, though goodness without knowledge...is weak and feeble; yet knowledge without goodness is dangerous; and that both united form the noblest of character...the first and principal object of this institution is the promotion of Piety and Virtue.²²

Less than a century after the founding of Phillips Andover Academy and halfway around the world, Rav Yisrael Salanter made a similar claim for the priority of an embodied and ethically-centered

vision of *yirat shamayim* over traditional forms of talmudic scholarship, of coherence and embodied purpose of vision over disengaged theory and disconnected pilpulism, radically revolutionizing the landscape of Jewish education for the next fifty years. If not for the destruction of European Jewry in the middle of the past century, the Musar Movement may still have been advancing the aims of reflective, practice-based *yirat shamayim* education, stemming from a comprehensive worldview grounded in the sources of our *masorah*, to ever more sophisticated heights. Perhaps what this postmodern world needs most, with its deep skepticism towards abstract rationality divorced from pragmatic value, is another kind of Salanter-inspired renaissance.

APPENDIX
High School Jewish
Thought Course Outline
as Case Study of Worldview formation

בס"ד

Jewish Thought
Rabbi Gottlieb

Maimonides School
אלול תשס"ד/2004 Fall

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, זצ"ל, the founder of Maimonides School, often characterized Judaism as a “divine anthropology,” a religiously significant account of the human condition. This Jewish philosophy of the person must engage the entire range of human activity, especially those areas that form the basic fabric of everyday life. Nearly everything we do, both as individuals and in relations with others, is colored by sentiments, attitudes, ideas, feelings, customs, and beliefs concerning “how to live.” For the serious Jew, the activities of everyday life – loving, working, playing, studying, caring, giving, teaching, talking, eating – are both the locus (place) of *kedusha*, holiness, and the object of our ethical and religious teachings. This course, through thoughtful deliberation and discussion of basic, but equally sophisticated, texts and themes, will train the student to think deeply, and “think Jewishly,” about the ideas and experiences of knowledge and *יראת שמים*, love and friendship, work and play, and character and ethics.

Contrast, both between sources and ideas within our tradition, as well as sources that form the body of wisdom in the worlds of literature, philosophy, history, science, etc, serves the purpose of defining (and refining) “borders” but does not go far enough to convey all that is “within.” For this reason, we will be looking to develop an authentic Jewish approach to life through the analysis of classical and contemporary Jewish sources, supplementing these sources, when appropriate, with writings for the world of general culture and thought.

Our approach of analysis, exposure to texts both Jewish and General, and discussion, will require serious effort and participation

on the part of the student. Students are expected to prepare reading assignments at home in preparation for class direction and discussion. There will be one written assignment (3–4 pp. in length) in each semester.

Grades for the course will be based on class preparedness (33%), participation (33%), and written work (33%). A secondary skill that will hopefully be cultivated in our course will be the continued development of the practice of outlining articles and essays. This will sharpen the students' ability to distill the central ideas of the essay, as well as see the connection between form and content, and how creativity stems from structure.

Course Curriculum

Unit 1 Introduction: What is Jewish Thought and Why Study It?

1. פירוש ר' ש.ר. הירש על התורה, שמות לג:כא
2. רמב"ם, הל' יסודי התורה, ד:יג. הל' תשובה יו
3. N. Postman, "Science and the Story We Need"
4. Selections from R. Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Mind*

Unit 2 יראת שמים, or Recovering the Lost Virtue of Reverence

1. תפילת "ונתנה תקף", מחזור של ימים נוראים
2. P. Woodruff, *Reverence*, pp. 3–13, 35–43.
3. פירוש ר' ש.ר. הירש על התורה, דברים י:יב–יג
קהלת יב:יג עם התורה תמימה
ברכות ו: "ואמר ר' חלבו...לזה"
4. תהילים לד:יב–טו עם פירוש ר' ש.ר. הירש
5. רמב"ם, הל' יסודי התורה, ב:א–ב
רמב"ם, הל' תשובה פרק י (א–ו)
6. רמח"ל, קטעים ממסילת ישרים
נחשוני, הגות בפרשיות התורה, עמ' 754–750
7. R. Soloveitchik, "Torah and Humility"
8. R.S. Carmy, "To Get the Better of Words..."
9. Vaclav Havel, "A Word About Words"
10. Selections from Rabbi B. Freundel, *Contemporary Orthodox Judaism's Response to Modernity* (קטאב).

Unit 3 אהבת ה' ואהבת אדם: Love and Friendship

Our source material will highlight the religious reality that the Jewish ethical life is located in the inter-subjective arena, the realm of human relationships. The *Ordo Amoris*, the right ordering of love and affections, must be studied and applied to the concrete situations of human interaction. The need for serious reflection in this area of Jewish ethical life is especially important in the high school years, as relationships and friendships take on a special urgency and intensity. Biblical and Talmudic narratives of love and friendship (Yaakov and Rachel and Leah, David and Yehonatan, R. Akiva and Rachel, Choni Ha'MeAgel), as well as theoretical and philosophical materials from Chazal, medieval and modern sources (Aristotle and Rambam on friendship, Netziv on “first impressions,” Rav Soloveitchik on marriage and parenthood, etc., Plato and Nietzsche on Love and Philosophy, C.S. Lewis on “loves and likes for the sub-human,” R. Lamm on Homosexuality, etc.) on the nature of love, friendship, and other relationships, will help cultivate an authentically Jewish ethic of relating to the other.

The ultimate purpose of our work together is to grow as thinking, feeling, and religiously sensitive individuals.... כן יהי רצון

I look forward to what lies ahead,

Best wishes for a טובה וחתימה and an exciting year of studies together,

RMG

NOTES

1. Robert Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” *Dædalus* (Winter 1967), pp. 1–21, later expanded into Bellah *et al.*, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (University of California Press, 1985).
2. Oxford University Press, 2005.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 170–71.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 171.
5. Thankfully, this lacuna looks like it will be shortly filled. Dr David Pelcovitz, Dr. Scot Goldberg, and Rabbi Steven Eisenberg of the Institute of Applied Research and Educational Partnership at Yeshiva University’s Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration have begun the hard work of data collection

and analysis on the religious and spiritual lives of Modern Orthodox youth, both before and after the Year in Israel experience. Their findings will provide an excellent starting-point for more focused communal agenda setting in the area of *yirat shamayim* education in our schools.

6. On “thinness” as a philosophical concept, see Michael Walzer, *Thick and Thin: Moral Argument at Home and Abroad* (Notre Dame, 1994), pp. 1–21.
7. For an insightful treatment of some of the complexities inherent in talking about religious development in modern orthodox teenagers, largely informed by James Fowler’s important work on the developmental stages of faith and meaning-making in the lives of boys and girls, see Jay Goldmintz, “Religious Development in Adolescence: A Work in Progress,” *Tradition*, 37:4 (Winter 2003), esp. pp. 54–62.
8. See, for example, Deut. 10:12.
9. See, for example, Rashi on Job 4:6, ibn Ezra on Exodus 18:18–25 (long version). For a survey of some of these sources that portray *yirat shamayim* as a kind of cognitive, almost intellectualistic apprehension, variably expressed as a stance of absolute obedience to God’s will and wisdom, a universalistic moral orientation, or an acknowledgement of our ultimate ontological dependence on God’s reality, see Warren Zev Harvey’s discussion in this volume, “*Yirat Shamayim* in Jewish Thought.”
10. Rav Soloveitchik identifies this religious-philosophical orientation with Pascal’s *logique de coeur* (*Halakhic Mind*, Free Press, 1986, p. 52). This approach has also been associated with John Henry Newman’s pedagogic-apologetic theory articulated in his *A Grammar of Ascent* (1870). For a thoughtful analysis of Newman’s theory in a contemporary educational context, see Joseph Dunne, *Back to the Rough Ground: Practical Reason and the Lure of Technique* (University of Notre Dame, 1992)
11. Neal Postman, *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* (Basic Books, 1971).
12. For an important early articulation of the need to create alternative cultural expressions in modern orthodox education, see Rabbi Mayer Schiller, “Realities, Possibilities and Dreams: Reaching Modern Orthodox Youth,” *Ten Da’at* 3:2 (Winter 1989), pp. 23–26. See also now, Yoel Finkelman, “The Hidden Curriculum and *Mahshevet Yisrael* Education” (ATID, The Academy for Torah Initiatives and Directions, 2006).
13. *Notes from ATID: Talmud Study in Yeshiva High Schools* by Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein and Rabbi Yehuda Brandes (ATID, 2007)
14. *Maharal, Netivot Olam (Netiv Yirat Hashem 1)*. For the analysis of Maharal’s conception of *yirat shamayim* suggested here, I am indebted to Rabbi Mayer Twersky’s Orthodox Forum presentation. Much of what appears in the next paragraph is drawn from his thoughtful theological treatment there.
15. *Netivot Olam* (Ibid.)
16. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Worship of the Heart: Essays on Jewish Prayer* (Toras HoRav Foundation, 2003), p. 128.
17. On the use of “religion” as a form of account giving that is comprehensive, unsur-

- passable and central, see Paul J. Griffiths, *Religious Reading: The Place of Reading in the Practice of Religious* (University of Chicago, 1999), esp. pp. 3–16.
18. For a traditional understanding of *yirat shamayim* in this more holistic spirit, see the commentaries of Seforno and R. S.R. Hirsch to Deuteronomy 9:12. For a contemporary and systematic formulation of this idea, see John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Blackwell, 1990).
 19. Although the literature on the religious significance of “worldview thinking” is rapidly growing in the communities of Christian academic and educational inquiry to date, little has been contributed to the world of Jewish Thought in this important area. See, most recently, David Naugle, *Worldview: A History of a Concept* (Eerdmans, 2000); James W. Sire, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as Concept* (InterVarsity Press, 2004). Two exceptions to this lacuna in our contemporary theological literature are Max Kadushin’s classic, *The Rabbinic Mind*, and, more recently, an important article by Jonathan Cohen, “Deliberation, Tradition, and the Problem of Incommensurability: Philosophical Reflections on Curricular Decision-Making” in *Educational Theory* 49 (1), pp. 71–89.
 20. I have in mind here places like Beit Morasha, Yeshivat Siach Yitzchak’s Machon Bina l’Itim, Beit Midrash Ra’avah, and, on a more public scale, the Shalem Center, but nothing remotely like this is happening in our day schools, yeshivot or other *mekomot Torah* in America.
 21. For Levinas’ ethical-theological reconstruction of *Nefesh Ha-Hayyim*, see “In the Image of God” according to Rabbi Hayyim Volozhiner,” found in *Beyond the Verse: Talmudic Readings and Lectures* (Continuum, 2007), pp. 148–163. For Rav Simcha Zisl, see *Hokhma U-Mussar*, chs. 1–4, *Kol Kitvei HaSaba MiKelm* and the thoughtful analysis in Ira F. Stone, *A Responsible Life: The Spiritual Path of Musar* (Aviv Press, 2006).
 22. Cited in F. Washington Jarvis, *With Love and Prayers: A Headmaster Speaks to the Next Generation* (David R. Godine Publishers, 2000).

