

Generation Gap

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"Happy is the generation in which the elders listen to the young: the result will be that the young will listen to the elders."

It is particularly significant that this insight is found in the tractate of the Talmud which bears the name "Rosh Hashanah" (Page 25B), containing the laws, customs, and teachings about these holy days of the New Year. It focuses on the crucial issue of our times, apparently, as of all times -- how can the right values be communicated effectively and meaningfully between old and young, parents and children, teachers and students.

A key phrase in creating a meaningful relation between generations is found in the first paragraph of the "shema" (Deuteronomy 6:4). It is usually translated as: "teach it (Torah, values truth) diligently to your children." A better translation of "v'shee-nantem l'vah-ney-chaw" would be "spell it out (or sharpen the point) for your children." The implications are clear: The reasoning behind a value (or a course of action), patient concern with a willingness to listen, genuine involvement, are all necessary if the old is to influence the young.

This attitude that should govern the relationship between parents and children relates directly to teacher-student relations, which is central to all education. In the Ethics of the Fathers (1:1) "raise my disciples" is related to the responsibility of a teacher to spell out his reasoning and the need to influence a student by the personal example of the teacher, as well as what he says.

The entire system of American education -- on the high school and especially the college level -- suffers from the

failure to grasp this basic Jewish view of education. A wall exists between the teacher and potential disciple; "raise your salary" (with government or private foundation jobs) is too often the faculty goal, rather than "raise disciples". The glory of "publish or perish" takes the place of "teach (well) or perish." The result is a factory for degrees that leads to higher standard of living, instead of school of learning for training in character to make a better life. A college student once told me that the only time he received a call from the office of the Dean of Students in his four years of college was to inform him to stop folding his IBM identification card!

Decentralization of the burgeoning campus into a multi-university: teacher rewards (even material ones) and recognition for raising disciples; new (or really old) methods of creating an atmosphere of genuine involvement between teacher-student-society are urgently needed. This must happen if American education is to "stop the carnival" (Sloan Wilson's description of it a decade ago) and we are to achieve the real goal of learning as defined by Mr. George B. Leonard, Senior Editor of Look Magazine as "individual human change."

On Rosh Hashana it is vital to stress this central role of education and the challenge to raise a generation with character and understanding. As it has been said: it takes more wisdom to fashion a child into a good adult than to develop or improve the atom bomb.

It is in such wisdom that Judaism is rooted. On the holy day of Rosh Hashanah, which commemorates the birthday of Adam, the father of all mankind, we pray for such wisdom to guide the family of man in our own nation and throughout the world.

An Unforgettable Letter

By RABBI SAMUEL SILVER

I don't know Mrs. Beppy Santer of Poughkeepsie, N.Y., but I'll never forget what she wrote.

Mrs. Santer belongs to Vassar Temple and recently she wrote a letter to her rabbi, Rabbi Henry Bamberger. She signed her name to the letter, so I'm sure she won't mind other people reading what she wrote.

What she wrote is so moving that it deserves to enter the hearts of all sensitive people. And perhaps her letter can "move" us to a greater degree of concern in this tumultuous world we're living in.

The text of her letter follows. I shan't comment on it, but leave you to reach your own conclusion.

"Dear Rabbi," Mrs. Beppy (wonder what that stands for?) Santer wrote, "I wonder whether you could see to it that this piece which comes from my heart will be printed in the Bulletin."

Continues Mrs. Santer "Since we came to Poughkeepsie in 1955 we considered the Vassar Temple congregation a cold and indifferent people.

Since my illness, however, which started in 1965, I have changed my mind quite a bit. It should be known how many warm-hearted women we have who come and visit with me.

"It is remarkable and I want everybody to know how much that means to a so-called 'stranger'."

"Please start something like this on an organized basis. I am not the only one with an incurable disease. But I am one who wants to learn that there are more patients who are going to enjoy these fun visits. Thank you, thank you!"

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JACKIE GAUGHAN,
JACK NOVAK,
JULIUS WALKER