



## Social Responsibility and Educational Audacity: Heschel's Challenge to 21<sup>st</sup> Century Jewish Education

By Dr. Eilon Schwartz

### "TACHLIT": Advanced Seminar for Day School Leadership

In May 2008, the Melton Centre will launch a new program: *Tachlit*, an intensive four-day seminar for heads of school together with their trustees. It will bring together approximately thirty leaders from some fifteen independent and community day schools worldwide. Building on an important conference on Jewish schools and Jewish community held at Melton in 2006, the seminar will help participants develop a sense of the Jewish purposes of their schools through a process of learning that focuses on four main areas critical to the development of a healthy Jewish school culture:

- 1 Identity** – Who are we when we describe ourselves as "Jewish" community day schools? How is that different from being a school for Jewish children?
- 2 Community** – Who are we when we describe ourselves as "community" day schools? How do we embody community?
- 3 Strategic vision** – How do we bring our core purposes to life across the culture and curriculum of the school, and for our constituencies?
- 4 Beyond the GPA** – How do we balance a need for excellence in general studies with an inspirational program in Judaic studies?

By addressing these guiding questions through an encounter with scholars and practitioners who are pre-eminent in the disciplines of Jewish Studies, educational theory, and the work of reflective practice, the seminar will help leaders to develop a vision for their schools as Jewish educational communities. By bringing together a community of school leaders from Canada, the United States, England, South Africa and Australia, the seminar expects to uncover the core values of Jewish community day schools that transcend local contexts.

It has been 100 years since the birth of Abraham Joshua Heschel, one of the most creative and celebrated thinkers of modern Jewish life. Heschel remains a central figure in Jewish life today, as his unique combination of scholarship, religious passion and social commitments has inspired a generation of Jews to combine their religious beliefs and their commitments to social change. The iconic photo of Heschel marching with Martin Luther King memorialized in the popular imagination a passion for social justice as a Jewish issue. Forty years later, Heschel's message still reverberates whenever Jews speak about social justice.

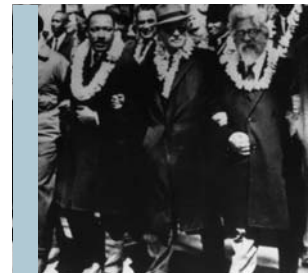
The Conference on Heschel's challenge, held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> of December, aimed to examine his work critically, with an eye on the links between Jewish/religious thought and social justice, and a particular focus on their educational manifestations. The conference aimed to reassert social criticism and political action as organizing principles for Jewish education, where issues of identification and continuity have dominated the community agenda. Heschel's uniqueness as an educator was in his understanding that being Jewish was not simply about a set of particularistic practices, but also about giving voice to God's vision of social justice, often in opposition to the status quo.

The conference began unofficially at the beginning of December, with a lecture by Prof. Arnold Eisen, recently-appointed Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary and noted Heschel scholar. Eisen's lecture, to a full house, set the stage for the conference three weeks later. Some 80 participants attended the two-day international conference, where over 20 academic papers explored the multifaceted

nature of Heschel's thought, and its implications for Jewish education. Our first keynote speaker, Edward Kaplan, author of the award-winning biography on Heschel, *Spiritual Radical*, spoke of Heschel's life "as a constant dissent and protest against the trivialization of Judaism," and religious education "as a necessary foundation for preparing young people for responsible moral action." Our second keynote speaker, Mitchell Thomashow, author of *Bringing the Biosphere Home* – in which he writes extensively about Heschel's relevance to environmental thought and education – spoke about how Heschel's thought influenced him as an environmentalist and as a Jew. Thomashow argued that Heschel's notions of "reverence, awe, wonder, reciprocity, and response provide activists and educators with remarkable spiritual support and guidance."

One of the key issues that was debated spiritedly during the conference was whether the idea of *tikkun olam* – repairing the world – often associated with Heschel's legacy, can be decoupled from Heschel's theological commitments to halakha and belief in a transcendental God. Can we separate Heschel's social activism from his religious beliefs, and embrace his moral sensitivities without the yoke of commandments? The question, of course, goes both ways – is it possible to be a religious Jew in the true and deepest sense of the term and remain oblivious or callous to our culpability in the suffering of others?

Most often, Jewish education, like all education, implicitly or explicitly supports and strengthens the status quo. This is a far cry from the kind of education Heschel practiced; an education which demanded that our religious beliefs give us the strength to protest against accepted norms when they foster injustice, and that our passion for social justice refocus the meaning of our religious beliefs. One hundred years after his birth, Jewish education still has much to learn from Heschel's life and teachings.



Prof. Michael Rosenak & Prof. Arnold Eisen at the Melton Centre



Prof. Martha Nussbaum (front row, second from right) with Melton faculty

## Prof. Martha Nussbaum at the Melton Centre: The Seymour Fox Memorial Lecture

Prof. Martha Nussbaum, the Ernst Freund Distinguished Service Professor of Law and Ethics at the University of Chicago, delivered the Seymour Fox Memorial Lecture in December 2007, speaking on "Humanistic Education and Global Justice" to an audience of over 200 people.

Prof. Nussbaum's lecture was the first in a series of biennial lectures planned by the Melton Centre in honor Prof. Seymour (Shlomo) Fox z"l. A student of Joseph Schwab at the University of Chicago, Seymour Fox moved to Israel in 1966 and for 15 years, from 1968 to 1982, served as Head of the Hebrew University's School of Education. In that capacity and in partnership with the Institute for Contemporary Jewry, he established the Melton Centre for Jewish Education, one of a slew of institutions and initiatives within the School of Education, and later outside of it, that he established and supported.

The evening in Seymour Fox's memory, chaired by Prof. Marc Hirshman, included greetings from Prof. Menachem Magidor, President of the Hebrew University, who spoke of Prof. Fox's contribution to the Hebrew University, to the education system in Israel, and to Jewish education worldwide. Prof. Michael Rosenak spoke of his personal and professional recollections of Seymour Fox, and Mr. David Fox spoke on behalf of the Fox family. The evening ended with the announcement by Melton Centre Director, Dr. Howard Deitcher, of the recipients of the Centre's Seymour Fox Memorial Scholarships – scholarships made available by the Melton Centre's International Advisory Board. A video recording of the evening is available on the Melton Centre's website at <http://melton.huji.ac.il>.

## International "Israel Education" Consultation

By Dr. Alick Isaacs

Understanding the meaning of Israel in contemporary Jewish life is surely one of the greatest challenges facing the Jewish people in the world today. Jewish educators around the world are – in varying ways and to different degrees – becoming aware of the centrality of Israel to contemporary Jewish life and thought. The question of how this complex theme should be dealt with in Jewish education is one that has not been adequately addressed. While a great deal of energy, time and money is invested on Israel education, bringing students on trips to Israel etc., the field lacks a clear sense of purpose and a rich body of theoretical grounding.

In an attempt to meet this challenge, the Melton Centre for Jewish Education, in conjunction with the 'MAKOM – Israel Engagement Network' of the Jewish Agency for Israel, established a forum of scholars, thinkers and educators who met in Jerusalem for two full days in January 2008, to present and discuss a series of initial statements about Israel Education. In attempting to delineate the boundaries of an academic field of "Israel Education", papers were submitted in three major tracks.

The first included papers in **Israel Education Studies**. These addressed A) **practices in Israel Education** in a wide variety of educational settings, formal and informal (e.g., teaching of Israel in schools, university level Israel Studies courses, informal activities in schools, camps, community events, adult education, synagogues); B) **attitudes to Israel** and its contemporary meaning fostered by educators, teachers, lay leaders, youth, graduates and participants in Israel trips (such as Birthright, March of the Living, youth movement and Israel Experience programs), amongst Jews of different denominations, in the media etc. Lisa Grant of HUC New York presented a keynote address that dealt with the reactions of American Jewish youth to Israel in Jewish education. Similarly, Alex Sinclair of the Shalom Hartman Institute and Ezra Kopelowitz presented sociological studies of attitudes to Israel at summer camps in North America in small discussion groups that allowed for maximum group interaction and discussion.

Papers in the **Philosophy of Israel Education** addressed A) **conceptualizations of Israel's meaning** as expressed in classical and modern texts and sources, in literature, art, music, halakha, ideological and philosophical writings; B) **methods of interpreting Jewish civilization and culture** that are informed by contemporary Jewish experiences and concerns with matters such as political sovereignty, the establishment of Jewish public space, territorial conflict, religious and national conflict, geographical

relocation, environmental responsibility, Israel and Diaspora, Hebrew language, ownership of sacred space, contemporary (religious) Zionism, Nationalism, Messianism etc. Avinoam Rosenak of the Hebrew University presented a paper on the implications of Rav Kook's thought for contemporary Israel education. Alick Isaacs explored the implications for Jewish education of Israel's experience with war, and Jon Glaser and Yehuda Bar Shalom of the David Yellin College explored paradigms for thinking about Israel's meaning in contemporary Jewish life based upon the ideas of Emmanuel Levinas. Michael Brown of York University, Toronto, shared his experiences in a long career of teaching about Israel through the prism of modern Hebrew literature and assessed the educational advantages of this literary approach, while Jonny Ariel of JAFI, in a keynote address, considered what it means to go back to the basic principles that lie behind the stories and narratives of contemporary Israel in education, moving (as he put it) from the milk and the honey back to the cows and the bees.

Finally, papers in **Israel Education Design** addressed or proposed A) **curricular models and taxonomies** for implementing theories and philosophies of Israel Education in practical educational settings; B) **an evaluation of the boundaries of the field** vis-à-vis Bible education, Jewish History, and Israel Advocacy as well as proposing theoretical meanings and purposes for the practice of Israel education and their attendant educational practices (e.g., the encouragement of aliya, affiliation with Jewish peoplehood, the teaching of citizenship, Jewish environmental awareness, etc.). Marc Silverman of the Melton Centre proposed a variety of models that might be used to consistently translate competing theories of Israel's meaning into different practices of Israel Education. Alex Pomson, also of the Melton Centre, described his experiences (along with Alick Isaacs) working with the implementation of theory in the practice of Israel-focused curriculum writing with teachers across Australia.

In addition to the paper-presenting members of the group (who came from Israel, Canada, the US and Australia), the consultation was attended by representatives of Melton's Senior Educators Program, the AviChai foundation, the Jewish Agency and the Hebrew University who came to participate in roundtable discussions. In the coming months, the final versions of the papers presented will be made available on the websites of MAKOM and the Melton Centre, along with a call for papers that will announce the first international conference in Israel Education to be held in 2009.



## Opening the Academic Year

By Prof. Gabriel Horenczyk

It is hard to say when exactly the academic year started. Senior faculty were on strike for almost three months, but others taught according to the regular academic calendar. By the end of January, all teachers were happily teaching, some starting their first semester, others close to the end of it. Upon resumption of classes, the University authorities have made great efforts to redesign the academic calendar, not an easy task.

For us at the Melton Centre, this is a very busy year. We have a record number of new students in our MA program, especially due to two new partnerships between the Melton Centre and other institutions.

For students of Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, the Melton Centre is now offering a course of graduate study that addresses the thirst for alternative expressions of Israeli Jewish identity, no longer dictated by the traditional categories of Religious and Secular, but open to a wide range of religious and cultural approaches. This MA program with a focus on Pluralistic Jewish Education, is designed to attract principals, senior teachers and educational administrators at the forefront of efforts to develop pluralistic Jewish education in Israel. Seventeen students selected according to stringent criteria are participating in the program. Institutions such as the Leo Baeck Education Center in Haifa have also decided to promote this program as a significant in-service training opportunity for their emerging educational leadership. In order to allow participants from around the country to participate, the program takes place on one (very intensive) day a week over two academic years, and will include a summer course and intensive seminars devoted to the theme of Leadership and Vision. The program will also include two weekend retreats, in which the interface

between the sacred and the mundane will be considered as it relates to the educational practice and process. Participants in the program will receive an MA in Jewish Education from the Hebrew University, and a Certificate in Pluralistic Jewish Education from the Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion.

We have opened a second program for a group of 12 women from the Sadie Rennert Women's Institute for Torah Studies [Matan] in Jerusalem. Over the course of 2 years, these women will complete an MA in Jewish Education with a focus on Bible Instruction, that imparts the pedagogic and didactic expertise and academic research skills needed for teaching Bible in schools. As a result of these new programs, the number of incoming students has almost tripled in this academic year.

Not only has the number of MA students increased, but this year we have accepted 10 new doctoral and pre-doctoral students. Four students have recently completed their doctoral dissertations, and will receive their degrees in the upcoming ceremony. Keri Warshawsky has explored the cultural identity of Messianic Jews in her work entitled "Returning to their own borders: A social anthropological study of contemporary Messianic Jewish identity in Israel", using an ethnographic methodology. Also employing a qualitative methodological approach, Katka Reszke completed her dissertation on "Narrating identity: Young Jewish adults in contemporary Poland". Ruth Walfish has completed her dissertation on "Teaching Biblical Miracle Stories in Israeli State Religious Schools" and Minna Wolf has written her dissertation on "Negotiating the Boundary: Exploring Identities during Israel Experience Mifgashim".

## Teaching Israel through Popular Israeli Songs

By Dr. Marc Silverman

What do Lev from Estonia, Mika from Armenia, Kira from White Russia, Yevgeniya from the Ukraine, Vitali from Russia, Miri from Israel, Guili and Alejandra from Argentina, Karin from Uruguay, Ittay from Australia, Ruby from England, Helise from Poland, Ilyse and Loren from the USA, and Jonathan from Canada have in common? A good deal!

First, they all are training to become or are already trained and are enriching themselves as 'senior' Jewish educators – Jewish educators engaged in central Jewish educational leadership roles in their respective countries and communities within them. Second, they are all presently undergoing this training and enrichment at the Melton Centre for Jewish Education in three different professional development frameworks: The Senior Educators Program; The Program for Senior Educators from the Former Soviet Union; and the 'Melamdim' program for educators from Argentina. Third, in a world undergoing globalization, where cultural boundaries are fluid and open and people are free to make their own cultural choices, they all are called upon to devise compelling responses to these penultimate existential-cultural questions: What should the Jewish people be like in the world of the 21st century? How should its culture(s) be constructed and what role should these cultures play in this world? What educational contents, instruments and processes are needed to foster and advance these cultures? And fourth, because of the similarity of the questions they face on the one hand, and the differences in the political-social contexts in which they address them on the other, all these Jewish educators can experience kinship and conduct fruitful dialogues with each other and can learn and grow from each other.

Inspired by this recognition and determined to convert it into a reality, the Melton Centre held an evening this past month which created a rich and exciting opportunity for the participants in these three frameworks

to become acquainted with each other – through studying, learning and conversing together. The program focused on one of the decisive questions currently facing Jews worldwide – the meaning and place of Israel in Diaspora Jewish culture and education today.

The program was constructed around a short power-point presentation and lecture on the possible use(s) of present-day popular Israeli songs as an educational tool in the teaching of Israel. To discuss the issues raised, the 45 educators were divided into 5 small groups comprising participants from each of the three programs. The entire program was conducted in Hebrew, with pre-appointed moderators and Hebrew-Russian translators assigned to each group.

The climate, substance and 'syntax' of the evening were truly inspiring, and we plan to increase the number and frequency of such combined programs in the future.



Participants in Melton's 3 current Senior Educators Programs

## Marking Milestones: Israel at 60, the Mini-School at 21

### The Florence Melton Adult Mini-School International Directors Conference

By Rena Ashkenazi



● Prof. Menachem Magidor, Hebrew University President, addressing the directors

Sixty directors and staff of the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School (FMAMS) attended the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual International Directors Conference at the Hebrew University. The conference began with the lighting of the *Torch of Jewish Learning* in memory of Florence Melton, visionary and founder of the FMAMS. Kim Zacks, Florence's granddaughter, shared special memories of her grandmother and how she had touched so many people's lives. Dr. Yonatan Mirvis, International Director, and Dr. Betsy Dolgin Katz, North American Director, addressed the impressive group representing over 40 Mini-Schools worldwide.

"Marking Milestones: Israel at 60, the Mini-School at 21" was the theme of the conference and

directors enjoyed a week of spirited exchange on the Mt. Scopus Campus which included keynote lectures and study with foremost academic scholars, outstanding professional development workshops and on-site learning.

Highlights of this conference in Jerusalem included meeting Professor Magidor, President of the Hebrew University; an 'Israel Update' from David Horowitz, Editor-in-Chief of the Jerusalem Post; and an opportunity for directors to be updated by their Israeli colleagues on the exciting developments at the Gandel Institute, Israel's Mini-School.

Shabbat was spent together in downtown Jerusalem, and included a full program of study opportunities and informative trips around the different neighborhoods of Jerusalem.

This outstanding educational gathering was a strong reflection of the professionalism and sophistication that characterizes the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School, and the Directors returned to their cities motivated to reach out to their communities and to continue the Hebrew University's vision of being the University of the Jewish People.

## Special Thanks & Fond Farewells



**Ms. Hinda Hoffman** served as head of Melton's Office of Academic Affairs for 25 years, and her intense, skillful and caring guidance of the students earned the Melton Centre a lasting place in their

hearts. We are very grateful for her sage advice and involvement over the years, which have been a source of enrichment to faculty and staff.



**Ms. Carmen Sharon** worked in the School of Education for 40 years, serving as Melton's Executive Director for the last 19 years. Carmen, the quintessential chief executive, efficient and thoughtful, deftly

navigated the university system, and translated into reality with great success the Centre's dreams for its personnel, programs and students. We will sorely miss her warmth and perspicacity.

We wish them both a well earned retirement filled with good health and good times.

## Argentinean Teacher-Trainees at the Melton Centre

By Marcelo Dorfsman



● Melamed program participants

The Melton Centre's professional development program for Argentinean Jewish Studies teachers is at the end of its second year, and a group of 21 teacher-trainees are currently participating in a 5-month seminar at the Centre. This three-year project is run in conjunction with the Argentinean Education Council, the 'Melamed' Teacher Training Institute and the University of San Martin, and is supported by the local Argentinean community, the Education Department of the Jewish Agency for Israel, the JDC, and the Pincus Fund.

The bulk of this program takes place in Argentina, where the students participate in distance learning courses in Jewish Education, delivered and developed by the Melton Centre. Melton faculty also deliver a number of

intensive seminars in Argentina, and supervise the curricula of all the Jewish Education courses that are given within the framework of the Education program of San Martin University.

The seminar at Melton comprises 6 academic courses, 2 methodology and didactics workshops, observations in Israeli schools, an educational trip to Poland (funded by the Claims Conference), and five weeks of voluntary work in Israel.

Students who successfully complete the Melamed program will receive a Teaching Certificate in Holocaust Instruction from the Melton Centre for 104 study hours, as well as a BA in Education from the University of San Martin. This innovative program, conducted entirely in Hebrew, has already enabled 40 students to receive high-level training for service in Latin American Jewish communities.

The semester in Israel is run within the framework of the 'Masa' program that supports long-term programs in Israel for young Diaspora Jews, and funded by the Israeli government and the Jewish Agency for Israel.

## BRACHOT

**Prof. Michael Rosenak**, Mandel Professor of Jewish Education (Emeritus) has received an Honorary Doctorate from Yeshiva University in recognition of his immense contribution to the field of Jewish Education. Prof. Rosenak has also received Honorary Doctorates from the Jewish Theological Seminary and from Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, making him the first recipient of Honorary Doctorates from the flagship academic institutions of all three major Jewish religious streams in North America.

**Dr. Nava Nevo** is congratulated on the publication, by The Magnes Press, of *The Hebrew Language in the Age of Globalization (Studies in Jewish Education, Vol. 12, 2008)* that she co-edited with Prof. Elite Olshtain.



**Ms. Irit Harat** has joined our faculty as Executive Director of the Melton Centre.

We extend her a warm welcome, and look forward to working together.

THE MELTON CENTRE FOR JEWISH EDUCATION  
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