

# Fundraising for Scholarship for Disadvantaged Students at Israeli University – Personal Reflections

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They sent word from there (sc. Palestine): Be on guard against scabs; take good care (to study) in company and be heedful (not to neglect) the children of the poor, for from them Torah goeth forth, as it is written: “The water shall flow out of his buckets” (mi-dalyaw) (Num. XXIV, 7) (meaning), from the dallim (poor) amongst them goeth forth Torah (Adopting reading of ‘En Yakob. Water being symbolic of Torah:).

Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Nedarim 81a

The value of study and education is of high priority in Judaic teachings.

We are ordered in the Torah: “And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down and when thou risest up”<sup>1</sup>.

From this passage the sages inferred the duty imposed on the father to teach Torah to his sons. Yet, this was just the beginning. During the first century schools were established in each district and town.

We are told by the Babylonian Talmud:

Rab Judah has told us in the name of Rab: Verily the name of that man is to be blessed, to wit Joshua ben Gamala, for but for him the Torah would have been forgotten from Israel. For at first if a child had a father, his father taught him, and if he had no father he did not learn at all. By what (verse of the Scripture) did they guide themselves? — By the verse, And ye shall teach them to your children. laying the emphasis on the word ‘ye.’<sup>3</sup> They then made an ordinance that teachers of children should be appointed in Jerusalem. By what verse did they guide themselves? — By the verse, For from Zion shall the Torah go forth. Even so, however, if a child had a father, the father would take him up to Jerusalem and have him taught there, and if not, he would not go up to learn there. They therefore ordained that teachers should be appointed in each prefecture, and that boys should enter school at the age of sixteen or seventeen. (They did so) and if the teacher punished them they used to rebel and leave the school. At length Joshua b. Gamala came and ordained that teachers of young children should be appointed in each district and each town. and that children should enter school at the age of six or seven.<sup>2</sup>

Professor Cover praised the fact that, unlike modern legal systems which emphasize rights, Jewish Law is duty oriented. He proved the advantage of Jewish jurisprudence of duties over Western paradigm of.<sup>3</sup> To demonstrate his theory Cover brings another illuminating demonstration of the advantages of

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1 Deuteronomy 6:6-7.

2 Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Baba Bathra, Folio 21a.

3 R.M. Cover, ‘Obligations: A Jewish Jurisprudence of the Social Order’, (1987) 5 *J. L. & Religion* 65. This essay followed his celebrated work *The Supreme Court, 1982 Term - Foreword: Nomos and Narrative*, (1983) 97 *Harv. L. Rev.* 4.

Jewish jurisprudence of duties over Western paradigm of rights in his essay.<sup>4</sup> Cover refers to the ‘right of education’, in American law, and concludes that ‘taken alone it only speaks to a need.’<sup>5</sup> This is so since ‘it is not even an intelligible principle unless we know to whom it is addressed.’<sup>6</sup> ‘Jewish legal materials’, on the other hand, ‘never speak of the right or entitlement of the child to an education.’ Yet, Jewish law imposes an ‘obligation incumbent upon various providers’ – the father, the teacher, the wealthy and the community as a whole – ‘to make the education available.’ In such a system, the right to education is not declared, yet it is guaranteed.<sup>7</sup>

Organized schools were established throughout history wherever Jews resided, from early childhood [*heder*] to academies of higher Torah education [*Yeshivot*]. Yet, the free education did not solve the difficulties. The academies were established in Jewish centers and students had to move there from near and far. Many of them came from poor families, who could not support them. On the other hand the academies did not supply full board for the students. The solution was by having the students being fed by wealthy members of the community. Usually a student would be maintained each day by another family. This came to be known in *Yiddish* as *Tage easen* [eating days].

This background seems promising for fundraising for scholarships for disadvantaged students. However, during my work as Head of Donors Recognition Unit at the Public Affairs Department at Tel-Aviv University I faced challenges. Benefactors of the university would tend to donate money for erecting buildings where the fruit of their donation would be recognized and their contribution recognized. On the other hand the fruits of donations to support disadvantaged students have no physical monument.

I therefore came to the understanding that it is the personal relations between the benefactor and the recipient that should be nurtured. When doing so the reward for the donor would be even greater. Rather than donating concrete and mortar [and after all the buildings are erected to serve the students] the donor would get immediate satisfaction by realizing how his generosity indeed contributes to the academic achievement of a disadvantaged student.

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During my involvement in these activities I noticed that hard as it may be to enlist donations for supporting disadvantaged students the main challenge is to ensure that the contributions will not be a one-time event. This could be achieved by exposing the face behind the receiver of the scholarship. I therefore insisted that the recipients should communicate with the donors. I encouraged them to send personal letters where they described themselves, their families, their background and their aspirations. I encouraged the students to keep these relations and get the donors involved with their advancement. Such letters made the donations more personal and were rewarding for the donors. When a donor would come for the Board of Governors annual meeting he or she would look up “his” students. I did find out that such intimate relationships encourage continuing support.

An outstanding example is that of the Colton couple. They are of the greater supporters of Tel-Aviv University. Among other donations they established a fund to support doctoral students. One of “their” students came from the Law School. She kept her ties with them throughout her brilliant career. When reaching the status of full professor she became an incumbent of the Colton Chair. Soon afterwards she was elected Dean of the Law School and after just two weeks as Dean she was nominated to the Supreme Court of Israel. The Coltons were involved in all stages of her career. I have no doubt that

4 R.M. Cover, ‘Obligations: A Jewish Jurisprudence of the Social Order’, (1987) 5 *J. L. & Religion* 65. This essay followed his celebrated work *The Supreme Court, 1982 Term - Foreword: Nomos and Narrative*, (1983) 97 *Harv. L. Rev.* 4.

5 *Id.*, at 71.

6 *Id.*

7 *Id.* Cf. H.C. 1/67 *Mashi'el v. Minister of Education and Culture*, 21(3) *P.D.* 384, 387; N. Rakover, *Modern Applications of Jewish Law*, 2 vols., (Jerusalem, 1992), I, 228, 229, *per* Kister J.: ‘The Jewish people recognized the duty of parents to educate their children... as well as the duty of the public to set up schools for children... among Jews a parent had the right to demand proper education for his young children and the public authorities were under an obligation to make suitable arrangements. See, further, Asher Maoz, “Can Judaism Serve as a Source of Human Rights?”, 64(2004) *Heidelberg Journal of International Law* 677, 585-86.

their satisfaction was much greater than having erected another building and certainly their positive experience will encourage them to support more students.