

Thoughts From The Lubavitcher Rebbe

By Rabbi Yossi Groner

Education: A Moral Imperative

Recent times have shown tremendous progress in man's mastery of nature. We have witnessed an explosion of knowledge that has dwarfed the achievements of previous generations, bringing with it marvels of modern technology.

Unfortunately, however, knowledge is not synonymous with understanding; and moral development has not kept pace with technical progress. The knowledge that could have been put to so many constructive uses has instead been channeled into, at best, wasteful, useless activities, and at worst, destructive acts of violence. A possible blessing has been perverted into a curse. Those bent on acts of destruction, whether from sheer greed, malice, or insanity, can now, thanks to modern day technology, easily wreak their havoc not only on their immediate surroundings, but exert influence on the entire community of mankind.

The failure to control this growing lawlessness is not limited to a few individuals. In the last few decades, and especially in the past few years, international tension and frictions have accelerated at frightening proportions. The soaring crime rate among individuals has evolved into a trend of national and international banditry, with wars raging across the face of the world. Hardly a nation has been left untouched by the horrors of violence, both on an individual and national scale and the world seems helpless to resist. A blanket of doom seems to have settled on the earth, and under its cover, outrageous acts are carried out with impunity. And with violence breeding more violence, the perpetrators of this terror have only one regret, that they neither did nor could inflict more damage. Their appetite for money, territory, or just plain mayhem grows insatiable, and the prospects for control grow dimmer. Police forces are increased and armies strengthened, all in a desperate attempt to retain control of a rapidly declining situation.

And the cause for the spreading increase in crime? Innumerable commissions have been set up, countless study groups have examined this problem. And the result? Total obfuscation! As many "answers" have been offered as studies made, all sharing one common point. Each strove to find some hidden cause, some deep unnatural reason - while ignoring the most obvious and true of them all. In a single word: education. It is only through proper moral and ethical education that we can be assured of children growing up to be good, productive citizens. We turn our attention, then, to an analysis of the difference between past and present education. A change for the

good in the education of a child will result in a better adult; and so with the reverse.

Only a few scant generations ago, most parents were G-d-fearing folk, believing with absolute faith in a G-d Who is the Master of the world. Not a strange belief, for it was upon this very principle that the U.S.A. was founded. The founding fathers possessed an absolute trust in G-d, a G-d Who was real and omnipresent, not a G-d Who politely resided in books and philosophical conjectures. So strong was their belief that trust in G-d brings success, that they uprooted themselves from their homelands, forsook all ties with the past, and journeyed to find a place in which they could serve G-d with full religious freedom.

Such a faith did not need to be taught in school. It was inculcated in children from the moment of birth; they lived it as naturally as they breathed. The very conduct of their parents and grandparents conveyed the same message - the world has not been left untended, there is a Master Who rules. Any mention of religion in school was unnecessary and inconsequential next to this complete and total education.

As time passed, the emphasis on such trust weakened. But full belief was still there: to bless and praise G-d for the food eaten or to say one's prayers at night - these things were still taken for granted. It was only later that religious instruction in schools became necessary. And still, teachers were mainly G-d fearing people, who, by their very demeanor and behavior, inculcated their students with a belief and trust in G-d.

It has only been in very recent years that religious instruction in schools has been forbidden. No mention of G-d, not even a simple non-denominational prayer is permitted. And the results of this attitude are painfully evident. Lack of awareness of a higher Deity, and the resultant void of moral and ethical training, has led to a generation of selfish, egoistical children, whose

sole aim in life is the pursuit of pleasure. And if that pursuit conflicts with responsibilities, such responsibilities are discarded. The inevitable result is a generation which disregards others, with a resultant callousness towards all the higher things in life. The indulgence of one's desires is the only object of importance, and all other considerations are swept aside. No wonder that theft, violence, even murder, have become so commonplace, accompanied by a complete breakdown in what was once an orderly, constructive way of life. It is but the bitter reaping of a harvest so blithely and carelessly sown.

Know then, that each and every parent and educator has been given strength by G-d to change all of this. Changes can be made in their children's education, and darkness can be turned into light, foolishness into wisdom. In turn, it is the duty, and privilege, of the leaders of this nation, whether on a national, state, or local level, to help parents in their task of properly educating their children. The first priority of this country must be given to ensuring that its children grow up to be healthy, both physically and spiritually. And the best way to carry this out is a non-denominational declaration, at the start of each day, stating that there is an omnipotent, omniscient G-d who demands proper conduct from us all.

"Focus on Israel" will resume next month. Ken-ny Gross has been on vacation.

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**IF YOU'RE A JEWISH
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Each year the Charlotte Jewish Federation as one of its many projects participates in funding the Jewish Children's Service in Atlanta. This worthy agency provides no-interest educational loans for Jewish students who need financial help to cover the rising costs of a college education. Students from the Charlotte Jewish Community are eligible to apply for these funds, although in years past many people were not at all aware that they were available.

Last year Jewish

Children's Service had total loan requests from 75 people for an amount of \$92,082. They only had \$70,000 to give out. From Charlotte there were 8, 4 of which qualified for almost \$5,000 in loans.

The deadline for applications is June 1983, but be sure to get an early start since the process takes some time. The necessary forms will be available at Federation's Department of Social Services. For more information contact Louis Albert at 366-0358.

There are eligibility requirements and limits on the amounts provided, but this is an opportunity which may be a big help to families with children in college. Take the time to apply because it just might pay off. It's also a great opportunity to see your Federation dollars at work here at home in our own community.

Your Jewish Lexicon

Adult Jewish Studies -

Union of American Hebrew Congregations

A Matter of Honor

"Honor your mother and your father," the Fifth Commandment instructs us. The imperative verb here is *kabade* (rhymes with "parade"). Built upon the core consonants, k-b-d, k-v-d or sometimes ch-v-d, we get a number of words that carry much weight in the Jewish lexicon.

This cluster of consonants conveys the idea of "to honor, glorify, respect" and also "to be heavy, weighty." Every week we light candles *lich-vod* ("in honor of") the Shabbat. During Passover, we drink special wine *lich-vod Pesach*. *Kibud av va-aim*, "respect for father and mother," is a cardinal principle in Jewish life. Showing

hospitality is still another teaching. Whenever guests come, we serve them *kibud* ("refreshment") as a way of honoring them.

The little book called *Pirke Avot*, "Ethics of the Fathers," contains a telling observation. "Who is honored?" the sages asked, and they supplied the answer: "*Ha-mechabed* (he who honors) his fellow man." But the person who pursues honor (*kavode*) out of vanity or self-aggrandizement had better be careful, for another Jewish scholar commented: "Honor (*kavode*) flees from him who runs after it, and follows him who flees from it."

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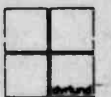
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