

SHOULD WE TEACH JEWISH VALUES?

Barry Chazan

I. The Affirmation of Teaching Values in Schools

The teaching of values is popularly regarded as one of the important missions of schools. Politicians, pedagogues, and parents are accustomed to regarding schools as important agents in the transmission and promulgation of great social and personal values. The role of schools in teaching values particularly comes to the fore when there is some crisis in society — Sputnik in the 1950s, the civil rights struggle in the 1960s, drugs in the 1970s. At such moments, schools are expected to devote great time and effort to the subject of teaching values so as to correct the ill or evil in question.

There is, of course, no agreement as to what is meant by “teaching values” or how one does it. The concern for teaching values has spawned an extensive theoretical and practical literature around such questions as: What are values? Are they social or individual? Are they principles or practices? How do we teach them? Who should teach them? What materials should we use?

A range of answers has been given to these questions by such twentieth century theorists as Emile Durkheim, John Dewey, Lawrence Kohlberg, Louis Rath, Merrill Harmin, Sidney Simon, Carol Gilligan, and John Wilson¹ and the disagreements among them are many and intense. However, they all share the belief that the activity of teaching values is in itself inherently valid and legitimate for schools.

II. The Affirmation of Teaching Values in Jewish Education

Champions of Jewish education are quick to indicate that the

1 For an analysis and comparison of several of the major twentieth century schools of moral education, see Barry Chazan, *Contemporary Approaches to Moral Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1987).

concern for teaching values has been a legacy and linchpin of Jewish education throughout the ages.² They point to numerous examples in Jewish tradition — from the education credo in the *Shema* to Rabbi Israel Salanter's comprehensive approach to teaching morality — as verification of the preoccupation of Jewish education with the subject.

The traditional Jewish concern for moral education also extends into contemporary Jewish education:

- The Reform movement in the United States has been producing texts and educational materials about teaching values since the 1940s.³
- The establishment of the Melton Research Center in the 1960s by the Conservative movement's Jewish Theological Seminary was closely linked to the concern for values education.⁴
- In the 1960s the *Torah U'Mesorah* movement developed a project in teaching Jewish values called the *Fryer Middos Curriculum*.⁵
- In the 1970s several Jewish educators and communal workers began to experiment successfully with the application of the values clarification approach to Jewish education.⁶
- In the early 1980s the Hebrew University's Melton for Jewish Education in the Diaspora launched a major high school program in teaching Jewish values.⁷

During the past decade we have witnessed several attempts to apply Lawrence Kohlberg's cognitive-developmental theory and

2 Michael Rosenak, *Teaching Jewish Values* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Melton Centre for Jewish Education in the Diaspora, 1986).

3 One of the classic texts of this genre is Helen Fine, *At Camp Kee Tov* (New York: UAHC, 1961).

4 *A Program for Jewish Education* (New York: Melton Research Center, 1963).

5 *The Fryer Middos Curriculum* (New York: Torah U'Mesorah).

6 Dov Peretz Elkins, *Clarifying Jewish Values: A Handbook of VC Strategies* (Rochester, New York: Growth Associates, 1977); Bernard Reisman, *The Jewish Experiential Book* (New York: Ktav Publishing, 1979).

7 The conceptual framework of the project is spelled out in Rosenak, *Teaching Jewish Values*.

pedagogy of moral education to Jewish education.⁸ Finally, over the past three decades there have been a plethora of doctorates, articles, and conferences focusing on the subject of teaching values and Jewish education.⁹

Thus, both traditional and contemporary Jewish education join the general education tradition in loudly and definitively affirming the central responsibility and role that schools should play in teaching values.

Against Teaching Values in Schools

There is another voice on this subject. It is a rather quiet, albeit persistent, voice which raises doubts about the entire enterprise of teaching values in schools.¹⁰ Advocates of this approach suggest, for various reasons, that the activity of teaching values is neither a legitimate nor valid activity for schools, and therefore should be avoided at all costs.

This approach is not the brainchild of malevolent or machiavelian rogues; it is a thoughtful theory advocated over many centuries by a small but impressive collection of well-meaning and highly committed individuals. Members of this group include such figures as the Russian writer Leo Tolstoy, the Spanish anarchist Francisco Ferrer, the American utopian Robert Owen, the Latin American reformist Paulo Friere and the Israeli writer S. Yizhar.

These various skeptics share doubts as to the place of moral education in schools; however they present widely divergent reasons for their reservations. In fact, there is a rich continuum of arguments that have been presented against the enterprise of teaching values in schools.

In this paper, I should like to turn to the "skeptics" to help us wrestle with the question as to whether we should teach values in Jewish schools. Specifically, I propose to do the following:

- 8 Jerome Friedman, "A Comparison of Moral Reasoning Stages among Jewish Day School and Public School Students" (Ed.D. diss., Cambridge: Harvard University Graduate School of Education, 1987); Earl Schwartz, *Moral Development: A Practical Guide for Jewish Teachers* (Denver: ARE, 1983).
- 9 These efforts are summarized in the first chapter of Friedman, "Comparison of Moral Reasoning."
- 10 I call this group of theories "the anti-moral educationalists." Chazan, "Against Moral Education" in *Contemporary Approaches*.

1. To examine several of the prominent arguments against teaching values in schools.
2. To utilize these arguments in attempting to determine whether or not we should teach values in Jewish schools.
3. To present an alternative to teaching Jewish values in Jewish schools.

An Ideological Caveat

The possibility that we should *not* teach Jewish values in Jewish schools may sound like a heresy. In raising this question I am motivated neither by maliciousness or nihilism. Rather, I am inspired by many of the great “anti-moral educationalists” who were people who fervently loved values and children. Some of the skeptics were motivated to question the essence of the activity because of their commitment to the philosophical principles of doubt and questioning. Others were motivated to raise the (unthinkable) question because they loved children so much they wanted to make sure that they would not be misused or manipulated by adults.

I would like to believe that well-intentioned questioning is inherent in the great tradition which underlies Jewish education and that, if done “for the sake of Heaven,” to question the assumed is often a virtue rather than a vice. Hence, to ask whether we should teach values should be seen in the context of the love of values and children rather than as their denial. It is part of the philosophical, human, and Jewish quest for basic principles and beliefs.

Three Categories of Reservations about Teaching Values

The many arguments against teaching values can be organized according to the following categories:

- Philosophical
- Sociological
- Educational

Philosophical Reservations

Philosophical reservations about teaching values focus on theoretical and logical arguments against teaching values in schools. There are two main philosophical reservations:

1. The Epistemological Reservation.
2. The Manipulative Reservation.

The Epistemological Reservation

The epistemological reservation about teaching values says that we do not definitively know which values are true or not, and education should only teach what we know to be true.¹¹ According to this position, while values are very important, they are not truths of the same order as facts in chemistry, physics, or even, history. Therefore, it is precarious and even immoral for a Jewish school to teach that a child should keep kosher, observe Shabbat or believe in God if we do not definitively know whether these things are true or not. Schools and teachers can influence children greatly — if Miss Cohen tells her preschool class that Jews believe in the world to come, little Adam takes her words very seriously. Whether there is a world to come or not is just not clear; thus to teach values in Jewish schools is to tamper with children's minds and to transmit speculative things as conclusive. Such an activity is out of bounds according to the epistemological argument, not because it may not succeed, but precisely because it might. It is a great immorality, says this argument, to impose half-, non-, or unknown truths on children.

The Manipulative Reservation

Throughout the history of education, there has been a voice which has regarded any form of intentional manipulation of young people as anti-educational. According to this approach, education should be about helping people grow, choose, and decide, and any attempt to manipulate or control their choices is indoctrination

11 John Wilson, "Education and Indoctrination" in *Aims in Education*, ed. T.H.M. Hollins (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1964).

and not education.¹² Indoctrination is the attempt to control the beliefs of others in certain particularly sensitive belief areas, e.g. religion, morals, and politics, whereas education is the concern with helping young people grow and preparing them to make their own decisions. The manipulative reservation about teaching values suggests that the teaching of values is not about 'teaching' in the sense of transmitting knowledge or stimulating reflection, but rather an attempt to control the minds and fix the behaviors of our charges. Teaching Jewish values, according to this argument, really means inculcating or imposing values. These critics are not opposed to values; on the contrary, many of them believe that a life of value is the kind of life we should live; however, they suggest that the teaching of Jewish values is objectionable when it becomes the attempt by certain adults to determine children's values.

Some critics claim that Jewish education is particularly susceptible to this corruption, and they suggest that many rabbis, Hebrew school teachers and Israeli *shlichim* are really concerned with manipulating their charges' lifestyles rather than with helping them to chart their own course.

The Sociological Reservation

Sociological reservations are rooted in the view that the realities of contemporary Jewry and contemporary Jewish education militate against any serious investment in teaching values in Jewish schools. These reservations encompass:

1. The Pluralistic Reservation.
2. The Ownership Reservation.
3. The Structural Reservation.

The Pluralistic Reservation

The pluralistic reservation says that the most striking charac-

12 This approach is most clearly represented by R.M. Hare, "Adolescents into Adults," in *Aims in Education*; For a comprehensive discussion of the concept 'indoctrination,' see I. Snook, *Indoctrination and Education* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972).

teristic of the Jewish people today is the fact that if there are two Jews in a city they build three synagogues — one they go to, one they don't, and one for the split-off congregation that is sure to develop. The Jewish people today is a collection of subgroups, subideologies and different points of view. There are Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Israeli, Diaspora, Ashkenazic, Sephardic, egalitarian, feminist, traditional, neo-Orthodox, left-wing Conservative, right-wing Conservative, *haredi*, *haredi-Zionist*, *haredi-anti-Zionist* Jews — and I know I have insulted many people by not including them in my list. Every book on Jewish sociology begins and ends by telling us that the most prominent characteristic of contemporary Jewry is its pluralism.

What values does one teach in a pluralistic Jewish world? Do we teach that Jews keep kosher? Most don't. Should we teach that Jews are people who live in Israel? Most don't and don't intend to. Should we teach that Jews believe in God? What do we do about Ben-Gurion and Golda Meir and many more like them? The pluralism of the Jewish people and of Judaism today almost completely paralyzes us from making any cogent generalizations about contemporary Jewish values, and it often leads to such weird situations as that described several years ago by David Schoem, where, in many Hebrew schools, we find non-religious Israelis preaching in broken English to non-observant Conservative children in suburban American communities that Jews are people who keep kosher and don't ride on Shabbat!¹³ There seem to be few or no values that we can call "Jewish values" in the sense that they are held by most Jews or even by most views of Judaism. Indeed, there may be no such thing today as "the Jew" or "Judaism" or "Jewish values" with capital J's.

If this is so, we have three choices:

1. Don't teach Jewish values.
2. Continue to look for some basic common values.
3. Teach the values of your specific denominational group (Orthodox, Conservative, Zionist, etc.).

Option 1 upsets us because we are educators who care very much about teaching values. Option 2 leads to a fairly *pareve* and nondescript kind of Jewish education. Option 3 leads to the

13 David Schoem, *Ethnic Survival in America* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989).

rampant denominationalism which threatens to rip us apart from within.

The Ownership Reservation

The issue of teaching values was, in many ways, clear in traditional Jewish and non-Jewish education. There were a set of contents or values whose authorship was known and accepted, and these values were regarded as true and binding (truer than physics or chemistry). The explication of these values was in the hands of learned or inspired people (rabbis, teachers, priests, gurus) who by the dint of their knowledge had the authority or position to teach. In former times, the ownership of values education was clearly centralized and ensconced in the hands, cloaks, and mantles of specially endowed or trained religious teachers who were the keepers of the faith.

Today Jewish education is in the hands of a “board” — of the synagogue, the federation, the bureau of Jewish education or the day school. Indeed, the two most prominent characteristics of the implementation of Jewish education today are:

1. It is local and non-centralized.
2. It is owned by either the clients or the non-professional leaders of the community.

On the whole, Jewish education professionals are the employees of boards who have the power to determine policy, content, and even methods. This structure of voluntary lay ownership is one of the hallmarks of contemporary Jewry and it is an impressive achievement. It has produced remarkable examples of involvement and commitment, and offers the possibility of a genuine democratization in Jewish life.

The price paid for lay ownership is that the teaching of Jewish values — like many other Jewish contents — is potentially in the hands of the good-willed, but unfortunately often ignorant lay Jewish world. If the board wants school to be two days a week, it will be two days a week; if they say six, it will be six. If they want to throw out Hebrew, out it goes (if the principal objects, out he or she goes). The commercial for Hebrew National hot dogs which says that Jews are responsible to a higher authority is not the

case with Jewish education today, because the higher authority is the lay committee.

Whereas the epistemological reservation about teaching Jewish values says that we do not know what values are true, and the pluralistic reservation says that there are too many Jewish values to choose from, the ownership reservation says that we have lost all authentic authority to determine what values to teach.

The Structural Reservation

The structural reservation says that whether there are or are not agreed-upon, true, or legitimate Jewish values doesn't matter; there is no practical possibility of engaging in this activity within the constraints of contemporary Jewish schools. This argument says that the structure of Jewish schools today does not provide the opportunity for any possibility of success in teaching Jewish values. We do not have the right teachers, enough time, or enough years to teach values in Jewish education, so it's better not to start. According to this position, teaching values requires:

- time,
- supportive parents,
- a social environment that reinforces the values,
- teachers who believe in the values.

None of these conditions exist in Jewish education. Hence, many critics of this camp echo Carl Bereiter's belief that perhaps the best we can do in schools is either teach some basic skills or do some good babysitting.¹⁴ This position draws much strength from research in general education which points to the futility of good-willed ventures in education that have no chance of succeeding. Maybe we should set our goals lower and focus on creating wonderful and warm Jewish settings which would teach some basic Jewish skills and make children happy to be Jewish rather than reaching for unattainable objectives.

14 Carl Bereiter, *Must We Educate* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1973).

Educational Reservations

The third category of reservations says that the enterprise of teaching values is precarious because of the realities of schools, teachers and classrooms. There are three reservations in this category:

1. The Developmental Reservation.
2. The Instructional Reservation.
3. The Evaluative Reservation.

The Developmental Reservation

This reservation is rooted in contemporary developmental approaches to personality which suggest that identity, character, and self are formed by a gradual and lengthy process which takes many years and which may never be fully completed. Kohlberg talks about six stages of morality, Erikson talks about eight ages of identity and values clarification describes seven dimensions of the valuing person. Moral development, according to these approaches, does not follow the input-output model of business in which a variable is introduced into some prior condition, and observable change is then recorded. Personality development is a much more gradual and non-determined process which evolves over time and place.

One of the most striking characteristics of Jewish education is the little time we have for it; for over 80% of Jewish children, formal Jewish education is delimited by the years of eight to thirteen at the most. During the critical period of adolescence, the majority of young Jews do not receive any formal Jewish education. What all this means is that there is essentially no possibility of engaging in a developmental approach to Jewish values education, whereas psychologically, the only kind of educational approach that matters in the sphere of teaching values is the developmental. We simply do not have access to the developmental span needed to attain any significant achievement in Jewish moral education, and if we have limited resources we had better invest in attainable educational tasks.

The Instructional Reservation

Most of the major contemporary theories of moral education emphasize the centrality of the teacher to the process of moral education. Values clarification sees the teacher as a critical catalyst; Kohlberg's teacher should be a philosopher-king; Wilson's teacher is a kingless philosopher; and for Noddings the teacher models caring. In each of these cases, the teacher (rather than curriculum or setting) is ultimately the central resource in the process of moral education, and without appropriate teachers it is extremely difficult to talk about doing moral education.

Much of the preoccupation of Jewish education in recent years has been with the crisis of the profession of Jewish teacher.¹⁵ The Jewish world has expressed increasing reservations about the level of Jewish knowledge and commitment of the classroom teachers who are teaching its young; while the level of pedagogic skill of teachers in Jewish schools may be on the rise, research and experience leave us with the uncomfortable feeling that the number of teachers who have Jewish knowledge and embody Jewish values is on the wane.

Teaching Jewish values requires sophisticated pedagogic skills and deep Jewish commitments, say these friendly critics, and we simply do not have the staff to do this job at the moment. Maybe some day we might be able to develop such a staff, but at the moment one should not have the hubris to believe that we can do serious Jewish education with the staff that we have. Thus, once again, perhaps we have to reorganize our thinking, and plan to confront some of the many other tasks in Jewish education which can be handled with the forces we have.

The Evaluative Reservation

Let us say there is agreement on what Jewish values are, on the legitimacy of teaching them to children, and on how to do it; in such a case, are there any more possible reservations one might have about doing it? A last group of straggling critics comes along and says: Yes, we still think that the enterprise of teaching values

15 *A Time to Act*, The Report of the Commission on Jewish Education in North America (New York: University Press of America, 1990).

in Jewish schools is futile, because years of experience and research in Jewish and general education show that it just doesn't work. From Hartshorne and May to Coleman and Jencks, the critics suggest that we have seen that schools have little effect on students' values. Schools have proven themselves effective in such areas as the transmission of knowledge, skills, and some social behaviors, and sometimes they have also proven to be effective conduits for socio-economic advancement. However, according to these critics, we simply don't have much proof that they succeed in values development. The operative conclusion once again is that schools should invest in what they do well and refrain from things that they seem to be less good at.

The Reservations Taken Together

We see that there are three main categories of reservations about the enterprise of teaching Jewish values: philosophical, sociological and pedagogical. The philosophic reservations are rooted in epistemological questions about the nature of knowledge and truth and axiological questions about imposition and manipulation of the minds of others. The thrust of these reservations is that teaching certain kinds of "subjects," e.g. values, is precarious and questionable because these spheres of human life ultimately belong to the individual's own choice and should not be dominated from without.

The sociological reservations revolve around the pluralistic and heterogeneous nature of the Jewish people today. This diversity is positive in that it presents many options for being Jewish and also invites a great sense of participation and ownership by all sorts of Jews in Jewish life; it is a very accessible and anti-elitist kind of Judaism. At the same time, the diversity of Judaism is very problematic for teaching Jewish values because it either invites sectarianism and denominationalism (all you can teach are the values that your specific group holds) or a paralysis from effectively doing Jewish values education (because beyond horror at the Holocaust and amazement at the creation of Israel there are very few things most Jews hold in common). Thus, the sociological criticism implies that we really cannot teach Jewish values today; instead what we can and should do is to create sociological Jews.

The third body of reservations is rooted in the educational complexities of actually teaching values, and it suggests that contemporary Jewish education simply does not have the minimal resources necessary to engage in this activity. The problem is neither philosophical or sociological; we know what to teach and we can deal with diversity; we simply don't have the teachers, the time, and the resources to do the job that needs to be done.

All of the reservations about the teaching of Jewish values that have been discussed are not a denial of the importance of Jewish education. There are many other tasks of Jewish education which can and should be engaged in, according to the reservationists, such as:

- Jewish skills training;
- the development of Jewish literacy;
- the experiencing of pleasant Jewish feelings and events;
- the meeting of exciting Jewish role models;
- the study of traditional Jewish approaches to value issues;
- the collective celebrating of Jewish moments and life-cycle experiences.

Thus, one can be critical about the possibility of teaching Jewish values in schools without negating either the importance of values in Jewish life or the value of Jewish education.

Should We Attempt to Teach Values?

In light of the many reservations we have just discussed, let us return to our original question. Should we teach Jewish values in contemporary Jewish schools? There now seem to be three possible answers to this question:

1. For all sorts of philosophical, sociological and educational reasons, teaching Jewish values is not really a desirable or viable part of Jewish education today, and all things being considered, we would be better off not engaging in it.
2. We should teach values in Jewish schools since all of the arguments raised against the activity can be answered and rebutted.
3. Teaching Jewish values is a very complicated activity for philosophical, sociological, and educational reasons, and if

you are interested in engaging in it, be aware of several pitfalls and problems.

I believe the third answer is the correct one.

The first answer correctly argues that there are some hefty arguments against teaching values, but arguments against something need not imply its rejection. Indeed, the first answer seems to me too quickly to capitulate to the naturalistic fallacy, and in doing so too facilely to reject the values teaching enterprise.

The second answer is too simplistic and casual about the philosophical, sociological and educational critiques which cannot be easily or definitely answered. If the first answer is too quick to reject, the second answer is too quick to accept.

The third answer affirms teaching values as a part of Jewish education — but it says that it is a much more serious and complicated activity than is often assumed. Consequently, if we are going to attempt to engage in the teaching of values, we must do so with some basic conceptual and educational pre-conditions; otherwise, we might be better off not engaging in the activity. Indeed, there is merit to the claim that if there are not enough necessary conditions for engaging in teaching Jewish values, which would offer some reasonable promise of success, we might better invest our efforts in other important areas of Jewish education.

What are those basic necessary conditions? In the final section of this paper, I shall describe six criteria which I would suggest are minimal and necessary for doing values education in contemporary Jewish schools.

Toward a Theory of Teaching Jewish Values

1. The Text

While Judaism has meant many things throughout history, it has unequivocally been related to a lengthy, rich, and diverse oral and written legacy; i.e., it is a culture or civilization which has created a rich literary heritage of texts, sources, books and primary documents. Teaching Jewish values in Jewish education should be very much related to the confrontation with and exegesis of these primary documents. The very act of the study of the docu-

ment is a moral act and an exercise in Jewish character education,¹⁶ and therefore text study is one of the cornerstones of a Jewish approach to teaching values.

This obviates the need for us to create hypothetical moral dilemmas; the Tanach is a fascinating and adequately contemporary resource for such situations. We are not really in need of more secondary and tertiary books which distill "the great values of Judaism" from admittedly difficult primary sources into easy-to-read, big-print coffee table volumes. We must, as Barry Holtz has suggested, go back to the sources. This task is not easy, and there is room for creative curricular work to facilitate the process.

While it is true that texts do not carry the same weight for all Jews (for the very traditional community the texts are divine in origin; for the liberal community they are great human religious documents; for the secular community they are great national texts), they do play a role in the experience of most Jews throughout the ages. Even if all Jews have not known the texts, the many diverse notions of Judaism (with some exceptions) have regarded our great texts as a critical dimension of the Jewish experience. Thus, in the approach that is herein being suggested, the texts become a unifying rather than divisive force in the contemporary Jewish world. Text becomes a common legacy and common subject of study for all Jews.

2. "A Bag of Virtues"

Several of the major twentieth century schools of moral education have taken strong stands against the notion of imposing a fixed set of moral behaviors (a "bag of virtues") on children. These critics raise some very important points about the nature of the "bag of virtues" and the problems of imposition; however, I do not think that we can deny the fact that the notion of "Judaism" as an "ism" — a worldview or a life perspective — has over time and place implied a corpus of virtues or values that have been regarded as indispensable to being Jewish. There has been disagreement in past and present as to the content which is definitive: the Zionists say it encompasses living in Israel and speaking Hebrew;

16 Elliot Dorff, "Because Study Leads to Action: The Use of Text Study to Teach Morality," *Religious Education*, vol. 75 (March/April 1980), pp. 171-192.

the Reform say that it is spirituality and morality; the Orthodox say it is *halakhah*. It seems to me that all of the various “Judaisms” that exist (with the possible exception of sociological Judaism) say that Judaism involves some “bag of virtues.” Part of the task of teaching Jewish values is to identify the most basic and agreed upon virtues — e.g. study; *Klal Yisrael*; *Eretz Yisrael* — and to make them linchpins of our values education. In teaching Jewish values we should be interested both in developing a reflective valuing process in the young, as well as in confronting them with some values that seem to be central to the Jewish experience. Thus, a second minimal dimension of teaching Jewish values is a value content or “bag of virtues.”

3. *The Learner*

The phrase “teaching Jewish values” is linguistically incomplete; its full form is “teaching x to y” where “x” equals Jewish values and “y” equals the name of some child (Shai, Tali, Danny). The child is a central actor/actress in the drama of Jewish values, and any approach to teaching values must treat the learner with dignity and seriousness. Too much of teaching Jewish values has been rooted in great love for Judaism and Jewish values, and much less passion and affection for children. If you do not believe that children are active and dynamic forces in their own values education, then, however knowledgeable or pious you may be, you are not really equipped to teach Jewish values. Believing in Jewish values is not an adequate condition for teaching them; you must also believe in children.

4. *The Dialectic*

Perhaps the most prominent tool of the teacher of Jewish values is the question and/or the dialectic. Ultimately, the teaching of values is about raising the question, not giving the answer, and as we have learned from generations of great pedagogues — Hillel, Socrates, Akiba, Rashi, St. Augustine, Heschel — the skill of questioning and of building dialogue is probably the critical pedagogic skill that needs to be learned in this sphere. The question has at least four functions in teaching values:

- It introduces relevant issues;
- It stimulates styles of reflective valuing processes;
- It links one to a valuing tradition and community;
- It summarizes and gives a sense of order to the confused world of values.

To learn how to question and how to facilitate good value discussion is the fourth minimal condition for teaching Jewish values.

5. The Teacher

Much of what we have said so far points to the need for a very special kind of teacher for the enterprise of teaching Jewish values. This is not an area that can be taught by anyone, and it might be that many of today's Jewish educators are well-equipped for some tasks — but not for teaching Jewish values.

What are the necessary qualities of the teachers of Jewish values? That is for another very lengthy paper, but briefly I would cite four traits which I believe should characterize such a person:

1. He or she must have access to the Jewish sources.
2. He or she must believe in and live some form of a Jewish value life (needless to say the number of *mitzvot* a person performs is only one form of Jewish value life).
3. He or she should exemplify the process of being a valuing person and should be concerned with developing this process in the young.
4. He or she must both love and like children and not regard them as animals to be tamed, babies to be sat for, or passive clay to be formed. He or she must see them in Amichai's terms "as something else" — as unique beings upon whom "God has had great mercy."¹⁷

6. The Value Community

Jewish values education cannot take place in a vacuum; it is not something that happens only in the classroom. The school, the

17 Yehuda Amichai, "A Child is Something Else," in *Collected Poetry of Yehuda Amichai* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986).

synagogue, the Jewish community center, the federation and the entire community should be "*kehilot kodesh*" — holy communities — which live by and reflect Jewish values. It is very clear from much educational theory and many years of educational practice that the attempt to teach Jewish values in the classroom will be trite and worthless if the Jewish community of which we are part is not prepared to be a living embodiment of the virtues that we propose to teach.

Conclusion

The subject of teaching values has had a renaissance in general education in the second half of the twentieth century. Jewish education has traditionally been greatly concerned with this area, and there have been some reaffirmations of that emphasis in contemporary Jewish education. With all the good will that may exist towards the subject, there are some serious philosophical, sociological and educational doubts about its viability. Jewish education should only get involved with this area if it can guarantee a set of critical minimal conditions; otherwise, all the good will in the world will not help.

For much of the twentieth century the Jewish people has been preoccupied with a horrendous and heroic struggle for survival; this is a battle which has demanded great effort, resulted in great loss, and been won at great expense. It is time to turn our attention to another — and no less important — battle: the struggle to be a "*mamlechet kohanim and goy kadosh*" — a people that lives by values and proposes to teach them to its young.