

FROM THE EDITOR

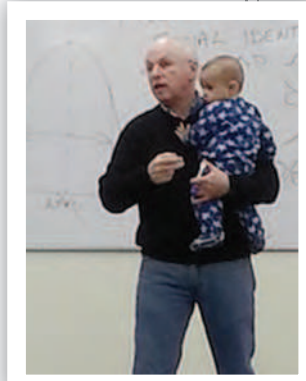
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CREDITS



There's a picture that recently went viral of South African native, Sydney Engelberg, giving a lecture to graduate students in Israel, while clutching a baby in his arms. At first glance, it would be natural to assume that it was one of Engelberg's own grandchildren, but that's not the case. Because it's a graduate course in Israel, where the obligation to serve in the military likely makes the average university student much older, many of Engelberg's students are parents, who balance family responsibilities with their own continuing education. So

Engelberg actually encourages his students to bring their children to class. But the picture doesn't tell the full story. One of the babies who'd been brought to the class had started crying, and his mother got up to walk out with him. Then Engelberg walked over, took the baby, soothed him, and simply carried on with his lecture while holding him! Why would a professor allow such a thing? Isn't having a young child in class distracting? In an interview with Yahoo Parenting, Engelberg explained, "The reason is that education for me is not simply conveying content, but teaching values."



And that's where Jewish education is so different. No one expects an ethics teacher to be ethical outside (or even inside) his classroom, but that's not the case when it comes to a teacher of Torah; we rightly expect our teachers to live in accordance with what they teach. One of the reasons the picture resonates so much with me is that Jewish education is really meant to be something that's transmitted from parent to child, with love and warmth. A Beis Medrash (a study hall for learning Torah) is meant to be filled with people of all ages, and there's something so beautiful about seeing a parent sitting with his child, learning Torah together. Unfortunately, most of us just aren't up to the task of giving our children a Jewish education. Although public school education is a relatively modern invention, the Talmud speaks of how a man named Yehoshua ben Gamla, who lived roughly 2 000 years ago, created the first Jewish day school system to ensure that no Jewish child got left behind.

Jewish education is a subject that's very close to my heart. I grew up in a wonderful home (my parents should, please G-d, live and be well) and, although I attended Hebrew school a couple of nights a week, it unfortunately didn't amount to much. Thankfully, as the famous Rabbi Akiva taught us by his very own example, it's never too late to make up for the gaps in our Jewish education. Although it gets harder to find the time as we get older, we can if we make learning the priority that it should be. It was only a couple of years ago, in these very pages, that I trumpeted the idea: "The People of the Book... should be able to read it (and understand it)!" The Torah, our precious inheritance, has been transmitted from teacher to student – parent to child – for thousands of years. Make no mistake, it takes time and effort, but there's something so incredibly liberating about being able to access it in the original language for oneself, of being freed from what Allan Bloom called "the tyranny of the translator", the imposition of someone else's ideas and interpretation on the original text. The Torah shouldn't be a closed book for anyone.

Here's to all of the wonderful Jewish schools throughout South Africa – and the world – doing their best to make sure the Torah is an open book for the next generation. And a special shout out to the United Herzlia Schools in Cape Town, which celebrate their 75th anniversary this year – quite possibly the oldest day school in SA – mazel tov to Geoff Cohen and all of the teachers, students, and staff on this momentous occasion!

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ON THE COVER: IT'S HARD TO DETERMINE THE EXACT REASON WHY THE LIGHTBULB CAME TO SYMBOLISE SOMEONE HAVING AN IDEA. PERHAPS BECAUSE LIGHT REPRESENTS KNOWLEDGE AND THE LIGHTBULB, THEREFORE, REPRESENTS A SUDDEN INSPIRATION OR HAVING A "BRIGHT" IDEA? WHATEVER THE REASON, OUR COVER IMAGE FOR OUR EDUCATION ISSUE PAYS TRIBUTE TO THIS IDEA THAT LIGHT REPRESENTS KNOWLEDGE.

