

Readers' Forum April 5, 2005 page A96

An Honor System in the Yeshiva?

Dr. Yitzchok Levine

Department of Mathematical Sciences

Stevens Institute of Technology

Hoboken, NJ 07030

llevine@stevens.edu

<http://personal.stevens.edu/~llevine>

The main goal of a yeshiva education is to help students develop into Jews who live their lives in accordance with the Torah. One of the most fundamental Torah principles is honesty. Rav Dr. Yosef Breuer, ZT"l wrote,

"Kosher" is intimately related to "Yoshor." God's Torah not only demands the observance of Kashruth and the sanctification of our physical enjoyment; it also insists on the sanctification of our social relationships. This requires the strict application of the tenets of justice and righteousness which avoid even the slightest trace of dishonesty in our business dealings and personal life.

God's Torah not only demands of us to love our neighbor in that we concern ourselves with his welfare and property, but it insists further on a conduct of uncompromising straightness ("Yoshor") which is inspired not only by the letter of the law but is guided by the ethical principle of honesty which, then, would deserve the honorable title of "Yeshurun."

"He fears God who walks in uprightness" (Mishle 14:2). This objective is given hopeful expression by the Prophet Zephama (3:13): "The remnants of Israel will not do iniquity, nor speak lies, neither will a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth."

(From "GLATT KOSHER - GLATT YOSHOR" pages 238 to 239 in **Rav Breuer: His Life and Legacy**)

Yeshivas must stress that no aspect of cheating has a place in the life of any yeshiva bochur or Bais Yaakov girl. Not to do so can lead to far reaching negative consequences and attitudes that undermine the role of the Jewish people as a "Nation that is to be a light unto the other nations."

Deleted: In **The World of the Yeshiva**, William B. Helmreich writes (page 225), "The problem was described in the following manner by an Orthodox psychologist:¶

¶ I have a friend who teaches at Brooklyn College. And he told me some incidents in his class where yeshiva guys and very religious women with *sheitlach* [wig worn for religious reasons] were cheating. He's a religious guy, a psychologist. He asked them to please stop. Then finally, on the final, he saw them and he said: "You're going to have to sit separately." So they said, "No, don't worry." So while he was standing there a friend of his came in and said: "You know, there's cheating going on in the back." So he gave them all Ds and Cs. So the guy got a call from the husband of one of the girls who said, 'How could you do this to one of your own? It's just a college course, *limudei chol* [secular studies]. It's nothing.' That's the attitude."¶

¶ One can only wonder what opinion of observant Jews this behavior engendered in the minds of the non-Jews who attended this class.

Given this, I am at a loss to understand why an Honor System is not part and parcel of every yeshiva high school. An Honor System is an excellent vehicle for teaching ethical behavior, and one would expect that every Mesivtha and Bais Yaakov would have one. ▼

Deleted: However, every time I have asked the question, "Why isn't an Honor System an integral part of our yeshiva system?" I have received the responses that it either cannot work or would never work. This response has come from both yeshiva graduates and those presently enrolled in yeshiva. In fact, they seem incredulous that I would even think that an Honor System should be part of a yeshiva education.¶

Can anyone explain to me why not? Aren't we supposed to be training moral, upright Torah educated people? If so, then why doesn't every yeshiva have an honor system?