

מאמרי ומכתבי בוגרי תכניות מנדל לזכרו של פרופ' סימור פוקס ז"ל
Pieces and Letters by MLI Graduates in memory of Prof. Seymour Fox z"l

Seymour's life-work strove to raise the sophistication and prestige of education in general and Jewish education in particular. With an uncanny ability to identify and nurture talent and potential in a vast array of people he succeeded in changing the terms of reference for an entire profession. With creative and unparalleled conviction he brought an undervalued and marginal field to a level where it could encounter the finest ideas and the sharpest minds of his generation. In my view his ideas were some of the finest and his mind was one of the sharpest and his wisdom of practice has profoundly influenced my way of thinking through educational work. His forensic determination was tempered by no small amount of inter-personal care and charm and many of us benefited from both. In one sense his death is the end of an era. In another – there are many talmidim who in their own way will develop the field further, a fitting legacy. His fingerprints are truly all over Jewish education. May his memory be for a blessing.

Seymour Fox z"l

Diary note, on hearing of his passing Tammuz 5766/July 2006

Jonathan Ariel (MJF 12)

I am just one of the students inspired, influenced, and intellectually provoked by the character, personality, gentleness and intellectual honesty of professor Fox z"l. I am saying baruch dayan ha emet and sending my condolences to his family.

השם ינחם אותם בכלל אבלי ציון וירושלים

Sergey Dolgopolsky (MJF 16)

UC Berkeley

Ze'hro lebra'ha

The departure of Professor Fox – z"l - has brought many memories back to me. Suddenly, all the treasures given during those two years in Jerusalem appear.

My first recollection is the encounter with Professor Fox in Jerusalem, in order to check if I would be accepted in this program. There he stands, silent. He looks at me, examining me in the way I answer questions. Zeev, whom I already met in Paris, is next to him. Having waited for this moment for seven years, I can't help mumbling in Hebrew. Then, suddenly, his question springs: "which authors do you read and what do you remember from them?" I can express myself. He found a common ground, a question which opens the dialogue between him and me. Already an opening.

And then as the memories fly by, I see his class, which you had to attend and be on time. It showed a respect for others and a politeness which has led me, still today, to keep my watch fifteen minutes ahead of time. Just a bunch of anecdotes.

What really matters is the unwinding of his thoughts on education and on Jewish education. Once again, his opening. He confronts us with his thinking. He doesn't try to impose it. He respects us and the ideas and convictions we may hold. In exchange, he asks us to back up ideological and philosophical sources. He forces me to question myself, to read, to open up to other points of view.

The common language – the *safa mechutefeth* – is being embodied, comes to flesh (?). For two years, I learn to listen to argument, I learn to respect.

Others glimpses from the past. The richness of the persons who surround him, who teach. We are very privileged and we don't even know it. Only after leaving this place would I come to realize it. The teachings have left deep tracks. He wishes the best for us. He wants us to learn alongside them, to oppose our ideas to theirs. Most of these men and women accept such debates. It's up to us to pull ourselves up, to be prepared for those encounters, for those sowing periods.

And here comes another picture. Coming from France, I don't understand everything in the debates, in the effervescence. We're still in the Villa. The program for the *Beth hassefer lemanhiguth hinukhith* is in gestation, along with the *Yehudi hamenuah* theme. What strikes me is the willingness of this man, his conviction. In the midst of this agitation, he consults and questions many people: intellectuals, practitioners and decision-makers in the field of education. Men of power too. Come to think of it, all those people who contributed aren't in any way a reflection of uncertainties from Professor Fox (?). This method serves to enrich projects which come to life, which burst forth. This is what I learned while watching him for two years.

He walks barefoot. His head is up in the stars and his body touches reality.

A commentary speaks of the profusion of wine which we invoke during the Kiddush. It claims that this is the blessing. The sign of blessing comes with the profusion. This is how I remember Professor Fox. The profusion, the blessing. Blessing to having met him, heard him, learned at his side. Sadness comes with his departure, how I miss him. Happiness of having been and still being an *Amit* from Jerusalem.

Michel Elbaz (MJF 10)

Dear Fox Family,

I wanted to take a moment to wish you my sincere condolences on the loss of Professor. Fox.

Professor Fox was a giant in Jewish education, both in the Diaspora and in Israel. His many articles and projects had a profound influence on the landscape of the Jewish world. His work with Ramah, the institution where I got my start as a Jewish educator, was innovative and groundbreaking.

However, more specifically, as an alumnus of the Jerusalem Fellows Program, I will forever be grateful to Professor Fox. Professor Fox helped to sharpen my mind through his seminar and made me think hard about many concepts in Jewish

education. Additionally, thanks to his work with the Program, I was able to spend two precious years in Yerushalayim learning and growing. Those two years allowed me to take the next step professionally and become a school principal.

May the memory of Professor Fox be for a blessing to you and to all of Am Yisrael.

Fondly, Aaron

Rabbi Aaron Frank (MJF 19)

In shock and deep sorrow I just want to let know Prof. Fox's family that today we are all avelim together. We lost a teacher, a friend, a guide, a spiritual father. "Haaveda kveda mineso". It's very hard to imagine the Jewish educational world without him, without his energy, his vision, his dreams and his ideas.

Tihie Nismato Tsrura Bitzror Hajaim.

Rachel Kleinberg (MJF 5)

Professor Seymour Fox (1929-2006 ז"ל)

Seymour Fox's sudden passing last month put an end to a career in Jewish education with historical significance. This was noted by historians even during his lifetime. Over twenty years ago, towards the end of a short summary of the history of Jewish education in North America, Lloyd Gartner described one of Fox's early accomplishments as follows:

The Jewish educational philosophy formulated after 1910, which reached its widest diffusion during the 1920's and 1930's, unquestionably exhibited signs of obsolescence. A tide of objection rose against the old Hebraism, arguing that Hebrew study in the stringently limited school hours required too much time and produced too meager results. Better, it was argued, use the few years to learn Bible, Jewish history, and religious principles and practices in English with a patina of Hebrew terms and verses. Orthodox day schools, which did not lack the class time, were for their part influenced by the anti-Hebraic pietistic surge of the 1950's and 1960's. They tended to turn in many cases to religious devotionism. During these years, attempts were made to find a new educational vision, the most distinctive of which came from the Melton Research Center at the Jewish Theological Seminary, directed by Seymour Fox. Their ambitious, carefully articulated program proposed to combine modern behavioral science with the findings of contemporary biblical and historical scholarship to reach rather traditional Jewish educational goals. The end purpose, as the Melton group formulated it, was to produce a personally moral, socially responsible traditional Jew, in whom the synthesis between the secular and the Jewish had begun from the elementary level of his education. Similar curricular reexaminations were undertaken in other circles, but with less comprehensiveness and intellectual power. (page 392 in "Jewish Education in the United States," in Marshall Sklare, ed., American Jews: A Reader [New York: Berman House]).

Gartner's reference was to the Melton Bible Curriculum that was published and implemented in day schools across America in the 1970's. What Gartner did not mention, however, was that Fox founded the Melton Research Center (the first of its kind in America), that in order to do so he succeeded in engaging the first in a series of major Jewish community leaders with funding a large scale initiative for the improvement of Jewish education, and that among the other outcomes of his work with the Melton group was the development of Camp Ramah. Fox described how he accomplished the latter in a monograph entitled *Vision at the Heart: Lessons From Camp Ramah On The Power Of Ideas In Shaping Educational Institutions* (Jerusalem: Mandel Foundation, 2000).

To get a sense of how significant Fox's career might be in the larger picture of Jewish education, we can consider what the field might be today without the other institutions and programs he conceived, founded and/or played a central role in developing: The Hebrew University School of Education, its curriculum specialist training unit, and Research Institute for Innovation in Education; The Hebrew University's Melton Center for Jewish Education in the Diaspora and its Senior Educators Program; The Mandel Leadership Institute and its flagship programs The Jerusalem Fellows and the School for Educational Leadership; and The Mandel Institute for Studies in Jewish Education at Brandeis University.

The main purpose driving these programs and institutions was to develop high level personnel for Jewish and Israeli education. Many of the staff and teachers in these programs and institutions were Fox's students, and many of their graduates have taken up central positions in Jewish education worldwide. The list of Fox's students and colleagues in these institutions is too numerous, and distinguished, to be limited to a brief rehearsal here.

(A number of Fox's students and associates paid tribute to him last year with the publication of a collection of essays in his honor, entitled *Educational Deliberations*). Suffice it to say that a majority of people in the field of Jewish education today can trace the origins of their professional training back to Fox or one of the programs for which he was responsible.

Fox worked tirelessly to bring qualitative leaders into the field because of his conviction that they were its central determining factor.

Decades ago, Fox warned leaders of the American Jewish Community that while there would soon be a much broader demand for Jewish education, even with adequate resources to support it, the central problem would be an insufficient pool of excellent educators upon which to draw. Fox's penetrating analysis of the personnel situation in Jewish education remains true today.

Fox could not have succeeded in founding these institutions and programs had it not been for his partnership with the community leaders who funded them. Indeed, a great part of his career was dedicated to engaging community leaders in Jewish education. This aspect of his work, however, was not restricted to his own initiatives. As all who studied with Fox came to learn, he laid responsibility for the ills of Jewish education on the breakdown of partnerships between professionals and policymakers. He claimed that each side tried to utilize the other side for their purposes more than to pool their wisdom and resources for the benefit of all. In his teaching and in his activities with community leaders, Fox worked incessantly to restore this relationship

and he aimed to change the priority structure among decision makers so that Jewish education would rise to the top.

When Fox started out on this path, he had few partners to work with. In his own words,

In the 1970's and 1980's, most American Jews of status and means cared mainly about Israel, hospitals and defense organizations. Jewish education and culture ranked very low. Four notable exceptions were way ahead of their time and were interested in education: Sam and Florence Melton of Columbus, Philip Lown of Boston and Leighton Rosenthal of Cleveland (Vision at the Heart, p. 46).

Three decades later, the situation has changed considerably. Again, in Fox's own words:

More and more, people are coming to realize that Judaism's and Israel's best asset is a Jewishly educated Diaspora, and that American Jews should be investing significantly in Jewish education. Fortunately, this view has prevailed, especially as part of the "continuity" agenda... Jewish education has now been raised to the very top of the agenda of most Jewish organizations and institutions (Ibid).

We will probably never know for sure the dimensions of the role that Fox played in this transformation. It is a story that has not been charted.

Nor was he prone to credit himself for successes, even when they were the direct outcomes of his efforts. Yet it would be impossible to describe this change in the history of the American Jewish community without reference to Fox's collaboration with the leading American Jewish philanthropist Morton Mandel and with Annette Hochstein in conceiving and implementing The North American Commission on Jewish Education. Their efforts were consciously aimed at impacting community leaders as a whole.

The Commission convened 46 American Jewish community leaders in the early 1990's to focus on the condition of Jewish education and its status on the community's agenda and to make recommendations as to how they could be improved. The Commission published A Time to Act, which was widely read in the North American Jewish Community, and set up the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education to implement the report's recommendations.

The potential for Fox's further impact on policymakers in North America had he lived there is difficult to overestimate. He invested equal energy in affecting policymakers in Israel, where he resided. Here too, little has been recorded, so we cannot know the full extent of his impact.

What we do know is that Fox served as a consultant to four Ministers of Education in Israel and that he made great efforts to enable Israeli education to benefit from the advice of his network of world class experts in education from North America, including his teachers Joseph Schwab and Ralph Tyler, and associates such as James Coleman, Israel Scheffler, David Cohen and Lee Shulman. Fox worked closely with Morton Mandel over the past two decades in engaging Israeli Prime Ministers and Knesset members on issues and initiatives related to education in Israel and in Jewish communities around the world. Regarding the latter, Fox made special efforts to

convince Israel to express its solidarity with Diaspora Jewry by providing support for its systems of Jewish education.

Fox's contributions to the development of high-level professionals and his impact on the community of policymakers are a remarkable achievement.

For Fox, however, one more factor was critical for success. Even where well-prepared professionals and firm community support are in place, he argued, Jewish education can still fail. Another precondition for success is the depth of the ideas that define Jewish educational practice.

Beginning as early as 1959, Fox always argued that the perennial ills of Jewish education were symptoms of a deeper problem, a lack of depth in the guiding definition of what makes being Jewish meaningful. Jewish education that does not take a clear stance, he argued, has little chance of succeeding.

In order to deal with this predicament, Fox undertook a decade-long project in developing a collection of new visions for Jewish education. He recruited six outstanding Jewish scholars of different backgrounds and ideological convictions to articulate their ideas of Jewish education in deliberation with leading Jewish educators and social scientists. The scholars included Professors Yitzchak Twersky, of blessed memory, Menachem Brinker, Moshe Greenberg, Michael Meyer, Michael Rosenak and Israel Scheffler.

The results were published in a volume that Fox co-edited with Israel Scheffler and myself, entitled *Visions of Jewish Education* (Cambridge University Press, 2003). The volume includes a chapter by Fox in which he draws on the six visions published in the collection to demonstrate how Jewish education differs when it is guided by profound ideas. The book concludes with a case study I wrote on the basis of a suggestion Fox once made in passing, but which has impacted my own career ever since: "Every school has an educational psychologist; shouldn't every school also have an educational philosopher?"

Fox's aim in publishing *Visions of Jewish Education* went beyond invigorating current thinking about Jewish education with new ideas. His intention was for this book to serve as the basis for generating a field of ongoing research in the applied philosophy of Jewish education. In the wake of the book's publication, he therefore founded yet another major program in Jewish education under the auspices of the Mandel Foundation, The Visions of Jewish Education Project (VJEP). The VJEP website now includes, together with more information about the project and its activities, an online resource library featuring a section devoted to Fox's ideas on vision, as well as a biography of his career and a bibliography of his writings.

Having said all this, I must mention one last factor in appraising Fox's impact on the field of Jewish education. As David Finn noted in a recent obituary in the *Jerusalem Post*,

One of Seymour's most remarkable and rare characteristics was his extraordinary modesty. His friends and colleagues knew him to be one of the most brilliant scholars and thinkers of our time, and yet he never sought the fame he deserved. His modesty was like those ancient great rabbis who wanted their works not their names remembered. Typically, in *A Time to Act* and many other outstanding scholarly

works for which he was responsible, his name only appears in small print or in appendices.

Given this characteristic, there are many other influences that emerged from Fox's efforts that will remain known only to those who benefited directly.

These benefactors should be encouraged to make the stories of their exchanges with Fox public (for a collection of written pieces on Fox, see <http://sps.mli.org.il/NR/exeres/76062FE8-3B96-401B-A029-0417EB87C7BE.htm>).

Yet, even were details of these efforts available, the most authentic tribute that could be paid to Fox for all of his work would be for the community of Jewish education to grapple with his ideas and strive to maintain his standards in their ongoing work in the field.

Dr. Daniel Marom (MJF 6)

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Professor Seymour Fox 1929-2006: A Personal Reflection

Today marks the final night of Shiva for Professor Seymour Fox who passed away suddenly last Monday.

Through his relationship with Sam Melton *alav hashlom* and Florence Melton, the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School was created. His agreement to develop the Mini-School at the Melton Centre for Jewish Education at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem launched the historic beginning of this project.

As is reflected in a number of [obituaries published thus far](#), Seymour was a man of multiple talents excelling as an academic in the fields of philosophy of education and curriculum theory and as an institution builder, creating numerous centers including those at JTS, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and The Mandel School of Leadership.

In this reflection I would like to focus on Seymour's impact on the field of Jewish education. There are few people in the world of whom it may be said that they really made an impact. Seymour was one of them. He was a true visionary and social entrepreneur. For the past 50 years he has been **the** champion of Jewish education and one of the catalysts in transforming Jewish education from a profession "not fitting for a Jewish boy" to a profession that today attracts young people of the highest caliber.

His strategy for achieving this comprised:

A focus on building Jewish education leadership. Seymour was instrumental in creating the Jerusalem Fellows Program (where I had the personal privilege to study) and later the Mandel School of Leadership. These programs ensured that a vanguard of outstanding Jewish educators would be recruited and nurtured to fill positions that had not yet even been created.

Raising the profile of Jewish education among lay-leaders and philanthropists. In the seventies and early eighties Jewish education was not considered to be worthy of support by the top lay leadership in the Diaspora. As an outstanding ambassador for the field and in his work on the Commission on Jewish Education in the late 1980s, culminating in *A Time to Act*, Seymour attracted leading philanthropists to support Jewish education and invest in this field.

An obsession for professionalism among his students. Seymour argued that if Jewish educators were to be taken seriously they should conform to the highest professional standards. He always demanded that meetings, workshops and lectures commence on time, that students devote maximum time to preparation and that there be professional follow-up.

A passion for excellence as a vehicle for success. Seymour demanded excellence and rigor from his students and those who worked with him. This passion was a hallmark of Seymour and was infectious among his students.

A belief that Jewish education could change the world. As a champion of the field Seymour believed that if Jewish education followed the desired professional standards, it could ultimately change the world. He felt that it is crucial that Jewish educators believe in themselves. Seymour had little patience for the educators who suffered low esteem and felt vulnerable and implored his students to aspire to the highest levels.

It is my contention that Seymour was not only responsible for the establishment of the Mini-School; his approach to Jewish education had a profound influence on the development of the Mini-School modus operandus as well. Much that has been mentioned has become germane to the Mini-School's culture guaranteeing its high level of success.

May Seymour Fox's *derech* continue to influence his students and colleagues alike.
Yehi zichro baruch!

Dr Jonathan Mirvis (MJF 8)

Binding and Teaching: A Meditation on the Right to Educate

Some time afterward, God put Abraham to the test. He said to him, "Abraham," and he answered, "Here I am." And He said, "Take your son, your favored one, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the heights that I will point out to you.

And Abraham said in his heart:

I don't know You very well yet. My discovery of You is still fresh, and while I know I am on to something powerful, I am still groping to determine the outline of Your

nature, Your expectations. And I must say, there are aspects of what I am encountering that are very troubling. I respect Your justice, and remember our conversation about the fate of Sodom and Gemorrah as an important moment of enlightenment for me. I came to understand that while Your ways must remain, ultimately, a mystery - that my understanding of the equations of justice, of right and wrong, reward and punishment in the world can never fully fathom Yours - still, there is a general structure that I can make sense of, most of the time. I realize that Your having given us freedom seems to limit Your power, and allows our evil the space in which to exist and even to flourish. I realize that nature obeys laws that are absolute, even when they seem to clash with the principles of justice You have established for humanity. In other words, I have learned, in just a few years of study and contemplation, to reconcile Your omnipotence and goodness with the existence of evil and suffering in the world.

What I am still struggling with is Your seeming antagonism to family; or is it just to my family? Remember, my first encounter with You was when You ordered me to leave my father's house and land, and set off on my own. On the one hand, I have to admit that You were right: once I came to know You and Your demands, I could no longer live in the society in which I had grown up. You were the spirit that drove my rebellion against the values of my environment, against everything I had learned from my family and society. The dissonance was too great. Even before I left I was already a stranger, an outsider. On the other hand, this commitment to You and Your commandments has doomed me to a life of loneliness. Being born again with You as father was a romantic idea for a young man. You provided me with escape to a new world, to vast horizons, to the powerful attraction of absolute justice, to the glimmer of greatness. Through You I could leave behind the decadence and decay of the culture of the past, and become a great, new nation. Only later did I discover the price I would have to pay for this glorious vision. Building my future with You meant losing my past. My parents may have been misguided, but I loved them. My childhood may have been in an impure environment, but my childhood memories, my parents' home were not devoid of humanity, of love, of - and here's the paradox - whatever it was that made me discover You. So my faith in You may be unswerving and proud, but it is bound up with a certain sadness, a sense of loss that is always with me. With my rebellion, a piece of me was lost. Forever.

Know too that this sadness is not only for my own loss, but for that of my parents. Among the animals, immortality is in the germ cells, in the infinite chain of transmission of deoxyribonucleic acid. As humans, however, we see ourselves living on in the constructions of our minds, in values, in the meaning we find in our experiences. Therefore, we are not satisfied with the physical continuity of biochemical replication. We expect something more. We expect our children to bring forward not only our molecules, but our beliefs, our understanding of the world and how it should be. Thus, when I allowed myself to be adopted by You, I cut off my parents' hope for immortality through me. I carry their genes, but all that they cared about I have rejected and abandoned. When they die, their dreams will die with them, for I have denied them their fulfillment. Because of You.

Oh, I know that rebellion against parents is a given of human existence. I know that my experience is not unique; however, that knowledge is small comfort when I think about my parents and myself, crying in our loneliness on either side of the great

divide that separates us. Moreover, if my parents' tears are also an expression of hopelessness and frustration due to my refusal to carry on their values and culture, then mine are by the same token an expression of guilt for having cut them off.

So I guess there is ironic justice in Your support of Sarah's demand that Hagar and Ishmael be sent off to die in the desert. I got my comeuppance. Just as I left my father's house and my father, cutting off his immortality, so I cast my son out, cutting off my own immortality. What exactly is the point You are trying to make by tearing away the bonds between me and any kind of continuity, before or after? That faith transcends blood, transcends family, transcends love? That to be committed to You and Your law means setting aside my humanity completely? The last of the words of the last of the prophets, some day, will speak of "turning the hearts of the parents to their children and the hearts of the children to their parents," while I, the first of the prophets, am to be denied both parents and children?

My understanding of the possibility of evil even in the world created by a good God will allow me to accept suffering caused by this evil. Let kings come against me with all their might, let me suffer plague and famine. I will protest, I will fight with all my strength - but I will understand that there is a cosmic logic that ordains my suffering. However, the loneliness, the despair of love and of immortality that I suffer now, more painful than the injuries of war or nature, are not decreed by that logic. They seem, inexplicably, to be the consequences of my adoption by You. If this is the nature of Your jealousy, it burns and it consumes, and leaves... nothing. Nothing for You; nothing for me.

I know Ishmael will live. That much faith in You I have! You are an expert on water miracles. I am sure that he and Hagar will not die of thirst, that they will find safety and a future. But I will not be part of that future. Beyond germ cells, nothing of me will live on in Ishmael. All that will be left for me is longing; all that will be left for him is the freedom of the desert. He will not be bound or buoyed by my discoveries, my beliefs, my hopes, my doubts. Perhaps he will become a great nation. So what? Do You think that all we men care about is the multiplication of our genes? Ishmael, I suppose, will experience what I experienced: no past, no history, the freedom and the pain of starting from scratch. Loneliness. He will make his own way, like I did. I had hoped for a better fate for him - and through him, for me. I envisioned a family, stability, continuity, traditions organically passed down from parents to children, grandchildren, happiness, immortality. Now, I have You, and Ishmael has... freedom? infinite possibilities? whatever he finds or makes of the future? the lonely howling of the wind in the desert?

And now this. As great as my doubt and anger might be, I never would have thought that the metaphor of Your burning jealousy is to be taken literally.

Before we go ahead with this project, I want to tell You what I had intended. I wanted Isaac to grow up in a loving home, permeated by values I have learned from You: the sanctity of life, the requirement of justice, the necessity of compassion. I wanted him to carry forward the faith that I have discovered and its explication and application in human life. I wanted him to replace me as Your representative when I am no longer here. I wanted him to take over from me the burden of Your law. I wanted to imbue him with zeal, with the fire of belief. I wanted to help him become,

like me or even more so, committed to You above all else and to repairing this world. I wanted to teach him what I have learned. I wanted to educate him. That is what it means to me to be a parent. Generativity.

Am I driven, in this desire to mold my son to my ideal of the one in whom I will live on, by instinct? by idealism? by reason? Is there any parent, anywhere, in any culture or religion, who is not driven by this same need?

At the same time I have to admit that this drive sometimes makes me uncomfortable. If I succeed in transmitting to my son a commitment to the values I hold dear, I fear I am setting him up for great suffering. Unsuspecting, he will absorb my enthusiasm for You and Your law, finding in it, as I do, joy and fulfillment and meaning. Then one day, he will discover the price for such commitment. As he moves through a world fraught with evil and cruelty, his goodness will make him a constant target. I shudder when I think about the taunts and stones, the expulsions, the gas chambers, with which the world will respond to his carefully tended innocence. I weep when I imagine him slogging forward through history, bloody and broken, his eyes shining with faith - the faith with which I imbued him.

Could it be that I am sacrificing my son to my own desire for immortality? Consider: if I were to stifle my impulse to educate him, to create in him my replacement, he would be free of my dangerous enthusiasms, free to blend in, to go with the flow, to choose his own less demanding path - or in any case, a path that would be his own, a life in which he would be responsible for his own suffering. What right do I have to bind him to the value system that has been revealed to me? What cost is it fair for him to pay for my desire for immortality?

It seems I am trapped: my only two options are to abandon my son, leaving him free and leaving me with no continuation - or to educate him and thus sacrifice his safety and happiness to my desire for continuity.

Ah, so the reality is more complex than the narrative! It's not just a case of Your suddenly commanding me to take Isaac up the mountain and sacrifice him. Rather, it is by my accepting Your way and seeking to educate Isaac in it that I am choosing to sacrifice him. This story is about an impossible dilemma, between commitment and freedom, between the love that binds and the love that lets go, between life for its own sake and life for the sake of an idea. Now I understand the story, but somehow I feel that future readers won't.

No, the test is not what it seems at first: the question You are asking is whether I am sufficiently committed to Your law to be willing to pass it on to Isaac knowing the risk to him this transmission may entail. Will I bind him in cords of responsibility and obligation, of innocence and idealism, and wait, hoping against hope that the knife will be stayed, that a scapegoat will materialize in time, each time? Do I have the right? Do I have the courage? Do I have the certainty that my way - Your way - is right? If I love him, perhaps I should hand him a jug of water and give him a shove, telling him to run for his life. Then he would be redeemed, but the world would not.

Maybe that's the point. Educating our children is not only an egotistical sacrifice, on the altar of our own need for immortality, but also an altruistic one, on the altar of the ideal of a redeemed world.

You win. I cannot bring myself to let go, to cut the cords, to turn away so Isaac can wander off into a thicket and get lost to me and to You, the way I wandered off from my father's house. We will go up, the two of us, together, bearing knife and fire — and, in spite of everything, hope.

Marc J. Rosenstein (MJF 1)

Shalom,

Having expressed my condolences to the Fox family at shiva, somehow I feel that I ought to say something to you, his professional family, as well. During my three years as a Jerusalem Fellow and in our ongoing contacts afterwards (much diminished in recent years unfortunately), Seymour was an important influence in my life, and that influence continues to be felt in how I work and how I think about my work. I was very lucky to have the opportunity to be a student of his (though in fact I never took a course with him), and can confirm the theory that much of importance that one learns from a teacher is learned from watching him/her in action, not necessarily by the actual content of the curriculum. He was an amazing person and it is hard to believe that someone so full of life and the joy of life is gone. Aside from the professional/educational sphere where his influence on me was felt, I was always moved by his zealous commitment to certain mitzvot like honoring one's parents, and welcoming guests, and he was a role model for me there as well.

If I, one of the farther moons in his universe, feel this sense of loss, I can imagine what you two, who moved in the closest orbit, must feel. Fortunately, in Seymour's case, his immortality is assured, in the many institutions and disciples he raised up. And of course, he left us a lot of work to do. Hopefully we can be worthy of the challenge.

"May God comfort us all among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem..."

Marc

P.S. After Seymour's 70th birthday, an effort was begun to publish a jubilee volume of pieces by students and friends. I don't know if he ever saw the material that was submitted, nor do I know what is happening to the publication - I assume it will come out at some point as a memorial volume. In any case, I thought you might like to see, at this occasion, what I wrote; attached is the central portion of it.

E-Mail sent by Marc Rosenstein

Vision at the heart: The death of a Jewish educator is a reminder of the values Israel is trying to defend

Before the first jet strafed Beirut, before the first missile crashed into Haifa, there was someone I was going to tell you about. His name was Seymour Fox, and either you never heard of him or you probably agree with the education professor who said in 1993 that he “might validly be considered the most important figure in the field [of Jewish education] in this century.”

Rabbi Fox was most recently the director of programs of the Mandel Foundation. Before that he directed the School of Education at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Before that — well, do you have time? Raised in Chicago and ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1956, he served as assistant to the chancellor and later as dean of the Teachers Institute. He was instrumental in the development of Camp Ramah, especially in cementing its role as a font of Jewish learning and identity for a generation of emerging Conservative leaders and lay people.

Fox made aliya in 1966, which gave him an opportunity to play a central role in Jewish education in both Israel and the Diaspora. He brought then cutting-edge ideas in teacher training and educational research into classrooms across the country. He helped establish the Melton Center for Jewish Education in the Diaspora, which lifted the field out of its traditional backwater.

I first encountered Fox almost three decades later, when I took part in another program he founded: The Jerusalem Fellows. The Fellows brings together Jewish educators from around the world for two years of study and then kicks them out of the country to spread the gospel according to Seymour. I was an experiment — as JTS professor Barry Holtz once wrote, Fox “had an eye toward bringing somewhat more unconventional types into the field.” Apparently “unconventional” means someone with a shaky grasp of Hebrew and a shakier grasp of educational theory, because I got in.

I had mixed feelings about the program — and Prof. Fox. He was a disciple of educational theorist Joseph Schwab of the University of Chicago, and Jerusalem Fellows were obligated to memorize Schwab’s four “commonplaces” of education: instructors, learners, content, and milieu. I often beat my head against the wall, trying to figure out what this all had to do with me and my profession. And Fox himself was an intimidating figure, outsized in the way that certain politicians, CEOs, and football coaches seem large — and slightly scary — even when they stand a head shorter than you.

But two things stuck with me. Much of Fox’s philosophy is summarized in the title of a monograph about his days at Camp Ramah: “Vision at the Heart.” “A great vision,” Fox said, “will inspire educators to creativity and even to the invention of new kinds of institutions. Goals certainly matter, but by themselves they’re not sufficient. And they are often so pedantic as to leave no room for vision. A vision that is intelligible and worthwhile is guided by great ideas that will survive periods when those ideas are out of favor.”

In the years since I left the program, the mantra of “vision” remains with me, and I’ve seen both how a clear vision sustains an institution through change, and how the lack of one is a recipe for failure and irrelevance.

The other thing that stuck with me were the people assembled around the Fellows’ conference table. Call it pluralism, diversity, a mishmash: My class, hardly atypical for the Fellows, included Orthodox, Reform, Conservative, and one avowed Israeli secularist; the principal of a Yiddish culture day school in Mexico City and a Hungarian philosopher; a dentist-turned-day school principal and a rabbi who would eventually write a book on being gay and Orthodox. In another part of the building, in a program for Israeli educators, the same pattern was repeated, with the addition of Israeli Arabs, Christians, and Druze.

This was all of Israel -- indeed, the whole Jewish world -- in one building, it seemed. The lessons it taught me in tolerance and in the ability to share ideas and learn from those with whom we disagree have shaped me personally and professionally ever since.

So why am I telling you this story now, with missiles raining on Haifa and Nahariya and Israeli jets flying deep into Lebanon? Firstly, and most importantly, Seymour Fox passed away in July, not violently but unexpectedly. He was 77 and was buried at the Eretz HaChaim Cemetery near Beit Shemesh.

But it’s also important to tell you about him, in this of all times, because Fox represented everything that Israel’s enemies want to destroy and everything that Israel’s people want to defend. Terrorists may have forced Israel behind walls, but it is not a garrison state. Behind those walls scholars synthesize the world’s knowledge and bring it to Israeli classrooms, laboratories and corporate suites. They turn around and export new visions to the rest of the world. Israelis argue (most of them are Jews, after all), but somehow there’s room for all kinds of people, and all kinds of ideas and beliefs.

And frankly, that’s what terrifies Israel’s enemies. That in the short span of its independence, Israel was able to corral its rival political factions into a functional, even flourishing, state; that in the face of violence it could develop a culture of innovation and enterprise; that in the midst of rejection it could still imagine — no, plan on — a future of coexistence.

Israel cultivates its own crazies, to be sure, but they are on the margins. At its heart, however, is a vision — a vision, you might say, that is guided by great ideas that will survive periods when those ideas are out of favor.

Andrew Silow-Carroll (MJF 15)

Andrew Silow-Carroll is Editor-in-Chief of the New Jersey Jewish News . This piece was published in the July 20 edition of the NJ Jewish News in Prof. Fox’s memory. It is on line at <http://www.njewishnews.com/njnn.com/072006/edcolVisionAtTheHeart.html>:

A Teacher

After returning from three years as a Mandel Jerusalem Fellow, people often ask me what I really got out of the program. I used to reply in jest, “I got to know Seymour Fox”.

As is often the case, my little joke was based on truth. To see Seymour in action, to understand the way he works, and to cross words with him intellectually was probably one of the most important experiences I gained during my stay in Jerusalem. I gained much from this experience on both a professional and personal level.

Seymour was a man of convictions who was not afraid of resorting to provocation in order to express his convictions. Yet behind the self-confident exterior, he had an unusual ability to listen to others, and, on occasion and without admitting it, to accept their arguments when they managed to convince him.

Above and beyond Seymour the program director and teacher, however, there was Seymour the human being. If a student or colleague faced a problem, he would move heaven and earth to help him, completely disregarding intellectual arguments and differences of opinion.

In recent years, contact between us has been less frequent. The frequency of meetings declined, as did the promises of cooperation between the Mandel Foundation and the Alliance. We did not always make the effort to meet when I came to Israel. Then, a few weeks ago, the Mandel staff began to renew contact with the alumni. “Submit a project and we’ll see how we can help.”

Without raising my expectations too much, I submitted a project from the Institute for Jewish Research and Education in Paris, under the auspices of the Alliance, to several members of staff at the Mandel Foundation. After studying it, they found it interesting and commented that it would be useful for me to discuss the matter with Seymour at some stage. I wrote to New York to suggest a meeting, and the reply was immediate. Seymour welcomed me warmly during my last visit to Israel at the beginning of July. Respecting tradition, I played the role of host and we dined in the restaurant of the King David Hotel. Our meetings were extremely warm, and it was evident that we both enjoyed renewing our acquaintance.

After the meal came the usual expressions of thanks to the director of the hotel, who was profuse in his admiration for Professor Fox. Some gastronomic observations on French cuisine followed (tradition, tradition), and Seymour took the project with him, promising to read it and comment on it the next day.

Due to other obligations, he was only able to read the document in part. He called me to express his interest, and suggested that we should discuss the matter in greater detail during an upcoming trip to New York.

On Monday, July 17th, my list of telephone calls for the day (a habit I learned from Seymour) included the note: call Seymour Fox. In the meantime, I had opened the mail that informed me that such a call could never take place.

Since then, my emotions have been mixed: profound sadness and pain, but also the happiness of having seen him one last time as I always knew him – a teacher in the finest sense of the term: someone who is able to inspire and guide more by example than by the material he conveys.

Jean-Jacques Wahl (MJF 1)

So sad.

The man was a real powerhouse.

Rashi's commentary on the death of Aharon in the recent sedra of Chukat (Rashi on Bamidbar 20:29) is very fitting.

Bnei Yisrael just could not believe he was gone...

(כט) ויראו כל העדה וגו'. כשראו משה ואלעזר יורדים ואהרן לא ירד, אמרו היכן הוא אהרן, אמר להם מת, אמרו, אפשר מי שעמד כנגד המלאך ועצר את המגפה ישלוט בו מלאך המות, מיד בקש משה רחמים והראוהו מלאכי השרת להם מוטל במטה, ראו והאמינו:

The man who did so much for Jewish Education – who pushed, challenged and provoked us to do better – is gone? Not possible. And yet...

Please send my best to the family and everyone at Mandel.

Baruch Dayan Emet,

Dr. Raphael Zarum (MJF 21)

אין לי הרבה לכתוב כי לא נפגשתי איתו הרבה, אבל את הדוקטורט שלי אני חייבת לפרופ' פוקס ז"ל.

באתי להתייעצות איתו אחרי סיום הלימודים בביה"ס למנהיגות חינוכית ובתחילת דרכי בפרוייקט החדש שהקמתי, שהיה תובעני ולקח את כל זמני, ביטאתי חשש שלא אוכל להשלים דוקטורט בגלל הלחץ והעומס והתייעצתי אם לעבור לאוניברסיטה בחו"ל, שהדרך לתאר שלישי בה יותר קלה. הוא הסתכל עלי ואמר לי השתגעת מה את הולכת להשוות את זה לדוקטורט מהאוניברסיטה העברית.

הוא דרבן אותי לא לוותר, למרות הכל ושאין אופציה להתפשר. כך פחות או יותר הוא לימד אותנו לאורך כל הדרך, תמיד לשלמות, ולקפוץ מעבר למה שנראה הגבול של היכולות. תמיד יותר ותמיד לא לוותר. אני תמיד שאבתי כח מהעידוד ומהמחה, ואפילו "נחת" שיכולתי להריש שהוא מקרין בפגישות איתו. זה תמיד נתן כח ורצון להמשיך עוד.

בברכה

חנה קהת (בי"ס למנהיגות חינוכית, מחזור א')

קיבלתי ההודעה בתדהמה ובכאב רב ביותר.
סימור היה לי ולחברי דמות של מורה, מחנך ואפילו אב.
משתתפת בצער המשפחה וכל חוג מכריו ומוקיריו.

גילה בן הר (בי"ס למנהיגות חינוכית, מחזור א')