

more technically minded scholars. Any work that grants insight into the human condition can ultimately make us better at understanding Torah. Additionally, the student of R. Carmy discovers that asking theological questions about *Tanakh* not only does not distract from the business of learning, but is an indispensable component of the endeavor. While not every chapter of *Tanakh* should be reduced to a *mussar schmeuss*, these prophetic texts do attempt to convey religious meaning.

This seriousness of purpose did not mean a dearth of light moments in class. From R. Carmy's beginning to teach while removing his sweater on the way in to his penchant for odd bits of medical knowledge to his references to the Police Philosopher — the class did incorporate its share of smiles. These were not the smiles of coarseness or frivolity but the joy that accompanies integrity and accomplishment. In a related vein, G. K. Chesterton points out that saints, contrary to popular imagination, often radiate a particular joy.

When I compare my college experiences to that of peers at secular universities, I often find that these two individuals provided me with a better education. To this day, YC includes the opportunities for a glorious learning dynamic if one selects the best courses. It is a shame that this great opportunity finds itself under siege from a three-pronged attack. The move to the right of some at Yeshiva leads to an unnecessary narrowing of vision regarding which aspects of human endeavor have Jewish value. The growing utilitarian pragmatism of America has students interested solely in GPA and the most lucrative jobs. Finally, the bugbears of relativism, historicism, and deconstructionism promote an environment in which nihilism and power politics replace the search for "the best that has been thought and said in the world." Reducing all ideas to responses to the socio-economic reality of their time and thinking that texts mean whatever we want them to do not inspire the thought that great books and ideas matter.

When I encounter students who fail to take advantage of the best courses available at YC, I am reminded of the well-known legend about a person who ignores his allotted time to pick up and acquire diamonds in the mistaken belief that such gems are worthless. The afternoons at YC offer the chance to collect precious materials. Pick up the gems.

Truth-Seeking as the Mission

By Michael J. Broyde

I came to MTA as a freshman in 1978 at the age of fourteen and left RIETS in 1992 at the age of twenty-seven, having happily spent nearly all of my adult life until that point as a student at Yeshiva. I left for a job as a professor at Emory University, where I still work. But I reflect on my Yeshiva years all the time, and those who have gotten to know me or hear me speak at the Young Israel of Atlanta know that I speak frequently about them.

Although I was at Yeshiva for some landmark events (I was at R. Norman Lamm's speech at the height of the financial difficulties, when closing the doors of Yeshiva was in the air, and I was in the Rav's last formal *shi'ur*), no single event left me shaped as a person. Rather, when I look back at my time at Yeshiva, I see that a number of different people at a number of different times reinforced in me a sense of its complex mission. That complex mission was to seek truth, and not to be content with half-truths or incomplete truths, never mind to be repulsed by falsehood.

No single person sold me on that mission — but many shared it with me. I still remember speaking to R. Michael Hecht (an unsung hero of Yeshiva, if there ever was one) when I was in eleventh grade about a complex topic that I was troubled by. He turned to me and said, "Truth seeking is complex, and a lot of hard work. Think about this topic some more and then we can speak again." It was then that I began to understand that the goal of Yeshiva was not to point me to a specific

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result, but rather to force me to develop a set of truth-seeking skills that allow me to discern the difference between truth and falsehood. Dr. Barry Potvin similarly shared with me a sense that scientific research was really a search for truth — and not just a tool to get into medical school. Dr. Moshe Bernstein shared the same vision in the context of Bible study, and that was surely the vision of Talmud study in R. Mordechai Willig's *shi'ur*, where I was privileged to sit and learn for a number of years — exposed to the hard analytical learning of *Gemara* and *halakhah* on a daily basis, with truth being the currency of the realm.

No one of these people alone formed me, but I see now a common goal that united the many different people who taught me; it was a recognition that the ultimate value of an education is to seek truth.

Even as a student, I sensed that this search for truth was somewhat disquieting to many. Many students simply wanted to go on their merry way, not plagued by any doubts, examination of the world around them, or digression from their professional goals, and this created some social tension within the community. Other students had already searched for truth and had found it; they spent their time at Yeshiva not searching for truth but proselytizing for the truth that they had found and needed to share. Both of these results, I now realize, are inevitable in a healthy environment that seeks truth.

So too, as I look back — and read some of the somewhat bitter accounts of my fellow alumni — I realize that truth-seeking sometimes leaves people somewhat disappointed in Yeshiva as an institution. Many express their frustration at having to have looked so hard on their own or have related that they were disappointed with Yeshiva because they found truth elsewhere. Such was not my experience. I found the search for truth to be itself a mission of a great deal of value, and learning how to look for truth made my days at Yeshiva ever so valuable. This mission is important, I think, even when, perchance, the truth that one finds is not at Yeshiva, as it was there that many of us were given the skill set to find this truth.

I remember as a Yeshiva College student discussing the Jewish calendar with a friend, and he remark that it would have been much simpler if the Jewish calendar was just a solar or just a lunar calendar (as almost other faiths are). I realized then that the mission of Yeshiva University was somewhat like the Jewish calendar. The Jewish calendar seeks to reconcile two somewhat incompatible truths: the solar year and

the lunar months, which do not ideally match up in one year (or even a few years), but yet they are both astronomical truths that can not be ignored. While some might like to build their calendar around only one of these truths and simply ignore the other for the sake of simplicity, the Jewish tradition did not adopt that view, but instead adopted a complex mathematically driven calendar of nineteen year and two-hundred and thirty-five lunar months that produces balance and ultimate truth seeking, but is not for the simple-minded. Yeshiva University balances two complex truths (Torah and secular studies) that are certainly not always fully compatible at least in the short run, and it is only in a complex universe committed to truth seeking that such really works.

The Talmud in *Shabbat* teaches us that “the seal of our Creator is truth,” and Yeshiva trained me to search for that seal in every aspect of my life — and I am grateful for that lesson.