



THE CARDOZIAN

NEWSLETTER OF THE DAVID CARDOZO ACADEMY

Machon Ohr Aaron & Betsy Spijer

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From the Dean's Desk

Dear Friends,

Shall we give up hope?

Pesach is a most powerful festival of protest. A demonstration against despair. We, who have walked through hell and are until this day threatened by annihilation, have never let our heads down. We have outlived all our enemies. From Pharaoh to Hitler. And we all know that we will continue to do so long after Ahmadinejad has been buried under his own empire of hate.

But Pesach is not just a festival. It is a challenge. Shall we live up to it? Shall we create authentic Jews and build our Judaism to new heights? Shall we again be redeemed and celebrate our own new Pesach? Or shall we stay mediocre Jews who only commemorate the Pesach of the past? Shall we betray our Judaism, or make it irresistible? When shall we stop complaining that our children are not inspired, but instead see to it that Judaism becomes the love of their lives?

At the spiritual laboratory of the David Cardozo Academy, we are experimenting and creating new road signs showing new opportunities to engage with a Judaism of the future. Be a part of this experiment. And we shall succeed!

Chag Sameach,

Nathan Lopes Cardozo

Recent **Think Tank** sessions have been focusing on Halacha's relationship towards non-Jews. The Think Tank spent significant time exploring what halacha saw as the function of the non-Jew, evaluating the seven Noahite Laws and tracking halacha's general attitude to the status of non-Jewish faiths. Certain halachot in particular stood out for study, such as Yayin Nesech (libation wine) and bishul akum (cooked foods by a non-Jew), and a specific insight by 13th century Talmudic commentator Rabbi Menachem Meiri allowing for a more tolerant view towards non-Jews who are not idol worshippers which Rabbi Cardozo used to support his suggestion some of these laws be abolished as no longer relevant.

Special Issue: Focus on the David Cardozo Academy Think Tank

The DCA's Jerusalem Think Tank, a forum of Jewish thinkers, educators and leaders, explores a wide range of Jewish topics. Think Tank Fellows present issues from their own lives - matters they struggle with every day - with the hope that exploring uncharted realms of Judaism in these challenging sessions will further invigorate authentic religious living. This edition of the Cardozian takes a closer look at the Think Tank.

Spotlight on Ari Goldberg, THINK TANK Member

Ari Goldberg hails from Ottawa, Canada, studied at its community day school, and then as a teen became active in Jewish communal life. "I was involved in a Liberal havurah my parents started, where I taught and gave drashot from my early adolescence on," recalled Ari. "I later davened in Orthodox minyanim, participated in USY youth and visited Israel on one of their trips, and continued to learn intensively formally and informally, in part through the University of Toronto's Jewish Studies program."

Ari's passion for Judaism reached a milestone when he co-founded the Ottawa College of Jewish Studies, a pluralistic center for adult Jewish learning. He also graduated with a BA in philosophical theology from the University of Ottawa, and then moved to Israel to pursue rabbinic ordination under Rabbi Riskin at Yeshivat HaMivtar.

A career in the Jewish community was a natural choice for Ari. "I love being an educator. I taught Tanach and Jewish philosophy to students, formally and privately, during my years in Ottawa. I've always wanted to share Judaism's beauty with others, and at the same time learn from others and enhance my Judaism."

In Israel, Ari sought out a framework where he could continue to learn and teach, and he discovered the David Cardozo Academy Think Tank. "I was looking for a group of passionate, out-of-the-box, unorthodox-Orthodox Jews with whom to share creative ideas about traditional halachic and philosophical concepts. My involvement has been a blessing. It has provided me with a safe space to discuss my ideas and a supportive community. The experience has given me the confidence to share my ideas with the traditional world and the awareness that there are others who will be receptive to them."

The most critical issue Ari struggles with is the challenge of balancing halachic commitment with personal authenticity. "The Think Tank has given me a format that I can use in exploring issues of halacha that are in tension with my conscience. The format is honest and open and does not allow either side to be compromised. It does not provide easy answers, but allows for a satisfying process of exploration. And this itself is meaningful and allows me to better serve Hashem."



Ari Goldberg, DCA Think Tank Member

New Horizons: The Think Tank Blog

The David Cardozo Academy Think Tank meets twice a month to discuss intellectual and personal issues arising from members' experiences of Judaism, and to promote novel approaches to halachic Jewish life. The very personal nature of the meetings precludes publicizing all the discussions; but the recently launched Think Tank Blog on our website aims to allow the public to engage in the dialogue. Some recent blog topics included: *Is halacha really a way to God consciousness?; Is religion opium to masses?; In search of religious idealism, and What purpose does Judaism serve?* So check it out - and add your posts to the conversation!

Think Tank Discusses Fundamental Commitments with Professor Yehuda Gellman

The David Cardozo Academy **Think Tank** had the pleasure of hosting Professor Yehuda Gellman in one of its "Bonus Monday" sessions. Before Professor Gellman arrived, Think Tank members discussed his article on different approaches to the question of scientific knowledge which seems to contradict the Torah, and they deliberated on the following question which Professor Gellman posed to the group:

To what is one's most fundamental commitment: to a tradition or to God? To what extent can these two be separated from one another and to what extent can the distinction serve as a guide in a religious crisis?

Rabbi Cardozo pointed out that a very important question to ask when considering the above is: What happens when you live a halachic life and God is no longer part of it? The fact that the point of Halacha is to know how to exist in the presence of God is lost on many who keep the Halacha.

Professor Gellman spoke about the problem with "skin deep" religious education which does not foster in students a strong connection to God, even though this connection should be the ultimate goal. This kind of education trains a person to follow the rituals and precepts of the religion and to see the religion as an entity in and of itself rather than seeing the religion as a vehicle to a relationship with God. As a result, the moment someone has a doubt or recognizes an inconsistency within the religion, s/he has no commitment and love for God to "fall back on" and s/he may quickly conclude that, "religion is not for me."

Professor Gellman did not see this problem as more endemic to Hareidi life than to any other stream of Judaism, as one member of the think tank suggested. He put it as follows: "If I keep Torah and mitzvot *because I am an Orthodox Jew*, then 'religion is for me.'" In other words, such a person keeps the Torah because that is how s/he has learned to define her/himself, rather than because s/he is strengthening a committed relationship with God.

Professor Gellman views as most problematic the phenomenon of religious seekers, or questioning people, who keep the Torah and mitzvot without making sure that these are their tools for building a relationship with God. Questioning people - "Yehidei Segula," as Professor Gellman put it, have the responsibility to be internally transformed by their observance. They must be affected by the mitzvot they keep, and if they aren't - if they follow religion because "that's what I do" then for them, this is a form of idol worship. Nevertheless, people who are Yehidei Segula are not permitted to separate themselves from the community in order to follow their own, disconnected, path to self transformation. They still have an obligation to be part of the community, to go to synagogue, etc.

Professor Gellman emphasized that he believes that it is very good for people to have an authority over them. He sees Torah and mitzvot as a way of opening our hearts, as in the verse *ptah libi beToratekha* - open my heart by way of your Torah. Whereas he advocated the use of our "sekhel" or common sense when approaching Halakha, he claims that sekhel may not always have the final say. There is a point where we have to realize that to impose our own sekhel can be an act of egotism and there are things we must do which are beyond our understanding.

Professor Gellman spoke of seeing the whole corpus of Jewish writing as God's way of speaking to the individual in a grand sense. This applies even when individual laws may not appeal to our common sense. He claims that what we do for the sake of others, even when the act may not conform to what we believe to be true, can be part of an authentic life.

Heresy and Denial of God's Existence at Jerusalem Lecture Series Talks

Under the leadership of Rabbi Cardozo, the 5772/2012 *Judaism, Heresy and Secular Philosophy* Jerusalem Lecture Series, which explores subjects rarely discussed publicly in observant Jewish circles, commenced with four stimulating talks. David Cardozo Academy Dean Rabbi Cardozo delivered the series' opening talk, "**Spinoza, the Kotzker Rebbe, and I,**" introducing Baruch Spinoza's background in Spanish-Portuguese Amsterdam, and exploring how Spinoza's views about belief in God and religion influenced Rabbi Cardozo to move closer to a religious, Jewish life. Rabbi Cardozo also discussed the dogmatic attitudes of the teachers of Spinoza which alienated him from Judaism. He also articulated the many (deliberate) misreadings of Spinoza concerning Judaism and wondered what would have happened if Spinoza would have met the great Chassidic masters such as the Kotzker Rebbe. Would Spinoza have stayed in the fold when confronted with their original and non-dogmatic readings of Judaism?



Professor Yehuda Gellman and DCA Dean Rabbi Cardozo

Professor **Ephraim Meir's** lecture, "**The Crisis of Jewish Identity and Franz Rosenzweig,**" traced Franz Rosenzweig's rediscovering of his Jewishness after an identity crisis and attempt to convert to Christianity. Professor Meir detailed Rosenzweig's viewpoint on Jewish identity and attempted to shed light on how today we may deal with Jewish identity crises, as Rosenzweig did.

Professor **William Kolbrener's** lecture, "**Milton, Paradise Lost, and Me: Is Our Paradise Lost? Desire, Skepticism and Belief,**" took the audience on a journey into Milton's famous epic, *Paradise Lost*, exploring the notion of wandering, or being lost, in the absence of a theological timeframe. And in his talk, "**The Dawkins Delusion: A Response to Richard Dawkins' Book, The God Delusion,**" Professor **Yehuda Gellman** demonstrated the weaknesses in Dawkins' proofs that God does not exist.

Academy Dean Lectures in the UK, USA and Holland

Close to 3,000 participants flocked to the University of Warwick, England, to attend the Limmud Conference, one of the most important international venues for Jewish education and learning. David Cardozo Academy Founder and Dean, Rabbi Dr. **Nathan Lopes Cardozo**, was invited once again as a featured presenter, delivering three major keynote addresses to the Conference: ***Spinoza, the Kotzker Rebbe, and I, I am Taking Off My Kippah!***, and ***God is Not Righteous and the Torah is Not Moral: Thoughts on the Justice of God and the Morality of the Torah.***

Panel on Practicing Judaism in a Secular Age

Rabbi Cardozo also served as a panelist in two debates; one with Professor **Elliott Malamet** (Jewish Studies lecturer at York University and The Community Hebrew Academy in Toronto, and Founder, Torah in Motion) on ***Faith, Doubt and the Road Ahead: Struggling with Our Judaism***, and another with Rabbi **Joel Levy** (of Kol Nefesh Masorti synagogue in London and of the Conservative Yeshiva in Jerusalem), Rabbi **Laura Janner-Klausner** (Rabbi for the Reform Judaism Movement in the UK), and Rabbi **Deborah Kahn-Harris** (Principal of Leo Baeck College in London) on ***Practicing Judaism in a Secular Age: the Future of Halacha.***



Rabbi Cardozo and Prof. Elliott Malamet. Credit: Chaim Bacon

Prior to Limmud Conference the **Jewish Chronicle**, a leading UK Jewish weekly newspaper, featured Rabbi Cardozo's article, *Why I Love to Teach at Limmud*.

London synagogues **Alei Tzion** and **Ner Yisrael**, congregations of Rabbi **Daniel Roselaar** and Rabbi Dr. **Alan Kimche** respectively, both welcomed Rabbi Cardozo as guest speaker over the Shabbat weekend, culminating in a joint Sunday morning lecture for members of both synagogues. Rabbi Cardozo also had the pleasure of addressing a private gathering at the home of **Karine and David Morris**, and of meeting with



Lecture at the Home of Karine and David Morris

leaders of the UK Jewish community and friends of the David Cardozo Academy. Audios of some of Rabbi Cardozo's UK talks are available on the David Cardozo Academy website.

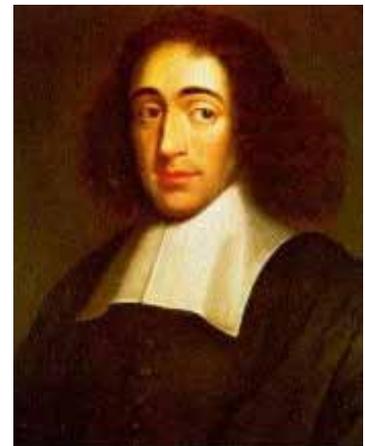
Rabbi Cardozo recently served as keynote speaker at LimmudLA Conference in Southern California, with hundreds of participants in attendance, presenting three talks at the conference. The Los Angeles Jewish Journal printed Rabbi Cardozo's article, prior to the conference.

Rabbi Cardozo just returned from Holland where he was the scholar in residence at the first anniversary of AMOS, the new **Amsterdam Modern Orthodox Synagogue** led by the energetic Rabbi **Menachem Sebag** and Doron Sanders. This synagogue has become a major center of Judaism for young couples, singles and many religious and non-religious students. Rabbi Cardozo has been involved in the building of this community from its very beginning and functions as one of its mentors. Rabbi Cardozo presented several talks over shabbat. His main lecture on Sunday, ***Spinoza, AMOS and the Future of Judaism***, drew many people and initiated a lot of discussion among the members of AMOS and beyond.

On the initiative of Dr. **Henry Markens** of Amsterdam, Rabbi Cardozo lectured at the Yehudah Palache Institute of the University of Amsterdam, named after Professor Yehudah Palache who perished in the Holocaust, and directed by the well-known scholar Professor **Irene Zwiép**. Rabbi Cardozo's talk, ***the Future of Halacha: Challenge and Opportunity***, set out his dreams about the future of Halacha and called for the introduction of prophetic Halacha instead of defensive Halacha. Rabbi **David Lilienthal** of the Liberal Jewish Community and Dean of the Levisson Institute in Amsterdam presented the second lecture. The lectures introduced this year's topic at the University of Amsterdam: ***The Development of Halacha Since the Holocaust.*** The

afternoon ended with a discussion between the two speakers and the audience.

While in Holland Rabbi Cardozo continued to meet with major players in the Jewish community of Holland where he was asked for his advice concerning many issues troubling the Jewish community. Rabbi Cardozo also attended the inauguration of Chacham Dr. **Pinchas Toledano**, the new Chief Rabbi of the famous Portuguese Spanish Jewish community of which Rabbi Cardozo is a member. Rabbi Dr. **Marc D. Angel** (a good friend Rabbi Cardozo) of the Portuguese Spanish Synagogue of Manhattan inducted the new Chief Rabbi.



Spinoza and the Portuguese Synagogue, Amsterdam, Holland

Locally in Israel, Rabbi Cardozo spoke at the Glenwood Jewish Center in Chashmonaim on ***"Spinoza, the Kotzker Rebbe, and I"*** at a lecture sponsored by Mr. Benja Philipson in memory of his dear mother Chava Philipson zichrona livracha, on her Yahrzeit day. After Pesach Rabbi Cardozo will serve as scholar in residence at Beit Knesset Ohel Ari and Shivtei Yisrael, both in Ra'anana.

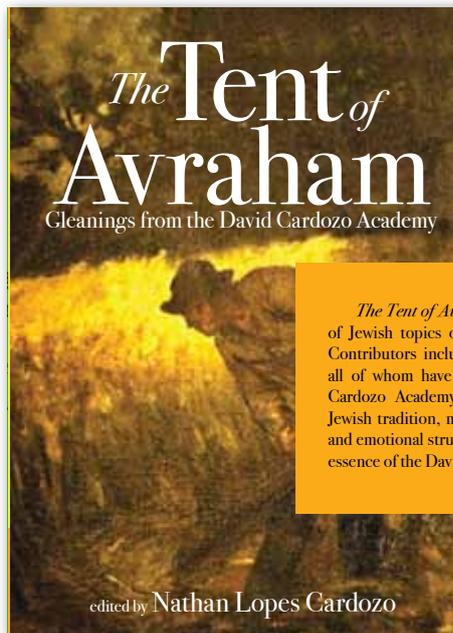
Future lecture tours by Rabbi Cardozo include Limmud Berlin, the Jewish community of Birmingham, Limmud Australia and New Zealand, Holland and South Africa.

From the Pressroom

Prior to Rosh Hashanah the *Jerusalem Post* and Israel's Weekly *Makor Rishon* Newspapers published Rabbi Cardozo's article, *Judaism: The Art of Bold Ideas*, which called for innovation and leadership. And the Academy's latest book, *The Tent of Avraham: Gleanings from the David Cardozo Academy*, is in the final stages of printing.

Judaism: The Art of Bold Ideas

It is time to start thinking big about Judaism. We need to get it out of all the compartmentalized boxes in which we have placed it over the many years...Most religious Jews are not aware that Judaism has become passé. They believe it is doing great. After all, we have more learning, more Jewish schools, more yeshivot, women's seminaries, outreach programs and books on Judaism than ever before. Despite this, Judaism suffers from a major malady. In truth, it is not only Judaism that suffers from this disease, but the whole world. *We lack great bold ideas.* We have fallen in love with—and become overwhelmed by—an endless supply of all-encompassing but passive information, which does not get *processed* but only *recycled*...



The Tent of Avraham is an anthology of essays on a variety of Jewish topics of academic, personal and spiritual nature. Contributors include Jewish thinkers, professors and rabbis, all of whom have taught at or are affiliated with the David Cardozo Academy in Jerusalem. Original insights into the Jewish tradition, many of the articles include a more personal and emotional struggle with elements of Judaism, capturing the essence of the David Cardozo Academy.

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