

• *To familiarize our chanichim with the various sources and give them a sense that these sources are accessible to them.*

We speak in Netzer about the need to 'democratize' Jewish life and decision making. We reject the practice of 'professional Jews' carrying on Jewish life for us while we watch from the sidelines. However, this democratization of Jewish life calls for knowledge among non-professionals, i.e. us and the chanichim. We cannot presume to make important decisions without the necessary knowledge. That knowledge is found in the traditional sources of the Jewish library. Although we do not expect our chanichim to be able to come out of the movement with a vast knowledge of the Torah, Talmud and Shulchan Aruch, we can expect them to know the names of the books, what they are about, and perhaps most importantly, the sense that these books are not "in heaven" - rather that these books are on the bookshelves of any decent Jewish library waiting to be read by all who wish; waiting to impart their wisdom and to influence anyone who will open the books, turn the pages, and hear the message.

• *To encourage our chanichim to grapple personally with Jewish ideas and values in a serious manner, in the traditional Jewish way.*

Although we can, and indeed do, use a variety of techniques to convey our ideology, traditionally the Jewish way to educate has been through the written word. It seems that when we analyze a text, examining each word and each phrase, we can achieve a depth which is more difficult to reach via other techniques. It is important to expose our chanichim to this mode of study, both so that they experience the process, and so that they grapple with these issues in a serious fashion.

At what age is Jewish textual involvement appropriate?

At every age! Obviously, the nature of the involvement of a seven year old will differ radically from that of a fifteen year old; however it is our belief that some measure of involvement is crucial at all ages. Without building the first stages of emotional openness, attachment and basic knowledge at an early age, education at a later age is irreparably set back. Even at the youngest age level we can achieve some of the goals set forth above. For example, if a madrich/a (youth counselor) holds a Tanach while telling the story of the spies sent to examine Eretz Yisrael (Netzer Book Book I, p.94), especially while treating the Tanach with extra care, (eg. not resting it on the ground), the chanich/a will view the story - and the Tanach - as having a special status. The chanich/a will link the story to the book, and will distinguish it from other stories s/he knows. We can thus, even at a very early age, convey the sense that certain Jewish books are "kadosh"; they do not simply tell the stories of what happened once, they tell the story of what always happens, they tell our story. The first steps in familiarizing chanichim with Jewish texts can be taken by introducing young children to Jewish figures and heros. There is no reason why Abraham, Moses, Miriam and Ruth should not be part of the landscape of a child's imaginary world; it seems safe to assume that the Ninja Turtles, Mickey Mouse and Cinderella would only be pleased to welcome more characters into the magical world of the imagination. The identification with these Biblical figures and the emotional attachment felt for them can serve as an excellent basis for Torah study which will come at a later age.

AND NOW TO THE BOOKS THEMSELVES...

NARRATIVE

When we use 'narrative' here we are referring to texts which, in some way, tell a story, or part of a story. We can also include in this definition commentaries surrounding the original texts/stories. The basic 'story' upon which all the other texts are based is the Tanach. We shall first examine the Tanach and then move onto other narrative works: Midrash and Mikraot Gadolot.

