

LOOK WHO'S TALKING AT ATID

ATID has hosted a number of prominent educators and communal figures through our **Forum for Inquiry and Deliberation in Jewish Education**. Recently M.K. Natan Sharansky led a panel discussion on "Israel as a Jewish and Democratic State: Educational Challenges and Opportunities."

Rabbi Dr. **Jacob J. Schacter**, Dean of the Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik Institute in Brookline, Mass., served as ATID's 2003 Scholar-in-Residence. Rabbi Schacter spent an intensive week of teaching and mentoring the ATID Fellows, and also delivered the keynote at our Mid-Winter Conference on "The Role of General Studies in Torah Education: Lessons from the Approach of Rabbi Soloveitchik." Audio files of both of these events (and other ATID conferences) can be downloaded from www.atid.org/audio.htm



M.K. Sharansky



Rabbi Jacob J. Schacter discussing Rabbi Soloveitchik and general studies. Seated (from left): Dr. Beverly Gribetz (Principal, Evelina de Rothschild School & ATID faculty), Rabbi Shimon Adler (Head of Religious Education, Israel's Ministry of Education), and ATID Director R. Jeffrey Saks

SENIOR ATID FELLOWS

For the 2003-04 academic year ATID invited three of our alumni to return as staff members, working on an intensive policy analysis and proposal for Jewish schools. Dr. Yoel Finkelman, updates us on the work he, Aliza Segal and Chaviva Speter have undertaken...

School reform is a long and difficult process. For the most part, change is reactive, responding to immediate problems that require resolution, rather than pro-active: envisioning what ideal education might be. When we returned to ATID in September, Rabbi Browender challenged us to begin not with an actual school in all its concreteness, but with a vision of an ideal and how to try to achieve it. He called on us to imagine ideal yeshiva high school graduates, and to create a model of a school that could produce such graduates. We were to ignore—at least for the moment—the complex and very real issues of budget, staff, and the like, and focus on those ideals, determining how such a vision could be formulated, and then to "work backwards" in charting a path for making that happen.

We have responded to that challenge by arguing that education can harness the energy and motivation which teens exhibit for many things, though often not for school. Adopting aspects of a traditional Beit Midrash, combined with theories and pedagogies from general educational that emphasize student choice and academic independence, we believe that it may be possible to radically improve students' motivation, academic achievement, and, ultimately, identity with Torah and its values.

As we began our work we divided our attention in three primary directions. First, we have been visiting and observing schools, both in Israel and the United States, and speaking with leading educators about student independence and the use of the Beit Midrash. Second, we have been examining the professional literature about academic independence, from both Jewish and general perspectives. Finally, we have been mapping out several models of new schools which could work to encourage student independence and motivation, without losing track of the good elements in the existing system.

With the ongoing assistance of the rest of the ATID faculty we are beginning to formulate a policy statement that will include an ideological statement about the place of independent learning in Torah education, a vision of the ideal school which could be created, and suggestions for implementation by existing schools under concrete and often limited conditions. This policy statement will help jar some of the existing status quo in Orthodox education, beginning a conversation that can help enrich both the theory and practice of Torah learning for contemporary Jewish youth.

Starting in September 2004 we will be implementing an experimental version of our program in one of Jerusalem's leading high schools, which will be a laboratory site in which we can evaluate our proposals, and serve as a model of innovation for other schools.

Joining Finkelman, Segal and Speter is **Rabbi Yair Kahn**, a veteran ATID mentor, and long-time faculty member of Yeshivat Har Etzion: "ATID deals with the challenges of Torah education, which are of paramount significance since Talmud Torah is not only to prepare for life, but reflects the Jewish way of life itself. It has been exciting to try to meet these challenges together with talented young educators, who can be refreshingly novel in their approach while being totally committed to tradition." Rabbi Kahn serves as a resource to the project, and will be contributing a section on the particular challenges of contemporary Talmud study and teaching.



Dr. Yoel Finkelman



Aliza Segal



Chaviva Speter



Rabbi Yair Kahn

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JEWISH EDUCATION & THE CREATIVE ARTS

ATID's conference, "one of the most significant events in the growing reawakening of the Jewish arts." —The Jewish Press

To inaugurate a series of planned initiatives on the topic of the arts in Torah education, ATID sponsored its first New York conference, **Creative Spirituality: Jewish Education and the Arts**. Convened by ATID President, Rabbi Chaim Browender, the November 2003 event was co-sponsored by the Yeshiva University Museum, and drew over 150 Jewish educators and artists for a daylong program to discuss, debate, and collaborate on issues related to the place and use of the creative arts in Jewish education.



Rabbi Browender

"Often, art in the Jewish day school has been limited to narrow purposes," explained Rabbi Browender. "ATID is interested in addressing the question of what are the values and ideas inherent in the visual and creative arts that makes them compelling, and how can they be used to reinvigorate the study of Torah and the observance of mitzvot—practices that have tragically become, for many students, devoid of mystery and wonder, and what do these ideas and values mean for our work in schools?"

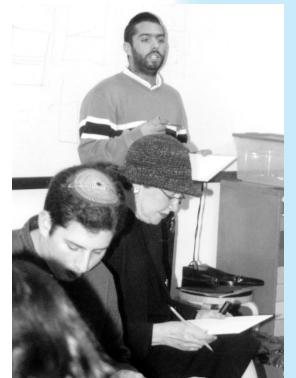
Three conference sessions examined the challenges and possibilities—from the perspective of the rabbinic tradition, from the artist's studio, and finally the view from the schoolhouse. Among the conference highlights was the hands-on workshop with artists, in which the participants were asked to draw, "as a way of exploring the potential of the act of creating as a model and trigger for the 'slowing-down' process, which might be the same as the

need to enter *tefillah* properly," explained workshop leader, Artist Ophir Agassi.

Yet, introducing art—both actual creativity as well as harnessing an appreciation for beauty and wonder—to day school education remains a challenge. "ATID's dedication to exploring the possibilities and launching initiatives in this area will be among the ways we are working to improve the state of contemporary Torah education," explained Rabbi Jeffrey Saks, ATID's director.

Rabbi Browender compared the unique quality of beauty found in nature or created artworks to the uniqueness found in the truth embedded in Torah. "Paradoxically, neither is ever totally satisfying—we always feel need to experience more beauty and truth." A parallel conference to be held in Jerusalem will take place in the late Spring 2004.

To join ATID's e-mail discussion forum "ATID ART"—and join concerned colleagues in the virtual debate and dialogue on ways to incorporate the arts in our teaching—send e-mail to atidart@atid.org



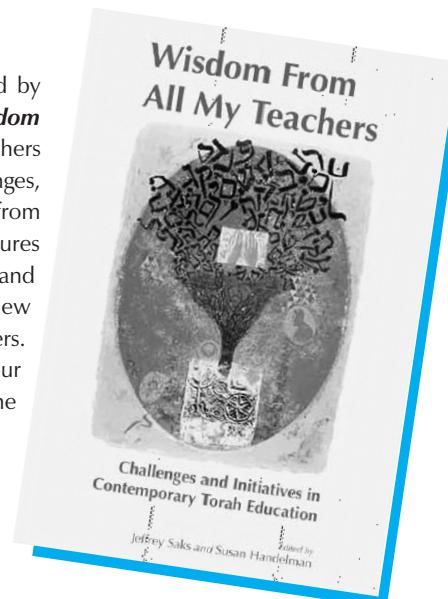
Artist Ophir Agassi

"WISDOM" ON YOUR SHELF

ATID's first book-length publication has recently appeared. Edited by ATID director, Rabbi Jeffrey Saks, and Prof. Susan Handelman, **Wisdom From All My Teachers** contains twenty original essays by leading teachers of Torah from around the globe. Containing reflections on the challenges, methods, and goals of teaching Torah by leading Jewish educators from Israel and the Diaspora, the volume features writings by leading figures such as Rabbis Norman Lamm, Aharon Lichtenstein, Shalom Carmy, and Drs. Beverly Gribetz and Joel B. Wolowelsky. Visit www.atid.org to view Table of Contents, author bios, and a "look inside" to sample chapters. The volume is available through all fine booksellers, and through our website. These essays will stimulate all who feel strongly about the future of Torah teaching.



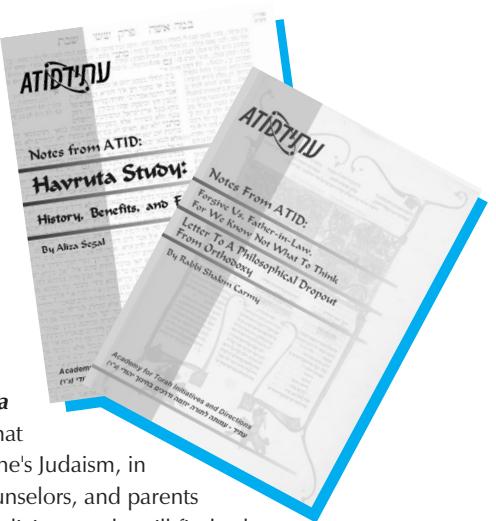
Dr. Dodi Tobin discusses her chapter in **Wisdom** at the Jerusalem book-launching. Dr. Tobin's essay, which began as research in our ATID Fellows program, is entitled "The Post-High School Year in Israel: Parent-Child Relationships and Religious Growth."



A diverse group of innovative Jewish educators, men and women, some who are new to teaching and others who are among the leading figures in teaching Torah. The writers share a deep concern for these issues and for those whose lives will be impacted by their teaching." —The Jewish Week

"NOTES FROM ATID"

ATID has continued to produce trend-setting and insightful monographs in its "Notes From ATID" series. Most recently, we published **Havruta Study: History, Benefits, and Enhancements**, by ATID Senior Fellow Aliza Segal. Examining the history of learning *be-havruta*, Segal describes the benefits, and evaluates whether two models from the world of general education—cooperative learning and the cognitive approach—may enhance the *havruta* system in Day Schools.



Another new title in the series is Rabbi Shalom Carmy's **Letter to a Philosophical Dropout From Orthodoxy**—offering insight into what it means to be religiously alive, and philosophically engaged by one's Judaism, in the form of a letter to a questioning student. Teachers, rabbis, counselors, and parents entrusted with guiding children, young adults, and all seekers of religious truth, will find value in the disputation of the "don't ask, don't tell" attitude which too often limits Orthodox Judaism to a set of demonstrable normative acts, eviscerating the inner meaning, depth, and force of a philosophically engaged, multi-dimensional Jewish life.

The "Notes From ATID" series has been distributed to North American yeshivah high schools through a partnership with the Association of Modern Orthodox Day Schools (AMODS).

FOCUS: ATID ALUMNI

In this issue we feature the work of three alumni of the ATID Fellows program.

ADINA LUBER was admitted to the Israeli bar as a lawyer before making the career-switch to being a teacher.

As a first-year teacher and 9th grade mehanekhet (home-room teacher with primary responsibility for the class) at Ulpanat Amit Noga in Beit Shemesh, my responsibility of running a class of 23 is a challenging one. I find that the daily tasks of preparing lesson plans for my Talmud, Mishnah, and Beit Midrash classes, as well as taking care of students' individual needs and attending meetings, consumes much of my energy and does not enable me to invest the time I would like in thinking about my teaching and the relationship between what I am doing and the greater goals of Jewish education. I am grateful to have had the time and place to think about these essential issues while I was an ATID Fellow. The skills and approach I gained influence the way I view my role as an educator. The research project I worked on during my years at ATID focused on *middot* and character education (especially for young women, like those I teach), as well as the way school leadership works to bring vision and goals into the hard work of schooling. That work, as well as the relationships I formed with the other Fellows and my mentors, continues to spare me much frustration and misunderstanding which I might have experienced as a new teacher in a new, developing school.



MOSHE (KINLEY) TUR-PAZ is a teacher in Jerusalem's Pelekh School and Chairman of Ne'emanei Torah va-Avoda.

The fusion of "Torah and Avodah" was always a fundamental premise of the Religious Zionist movement, believing that Judaism's values could provide a basis for the establishment of a modern society in the Land of Israel. Basic to that vision is the integration of religiously observant citizens in all walks of life in the Jewish State. My own commitment to these goals led me to recently accept the leadership of Ne'emanei Torah va-Avoda, a non-political movement founded over 25 years ago, in addition to my responsibilities in school and the classroom. The orientation of our organization is social and ideological. Our members concentrate on questions of modern observance, on Jewish identity in a modern state, and on other issues that are critical to the internal workings of Israeli society. Through our publishing division (which produces our quarterly journal, *Deot*) I am editing *Orthodox Confrontations with Biblical Criticism*, which will contain articles, including the work I undertook as an ATID Fellow.

MICHELLE BERKOWITZ, taught in a variety of settings, from nursery school to high school, before founding an educational consultancy firm.

As a madrikhah le-tikhnun hinukhi (educational consultant) I focus primarily on helping children and their parents in the search for the right school. This decision can be difficult for any family, but especially for new olim to Israel, who arrive with teenage children. The Israeli educational system is complex, and differs in many significant ways from what many were used to in North America or elsewhere. During my years in ATID I researched some of the problems facing Anglo-Saxon youth in Israel, and my service has grown out of a response to those needs. So far, I have coordinated high school fairs in Beit Shemesh and Jerusalem, published handbooks to assist families in their search for the right school setting, lectured on the confusions of the Bagrut (matriculation) exams and leniencies available, and continue to provide private counseling services. Among the issues I find myself facing most often include the emotional transition process of teens, providing parents with preparation tips to help ease their children through the difficult transitional points, as well as advocating for teens when challenging issues arise in school.

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Join **ATID** in its mission to effect positive change in the world of Jewish education through training outstanding educational leadership, working with teachers and schools, and producing sophisticated teaching and resource materials. Various initiatives and publications are available for dedication. **ATID** is a 501C3 charity in the United States via its American funding body, **Torah Education in Israel** (TEI). Please contact our office to discuss ways that your gift will help make a difference for Jewish education.

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ATID is an independent institution fostering new and significant thought and strategies for the crucial issues facing Jewish education, both in Israel and the Diaspora.
Rabbi Chaim Brovender, President, ATID
Rabbi Jeffrey Saks, Director



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