

“Personal Voice” and Authenticity in Reflections Written by Teacher-training Students

Rivka Shteinmetz and Tsila Aran

As coordinators in the Education Department of Michlalah – Jerusalem Academic College, we have reviewed numerous reflections written by teachers in their first year of specialization in the classroom. Many of them, we noted, remain on the technical level with little depth; perusal of educational research led us to the key concept of authenticity. The concept originates in existentialist philosophy: an authentic individual is unique, at peace with himself, lives a full and meaningful life which he has chosen freely. Maslow (1959) famously contended that teachers must help their students become attentive to the voices rising from the inner wellsprings of their personality, and to hear those voices above the roaring world of social influences. We believe that summed up in the formula: “failing, despair, repair” (*kilkul, ye’ush, tikun*). The Creator made a world that was wholly good; humankind was created in G-d’s image – invested, as Seforno contended, with free choice. Adam’s sin cast humankind into despair at the loss of their lofty status. This, however, enables the opportunity of repair, guided by G-d. The sins of humankind affect both the cosmos and natural order; restoration thus takes place through adaptation to a new reality. In the human realm, the effect of sins on the Jewish people is manifest above all in the appearance of new commandments – particularly after the sin of the Gold Calf and the sin of the spies. This ongoing dynamic eventually resulted in the 613 commandments embodied in the five books of the Torah. R. Copperman articulated this conception, gleaned from the Seforno’s commentary, in his teaching and writings. The second part of this paper considers some of the ways that R. Copperman applied this method to other parts of the Bible (Prophets) and used it in analyzing a range of topics that have received little attention to date.

