Jewish Political Thought

The Jewish Political Tradition as the Basis for Jewish Civic Education: *Pirkei Avot* as an Example

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The Problem and The Opportunity

It is difficult to overemphasize the problems facing Jewish educators in interpreting Jewish peoplehood to American Jews in light of American view of the Jews as a religious group, first and foremost, and Judaism as a religion in the Protestant sense. Even sophisticated American Jewish scholars in fields other than Jewish studies often lack the sense of Jewish peoplehood which lies at the base of all proper Jewish identity. For example, in a recent encounter of this writer with one of the most renowned contemporary scholars of American civilization, himself Jewish and not particularly lacking in Jewish knowledge, it became clear that his view of Israel as a Jewish state meant that Israel was a religious state. He simply could not conceive of a different understanding of "Jewish", this despite that fact that he is a historian who claims to have some passing acquaintance with Zionist history. Under other circumstances he should have been able to simply pick up the very different national meaning of Jewishness that informs Zionism rather than the move limited American theory of what constitutes "being Jewish." Instead, because he was not brought to think about it in other terms, his American perceptive screen filtered out the national element.

This problem has become even more intense because of the political and moral climate in the United States today a nation at peace, with a political existence uncomplicated by major dilemmas, which has the luxury of viewing the rest of the world in black and white terms from a highly moralistic posture based on the least possible understanding of the historical or geopolitical contexts of the issues involved. This is both America's strength and its weakness. Its strength is that Americans are among the few peoples of the world who preserve a serious an active concern for morality in problems of public policy. It is a weakness because this concern for morality in the abstract finds it very hard to deal with morality in practice, with the many gray areas and less than ideal situations in the world.

What is needed is a very sophisticated and hence more difficult program in moral education with a civic orientation, one which the average Jewish school probably does not have the time and at this point certainly does not

have the capability to provide, especially in the face of what is taught in the general education system and through the mass media. Nevertheless an effort must be made if the Jewish school is to help the next generation develop and appropriate commitment to the Jewish people.

The matter is further complicated by the separation of most American Jews from the daily problems of governance and security. It is one thing to talk about political morality when others are doing the dirty work of maintaining civil society. It is quite another when we have to do our own. Characteristically, few American Jews serve either in the military or in the police forces. They do not have to collect their own garbage or clean their own streets all things in which most other American groups are represented and that Israelis must do.

The Jewish Political Tradition

The return of the Jewish people to full participation in history through the reestablished Jewish commonwealth of Israel made it imperative that Jews everywhere reconsider the political teachings of Judaism so as to be able to deal with precisely these kinds of problems. The crises of the past few years have generated renewed interest on the part of committed Jews in the character of Israel as a Jewish state, the various diaspora Jewries as communities in the historical tradition of their antecedents, and in the Jewish people as a corporate entity. As a consequence, the modern Jewish search for roots and meaning has been intensified.

In the twentieth century, the most practical aspects of this search have involved the restoration of Jewish political independence through the State of Israel and the revival of the sense of Jewish peoplehood throughout the diaspora as well. It is precisely because contemporary Jewry has moved increasingly towards self-definition in can only be described as political terms that a significant part of the search for roots and meaning must take place within the political realm. The revival of political concern among contemporary Jews is only right. It is a reflection however obscured of the fundamental truth that the validity of Jewish teaching can only be fully tested through a polity in which Jews have the responsibility for building the "kingdom of heaven" the good commonwealth on earth. Accordingly, it becomes vital for Jews to rediscover the Jewish political tradition in order to pursue the Jewish vision and so as to root their institutions, whether the state of Israel or diaspora communities, more fully within it.

What is a political tradition in this sense? A political tradition represents a shared view of what constitutes justice in public affairs, the proper uses of power in the pursuit of political goals and the reciprocal relationship between power and justice in the body politic. It is built around an enduring consensus a thinking together on the part of the members of a particular political community or body politic about common questions over generations. The answers to those questions need not be the same for all consenting members of the body politic. Were they the same, we would have a political doctrine, not a tradition, for implicit in the existence of a tradition is a dialectical dimension a continuing "great debate," a tension between different expressions of that tradition that remain in tension within

the dialectical framework because of shared common questions which allow for answers that do not diverge beyond certain limits.[1]

Like all of Jewish tradition, the roots of the Jewish political tradition are in the Bible, which has provided Jews and the rest of humanity with an important political teaching.[2] As a tradition, it is best expressed through the political institutions and behavior of Jewish communities and polities throughout the generations. There are important works in Jewish political thought, but in the manner of Jewish thought the most important sources of the tradition are to be found in the halakhic literature are essentially commentaries on the realia of Jewish life.

In the past few years, a growing segment of the Jewish scholarly community has begun to devote itself to the exploration of Jewish political life and thought to developing the basis for the recovery of the Jewish political tradition. Long hidden within the confines of history and sociology, the field of Jewish political studies is now beginning to force itself upon the consciousness of all those concerned with the quest for Jewish community at the highest level and more immediately those concerned with the life of specific Jewish communities and the Jewish state on an immediate day-to-day basis. Beginning as a search for a better intellectual understanding of the Jewish past and present, this effort can now become part of the overall Jewish search for a usable past and an authentic present.[3] Hence the rediscovery of the Jewish political tradition can be an important tool in strengthening contemporary Jewish life in Israel and the diaspora.

What is perhaps most compelling about the need to rediscover the Jewish political tradition is the fact that Jews continue to function in their communities and in the political arena, in no small measure, on the basis of their political tradition, albeit without conscious awareness that they are functioning within a living tradition of their own or any tradition at all.[4] The striking similarities in the structure of Jewish institutions in Israel and the diaspora, present and past, the basic characteristics of Jewish political behavior, the fundamental beliefs and practices embedded in Jewish political culture, all attest to the persistence of a Jewish political tradition that remains for the most part unrecognized.[5] Were we speaking of the creation of a tradition where none existed, it would be perhaps possible to question the validity of the effort. But since we are speaking of a living phenomenon that is simply unrecognized, the benefits that can be derived from developing a conscious understanding of it are great indeed.

Important segments of the new generation of activists which emerged throughout the Jewish world after World War II tried to build its Jewish commitment on secular rather than a religious foundations. In the past generation, the limits of secularism have become glaringly apparent and studies of both Israeli and diaspora Jews show that the search for Jewish expression on the part of Jewish activists has acquired a broader dimension. The new dimension includes the emergence of a civil Judaism which embraces many traditional religious forms.[6] This civil Judaism encourages many traditional Jewish practices developed and maintained by Pharisaic Judaism but it is not grounded in the same principles. Rather, it can be described as a revival of Sadducean Judaism, that is to say, a Judaism whose religious commitment is expressed less through the

observance of Jewish law in its detail than in the participation in Jewish civic life with observance designed to reinforce the civic dimension of Jewish existence.[7]

An Educational Response

All of the foregoing must be taken into consideration in Jewish schooling. It is precisely in recognition that these problems were bound to arise once we had a Jewish state that we of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs initiated an effort to develop a curriculum in the Jewish political tradition and its contemporary meaning for Jewish schools.[8]

While we have been successful in preparing very interesting material which has been tested and proved very exciting for students, the innovative character of this program has run up against a kind of passive resistance on the part of Jewish educators. Jewish educational leaders have been unwilling to invest in the transformation of an experimental program into an operational one. They cite problems of lack of time plus a higher priority for other subjects. While those are good reasons, they are not the real ones. In this writer's opinion, the opposition basically reflects the fact that for most American Jewish educators, Judaism is primarily a spiritual matter, not to be "sullied" by the difficult problems of politics and government. A spiritual Judaism is much easier to deal with since it carries little in the way of responsibility with it.

The reality is that the new condition of the Jewish people requires that a major new element must be introduced into the schools, into teacher education and into curriculum development. Before the reader begins to say, "oh no, how much more can we burden our already heavily laden curriculum in a period of shrinking hours of study (at least in non-Orthodox schools)," it should be pointed out that this is an opportunity far more than it is a burden. For the political teachings that are needed are to be found in the classic texts of Judaism and learning how to confront the realities of living in a political world can be entirely combined with teaching Tanach, Talmud, *mifarshim* and *poskim.*

This is possible because Jewish thought is best understood as prismatic, that is to say, reflective of a well-nigh infinite variety of perspectives of the same core of truth that is simultaneously solid and shifting. The Bible, indeed, is the archetypical and ultimate prismatic work, occasionally paralleled and imitated but never matched. Jewish tradition recognized this as in the Midrashic statement that "the *Torah* has seventy faces." Prismatic thought is, perforce, multidimensional at all times, achieving multi-dimensionality through repeated description of the same issues from different perspectives (a technique Lawrence Durrell was to adopt in his fiction). By contrast, systematic thought achieves multi-dimensionality through an elaborate and more abstract architecture that must sacrifice some of the immediacy of events and perspectives.

Prismatic thought has the distinct advantage of reflecting the complexity of reality. In physics, for example, it is prismatic thinking to understand light as composed of both waves and particles simultaneously. The apparent

repetition of events in the Bible (whatever the textual history of the original sources) is another reflection of prismatic thinking, with each account offering us a different perspective on the same incident and, hence, a different lesson to be learned from it. Given the extra complexity of human reality, there is much to be said for such an approach. The world, indeed, is far more prismatic than systematic. While this should not prevent us from seeking systematic understanding of it, such understanding can only be achieved when we begin with its prismatic character.

One of those prisms is the political. Politically, normative Jewish texts can be read through facets of the several prism. In our time we have seen political scientists who have read them as key to understanding contemporary revolutionary movements,[9] as a great game between God and humans whereby each uses His or their advantage to achieve their goals or the weakness of the other to prevent excessive departure from those goals,[10] or as a textbook for the study of leadership and the interaction between leaders and the publics or polities they lead,[11] to name only a few.

From the perspective this writer has sought to foster, we must begin with the covenant foundations of Biblical and subsequent Jewish thought. We need to look at the pervasiveness of covenant as the formative theory and practice of Jewish tradition, at the variety of uses of covenant in the Bible and subsequent texts at the uses of covenant in the designing of nations, particularly the nation of Israel.

Constitutional Texts and Teachings

The political tradition that flows from all this is based upon biblical teachings: from a political perspective, Biblical teachings emphasize covenants, federal relationships, the frontier experience, the importance of foundings, the special character of new societies, the necessity for and problematics of civilization, the generational ordering of time, the continuous relationship of space and time, the varieties of geographic expression of human settlement, the division of humankind into nations and peoples, the necessity for and problematics of political organization of all societies and communities, constitutionalism in its republican and democratic dimensions, the importance of "way" (what moderns call culture), and the binding way of tradition. A close reading of the biblical text reveals all of these as recurrent themes.

Torah not only means teaching, it is also the term for constitution in ancient Israel. In its most immediate sense, the *Torah* consists of the Five books of Moses, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible. The first four books together can be seen as a constitutional document with a long historic introduction (Genesis), a preamble, covenant, and fundamental set of laws (Exodus-Leviticus), and a historical epilogue (Numbers) that includes additional fundamental laws that grow out of the desert experience of *Adat Bnai Israel* (the Assembly of the Children of Israel/Jacob, the ancient name of the Jewish people as a polity reflecting both the familial and federal character of the political organization). Deuteronomy is the restatement of the teachings of the other four books in more systematic and properly constitutional form,

with final additions and modifications adapting the constitution to a settled life in the promised land.

Moreover, the *Torah* is the oldest extant political constitution in our possession. As such it is generally important for political science and is particularly important as a living example of an ancient constitution in the covenantal tradition. Consideration of the *Torah* as a political constitution must begin with an understanding of ancient constitutions and how they differ from modern ones. Ancient constitutionalism is at once more comprehensive and more limited than modern constitutionalism. It is more comprehensive in that it delineates and prescribes the way of life of the polity as a whole, including matters no longer deemed to be of public concern, having to do with the behavior of individuals and families, understanding them to be of critical importance to the body politic. The *Torah*, for example, is concerned with the holiness of Israelites as individuals as well as collectively as the foundation for the holy commonwealth. Because this holiness is both individual and collective, it is an important constitutional issue.

At the same time, this ancient constitution is less specific in matter of governmental institutions, allowing greater leeway for constitutional interpretation, or what Europeans and Latin Americans refer to as organic laws less-than-full constitutional arrangements of more than normal statutory importance. These were later referred to in subsequent *halakhah,* the rabbinic Jewish law derived from the *Torah*, as "ordinances required by the times" *(takanot ha-shaah,* literally, of the hour), many of which acquired their own constitutional status as subsidiary constitutional expressions. In other words, *Torah* like other ancient constitutions, has to do with the ordering of the polity, not merely of its government, emphasizing the moral bases of society (i.e. the pursuit of justice within a covenantal framework as embodied in the two phrases: *tzedakah u'mishpat* and *habrit v'hahesed)* the proper socio-economic distribution of power (as embodied in the land tenure sabbatical, jubilee, and glenning laws) and how the pieces in the frame of government must relate to God, Israel, and one another (as in the procedures for underlining the militia for battle or the requirement that a king if one is appointed, must copy the *Torah* himself).

Jewish texts are relatively spare but very rich every word, sentence, and paragraph is filled with nuances of meaning. The order of words, sentences, and paragraphs carries meaning. The apparent repetitions with subtle differences carry meaning. Thus, a full exploration of the text requires an intensive effort. For example, in the description in Leviticus of the sin offerings which Israelites must bring if they should sin, in every case the Biblical language indicates that If an Israelite shall sin, he shall be liable for such an offering, but in the case of *nessim* (magistrates), that is to say, those who are in positions of political leadership, the phrase is "When a *nasi* shall sin." In other words, by changing two letters the passage conveys the sense of how those holding political office inevitably must violate some moral commandments out of political necessity and provision is made for acknowledging that reality.

Indeed, over the centuries hundreds of thousands of words have been written to interpret this book of constitutional statements. Our task here is

only to understand the covenantal aspects of Israel's ancient constitution and to begin to expose its constitutional character, content, and ordering. It is both easier and harder to pass over the political meaning of a Jewish text than it is a piece of classic philosophy. A Jewish text is not likely to proclaim itself as being political. The biblical system is one of theme, language, and sound expressed through a series of stories that embody important cases and issues, bound together through sets of shared value concepts. It can be discovered only by identifying and following the threads that run through its many parts in other words, a system best penetrated by what in Hebrew is termed midrash, the inducing of meaning from textual and other sources, rather than by syllogism. The midrashic method, with its emphasis on the explication and harmonization of texts, by its very nature makes it harder for the student to uncover that teaching but, by the same token, it requires him to delve deeper and make a greater effort to order his or her thoughts. It also offers the student greater opportunity for flashes of insight that restrain the impulse to rush to erect comprehensive schemes that may be intellectually compelling but are far from reality.

In the effort to develop a systematic way of interpreting the biblical text, especially the *Torah* for legal (including constitutional) purposes, the sages of the Talmud developed a series of rules of interpretation that reflect this attention to nuance. They are:

1. Inference from minor to major, or from major to minor.
2. Inference from similarity of phrases in texts.
3. A comprehensive principle derived from one text, or from two related texts.
4. A general proposition followed by a specifying particular.
5. A particular term followed by a general proposition.
6. A general law limited by a specific application, and then treated again in general terms, must be interpreted according to the tenor of the specific limitation.
7. A general proposition requiring a particular or specific term to explain it, and conversely, a particular term requiring a general one to complement it.
8. When a subject included in a general proposition is afterward particularly excepted to give information concerning it, the exception is made not for that one instance alone, but to apply to the general proposition as a whole.
9. Whenever anything is first included in a general proposition and is then excepted to prove another similar proposition, this specifying alleviates and does not aggravate the law's restriction.
10. But when anything is first included in a general proposition and is then excepted to state a case that is not a similar proposition, such specifying alleviates in some respects, and in others aggravates, the law's restriction.
11. Anything included in a general proposition and afterward excepted to determine a new matter cannot be applied to the general proposition unless this is expressly done in the text.
12. An interpretation deduced from the text or from subsequent terms of the text.
13. In like manner when two texts contradict each other, the meaning can

be determined only when a third text is found that harmonizes them.

Appreciation of biblical prismatics as contrasted with systematic philosophy is, in the last analysis, also a matter of aesthetics. It should be no surprise that the Greeks for whom symmetry was the key of aesthetic beauty, introduced philosophy as the aesthetics of systematic inquiry (although only after laying a foundation through the Platonic Dialogues, which, while more systematic in structure than the Bible, embody a similar method, that is to say, they demand that the reader enter into the text in order to understand the argument and the principles derived there from). Thus, one must be prepared to recognize the different aesthetic sensibility of the biblical system in order to enter into it. Biblical aesthetics is much related to process, to the necessity to read and probe to be touched by the elegant and moving language the Bible and the Jewish texts use to deal with prosaic matters, and the sudden insights that come with those efforts.

Following these guidelines, the curriculum built by the JCPA introduces children to exciting aspects of classical Jewish learning that they do not normally get in the present curriculum in any form. Nor are we talking just about random snippets to prove a point but a coherent teaching.[12]

In preparing such curriculum, the Biblical text is comparatively easy and indeed our first work relied perhaps overmuch on the Biblical text. It requires more effort to deal with Talmudic texts. For those texts, the analogy to Biblical "stories" are Talmudic suggiyot - that is to say, cases or issues carried through the various tractates.

An Example: The Distribution of Authority According to *Pirkei Avot*

Here I would like to provide one example of what can be done in this regard with a conventional Talmudic text that is among the more readily accessible to all. *Pirkei Avot* often is taught as a simple entry point into the study of Talmudic literature, based on a Mishnah easily accessible even to relative beginners. Like most classical Jewish texts, it can be read on several levels and viewed through different prisms. Indeed, those two qualities are characteristic of all classic Jewish texts, which enable them to unite a varied and diverse people around the study of the same materials, each at his or her own level and each from his or her own perspective.

Masekhet Avot, known familiarly as *Pirkei Avot*, is a Mishnah included in the Talmud without a Gemarah attached to it. Traditional Jews know it is the subject of popular Jewish study in the synagogue and elsewhere whose maxims have become part of the rhetoric of normative Judaism. It is placed at the end of Seder Nezikin which is the talmudic order dealing with civil damages or civil matters and includes the talmudic teaching on the organization of government and courts, especially the judicial system.

Judah Goldin suggests that Avot may once have been placed at the very end of the Mishnah as its final world and that we can assume that moving Avot to Nezikin was deliberate and not merely an afterthought.[13] The

construction of Nezikin begins with the discussion of the laws of private damages and builds up to a discussion of the institutions of governance to enforce civil law. It concludes with Avot which, I would suggest, deals with the theoretical principles on which the first two subjects rest and by which cases and controversies involving them are to be judged.

Had the placement of Avot remained at the very end of the Mishnah, its public purpose might not have been entirely clear. By placing it where it is, however, we can discover it as unmistakably designed to teach leadership, that is, to inform leaders, particularly the judges and those who interpret the *Torah*, of their role, their position in the *edah* (the Bible term originated for the Jewish polity), and what character traits they must cultivate in order to fulfill that role properly. As such, it comes the closest that we have to a tract of political (rather than legal or spiritual) thought in the Talmud and as such it is worthy of particular attention from the political perspective.

Indeed, when we examine Avot carefully we discover that it clearly states the classic or normative Jewish political world view and elaborates on it by presenting the platforms or points of emphasis of leading sages and *Torah* interpreters in the period in Ezra to Judah Hanasi, roughly what is known as the Mishnaic period, from the transfer of power from the Biblical regime from kings, priest, *(kohanim)* and prophets, to the first post-biblical regime based first and foremost on the sages (Hakhamim), with lesser roles for priests and magistrates *(nesiim),* in the fifth century BCE to the end of the second century CE, during what I elsewhere have described as the two constitutional epochs of *Malkhut Yehuda*/The Kingdom of Judah and *Hever ha-Yehudim*/The Jewish Commonwealth.[14]

The fundamental political principles of the tractate are set out in Chapter One, verse 1. They deal with two subjects: one, the source of authority and the chain of tradition in Jewish life which are supplied in shorthand in the first verse of the chapter.

> Moses received *Torah* from Sinai, and transmitted it to Joshua, Joshua to the Elders, the Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets transmitted it to the Men of the Great Assembly. They said three things: be deliberate in judgment; and raise up many disciples, and make a fence for the *Torah*.

The verse starts by indicating that the authority of the *Torah* reflects the *Torah* as a constitution and a teaching given by God, whose interpretation and implementation was transmitted to the greatest of all Jewish leaders, Moses, and from him to successive generations of leaders responsible for its interpretation and application, during the two biblical regimes (Mosaic and Davidic), ultimately reaching the hands of the Anshe Knesset Hagedolah, the assembly led by Ezra the first of the sages who were to produce the Mishnah.

Two things need to be noted about the chain of transmission. One is that those who were exclusively responsible for the civil rule of the *edah* such as Judges *(shoftim)* and Kings are excluded from the chain, which secures the claim of authority for those responsible for the interpretation of the *Torah*

and God's word. Close examination of the biblical account shows that the kings and shoftim, with he exception of Samuel who also is referred to as a prophet, were strictly civil rulers and therefore were excluded from the chain of tradition by the sages of the Mishnah as part of a clean effort to seize power within the community from civil rulers. Moses, Joshua, and the elders held elements of both civil rule and powers of constitutional interpretation as did the Men of the Great Assembly and so were, in the rabbinic view, parts of the chain of tradition, able to receive it and pass it on, something which required different skills than civil rulers.

Even more startling is the omission of the priests, who are even more decisively excluded from the chain of tradition in Avot, despite their important role in the biblical period. Hence what we have here is a claim as to who controls authority and hence should hold power in the *edah*, or as it was being called by then, *Knesset Israel.* (*Edah* in Aramaic is *kenishta,* which, retranslated into Mishnaic Hebrew is *knesset.)* This claim is the foundation of rabbinic Judaism.

But the claim is to supremacy, not total domination because the tradition itself forbids the latter. The second dimension of the theory is expressed in the second verse.

> Shimon HaZaddik (the Righteous) was one of the last survivors of the Great Assembly. His platform was that the universe stands on three things: on (the) *Torah*, on worship (Divine Service), and on the reciprocation (doing) of righteous acts.

There Shimon HaZaddik, who became the chief *halakhic* authority of the *Edah* sometime after Ezra, presents the requisites of human existence: *Torah, avodah* (worship), and *gemilut hasadim*, that is to say, acts that involve loving kindness between humans in order to live up to the covenant *(hasadim,* from *hesed* presented in the Bible as covenant required loving kindness, i.e. the dynamic dimension of covenant itself) between God and humans. Each of these has its domain of human activity. The first is the domain of God's communication to and teaching for humans via the *Torah*; the second is the domain of human offerings to or petitioning God: *avodah*; and the third, the domain that requires the organization of political society to foster and extend *gemilut hasadim* beyond individual acts.

The political consequences of this three-fold division of life are expressed in chapter 4, verse 17 where Shimon HaZaddik speaks again.

> R. Shimon says there are three crowns: the crown of *Torah* and the crown of priesthood and the crown of kingship (civil rule) and the crown of a good name rises above them all.

He mentions three crowns, i.e., three realms of leadership and public activity: *keter torah, keter kehunah*, and *keter malkhut.* Each of those three crowns relates to one of the three domains set out in chapter 1, verse 2.

Keter Torah involves the responsibility of interpreting and teaching Torah and handling God's communications to humans. *Keter Kehunah* involves

the maintenance of *avodah* and responsibility for organizing human communications to God. *Keter Malkhut* has responsibility for *gemilut hasadim*, i.e., the purposes of the good political regime are to make possible and to ensure *gemilut hasadim*. This follows the Biblical account quite closely. Moses is the exemplary bearer of the *Keter Torah* for all time. Aaron is the Bible's exemplary bearer of the *Keter Kehunah* and Abraham, the first patriarch and thus the first bearer of this crown, is presented in the Bible and rabbinic tradition as the exemplar of *gemilut hasadim*.[15]

Verse 4 concludes with a statement that *keter shem tov*, the crown of a good name, stands above the other three. That could be read non politically as a matter of reputation only. I would suggest that "a good name" in this context means what we refer to as character and that reference to it here completes the political teaching suggesting that character rather than merely formal authority or function is most important in leadership. The rest of the tractate is an elaboration of these fundamental principles

Conclusion

It would be a great mistake to forfeit the opportunity provided by the present situation to build a long-term educational program in the Jewish political tradition. The idea that *Pirkei Avot* is a manual for rabbinic leadership in the classic sense points to one way. The emphasis is on prudence, balance and judgment. While these are undoubtedly necessary qualities for judges, they also are necessary for all political leaders, may, for all humans hence the easy popularity of *Pirkei Avot* for ordinary Jews. The fact that this material is readily accessible to everyone gave it a special cachet for a people for whom the study of sacred texts is a religious obligation.

Jewish educators should make use of such traditional devices that have been well-tested over time to enrich the education they are offering at this time. In *Pirkei Avot,* as in so many other texts, it is possible to do so with regard to the Jewish political tradition as is with regard to so many other facets of Jewish tradition.

Notes

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13. Judah Goldin, "Avot", *Encyclopedia Judaica,* Volume 3, (New York: MacMillan Company, 1971), p. 983.

14. Elazar and Cohen, *The Jewish Polity*.

15. For an elaboration on the three domains in the period under discussion, see Stuart Cohen, *The Three Crowns: Structures of Communal Politics in Early Rabbinic Jewry,* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

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