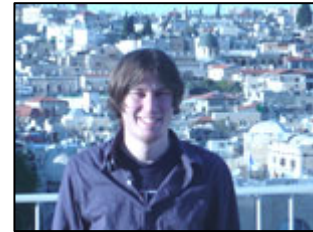




A STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

by Daniel Wicentowski



There is a wall in our mind. Towering, iron gray, it rises out of the mists of our consciousness, smooth as marble, hard as diamond. It is a wall we all face, and while some can raise their eyes and stare at its surface, others cast their gaze downwards and merely reside in its mammoth shadow. It is the wall where logic can pass no farther. It is a wall of frustrated looks, jittering hands, and words sought but not found; it is a barrier that I and many of my friends now find ourselves facing.

In the past weeks Rabbi Aaron has taken us to the brink of language, where words, like meteors falling to earth, burn red hot and disintegrate. He has guided us in plumbing the depths of Judaism's authentic picture of what we call G-d, and what Torah and *mitzvot* represent. In exploring G-d's relationship with His creations I've encountered concepts that challenge logic, that openly, laughingly, defy the machinery that I've come to depend on to process the world I know. My brain, once so haughty in its ability, has had its most prized possession called in to question: common sense. I used to believe, with good cause, that reality could be processed completely through reason, and that, perhaps, I would be able to understand what G-d is through logic alone. I was wrong.

We run at the wall. Our feet pounding, breath heaving, we sprint towards the dark edifice, knowing that our speed and our strength will surely topple this offending obstacle in our pursuit of truth. We break upon the chrome surface like a tide of porcelain dolls.

If you could walk into our *Beis Medrish*, you would surely see us listening intently, writing notes, raising our hands in tremulous question, but you would not be seeing us as we are. If you could truly see us, you would see blood. You would see broken arms, bandaged heads, splinted fingers. We crash against the wall with the determination of the righteous, and we come away again and again bruised but not beaten, broken but not ready to surrender. We are a sea with no ebb. In any given class we may ask the same question in a dozen different configurations, hoping beyond hope that we get our answer. To these questions though, the convention of question-answer doesn't exist.

In my search for G-d, I always thought that if I could understand G-d's intention, His plan, then I could embrace the relationship in the truest sense.

As a painting or a novel can clearly reflect the intention of the artist, that I could understand why he crafted this art, this sentence, so too I wanted to have that intimate awareness of the essence of G-d. I was wrong. I've learned that I cannot pick apart G-d as if I was analyzing a novel, for I am the novel. I cannot gaze at the painting, dissecting the imagery and coloring; I am the painting; I am the mottled hues and strokes across a canvas that I cannot remove myself from. Reality is an expanse of infinite Sistine beauty and never-ending scope. And of the painter? Will I ever feel the tickle of the brush, the wetness of paint? These are the questions that I now strive to find meaning in. Perhaps I am continuous splash of color, an existential Pollock that is forever bathed in color. I cannot say for sure at this point. But it is in this perspective that the mind recoils, afraid in the unfamiliar, in the unknowable strangeness of these brave new words that lack concrete substance in the mind.

If I seem obtuse in my description, or ambiguous in my method, it is because I don't think I could adequately explain the subject myself. Rabbi Aaron has been guiding us through this issue for the past few months, and while I cannot verbalize with clarity the intricacies of the subject matter, I feel it is worthwhile to convey the emotions this class has brought to the forefront of my mind; for as we confront discussions of our relationship to G-d, our 'purpose', language fails. Words fragment into symbols, symbols crumble into metaphor, and metaphor stumbles under the weight of the alien, leaving me with a blurred mirage, like the fuzzy static that dances before the eyes after glancing at the sun. Even now my words look woefully inadequate and broken.

However, I see hope. For some of us, we will pick ourselves up one day and find not the strength to continue. The questions, ever asked and never answered, will suddenly lack the poignancy they once had. Those will walk away from the wall, defeated, but still scarred. They will learn to live within the context of what they can understand, to content themselves with the grainy image they can perceive, unwilling to further damage themselves in a quest that can only lead to anguish and insanity.

Others, though, will change. For them the wall will invert, and suddenly they will stand not at the foot of an impassable barrier but at the edge of an abyss. It will be filled with light, whiter and more brilliant than any bulb, purer than any ivory. It is the knowledge that within us is the potential to step over that edge, and surpass the dualism of our minds and embrace the paradox as truth. Beyond the edge, beyond logic, somewhere out there lies a truer perception than we can perceive. And even if we lack the ability to take that final step, to plunge ourselves into the realm of the irrational, to forsake Newton for Escher, we can still sit at the edge, legs dangling and eyes closed, and enjoy the breeze for a while.

Danny graduated from Skokie Yeshiva high School in Chicago.

He was the Editor and Chief of school newspaper and Editor of school Purim plays. Danny is the head writer and creative Director of the first annual Orayta Purim Spiel (play). Danny's twin brother is learning at KBY.

Danny is a big fan of Rabbi Aaron's philosophy classes and always looks forward to Thursday morning rugalach and soda with Rav Noam.

After Orayta, Danny will be attending the University of Illinois, majoring in computer science.