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**TWENTIETH CENTURY EUROPEAN PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS
ASSIMILATED IN TALMUD STUDIES AT THE HILDESHEIMER
RABBINICAL SEMINARY IN BERLIN AND AT YESHIVAT SIACH
YITZHAK IN ISRAEL**

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Abstract: Students who seek to study Talmud in the traditional Orthodox manner customarily do so at a yeshiva, as this is the fundamental method of Talmud studies in the yeshiva world, though at times the emphases vary. Talmud studies accompanied by academic studies is a level beyond that of traditional Talmud studies (though some would perceive it as a shortcoming). More innovative is Talmud studies accompanied by philosophical concepts. Indeed, from philosophers would not perceive this as an innovation, as some already employed this method of study in 20th century Europe, for example E. Lévinas. But in the context of Orthodox Talmud studies, such as at the Hildesheimer Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin or at Yeshivat Siach Yitzhak, this is a significant innovation. The purpose of the article is to show the methods of Talmud instruction (reflected also in independent study) at these two institutions, as well as the philosophical concepts assimilated in these studies and their significance and contribution to understanding the Talmud and, as an outcome, also the different terms associated with the philosophical concepts.

Key words: Talmud studies/instruction, philosophical concepts, Hildesheimer Rabbinical Seminary, Yeshivat Siach Yitzhak.

1. Introduction

The Hildesheimer Rabbinical Seminary (below: The Rabbinical Seminary; in German: Rabbinerseminar zu Berlin or Rabbinerseminar für das Orthodoxe Judentum) was established in 1873 by R. Dr. Azriel Hildesheimer (Germany, 1820-1899), who headed it. The seminary espoused a combination of Torah (religious studies) and *derech erez* (secular studies). The aim of the institution was to bridge the gap between Jewish studies as a science and tradition; namely, comprehensive religious teaching together with a scientific education. All students studied both an academic program and religious studies culminating in rabbinical ordination. Talmud instruction at the seminary was based on the academic research method, enhanced by philosophical concepts.

Yeshivat Siach Yitzhak is a *hesder* yeshiva (an Israeli yeshiva program which combines advanced Talmudic studies with military service in the IDF) and higher yeshiva located in the town of Efrat in Gush Etzion, Israel. The yeshiva was established in 1996 as a yeshiva for graduates of *hesder* yeshivas, at first in Jerusalem and then in Efrat. Initially, it was called “Siach”, reflecting a vision of discourse between this yeshiva and other types of yeshivot, as well as the new cultural discourse. In 2003 its name was officially changed to “Yeshivat Shiach Yitzhak”, for Dr. Isaac Breuer (Hungary, 1883-1946). The yeshiva was headed by R. Shimon Gershon Rosenberg (Israel, 1949-2007) (also known by his acronym: Shagar), and at present by R. Yair Dreifuss, R. Dr. Noam Samet, and R. Dr. Uri Lifshitz.

The purpose of the yeshiva is to teach in view of Jewish sources and in an open and creative approach by combining a Jewish outlook in all creative areas, from writing in journals and newspaper supplements to theatre, poetry, and music. This is also reflected in students' manner of independent study. Nonetheless, philosophical concepts have been assimilated in it as well, as shown below. Talmud readings that include philosophical concepts are nothing new. E. Lévinas (France, 1906-1995), for instance, one of the great 20th century European Jewish philosophers, already read several sugyot from different tractates in this manner (Lévinas 2001; Lévinas 2004; Goldwyn 2011).

2. The method of Talmud instruction at the Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin

The method of Talmud instruction at the Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin was based on the academic research method. The principals of this method are based on teaching in the scientific method, with the aim of serving as a vessel for understanding the Talmud and a means of enriching

and expanding Talmud studies, and consequently reconciling between the teaching and research orientations (Hoffmann 2010, 29). This method included philological and historical inspection of the sources to reveal the truth as objectively as possible in order to understand the simple meaning of the sources and determine the correct form, allow clear understanding of the Talmud and of the first sages (the *Rishonim*), as well as understand the language and the historical and realistic context (Stern 1978, 309-314).

3. Dialectics as a philosophical concept assimilated in the method of Talmud instruction at the Rabbinical Seminary

The first philosophical concept to permeate the Rabbinical Seminary was the dialectics proposed by G.W.F. Hegel (Germany, 1770-1831) (Hegel 1995, 49-71). In Hegel's philosophical teachings (Maybee 2020), dialectics is not merely a deductive method but rather a characterization of the development of human history. The spiritual and material world develops in a regular process that involves the emergence of contradictions and their resolution. Chalybäus' interpretation of the process described by Hegel is portrayed as three events; the first is the thesis that develops in a certain matter or issue, which gradually leads to the ripening of the second event – the antithesis, and together they ultimately form the third event – the synthesis that contains both the thesis and the antithesis. This synthesis later itself becomes a thesis that leads to the ripening of another antithesis, and so on and so forth (Chalybäus 1839), although there are those who object to this interpretation (Mueller 1958).

If we examine the academic-research teaching method at the Rabbinical Seminary in this vein, then the thesis is the traditional manner of teaching employed in yeshivot until the early 19th century, and the antithesis is the research-based manner of Talmud instruction of the post-modern *Hokhmat Yisrael* (Wissenschaft des Judentums) movement that initiated academic research in Jewish studies. The synthesis combines (preliminary) academic studies with studies towards rabbinical ordination.

Academic research in the Rabbinical Seminary examined Jewish sources by means of scientific and critical tools. The research conclusions undermined traditional values in the name of a universal source of authority (thesis), and it seemed that engaging in studies of *hokhmat yisrael* (Wissenschaft des Judentums) encompassed heretical leanings and a departure from the world of Torah and *mitzvot* (antithesis). R. Hildesheimer strived to synthesize and reconcile between the traditional manner of teaching and research-based teaching, to transform science into a vessel for understanding the Torah and a means whose methods would enrich and expand knowledge of true Judaism. Regarding the route and the method, Torah study and scientific research have a single common goal – to strive for the truth as objectively as possible.

R. Hildesheimer wanted the *beit midrash* to create a fighting Orthodox alternative and a school of research that would mend the rift formed between Jewish studies as a science and tradition. He said that Torah-oriented Judaism can overcome modernity by a special combination of outdatedness (as seen by the modern) and modernity (as seen by the elderly). He aimed to prove the vitality of rabbinical Judaism in the modern era as well. The scientific trend, perceived by Eastern European Torah sages as a great sin, was perceived by him as a religious precept. His basic premise was that history, archeology, philology, and literature are branches of human research in which the spirit of Torah and Judaism should be instilled, releasing them from the binds of heresy and prejudice (Breuer 1995, 19-22). This helps understand Hildesheimer's method, which connects the customary research methods and modern science with the Jewish spirit of Torah and religious precepts. This link is indeed accentuated in the scientific method of Torah instruction at the Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin (Stern 1978, 309-314).

The philosophical concept mentioned above, manifested in Talmud instruction at the Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin, was also assimilated at Yeshivat Siach Yitzhak. The thesis is the traditional manner of instruction in yeshivot until the early 19th century. The antithesis is the research-based manner of Talmud instruction that advocates multiple truths. The synthesis is a method of Talmud studies, implemented at Yeshivat Siach Yitzhak (Rosenberg 2009, 235), centering on a search for meaning, as we shall show below.

4. The Talmud instruction method at Yeshivat Siach Yitzhak

The Talmud instruction method at Yeshivat Siach Yitzhak is based on five main areas (the entire method is based on Rosenberg's practical proposal for Talmud instruction ((Rosenberg 2009, 230-237, 254-256)). The first is Talmud instruction, the text studied (the sugya) as a textual literary work in the methodological sense, the literary redaction (Rosenberg 2009, 226, 236). Literary tools are necessary in order to understand the redaction of the sugya and its messages. This means teaching that examines formative-stylistic aspects such as: recurring constructs, for example the tripartite structure in the sugyot of Tractate Eruvin or chaining, as well as recurring terms (Zur 2016). The textual aspect has meaning for understanding the sugya and the aim is to understand how the textual aspect is connected to the main idea of the sugya (Zur 1999).

All high-level theoretical Talmud instruction is for individuals. It requires a high intellectual capacity, deep inquisitiveness, textual literacy, very high abilities of text analysis, curiosity and discernment. The skills required are very demanding and in this respect it is certainly not suited

for everyone because it requires much deeper skills than the regular skills needed to study at a yeshiva.

The second area involves clarifying the sugya's components and its sources (Rosenberg 2009, 233). For example, on what other sugyot in the Talmud Bavli is the sugya based, what is the parallel sugya in the Talmud Yerushalmi. Any teaching of a sugya begins with two or three days of scrutinizing the biblical verses and biblical commentators associated with the sugya, followed by another two or three days of scrutinizing the Mishna, baraitot from the Tosefta, and midreshei halakha associated with the sugya, and the contribution of these sources to the sugya. The structure of Talmud studies also assimilates academic premises such as: distinction between the anonymous Talmud and statements of Amoraim.

The third area is the talmudic sugya as an evolving work (Rosenberg 2009, 233). In Talmud studies there is need to emphasize that this is an evolving work rather than a uniform textual blend. The sugya comprises different sources, as noted above. Sometimes the sugya mentions a concept not utilized by the Mishna and this creates another layer. In addition, there is also the layer of the "anonymous Talmud" (namely, text brought with no identification of the speaker), for example the first sugya in Tractate Kiddushin (2a-3b) that was redacted by the Savoraim (Lewin 1972, 71). There is a layer of amoraic sources cited with their names, for instance Abaye and Rabba (Bava Bava Metzi'a 21b). The distinction between these different layers makes it possible to examine the sugya as an evolving work and thus helps find the meaning of each layer and of the preceding layer in the talmudic text. Notably, R. Samet was not the first to propose the layer method, which appeared in academic research previously as well (Weiss 1943; Friedman 1978). But as noted above, he completely disregarded previous academic research that directly addresses the sugya per se (Rosenberg 2009, 201).

The fourth area is Talmud studies according to the first commentators (the *Rishonim*) (Rosenberg 2009, 236). When the commentaries of the *Rishonim* are utilized to teach the Talmud, for example R. Shlomo b. Aderet (Spain, 1235-1310) or R. Yom Tov of Seville (Ritva) (Spain, 1250-1330), their interpretations of the sugya should be read as they did, down to the personal level of feeling what the commentator felt at the time (including the dramatic dimension, sensing when he pounded on the table and when he raised his voice).

When teaching Talmud according to the commentaries of the *Rishonim* it is possible to discern the difficulties encountered by them, the places where they identified contradictions within the text, the seams in the text, the complex points, or using different linguistic forms such as that of the Mishna, of the Amoraim, of the talmudic give-and-take, and of the Savoraim. An example of such a reading of the *Rishonim*'s commentary is a sugya on the words of *Rabbanan de-Kisrei*, on how to calculate the area of a square surrounded by a circle (Sukkah 7b-8b). At the end of the sugya

there is a refutation that employs the phrase "וְלֹא הִיא" (8b) ("And that is not the case"). Ritva distinguished between two linguistic forms, that of the anonymous give-and-take in the sugya and that of the Savoraim, and decided that the refutation using the phrase "and that is not the case" was formulated by the Savoraim rather than by the anonymous give-and-take (Alasevili 1975, 76).

The fifth area is teaching Talmud using the tools of academic research (Rosenberg 2009, 232-233). Academic research tools that he considers legitimate for teaching Talmud are philology, history, and parallel philosophical languages.

R. Samet (one of the yeshiva's current-day heads) notes this in a rhetorical question: "Is it conceivable that a Torah scholar would study Gemara and not be familiar with them? It's obvious". A rich spiritual background is necessary to deal with the deep issues in the text. Research tools are needed to analyze a sugya to its different layers and become familiar with its underlying sources. Researchers in academia provide many valuable tools that should be learned. These are indirect issues pertaining to the sugya that can certainly contribute to its comprehension, but he does not include in the Talmud instruction method utilized different academic studies that deal directly with the content of the sugya and its complexities. According to R. Samet this is because he does not wish to be an academic researcher at a university, rather he sees himself as continuing R. Azriel Hildesheimer, the founder of the Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin mentioned at the beginning of this article, whose approach was: How can I possibly not use academic research too?! Namely, he used academic research, but it was not at the heart of his method of Talmud instruction. Similarly, R. Samet too embraces at Yeshivat Siach Yitzhak a Talmud instruction method that follows the approach of R. Hildesheimer (Klein 2021).

5. The existentialist philosophical concept assimilated in the Talmud instruction method at Yeshivat Siach Yitzhak

The yeshiva's curriculum includes general philosophy, according to R. Samet. This, despite the problematic stigmas attached to the yeshiva over the years due to assimilating the topic of general philosophy in the curriculum, which for a long time caused the Talmud instruction method of R. Rozenberg (founder of the yeshiva) to remain outside the sphere of many yeshivot. Even at the present, some yeshivot avoid R. Rosenberg's Talmud instruction method for ideological reasons. In a few yeshivot that accept his method, gaps have been formed between them and his Talmud instruction method, because his instruction method that includes the philosophical dimension is considered too radical (Klein 2021).

In addition to the Talmud instruction method at Yeshivat Siach Yitzhak, which assimilated the method utilized at the Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin that followed Hegel's dialectics (Rosenberg 2009, 208), Yeshivat Siach Yitzhak also assimilated the existentialist philosophical concept of 19th-20th century European philosophers. These encompassed first and foremost S.A. Kierkegaard (Denmark, 1813-1855) (Kierkegaard 1959), as well as philosophers such as F.W. Nietzsche (Germany, 1844-1900) (Nietzsche 2002), M. Heidegger (Germany, 1889-1976) (Steiner 1978), J.P. Sartre (France, 1905-1980) (Sartre 1977), and others. The existential philosophical concept either derived from Hegel's philosophical doctrine or was an educational branch of it C.R. Rogers (United States, 1902-1987) (Rogers 1968; Tadmor 2007, 151-153).

The existential philosophical concept is that a person who exists creates his or her own subjective meaning or aim. On the educational dimension, the emphasis is on teaching that is directed at each individual (=student). Every person understands reality in a way that is meaningful to him/her according to his/her mental existence, which includes thoughts, feelings, motivations, aspirations, and wishes. The individual grants personal meaning to his or her life reality (Rosenberg 2009, 198-237).

This philosophical concept is assimilated in the Talmud instruction method at Yeshivat Siach Yitzhak, manifested in workshops on different topics. These workshops are part of the therapeutic-pedagogic Talmud instruction method that includes diverse tools used to form the layer of meaning within Talmud studies. Hence, the workshops address varied topics, such as teaching Talmud in the tractate studied at the yeshiva from completely different angles that pertain to life, regarding different aspects and not necessarily the sugya itself. Teaching the talmudic text and the different ways of understanding it derive more from a general view of the meaning of the tractate or chapter or sugya for one's existential life. This method of Talmud instruction is humanistic, free, and individual, and involves changing the structure of the student's "self". (Rosenberg 2009, 198-237).

6. The creative philosophical concept assimilated in the Talmud instruction method at Yeshivat Siach Yitzhak

Another philosophical concept assimilated at Yeshivat Siach Yitzhak is creativity as construed by J.P. Guilford (Guilford 1968) or lateral thinking as construed by E. De Bono (De Bono 1992), which is the operational progenitor of the above existential workshops for creating meaning, as shown below. The philosophical concept of creativity is a new unique combination of fundamentals.

The human creativity taking place at the yeshiva contains the highest Divine revelation (Rosenberg 2009, 212). The significance of creativity in

Talmud studies at the yeshiva is manifested in extracting the deep points from the talmudic text and its details, raising conjectures independently before studying the interpretations of the *Rishonim* and *Acharonim*. Another type of creativity is literary creativity; namely, the ability to find the literary line of thought that exists at times within the arrangement of the Mishna or the talmudic text and emphasizes the aesthetic aspect, the aesthetic creativity (Rosenberg 2009, 225-226).

At Yeshivat Siach Yitzhak Talmud is taught also using the method of an operational workshop in the form of a student group (*havura*) rather than in the form of a lesson. This is Talmud instruction in an open, humanistic, free approach. The teacher who facilitates the workshop sits with all the students in a group. The students are an active part of the workshop and are not competitive. The teacher encourages all the students to participate and to speak up, while raising questions that contain analogies and metaphors. This type of Talmud instruction is therapeutic, i.e., it arouses the students' personal motives rather than fulfilling instructions and purposeful studying, and it lacks the judgmental dimension of apodictically conveying information or accepted academic statements. The head of the yeshiva participates in the workshops too, not as a teacher but rather as a student who expresses his opinion as part of the student group, and he encourages the students to display creativity, a wide panoramic perspective, and many new points of view. The students too are ultimately asked to facilitate Talmud teaching workshops in this creative style (Klein 2021).

Another type of creativity employed in teaching Talmud at the yeshiva is to find something new in the text on which nothing has yet been written. In the traditional method of teaching, rabbis teach that which tens of thousands of people have learned and read for centuries, for example the sugya "tkafu cohen" (meaning "a priest seized it") (Bava Metzi'a 6a-7a). This gives the student a different feeling, a feeling that he is part of the ancient collective who have studied this text over the generations. There is a sense of internal movement of the student versus the talmudic text, a sense of something that is very internal and very deep. Then again, beside this deep feeling of connection that links the current-day learner to previous learners of the same talmudic text, there is also the opposite aspect, which is the strong desire to search for something specific that has yet to be addressed, a lacuna, to learn something differently than the way in which it was learned up to now (Klein 2023).

What is the reason for the desire to try and find something new that has yet to be voiced? Why should we make this effort? The answer is contained in the yeshiva's Talmud instruction method. When finding something that has yet to be said, beyond the fact that saying something new is heartening and productive it also implements the philosophical concept of creativity, wonder, and renewal assimilated at the yeshiva. There is a

desire and a call for Torah innovations. There is a great call to Talmud scholars to bring the Talmud to a new place. This is a big challenge, because on one hand there is a wish to collaborate “through the eyes and the heart” with all the past learners who studied the same text in the traditional method customary in the yeshiva world. But on the other, the philosophical concept of creativity assimilated in Talmud instruction at the yeshiva causes learners to be creative and to seek the next thing, the new thing, rather than remaining where they are. The Talmud instruction method at the yeshiva encompasses these two contradictory dimensions when coming to teach the talmudic text.

Another type of creativity, according to R. Samet and R. Lifshitz, is the person studying the Talmudic text. This student is in fact always creating, all the more so in the Talmudic text. Namely, in the initial place where the student observes and reads the text he is in fact called a creator, at least by definition. Therefore, some students flee the creativity containing in the world of teaching the Talmudic text because it is an enigmatic text that does not lend itself to creativity, and they turn to studying the words of the first commentators (the *Rishonim*) on the text, making do with organizing the proposals of the latter, because being creative within the corpus of the first commentators is less demanding (Klein 2023).

7. The evolvement of the method of teaching the Talmud Bavli at Yeshivat Siach Yitzhak, inspired by the academic method at the Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin and the philosophical concepts

R. Rosenberg, founder of Yeshivat Siach Yitzhak, developed a Talmud instruction method that combines topics from academic Talmudic research with classical study in the yeshivot. He called for a cognitive breakthrough in Talmud studies. He based this call on three premises:

1. When contemporary religious Zionist students study Talmud in the yeshiva, they experience a deep cognitive dissonance.
2. Every teaching method takes its strength from an underlying worldview, such that a certain teaching method will only suit people who identify with that worldview.
3. A teaching method that suits the postmodern era must be compatible with the postmodern spirit (Walfish 2011).

Following these premises, he generated a new path in Talmud instruction, one that combines topics of academic talmudic research with classical study and the philosophical ideas of dialectics, existentialism, and creativity, in an attempt to have Talmud studies deal with topics with existential and spiritual meaning (Rosenberg 2009, 193–237).

R. Rosenberg proposed a new method for teaching Talmud, one that combines traditional studies in a yeshiva with academic research (that

does not deal directly with the study of the talmudic text per se), together with seeking spiritual meaning. He established the Talmud teaching method he developed on three main foundations. Each of these foundations was aimed at increasing the students' motivation to study Talmud. The first is that classic yeshiva studies adhere to the inherent discourse of the Talmud, maintaining a continuity with tradition and formalism that allows in-depth conceptual analysis (the thesis according to the philosophical concept of dialectics) (Rosenberg 2009, 198-237).

The second is that the academic research topics (the antithesis according to the philosophical concept of dialectics) associated with realistic, historical, and sociological aspects that are important to students in western civilization, were also integrated in his method of Talmud instruction (the synthesis according to the philosophical concept of dialectics). Nonetheless, he completely disregards research that deals directly with the Talmud Bavli and the sugyot.

The third, the highlight of his Talmud instruction method, is the search for meaning. Namely, at the end of the discussion it is necessary to ask what the sugya "tells" the student, what is its meaning for the student, for his way of life (according to the philosophical concept of existentialism) (Rosenberg 2009, 198-237). R. Samet says that this is the only thing that will cause students to study Talmud, i.e., the feeling that it is the most important and meaningful thing that the student can do with his life; otherwise, why study Talmud. Educationally, this teaching method brings the students into a world of Torah and piety (Klein 2021).

R. Rosenberg says that this perspective imparts a different "illumination" (in Hebrew *hanhara*, a term that describes the "light" that shines from the sugya studied as a result of the teaching method, which we will return to below) that strives to detect the meaning within real questions pertaining to life (according to the philosophical concept of creativity and existentialism). Detecting meaning has importance, practical implications for one's current life and for the future ideal, both the social and the personal-existential (Rosenberg 2009, 198-237).

8. Terms that have an association with the philosophical concepts

8.1. R. Rosenberg's outlook – motivation, meaning, and illumination

Motivation

There is an inseparable connection between motivation and the method of Talmud instruction discussed here. Motivation comes not only from the object, i.e., the content of the text studied, rather it can also be based on other matters that are far from this content. Motivation can also

be the result of an ideological pathos of intellectual rationalism, namely striving for the deepest comprehension of the content studied or motivation to effect an improvement in the upper worlds (Rosenberg 2009, 38).

What is motivation? This is the aspiration to find interest in the content studied. Motivation is related to personal involvement by the student, an attempt to find the truth within the content of the text studied. Motivation has different nuances, for instance the experience of understanding within which a collection of details unite to form one generality or one solution to a range of difficulties. The purpose is to touch upon the true essence of understanding the text. And there are other motivations, such as pleasure, proceeding within the inner texture of Jewish life, the aspiration to obtain God's word which is unobtainable, to touch the Divine absolute that is untouchable, criticism, and others (Rosenberg 2009, 39-44, 152, 211-212, 227-228).

Meaning

Another type of motivation suggested by R. Rosenberg is the search for "meaning". The existence of Torah studies within the search for meaning. Searching for and locating "existential meaning" is supposed to generate the guiding motivation for Talmud studies. Personal meaning for the student who asks himself: What does the text say to the learner? How does the text answer the learner's human and religious questions that occupy him? The learner's personal difficulties are brought to the text. When revealing the meaning in light of the text's contents, there is Divine enlightenment and deep commitment. The meaning is acquired from a position of commitment (Rosenberg 2009, 45, 203, 215).

Meaning is the learner's involvement, personal touch, personal interest in the contents studied. It is necessary to place the meaning at the forefront or at the center of the method of Talmud studies, lacking meaning and existential contents some of the learners may leave. It is necessary to form research rules that deal with the meaning. Research fields that concern the philological level, textual criticism, and social-historical analysis will have to deal with the issue of meaning and merge with the spiritual analysis that centers on meaning. The foundation of teaching should be based on the search for meaning and be open also to real questions concerning life. Meaning that emerges from real historical life involves the student and his life. Meaning is what will be at the center of the method of instruction. The truth revealed within the text is connected to the existential truth and has huge religious meaning (Rosenberg 2009, 159, 198-211).

Illumination (hanhara)

In light of the motivation of seeking meaning, the Talmud instruction method leads the student to self "illumination" of the student's percep-

tions within his world, because he does not only learn the text, the contents of the text, rather is deeply involved in it. In this way, the student may be privileged to acquire a deep understanding of the religious consciousness and even to continue it in new directions (Rosenberg 2009, 213).

This study method makes it possible to use the term “myth”, employed by philosopher R. Barthes (France, 1915-1980) (Barthes 1973). Namely, according to this method of study as a myth there is a set of signs that encodes faith, and specifically faith in Torah originating from Heaven as a metahistorical truth, an “objectual truth”, as he calls it. The myth is a product of certain historical circumstances, and the current historical circumstances require a different myth. Illumination also derives from creativity by discovering some principle that links different details in the text. Also, criticism that might clarify a certain matter leads to illumination of the possible ways available to the critic. Thus, also reviewing the sources in the Talmud instruction method, their development, and the accompanying interpretation, grants the benefit of illuminating the final (textual) result, even when it is complex (Rosenberg 2009, 214-233).

8.2. R. Lifshitz’s outlook – imprint on life and art

Imprint on life

R. Lifshitz (one of the yeshiva’s current-day heads) uses two terms that are linked to the philosophical concept of existentialism and are aimed at clarifying Talmud studies at the yeshiva.

The first term is “imprint on life”, namely, Talmud studies are intended to leave a mark on the student’s personal life, as he says - “that which remains with the student”. He means that the object of the teaching, that which is learned, remains in the student’s inner world, even if he is unable to define it; it’s traces stay with him. Also - leaving a mark on others, experiences and efforts applied to the object of the teaching, that which is learned, are part of the student’s world, and in other words, the encircling light or vestments (*malbushim*). Sometimes only slivers of all these events remain but they stay with the student; this is the “imprint on life”. Also deep ideas or deep insights that could have been formulated in different ways remain only with the student; these are the “imprint on life” (Klein 2021).

Art

The second term is “art”. Art has two definitions. The first definition is the art of teaching Talmud as a discipline, how to teach. He says that the question is “How to teach Talmud”, namely Talmud instruction must be performed as professionally as possible, in a thorough and systematic way that will lead to the “illumination” mentioned earlier, i.e., the “light” that

arises from explaining the sugya and its clarity. For this purpose, Talmud instruction is considered a professional art.

R. Lifshitz's second definition is the attitude to Talmud studies as a "work of art". Namely, the art of that which is learned, as well as observing the talmudic text as a work of art manifested in the process of interpretation in the text and in the specific details. This is similar to anyone who has read a good book or seen a good painting or listened to good music and felt uplifted, in the knowledge that any attempt to explain that experiential feeling in words is doomed to fail, or the feeling of someone who discovers a certain insight that cannot always be expressed in words that will describe that sense of revelation or "illumination". There is an exalted feeling that is beyond the written word and that cannot be expressed.

Therefore, when the Talmud instruction relates to a certain sugya, it is necessary to seek the "beauty" of the sugya, its aesthetics, the experience felt when teaching the sugya, and the uplifting felt when resolving the difficulties and problems that arose in the sugya (Klein 2021).

8.3. R. Samet's outlook – meaning and illumination

Meaning

R. Samet stresses the significance of Talmud studies that contain "meaning" for the student, namely, that creates personal "meaning" for the student. The meaning in Talmud studies must take front stage. But he wonders: What does this mean? What is the basic premise? What "grants meaning"? And he answers: The quest is for Talmud instruction that touches upon something that somehow generates consequences for existential aspects of the learner. But in his opinion the meaning comes at a cost, as a teaching method that has "meaning" fundamentally assumes that it should be emulated in other fields, which R. Rosenberg called "translation". "Meaning" – indicates that the "meaning" per se is closed somehow, and for there to be "meaning" there is need for a transformation that must be translated into other words in order to transfer it to another field, for example to bring the "meaning" to the workshop where it will become meaningful, individual "meaning" of the student. But according to R. Samet, there is something about the word "meaning", something that is irksome and unindicative, and this word specifically is not particularly helpful (Klein 2021).

Illumination (hanhara)

R. Samet would like to replace the word "meaning", due to his view in the last sentence above (where he says that there is something about the word meaning, something that is irksome and unindicative, and this word specifically is not particularly helpful). In his opinion it would be better to use another word, one that is more primary and minor, which reflects his

outlook more powerfully – “illumination” (as R. Rosenberg mentioned above). Namely, when the Talmudic text illuminates it contains something clear that is an illumination for the student. Although the word “illumination” too is a “tricky” word, because when does text illuminate? With what insights is the student illuminated? But it is necessary to clarify that “illumination” seeks the clarity in the thing itself and does not try to place on the text something external, rather it is a type of listening. “Illumination” is that which this text illuminates for a student living at present in the 21st century with certain thought horizons, who reads the text in different ways and in languages that he uses to think about other things. The “illumination” is the expectation that the text illuminate for the reader from within its subjective contexts, a type of comprehensibility and transparency that express something specific. The “illumination” can be easy and attainable in different texts in certain tractates, for example Tractate Rosh Hashana or Tractate Yoma or Tractate Sukkah, because they deal with matters concerning the festivals, or Tractate Berakhot that deals with matters of prayer, which are closer to the student’s everyday life. Although from an inherently textual respect the Talmudic text can still be complex or complicated with regard to its eclectic cohesiveness. The term “illumination” relates to the internal part of the text, the text has within it something that contains a personal light for the student, that is the personal moment of individual and intimate revelation that comes from the student’s level of supreme devotion.

Underlying the words in the text is a deep insight revealed through the words that are capable, at each stage, of activating the trigger of inner “illumination” formed by the link between the literal words and their comprehension. The “illumination” is something that pops up from the words and not something that is attached to the words from without.

The “illumination” of the texts is not simple in itself and the question of whether the texts illuminate at all is a very complex question. “Illumination” can also derive from the very fact that the talmudic text is redacted. Reading the text, together with the expectation for personal “illumination”, constructs the next tier of the talmudic text.

Therefore, every student must assume sincerity and responsibility when studying the talmudic text because it will be his personal “illumination”, which will in fact be the contribution of the present generation to the next generations (Klein 2023).

R. Samet expands the explanation of the term “illumination” as follows. At present, when utilizing the Talmud instruction method at Yeshivat Siach Yitzhak, we are encountering more advanced and meaningful questions. Not only the question of the relationship between the “anonymous Talmud” and the statement of an amora, or between the last and first Amoraim, but rather the question of the entire sugya. In the language of the yeshiva: Where is the sugya headed? What is the orientation of the sugya? There is a preconception that the sugya has a certain

direction, an orientation. According to this preconception there already exists a connection to two additional aspects that R. Samet places in tiers. The first tier is that of honesty, the “illumination”, the student’s experience of internal clarity. The great force of what the individual student finds in the talmudic text, while the student often feels that the “Torah’s intellect” is foreign to the student’s intellect. When a student begins to study Talmud at an early age he does not ask himself questions, rather he simply knows that this is how you learn. He doesn’t ask himself, why is the Talmud such a strange and such an awful text. There are several unwritten premises that underly Talmud studies, which we skip over without noticing and perhaps treat as obvious, but they have considerable force. There are many premises that one must grasp in order to be capable of explaining the course of the Talmudic text in a simple way; as R. Samet says figuratively: “You have to come with a truck of premises to understand a course of thought or to justify its rationality”. Most of us, however, do not contend with this question and do not assume that the talmudic text is supposed to be rational, not in the scientific meaning of the word but in the sense of being supposed to communicate with human beings and talk to them in a language that is not an internal code of the *beit midrash*. This leads to the second tier, where two movements take place. The first is deep “illumination”, which is a type of understanding that allows a large quantity. The second is that the talmudic text has an orientation and the student has the motivation that allows him to ask what to do with the Talmudic text. This produces a greater and deeper experience of persuasion and identification.

These two elements are extremely significant. The first is individual persuasion. The student understands better what is happening in the text. Many stages in Talmud instruction suddenly became comprehensible, the student understands what is happening in the text. The second is individual identification. This is a very common element at the yeshiva – identification, relevance, deep analysis, internalization – a long list of spiritual and mental movements that can become part of the student’s encounter with Torah study, and this is much more significant than research (Klein 2021).

Talmud studies must necessarily involve reading the text and clarifying what occurs in the text. The student can grapple with the enigmatic aspects of the text and read “side by side”, as R. Samet says, also the words of the first commentators, waiting for an “illumination” to erupt from their words that will transform the entire talmudic discourse also into the student’s place. So the student is not only the consumer of the talmudic discourse or the addressee of the discourse between the text and the *Rishonim*, but rather also part of the discourse himself, an active participant in the discourse who takes part in it, his own part, and that is the meaning of the word “learn” according to the yeshiva’s method of Talmud instruction. The hard core of Talmud studies is the place where the

student complies, listens, hears the words, flows with them, comes into contact with them, works with them, and experiences illumination in the words themselves (Klein 2023).

9. Conclusions

R. Rosenberg's method of Talmud instruction at Yeshivat Siach Yitzhak assimilates philosophical concepts devised by the greatest 19th-20th century European philosophers. His method includes topics that are within the domain of academic Talmudic research, such as realism, history, and sociology, though it does not address the direct study of the talmudic text (the sugya) as did the Talmud instruction method at the Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin. The method also includes academic research tools that he sees as legitimate for teaching Talmud, such as philology and history.

The innovation of his method is the assimilation of different philosophical concepts such as Hegel's dialectic, inspired by the Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin, and other philosophical concepts such as Kierkegaard's existentialism and Guilford's creativity, both among the greatest 19th-20th century European and US philosophers.

Another innovation developed in the Talmud instruction method devised by R. Rosenberg, R. Yair Dreifuss, R. Dr. Noam Samet, and R. Dr. Uri Lifshitz are terms associated with philosophical concepts, such as motivation, meaning, illumination, imprint on life, and art, intended to form an interaction with the student that will leave him with an existential or spiritual relationship, primarily through individual "illumination".

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