

Rabbi Dov Linzer's Remarks
Avi Chai Fellows Press Conference
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I am the Rosh HaYeshiva (Rabbinic Head) and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah Rabbinical School. YCT Rabbinical School was founded nine years ago by Rabbi Avi Weiss, and in my role as Rosh HaYeshiva and Dean, and with the collaboration of my colleagues, I have spearheaded the development and shaping of YCT's groundbreaking curriculum. This curriculum has professionalized Orthodox rabbinical training, by combining intensive Talmud study and the rigorous and nuanced study of halakha with an expert professional leadership and rabbinic training program and an unparalleled four-year pastoral counseling program. In many contexts, the training integrates these various disciplines, modeling for students how to balance and integrate the many-faceted dimensions of the rabbi's identity and role.

YCT is innovative not only for its curriculum, but for its vision of Orthodoxy as well. We believe in an Orthodoxy that promotes openness in thought and inclusiveness in practice. We are committed to serving all of Klal Yisrael, and our students make a commitment to serve in the rabbinate for a minimum of three years. Our *mushmachim*, ordained rabbis, work to increase the knowledge, literacy, and Jewish identity of all Jews, and to heighten the awareness particularly amongst Orthodox Jews of the importance of religious meaning in addition to observance, the obligation of inclusiveness, and our mandate to serve not only our fellow Jews, but the society at large.

Until now, our focus has been on producing pulpit rabbis and this has been the emphasis of our curriculum. While approximately 30% of our *mushmachim* enter into the field of Jewish education, we have yet to create an educator's track for such future educator-rabbis. However, the need for rabbi-educators who embody the vision and values that I have described is great. Even within the Modern Orthodox schools, many of the rabbis do not identify as Modern Orthodox. Among those who do so, a large number fail to bring a non-dogmatic, critical-minded and meaning-making approach to the study

of traditional texts and fail to communicate to their students religious values that are modern and inclusive and that underscore the importance of Jewish unity and Klal Yisrael. It is also fair to say that many rabbis filling these teaching positions are not schooled in educational theory and have received little or no pedagogical training. Our schools- Jewish day schools, yeshiva high schools, and community schools – need rabbis who are deeply learned, who are professionally trained as educators, and who embody modern and inclusive values.

Developing a rabbi-educator's track is thus the next critical step that YCT must take.

As an Avi Chai Fellow, it will be my goal over the next three years to develop an educator track within our rabbinical school, to parallel the pulpit track that already exists. This track will teach educational philosophy and general pedagogical training, with a student-focused approach to learning that encourages discovery and personal meaning making. It will further teach educational practices particular to Jewish texts and subject matter, and engender an approach to text and subject matter that reflects modern values within a traditional context. As teaching is an apprentice-based craft, intensive mentored internships will be a major part of the training. As rabbi-educators must often serve in a pastoral capacity to their students and their students' parents, our pastoral-counseling program will be a critical component of this curriculum.

Rabbis trained in this program will be prepared to teach in Jewish day schools, in yeshiva high schools, and in community schools. This curriculum will also be developed with the hope that elements of it may be incorporated into the curricula other rabbinical schools, as appropriate.

It is my hope that with this curriculum, and by producing rabbis informed by its vision and values, that we can increase Jewish literacy and commitment, that we can cultivate in our children intellectual openness and critical thought, awaken in them a passion for Torah and a religious connection to our sacred texts, and raise them to recognize and assume the responsibility towards their fellow Jews and towards all humankind.

