



## Dear Friends and Colleagues:

When I was in my 20s, I taught 7<sup>th</sup> grade religious school at a Reform synagogue in the Bay Area. Among other things, I was charged with teaching the Jewish holidays as the cycle of the year unfolded. Probably as a reaction against the mediocrity and irrelevance of my own Sunday School experience, I approached this exploration of the holidays—and everything else I taught—with a deep desire to make it *relevant* for my students. In other words—though I certainly wouldn't have articulated it this way myself at the time—I wanted them to experience Jewish learning as a source of Jewish wisdom *with the potential for practical application*, something that could have an authentic role in their day-to-day lived experience. I was more or less successful in this regard (*Lag b'Omer* always presented a relevance challenge), but I want to highlight my Yom Kippur teaching as an illustration of a particular limitation of my approach.

While I later learned that the Yom Kippur prohibition on wearing leather shoes is traditionally understood as a form of self-affliction in dialogue with fasting and the other forms of self-abnegation undertaken on the day, I was drawn to the idea that avoiding leather was an expression of support for animal rights: On this day when we stand in judgment, we ought to refrain from reminding the judge that we regularly kill other living things. As a longtime vegetarian, I still find this far more compelling than avoiding the comfort of leather shoes (I prefer my Converse Chuck Taylors anyway).

Now, how to translate this into a relevant learning for my students? As I shared

with my students the Yom Kippur rules governing leather footwear and introduced them to the Jewish ethical values around *tza'ar ba'alei chayim*—the ethical treatment of animals—I also made them aware of the boycott against Proctor & Gamble that People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals was then leading in an effort to force P&G to abandon its longstanding, cruel, and antiquated practice of testing cosmetics and household cleaning products on animals. As a *coup de grace*, I gave my students a homework assignment: When you get home, go through your house and gather up all of the Proctor & Gamble products you can find—Crest toothpaste, Tide laundry detergent, Charmin toilet paper—and pile it all up on the kitchen table. When your parents get home, tell them that you're going to use up these products (since to dump them would violate the *mitzvah* of *bal tashchit*—wastefulness), but that going forward, until the boycott is over, you're going to refrain from buying these products because Proctor & Gamble engages in cruel and unnecessary testing on animals, and that's not a thing that Jews—who don't wear leather on Yom Kippur—can support. (This [recent New York Times article](#) offers a more developmentally sound basis for what I then called “bounded transgression.”)

Needless to say, there were consequences. On the one hand, my students were inspired: *Wait a minute. You're saying that Judaism can offer me an authentic justification to put my nascent sense of righteous indignation into practice in a way that will assert my independence of my parents?! I'm in!* On the other hand, I caught a bit of hell from a few parents, one of whom just might have called me an eco-terrorist in the after-school pick-up line (she later became a friend).

So... mistakes were made. But there was a spark of something interesting in that offbeat pedagogical moment.

In his book *Pasteur's Quadrant: Basic Science and Technological Innovation*, Donald Stokes outlines a 2x2 taxonomy for scientific and technological research based on the extent to which the research is designed to expand fundamental understanding and/or solve a particular, applied problem:

		Considerations of use?	
		No	Yes
Quest for fundamental understanding?	Yes	Pure basic research - <i>Niels Bohr</i>	Use-inspired basic research <i>Louis Pasteur</i>
	No		Pure applied research <i>Thomas Edison</i>

Research that's purely intended to advance fundamental understanding—the *Torah lishma* of scientific inquiry—is epitomized by the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century physicist Niels Bohr. Thomas Edison, on the other end of the spectrum, is the archetype for research that's driven entirely by its potential application. Stokes sees the greatest value in the intersection of these two, embodied by Louis Pasteur, whose use-inspired work in fermentation helped confirm the germ theory of disease. (It is in this quadrant that the breakthroughs initiated by DARPA—like the internet and GPS—sit, along with John Maynard Keynes' foundational work in macroeconomic theory, undertaken while trying to ameliorate the effects of economic depression.)

I love engaging *Torah lishma*, and I continue to find power in study for its own sake. But I am increasingly compelled by applied wisdom, whether the Edison flavor—taking extant knowledge and making it newly useful, as my twenty-something self was trying his best to do—or that of Pasteur's quadrant—in which we ask hard questions to which we don't yet know the answers and not only mine existing research but generate new knowledge in pursuit of a solution.

Work in Edison's and Pasteur's quadrants is what we're trying to catalyze with the Lippman Kanfer Prize for Applied Jewish Wisdom, the Finalists of which we're announcing elsewhere in this newsletter. How do we address economic inequality? What does it mean to be stewards of our planet? How do we cultivate civil discourse in an era of increasing social atomization and polarization? How do we nurture meaningful and sustaining relationships with

our spouses? How do we align our economic choices—work, saving, investment, consumption, philanthropy—with our values? For these questions and others, the Lippman Kanfer Prize for Applied Jewish Wisdom offers an opportunity to go deep into Pasteur’s and Edison’s quadrants, inviting us to ask how Jewish text and tradition inform and guide new thinking into the most important questions with which we as a community must grapple.

Yours,  
Aaron



## REGISTRATION OPEN

Jewish Futures 2016 Conference  
Wednesday, December 14, 2016

Along with our partners at the Jewish Education Project, we are pleased to present the 2016 Jewish Futures Conference. In addition to a full program and insights from **DAN ARIELY**, one of the world's foremost behavioral psychologists, the event will also feature the Inaugural Award Presentation for the Lippman Kanfer Prize for Applied Jewish Wisdom. [Registration now open.](#)

**LIPPMAN  
KANFER PRIZE**  
for Applied Jewish Wisdom

Lippman Kanfer Foundation for Living Torah is pleased to announce its Finalists for the Lippman Kanfer Prize for Applying Jewish Wisdom!

In the Local/Regional Category:

- 24/6: A Jewish Theater Company
- B'naiture Pre-Teen Rite of Passage and Mentorship, a program of Wilderness Torah
- Hadran Alach: Bringing our Jewish Agricultural Heritage to Life, a program of the Pearlstone Center
- Jewish Enrichment Center
- Milwaukee Jewish Artists' Laboratory at the Harry and Rose Samson Family Jewish Community Center
- The S&M Bet Midrash, a collaboration between Mishkan Chicago and Svara: A Traditionally Radical Yeshiva

And in the National/International Category:

- Ask Big Questions
- BIMA/Genesis, a program of Brandeis University
- Encounter
- Jewish Communities Engage Mass Incarceration, a program of T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
- LaHaV, a program of Shalhevet High School
- Urban Adamah Fellowship, a program of Urban Adamah

The Foundation hopes this cohort of thriving and effective programs will encourage more organizations in the Jewish community to bring this approach to their work with creativity and intentionality. Profiles of all Finalists and Semifinalists can be read at [www.lippmankanferprize.org](http://www.lippmankanferprize.org).

[Click here to read our full press release.](#)

## GIVING

Over the last few months the foundation has been working with potential partners to finalize several 2016 grants. We're pleased to share that the following organizations received grants that commence in 2016: Amplifier, Foundation for Jewish Camp, Jewish Emergent Network, J4 JOFEE organizations (Hazon, Pearlstone Center, Wilderness Torah, & Urban Adamah), JEIC/the Hakaveret Team Challenge, Hillel Office of Innovation, Keshet, Clal for the New Paradigm Spiritual Communities Initiative, and Sefaria. We're excited to work with a mix of new and long-time partners on a diverse array of initiatives that further applying Jewish wisdom.



**Al tifrosh min hatzibur — Do not separate yourself from the community**

[Click the video above](#) for a preview of this month's Sh'ma Now - Read the full issue at [forward.com/shma-now/](http://forward.com/shma-now/)

## LEARNING

When we initiated the Lippman Kanfer Prize for Applied Jewish Wisdom, we did not know what to expect. Would organizations be interested in a competition that asked them to describe how they were “applying Jewish wisdom” in their activities? Would they even understand what we meant by that phrase? Would we find a handful of examples or more than a few? Would the organizations be able to demonstrate their reach and impact?

Now that the inaugural Prize competition is reaching its final stages, the answers to some of these questions seem clear. The pool of applicants has applied Jewish wisdom in a wide variety of ways to a broad range of life concerns, reaching diverse populations. We now have reason to believe that we are looking at a phenomenon in American Jewish life that is both more widespread and more impactful than has

previously been recognized. Amidst the hand-wringing about assimilation and disaffiliation that often dominates discussion of the state of Jewish life, we see enormous grass-roots energy and creativity in developing new forms of Jewish self-expression and community-building.

Fully mining the treasure trove of information contained in the 200 plus Semifinalists for the Prize will take time, but we plan to share our own ongoing analysis, and invite others to use the database for their own research and/or inspiration. All of the program profiles are available at [www.lippmankanferprize.org](http://www.lippmankanferprize.org).

Senior Fellow Jon Woocher has detailed his initial insights in an article, published in eJewish Philanthropy and our blog. In it, we offer three early findings that bear further investigation and elaboration:

1. **Program developers and sponsors are not shying away from incorporating serious Jewish content in their programs, but are acutely aware of the need to make this content relevant to their audiences.**
2. **There is virtually no area of contemporary life that is not addressable and being addressed by Jewish wisdom.**
3. **“Jewish wisdom” is a compound of teachings, practices, and relationships.**

Please [click here to read Jon’s full reflections](#), only the start of what we hope to learn from this rich data source of inspiration and success stories.



**We've moved offices!**

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## SHARING

Catch our Senior Fellow, Jon Woocher and Director of Jewish and Organizational Learning, Rabbi Lee Moore on [Episode 37 of Judaism Unbound](#) - stream online or subscribe to the podcast via [iTunes!!!](#)

We're proud to see our sister foundation, [Lippman Kanfer Family Foundation](#), honored by [Hunger Free America](#) at [their fall gala](#), this November 9.

The [Bronfman Youth Fellowships](#) are kicking off a new recruitment season - now's the time to urge any high school juniors you know to consider applying.

<http://bronfman.org/become>

And if you love the program, why not join them? BYFI is [looking for a part-time communications and design associate](#) for their NYC based team.

Rebecca Sirbu continues to break new ground in connecting rabbis to the people who need them with her startup [Rabbi Careers](#)

[Jeducation World](#) continues to offer stories of considerable interest to those involved in Jewish Education - one of our recent favorites was this story of [a man trying to apply Jewish wisdom within the popular computer game, Minecraft](#).

There was a great deal of Jewish wisdom in this article featuring [parenting advice from Ruth Bader Ginsburg](#)

ICYMI, the power of Shabbat dinner played a huge role in changing the views of white supremacist [Derek Black, as told by the Washington Post](#). Others are also inspired to change the world around the Shabbat dinner table - read this story of [Dinner Table Politics](#), and if you're inspired, [sign up to host your own election-edition shabbat](#) at [OneTable](#)

*What else should we be sharing?*

[Click here to send us your recommendations!](#)



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