

## The Center for Modern Torah Leadership

"Taking Responsibility for Torah"

www.torahleadership.org

כ"ב אלול תשע

1 September 2010

Dear Friend and Supporter,

If the future of Modern Orthodoxy matters to you, the Center for Modern Torah Leadership is a great investment. Here's why:

This is a time of tremendous opportunity for Modern Orthodoxy. We have achieved a remarkable level of Torah education, for both men and women; we have incredible financial and human resources; Medinat Yisrael is as secure as it has ever been; and the American Jewish community has come to a general recognition that continuity requires the combination of knowledge and commitment with breadth and openness that we embody.

But this is also a tremendously challenging time. The spread of high-level Torah education has destabilized rabbinic and halakhic authority; day school tuition threatens to make our community inaccessible to all but the wealthiest; the State of Israel no longer seems realistically protoMessianic; and a combination of ideological and personal status issues threaten to fragment both Orthodoxy and the Jewish community generally.

To seize these opportunities and meet these challenges, Modern Orthodoxy needs leaders who

a) take thoughtful and nuanced public stands on critical but controversial issues;

b) inspire us as individuals and as a community to heights of interpersonal kindness and social justice

c) address and confront the intellectual challenges of academia; and

d) always take responsibility for the consequences of their Torah statements.

We are proud of the important contributions our alums, still at the beginnings of their careers, are already making on campus, in the rabbinate, in the classroom, and in the boardroom. (A list of alums is at [www.torahleadership.org](http://www.torahleadership.org).) And we look forward to much more.

Our flagship Summer Beit Midrash program accepted its largest group of Fellow this summer, and we were still forced to turn away qualified applicants. The level of learning was extraordinary, and we successfully integrated our first Israeli students, who left determined to start a parallel program in Israel. The American SBM Fellows are returning to their yeshivot, universities, and teaching positions invigorated, inspired, and ready to spread the message of "taking responsibility for Torah". You can share the learning and experience by downloading this summer's shiurim from [www.torahleadership.org](http://www.torahleadership.org).

"Containing Diversity", our fourth annual conference for rabbis and educators, generated passionate, rigorous, and respectful discussion among participants across the spectrum of Modern Orthodoxy. A public panel on Modern Orthodox education, featuring conference participants Rabbi Shalom Berger and Rabbi Yaakov Bieler, and moderated by Rabbi Dr. Meir Sendor, filled the main sanctuary of Young Israel of Sharon with teachers, parents, and school administrators from all over the Greater Boston area, with a remarkably energizing q&a period following.

Our website is an international center of Torah learning, regularly exceeding 3000 shiurim downloaded each month, our weekly dvar Torah is read by hundreds of subscribers. .

Growth comes with costs, and there is so much more we need to do. Please invest in your vision of Torah by contributing to the Center for Modern Torah Leadership [here](#).

Bivrahah leshanah tovah umetukah,

Rav Aryeh Klapper  
Dean

Deborah Klapper  
Director of Development

Please scroll down to see the dvar Torah for Rosh Hashannah, and open the PDF document attached for the dvar Torah for this Shabbat.

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### **Teshuvah, Autonomy, and Ideal Torah Leadership**

R. Yosef Albo (1380-1444, Spain) argues that praiseworthy “repentance out of fear” (*teshuvah miyir’ah*) cannot refer to a change of heart that takes place while G-d is punishing the sinner – that would be deemed “repentance out of coercion” and have no significance. Rather, it refers to repentance in the aftermath of punishment.

This distinction seems problematic – isn’t the repentance after punishment still the result of coercion, motivated by the implicit threat of further punishment? R. Albo responds that sinners always have the freedom to believe their past suffering was random, and therefore that future sin will go unpunished. Genuine “repentance out of fear” involves the continuing recognition that sin has consequences.

“Repentance out of love” (*teshuvah meiahavah*), by contrast, is the decision to choose virtue over vice without regard to self-interest. The ultimate religious goal of the Yamim Noraim is thus a state of complete freedom in which our choices reflect nothing but our own will. It accords perfectly with the “modern” ideal of autonomy.

However – it is all too easy for people to ignore the possibility of Divine coercion, and nonetheless continually make decisions to curry favor with or avoid the displeasure of other people. Such people act as if they have no will of their own at all, only fears and desires. As leaders, they pander, equivocate, and surrender.

Ideal Torah leaders have a vision of the good that is deeply rooted in their truest selves; they make a fully autonomous choice to carry out G-d’s will. Such leaders are capable of making the decisions that enable their communities to embody and promote justice and holiness.

The Center for Modern Torah Leadership is dedicated to the development of such leaders, in the hope and belief that they will lead us all to *teshuvah meiahavah*. Please help us fulfill that sacred task.