

(from Dr. Ervin Birnbaum, 1976)

PERPETUAL SEARCH IN SOLID PERMANENCE

In a bewildering world of rapid change, it is good to take in a bit of the unbounded serenity of life, time, and nature. Most people, especially city people, do not get a chance to experience the solemn, steady, rhythmic and harmonious flow of life. The hum of modern gadgets, from car to T.V., is too much with them.

One of the Midrasha's most splendid contributions to its students is that it offers an unparalleled opportunity to return a bit to the essence of man and life, to become intimate with the breathtaking monuments of eternity and to determine one's role in a miniature model society.

This is the setting that you chose--or fell into--two years ago. You came to us in your mid-teens, when you began to despair of your parents, and perhaps your parents of you. Nothing personal is meant here--the relationship between parents and adolescents is as eternally embedded in the life-cycle of man as Wadi Zin, or Ein Avdat are in the bosom of the Negev. Here in the Midrasha you worked out your adolescent turmoil, shedding your posture of childhood and acquiring the posture of an adult. A fundamental change occurs which does not compare to anything else, except possibly the moment of one's birth. But the development at birth is not a conscious process, whereas the change from child to adult is a period of grueling self-doubt, self-search, and much storm and stress.

The serenity of the landscape and youthful fluctuations of mood, the solid permanence of the colorful desert mountains, and the perpetually changing, sometimes chaotic search for the self--such are the constants and contrasts of beauty that embellish the Midrasha. And if the eternity of such divine architecture became part of you, as it must have, then your tumultuous selves became intertwined with the design and fate of this unusual place. The two strains complement each other. I am convinced that in a decade or two, as you cast a nostalgic glance over your shoulder, you will admire the sublime blend that found expression during your brief stay with us: your personality in transition amidst this rugged, glorious permanence.

People, for a person in my position it would not be fair to draw comparisons with the five former graduating classes, but I could be allowed to say that individually and as a group you are a swell bunch; you worked hard (well, most of you), you didn't make our staff's lives impossible (except once in awhile), you brought us many moments of pride and you allowed for a relationship of wholesome mutual respect. Thanks very much for enriching my life by allowing me to touch yours. My warmest best wishes accompany you wherever destiny should take you. I shall be looking forward to hearing from you and sharing with you morsels of delight in your progress and accomplishments.

Signed: Ervin Brinbaum