**We Are Not the Same**

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“Real teaching,” writes Joseph McDonald in *Teaching: Making Sense of an Uncertain Craft,* “happens inside a wild triangle of relations – among teacher, students, subject – and the points of this triangle shift continuously.” We are in the midst of a world-shaping moment in Jewish history, a ‘wild triangle,’ and an inflection point that we have yet to comprehend. It demands something unexpected of us as educators. It is hard to know how to rise to a moment that is both deflating and incomprehensible.

Many of us cannot remember our last normal day. It was probably October 6th. We are not the same people we were before October 7th. I am not the same person. As an educator, this sense of disequilibrium has challenged my objectives in the classroom. If teaching is foundational to my identity, and my identity is shifting because fundamental assumptions I’ve made about the world have been questioned, then how can I teach?

It is still too early to apprehend how we have changed as a nation and as individuals; this will be the work of many years to come. And it will only begin in earnest once the fog of war has lifted. It will involve understanding more about what factually happened as we clear the debris of heartache and the bias of the media. It will involve dissipating political minefields, processing trauma, internalizing the deep wounds of antisemitism, and asking ourselves how we can love a universe again when we feel profoundly betrayed by it.

Other developments more positive in nature will also have to be examined in the work we do as educators. We will have to find ways to hold on to the unity this war has generated in Israel and across the globe. We must rethink the Israel/diaspora divide that occupied academics and journalists that now seems false, a synthetic creation that disappeared when we were under attack. We will have to name and try to preserve the thousand small kindnesses that surfaced every day of this war that have affirmed the inherent goodness of Israeli society. We cannot afford to squander these gifts that it took a war to bring to our attention.

McDonald confesses that inside the continuously shifting triangle of teaching, he remains “chronically unsure of what to teach and how to teach it” but has developed an eye for what he calls “productive linkage.” We don’t have to have all the answers to make productive linkages; connecting our students to relevant ideas and to each other may be the most redemptive work we can do as professionals right now.

There is something also liberating about leaning into this uncertainty. Imagine, for a moment, a science teacher in an elementary school. A storm begins to brew outdoors; the teacher realizes that she is losing the attention of her students to the heavy rain beating on the classroom window. Instead of exerting authority to pull them back, she bends into the moment, invites the class to move to the window and begins a science lesson on the weather. That evening, as she reflects on how different her lesson plan was from what actually happened, she realizes that the initial loss of control helped her teach both more relevantly and more authentically. She is oddly exhilarated.

We are in that storm. We need to take our students to that window and talk about the storm. As Jewish educators, we are always teaching for uncertainty but not always as aware of it. We, too, may look back on these many months one day in a more peaceable future and realize that instead of skirting uncertainty, we embraced it and brought it into the space. Our vulnerability turned into our strength and taught us how to teach.