

# “Relearning the Lesson”

By Rabbi David Wolpe

We are forever relearning the lesson: education and values are not the same. A trained intellect does not equal an active conscience. Doctors can plot to bomb innocent people in London and Glasgow, if they are doctors without values. Professors can lie and cheat and steal, if they are professors without values. As George Steiner so memorably wrote years ago: "We know that a man can read Goethe or Rilke in the evening, that he can play Bach and Schubert, and go to his day's work at Auschwitz in the morning."

Oliver Wendell Holmes spoke of bigotry as resembling the pupil of an eye — the more light you pour on it, the more it contracts. Learning alone will not widen a mind unless it has elasticity. Becoming a doctor means developing the skill of preserving life; becoming a decent human being means holding the conviction of the value of life. The two often go in tandem, but not always, as the growing literature on Nazi doctors teaches us; as today's newspaper reminds us.

No belief, training or tradition alone can ensure goodness. Our best chance is to reiterate the central teaching of the Torah: each human being is made in the image of God. You can betray that image or honor it. A world bereft of that truth is a world bereft.