

Teach Your Children Well

BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE

The new book *Jews and Words* coauthored by Amos Oz and his daughter Fania Oz-Salzberger, quotes Jesus' saying "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God." The authors go on to say: "The directive sounds very Jewish, but the reasoning is quintessentially Christian: it rests on the assumption that the least learned are the purest human beings. It bonds innocence with ignorance."

"But Jewish tradition usually — some Hasidic tales offer an exception — found nothing angelic in an untaught child....In Jewish communities young children were already students. The Talmud endearingly calls them 'school babes,' *tinokot shel beit rabban*."

In Eastern Europe the letters of the alphabet were famously smeared with honey so that children would recognize early on that learning was sweet. Indeed, as Oz and Oz-Salzberger write, all that is necessary for the Jewish tradition to continue are children and books. As schools start all over the world, let us hope we are continually blessed with both.