

Eulogy of Yochanan Rywerant 1922-2010

by Eva Laser

Yochanan Rywerant no longer summons students around his bench or the floor to explain the elements of the Feldenkrais system. A long undertaking to make the principles of the method visible and explainable in a sensory context has reached a new phase. His refined touch is to be felt no more.

I initiated my professional training with Yochanan in the summer of 1988 and I regularly returned until December, 2009. I continued to study with Yochanan because I found significance in the returning and deepening as a way of excellence that was one of Yochanan's virtues. As I matured as a teacher, I found his constant theoretical curiosity along with a simplification of strokes to be very hopeful and promising. In later years, as the Feldenkrais legacy like Alexander Yanai, San Francisco and Amherst became accessible in depth, I have been able to find an independent way to draw upon it as an infinite resource of learning. The similarity has been striking.

We often say that doing something three ways is choice. I found Yochanan's ability in having more than three ways of explaining the most complex situation in metateaching, whether with Awareness Through Movement or Functional Integration, to reflect a complete freedom and mastery. Remembering Yochanan I find his attitude deeply rooted in Jewish thought as he carefully prepared us, his students, to keep asking questions, to look for a diversity of answers and to be faithful to the elementary values of the teaching. Yochanan always emphasized the facets of the Feldenkrais legacy that rest on science and his lifework should be evaluated from this perspective. Grounded in the science, he saw, among other things, the ability to repeat and reproduce the overall response looked for again and again. He pointed out, and demonstrated, how the application of the principles of the system was a way to assure this would happen. Reading him carefully, we will find him adherent to these very values he learned to appreciate during the years at Moshe Feldenkrais' side.

I look upon him as a visionary in that he understood that a profound understanding of the construction of the "alphabet", the application of principals at an elementary level, would enable his students to develop security and confidence in engaging themselves in the art of Functional Integration and Awareness Through Movement and to adjust to their clients' various needs.

Yochanan joined the Feldenkrais School in 1952 and after years in Alexander Yanai he participated in the first training in Tel Aviv in the years 1969 to 1971. He had already been invited to assist Dr. Feldenkrais in his developmental work in Nachmani Street. He assisted him in Berkley, San Francisco, and Amherst. He trained in Toronto, Munich and London and

In the early 1980s, he formalized his learning and teaching experience into the first didactic book about Functional Integration, *Feldenkrais Method, Teaching by Handling*. The book was published in 1983. In a short foreword, written in the old rabbinical approach, Dr. Feldenkrais gives his authorization, a *smachta*, of the book and its author, opening a new venue in meta-teaching Feldenkrais to future generations of teachers. The book is a didactic concretization and systematization of the teaching of Functional Integration. It begins to fulfill his quest to make the vision of the Feldenkrais Method sustainable into the future with emphasis on the scientific approach of the system.



From this statement, his book, he developed an independent pedagogical approach to which he was adherent to during 24 years as an independent trainer. In 1986 he was invited to Sweden and became a pioneer in training teachers, providing a concise nomenclature and textbook as a reliable support for the elusive process to learn the Feldenkrais system and legacy. His professional training model consisted of a 90-day program in groups no bigger than 24 and often smaller. His first wife Yardena Alotin, filmed this first training and it is now a valuable documentation of his explanatory skills and precise touch. This documentation might be a complementary source for the many teachers who have never have been introduced to the *Teaching by Handling* text in their training settings.

In 1993 Yochanan was active in the founding of the International Feldenkrais Federation (IFF), thus enabling his students to get integrated in the International community, hoping that their unique learning experience would enrich and promote the development of teaching. In 1994 he organized his meta meta-comments into a 40-day outline program in order to enhance the development training skills. This program was later published in 2000 under the title *Acquiring the Feldenkrais Profession*. It is the outline of a curriculum for training teachers. His pedagogical approach, relying on a combination of precise verbal and sensory information, is hidden in the text. The use of speech in teaching Awareness Through Movement is essential, taking lessons far beyond the written page, and his refinement to fully embrace the primacy of hearing in learning Functional Integration made his Functional Integration teaching clear and precise.

In 2008 he published a monograph titled *Corollary Discharge, the Forgotten Link - Remarks on the body-mind problem*, where, he among other things discusses relative conjugate movement, a discovery of Dr. Feldenkrais and a cornerstone in the Feldenkrais system. He again uses dialogue with science to explain a 55-year-long professional view.

After health reduced his traveling during the last decades, he continued to teach concise professional trainings and his 40-day training course and to give various advanced trainings and lectures in Israel, Switzerland and Germany. His work continued to gain precision, clarity and simplicity.

I was present in one of the monthly advanced trainings in Tel Aviv while pedagogues invited their clients to get lessons from Yochanan, lessons which he later discusses with the gathered teachers. A young teacher coming from a different training modality asked why he always repeated himself. He smiled at her and said; "There are many people in this room isn't there? I can address every one of you with the same question. What is your name? And every single one would give a different answer. You might think I am repeating myself but the answers to my questions are always new. My next question, as you know, is always depending on your answer. It is a dialogue at hand."

My father put a question to me before his passing, asking me if I believed he could send pictures from the other side. I was without an answer at that time. Memory is such that a respected teacher never disappears. Still, there is a huge loss.

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