

R. Elimelekh Bar-Shaul:  
Some reflections on the educational aspects  
of his thought and halakhic positions

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Rabbi Elimelech Bar-Shaul (1913-1965) was a community leader, rabbi and halakhic expert, and exemplary teacher for a generation in need of guidance. In the wake of the Holocaust and the founding of the State of Israel, a great number of observant Jews, youth in particular, needed to establish a new cultural and religious identity in largely secular surroundings. This paper presents the figure of R. Bar-Shaul and the role he played as an educator and religious personality, and considers his influence both in his own time and through the spiritual legacy he bequeathed to his students. R. Bar-Shaul's own writings are the focal point of discussion, particularly the halakhic responses he composed on a wide variety of issues. These reflect important aspects of historical reality and of his personality as it is refracted through his communication with those who turned to him for advice and rulings. The article begins with a biographical review, followed by a consideration of letters that R. Bar-Shaul wrote on the halakhic issue of modesty. They bring to light his loyalty to traditional Jewish law combined with sensitivity to contemporary concerns, and reflect his efforts to offer practical advice. The discussion then treats other central subjects in R. Bar-Shaul's teachings and persona, such as attitudes toward Oral Torah, the role of educators and the influential power of personal example.