Memoirs of a Jewish Educator

Louis Hurwich and the Story of Boston's Jewish Education

The Bureau of Jewish Education of Greater Boston

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PREFACE

The history of Jewish education in North America and how Jewish communities organized to provide educational opportunities are areas of research and analysis that remain poorly documented. Though some communities have preserved their stories, most have not. Aside from the lessons today's leaders could learn from such accounts, we might develop a greater sense of pride in our achievements were we able to contemplate them more carefully and analyze them more thoroughly.

The "Boston story" has been documented in several monographs and articles, most recently in *The Jews of Boston*, a publication of Combined Jewish Philanthropies, the local federation, on the occasion of its centennial. Nevertheless, the most sweeping history, covering more than three decades of pioneering work by the central figure responsible for the formation of the modern system of Jewish education in the community, has been relatively inaccessible to a large audience.

Until now.

Zikhronot M'anekh Ivri: Memoirs of a Jewish Educator, the three volume Hebrew edition of Louis Hurwich's memoirs, was completed on March 25, 1953, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Officially, it was published by the Bureau of Jewish Education of Boston in 1960, in cooperation with M. Newman Books, Ltd., Jerusalem.

The English translation was completed by the author in Israel in 1965. Over 400 pages of English typescript and more than 800 pages in the author's hand, the translation was not published until Dr. Walter Ackerman, a student of Louis Hurwich and a leading figure himself in Jewish education in North America, Israel, and worldwide, suggested that the Bureau of Jewish Education seek it out from the author's son and publish it.

The Hebrew Volume I, comprised mainly of autobiographical information, was edited down to a short chapter by Dr. Baruch Hurwich, the author's son, in Jerusalem, in 1996.

The remaining volumes were edited by Aaron Darsa, with final editorial work and supervision by Dr. Daniel Margolis, Executive Director of the Bureau of Jewish Education of Greater Boston, over two years, 1996–98. In editing the original from three volumes to one, we were forced to make many editorial decisions and anticipate being accused of making some bad ones. Clearly, some critical events and people are not included who should have been. But this leaves a task for others to complete in years to come.

Originally intended to commemorate the Bureau's 75th Anniversary, the task, which started as a "good idea" and "do-able project," turned into a protracted labor of love. Nevertheless, we hope this volume becomes a solid contribution to the general literature on Jewish education and a tribute to the remarkable efforts of one man who shaped the renowned Jewish education system of a community that insists on carrying on the tradition of its remarkable origins.

We are grateful to those who contributed to the publication effort; to "Ackie," for his steadfast encouragement; to Baruch and family for their patience and support; and to the Boston Hebrew College, Dr. David Gordis, President, for its financial assistance. We acknowledge, as well, the support staff of the BJE for all their many efforts towards the publication of this volume.

Daniel J. Margolis
Newton, Massachusetts
May, 1999 – *Sivan*, 5759

IN GRATITUDE

Memoirs of a Jewish Educator: Louis Hurwich and the Story of Boston's Jewish Education is a publication of the Bureau of Jewish Education of Greater Boston, with support from Hebrew College of Boston. In publishing this volume, these two institutions acknowledge their debt and honored history to the efforts of their founder, Louis Hurwich.

The publication of this work was also made possible by the generous support of those named below, who felt that the contributions to them from the Boston Jewish educational system under the leadership of Louis Hurwich are worthy of dissemination to a larger audience. We are grateful to these donors who have honored the memory of a Jewish educator-pioneer and the achievements of the institutions and system he in large measure created.

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Louis Hurwich, ca. 1940

I

BEGINNINGS

The original volume I, summarized by Baruch Hurwich, M.D.

RUSSIA

Childhood

My father, Baruch, was a scribe. The leaves of parchment on which he wrote the Books of the Torah were kept at home as his holy work continued throughout the day and well into the night. When half of our town of Sohl in Lithuania went up in flames, my mother, Rhoda, repeatedly ran into our burning house to rescue as much of the precious material as possible. Smoke inhalation aggravated her tuberculous state. She succumbed in 1889 at age 26 when I was only two and a half years old. I had a photograph of her lovely face, but actual memories were dim and few. I wrote, some time before my bar mitzvah, "Daughters in life you buried two; Sister and I buried you, too."

When it came to supporting those in need, Jewish communal activity in the old country took many forms, including: visits to the ill, bridal support and clothes for the needy. One institution, however, did not exist: the Orphanage. Though many children were suddenly left orphaned in those nineteenth century days, Jewish tradition did not permit them to be institutionalized. Invariably, relatives, friends, acquaintances and even total strangers took upon themselves the decades-long responsibilities of taking the orphans into their homes and bringing them up as their own. So my mother's parents could not do otherwise but take in their dead daughter's children.

Grandfather Michal was one of sixty *melamdim* (private religious school teachers) in Smorgon, a city of 15,000 souls, about three quarters of whom were Jewish, near Sohl. His *ḥeder* invariably was oversubscribed, and he had to turn away prospective pupils. Reb Michal never resorted to physical punishment of his charges, an accepted

practice in those days. His love of Torah and of the children was reflected in his approach: "One teaches Torah to a neighbor's son as if he were one's own." (*Sanhedrin* 19b). God bestowed ability, but persistence and maximal usage of what was God-given was in the hands of Man. That was his credo and that was what made him so popular among his neighbors. He was to continue his work well into his eighties, as his former pupils, now parents and grandparents, would not accept anyone but him as their children's teacher.

What guided Reb Michal in his behavior towards his charges, was the attitude expressed by my father's sister, Aunt Fruma. Before I left for studies in Vilna when I was in my mid-teens, she told me that I must always show respect to every person, for each one of us is a creation of God. Such behavior would be reflected in the attitude of others towards me. It was a lesson I never forgot and was to hold me in good stead the rest of my life. It was the reason I never had a physical altercation with anyone and why, as a public figure who came into contact with people of all sorts, I almost invariably was able to reach out to them and, through emphasizing the positive, find myself respected and rewarded in return.

After some years in Reb Michal's *ḥeder*, I was passed on to Reb Hirsch, where I stayed until my bar mitzvah at age thirteen. I found study in general and the major subject in which we concentrated, the Talmud, to be fascinating, and was able to master large tracts at a relatively early age, a fact that was noted by my teacher. I am certain that Reb Michal's attitude towards me was an important factor in my development. He would encourage me not to spend excessively long periods at play and would challenge me from an early age with ever higher levels of inquiry.

Once, when I was yet a boy, an important decision was to be made which testified to the importance my grandfather placed on Jewish learning. I heard him speak to my grandmother about moving to another home where my studies could progress. Then he turned to me in all seriousness and said: "Leibele, what do you think? Should we move to another place?" When an itinerant preacher of note came to town, he would take me along to a session that might last a few hours. When he went out for a constitutional, he would take me along and converse. My self-image developed steadily as he constantly ensured that my time was not spent frivolously.

I read my first Hebrew book when I was ten years old. Soon, I had read tens of books including histories, translations such as *Robinson*

Crusoe, as well as Josephus' *Wars of the Jews*. I learned of Mendel Einbinder's large private library of Hebrew books where for 3 kopeks I could borrow one book or for 5 kopeks a week, an unlimited number of books. I would go to the library and sit there for hours reading, among others, modern Hebrew authors such as Avraham Mapu. Mendel, seeing my seemingly insatiable appetite for reading, made me an offer: he would pay me 5 kopeks a week for reading with his son one hour a day. I could then borrow and take home an unlimited number of books.

One *Shabbat* I told my grandfather that I was going to the *Bet Midrash* to learn, but I went instead to Mendel's library and sat there reading for hours. Aunt Tzipe Rhoda appeared and told me to get out quickly; Reb Michal had come for me in the *Bet Midrash* and, having discovered that I had not been there at all, was looking for me. My grandfather appeared and told me to come with him. As we approached home, he turned to me and slapped my face twice, hard, the only time in my life when he hurt me physically. I found out they told him that they knew I spent long hours at the library. I was turning into an *Epikoros* and had turned into a liar. When told not to continue teaching Hebrew to Mendel's son, I complained that it was my only source of income, but Reb Michal said he would give me 5 kopeks a week in place of the lost wages.

The next day Reb Michal had a talk with the Head of the yeshivah, Reb Hirsch, who knew and understood me. He calmed my grandfather with assurances that I would not "be lost," I would not turn into an *Epikoros*. In addition, he argued that my reading was training me to understand the Hebrew language in depth. Relieved, Reb Michal permitted me to resume my visits to the library. I joined with others in sharing a subscription to the Hebrew daily newspaper *HaZefirah* (The Dawn). Ninety minutes a day were allotted me to have the paper before passing it on to another joint-subscriber. It opened for me a window to a new world for the first time, revealing the problems and burning questions of the day.

I came to learn that Reb Michal was not opposed to the study of Hebrew per se. His own grandfather, Reb Aharon ben Reb Michal, had written popular commentaries in Hebrew on the prayer books used on *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*. It was not the language but the subjects of the Hebrew books that were his concern. He violently opposed the reading of books written by *Epikorsim* and *Maskilim* as opposed, for example, to those of the *Ḥafetz Ḥayim*[1]

which dealt with religious matters. I read the latter with as much enthusiasm as I did the books in Mendel's library. My thirst for Hebrew writing was never slaked. The major themes of Hebrew writing grasped me tight, yet, by loosening his hold on me, Reb Michal made it possible for me not to reject that which he valued above all else.

Transition

When I was twelve an older friend and I participated together in a correspondence course in bookkeeping. It consisted of weekly lessons and cost 25 rubles. Grandfather Michal agreed that this would be a fine way for me to become secure financially, a problem faced by many young men who were forced to leave their studies in the yeshivah in order to find a way to support themselves. I could work at my own pace, at home, and would not be forced to leave the learning community. Each lesson was accompanied by an exercise which we sent to the "home office." If satisfactory, it was returned to us with corrections, accompanied by the next lesson. Reb Michal was so pleased by my step towards economic independence that he insisted on paying the extra 10 rubles charged for my being added as a student to my friend who had paid the full price for the course. In less than half a year I received a gold-lettered certificate and was a licensed bookkeeper.

My Bar Mitzvah came and went with little fanfare. Other than the wearing of *tefilin*, my daily program was unchanged. Reb Hirsch informed my grandfather that I had reached a level of knowledge that would permit me to leave the yeshivah to undertake independent study of the Talmud. The famed Volozhin Yeshivah had reopened after being closed in 1892 and by 1899 had 150 students. I was to be the first and only son of Smorgon to study in Volozhin where I was called "the Smorgon-er." Reb Michal's uncle, then aged eighty, lived in the town and agreed to take me into his home.

My studies began after *Sukkot* in 1899, not long after my becoming bar mitzvah. I was the youngest boy in the yeshivah. A wave of piousness swept over me during my first months of study. I stopped reading anything but the holy books. I even found a path from my room to the yeshivah through back yards and gardens which would permit my passage without (Heaven Forbid!) having to look at a female face. But this phase passed quickly. The Boer War was the center of interest among my fellow students. Unlike other yeshivot,

students in Volozhin were quite independent. Outside literature was permitted, including newspapers. The pages of the Hebrew newspapers, *HaZefirah* and *Hamelitz* were filled with news of the Dreyfus Case. We identified with the Boers in their war against the British Empire. We were drawn to the Zionist movement and its founder, Theodor Herzl, whose First Zionist Congress had taken place two years earlier.

A revolutionary concept in education, the "*ḥeder metukan*," arose based on Hebrew as a spoken language. All activities in the classroom were conducted in Hebrew, a seeming impossibility to us. For the very first time in my life I purchased a Hebrew book, volume four of a series on the history of the world, that dealt with the period of the French Revolution, Napoleon and the events in Europe in 1848. I read and reread the book at least a dozen times. Not long after I devoured the Hebrew translation of a 1,500 page book on the Natural Sciences. I was learning about a grand, wide new world beyond the walls of my yeshivah.

The devoutness of my first months in the yeshivah evaporated and in its place arose doubts and many questions. Unlike many others, however, I did not swing from one extreme to another or become an "enemy" of religion, probably because I had never suffered from my Jewish beliefs. Wisely, whenever Reb Michal saw my interest in his world waver, he became silent and did not attempt to force upon me anything which I deemed repugnant. Now, in Volozhin, I was on my own. Yet, along with my loss of interest in religious devotion there came substitutes which I deemed honorable, Zionism and a love for the Hebrew language. Despite my change of heart, however, I studied the Talmud diligently in my long days at the yeshivah. I had learned six *masekhtot*, about 700 pages of the Talmud/*Gemara*, a significant amount for a fifteen year old boy.

After a year and a half in Volozhin, I felt that I was without a clear idea of what my future was to be. I had not learned Russian; I did not want to prepare for the rabbinate. With my grandfather's consent, I returned to Smorgon where I found that the Zionist idea had spread like wildfire. A Zionist group was founded with important members of the community serving as its leaders. It rented a building for meetings and various activities including a program for youth. I joined the group and was given responsibilities such as the sale of tickets for a special Zionist *minyan* for *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*.

But my special interest lay in the "*ḥeder metukan*" where Hebrew was the language both of instruction and conversation and where the academic program included modern subjects. The yeshivot in Smorgon were losing their students at an alarming pace; some already shut their doors altogether. Sons and daughters, caught up by Socialism, rebelled against their parents and turned completely against Judaism and the Jewish people. I proposed to the leaders of the Zionist group that they should sponsor a "*ḥeder metukan.*" It would fill the void left by the collapse of the yeshivot; it would prevent the rebellion of Jewish youth and attract them to the Zionist cause. They should give it a home in their building without charge and supply light, heat and other services and could attract good teachers by offering a salary twice that earned by the most successful of private *melamdim* in their *ḥadarim*. I argued that many families, fearful of where their children were headed, would be prepared to pay the increased costs of the *ḥeder metukan*, making it self-supporting. Attracted by the idea, they suggested that I present it at an open meeting of the Zionist group.

Reactions were split. Those who resisted housing a school felt that the wives of the sixty *melamdim* in town would rise up united, claim it was taking bread from their children's mouths, and be a vocal and possibly violent opposition. However, the group agreed that if other sponsors were found, they would house it in the Zionist house as I had proposed. It was agreed that I would approach prominent members of the community in an effort to obtain their support as individual sponsors. Three factors were of help to me: my youth (it was the summer of 1901 and I was not yet fifteen years old, so there was no chance of my deriving personal gain from the new school by becoming a teacher); my Volozhin background gave me a standing in the community well beyond my years; and widespread panic brought on by the children's desertion. Together, these brought many households to seek a solution at any expense. We figured that thirty registered students would cover all known and even unexpected expenses. My visits with parents brought success after success and soon 35 had agreed to register their sons in the new *ḥeder metukan*. For the first time in my life I had undertaken and succeeded in a communal role.

Still, we had only half of what was needed. Where would we find a teacher? I had set as a minimum standard for the teacher an ability to speak Hebrew fluently, but there was no one in all of Smorgon

who spoke Hebrew at that time. Such a person could only be found elsewhere. I wrote articles and letters to newspapers, as well as private letters to various bodies in cities throughout the Jewish areas of Russia. No satisfactory reply was received. I used my small amount of savings to travel to Minsk where there were supposed to be appropriate candidates whom I interviewed from morning to night. Not even one was found to be suitable.

I returned to Smorgon, but we kept secret from the community my failure to find a teacher and said that I was still looking. We held public meetings in Smorgon at which those present decided that spoken Hebrew was next to an impossible undertaking. The *melamdim* were so upset by these events that they resorted to threats of various sorts, reaching a peak when one *melamed* told my grandmother that were I not to cease and desist from my efforts, he would tell the authorities that I was preaching Socialism, and I would be deported immediately to Siberia. I refused to stop my efforts, even then.

A magic moment came upon us at the holiday minyan sponsored by the Zionist group. At the end of the *Maariv* service on the first day of *Rosh Hashanah* a small man, aged about thirty, a local *maskil*, spoke to the congregation. At first no one understood him. Slowly there came the realization that he was speaking in Hebrew! His talk lasted for a quarter of an hour, and dealt with the People and the Land of Israel, Torah and Hebrew language. He spoke again on the second day, at *Neilah* on *Yom Kippur* and the next week during Sukkot. We were witnesses to a miracle and discovered that spoken Hebrew is not only possible, it can also be a day-to-day affair, not unusual in any sense of the word.

Meanwhile, four of the best local *melamdim*, themselves *maskilim*, banded together to establish a Hebrew School, albeit not one in which all affairs, including the teaching of the language itself, would be conducted in Hebrew. Yet there would be an introduction both to the Hebrew language and to a revised, broad schedule of study. It became obvious that no suitable teacher would be found for the *ḥeder metukan*. The Zionist group, after hearing of our dilemma, agreed to my suggestion that it sponsor the new school. In retrospect, it is clear that the time was not yet ripe for the founding of the *ḥeder metukan*. There simply weren't people available who could manage a full program in spoken Hebrew. The success of the four *melamdim/maskilim* and their enthusiasm in founding the new school bode well for the future.

As to myself, I learned from my experiences that if sufficient energy is devoted to a program for the good of a community and there is no personal gain to be had by the person expending those efforts there is bound, in time, to be success. Even a youngster such as I was able to move the pedagogical efforts of a whole community in new directions. It was an effort I was never to forget and was to be a guide and support for me in the years to come.

After the holidays I went to Vilna. While working for a great-aunt there, I studied and read Russian, found a Hebrew library where I could read many new and old works and participated in Zionist activities. Though public Zionist meetings were forbidden by the government, small meetings were held in private homes. Some spoken Hebrew could be heard at such events on rare occasions. Even in Vilna, "the Jerusalem of Lithuania," spoken Hebrew was still virtually a dream.

I realized that I had no specific goals or plans. Reb Michal wrote to my father who had gone to America in 1900, asking whether there would be a future for me there. I was approaching the age at which I could be involuntarily drafted into the Russian army for a minimum of four years. He feared that Socialism might envelop me. It was agreed that my father should purchase a ticket for my ship passage to the United States by signing contracts to pay for that ticket (at high interest) over an extended period of time. The ticket would not actually be sent until the price was completely paid. I agreed to go, but had to wait many months until my ticket arrived.

I made a last trip to Smorgon where I found that many of the yeshivot were permanently closed. I parted forever from my dear grandparents. Returning to Vilna, I was witness to the moving visit of Theodor Herzl. Finally, after an arduous trip to Antwerp, I boarded the "Finland" on September 28, 1903, 7 *Tishrei* 5664, spent *Yom Kippur* and the beginning of *Sukkot* in the dreadful steerage of the ship and arrived at Ellis Island in New York on October 6, 1903. I was two weeks short of my seventeenth birthday.

AMERICA

The New Immigrant in the New World

I lived with my father for the next four years in a tiny, three-dollar-a-month room at 18 Eldridge Street in New York's Lower East Side. Outfitted in a refurbished suit (for $2.50) and a second-hand derby (for 40 cents) and taken for a haircut the day after disembarkation, I instantly blended (outwardly) into the local scene. Throughout the winter I tried to teach myself English using an English/Yiddish book of instruction. At the same time I strove to improve my Hebrew with an emphasis on grammar, a subject woefully weak even in those who otherwise were well-versed in the language.

More important for daily existence was my private tutoring of a pupil in Hebrew subjects. The pupil's father had read my letters of recommendation from Volozhin. My salary was $8.00 a month, just one dollar short of my needs. The position was to last as long as I was in New York, until 1911. There were five lessons per week, each lasting one hour. Since my nine year old pupil and I had no common language, I immediately realized this was my golden opportunity to implement what I had preached in Smorgon regarding the *ḥeder metukan*.

With the only book available to teach Hebrew using Hebrew speech alone, "*L'fi Hataf*" ("Into the Mouths of Babes"), we created a "third party" whom we called "Reuven." We were soon conversing using common verbs such as sit, stand, go, take and write, and objects in our immediate environment. With lists of basic words, unrelated to any subject, we made up stories and not long after entered a phase of lively conversation more and more approaching natural language. We also studied Torah, Prophets, and other

literature. It was believed then that the "natural system" (teaching Hebrew in Hebrew) was appropriate only for large classes and not for individuals. Unaware of this, I broke all contemporary pedagogical theories and, in my ignorance, found my pupil succeeding in his mastery of Hebrew at a very rapid pace.

My progress in learning English, however, was unsatisfactory. Two months spent as a volunteer receptionist in a doctor's office didn't help, nor did exchange lessons in Hebrew and English with a teacher in a local school. There were special schools for the New York State Regents examinations which entitled one to apply to college, but I felt there was something missing in the graduates' training. "Why not go to public school as a regular student?," I asked myself. "Why hurry to get into college?" By attending classes with native-born American youth, I could doubly benefit both by learning their culture and by acquiring more precisely their expressions and accent. The principal of P.S. Number 7 agreed in May, 1904, to admit me to the seventh grade. In the fall, when I was eighteen, I advanced to the eighth grade with 14 and 15 year olds.

At the class graduation ceremony, however, when all but I were given their diplomas, I experienced some moments of doubt and near panic. Then the principal stopped the regular proceedings and, in a speech to the assembled crowd, told of my unusual step of registering as a regular student in the school, albeit at an advanced age, and of my success in my work and adjustment to American life. He then called me to the stage to receive my diploma and a special prize, Mark Twain's *Roughing It* in two volumes. As I approached him, with the audience's applause ringing in my ears, I thought of my dilapidated state, my torn shoes and threadbare clothes and wanted quickly to return to my seat and its anonymity.

Next day, I went to thank the principal for his kindness. "You must go to college," he said. "But would I be capable of handling the material?" I asked him. His Irish brogue and thundering voice told me that anyone who was willing to undergo the program I had chosen for myself could succeed at anything he wished. "Now get out of here and just remember to drop by occasionally and tell me of your achievements." I truly had been blessed by having been in the hands of an outstanding man.

"Mefitzei Sfat Ever," The Hebrew Language Society

A few weeks after my arrival in America I attended a lecture in Hebrew on a Sunday evening at the Educational Alliance on East

Broadway. It was as if I had been transported to another sphere. I joined the "*Mefitzei Sfat Ever Vesifruta,*" "Diffusers of the Hebrew Language and of Its Literature" (membership cost 15 cents a month), and became active, and, in my final year in New York, I served as President of the group.[2]

The Society was founded in 1902 by an original group of ten founders, moved to act by a feeling of spiritual isolation. They espoused a desire to unite all those knowledgeable in Hebrew who wished to nurture and develop it, and a belief that it was possible in the New Land to maintain the national aspirations of the Jewish people through the Hebrew language and its literature.

At that time, there may not have been one person in all of New York or the rest of America who spoke the language fluently but the founders knew that Hebrew was slowly becoming a spoken language in Palestine as well as in Russia. There were weekly meetings at which a main speaker delivered an address based on a literary work. This could be history, poetry or *belle lettres*. A few successive lectures might deal with a certain period of time or place, approaching it from different aspects. Following questions and comments there would be a short program of news and contemporary items.

Incredibly, nearly from the beginning, large audiences attended, reaching at times up to 300. Word of the lectures spread to other cities and visitors to New York were often to be found in attendance. The basic premise was that there was a future for the Jewish people in America that depended on a continuous spiritual and intellectual life centered upon a living Hebrew language.

There were very few women members. There had not, as yet, been developed a Hebrew educational system in America, so boys received an inadequate Hebrew education. Girls, however, received *no* organized Jewish education whatsoever. The active (male) members had all received their Hebrew education in Europe.

Activities similar to ours were undertaken in various locations on the East Coast and in the Midwest. It was felt that there should be a national organization. I was one of eight New York representatives attending the founding meeting of the General Hebrew Association (*Histadrut Ivrit Klalit*) which was held in a five-day meeting in Philadelphia, June 16–20, 1905. One session was devoted totally to spoken Hebrew and all its proceedings were in Hebrew. Zionist groups were to be formed within each city's organization. Meetings of "The Zion Circle" of *Mefitzei Sfat Ever* were opened in English,

especially to allow female participation, but then continued in Hebrew. Unlike the parent organization, the Zion Circle was also a social body that was active in general community functions, ran the annual fund-raising ball and sponsored summer trips and picnics for members.

Possibly the most important achievement of the group was its successful demonstration of the effectiveness of teaching Hebrew using the principles of the *ḥeder metukan*. When the sole language used in its meetings was Hebrew, they became a living demonstration that what seemed at first to be an impossible ideal became, after a while, a fact, a daily affair of no special consequence. *Mefitzei Sfat Ever* pioneered spoken Hebrew in the United States. In a way, its success brought with it its demise; many varieties of activities in Hebrew had developed by 1913, so a group whose sole activity was lectures no longer attracted large numbers.

Zionist Youth Groups

The first youth group in the United States to run its meetings in Hebrew was the "Dr. Herzl Zion Club." Following Herzl's sudden death, three young men, students at the "Volozhin Yeshivah" in New York, decided to establish a youth group which would have as its goal the advancement of Zionist thought as well as the development of Hebrew fluency among its members. The three were Abba Hillel Silver and his brother Mordecai, and Israel Chipkin. Their first meeting was held on August 28, 1904, two months after Herzl's death. The meetings were held at first in the Silver family home. The boys' father, Moshe, was a Hebrew teacher who dedicated himself to their education and intellectual development. Having attended a number of meetings of *Mefitzei Sfat Ever*, he was thrilled by Hebrew as a living language. He gave himself fully to the boys' new club and was their leader and spiritual mentor for a number of years, helping, in addition, in their efforts to run the club's meetings in Hebrew. The beginning was difficult as the boys' Hebrew was limited, but the devotion to their goals resulted in rapid success. The number of members grew. It was the testing-ground of young people who were to become important leaders of America's Jewish community.

I had by then a number of private students, four of whom became active in the club, including George Sokolsky, who was later to be an important newspaper columnist and radio personality. As a frequent visitor at their meetings, my belief was confirmed that the

real efforts of the older generation must go into youth to assure the future of American Jewry.

In 1906, the Herzl Zion Club was given a Charter by the Zionist Federation of America. These were the youngest members of the Zionist movement. In 1907 Abba Hillel Silver attended the Tenth Zionist Congress as a delegate, representing his club. In general, club members realized the importance of their work. They were not shy; many appeared as public speakers, and their elders appreciated the fact that they were tomorrow's leaders, their great hope.

By 1908 the membership of the Herzl Zion Club grew. The members felt that the Club should split into two groups, one of older members, who by now had advanced significantly in their Hebrew knowledge, and another of new, younger members. I was approached by a few of the Club's members to accept the club's management. By then I was extremely busy in my studies at college. Also, my private students lived as far apart as the Bronx and East New York (in Brooklyn), and I taught each of them in his home. I was also spending more and more time in matters related to *Mefitzei Sfat Ever*. Yet I could not and would not reject the boys' request. As a result, each week I was with them on Saturday evenings and at *Mefitzei Sfat Ever* meetings and activities on Sunday evenings. Amongst the boys in the club there were leaders of the future American Jewish community. In addition to the three founders, they included Emanuel Newman, Barnett Brickner, and Saul Cohen. By 1909, the Club had five sections: the Seniors, the Juniors, the Girls, and Harlem and Jersey City chapters.

Zionist enthusiasm grew, especially among young people. In 1909, an unaffiliated umbrella organization, Young Judaea, was founded to incorporate all active Zionist youth groups. As director of the Herzl Zion Club, I was asked to join its first Executive Board. Young Judaea leaders were unsuccessful in their efforts to convince the Zionist Federation to allocate funds to them. That was a mistake, for no youth group should be expected to support itself without financial aid.

Both *Mefitzei Sfat Ever* and the Herzl Zion Club, however, were successes without successors, pioneers who proved their premises. Though their members included outstanding people who would leave their mark on many public bodies in the future, these two groups withered and died in the years leading up to the Great War, for several reasons, among them: Hebrew language

activities flourished on many planes; weekly public Hebrew lectures were no longer unique; and the groups consisted of adolescents and university-age students for the most part, and any group made up of students, unless it attracts year after year a new, large number, is doomed.

Advancement in Secular Studies

Following graduation from Public School, I chose the seven-year program at City College of New York (C.C.N.Y.) which consisted of three years of rapid-advancement secondary school at Townsend Harris Hall followed by four years in college. By 1910, after two years at C.C.N.Y., I found myself without a clear goal or plan for my future. Contemporaries were studying medicine or the law; some entered the rabbinate. No capable, competent person dreamed seriously then of Hebrew education as a profession. What of engineering? I had taught myself algebra and did well in math studies in high school and in college. So that fall I registered at the Columbia University School of Engineering.

One day, I faced a psychological shock when our professor remarked that a civil engineer who was also a Shakespeare scholar and charged $3.10 per square yard for road construction would be left without work when the contract would be given to another engineer, an absolute ignoramus otherwise, who charged only $3.00. It was not the fact of the matter which upset me, but the all-or-nothing aspects of a life which seemed to be a dead-end existence, a fight for a contract and then either nothing or a challenge restricted to a very limited frame.

Human thought, the interchange of ideas, intellectual development, and, finally, the ability to impress upon a community new values and norms—all these were as naught if one's profession consisted of putting aside general excellence of mind and if success or failure depended on charging $3.10 vs. $3.00 per square yard for one's work. It was this realization that too many people in too many walks of life lived without sufficient interaction with and understanding of their neighbors that bothered me. I had learned from very different and great cultures and it was my ardent desire to transfer the excitement I had experienced of those two worlds to as many of my fellows as possible.

The expenses of a private education, as opposed to tuition-free C.C.N.Y., with the greater demands on time required in the engineering program, left me in a financial bind. I had scrimped on food

and was thin as a rail when I left for a short vacation in the Catskill Mountains before beginning the 1911 academic year at Columbia. A postcard awaited me on my return to New York: "Please contact immediately to arrange a vital meeting." Little did I realize that the meeting would be a watershed in my life.

Indianapolis

Rabbi Yitzak Elanan Neustadt, Chief Rabbi of Indianapolis, had come to New York on a special mission. Dissatisfied with the results of the four *ḥeder* schools in his city, a committee of prominent citizens was established in order to found two new Hebrew schools of high quality. The Rabbi was interviewing candidates for the position of Director of the schools.

When we met, I flooded him with questions: Who were the members of the committee? What is it they hoped to achieve? How will the students be recruited? What will be the relationship between the four *ḥederim* and the new schools? Will the new "natural system" of teaching be used (Hebrew in Hebrew) or the old one of direct translation? What will the budget be and how will it be obtained? Will it be only for the children of poor families or for everyone? Indianapolis was a small community where every individual counted. Were there serious opponents who might undermine the schools?

After over an hour's discussion I asked Rabbi Neustadt what would the Director's salary be. He practically jumped out of his chair. "Mr. Hurwich," he said, "I have interviewed up to two hundred candidates over the past few weeks. Nearly everyone started out with the question about salary. You, finally, after our long talk, brought up the subject. You're my man! I'll give the committee three names but recommend you and assure your being chosen. The salary will be from $1,500 to $1,800." I told him I would expect the higher sum. Paying their new Director a high salary would be a positive influence on the community. They would see the position as one of importance. A low salary would signify the opposite.[3]

A telegram inviting me to Indianapolis followed, and soon after I was on my way to interviews and lectures I was asked to give on the upcoming Holy Days in the large Conservative synagogue.

My conditions for accepting the responsibility for establishing and directing the schools were as follows: 1) Only exceptional, experienced teachers must be employed. 2) In order to obtain them they must be paid at a level commensurate with the highest paid school

teachers in New York. 3) Only the Director, who chose the teachers (but who were accepted finally by the committee), would have access to them and not any member of the committee, once they were employed. 4) All contacts, criticism, and suggestions were to be made to the Director, who alone would bear responsibility for everything that happened in connection with the schools. 5) Only the "natural system" (teaching Hebrew in Hebrew) would be used. Its success with my private students would certainly be equaled, if not exceeded, in the classroom and there was, already, a successful ten-year experience with the *ḥeder metukan*.

The plan was to have two schools with 150 students in one and 50 in the second. People realized that no school can rise above its teachers' abilities. Despite pressure from the *ḥeder melamdim*, in October I returned to New York to engage staff as I saw fit. I was empowered to offer prospective teachers a guaranteed wage of $75 a month, including a month's paid vacation in the summer, and a full year's employment. These conditions existed not at all in New York Hebrew schools and, most likely, not elsewhere. I could also offer them a guarantee of total non-interference by members of the board of the schools. At that time, teachers expected any and all lay members of the school board to criticize and otherwise involve themselves in professional matters. In Indianapolis the committee agreed that only the Director would have contact with the teachers while board members could approach only the Director on any and all matters. The peace of mind afforded the teachers was critical if excellence was desired in the classroom.

In another unprecedented step, I obtained consent that the teachers' salaries be guaranteed for the year, a hitherto unheard of stipulation, but one which the committee understood and supported. In not having to worry that support for the new project might wane and the schools fail, with the teachers (and Director) losing their positions, there was the added benefit to them and to the community that the new teaching staff would be professionals secure and free to devote all their energies to their new responsibilities.

Happily, I was successful in attracting three excellent teachers for the school: David Markson, Elimelech Gordon and Pinḥas Mazieh. All three were teachers at the Uptown Talmud Torah, the largest afternoon Hebrew school in the country with 1,500 students. I sent each to Indianapolis by Pullman train directly upon their agreeing to terms. This was during *Ḥol Hamoed Sukkot*, only three

weeks from the time of my trip there to visit Rabbi Neustadt. Their arrival silenced any critics there might be in the community, as all saw plainly that not only was the school ready to begin directly following the holiday; but also that the high quality of the teachers was incontrovertible.

There was not one successful Hebrew school in New York in 1911. All the schools were sources of despair, of failure. At most, parents hoped that their sons would learn to read the Hebrew prayers. In schools as well as *ḥadarim* classes were large, with up to 60 children. Study consisted of reading by rote. Boy after boy was called upon to read *Ivreh* (Hebrew) in a mechanical fashion for a few minutes, not knowing what they were saying. The vast majority did not stay in the school more than a year or two. Few actually learned to read well, let alone understand the language. Despite its large student body, turnover at the Uptown Talmud Torah was massive. The teaching staff was disillusioned and depressed as they couldn't see their efforts bearing fruit. Even the principal was uncaring and, unfortunately, neither an adequate guide nor model. Teachers were being paid a pittance, $30 to $35 a month, not enough to support a family in those days, and they were not paid at all during vacation periods.

It was widely believed that there was no chance ever of teaching Hebrew and Jewish subjects in America. I disagreed. I had eight years experience in private teaching, with one boy during all eight and another, for seven years. Their achievements were prodigious. In addition to fluent conversational Hebrew, the two long-term students read at a rather advanced level, were familiar with Hebrew grammar and had covered all the Torah as well as the Books of the Prophets.

Registration began directly following the holiday. Rabbi Neustadt agreed with my request that girls be accepted to the school on an absolutely equal footing with the boys. This was yet one more unprecedented step, but the backing of the Rabbi prevented any problems that might have arisen.

I met each and every child during the registration period, as well as all the parents, and decided in which class he or she should be placed. Practically without exception, all were or could be classified as beginners. This made creation of homogeneous classes easier, as the children could more easily be grouped according to age, and not knowledge. I would pass from class to class, observing but never commenting on site.

When teachers were absent I often filled in as substitute and thereby gained experience and also pleasure working with the students. There was little difficulty with absentees; most were enthusiastic about their studies. I would phone home directly upon seeing that a child had not arrived in time. This was a means both of involving the parents in their children's steady attendance and also served as one means of maintaining contact with each and every family. I would meet personally from time to time with all the children, inquiring about their progress and asking about problems. On Saturday afternoons the teachers regularly met together and with me to discuss our work and to plan for the future.

This was the arrangement of the classes: Each teacher taught four one-hour classes a day, from 4:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M. Monday through Thursday and from 9:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. on Sunday. Each class studied one hour a day, five days a week. Classes literally exchanged seats as quickly as possible and the teachers actually taught almost four full hours. Homework was assigned each day. It was marked quickly by the teacher, and he or I would contact parents if student preparations were incomplete. Physical punishment of the students was strictly forbidden. The Hebrew-in-Hebrew method was used throughout. The school year lasted eleven months, with one month off from July 15th. Subjects taught included Hebrew language, Bible with Rashi commentary, Prophets, History, and Laws and Customs. There were also extra-curricular activities.

The pitiful state of Hebrew teaching had not encouraged the writing of good texts. The one and only appropriate book for the Hebrew-in-Hebrew technique was published in Europe. I ordered a large number, but they hadn't arrived in time for the opening of classes. Instead, I prepared a list of words similar to the one I used with my private students. Classes averaged about twenty children and permitted personal attention to each student by all the teachers. Parents were enthusiastic when they observed their children able to talk in Hebrew using short phrases not long after beginning school, though some were impatient that they weren't "reading *Ivreh*," the prayer-book. That was quickly remedied when the books finally arrived.

Teachers, parents and the community at large were delighted with the progress of the school. No serious problems arose; studies progressed undisturbed, and soon the first school year was to end. I had expected to stay in Indianapolis only one year, in order to

accumulate sufficient funds to pay for my engineering studies at Columbia University.

Rabbi Neustadt congratulated me towards the end of that first year. "However," he said, "there still is hesitation on the part of many members of the community and opponents of the program, especially the *ḥeder* teachers. If you leave us now, the school could well come apart at the seams next year. It isn't only the manner in which the school is running; it is equally the personal attitude you bring to the system. Were you to leave I fear the schools might fail. Please stay another three years. We will guarantee your salary for the whole period."

The offer was very generous, but it disturbed me greatly. I had never conceived of a career in Hebrew Education. I knew of nowhere in America where a position paid as much as I was earning. Further, education was not a profession which afforded economic stability, not to speak of comfort. After considering the matter, I told the Rabbi that I would not continue, despite his generous offer. It would make my entry into engineering at a later age too difficult, when my faculties would not be as sharp. He was depressed by my answer.

Rabbi Neustadt asked to see me privately before the final meeting of the school committee. He took both my hands in his and said to me, in Yiddish: "I plead with you to accept my offer." I felt a hot tear fall on my hands. I shuddered. I had caused Rabbi Neustadt to weep! At that moment it was clear that no argument would serve to prevent my acquiescence. "I'll stay," I told the Rabbi. Had he asked I probably would have stayed with no contract whatsoever.

Mr. Markson and Mr. Gordon stayed on as teachers and Mr. B. Isaacs joined them for the second school year. In a complete reversal of the usual pattern elsewhere, nearly all the students signed on for the next year of study. On my way to vacation in New York State, I stopped off at Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Washington and Philadelphia to observe Hebrew schools. On my return I saw the programs in Albany, Rochester, Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit and Chicago. It seemed that ours was a pioneer effort, unmatched anywhere in America. We felt certain we had proved that a living, successful program of Hebrew education was possible in the New World.

Towards the end of the second school year I was visited by a representative of Dr. Samson Benderly, Director of the New York Bureau of Jewish Education. Israel Konovitz, a tall man with piercing eyes

and fluent spoken Hebrew, was conducting a survey of Hebrew educational systems. When it became public, it began: "My visit to Indianapolis was like cool water to a thirsty man." After seeing nothing but *Ivreh* taught inadequately at city after city, he found an organized Hebrew School system, excellent teachers, a progressive syllabus, impressive achievements in the classroom and enthusiasm. Over the years, I saw Mr. Konovitz often and fate tied me to him in another manner.[4]

Rabbi Neustadt died of a rapidly progressive cancer in the summer of 1913. In a world of many shadows and much darkness, he was a beacon. A man of vision, a scholar, an exemplar of truth and correct behavior, possessing great powers of persuasion and of accomplishment, his loss was a blow to his family and to all of us in the community. May his memory be blessed. After his death, I felt an obligation to guarantee the success of the undertaking planned and executed as a result of his dreams.

In June, 1916, five years after my arrival in Indianapolis, I saw eighteen members of the first class graduate. As part of their studies that year the students learned the whole of the difficult book of Isaiah and read sections of the newly published *Sefer Ha'Aggadah* (Book of Legends) by Bialik and Ravnitzky. Their command of Hebrew was quite impressive. To my knowledge, there had never been such a large graduating class in any Hebrew school in America.

After five years, I was ready to follow Rabbi Neustadt's advice to return to academic life. Mr. Isaacs took over as Director of the schools in my place. I was drawn to a program at the School for Jewish Communal Work developed jointly at Columbia University with the United Hebrew Charities of New York, whose Managing Director had been Mr. Morris D. Waldman. My savings from my five years of work in Indianapolis would suffice for payment of all tuition fees as well as living expenses for the projected three years of study.

After Indianapolis – Transition

The return to Columbia and the status of student was seamless. I found myself freed from the subjugation to the watch that in earlier years tore me away from my studies to rush and give my next private lesson or attend a meeting or lecture, or fill some community obligation. I took regular courses at Columbia and, in addition, attended lectures and classes in Jewish Social Work given by Waldman and guests such as Dr. Maurice Fishbein in Public Health and

Dr. Paul Abelson in Problems of Workers. I registered, in addition, for courses at Teachers College of Columbia.

Certain details from those days remain. I was chagrined to learn that twenty-six percent of Jewish immigrants to the United States were illiterate. Weren't we supposed to be the People of the Book? I learned altogether new material, such as that the real problem group among American Jews was not the immigrant generation but their native-born American children. The parents usually had mastered a trade of some sort and adjusted, albeit to a difficult life. The children, on the other hand, didn't have the rigorous discipline or deprivations of the past that made adjustment easier for their elders. They had no special training. Their parents were "greenhorns" who were foreign to American ways. As the traditional Jewish home was being destroyed, the children were leaderless and, sometimes, lawless. They were the main target of the social services.

The academic year 1916–1917 was a busy one for me. As it drew to a close, having heard of Waldman's pioneering efforts in his new post in Boston, I approached him and received his permission to spend the summer of 1917 working with him without salary at projects that would be of practical importance to my development in my new career. He requested that I undertake two surveys: on the Hebrew Industrial School and on the status of Hebrew education in the greater Boston area. He told me that people in Boston had some concept of what was happening in the Industrial School, but none whatsoever of Hebrew or Jewish education. I accepted his offer with thanks.

Little did I know that with this act I had determined the course of my whole life to come.

Members of the Hurwich family: Leah (half-sister), Baruch (father), Aharon (uncle), Louis

A Personal Note About My Family

At 25, with two more years to complete my course in civil engineering at Columbia, I stopped for one year to take the position in Indianapolis, Indiana, to earn enough for the two remaining years. That one year turned into five years. Love for Jewish education trapped me there, as I just described. At 30 I returned to New York to take up a three-year graduate course in Social Service. I again stumbled upon Jewish education while making a survey, as a volunteer, of Jewish education in Boston. A gripping situation developed. What was done in Boston became a model to be copied by other communities. Jewish education filled my world to the exclusion of almost everything else.

My younger brother, Barnett, a Columbia graduate, was admitted to Harvard Law School in 1921 and completed it in 1923. He saw how attached I was to my tasks and he concluded that if I didn't marry while he was near me I'd never marry. He began a barrage. I was all absorbed in my work and he kept hammering, "When will you get married?"

In November, 1922, Miss Leah M. Konovitz came to Boston as Director of Extension Jewish Education of the Bureau of Jewish Education, including Sunday Schools. Her unexpected success in overcoming the conversionary work of the cleverest of Boston missionaries, Reverend Smith, and her reorganization of the Jewish Sunday schools into three large two-day-a-week schools, was truly remarkable.

After Passover, 1923, Miss Konovitz and I announced our engagement and on June 26, 1923, we celebrated our wedding in New York. Those who officiated were Professor Louis Finkelstein of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, Professor Morris Levine, my

uncle, Rabbi Jacob Hurwitz of Albany, New York, and my father-in-law, Israel Konovitz.

Our daughter, Rhoda Chaya, named after my mother, was born in 1928 and our son, Baruch Yoseph, named after my father and my wife's grandfather, was born five years later, in 1933.

We decided that Hebrew should be our children's mother language. While in Eretz Yisrael during 1921–22, Leah learned to speak Hebrew in the Sephardic accent, and that was the accent of our children's Hebrew. In Boston there had been two children whose mother tongue was Hebrew: a daughter of a Palestinian couple who stayed in Boston 2–3 years and then returned to their homeland, and the son of Samuel Pitlick, Principal of the HaTeijah Hebrew School. We did not publicize it, but Rhoda's Hebrew as her mother tongue was a new phenomenon.

At that time educators believed that if Hebrew as a mother tongue were deeply rooted in the child's consciousness that it would act as a life-long motivator toward all that is Jewish. With that in mind, many Hebrew educators, among them Professor Zvi Scharfstein of New York and Dr. Leo L. Honor of Chicago, tried and succeeded in making Hebrew the first language spoken by their children.

We notified our Hebrew speaking friends about our decision and requested that even before Rhoda started speaking they should always address her in Hebrew, and that became an iron-rule in our home. When she was six months old, Rhoda said *abba* (daddy). The day turned into a holiday. When she was about two years old, she was sitting in her carriage one day in front of our home. Leah was near her. An old Rabbi and his wife, who knew us well, passed by and stopped to look at Rhoda who was an unusually attractive child. Pointing to the Rabbi my wife asked Rhoda in Hebrew:

"Mi Zeh?" (Who is this man?")
"Dod." (An uncle)
"U-mi Zot?" (And who is this lady?)
"Dodah" (Aunt)
The Rabbi was astounded.
"Such an infant and she already knows grammar!"

When Rhoda was two-and-a-half we moved to Cambridge, the seat of Harvard. We lived near Professor Nathan Isaacs. He and his wife adored Rhoda and we used to visit them, especially on the

Sabbath. She was very much at home there. There was a player piano. One day, Mrs. Isaacs pressed a button and the piano began to play. Rhoda was astounded to see the piano play by itself.

"*Kishoof!*" (Magic), she said. Mrs. Isaacs still enjoys telling that story.

Professor Isaacs was a real *Talmid Ḥakham*, but he was not a fluent Hebrew speaker. Occasionally when he had a guest for the University who knew Hebrew they tried to converse in it. When they came to a roadblock, Professor Isaacs used to say, "Let's call Rhoda and ask her." "How do you call this?" or "What am I doing?" and it was nice to see those learned men learn from a child!

Rhoda loved to be around when people spoke Hebrew. She used to linger near the table. While the adults continued to speak Hebrew, Professor Isaacs had his eyes on Rhoda. If one of the conversants mispronounced a word, and made a usage mistake, Rhoda used to repeat to herself the phrase in a corrected form. Professor Isaacs' glee on such occasions was huge.

One day he gave Rhoda a small low wooden footstool as a gift. He was adept with tools and in his basement he had a small, well equipped carpentry table. The footstool was a beauty. It was made well, practical and strong. It was painted green and on one side it had "Rhoda" in Hebrew. She always loved it and after she married she took it with her. One after the other her three growing daughters were delighted to use the stool which, "Their mum used when she was their size."

Until Rhoda was three, we were careful that she speak only Hebrew, making every effort that she be in a Hebrew speaking environment. Dr. Samuel Perlman, Dean of the Hebrew Teachers College used to visit us very often. So did most members of the faculty. The College students, especially the girls, loved to come and spend some time with the only child in Boston whose mother-tongue was Hebrew. In case my wife and I had to be away from home we always engaged a Hebrew-speaking girl babysitter. Once Rhoda needed an operation. A room was engaged in the hospital and an extra bed for my wife who was the interpreter for the doctors and nurses who spoke only English. Once in a while a doctor who still remembered some of his Hebrew school studies used to come in to try his Hebrew with Rhoda.

After her third birthday, we began to bring Rhoda into contact with English speaking children. She began to assimilate English

words and phrases, but her enunciation was no different than that of foreigners who begin to grope their way in English. She got no help from us. We continued our 100 percent Hebrew with her. On my part I always spoke Hebrew to her even when she was full grown. Our friends thought that her foreign accent would stay with her. When she was five she was admitted to kindergarten. Her English was still foreign, but in another year she acquired the native accent in all its minutiae, like all American-born children. Her Hebrew did not damage her English. When other people were with us, she spoke in Hebrew to those who knew it, and to all others in English. She never suffered any language conflict.

We did not register her in a Hebrew school because mentally she was at her own age-level, while in Hebrew fluency she even topped the graduating class. I got her whatever suitable Hebrew stories were on the market then, giving her material of increasing language difficulty as we went along. She learned to write and her ability in reading and writing was on a par in both English and Hebrew. We began the Torah from *B'raisheet* (Genesis) in the original. What a pleasure it was to proceed sentence after sentence and then chapter after chapter without having to stop and painfully explain each word. Rhoda easily grasped the entire text until we finished the Book of Genesis in the original.

At nine, I engaged Mr. Aaron Rashish, one of the best teachers in Boston, to give her one one-hour lesson a week. Mr. Rashish, however, stayed with her for two hours beginning from the Book of Exodus. Within a year Rhoda covered the Torah and all of the Early Prophets, all in the original text. She also had basic Hebrew grammar, and frequently prepared a Hebrew composition. Jewish history was covered to the end of the Biblical period—the Babylonian Exile. The above meant that within one year, getting one lesson a week, Rhoda covered all that is taught in the Boston Talmud Torahs from the beginning of Grade III to the end of Grade VI, requiring 5 sessions and a total of 10 hours per week. Even more, while most of the Torah studies in the schools was from abbreviated texts, Rhoda covered all from the original unabridged texts.

In September, 1938, after her tenth birthday, she took part in the joint examinations given yearly under the auspices of the Hebrew Teachers' and Principal's Association to those who covered the full 6-year Talmud Torah course. That was the equivalent to an entrance examination to the freshman class of the Hebrew High

School. Rhoda passed and was admitted. Most of the entrants were 13–14 years of age, while Rhoda was 10. We arranged that she take only one-half of the prescribed work in the first two years, and thus it would take her 4 years to do what the older students did in 2 years. She would thus catch up to them in terms of age. The whole program was also less burdensome to her. At ten, she also entered Boston Latin High School for girls, where the entire curriculum was geared for college entrance.

Rhoda had a deep emotional religious feeling. She loved to attend synagogue services and understood much of them. One day when she was eight we walked near the Mishkan Tefila Temple in Roxbury, which cost one million dollars to build. It was placed in the middle of a 75,000 square foot plot, facing beautiful Franklin Park. It was a rare summer day. Small clouds lazily floated in the sky above, and peace and quiet permeated the environment. Suddenly, Rhoda stopped and said,

"*Abba*, God's glory is all around this holy place."

Our son, Baruch Yoseph, was born on Balfour Day, November 2, 1933.

We were fortunate in getting for Baruch a young person who graduated from a child-care course. Miss Sarah Kool, a Christian, was a find. I promised her $5.00 if Baruch's first word would be in Hebrew. At five months, he clearly said *abba*, again and again. The money was paid and proved to be a bargain. Hebrew became Baruch's mother-tongue, too.

Miss Koal stayed with us nearly a year. Being intelligent she had no difficulty in maintaining a lead over Baruch in his Hebrew working vocabulary. Rhoda helped considerably. She always conversed with her little brother in Hebrew. To her, Baruch was a "big doll." She loved being near him and Hebrew speaking was the normal vehicle in our home.

Upon reaching his second birthday we were less stringent than we were with Rhoda in keeping Baruch only in a Hebrew environment. We felt that a bi-lingual regime could be maintained from then on if Hebrew remained the only language used while dealing with him at home. Leah and I conversed with him only in Hebrew. In mixing with other children, Baruch began to speak English. At no time had there been a language conflict in the life of our two children.

At four, Baruch was admitted to Kindergarten in public school and at five to first grade. He was, therefore, one year ahead of the scheduled kindergarten age of his classmates.

We did not enter him in a Hebrew school for the same reason that we kept Rhoda out. At five, I began to teach him Hebrew reading. Before we began I said, "When you finish this book, you'll be able to read any Hebrew book that I have." When he finished the last session he walked away and later appeared before his grandfather, Dr. Israel Konovitz, carrying an immense book. He said: "*Abba* told me that when I finish the book that I had I'll be able to read any Hebrew book. I now want to read this one which you always study," and he placed on grandpa's lap the large 5-pound Talmud tractate *Bava Metzia*. Being a real educator my father-in-law said that the child's desire should be honestly met. He placed Baruch on his lap and began to read. That pleased Baruch very much, and thus began Baruch's study of Jewish texts. That lesson was symbolic and in the coming years Talmud was always his favorite subject.

Because of a long siege of ill health, I could not give as much attention to Baruch's initial Hebrew education as I did with Rhoda. We decided he should have a private Hebrew teacher for two years. Again we were fortunate in getting Aaron Rashish, who nearly always spent two hours instead of one hour a week. I used to review each lesson with Baruch as I did with Rhoda, which included *Ḥumash*, Early Prophets, (all in the original), grammar, biblical history and Hebrew.

In September, 1943, before reaching his 10th birthday, Baruch took and passed the entrance examination to the Prozdor. Because of his extreme youth we divided the Freshman year over two years, but when he entered the Sophomore class he insisted upon a full program, despite the age difference. He also joined a special Talmud class which was begun that year.

He continued this concentration in Talmud, which meant an additional classroom hour per week, for four consecutive years. When he completed the Hebrew Teachers College Sophomore year he was permitted a leave of absence for one year which he spent studying at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. In 1953, he was graduated from the Hebrew College.

As to his secular education, he completed the 4-year program at Boston Latin High School and was awarded a 50 percent tuition-free scholarship for his entire stay at Harvard College, from which he

graduated *cum laude*. That year he taught two hours a day in the Cambridge Hebrew School. He was admitted to the New York University Medical School in 1954. In June of that year he married Judith Kaufman of New York, a graduate of the Ramaz Yeshivah and Barnard College in New York.

Rhoda was graduated from Boston University and continued her studies to get a Master's degree in teaching music. On June 26, 1946, she married Avram S. Kane who also graduated Boston University and got his Master's degree in music instruction. Rhoda presented us with three granddaughters. For many years, she taught Hebrew school in Hartford, Connecticut.

Endnotes

1. Israel Meir Ha-Kohen Kagan (the Hafetz Ḥayim), spiritual mentor of the ultra-Orthodox organization, Agudat Israel, was an influential rabbi and author in Poland who published, among other writings, a six-volume comprehensive commentary on the Shulan Arukh.

2. Though the Society had no official connection to the institution, it is of interest that five of the seven presidents during its 11 years of existence (excluding myself and Dr. Noah Shechter, the first to serve) were either students or graduates of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

3. Much later I learned that my salary was far greater than that of Rabbi Neustadt. I was a single young man while he was aged forty and the father of eight children. Yet he put his job on the line by supporting me and the conditions I stipulated for myself and for the teachers. Any failure on our part would certainly reflect upon him, even endanger his position. Yet, he treated me as a son; his advice was nonpareil. "Remember," he once said to me, "You were employed not as a public speaker; Rabbi Feuerlicht of the Reform congregation is a brilliant orator. You weren't employed because you are a great scholar; there are learned men in the community who won't look for scholarship in you. What impressed our people was your manner of speaking and relating to them, your honesty and dedication. Be yourself. Concentrate on your responsibilities, doing as you see fit. With that, your success will be assured."

4. Nine years later, in 1928, I married his oldest daughter, Leah Konovitz.

II

Early Years in Boston

My First Steps in Boston

Theory and Practice

Sunday, June 3, 1917, I came to Boston. I asked for the Jewish district and was directed to the West End. The signs "*Bosor Kosher*" testified to its Jewishness. Offices were closed on Sunday and I did not want to disturb Mr. Waldman at home. As I walked I came upon the Evrio Hebrew School, 62 Chambers Street. I knew that Boston had *Ivrit B'Ivrit* schools.

Like most Hebrew schools of those days Evrio was housed in an old residence that was remodeled into a school. Children swarmed all over the place. Mr. Benjamin Hirsh, the Principal, tall, personable, who spoke a fluent Hebrew, received me warmly. My Hebrew speaking opened all doors for me in Hebrew schools. I told him that the local Federated Jewish Charities invited me to gather information on Jewish education in Boston. Mr. Hirsh was surprised. "How come the Federated Charities are interested in Hebrew education? Its leaders would rather close all Hebrew schools!" I said that I had been invited by the "Federated" Director, Mr. Waldman, and since I had not seen him yet, I was on my own as a visitor. I went on to tell him that for five years, 1911–16, I had been Principal of the Indianapolis, Indiana Hebrew schools and would appreciate his permission to visit some classes.

Mr. Hirsh was still puzzled. Long and bitter experience had taught us to be on our guard when our enemies began to seek information. And the Federated leaders were indeed considered enemies! They never wanted to lift a finger to assist the struggling Hebrew schools. Again and again they showed their opposition to the way of life of Eastern European Jews, and particularly to the institutions that aimed to perpetuate their ways of life in America. My Hebrew, and

the fact that up to the year before I was in Jewish education, tipped the scales, and Mr. Hirsh took me to some classes.

The school made an excellent impression. I found a graded curriculum, well-organized classes and a fine teaching staff consisting of the Principal, who taught two classes, Samuel Margolis, M. Newman, Harry A. Savitz, and three junior teachers: I.A. Cushing, Tovah (Tillie) Epstein, and Sheine Novick. Mr. Hirsh said that due to the stoppage of immigration from Europe since the outbreak of the World War in 1914, a serious Hebrew teacher shortage obtained all over America. The junior teachers should have continued as students, but there was no other way out. They were only part-time teachers, but they too impressed me. The *Ivrit B'Ivrit* method obtained in all classes, and in the higher grades the pupils spoke Hebrew quite fluently. Mr. Hirsh said that Evrio had about 400 children and was the largest Hebrew school in New England.

During the intermission Mr. Hirsh introduced me to the teaching staff. Word had already spread that a Federated Charities visitor was there. The teachers met me politely but also in a spirit of "Respect, but suspect." Maybe he was a spy! Such was my first school visit in Boston; suspicion would shadow me for a very long time.

Monday morning I came to Morris Waldman's office, 40 Court Street, Boston. Mr. Waldman met me warmly. He said that up to 1916 the most that the Federated Charities ever raised was $65,000 and he proposed a much wider scope of action. The last Federated campaign netted nearly $250,000. The Federated could now undertake new obligations.

As to the two surveys that I was to make:

The Hebrew Industrial School. It had been in existence for many years concentrating on "social uplift" in the Jewish immigrant quarters. The Federated officers were not quite happy with its program. The survey was intended to present a picture of its doings to guide the Federated in its planning for the future. The Superintendent was a German lady who had many personal friends among the Federated's supporters. Mr. Waldman knew that I knew nothing about that field, but, if he still wanted me to survey that institution, I would do it.

Jewish Education in Boston: The Federated had no knowledge whatever about it. Some time ago a small committee was formed on behalf of the Sunday Schools, but the Hebrew schools were a

terra incognita to the Charities. As a former Principal of Hebrew schools, who now had an idea about Charity Federations, their aims and scope, I most likely could present a true picture of what was going on in the Hebrew schools. If it could be shown that their aim was worthy but that they were in need of assistance, the Federated was willing to render it.

Mr. Waldman indicated that he could pave the way for me in the Industrial School; every facility would be given to assist me to get factual material. However, he left the entire problem of the Hebrew schools in my lap. He was glad to hear that I had already visited one school, but I would have to make other contacts and find my way around on my own. Those were all my instructions.

The Hebrew Industrial Survey

I visited The Industrial School, which was located on Chambers Street in the West End. It was clean and had a welcome atmosphere. Miss Golde Bamber, the Superintendent, met me. She said the institution aimed to help adjust the neighborhood children to their American environment. There were children's clubs, where the girls learned sewing and all were taught how to deport themselves among strangers. The Institution conducted a Sunday School. For their graduation, the girl students wore white dresses. A "Graduation Dress Society" sewed new white dresses for those who could not afford to buy them.

I tried to find out what people in the neighborhood thought of the Industrial School. Invariably the answer was that it was the creation of the *Yahudim* who maintained that immigrants must burn all bridges with their past, except that no one paid any attention to them. It was evident that Miss Bamber loved children and meant well, but she knew and understood little of the life and interests of the immigrants whom she aimed to Americanize.

I went to the main Public School office and spoke to the Superintendent, Dr. Frank W. Thompson. He knew about the Industrial School from a personal visit there. He called it "an afternoon tea-toy of the gentle folks," which did not amount to much.

I visited the State Industrial Department in the State House and, as if by fate, was directed to Dr. R. Allan. He, too, knew about the Hebrew Industrial School and said that it was of no value. I told him of my assignment, and the sense of the Jewish community that there

should be an institution, to direct and guide the immigrant young. Dr. Allan became interested immediately. We had many meetings and extended talks. He was more than a government official; he had an abiding interest in the human aspects of life, and he approached the matter as part of the problem of the community poor.

Dr. Allan advised me to visit some vocational schools. One of the best was The North Bennett Street Industrial School at 39 North Bennett Street in the North End. In schools of that category boys were taught carpentry, printing and one other trade. Girls were taught needle work. Contact with actual trade work gave the youngster some idea about the field in which he might choose a permanent occupation. Many a youth was thus helped to find his way in life.

I visited other vocational and semi-vocational schools and talked to principals and teachers in that field. I also interviewed some of the friends and supporters of the Hebrew Industrial School. I then examined all the information and reactions of the persons interviewed. Certain things became clear:

a. The saying that "you cannot teach an old dog new tricks" applied to the Hebrew Industrial School. "Social uplift" of immigrants remained its main aim and the rooted belief of its supporters. But the immigrants did not give a hoot about being "uplifted," and the neighborhood in which the school functioned held it in disregard. Any proposal for basic changes would mean a battle with some of the school's supporters, and in the end the proposed changes would likely be watered down to ineffectiveness.

b. Still, vocational guidance was a pressing need. In the Boston Jewish community there was no place where one could get any vocational guidance. Thousands of the recently arrived parents had no personal work experience except in their own chance occupation in which they persisted as draft horses, pulling the family cart.[1] Many failed to enter the field for which they were best fitted, and which would have given them personal satisfaction. In place of satisfying an urge to be usefully occupied, daily work would become an embittering burden. In that case the youngster was defeated before he really started. His daily work sent him home dejected, frustrated and angry. And there was an even worse possibility: delinquency.

All of the above added up to one conclusion: a vocational guidance institute was a prime social need. Such an institution would serve all classes of society, not only the poor. Even from a restricted philanthropic point of view it was clear that many of the undirected children were destined to land in the Charities' office. *Early direction was an investment.* Ultimately it would increase the number of contributors and decrease the number of charity applicants.

But how would the Federated Charities, whose means were puny, maintain guidance centers for the thousands of children of the whole community?

Happily, America had a ready answer:

Government is conservative; it rarely invests in doubtful social experiments. But it is willing to introduce improvements in what it does already and also start new activities after private initiative has proven convincingly that they benefit the public. Many of the improvements in education, public health, social institutions, etc. had their initiation in private institutions which risked experiment and trial and ultimately discovered better ways of reaching desirable goals. We heard this time and again at the University. Of course, private philanthropy cannot cope with all social problems. It is rather an experimental agency dealing with limited issues. It experiments and searches for the best and most efficient ways whereby society may deal successfully with the problems growing out of the conditions of modern life. Such experiments are within the capacity of the private sphere. As they prove the value of new ways and methods the Government takes them over, and the private institutions can then turn to new areas in need of improvement. Thus social service grew and developed in the United States.

With the above in mind it may be assumed that when vocational guidance, on a restricted scale, proved its intrinsic worth it would attract the attention of Government agencies. The program would then be incorporated in the Public Schools to serve all the children of the community. The proposed new program would then be a threshold to greater deeds. The project enthused me.

I continued with Dr. Allan until a proposal was formulated that the Federated Jewish Charities should open a "Vocational Discovery School." In this school boys and girls 12 years or over would try to find a type of work they liked and were fit for. Teachers and equipment would be available to them for trades which have a market in the community. The children would try work which attracted

them with teachers helping at every new turn. The child would have the opportunity to concentrate in the chosen field as a pre-apprentice trial.

The Institution would ascertain to what extent there was a demand for apprentices in the community. Few factors can so destroy a boy's initiative and self-confidence as the discovery that his chosen field, for which he already invested time and effort, has an over-supply of apprentices with the result that his career must now begin with unemployment. The main aim of the new school, however, remained to discover what each boy and girl could do best. Once that was found out, the opportunity for steady employment was examined. The actual training for the chosen occupation belonged to outside agencies, and was a problem by itself.

At first I was considered suspect by the Union men. Was I not part of a plan whereby the number of apprentices would outstrip the number of jobs, and thus undermine the union?! And who was I, anyhow?

I believe that my *naivete* and sincerity soon convinced them I wasn't a spy. I stated that in principle the Federated Charities never took sides in the class struggle. That was made very clear by my lecturers at Columbia. My proposal aimed to correct an omission in children's education, and to reduce as much as possible the suffering of young people that emanated from the lack of their early training for a trade. I suggested the Union should have representation on the Boards of the proposed school, and also *that the Union should have full control over the number of apprentices the school would admit to its various branches.* That would be the same as if the school were run by the Union, except that now the Federated Charities would cover the budget according to a mutually accepted plan.

The reaction of the Union was favorable to the principle of affording vocational discovery to Jewish youngsters. They then said they would agree to the proposed school if complete control was given to the Union over the type of preparation and the number of apprentices submitted to each branch. Here lay a key to further possibilities. Similar experiments could be developed for other trades where skill and training were required and where the level of pay was high. Such trades included carpentry, plumbing, electrical and locksmithing trades. Those four deserved immediate attention. To become an electrician, for instance, the student had to attend a trade school, such as the Wentworth Institute. *Our school needed only to uncover ability for a certain field.* From then on our task was clear.

We had to interest the parents to finance the preparation, and where the parents could not possibly do it, the Federated Charities could either create scholarships or else have a tuition fee loan fund which the trainee could pay off in installments after he reached a certain earning level. The guidance program could thus function without imposing upon the Charities more than it could carry.

There was reason to believe that if the school materialized and really rendered the service hoped for, that public opinion would slowly become a force in its favor. It would press for its extension to all the children of the community. Such a demand would lay the foundation for its transfer to Government agencies, just as happened with other services initiated by private agencies and taken over by the government. Such services included children's health examinations, lunches in the Public Schools, extension education, and keeping the school buildings open after the regular school hours for local meetings and activities.

The survey covered over 100 pages. Mr. Waldman let me explain the entire proposal, then he started a barrage of questions. He asked for valid reasons for each of the important points. His questioning was in the form of an attack that aimed to find faults. How, for example, would I meet such and such doubts and such and such opposing ideas? After over an hour he said he was happy with the survey and that my proposal deserved serious consideration.

The survey, however, remained on the shelf. Mr. Waldman did not stay in Boston long but before leaving he opened five branch offices of the Federated Charities in as many districts. These branches were a part of a plan which had vision and merit. It introduced radical improvements in the methods the "Federated" used to do things. These changes, however, absorbed all the Federated Charities' unassigned funds so that the pre-vocational school would have to find new support for itself.

After submitting the survey to Mr. Waldman I did not follow it up. It lay in the Federated office which became overcrowded, and old records had to be put in the basement where other old records were stored. The office was moved several times and the survey was lost together with my proposal about which nothing was done.

The Industrial School, however, introduced changes on its own accord. It moved to 22 Bowdoin Street in the West End, where it was called Hecht Neighborhood House. It was open to the children of the neighborhood, including non-Jewish children. The institution continued to expand and in 1936 it moved to the other end of

Boston, to the former Home for Jewish Children's spacious building and grounds on the American Legion Highway, in front of Franklin Park in Dorchester. The change of location was caused by the fact that by 1936 nearly all of the 35,000 Jews who used to live in the West End had moved to other districts, particularly to Dorchester and Mattapan. With the change of location the institution also changed its name to "Hecht House" and became a "Center," whose facilities were opened to the needs of the neighborhood. Dr. Edward Sidman, who had worked in the institution in the West End for many years, first as a volunteer and then in a full time job, now headed it. The institution grew apace. It housed a large Sunday School of about 500 children, a daily general kindergarten, a day-camp, and many clubs for children and adolescents. Its facilities were open to adolescents for study and recreation, and also to some adult needs.

Now I was entering a different world—Social Service. That was my aim. Fate, however, decreed otherwise.

Morris D. Waldman, Director of Boston's Federated Jewish Charities, 1916–19

THE JEWISH EDUCATIONAL SURVEY

Boston Hebrew Schools

In 1654 23 Jewish immigrants arrived in New Amsterdam, later renamed New York. They were the first Jews to land on the territory which is now the United States. The historian Lee M. Friedman maintains that even prior to that date, in 1648, some Jews passed through Boston.[2] What is a proven fact is that in 1843 18 Jews opened the first synagogue, Ohev Shalom, in Boston. There were no scholars among them, and least of all teachers. That year they opened a Sunday School, and for nearly 40 years, till 1892, the Sunday School was the only institution which dispensed some Jewish education to the growing generation.[3] Several vain attempts had been made to open and maintain a Hebrew school. With the Eastern European Jewish immigrants who began to arrive in 1881 in increasing numbers, came the traditional *Ḥadarim*, the one-man, private Hebrew schools. In 1892, The West End Talmud Torah was opened. It continued to function until the end of the nineteen fifties when only a handful of Jews remained in the West End.

Only at the beginning of the twentieth century, when the increasing Eastern European immigration brought with it experienced Hebrew teachers, did people attempt to open modern Hebrew schools. In 1904 two young men, Israel and Meyer Abrams,[4] who had received their basic Jewish education in Russia, assembled a small group of children and taught them in spoken Hebrew (*Ivrit B'Ivrit* method). They continued as volunteers for nearly three years. The group met in a rented room on Leverett Street in the West End. Friends paid the rent. Their attempt was not sufficiently known, and the experiment remained sterile. The first fruitful attempt to begin a weekday school was made by the Zionist Jewish People's Institute.

Zionism struck root in Boston in 1897 with the organization of the *Ahavath Zion* ("Love of Zion") Society. In 1901 the *B'nai Zion* ("Sons of Zion") society was formed. It was followed by the *B'nai and B'noth Zion*, and others. A "Zionist Council" was formed, and a devoted group arranged for a common meeting center. They rented a house at 62 Chambers Street in the West End and named it "The Jewish Peoples Institute." It served as a social club and a meeting center. In 1904 the National Zionist Convention urged all Zionist societies to concentrate on Jewish education which had been terribly neglected. The first to react in Boston was an Americanized group of young people who began to organize Sunday Schools. The Jewish Peoples Institute patrons, who were educated in Eastern Europe, were not satisfied with the thin fare that a one-day-a-week school, such as the Sunday School, could give. They wanted to have a Hebrew School with daily sessions. In January, 1907, they opened a school which was modeled after the *ḥeder metukan*, which struck root in Russia, Poland, Galicia, Rumania. They named it "Evrio."

The Evrio Hebrew School, *62 Chambers Street, West End*
This school was opened in January, 1907, (*Teveth,* 5667) on Leverett Street in the West End. The first teacher was Morris Kaplan (later Dr. Kaplan) at a salary of three dollars a week. In Warsaw, Poland, he had some teaching experience in a *ḥeder metukan*, where the method of instruction was *Ivrit B'Ivrit*, otherwise called the Natural Method, which is based on the use of spoken Hebrew in the classroom.

When I came to Boston in 1917 Evrio had functioned for a decade. It even already had a fine graduating class of about 20. The West End, where Evrio was located, was the largest Jewish district in Boston, and many well-to-do Jews lived there. Among those who labored for Evrio since its inception were: Israel Haskins, A. S. Kubitsky, Moses Caplan, Benjamin Rabalsky and Jacob Rosenberg. There was also a Ladies Auxiliary and other men and women who stood by the school for years until only a handful of Jews remained in the West End, and the school had to close.

Educationally, the West End outranked all other districts. Despite the fact that Evrio was the largest and most successful school in the city, it was poverty stricken. The rich refused to support it and other institutions fought it. Luckily, the school had a patron, Harry H. Levenson. He was unmarried and had means. He grew up in America when effective Jewish schooling was non-existent. But he

had fire in his heart. He was kind, generous and devoted to things Jewish. He shunned publicity. Time and again, although he had major disagreements with the Evrio committee, he gave Evrio substantial sums. When I came to Boston the school asked me to be a messenger of peace, so I spoke to Mr. Levenson and restored friendly relations, and never again were they disturbed.

In 1917, 385 boys and girls were registered. There were 13 classes and a staff of five capable and experienced teachers. The principal, Mr. Hirsh, carried the full load of a teacher. There were also three young junior teachers. Two years before they had graduated Evrio, and now they taught part-time in the lower grades. Scholastically, they were not equipped to teach, but that was during World War I, immigration from Europe had ceased. There was a shortage of manpower everywhere. Wages and salaries were rising, but not in the area of Jewish education. As Principal, Mr. Hirsh, who also carried a full-time teaching load, was paid $20 a week for the support of a family of five. The salaries of the other teachers were: $16, $14 and $11 a week, for 20 hours of teaching. The junior teachers received $6,$5, and $4 per week for 10 hours of teaching. They were students who lived with their parents, and their income sufficed for their tuition fee at College and for other small expenses. As I went on with the survey, I discovered that the employment of junior teachers was a general practice, which eased somewhat the financial burden of each school.

The total budget of the Evrio School was $7000 a year. Seventy percent of the budget came from tuition fees. The balance came from various sources which involved the endless effort of the Board and the Ladies Auxiliary.

West End Hebrew Free School, *3 Poplar Street, West End*

A short distance from Evrio Hebrew School was the West End Hebrew Free School which was opened in 1892. It had 200 boys, divided into nine classes, with 4 full-time and one part-time teacher. It was a typical "*Ivre*-factory" where mechanical reading of Hebrew was the main subject. It was a copy of the *heder* of the Old World, embodying most of its weaknesses but few of its advantages. The teachers were of the *melamdim* type (i.e. not pedagogically prepared). Yiddish was the language of instruction; discipline was poor. The curriculum consisted of only one subject: *Ivre*, largely because nearly all the pupils were beginners. And they were beginners because the great majority of children by far stayed in school one year or less. Very few attained

the level of studying the *Humash* (Bible). This school was the antithesis of Evrio. The practice of reading various stations in the Siddur was the Alpha and Omega of each lesson. Only boys were admitted. Full-time teachers received $10 a week for 20 hours of instruction and classroom facilities were very poor. Two rooms served as a synagogue. Most pupils came from poor homes, and most of the income was derived from various sources.

Later, I found out that one of the teachers knew Hebrew and also spoke it fluently. He had to accept employment there and follow the school tradition. This school also had a Talmud class which met five times a week.

Adath Jeshurun Hebrew School, *Blue Hill Avenue & Brunswick Street, Roxbury*

At Adath Jeshurun Hebrew School, I met Mr. Z. Shoham, whom I knew in Smorgon, my hometown in Lithuania, as the owner of a private, modern *heder.* He used to be called *Welfke der Lehrer* ("Wolf the Teacher") because of the modernization of his school in which *dikduk*, Hebrew grammar, and Hebrew writing were a part of the program. All instruction was in Yiddish. That was in 1901 at which time he had a long reddish beard which was inordinately clean. Now I met a short man whose height had shrunk!; I must have been in my growing age when I knew him in Smorgon. Now he spoke Hebrew fluently and had been in Adath Jeshurun for several years.

Ivrit B'Ivrit was employed in all classes. Mr. N. M. Tumaroff, who later became principal, was successful in demonstrating the effectiveness of that method and this school, which had a registration of 175, succeeded in producing a graduating class, the second in Boston Jewish education history.

Sessions were held in the basement vestry rooms of the synagogue where there was a room in which services were held on weekdays. In the evenings most of those who attended the service were saying *Kaddish* in memory of a departed member of the family. I am sure that the sounds of prayer and the echo of children in the classrooms often merged and reached heavenward. They testified that in America, the new Jewish land of sojourn, prayer and study were still factors in Jewish life.

Adath Jeshurun synagogue maintained the Hebrew school. It covered the gap between the tuition fee income and the total teachers' salaries. It also gave the school free housing, light, heat and services.

Some of the wealthiest Jews of Boston were members of Adath Jeshurun, which was also known as The Blue Hill Avenue Synagogue. Among them were the families of Lassor Agoos, Rudnick, Colman Levin, Kaplan, Dana, Mark Angel, Oscar Grosberg, Nathan Pinanski and others, who together constituted the pillars of Boston Orthodox Jewry. The President was Nathan Pinanski who was the prime dynamo in the planning and erection of that synagogue, at that time was the finest Jewish house of prayer in Boston. Mr. Pinanski retained the Presidency for many years. He was an unusual person, and we will meet him again and again.

Louis Pokroisky was President of the Hebrew School. Formerly, he was active in the South End Talmud Torah. For many years he was Managing Director of the Hebrew Free Loan Society of Boston (*Gemiluth Ḥessed*), which was organized October 6, 1912. From its inception, it granted to Jews and non-Jews loans up to $200, and later up to $1000 at *no interest* payable in small installments. Louis Pokroisky's abiding interest in the Hebrew School and in the Hebrew Free Loan was symbolic of our life through the ages, in which religious, educational, and social interests merged into one constructive totality.

Moriah Hebrew School, *94 Fowler Street, Dorchester*

Shachno Stein was the principal of the Moriah Hebrew School. Several years before I had met him in New York when he had just arrived from Poland. His jet black hair reached his shoulders and he spoke a beautiful, rich Hebrew. In Poland he gained much experience in the use of the *Ivrit B'Ivrit* method. In Warsaw, he taught for a time under the well known Krinsky.

Moriah was maintained by the Beth-El Congregation, 94 Fowler Street, Dorchester, of which the already mentioned Joseph Levenson was President. It had a registration of 130. Two vestry rooms of the synagogue were used as classrooms. Mr. Stein and Miss Kaplan made up the teaching staff. *Ivrit B'Ivrit* was used throughout. Mr. Stein's salary was the highest in Boston, $25 a week. The junior teacher received $7 a week.

In this congregation there was a concentration of Talmudic and *Maskillic* laymen. Wolf Berger was President of the school. The entire neighborhood was new. Residents from the West End, South End, East Boston and nearby Chelsea had moved there. The synagogue provided the school free housing, light, heat and service. The school was then almost self-supporting. Seventy-five percent of the

budget came from tuition fees, 17 percent from members' dues, and less than $100 was needed to balance the budget. However, that was only a beginning. The synagogue's contribution grew from year to year until it reached a stage where the tail wagged the cat, and the school budget was larger than the budget for the synagogue. The name of the school was changed to Beth El, the same as that of the synagogue. For decades Beth El was the largest Hebrew school in New England.

Hatehiah, Hebrew Educational Alliance, Hebrew School,
109 Harold Street, Roxbury

The Hatehiah, Hebrew Educational Alliance, Hebrew School was the first Hebrew school I saw which had a yard and an open space all around it. Mr. Kaddish Waldman was the Principal. For a time he taught at the Evrio and gained experience in the use of *Ivrit B'Ivrit*, which he introduced in the *Hatehiah*. With him were one experienced and two junior teachers.

The Hebrew Educational Alliance, which bought the building, gave the school free rent, light, heat and service. The 1917 budget was $3093, of which $1768 was for teachers' salaries and $1325 for interest and upkeep. Tuition fee income was $1200. The *Beth Hamidrash Hagadol* of 105 Crawford Street contributed $500. The deficit of $1393 was covered by the Hebrew Educational Alliance.

The Principal taught 18 hours a week. His salary was $20 a week. An adult teacher taught 15 hours at $15. The two juniors had one class each, 7½ hours a week and their salaries were $4 and $5 a week. Registration was 130 children, divided into 6 classes.

Mr. Meyer Wiseman, the patron of the school, donated $8000 to it. He died shortly before I came to Boston. The institution felt his loss painfully. He loved learning and was a great devotee of Jewish Education.

Roxbury Hebrew Free School

The Roxbury Hebrew Free School was organized through the efforts of Rabbi Shocher. He was aided by members of Congregation Shaare Tefila, 11 Otisfield Street, Roxbury, and especially by Mr. Shalom Cabelinsky, who was the moving spirit of that congregation.

In 1915, Mr. Moses Parsons taught there, and later became its Principal. He introduced the "mixed method" by employing both *Ivrit B'Ivrit* and the translation methods. He taught 18 hours a week for

$19.50. One experienced teacher, Hillel Pill, also taught 18 hours for $14.50, and one junior teacher for seven dollars, working nine hours a week. During part of the year there was also another junior teacher who taught 7½ hours for $5 a week. Registration was 150 in 6 classes.

This school was near Adath Jeshurun in the midst of a thoroughly Jewish and thoroughly impoverished district. Among the most devoted workers were Messrs. Magidson and Hartstein. Every possible device was employed to balance the budget but it often stayed unbalanced.

So scanty was the income from Hebrew teaching, and so uncertain, that every teacher who could do so devoted all their free time preparing for other employment. In 1919 Parsons was admitted to the Bar as an attorney, but it would be years before he could derive enough from his law practice to live on it. That was why many Hebrew teachers continued to teach long after they had completed a course in another field. Parsons, too, did not give up teaching, but he resigned his Principalship and accepted a teaching position in another school.

Honesty of purpose to Jewish education remained with him. Years later when he again became active in Boston Jewish education, and in 1945 when the first "United Hebrew Schools" were formed, he was chosen as its first President.

Tel Aviv Hebrew School, *65 Wayland Street, Roxbury*

Near the Roxbury Hebrew School there was another school, the Tel Aviv Hebrew School, which was opened shortly before I came to Boston. Kaddish Waldman, Principal of the Hatehiah school, was its President, but there was no connection between the two schools. It had a registration of 85. One of the best Boston teachers, Dr. Alexander Goldberg, taught there 15 hours a week for $14.50. A junior teacher taught 7½ hours for $5 a week. *Ivrit B'Ivrit* obtained in all classes. Goldberg was the second teacher in the Evrio school, after Morris Kaplan began there in January, 1907. He was a sincere scholar and a gifted teacher. He had already completed a Dentistry course but continued to teach in a Hebrew school. There will be more to tell about him.

The Tel Aviv neighborhood was the poorest in Roxbury, and so was the school. Mr. Robinson, Mrs. Nemzoff and others did their best for the school. A young man, David Elihu Stone, who later was prominent in the Zionist movement, took an active interest in it.

Also the B'nai Abraham Congregation, which was nearest to it, assisted it from time to time. But all efforts failed to keep the wolf from the Tel Aviv door. Its budget amounted to $1293; tuition fee income—$635; rent for the school building—ten dollars a month!

Hashaḥar Hebrew School, *996 Blue Hill Avenue, Dorchester*
The Hashaḥar Hebrew School was opened in Dorchester in 1916 through the initiative of Zvi H. Slobbins, who was among the very first to introduce the Spoken Hebrew method in the Stone Avenue Talmud Torah in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn, New York. He had an iron will and his own ways of teaching; he wanted to have a free hand in practicing his methods. He rented an unoccupied store on 996 Blue Hill Avenue, near Mattapan, and opened a Hebrew school. It was the first Hebrew school in that district to which Jews began to flow from other Boston areas.

Mr. Slobbins was artistic and an able organizer. He formed a local School Committee and Hashaḥar became a public institution. When I came to Boston, the financial responsibility was still Mr. Slobbins'. Reviewing his account, I found that he personally borrowed $400 from the Hebrew Free Loan to equip and carry the school, and that his net income that year was *9 dollars a week.* To maintain his family, at least on a subsistence level, he gave private lessons as his school duties permitted. He had a registration of 42 and was the only teacher. Spoken Hebrew prevailed in all classes. His good taste did not permit poverty to show its ugly face in his school. Mr. Slobbins, though quick tempered and impatient, found ways of decorating and beautifying the schoolroom, which he kept spotless. He also prepared pictures and toys as teaching aids which kept up the children's interest.

The very busy Mattapan street car line, passing on Blue Hill Avenue, vibrated the nearby buildings, and even more the nerves of a person whose tasks demanded uninterrupted concentration. Under those conditions, Mr. Slobbins carried on his daily teaching with children who were tired after their five hours of public school and with nerves as tight as violin strings. Despite all these, he always worked with a smile and captivating heartiness.

Years later I discovered his secret. He was afflicted with very high blood-pressure, which rose from year to year until it cut his life short in middle age. In many ways he was an ideal teacher, and the creation and maintenance of Hashaḥar were at the cost of endless effort and his life-blood.

Novay Zedek Hebrew School, *35 Vernon Street, Roxbury*
Novay Zedek was a small synagogue in which one room was assigned for religious school purposes. The 37 registered children were divided into 3 classes. Mr. Berman was the only teacher. The Mixed Method of using *Ivrit B'Ivrit* and translation into English was followed. Mr. Berman taught 17 hours a week for $12. The synagogue gave the school free rent, light, heat and service. The year's budget was $883. Tuition fee income was $468. The balance was covered by various efforts of the School Board.

East Boston Hebrew School, *155 Chelsea Street, East Boston*
East Boston is a small island near Boston. A narrow bay separates it from the big city. A car line connects it with Boston through an underwater tunnel. Also, ferry boats maintain contact with the metropolitan center. About 6000 Jews lived there in the early nineteen hundreds.

Several synagogues cooperated to maintain a Hebrew school, which had a registration of 80 divided into 3 classes. For $16 a week a teacher gave 2½ hours a day, totaling 12½ hours a week. A junior teacher taught 7½ hours a week for $7. During the year there were some teacher changes, and at times they did not have two teachers. The 1917 budget was $1445.45; teachers' salaries—$792, and tuition fee income—$367.14. The deficit was covered by appeals at the synagogues and by the School Board. The Mixed Method obtained.

South Boston Hebrew School, *404 East 4th Street, South Boston*
South Boston was another offshoot of the Boston Jewish Community. About 100 Jewish families lived there, and it was the smallest group in the city that maintained a Hebrew school for many years. 35 children were registered. Mr. Reznick (later, Dr. Reznick) taught 20 hours a week for $12. There were four classes and the mixed method obtained. Budget—$1056, tuition fees—$641. The balance was covered from various sources. At times there were afternoon and evening services in the classroom, which was also the synagogue for the small community.

Among the "never say die" workers were Mr. Pinzer and Mr. R. Ocnoff, who was a devoted Zionist worker for decades. Ocnoff told me that he took a dip in the ocean *every day of the year.* In the winter, when the seashore was frozen, he hired a man to chop a hole in the ice, and Mr. Ocnoff had his dip. On emerging, he put on a heavy fur coat and went home. "I never caught a cold," he added.

He continued his efforts in Zionist and Jewish education long after passing into his eighties.

South End Hebrew School, *9 Lovering Street, South End*
After I had completed most of the educational survey, I discovered that there was yet another Hebrew School in the South End. The teachers and laymen who helped me compile the list of Boston Jewish schools were unaware of its existence, and it was not a small school.

I visited it after having seen all the other schools. It was a *ḥeder* of the poorest type. It had 80 children and two *melamdim* (teachers). For $11 a week, each taught 3 classes for a total of 15 hours a week.

All instruction was in Yiddish. The curriculum consisted of one subject: *Ivre*—mechanical Hebrew reading. The very neglected building was a multiple heartache.

The budget—$2347.89. Tuition fee income—$379.20. The large deficit was covered from various, and also peculiar, sources. About 8000 Jews inhabited that district where formerly well-to-do non-Jews lived. It degenerated into a slum and many charitable agencies functioned there.

The Hebrew school was a lower order than the one on Poplar Street in the West End. I had to see it myself to understand why teachers and laymen were unaware of it. I was told that it was one of the oldest Hebrew schools in Boston, but I could not ascertain when it was organized. One letter indicates that it came into being around 1885.

The South End was one of the poorest sections in Boston. Poverty breeds a large family, abnormal family life, poor child control, undue street influence and asocial habits. These add up to a very serious problem. Many social, religious and philanthropic institutions operated there, doing remedial and preventive work. They grappled with problems that fester if neglected. All were busy for years but the neighborhood was not cured.

Shortly after I began to visit the Hebrew schools, which generally impressed me, I began to see the situation in a broader perspective. Boston had the important educational potential to maintain a worthy modern Jewish school system. It also had a big enough kernel of devoted laymen who hungered for such schooling. Also, among parents there was wide appreciation of the value of the work done in the Hebrew schools. That was evident from the total registrations,

the tuition fees paid, and particularly from the fact that the schools retained their students to the advanced grades. That contrasted sharply with Hebrew schools in other communities, as described by Israel Konovitz in his article, "The State of Jewish Education in America."[5] To its credit, Boston could point to some very solid achievements.

Balancing the positive factors were inherent weaknesses which prevented further growth and development:

a. Each school was a world unto itself. There were no points of contact or cooperation among the schools by which all participants would benefit. In some sections there was even bitter, hurtful competition for lay support, as between Evrio and the West End Hebrew Schools.

b. The level of financial support provided by the active laymen was puny. Try as they might, and they tried hard, they secured only crumbs of income, and it didn't look like they might do much better in the future. An iron wall of misunderstanding existed between them and the regular contributors of the community. The Orthodox Jews, who worried about the Jewish future of the young generation and who could well maintain the existing school system, were violently against it. As I learned from private conversations, their opposition stemmed from lack of information and misinformation about what was done in the schools, and also from their feelings of hopelessness about Jewish education in America.

c. The Reform Jews, who were the wealthier members of the community and knew how to activate people and raise funds, hated the Hebrew school. They regarded it as un-American. ("It aims to transplant here the archaic ways of the Old World. To prevent besmirching the good Jewish name here, all patriotic Jews should oppose it.")

d. Meanwhile, the exponents of the Hebrew School regarded the critics as self-hating antisemitic Jews. They named them *Yahudim*, a pejorative form connoting the Western European, snobby, perverted Jews, who hated their origins and the very sources of our own civilization and culture. Many past occurrences demonstrated the contempt of the *Yahudim* for their Russian and Polish brethren. A gulf of misunderstanding, with all of its poisonous by-products, divided Boston Jewry.

e. Also in the Hebrew schools, there was a lack of understanding between the teachers and the laymen, their employers. The teachers regarded the laymen as ignoramuses who had no concept of what Jewish education was, whose support was only a show for the sake of personal aggrandizement. If they were really interested, they would improve the teacher's hard lot. They had no right to control educational matters and interfere in what to give or keep from the growing generation.

   On their side, the laymen had no respect for the teachers. They were convinced that only the never-do-well in anything else took to teaching. Anyone with a spark of ability deserted *melamdut* and entered the active world. Those who stayed in teaching paraded as idealists and were nothing but *melamdim*, misfits, who would perish if it were not for the opportunity given them in schools. There was no reasonable basis for the teachers' demands. They must not be pampered, particularly when they have nothing but contempt for their employers.

This was the cross section of the situation.

It was not peculiar to Boston alone. In New York, and in other communities I had visited over those half-dozen years, the same relationship obtained. It stemmed from the novel conditions of life in America, from confused thinking and from the lack of mutual understanding among groups of different cultural strata.

I said to myself that it would do little good to proceed with gathering more detailed statistics about the operations of the schools. What prevailed were misinterpretation, misunderstanding, and prejudiced evaluation on all sides. Still, I also realized that the contending camps consisted of the people who were sincere and meant well. All gave of their time and means toward aims which they considered important.

The need of the hour was to bring the different factions together. That could be done by making it clear that essentially all of us strove toward the same goal: Jewish perpetuation as Jews. Conditions of life estranged them from each other, and that estrangement bred misunderstanding and mutual distrust. Despite the inherent enormity of the total problem it seemed to me that in the area of Jewish education it was possible to build a bridge of better understanding between the opposing sides. It could come into being by organization, planning and by working together around one table.

The formula was simple enough but how to achieve it?

Nowhere was there a precedent to go by. The attempt of Dr. Judah L. Magnes in 1908–10 to create a *Kehillah* in New York whereby there would be a union of all the community elements failed. The Bureau of Jewish Education, which was created by Dr. Samson Benderly in 1910, and which continued to function for many years, existed essentially on the contributions of individuals who respected Dr. Benderly's views. On the other hand, I had no instructions whatever. Yet, before the end of the summer vacation, I had to present a completed survey, and I had no idea what to say.

A few factors were of vital help.

I still remembered my Lithuanian Yiddish with all its richness and nuances, its intertwining of Hebrew quotes, sayings, terms of the Bible and Talmud, as well as quips from typical Jewish life. This opened doors for me among the Yiddish speaking Orthodox Bostonians.

My Hebrew speaking made me at home with the Hebrew teachers. My English, though marked with a heavy foreign accent, admitted me to English speaking circles. Furthermore, being an outsider who had to return to New York in a few weeks eliminated any suspicion that I meant to use the given situation as a pretext to remain in Boston. My experience as a Principal of Hebrew schools and my visits in other communities indicated that I was at home in Jewish education. Also, my approach meant an undreamed of subsidy of thousands of dollars from the Federated Charities. That reflected a practical aspect to my survey.

I figured that if the Charities were to give a subsidy to each school individually it would directly or indirectly become master of the Hebrew world. That must not be permitted because most of the supporters of the "Federated" had little sympathy for intensive Jewish education. At the same time, it would be foolhardy for the schools to forgo the possibility of getting a yearly subvention of thousands of dollars. The greatest efforts of all the Hebrew schools put together yielded each of them a mere pittance. Outside of tuition fee income, the total raised by the 12 school boards was under $14,000 and how those devoted men and women labored throughout those years! It would be best to *organize all the schools into one united body that would represent the entire educational system of the Boston community.* A united body has more weight than all of its components working separately, just as a minyan as a whole is superior to the ten men who compose it if each prayed by himself.

The idea of uniting all the schools in one smooth-working example of community organization for Jewish education came to me from my experiences in Indianapolis and my observation of similar attempts in other cities. But in Indianapolis, it worked, starting in 1911 and continuing for decades. Because of the splendid results of five years' work under this system in Indianapolis, as described earlier, I wanted to try to duplicate the plan on a larger scale in Boston.

As a matter of historical record, *in the history of American Jewish education, Rabbi Isaac Elḥanan Neustadt should be credited with the first practical example of organizing Jewish education on a community responsibility basis with a community body both supporting and controlling it.*

There were two *Weltenschauungs* (world views) operating in the Jewish community at that time: 1) the *Yahudim* who were total strangers to Hebraic education, and 2) those who wanted Torah in its original Hebrew, together with Jewish Nationalism and Eretz Yisrael. Yet both camps had the same basic goal in common: Jewish survival. They differed greatly in their methods of reaching the goal. The two, however, could be connected by a bridge, and the attempt to build such a bridge was a challenge.

The task required propaganda along two channels: 1) through meetings with influential individuals and 2) through group contacts. I decided to rely on no one else and to attempt the two-fold effort by myself. If I succeeded in creating an organization based on clear conviction then it would have enough vitality to carry on by its own power. On the other hand, if I failed, it would only be my own personal failure and no one would be hurt. I began with individual contacts.

First I met the Hebrew School Principals: Benjamin Hirsh, N. M. Tumaroff, Kaddish Waldman, Shachno Stein, Dr. Alexander Goldberg, Zvi Slobbins and Moses Parsons. I met each one individually. I said that I wanted to get his reaction to the plan that all Hebrew Schools should form a united body composed of delegates from each school. The united body would receive a subsidy from the Federated Charities and distribute it among the schools according to a mutually adopted plan. The delegates would also deal with problems of individual schools as well as problems of common interest. They would try to help each school do a better job in its own area. As a united body they would maintain contact with the Federated Charities. The Charities would not deal with any school by itself.

There was also another educational area, the Sunday schools. A few years earlier these schools had formed an organization called the Education Society which was not active. Among the Reform Jews, and particularly among most of the leaders of the Federated Charities, this type of schooling was deemed sufficient for the educational needs of American children. If the Charities subsidized the Hebrew schools, it would not be able to leave out the Sunday schools.

I had already known that a deep gulf existed between these two types of schools, each seeing an antithesis in the other. That attitude would not easily permit cooperation between these two areas.

However, some needs were common to both types: increased parent interest and increased registration, better housing facilities, improved teaching methods and public relations to sell Jewish education to the public. I suggested that each group send four delegates to a Joint Board. These eight delegates should then co-opt a ninth member from the outside. The Joint Board should act on matters of common interest to both groups. To me the plan seemed logical but not so to the Hebrew teachers.

It must be remembered that in the field of Hebrew schools many were puzzled why the Federated Jewish Charities, which was comprised mainly of the Reform Jews, should all of a sudden take an interest in Jewish education and offer it big subsidies? Was it a strategic move to penetrate the hated Hebrew education area, dominate it through the power of money, and then destroy it? Were there any proofs to the contrary? If I was not a spy, perhaps they were fooling me, using me as a tool, since my Hebrew speaking would obviate any suspicion?

And now I poured oil on the fire: the Sunday Schools! The Hebrew teachers argued: To the Hebrew schools, the Sunday schools were an object of horror. The Sunday Schools were like the Temple of the Samaritans on Mount Grizim, at the time of the Second Temple, which opposed the Jerusalem Temple. Their total hours of instruction during the year was puny, yet they paraded as "Religious Schools," pretending to give the children something worthwhile, all the while keeping them away from the Hebrew schools. So why was I suggesting that they be subsidized on the same principle as the Hebrew schools? Very likely this was a trick to convert the Hebrew schools into Sunday Schools! I proposed that the Hebrew schools should even help their enemies. Did I think their souls were for sale?!

Danger lay ahead. Becoming suspect would make it impossible for me to effect what seemed so logical and promising. I began to

reexamine the whole plan. Was I overreaching myself? I could still draw back. I came as a volunteer to make two surveys which required the assemblage of facts and suggestions for improvements. No one asked me to implement my plan, just as no one gave me any instructions or suggestions of any sort. All that Mr. Waldman wanted was facts. In my attempt to exceed my assignment I met with misunderstanding and suspicion which might so undermine the survey that even its otherwise acceptable parts would be invalidated. The opponents would fight fiercely if they considered my plan harmful.

Thus I was at a crossroad.

On one side the Hebrew Schools were in bad shape. Teachers' salaries were insultingly low. They had no status even with their own school boards who considered them a necessary evil. The teacher shortage reached a very critical point. In most schools young adolescents who should still study for years served as teachers. The teachers' lack of status, low pay and total lack of job security made it very unlikely that young Americans would care to make a career of Hebrew teaching. At the same time American Jewry could not continue to rely upon overseas Jewries to supply its need for teachers. This was the summer of 1917, in the midst of World War I. Immigration from Europe had practically ceased. No one could tell when the inflow of immigration would be resumed. How could Hebrew schools function without teachers?

Also, the school boards made a depressing picture. Despite the hard, self-sacrificing work of good, well-intentioned men and women all twelve school boards raised less than $14,000 during that school year. They collected pennies which came from the lower middle class. The well-to-do either held back altogether or contributed little. The *Yahudim* were totally opposed to them. The segments of the community which had prestige, money, and knew how to raise funds had no sympathy for them. Left to their starvation budgets, how long could the present Hebrew school devotees maintain even what they already had?

It was left for me to develop another picture.

During the stay in Indianapolis, Indiana (1911–1916) I frequently visited communities that lay between Indianapolis and New York. I saw nothing but woe in the Talmud Torahs. All were a poor copy of the old time *ḥeder*, with most of its faults and hardly any of its positive values and, in addition, there were negative aspects which grew out of conditions in the New World. *Boston was the only community*

that managed to develop a chain of promising schools. They could become effective educational entities if only material and spiritual help were provided. Under the circumstances the likelihood was that the apathy of the community would discourage the present band of workers, and Boston's challenging example, which could inspire others, would die of anemia.

As I saw the situation, a live example had to be created in one community. Here, a network of Hebrew schools, headed by teachers and principals who brought with them basic Jewish knowledge from abroad, should be set up. With proper planning they could achieve much, disseminate real Jewish knowledge and develop proper Jewish attitudes. The community would serve as a guide and example to other communities. Qualified teachers who had been in America for some time, but who saw no hope for Jewish education here, would begin to come back; Jewish education would also begin to attract young students like those graduates from the Evrio Hebrew School who went from rabbi to rabbi saying, "We want more Torah"! Some of them would continue to study until they, too, would be ripe as teachers.

As it was, Boston was already a challenging example of what could be achieved in Jewish education.

Luckily, my five years in Indianapolis were wonderful in every respect. Even the 1916–1917 year in New York was very happy. Now I could work from morning to midnight day after day. A 15–16 hour workday was a normal effort. I was ready to plunge on and on until the goal was reached.

I preferred personal contacts. It is more time-consuming, but also more effective. From early morning till after midnight I met people. I reserved the evenings for the Hebrew teachers. Boston summers are wonderful. Even in the hottest days the east wind from the Atlantic Ocean neutralizes any heat wave. Conversing with one of the teachers, we always landed in one of Boston's many parks. I let my companion empty himself in an uninterrupted monologue, and then bit by bit I tried to formulate the benefit inherent in a union of all the Hebrew schools. I repeatedly emphasized that the Federated Charities would extend very substantial help and would not interfere with the inner workings of the schools, directly or indirectly. Complete autonomy would be the basic principle. My assurance came in the name of Mr. Waldman who made that point crystal clear. If at any time the Charities interfered with the schools, they could sever relations at will. Further, even if they had to break away

from the Charities, the schools would emerge in a much stronger position. The *shidukh* with the Charities would have given them status and prestige which would mean more manpower, income and influence.

As already indicated, there was much misunderstanding between the teachers and their employers, the *Baalei Batim*. I was certain that gulf could also be bridged, and with it would come an all-around blessing, in this way.

The proposed union of the Hebrew schools called for democratic representation; that is, each school would send two delegates to a United Board of Delegates, one layman and one teacher! Laymen and teachers would meet under one roof. Both sides would begin to envision education from its all-inclusive aspects; that is, how to best reach the growing young Jewishly? Each side would soon learn to appreciate the problem engaging the other side and that, in turn, would generate mutual respect. The laymen would realize that the teachers were not just *batlonim* and *schlemiels* who didn't know life, and who demanded a full week's pay for a mere few hours work each day. With mutual appreciation would come a broadening of the program, greater cohesion and deeper interest.

I first presented the idea to the teachers. They did not believe the laymen would agree to admit the teachers on such a broad basis. I said that in discussing the whole project with the laymen, I would strongly urge the admission of the teachers. That pleased the teachers. They saw in it an attempt to raise their status, and this most likely helped to gain their approval of the entire project.

But there I was halted by an iron wall. The laymen objected!

The daytime hours when I was free from the Industrial School survey, and particularly after I was done with it, I devoted to meeting laymen of all strata including school officers, patrons who were influential in the community, and Orthodox rabbis. I also met Rabbi H. H. Rubenovitz, the only Conservative rabbi in Boston, and reform Rabbi Harry Levi of Temple Israel who commanded great prestige and influence with the Charities' trustees, many of whom were members of his Temple. Upon Mr. Waldman's suggestion I also met some influential *Yahudim*.

One of the first laymen I met was Mr. Nathan Pinanski, President of Congregation Adath Jeshurun, Roxbury. He was an unusual person. Born in Lithuania, he studied some years in a Vilna Yeshivah.

I visited him in the evening. He was alone. His wife had died recently, and he never stopped mourning her. He proudly showed

me the pictures of his two sons, one of them, Abraham, excelled in Harvard Law School. He was justly proud of him. In time, Abraham was appointed to the Massachusetts Superior Court. Like his father, Judge Abraham Pinanski was sharp, clear cut, full of Jewish humor and with a heart of gold. He was a credit to his exalted position.

Mr. Pinanski was enthusiastic about my plan and promised his support. He promised his cooperation in realizing the project and said that I could see him whenever I had need of him. He named some key men that I ought to see.

At that time there was a *Ḥevrah Shas*, a laymen's Talmud group to which most of the Orthodox rabbis also belonged. It was interesting that many rich men were among its members; Lassor Agoos, Oscar Grossberg, Shalom Cabelinsky, Nahum Stern, Rudnick, Isaac Watchmaker, Reuben Finkelstein and others. I was told that *Ḥevrah Shas* was a power to be reckoned with. Its goodwill would be an asset; its opposition would be serious. I planned to meet its leaders individually, address the entire group, discuss and clarify the whole plan.

That Sabbath, Adath Jeshurun held a special gathering of the *Ḥevrah Shas*, attended by representatives of its Boston branches. After the morning service, members of the congregation and the officers, led by President Pinanski, went down to the vestry. Rabbis from many congregations were also there. Mr. Walper arranged that I would address the gathering. I told them I was interested in creating a united body of Hebrew schools through which the Federated Jewish Charities would give a substantial subsidy to the schools. I believed that the aim should be to prepare spiritual heirs to men of Jewish learning such as themselves. I told them that the participation of *Ḥevrah Shas* was important. They should not expect their work to be done by proxy. As to myself, I believed that Jewish education could create a brighter tomorrow. My audience was not used to getting encouragement from young Americanized people. They were touched, and the speakers who followed urged cooperation for the sake of Torah dissemination.

My talk at *Ḥevrah Shas* opened before me all Boston Orthodox synagogues which were the great majority of the Jewish Houses of Prayer. The next Sabbath I spoke at Adath Jeshurun, the following Sabbath in Beth El, Dorchester. After returning from the summer course in Columbia in mid-August, I spoke at the Beth Hamidrash Hagadol, Roxbury and the following Sabbath, in two West End synagogues. In those days the synagogues were filled on the Sabbath

almost as much as on the High Holidays, and by mid-September, I had addressed two to three thousand people. In each case I described the neglected state of Jewish education, emphasizing the need for increasing the schools' manpower, widening the existing schools and organizing new ones. I also related how the Federated Jewish Charities felt it was a trustee of the community's conscience, and that it wanted to meet the desire of so many to assure the future of Jewish life in America through a combined organization of all the educational units, so all would benefit.

I was met with goodwill everywhere. The fact that the *Baalei Batim* took me seriously affected the attitude of the teachers who also realized that the schools and the teachers would benefit from the new proposal.

I met several rabbis: Zalman Jacob Friederman, Shereshevsky and Shocher. By his personality and gripping conversation, Rabbi Friederman was always the spokesman. He favored the plan of uniting the schools, but added, "The correct men of Jerusalem never joined a meal unless they knew in advance who would be their table companions," (*Sanhedrin* 23a). Here he knew who would be with us: *apikorsim*—"heretics"! He was very wary of the *shidukh* with the assimilationist Charities. He then said that he would think it over before deciding what to do. My talk with the leading rabbis, especially those who had scorched their fingers in dealing with schools, revealed there would be hurdles ahead. My limited stay in Boston would not suffice to accomplish anything in that direction.

At the end of the first week in July I had to go back to New York. After 5½ weeks I returned. One of the things to which I applied myself after returning to Boston was to smooth the way for an organization meeting.[6] The teachers, officers of the Hebrew Schools and other leading laymen agreed that such a meeting should be called. It took place in August, 1917. Representatives of all 12 Hebrew schools and the largest synagogues were present. That meeting examined the details of my proposal and adopted the following resolutions:

1. The organization of all the Boston Hebrew schools into a united body was desirable and timely.
2. Those present greeted with deep satisfaction the willingness of the Federated Jewish Charities to subsidize Jewish education.
3. Direct subsidy by the Charities to each school individually was not desirable. It was likely to lead to the Charities' control of the

schools. Therefore, it was recommended that the subsidies be given through the medium of a joint organization of the schools.

4. The Hebrew Teachers may serve as delegates of their respective schools.
5. The leading synagogues of Boston were invited to send delegates to the organization of the schools.
6. The school organization should serve as the center which would deal with the problems of education in general and with problems of individual schools as they came up.

The teacher participation as delegates incited a warm debate. Some said, "Why not?" Others thought that since the teachers would all attend regularly, while the *Baalei Batim* would attend only occasionally, the teachers would run the organization which employed them. There were also some who did not care to meet as equals with the teachers.

On my part, I argued in favor of including the teachers for our own benefit. They would then realize the travail of the *Baalei Batim* keeping the schools going, of which they had little conception or, worse, wrong ideas. Such understanding would improve their attitude to their tasks, to the school directors, and to parents and children. Also, on their part, the laymen would get a better insight into the world in which the teachers live and think, which is much more interesting than many imagine. Both sides stood to benefit by associating with the other. At the same time, should the *shidukh* turn sour, the laymen could change the rules and meet by themselves.

If the decision had been left to the laymen alone, they most probably would have voted to meet by themselves, but I stood firmly for associating the teachers. Perhaps because it was through me that they would receive substantial subsidies for their schools, whose financial condition was always critical, they voted for associated representation as follows:

1. Each school would send two delegates, a layman and a teacher.
2. The following ten Boston congregations would each send two delegates: From Roxbury, Adath Jeshurun, Beth HaMidrash Hagadol, Shaare Tefila, Mishkan Tefila and B'nai Abraham. From the West End, Tifereth Israel, and the Philip Street Synagogue. From Dorchester, Beth El. From East Boston, Ohel Jacob. From the South End, one synagogue.

Important organizations interested in education could send two delegates each. As to *Hevrah Shas*, those present said that since nearly all of its members belonged to congregations, and could come as delegates, there was no need for special representation. As to the Rabbis, with nearly 70 in Boston, if all of them came as delegates they would outnumber all the other delegates. Therefore, it was thought best to allow the congregations to send their own Rabbis as delegates. That decision backfired. Some rabbis who were not chosen as delegates complained that they should have been chosen on their own merits as Delegates at Large. That hurt. We were not wise enough to suggest that the Boston Rabbis should meet and send their own representatives.

Failure to include the Rabbis from the very inception of the project was an historic mistake. Their enthusiastic cooperation in the planning and execution of the total program would have been constructive in many ways and would have obviated serious negative consequences which developed in later years, this, although Rabbis, for the most part, did not hold as much status then as they do now.

Explanatory letters were sent to all 12 Hebrew schools and to the above synagogues inviting them to an Organization Meeting which was held in August. Delegates came from all the invited schools and from nearly all the invited congregations. Rabbi P. Israeli was elected Temporary Chairman and Moses E. Parsons, Principal of the Roxbury Hebrew Free School, was chosen Protocol-Secretary. It was decided to organize under the name of "Associated Boston Hebrew Schools." A committee was appointed to draw up a constitution.

Delegates voted to publicize the formation of the school's organization in all the synagogues during the coming High Holidays which began September 17, 1917 and to ask the local Rabbis to speak and explain the significance for Jewish education of the union of all the Hebrew Schools. Several delegates offered to speak in the synagogues where the local Rabbis would not want to deal with this subject.

During the High Holidays I spoke in several synagogues. The consummation of my plan to organize the Hebrew Schools gave me status in the community, and I was seen as a friend of Jewish education. Ordinarily, Rabbis are loath to share their pulpits on the High Holidays, but in all the leading synagogues the Rabbis made a place for me to deliver short addresses.

Now the creation of the Associated Boston Hebrew Schools preceded the delivery of my educational survey to the Charities, but Morris D. Waldman had followed with considerable interest my organization work, and he encouraged me to proceed, although officially, the Charities had to act first on the recommendation to subsidize the schools.

Before the High Holidays, some *Baalei Batim* and Mr. B. Hirsh, Principal of the Evrio Hebrew School, as well as other principals, told me that all I built up would vanish as soon as I left the city. Through the years, negative forces fragmented education into small opposing school units. I had succeeded in bringing together all the elements. As an objective outsider, who evidently had the welfare of Jewish education uppermost in his mind, I could achieve what no local person could. But, without a shadow of a doubt, all would be lost after I left. Locally, there was no cohesive force, while there were strong divisive pressures. Apparently, some *Baalei Batim* spoke to Waldman. He, too, urged me to return to Boston, at least on weekends. "The Charities would pay your salary, and after the schools begin to get the subsidy they might stand on their own feet."

It was a hard choice.

Because of the World War, spending a weekend in Boston meant sleeping 3 nights a week in New York, 2 in Boston and 2 on trains because we were able to travel only at night. In Boston the work would be arduous. Could I do satisfactory work in Columbia preparing for a new profession, Social Service? Was this another test to keep me away from my life goal?

At the same time I realized that there was weight in the proposition. There were centrifugal forces which were set to kill the plan for organization before it managed to get on its feet. Should that happen, all hope of cooperation on a community scale for Jewish education would vanish.

I answered that I would accept an arrangement for six months, beginning that October. During that period the Associated Hebrew Schools should have developed enough vitality to stand on its own. At a meeting held in my absence, the Associated Boston Hebrew Schools voted to accept my proposition. I was then elected Superintendent of the Associated Boston Hebrew Schools at a salary of $200 a month. Prior to that meeting, the Federated Jewish Charities promised to pay my salary. Out of that salary, I paid for my weekly round trips and for my room and board which I continued with the

kind Abrams family in Boston. I did not disclose to the teachers or laymen that the above left me $16 a week. Wasn't this becoming a *Zei Gezund*[7] to Jewish education!

Early in September I submitted to Mr. Waldman my "Survey of Jewish Education in Boston." It contained about 100 pages. Waldman, who knew already the substance of the survey, started with a barrage of questions as to the factual part and particularly about the proposals. From the questions it was evident that they stemmed from misunderstanding and misinterpreting the survey. Some questions seemed to put the survey in a false light but I answered as best as I could. All was done at a rapid pace. When Waldman saw that my answer was to the point, he stopped me and switched to another question. I already knew him well enough to realize that it was meant as a rehearsal for my appearance at the meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Charities. He knew that I would be asked varied and even out of the way questions, and he wanted to see how I would defend my thesis.

At the end he said he was delighted and that he was sure of positive results. He was a superior teacher and knew how to put me at my best.

A Fateful Decision of the Federated Jewish Charities

Early in September, 1917 the Board of Trustees of the Federated Jewish Charities met at the Elysium Club, 218 Huntington Street, Boston. Mr. A. C. Ratshesky, President, presided. I submitted the substance of the Educational Survey, which contained the following:

Achievements

a. *Hebrew Schools* Some have very creditable records of achievement. But all lack funds to maintain equitable levels of teachers' salaries, housing standards and to expand so as to admit all who want an intensive Jewish education.

b. *Sunday Schools* All were closed during the summer and I could not evaluate them. All teachers were volunteers. This had its drawback. No demands could be made of volunteers in terms of proper Jewish background to ensure adequate preparation for each lesson. Such requirements can be made only when teachers are paid.

Summary of the Education Survey

	Hebrew Schools	Sunday Schools
Number of Schools	12	7
Registration	1,529	1,800 (estimated)
Total Expenditures	$32,044.59	$2,000 (approximately)
Tuition Fee Income	$15,932.97	Free Tuition
Range Teachers' Salaries	$10–$20 a week	All Teachers Volunteers
Sessions Per Week	5	1
Curriculum	Hebrew reading, speaking and writing; Hebrew prayers; Five Books of Moses and Hebrew texts; Jewish history, Customs and Ceremonies; Celebration of Jewish Holy days.	Jewish history, largely biblical; celebration of holidays; some prayers in English.
Methods of Instruction a) *Ivrit B'Ivrit* b) Translation Yiddish c) Compound (a & b)	Schools pupils 6 947 (61.9%) 2 280 (18.3%) 4 302 (19.8%) 12 1,529 (100%)	English used in all schools. Each teacher follows his own method.
Housing:	All Housing substandard	
Schools in synagogue vestries	3: Adath Jeshurun, Moriah and Novay Zedek.	2 Schools in Roxbury and West End YMHAs. Others in rooms rented for Sunday mornings.
Schools in Roxbury and West End YMHAs		2
Rental Rooms or buildings	3: Hashaḥar, South End, Tel Aviv	5 (Sundays)
Schools in their own homes	East Boston, Evrio, Hateḥiah, Roxbury Hebrew Free School, South Boston and West End Hebrew Free School	
Form of Organization	Each school has its own autonomous organization.	The Jewish Education Society helps local Sunday schools to organize.

The Financial Structure of the Hebrew Schools

Salaries of principals and teachers are painfully low. All Principals are family men, but only one Principal gets $25 a week. Teachers' rate $11–$16 a week, salaries which could not possibly support a family. Under those circumstances no young person would care to enter a career of Hebrew teaching.

Income: Woefully low at all levels. The basic reason is that the schools were located in the poor districts and the children came from poor homes. The respective school boards did their utmost to collect crumbs of income. Some schools even resorted to out of the way measures. Collectors, for example, circulated with *pushkes*—charity boxes—at stores, homes and the streets. Children were sent to escort funerals, and in some schools *Kaddish* was recited for the departed. These methods and others of the same category degrade education.

Housing: Most of the school buildings, and the way they were kept up, were a disgrace to the glorious community of Boston.

Could any single person be blamed for all of the above? Not at all! What we found stemmed from the very approach to Jewish education. All had been left to the parents. But many parents had no means to pay for schooling, small as the tuition may have been. Then there were children who had no parents, and still others whose parents had no interest in Jewish education. But in our society, ignorance and democracy are antitheses to each other.

For its own security a democratic society must be an educated society and education does not fall from heaven. Only through effective, well planned and uninterrupted education which embraces most of the children is it possible to maintain knowledge of the basic values whereby democracy can survive.

The same applies to Jewish life. For the last 2,000 years Jews had maintained a general system of education which reached all the children of the community. When parents could not afford to educate their own children, the community did it for them. At all times it was clear that full appreciation of the fundamentals of Torah and Judaism was the *sine qua non* condition for the perpetuation of Jews from age to age.

These principles were as applicable to American Jewish society as they had ever been anywhere else. *The responsibility of affording a Jewish education to all the children of the community should be*

upon the community as a body. Therefore, it was a basic mistake in America to have left it all to individual parents. The resulting loss cannot be calculated. And just as we do not leave it to individuals to take measures against fire, but rather to the community through its city government which maintains a fire department for the whole city, so it is the case with us. *Jewish education is essentially a community responsibility.* As much as possible parents should be made to share the burden, but the final responsibility is upon the community. Those institutions which articulate the most all-around will of the community for its own welfare should assume this task, which is not a burden but a privilege.

In Boston such a qualified agency is the Federated Jewish Charities. Since it embraces all strata of the population, and it can achieve better results than any other single agency or group of agencies. The Federated, therefore, is the agency best suited to support Jewish Education, because from the democratic point of view, every parent has the right to determine the kind of Jewish education he prefers for his children. It is up to the community, then, to provide and support different types of education. Those parents who prefer to have Sunday schools for their children should have Sunday schools. Similarly, those who want an intensive type of Jewish education should have the five day a week Hebrew school.

It is from this vantage point that we can view a democratic society which in our case consists of Reform, Conservative and Orthodox Jews. *Each group has an inherent right to educate its children in its own image.* Of course, there is room to discuss and debate the relative merits of the various types of Jewish education. This, however, should be carried on among adults; the children and their education should be left to the exclusive direction of their parents. Only by respecting our differences, and at the same time working together, will American Jewry hammer out through the years what is best and most suited for the perpetuation of Judaism in free America.

With the above in mind, it is proposed that the Federated Jewish Charities allot funds for the following purposes:

1. Do away with the degrading collection methods for education such as sending people with *pushkes* into which pennies and nickels are dropped, sending children to escort funerals, reciting *Kaddish* at cemeteries, etc.

2. Raise teachers' and principals' salaries by at least 25 percent. Even after that there will still be a need for future raises in order to make Hebrew teaching an attractive occupation.
3. In total, the Charities should allot to the Hebrew Schools an amount that equals all that had been raised this year by all the school boards, exclusive of tuition fee income.
4. A Reserve Fund of $5,000 should be added to the above for the opening of new schools and for the expansion of existing ones.
5. Introduce extension activities in all schools outside the regular classroom session time.
6. To maintain the prestige of the Central Organization of the Hebrew schools, all subsidies should be channeled through that body.
7. Sunday Schools should combine into an organization of their own and their subsidies should be channeled through their central organization.

The two Central Organizations should each select from its Board four delegates to a Joint Board which will represent them at the Federated Charities. Through this Board such activities will be conducted which by mutual agreement will be of common interest, such as increasing registration, increasing total income, attaining better housing, etc.

I proposed that $20,000 be given annually to the Hebrew schools and $10,000 to the Sunday schools; that is, $30,000 a year to Jewish education.

Attendance time at the Sunday schools is one-fifth or less of children's attendance time at the Hebrew schools, yet I suggested that the Sunday schools be given one-half as much as the Hebrew schools because of two reasons:

1. The Sunday schools had no tuition fee income while the Hebrew schools had tuition fees.
2. The main reason. To most of the Federated Charities' Directors, Jewish education meant Sunday school education. If I were to propose for the Sunday schools what might look like too little it would be interpreted that I was prejudiced against the Sunday schools and the entire project of subsidizing Jewish education might have been scrapped.

Deducting the nearly $16,000 of tuition fees received by the Hebrew schools in the school year of 1917, *the total subsidy of $30,000 a year was twice as much as was raised that year by all the Boston school boards put together.* It was daring on my part to go that far. It had no precedent anywhere else at any time in the history of Jewish education in America. I dared because of two reasons. First, I felt sure that the Hebrew schools would improve at such a spurt as to make all concerned feel that the investment was worthwhile. Second, the Federated Charities had such a generous response that year from contributors that it had an unassigned surplus of $100,000 and first come first served!

My report evoked a barrage of questions. The Directors took particular exception to my approach that Jewish education was the community's responsibility, instead of the total responsibility being of each family or of each congregation. They were particularly frightened when one of the most respected directors, Mr. Joseph, asked me for the total budget if all the children of the Boston community were in Hebrew schools.

My answer was based on the following figures: The estimated Jewish population in Boston was 80,000. Children between the ages 6–14 constituted 20 percent, or 16,000. The average annual per capita cost in a Hebrew school was $25. Multiply 16,000 by 25 and you get the figure of $400,000 a year. That alarmed the directors. Why, that sum exceeded by 60 percent the total budget of the Federated charities!! Is not the Federated being invited to step into a bottomless quagmire?!

Further analysis, however, brought out that there was little ground for fears. First, it would be very long before *all* the children would attend any Jewish school. Second, very many would attend Sunday schools which cost much less than Hebrew school. Third, a very large sum would come in as tuition fees from parents. Finally, full attendance of all children in the community would result from a tremendous rise of interest and enthusiasm for Jewish education among the masses and that would bring a corresponding rise in the Charities' income. Thus, with tuition fees covering 40 percent of the budget of each school, the net total subsidy would be within reach of the Charities.

After about two months, during which committees studied and analyzed the survey proposals from all angles, an official report was sent from the Charities that all the proposals of the survey were accepted and that it was decided to allot $20,000 a year to the

Hebrew schools and $10,000 a year to the Sunday schools. The subsidies would begin from January 1, 1918, but since the fiscal year of the Charities begins in October, proportionate allotments would be made from January–October, 1918, and from then on all allotments would be made on an annual basis.

Boston—The First in the United States to Organize Jewish Education on the Principle of Community Responsibility

The decision of the Federated Charities was decisive and historic for Jewish education in Boston. Directly and indirectly it also served as a catalyst for expanding and developing Jewish education in Boston to an extent no one at that time dreamed possible.

Also, Boston served as a challenging example to large and small Jewish communities in the United States. During the coming decade Philadelphia, Baltimore, Chicago, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Buffalo, Detroit and Cincinnati created Bureaus of Jewish Education which were patterned upon the Boston plan, although not all had the same nomenclature, nor were all the basic Boston principles accepted from the very beginning.

Factually, Boston was the first Jewish community in America to adopt Jewish education as a total community responsibility and to organize it as a basic community function. In Boston, the plan adopted in 1917 has been functioning uninterruptedly to the present day (1966).[8]

The Bureau of Jewish Education of New York, which was organized in 1910 by Dr. Samson Benderly, aimed to become a New York community organization, directing its entire Jewish educational apparatus, but it did not achieve that. It developed and rendered many and varied pioneer services to New York and to other communities, but it functioned mainly by the support of private subsidies. In no other city at that time had the community assumed responsibility for the total program of Jewish education of the entire community as was done in Boston by its 1917 vote.

THE JEWISH EDUCATIONAL SURVEY—II

Sunday Schools

The first Jewish Sunday school in America was organized by Rebecca Gratz in Philadelphia in 1838. The total Jewish population in the United States at that time was estimated to be about 15,000 who were very widely scattered. Most of them came from Germany. The Sunday school found its way primarily in Reform congregations. It coincided with the inherent trend of the Reform Movement which aimed to adjust Judaism to the American milieu.[9] Sessions were held in the morning, lasting two hours. The school year generally began right after *Sukkot* and ended with the *Shavuot* holiday. Deducting midyear and other vacations there remained 30 weeks totaling 60 classroom hours a year. Everything was carried on in English.

The Sunday School curriculum included: Jewish history, generally limited to the biblical period; some explanations about the Jewish religion; and celebrations of the holidays which fall during the school year (*Ḥanukkah*, *Purim* and Passover). In most instances graduation and confirmation were celebrated on *Shavuot* in a synagogue (when the school belongs to it.) Schools with an auditorium conducted assembly exercises for about one-half hour. Up to the time of the Boston survey (1917) no tuition fees were charged and on holiday celebrations the schools distributed goodies to the children. The teachers, mostly women, were volunteers. Discipline was good; no corporal punishment of any kind obtained.

Conservative congregations began to conduct Sunday schools as part of their total program. One reason for this was that the school looked modern since all was conducted in English. *A congregational Sunday School also enabled the congregation to give religious*

instruction to all members' children without involving too much of the congregation's budget, since almost all work was done by volunteers. Sunday morning the members were free and many could come and see how the congregation was affording religious education on a large scale. At an assembly the Rabbi would speak to all the children which proved that he was in contact with all the members' children. The fact that the Rabbi addresses the children every week stamped the whole program as religious, especially since it usually opened with a prayer in English.

The Sunday schools had wisely named themselves "religious schools." That paid off handsomely in many ways. They did not, for example, have to prove they were inculcating definite knowledge as was the case with the Hebrew schools where Hebrew reading, *Ḥumash,* Hebrew speaking and writing, and customs and ceremonies were the subjects in which pupil achievement was measured. The Sunday school had only 60 hours a year at its disposal. No real knowledge could possibly be implanted when six days passed between one lesson and the next, but the appellation "religious" meant something emotional and did not lend itself readily to measurement.

In the course of time the Sunday schools became the darlings of community. Even some Orthodox synagogues housed them gratis and provided them with free service. Federated Charities generally maintained that the Hebrew schools, *as demonstrated by their name,* were only language schools, teaching an ancient, dead language. At best they were entitled only to fringe support, whereas the Sunday Religious Schools, *as demonstrated again by their name,* were religious institutions, entitled to attention and full support. Weren't they saving our children for Judaism!

The Sunday schools also benefitted in another way. They did not have any building maintenance problem. They occupied a building only two hours a week, 30 weeks a year. In most instances synagogues were glad to house them free of charge. When such facilities were not available, the Sunday school rented a local meeting hall which was nearly always unoccupied on Sunday mornings.

The small financial outlays of non-congregational Sunday schools were met by private individuals. Some societies also contributed to them. Reform congregations were usually willing to maintain a Sunday school in a poor district. In such cases they conducted it as a Reform congregation school and thereby prepared followers among the growing generation.

The Boston Sunday Schools

In Boston, Jewish education began in 1843 with a Sunday school. That year the first Jewish congregation, Ohev Shalom, was organized by 18 members. That tiny group apparently had no one to teach Hebrew reading and *Ḥumash* (The Five Books of Moses). A Sunday school such as Rebecca Gratz opened a few years before in Philadelphia was the only means whereby the children could get some smattering of the Jewish religion. The Ohev Shalom congregation participated in the maintenance of the school.

Most of the Ohev Shalom members came from Germany. They brought with them the idea that the Jewish religion must be modernized. That resulted in a schism and in 1854 some members left and organized a new congregation, Adath Israel (now Temple Israel). In 1874, when Rabbi Solomon Schindler was installed in Adath Israel, he introduced a Reform ritual, and from then on the Sunday school had been the main Jewish religious education agency for that congregation's children.

Another group broke away from Ohev Shalom in 1858 and organized as Mishkan Israel which, after another merger, was named Mishkan Tefila (now Temple Mishkan Tefila). Since 1872 this congregation has maintained a Sunday school.

At the Zionist Convention of 1904 in Cleveland a resolution was passed obligating Zionists to take an active part in the promotion of Jewish education in their respective communities. Albert Hurwitz, one of the Boston delegation, reported at the *B'nai Zion* Society on the above resolution. The Society decided to open a Sunday school with its own Talmud Torah located in the North End. Very soon several hundred children registered. Members of the B'nai Zion volunteered as teachers. That was in 1904 when Dr. Herzl died and the school was named "Theodor Herzl." The success of this first attempt encouraged the members, and Sunday schools were opened in East Boston, Dorchester, Jamaica Plain and South Boston.

In 1911 the Jehudah Halevi Sunday school was opened in the Agudat Aim synagogue, 14 Crawford Street, Roxbury. Only Sabbath observers were admitted to membership in that synagogue. (In December, 1920, that building was bought by the Bureau of Jewish Education for the proposed Hebrew Teachers College which had occupied it for over 30 years). The Jehudah Halevi school grew so that it had to be moved to larger quarters. The YMHA on Warren Street, Roxbury, admitted it, and in 1917 the school had a registration

of 500. In time, the maintenance of a Sunday school became an organic part of YMHA programs and quite a few such schools were opened in New England.

One fundamental fact needs elaboration: In Orthodox circles the Sunday school at first enjoyed a very friendly reception. In the Orthodox Baldwin Place Synagogue of the North End, the Theodor Herzl School was housed until it outgrew the synagogue facilities. In Roxbury, the ultra-orthodox congregation *Agudat Ahim* opened its doors to the Jehudah Halevi Sunday school which grew fast and had to be transferred to larger quarters.

When I came to Boston in the summer of 1917, I found an entirely different relationship. Mutual hatred prevailed between the Sunday schools and the Hebrew schools to the extent that each side denied the other the right of existence. What caused that mutual hate? In the Hebrew schools opposition was so acute that at first I was suspected as a spy who came to undermine them with the money power of the Federated Charities and then convert them into Sunday schools.

Also, in the Orthodox synagogues I found a strong negative attitude to the Sunday schools. There they repeatedly said: "The Sunday school teachers ought first to go to *ḥeder* to get an elementary Jewish education. How could they teach anything to anyone?" The honeymoon period between the Orthodox synagogues and the Sunday schools had been a matter of ancient history. The writer believes that the cause for the about-face-feeling stemmed from the following:

Initially the Sunday school came into an educational vacuum where children got no Jewish education whatever, and the Sunday school undertook to give them at least something. It also stated that its main aim was to generate in its pupils some appetite for Jewish knowledge so that they might transfer to a Hebrew school where they would get basic Jewish instruction. That could be achieved through emphasizing to the parents as well as to the children that the Sunday school was a way station leading to a more intensive Jewish education in a Talmud Torah or in a Hebrew school. With that purpose in mind, the Sunday schools were welcomed heartily in the Orthodox circles. *But the Orthodox soon learned that the Sunday schools meant to become the Alpha and Omega of Jewish education.* In other words, the Sunday school was sufficient unto itself for Jewish children.

This conviction held by Sunday school principals and teachers was not an outgrowth of any ill intention. It was an attitude born from

sheer ignorance of things Jewish. They even tried to register children who otherwise would go to the more intensive schools where pupils attended five days a week. While in Boston, I interviewed principals and teachers. The prevailing opinion was that in America there was no room for the archaic Hebrew schools! Of course the Hebrew schools did not take all this lying down. They argued that the Sunday schools existed at the expense of the Hebrew schools. Had they been closed most, if not all, of their registration would have transferred to the Hebrew schools.

Never had the twain come together to sit at the same table and talk over their differences. Neither side took into account that on one hand there were families which would under no condition take more than a spoonful of Jewish education while on the other hand there were families which were eager for a rich educational diet. That would have served as a guide in the distribution of children's registration. As it was, the contenders never met, criticism and bitterness abounded and each side would declare the other a cancer on the Jewish body.

In addition to the three congregational Sunday schools of Temple Israel, Temple Mishkan Tefila and Temple Ohabei Shalom in 1917 there were seven Sunday schools not connected with synagogues, with a total registration (added to that of the three congregational schools) of 1,800. That was only an estimate, and I had no means of checking the figures. The seven schools were: Theodor Herzl, Emma Lazarus, Grace Aguilar, Jehudah Halevi, Maimonides, Maccabean and Herbert Samuel. They were located in the West End, East Boston, South End, Roxbury and Dorchester. Their total budget was $2,000.

After my appearance at the Federated Directors' meeting, I had to return to New York to start the new year at Columbia. Mr. Waldman escorted me to South Station. We came early and went in for a cup of coffee at the corner of Federal Street and Atlantic Avenue. Mr. Waldman spoke frankly. He said that what I achieved in Boston was beyond any value. I realized the value of my achievement; very rarely is a person privileged to come upon such a pregnant opportunity.

Waldman went on. An impassable gulf had existed for many years between the German and the East European Jews. The German Jew looked down upon the Russian and Polish Jews as *schnorrers* (beggars). This superiority complex prevailed throughout the country wherever German and Eastern European Jews met. The Russian Jews balanced the account with contempt for the *am-ha'arzut*

(Jewish illiteracy) of the German Jews and by staying away from any community cooperation with them. No practical bridge had as yet been devised between these groups of estranged brethren. And here I came, entirely on my own initiative and responsibility, creating such a bridge! He said that the decision to subsidize Jewish education which was in the exclusive Eastern European Jewish domain, *would bring about a rapproachment along the entire front of communal activities*, and would open a new chapter in Boston community cooperation. Waldman's assessment was music to my ears, but I said that he had been the architect of the whole plan by inviting me to Boston.

Mr. Waldman then raised his coffee cup and said: "I am drinking to the health of the new Superintendent of the Federated Jewish Charities." I looked in astonishment but he repeated the toast. He explained that he would not remain for long in his present position because he planned to enter business. He attentively followed my ways of doing things, how I handled people and how people of different strata took to me. He was sure that I was ripe for a responsible position and decided to propose me as his successor when the time came for his resignation, which would be soon.

I thanked him fervently but said that I would under no circumstances accept the responsibility of such a great organization as the Boston Federated. As a beginner in social service I should start at the bottom in a small community. If I accepted the position in Boston without previous extensive experience and failed, as I most probably would, I would lose my self confidence. Mr. Waldman disagreed but I insisted that my first position would have to be in a small place.

I told no one about Mr. Waldman's offer lest it appear like boasting and jeopardize my relations with future Executive Directors of the Charities. Only my wife and Dr. Alexander Dushkin (to whom Waldman later made a similar offer) heard from me about this with the urgent request not to divulge it.

A clear sky and a new world beckoned me to Columbia at the beginning of the 1917–1918 school years. I felt that Heaven had privileged me to fashion a suitable *Zei Gezund* to Jewish education.

Associated Boston Hebrew Schools

In August, 1917, an organization meeting was held. Rabbi P. Israeli was Temporary Chairman and Moses I. Parsons, Recording Secretary. In attendance were delegates from the leading congregations.

A Constitution Committee was appointed and it went to work immediately. In September, 1917, I was elected Superintendent for a period of six months.

At the next meeting, November 4, 1917, I was authorized as Superintendent to organize Committees of Ten from among the laymen of the community. It was my aim to activate many *Baalei Batim* outside the money-raising area. Every ten pupils who lived near each other would have a "Big Brother," a layman who would act as intermediary between the school and the home. He was to take interest in the scholastic progress of each person in his group, in his conduct and general attitude to the school. The monthly Report Card should first be given to him, and he would then forward it to the parents. In the course of time he would know each child's character problems and aspirations. He would also know the home and would step in when a child got into trouble in school, praise the child on his general progress and encourage each of his charges to do his best. When the child grew up and needed a job or some other help, he would turn to his "Big Brother."

At that time Boston had 1,500 Talmud Torah pupils. That meant getting 150 Big Brothers. Prior to making the proposal, I interviewed quite a few *Baalei Batim*. Men such as Nathan Pinanski, Harris Poorvu and the old Mr. A. Walper said that they would gladly take on such groups.

I thought such a Big Brother relationship would not only serve in terms of school work, important in itself, but it would also create a body of intelligent men who had standing and prestige in the community as an auxiliary body to the schools. They would begin to see several facets of Jewish education and would cooperate with the various standing committees of each school. The number of Big Brothers would increase as registration increased. Bit by bit, a mighty organization of men would form who would see Jewish education not only from its financial but from its spiritual aspect as well. And one more detail: the Big Brothers would be chosen outside the body of parents of the given school attended by the Big Brothers' charges.

The plan fascinated me. I visualized it as a growing power rooted in intimate knowledge of what went on in education. It was part of my plan to fortify the new organization so that after my six months were over it would be able to carry on with its own inner strength.

All the above was presented to the delegates, as part of the plan I was authorized to carry out. At the same time I tried to visualize

the means whereby the organization could continue on its own. I counted on the following:

1. The very creation of the organization already infused new life into the education field.

2. Cooperation between teachers and *Baalei Batim* already began to yield benefits in terms of better mutual understanding and appreciation.

3. The Charities' subsidies would smooth the way for many things, and with every advance the subsidies made possible, the desire would be whetted for more advances.

The "*Minyan*-Groups" (the committees of ten) would become a growing force and would emphasize public opinion to such an extent that not only would Jewish education have to please the Federated but the Federated would also feel the need to please the influential patrons of Jewish education.

The idea was essentially good, but it never materialized. I was still inexperienced in many phases of community work and presumed that a Principal could handle the *Minyan* leaders of his school. In reality the activity of 150 volunteers was a full-time job for a specially trained person; and that required a budget.

In the long run such an outlay would be productive. But, in our present stage, when even my salary was something new, the addition of more people to the office would be seriously questioned. I was drawn to pressing matters in other areas which were productive educationally, and the "*Minyan* Committees" were never created. Nevertheless, it was not a waste of time. The many people with whom I discussed that plan realized that even with a regular teaching staff, the schools still stood in need of important services. That recognition helped in the plans for future expansion, which were soon to materialize.

Only a few weeks had passed since the schools had united. The subject of subsidies had yet to be discussed and approved by the Charities, yet we already saw how the getting together of like-minded people expanded their horizon and intensified their program and their appreciation of the educational needs of the community as a whole. In the minutes of the Delegates meeting of November 18, 1917, we read that Committees were appointed for the following:

1. The budget, curriculum-composition and pupil achievement.

2. To organize a Lecture Bureau for the expansion of Jewish education.
3. To open a Hebrew Kindergarten.
4. The Curriculum Committee should approach *Ḥevrah Shas* to form Talmud classes for qualified students.
5. Appreciating the value of Jewish music as an integral part of the curriculum, the Curriculum Committee should include Jewish music as a regular subject.
6. To begin immediately with the teaching of songs for the next *Ḥanukkah*.
7. To organize in each affiliated school a children's Congregation for Sabbath services.
8. The Superintendent was authorized to start exploring the possibility of introducing serious Hebrew instruction in the Orphan Asylum on Canterbury Street, Dorchester, which was maintained by the Federated Charities.

At that time there were about 150 children in the Orphan Asylum. The Superintendent, Dr. S.G. Prokesh, was a Jew, but most of the Governors were gentiles because a) no Jewish governors were available and b) the gentile governors were actually more appreciative than the Jews of the value of the children's religious services and religious classes.

The Hebrew schools felt that neglecting the Jewish education of these children was a public indiscretion, and that the Associated Hebrew Schools must take this up without delay!

The Federated Jewish Charities Budget for Jewish Education

The Charities wanted each school to know the subsidy came from them, and, at the same time, they wanted to build up the prestige of the Associated. That was why the checks were made out to each school separately, but all were sent for transmission to the Associated Hebrew Schools. That practice prevailed for about 2–3 years, after which the Associated received a lump sum and distributed subsidies, using its own checks.

With the installation of the "rich uncle's" subsidies came a period of passionate, fruitful work. The following is the substance of the first two years, 1918 and 1919.

1. The number of Hebrew Schools doubled from 12 to 24; Registration increased from 1529 to 3075 (2258 boys, 817 girls); the number of teachers rose from 35 to 55.
2. A Hebrew Kindergarten opened.
3. Curriculum was elaborated and adopted.
4. A *Beth Midrash Lemorim*—a Hebrew Teachers Training School opened (later became the Hebrew Teachers College).
5. Extension activities were introduced.
6. The total budget of the schools rose at a galloping tempo:
   1917—$32,044
   1918—$54,000
   1919—$86,745

That meant that each dollar given by the Charities was matched by more than an additional dollar from outside sources. As its compass expanded, the Associated Hebrew Schools became a center pulsating with life and energy.

7. At first, teachers' salaries were raised 25 percent across the board and by 1920 the total increase was 60 percent.
8. Everywhere new volunteer workers joined the field of Jewish education.
9. At least in one field, a permanent bridge was created between the *Yahudim* and the Eastern European Jews.
10. The influence of Jewish education began to penetrate into the other Federated departments.

The fact that Boston developed a central Jewish education organization became a sensation. Outside communities sent committees to study the ways and means of the new organization. Similar centralized bodies were formed in other cities and their Charities copied the Boston example in aiding Jewish education.

All the above came into being not by a magic wand or with smooth sailing. The entire development was new and unprecedented, with plenty of birth pains. There were also errors in judgment and execution. Above all, there prevailed a strong urge to advance, a conviction that the goal ahead was worthy and that the end of the rainbow could be reached.

Certain aspects of the advances of the Boston schools deserve detailed recording.

The Rise in the Number of Schools, Registration and Budget

The urge to reach more children came to the fore with the assurance that education would be subsidized. Mr. Waldman gave me sage advice, that is, to include in the budget a substantial sum for the expansion of the existing work and for the creation of new schools. Otherwise, we would soon find ourselves in a financial straight jacket. For every bit of expansion we would have had to turn to the philanthropies for an additional appropriation, which may or may not come forth. Therefore, in the Hebrew schools' subsidy of $20,000 a year, I earmarked $5,000 as an Expansion Fund. Financially, the schools were chronically starved, and even $100 was a weighty amount to a school. With broad-mindedness, these impoverished schools approved the establishment of the Expansion Fund instead of demanding larger allotments for themselves.

The Expansion Fund achieved much, especially in creating new schools. The Delegates quickly adapted themselves to thinking in terms of the entire community, and they decided that *in every Boston district there must be a Hebrew school!*

A Hebrew Kindergarten

A kindergarten was discussed in the fall of 1917. It was a pet idea with the Hebrew teachers who believed that it would lay a natural foundation for a Hebrew school program. But there was a handicap. At that time there was only one experienced Kindergarten teacher available in America, Mrs. Waldstein, wife of Dr. A. S. Waldstein, one of the pillars of the *Mefitzei Sfat Ever* Society of New York. She came from a prominent Boston family and that, I thought, might induce her to accept a position with us. I was authorized to engage her, but she had already accepted a position in Philadelphia. By chance I found a couple named Ganapolsky and both were Hebrew teachers. Mrs. Ganapolsky said that she had kindergarten teaching experience in *Eretz Yisrael*. We engaged her, and by the end of April, 1918, a kindergarten was opened in the Tel Aviv school in Roxbury with two hour sessions in the morning and a second kindergarten was opened in the South End in the afternoon with 20 children.

The 1918 and 1919 enrollment growth was not only through the opening of new schools. The existing 12 schools also experienced a vital increase in their pupil population (See Table I).

The net gain was 493 pupils or 32.2 percent of the 1,529 found in 1917. Table II shows that the total enrollment in all 24 schools in

1919 was 3,110 as compared with 1,529 in 1917, a net increase of 1,581, more than 100 percent. That was a solid gain and it constituted the basic school attendance with little variation even during the thirties, which were crisis years.

I don't know of any other substantial community in the United States at that time (or any other subsequent period) where such increases took place in two years in the number of schools, registration, teachers or teachers' salaries as they did in Boston in 1918 and 1919. In the opinion of the writer, the results were due to the union of all schools, the institution of school subsidies and to the operation of all schools in the city as an integrated body.

Table I. Registration Increases by 1919 in the 12 Hebrew Schools of 1917

School	1917	1919	Increase	Decrease
Adath Jeshurun	175	204	29 (16.6%)	
East Boston	80	198	118 (147.5%)	
Evrio	385	379	—	6 (1.6%)
Hashahar	42	113	71 (169%)	
Hatehiah	130	174	44 (33.8%)	
Moriah	130	165	35 (26.9%)	
Novay Zedek (changed to Ahavath Zion)	37	50	13 (26%)	
Roxbury Hebrew Free School	150	180	30 (20%)	
South Boston	35	54	19 (53.3%)	
Tel Aviv	85	208	123 (144.7%)	
West End	200	182		18 (9%)
Totals	1529	2022	517 (33.8%)	24 (1.6%)
Deduct decrease			(24)(1.6%)	
Net Increase			493 (32.2%)	

Table II. Hebrew Schools Growth during 1918 and 1919 Compared with their Pre-Unity Condition in 1917

	1917	1918	1919
Number of Boston Hebrew Schools	12	21	24
Registration	1,529	2,412	3,110
Total Budget	$32,044.59	$54,000.00	$86,745.07
Tuition Fee Income	$15,923.97		$32,009.62
Number of Teachers	35		55
Regular Teachers	24		25
Assistant Teachers	11		30
Total Teachers Salaries	$19,723.46		$49,491.24
Federated Charities Subvention	N/A	$16,417.19	$19,164.20
Income from other sources	$13,946.29		$35,571.20

Note: Table VI is based on 1917 Survey by Louis Hurwich and on the 1919 Survey by Louis Hurwich and Ben Rosen, Associate Superintendent of the Associated Boston Hebrew Schools.

One fact should be noted: in 1919 the salaries of Hebrew school teachers were higher than those of the Public School teachers! That laid the groundwork for the change in the status of Hebrew teaching from *Melamdut* to a profession, and the organization of the Hebrew Teachers College benefited from this.[10]

Beth Midrash LeMorim—Hebrew Teachers Training School

From my first visit in the Hebrew schools in June, 1917, I realized one basic weakness—that is, the large proportion of assistant teachers. Under no condition could they be classed as teachers. They came from the two graduating classes of Evrio and Adath Jeshurun. They may have ranked high as students but not as teachers. It was the same as taking public school graduates and setting them up as teachers in the public schools. All of them were young—15–17 years of age—and were still high school students.

That was in the midst of World War I. Immigration from Europe had stopped three years earlier. Many Hebrew teachers transferred to other better-paying occupations. Vacancies had to be filled with "assistant teachers." No one could tell when the War would end and

when renewed immigration from Europe would again bring qualified, experienced Hebrew teachers. Under the given conditions, the number of assistant teachers would inevitably increase. In the 12 Hebrew schools there were 35 teachers of whom 11 (31 percent) were assistant teachers. In three of the one-teacher schools only adults served. Two other schools ranked as hopeless *ḥadarim* and nothing could be done with them without basic changes in their administration. The 11 assistant teachers were in the seven larger schools where *Ivrit B'Ivrit*, or the compound method of instruction, was employed. It became clear that a way had to be found to increase the knowledge of the assistant teachers. Only after-school subsidies were possible, and when the Expansion Fund was available we could plan to meet that need. The Principals and the experienced teachers agreed that something ought to be done. At the delegates meeting of March 3, 1918, I explained the weakness in quality teaching due to the employment of assistant teachers. I then proposed the creation of the Boston Hebrew Teachers Training School. The courses should be open to the present Assistant Teachers and to the future graduates of the Hebrew School. That would assure the schools a reserve of better equipped assistant teachers.

There would be two sessions a week, on Sunday and Friday afternoons in the long days and on Sunday and Saturday evening in the short winter days. The course of study would include *Ḥumash* and Rashi, the Later Prophets, Jewish History, Hebrew and Modern Hebrew Literature. As much as possible these courses should be given by local men. For courses in education we should invite one or more of the greater Boston college professors. Mr. Waldman agreed that the Training School should be financed from the Expansion Fund. I discussed this proposal with several delegates before the meetings. When I presented the plan, it was unanimously voted that there was an urgent need to open a teachers training school. A committee was appointed to prepare a detailed plan.

At the next meeting, March 24, I reported that I met with the young teachers, and they agreed to enlist in a 2-year course of study which would include *Ḥumash* and Rashi, the Later Prophets, Hebrew, Grammar, Jewish History, Hebrew Literature, customs and ceremonies. The delegates were happy and decided to open the Training School immediately.

The appointed staff included Benjamin Hirsh, Principal of Evrio; Solomon Zucrow, a thorough Talmudist and an experienced teacher

who arrived recently from England; Shachno Stein, Principal of Moriah; N. M. Tumaroff, Principal of Adath Jeshurun; Ezekiel Leavitt, who was not engaged in teaching at that time but was known as an expert in Hebrew grammar and for his knowledge of Hebrew. I also reported that Dr. Harry A. Wolfson, already a renowned scholar at Harvard University, promised to deliver a series of lectures during the coming summer. President Lowenberg promised that the premises of the Hatehiah Hebrew School in Roxbury would provide free housing and service for the Teachers Training School.

On April 21, 1918, the first session was held with 21 students. On May 19 the registration increased to 28 and a year later to 48 boys and girls. From the beginning the registration by far outnumbered the number of assistant teachers. That meant that thenceforth we could appoint assistant teachers whose knowledge exceeded the level of the present assistants. There were three classes. All instruction was in Hebrew. Each teacher had one day a week, except Mr. Leavitt who had two days a week. In June, 1918, it was decided to have 3 hour sessions totaling 6 hours a week, which required about as many hours of homework. The number of classroom hours corresponded to the schedule of the Teachers Institute of New York, which was opened in 1909. Graduation from a six-year *Ivrit B'Ivrit* Hebrew School was one of the admission requirements, especially since all subjects were taught in Hebrew.

At the beginning of 1919 a third session a week was added for courses in Education given by Ben Rosen, and the total classroom hours per week rose to 10½. The courses in education were given in English. I acted as Principal and the staff was accountable to me. I managed to be present at all sessions and to maintain personal contact with each student.

The Teachers Training School served as a foundation for the Hebrew Teachers College, which grew out of it 3½ years later, and to which Dr. Nisson Touroff was invited to become its first Dean.

The Curriculum of the Hebrew Schools

During the decade since the *Ivrit B'Ivrit* method was introduced in Boston there were only two graduations, one in Evrio in 1915 with 20 graduates and one in Adath Jeshurun. In the summer of 1917 Evrio had a second graduation, which was the third in Boston. Every school was an island universe unto itself. There was no felt need for a general uniform curriculum.

As to my own experience, a graded school program was certainly desirable. During my five years (1911–16) with the Indianapolis, Indiana, United Hebrew Schools we had a detailed course of studies whereby a well-prepared class of 18 graduated at the end of five years. They came from the two branches of the Talmud Torah which operated with parallel classes. The other classes of the two branches were so graded as to produce equally proficient graduating classes each year.

As soon as the Associated Boston Hebrew Schools was organized, I proposed that a uniform curriculum be prepared for all member schools. A committee of teachers and laymen was appointed, and on December 23, 1917, Mr. Kaddish Waldman, Principal of Hatehiah Hebrew School, reported for the committee proposing a six-year course of study for all schools, and another course of three years for older beginners who most probably would not attend for all six years. Through our lack of previous experience, we included elements and standards which were an honest wish but an unlikely reality. However, the fact that we began to deal in terms of uniformity and standardization for all schools had much to do with the final image of the United Hebrew Schools. All the schools together constituted an organic body and this gave us the added strength to push ahead.

Extension Activities

Extension activities with the Hebrew school children were not new to Boston, but they had largely been in connection with fund raising. Programs often included the participation of pupils, and parents and friends came to see their children on the stage, providing increased income for the affair. There were also holiday celebrations for *Ḥanukkah, Purim,* etc. The Associated Schools assisted in widening these undertakings by special financial appropriations. A music teacher was engaged who circulated among the schools and taught the children holiday songs. During the winter of 1917 grants were made for children's gifts on *Ḥanukkah,* the 15th of *Shevat* and *Purim.*

Mr. Lowenberg created new interest. He told the Delegates how 150 Jewish children participated in one school in a Christmas celebration. At that time missionaries were very active in Boston. Many said there were even cases of secret children's conversion to Christianity. That increased the urge to plan for pleasant contact with children even outside the school sessions. At one meeting Mr.

Nathan Pinanski announced that the theatrical corporation with which he was connected would allow free use of its large Shawmut Theater auditorium in Roxbury for some Sunday morning celebration. Over 1,000 children could be accommodated. The offer was accepted with thanks. A *Lag B'Omer* celebration was held with 1,500 children from various Boston schools in attendance.

On August 21, 1919, we arranged for an open-air gathering of 3,000 school children in the very spacious Franklin Field in Dorchester. Pupils from all the Roxbury schools, the *Hashaḥar* of Dorchester, as well as pupils of the Sunday school, participated. A regular Extension Education program was installed at the beginning of the 1918–1919 school year. Chance aided us. Mr. Ben Rosen of New York, who worked in the New York Bureau of Jewish Education under Dr. Samson Benderly, and acquired much experience in conducting extension education activities on a large scale, came to Boston. He was inducted into military service and had the choice of serving in Boston or in the South. I urged him to choose Boston. It turned out that his army tasks allowed him several free hours each day. I invited him to give us as much time as he could spare and he took charge of the Extension Education Department. He organized children's clubs, Parents' Associations, lectures on Jewish history which were illustrated by stereopticon slides, and large children's group celebrations of Jewish holidays. He also arranged to send Hebrew teachers to out-of-town summer places where Boston Jewish families spent their vacation. The teachers organized study groups with the Boston children, who thereby enriched their stock of Jewish information. He remained in Boston after he was discharged from the military. He was then engaged on a full-time basis as Associate Superintendent, and began to visit the classes of the assistant teachers on a regular basis. These visits brought about his pedagogic lecturing at the Hebrew Teachers Training School in 1919, as was mentioned above.

THE HEBREW SCHOOLS' EXPLOSIVE GROWTH

Almost overnight the provincial Hebrew school workers turned into expansionists. In place of each viewing the turn of events through the narrow aperture of his own school they jointly began to see the work in Boston as an integrated totality, which included the entire community. Instead of seeing new Hebrew schools as competitors for slim local support, they regarded them as desirable and deserving of help and encouragement. Even their awakening spread beyond the framework of the Associated Hebrew Schools and, as already noted, new schools were opened through the initiative of outside agencies. These were:

- *Mishkan Tefila Hebrew School* was organized by the Conservative Temple Mishkan Tefila in November, 1918. In 1919 it had 142 pupils, and the Temple maintained it.
- *Mishkan Yisrael,* 137 Dakota Street, Dorchester, came into being through the initiative of the small local synagogue of the same name in June, 1918. The Associated Schools allotted it $200 a year. In 1919 its registration was 76.
- *Charlestown Hebrew School.* Local initiative created it. In 1918 it was allotted $200 a year. Its 1919 registration was 35.
- *Hatikvah*, Dorchester. Local initiative, headed by S. G. Pollack, brought it into being. In 1918 it was allotted $200 a year. In 1919 its registration was 47.
- *Yavneh*, 99 Crawford Street, Roxbury. Organized in response to the demand of the Beth HaMidrash Hagadol as a branch of Hatehiah. In 1920 it was allotted $800 a year. The registration in 1920 was 122.
- *Shaare Tefila,* 15 Otisfield Street, Roxbury. Named after the congregation which founded it, it was not subsidized by the Associated Schools. It developed tremendous initiative under

the leadership of Mr. Shalom Cabelinsky and it soon had hundreds of pupils. *It also erected the first modern Hebrew school building in Boston.* It had 20 classrooms.

Together with the growth noted here was also a considerable increase in the number of volunteer workers in each school. At first men were the only workers. Soon, however, Ladies Auxiliaries were formed in each school. The considerable growth of new cells of volunteer workers all over the city meant a solid growth in strength for the total Jewish educational field.

What was particularly notable was that all the new schools were solid additions. All struck deep roots as permanent institutions. And at the advent of the long bitter years of the economic crisis in the thirties, each school had a phalanx of devotees who strove with might and main to keep it above water.

Not a single Boston Hebrew school closed during the extended crisis. These centers of education became permanent points radiating Jewish influence throughout Boston.

Association Breeds Consent

During this period an iron wall stood between the *Yahudim* who came from Germany and the Eastern European Jews. Religiously, the *Yahudim* were Reform while most of the Eastern Jews were Orthodox. Only one, not particularly large, synagogue was Conservative. In the Federated Charities the saying persisted that the *Yahudim* "gave" and the Eastern Jews "took." The typical charitable institutions of the Eastern Jew such as "Visiting the Sick," "Home for the Aged," *Moeth Ḥittim* (for Passover), "Home for Transients," contributions to out of town *Meshulaḥim* (Fund Raisers), Talmud Torahs, *Yeshivoth* in Europe and in *Eretz Yisrael,* and Zionist work were the exclusive concern of the Eastern Jews. The *Yahudim* spoke English and strove mightily toward conformity and Americanization. The Eastern Jews spoke mostly Yiddish and continued to keep alive the forms and habits of the Old World. The *Yahudim* were the rich, the philanthropists, who represented the Jewish community to the outside world. The Eastern Jews produced liberals and Socialists who urged fundamental social changes, while the *Yahudim* were mostly on the side of the capitalists who viewed the radicals as asocial and as destroyers.

In the area of Jewish education, the Sunday school was the accepted vehicle among the *Yahudim*. Among the Eastern Europeans

the Talmud Torah was the most acceptable agency. There were no points of contact between these types of schools. The haughty sense of superiority of the *Yahudim* towards the Eastern Europeans and the sense of contempt for the Jewishly illiterate, rich *Yahudim* on the part of the Russian Jews maintained two spheres which were adjacent geographically and worlds apart spiritually. But the weal of the community required contact between these two great bodies, and in the course of time life would have created possibilities for contact and better understanding. It was along those lines that Mr. Waldman tried to recruit me when he escorted me to South Station on my return to New York:

"No one can evaluate your service to the Boston community . . . there was no bridge between these two estranged brethren, and now you came and, entirely on your own initiative, created such a bridge!" He then added that the creation of the Associated Schools and the decision to subsidize Jewish education as a community responsibility *would bring about a better mutual understanding all along the line.*

And now that was happening! The decision to subsidize Jewish education evoked interest among the German Jews. The Charities appointed a Committee to handle the subsidies. Chairman of that committee was Judge Abraham A. Cohen, born and bred in Boston, but was justly honored and respected by Jews and Gentiles. The Committees began to inquire into the substance and character of Jewish education. They saw intrinsic value in it and reported on their findings. Word spread and the attitude to the "Russians" began to change for the better. This change of attitude made way for more Jewish influence upon the other departments of the Federated as will be detailed below.

Among the Eastern European Jews the *Yahudim* began to be more appreciated. They began to see that those estranged brethren were not so estranged, that cooperation with them was not impossible, and that, in their way, they, too, meant to preserve our basic Jewish values.

There were also other factors which made for fundamental changes in the life of the community. For example, many of the Eastern Jews began to attain wealth, while many of the German Jews lost theirs, and they who held the purse strings began to set the tune. But that occurred some years later. The first step was made by the Charities' decision to subsidize Jewish education. It brought about better understanding between brethren who were so near yet so far apart.

Boston Becomes A Model For Other Communities

Boston's achievement was echoed in many areas. In March, 1919, I was invited to make a survey of the Jewish educational institutions of Chicago, Illinois. The Chicago Federation had been giving subventions to a few Hebrew schools since 1913. It was done in the nature of extending help to some struggling institutions. Now the Charities wanted to get a picture of the entire educational field. I accepted the invitation and recommended a plan modeled on that of Boston. That survey included all the Hebrew and Sunday schools of the city. In 1922, I was invited again to Chicago to make a resurvey of those schools which had been subsidized by the Charities. I again recommended a community organization to deal with all its educational institutions. Now I added that Chicago should also have a Hebrew Teachers Training School. By that time I already had the experience of what Boston gained from the Hebrew Teachers College which was opened in November, 1921, with Dr. Nisson Touroff as Dean. A Board of Education was subsequently formed. Dr. Alexander M. Dushkin was appointed as its Director.

In Baltimore they examined what was done in Boston, aiming to create a similar organization. So did several other communities.[11]

In 1921 Mr. Jacob Billikoff of the Philadelphia Charities came to see what we had accomplished in Boston. He then invited Ben Rosen who had been with the Boston Bureau of Jewish Education since 1918, to head a Bureau of Jewish Education in Philadelphia. Thus Boston's example was followed by other communities where responsibility for Jewish education was regarded as a community responsibility and a central educational organization was formed.

There were variations in type, form, scope, extent as well as in the names of the central organization. Most important, in each case *community responsibility for Jewish education became a fact,* and since the Charity organization was the biggest and most embracing entity in each community, the duty of supporting Jewish education was included in its program.

There is no doubt that in the course of development of Jewish life in America Jewish schools would sooner or later have united in their common effort. Also, the largest organization in each community, the Federated Charities, would undoubtedly have entered the education area. What was done in Boston served as a challenge which speeded up an inevitable development.

The 1919 Survey of the Boston Hebrew Schools

On November 17, 1918, I was reelected as Superintendent of the Associated Boston Hebrew Schools. On the two previous occasions I consented to serve only for six months each time. Now I accepted the election for one year. During that year I was to complete my Social Service course at Columbia. I still had no intention of remaining in Jewish education.

The growth of the Talmud Torahs since my 1917 survey required a second survey. Mr. Rosen and I prepared a plan and divided the work between us. A searching survey was completed in July, 1919. One copy of that survey was preserved in the archives of the Bureau of Jewish Education. It shed much light on the condition of the Hebrew schools in 1919 and on the extent of progress made since the Associated Boston Hebrew Schools was created two years before that.

The basic facts are of historical value and they challenge attention. They were mentioned in part in a previous chapter. Certain aspects of that survey deserve close examination.

This second survey showed the great progress made during the intervening period. It called attention to the many possibilities which could be exploited. World War I ended about half-a-year before. Peace was restored. Economic conditions maintained an upward trend. Inflation began. People were now more ready to spend and give. All over the land there was an urge to expand. The shortages in materials, workers and volunteers were behind us. The Balfour Declaration in 1917 began to bear fruit; that is, there was greater public interest, more sympathy for Jewish Nationalism and improved group relations through cooperative efforts. All of these were positive factors. In Jewish education, too, there was an awakening and greater possibilities lay in the offing. This survey viewed what had been done and offered a rough blueprint of the road ahead.

Hebrew Teachers Training

At the beginning of 1919 we added a course in Education to the curriculum of the *Beth Midrash LeMorim*. It was given particularly to those engaged as assistant teachers. It included demonstration lessons.

Originally, the survey also proposed that in different sections of Boston, Hebrew High School classes should be established. Gradu-

ates of those programs would then enter the *Beth Midrash LeMorim.* The fact was that graduates of the Hebrew Schools were not quite ready for admission to the Training School. However, even though the proposal was sound, due to local conditions it had to wait four more years to open until other factors improved.

One of those factors was the availability of teachers. Despite the increase in the number of schools and total registration, *the number of full-fledged teachers did not increase.* In 1917, there were 24 and in 1919 only 25 such teachers. During those two years one teacher died, one entered the Theological Seminary in New York and several moved to other communities. New men, and as it happened good men, replaced them, but the total remained unchanged. The increase was all on the level of the assistant teachers; there were 11 in 1917 and 30 in 1919. Those who needed additional years of serious study before they could aptly be called teachers now taught most of the children. The one basic reason for our inability to recruit more qualified teachers was that immigration from Europe had been suspended since the outbreak of the War in the summer of 1914. Assistant teachers were the only ones available for the great increase in registration. 1,066 students (46 percent) were taught by qualified teachers, and 1,248 (54 percent) were taught by assistant teachers. A fundamental correction was imperative!

Pupil attrition: The survey uncovered a very disturbing fact: a terrific rate of pupil attrition. Despite rosy hopes pinned on a comprehensive curriculum and effective teaching, *the great majority of pupils stayed in Hebrew school only a very short time.* What they managed to absorb in school evaporated from their memory in short order, and all of the teachers' efforts seemed so much time wasted. This remained a burning problem for many years all over the country. It is with us in the afternoon Hebrew schools even at the present writing (1966).

As already noted, many new schools opened in 1918 and practically all their pupils were beginners. In all, 1,200 new pupils were registered in all the Boston schools in 1918. At the end of the 1917 school year 1,212 were left out of the 1,529 who registered at the beginning of that school year.

Table I. Enrollment by Grade, 1918

Grade	Semester	No. of Classes	No. of Pupils		% of Total Registration	
I	1	37	929		39%	
	2	32	825	1,754	34%	73%
II	1	5	119		5%	
	2	7	138	257	6%	11%
III	1	11	271		11%	
	2	3	39	310	1.5%	12.5%
IV	1	1	30		1.0%	
	2	—	—	30	—	1.0%
V	1	1	35		1.5%	
	2	—	—	35	—	1.5%
VI	1	2	26		1.0%	
	2	—	—	26	—	1.0%
Totals		99	2,412			100%

Table I indicates how difficult it was to conserve real pupil achievement by advancing it from grade to grade till the sixth and graduating class is completed. The fault lay not necessarily with the school. Many internal and external factors joined in producing a most discouraging pupil elimination. In New York the situation was much worse. According to Reb Israel Konovitz, there were schools where the annual pupil drop-out was equal to, or even higher than the total registration at the beginning of the year.[12]

Most of the Talmud Torahs seen in 1917 had been in existence since 1910 or 1911. But only 3 graduating classes were produced. The last one was in 1917 with a total of 45 graduates. Many hundreds were admitted but only a handful completed the 6-year course.

By grades, the 1918 registration was distributed as follows: 73 percent were in grade 1. The very large percentage in grade 1 was due to the happy fact that in 1918 many new schools were opened, and the total new registration was 1,200. The correlation with the higher grades should therefore be based on the number that remained from

the 1917 registration (originally, 1,529, registered at the beginning of 1917). The total 1918 registration was 2,412. Deduct the new 1,200 who came with the 1918 registration and the carry over from 1917 was 1,212. These were distributed, by grades, as follows:

Grades	Registered	% of the 1212
I	554	45.7%
II	257	21.2%
III	310	25.6%
IV	30	2.5%
V	35	2.9%
VI	26	2.1%
Total	1,212	100%

The story told by these figures is that after grade three only a tiny fraction, 2.5 percent, remained to continue their study. It was from that remnant that Hebrew High School and Hebrew Teachers Training classes had to be built! Could a community of 80,000 depend on a few of the hundreds who came and left, and hope that from among them would develop teachers, rabbis, leaders and learned laymen, by whom the Jewishness of the growing population would be guaranteed? Here we pin-pointed the very heart of the problem of Jewish education in America. Through the coming years it had been taken up by many thinkers who wondered how the historical logistics of American Jewry would work out. It was quite clear that many factors contributed to the situation which imposed sterility upon the Hebrew school. The very heart of the problem was what to do with the actual and potential elements that are under our control to assure our tomorrow?

As to the assistant teachers, they had to be encouraged and motivated to acquire more Hebraic and pedagogic knowledge to succeed with their young charges. Here Ben Rosen rendered pioneer service. At the beginning of 1919 he was discharged from his military service and he could devote all his time to education. He was appointed Instructor of Education in the Hebrew Teachers Training School and Supervisor of the assistant teachers. Of the 48 students then in the Training School, he selected the 30 who were serving as assistant teachers. Among them were 13 who attended College. He formed them into one group, and the other 17 were a second group. During the school year the following was done:

- 30 lectures were delivered on Principles of Education, with emphasis on Hebrew education.
- A series of model lessons on various subjects in the curriculum was given. The students were organized into a pedagogic club where the professional aspects of Hebrew teaching were discussed.
- A music teacher taught them how to teach singing in their classrooms.
- Mr. Rosen and I constantly visited the assistant teachers during their teaching hours. Each visit was followed by a personal conference at which the lesson was analyzed and suggestions for improvement were made.
- An independent student committee was formed to deal with Training School matters.
- Pedagogic instruction, the model lessons, the visits to individual classrooms and the many personal conferences were the means whereby we hoped to improve the young teachers' capacity and their interest in their total task.

The Survey's Proposals

In addition to the actual steps we took, the survey suggested the following ideas should be put into practice relative to the teachers and principals in the schools:

- Award sufficiently high scholarships so that assistant teachers may devote all their time outside their college requirements to their preparation for Hebrew teaching. The recipients of the scholarships should give some of their time to matters pertaining to their own schools.
- Employ teaching supervisors who shall regularly visit classes in session and work with young teachers.
- Hold conferences between the Superintendent of the Associated schools and the school Principals to discuss school programs and means for continued improvements.
- Schools should have regular teaching staff meetings with their principals.
- Conduct visits of teachers during teaching time for observance, comparison and discussion of the most efficient ways of teaching.
- Invite all Boston teachers to view monthly model lessons.

- Establish a Pedagogic Club of the assistant teachers.
- Pay teachers for extension work which would meet the institution's needs not otherwise met.

Note: That was quite an ambitious list of requirements. But we believed that with each forward step greater public appreciation would be engendered for the educators and that, in turn, would create additional means for still greater progress.

There were other primary recommendations in the survey to improve the schools and their operations:

1. To institute a School Building Drive for the erection of nine buildings that would serve the entire family. (With classrooms for minors and adults, meeting rooms and an auditorium that would also serve as a synagogue.)
2. To organize tuition fee payments under one community agency with paid collectors.
3. That the community expansion fund of $5,000 be continuously replenished.
4. To organize special classes: additional kindergartens, preparatory classes, and Hebrew High School classes prior to admission to the *Beth Midrash LeMorim.*
5. To create a Scholarship Fund for the *Beth Midrash LeMorim* students.
6. To plan a varied program for the children not currently enrolled in school.

Secondary Proposals:

1. To repair the existing school buildings and improve janitorial service.
2. To raise the scale of subvention to schools.
3. To include the 3 schools which were outside our orbit.
4. To cooperate with out-of-town schools, aiming to organize Jewish education on a State basis.
5. To enrich the present school curriculum in methods of instruction and by supplying schools with pedagogic material.
6. To supply textbooks to those schools which were in need of them.

7. To increase our supervising staff and to organize a Principals' Association.
8. To enable our *Beth Midrash LeMorim* to send teachers to out-of-town schools.
9. To enable present teachers to follow an In-Service education program.
10. To reorganize the Board of Delegates.
11. To help schools in enlisting more volunteers.
12. To open a Teachers Employment Bureau.
13. To maintain a continuous survey of our evolving work.

A Thorny Road

Thus far the story revolved about success and progress. But there were also shadows, and my own path had nearly always been strewn with stones and road-blocks. To a certain extent that was my own fault.

As I mentioned already, I was a novice in the formation and activation of such an organization. I had no one to turn to for advice or guidance. I was the first in America to organize a large community to assume responsibility for Jewish education. My expressed aim, which I made clear to teachers and laymen, was to create through the years something like the spirit of the *Yeshivah* of Volozhin.

Despair was the starting point of so many Jewish educators, but I approached the situation with faith and hope. The social field at the time had accumulated much know-how in community work. Mr. Waldman would have gladly cooperated with me, but social workers functioned in a different milieu, with different people and with different methods.

Many of the difficulties stemmed from the very conditions that generated them. For several years the Hebrew teachers regarded me as *the greatest enemy of Jewish education.* They believed I aimed to replace them with American-born youngsters whose only advantage was that they spoke English without a foreign accent. When I first came to Boston in 1917, the teachers and laymen looked upon me with unconcealed suspicion. What had the Federated Jewish Charities to do with Jewish education? It never lifted a finger to assist it, and many Federation exponents had often said that Jewish education as it obtained then had no place in America, and that something ought to de done to export it back to Russia and Poland, its natural habitats.

The suspicion increased when I said that the Federated was willing to contribute substantially. This, supposedly, revealed its aim to set foot in Jewish education, gain controlling power and then abolish the Hebrew schools. That suspicion softened somewhat when Nathan Pinanski, who was spokesman for the Russian Jews, and whose synagogue maintained a fine Hebrew school, confirmed my statements and said that the Charities was sincerely interested in helping Jewish education and would not interfere in any way with the schools' autonomy. The suspicion surfaced again when half of the 1917–18 winter passed and not a cent came from the Charities, despite the hopes for an expanded budget, already approved by the Federated Charities.

A pivotal change for the better came on February 6, 1918, when checks for January and February were received and with them an assurance that checks would be forthcoming monthly in the same proportions. That verified my plans and promises. All teachers got a 25 percent raise in their salaries, which was accepted as a gift from heaven, since the schools could not possibly do that by their own efforts. Now many were sure that I possessed some mysterious power to "extract money from the rock." Such a person was highly useful in education where poverty and deficits were indelible traits. But shortly thereafter my reputed magic power was put to test.

The cost of living began to rise in 1918 and continued to accelerate in 1919. The 25 percent raise in the teachers' salaries was swallowed by these rises in the cost of living. The teachers asked the schools for a new raise and the schools turned to me. I turned to the Federated and was told that it, too, was wrestling with the increased cost of living. Expenses increased, but income did not, and we should consider ourselves fortunate if before the end of the fiscal year there wouldn't be a cut in our appropriations. I transmitted the answer to the schools which gave it to the teachers. The latter came to me. I explained that under given conditions we could not get more. The teachers did not believe me. Mr. Hurwich had the magic power to get thousands and even tens of thousands when he wanted to do so. *Now he does not get an increase because he does not care to do it!* Realities outside their own orbit, as well as the Federated, were so foreign to the experience of the teachers that try as I might to explain the situation it was all in a language which they failed to grasp. Their conviction was unshaken; that is, I definitely could get additional sums for the schools but was not interested in doing it. I

must admit that the teachers' needs did not affect me. My salary was greater than theirs and, selfishly, I did not realize the suffering of *Talmidei Ḥakhamim*. Now they saw me as an exploiter who willfully kept bread from their and their children's mouths.

Additional evidence that I plotted against the teachers was furnished by my helping out-of-town teachers to settle in Boston. One told me plainly: "Till you came there were three of us who sort of managed teachers' affairs here. That meant that *each of us had one third of the control*, but with each man that you bring in from the outside *each of us three loses part of his control, and we don't like it!*" The mathematics was quite correct, but the conclusion didn't appeal to me at all. I replied that each of those whom I brought was an additional blessing to education in Boston where there obtained a crying need for men of their caliber. The proportion of assistant teachers kept on increasing, and for the benefit of education they should be balanced with new full-fledged teachers. That was imperative! On their side, the teachers interpreted it as an attempt on my part to undermine the old-timers.

Those whom I brought from the outside were Mr. Solomon Zucrow, a top Talmudist and a gifted teacher, Isaac Shapiro, Abraham Gold, Leon Bardin, and Samuel Pitlick. They were men of source-knowledge who had rich teaching experience. The untimely death of Dr. Goldberg, the decision of several experienced teachers to leave and the opening of a host of new schools, all combined into one urgent demand for more experienced teachers from the outside. Yet, try as I did, the newcomers only filled the vacancies. All the newcomers were scholars, who also had a general education, long, successful teaching experience and were well-known in the teaching world. I always maintained that there were never too many such men in our community.

Another element which added to the suspicion about my ultimate aim lay in the intensive care that I gave to the "*Beth Midrash LeMorim*" especially since Mr. Rosen was added to the faculty as instructor in Education. He had already passed his oral examination for the Doctorate in Harvard, and knew well the problems of Hebrew schools in America. At that time, a person like him outside of New York was a real find, and I took advantage of his presence in Boston to bring him in contact with our teacher trainees, with a third session a week instituted in the *Beth Midrash LeMorim*. The 30 assistant teachers were included in the expanded program. Rosen

gave them a weekly lecture, visited their classes regularly, then met them individually and in groups. Did all this prove that I meant to replace the older, European teachers?

The suspicion reached a peak when I stated on occasions that the present Teachers Training School was only a first step and that I planned to reorganize it into a real Training Institute with a four-year course and daily sessions. Even the blind could see what I aimed at! I was told that at the *Agudath HaMorim* and even outside its meetings, I was frequently criticized. This state of mind continued.

Before presenting a detailed plan to the associated schools about a reorganized Training School, I had to have in mind a person of sufficient stature, particularly in the pedagogic area, to head it. That was why I turned to Mr. H. A. Friedland, Principal of the *Beth HaSefer HaLeumi LeBanoth* of New York, which was in financial straits. I asked Mr. Friedland whether he would be willing to head such an institution in Boston after its being reorganized within the above framework. He said that he wanted first to visit Boston privately. Returning, he told me that he found a very difficult situation. The teachers bitterly opposed my plan. He did not tell me why, but he said that he decided to remain in New York. He then advised me to turn to Dr. Nisson Touroff, who had come to America the preceding year from Palestine. Even after Dr. Touroff was engaged as Dean of the new Training School, and after he came to Boston to open it in September, 1921, *not a single Boston teacher came to greet him for three months.* His appearance offered the most convincing proof to the teachers that I had decided to get rid of the foreign-born teachers, and replace them with youngsters. Dr. Touroff had openly joined the plot; why then should any teacher want to welcome him! There was an even more serious source of difficulty: teacher placement.

Salaries were so low that teachers had a hard time making ends meet. Even a difference of one dollar a week was very important, and there was no general salary scale. That would be years in coming. Each school paid what it could afford, and those in the richer sections offered higher pay. At the end of every year most of the teachers were ready to change for a better paying position. Thus there were many potential positions as well as many candidates. Until I came that was a matter of "pulling strings" and securing the favor of same influential members of the School Board. To some extent the *Agudath HaMorim* delved into the problem of teacher placement. There were teachers who disregarded the *Agudah* and preferred to do their own hunting.

After I arrived, schools began to turn to me for new teachers. In nearly all cases I suggested only one candidate, the one whom I considered best suited for that school. But if that were one of the "better" positions individual teachers came to me complaining, "Why didn't you propose me?!" Sometimes, I explained to the applying Committee why I suggested a particular candidate. I always emphasized that what I said must remain *entre nous*, but within an hour my words were repeated by the members of the Committee with their own additions and deletions.

There were also some who were candidates for more than one vacancy, hoping to select the best. When I suggested someone else for the position the other protested that he had been negotiating for that position, and then I came in and snatched bread from him and his family.

Sometimes a committee reported that "so and so" was suggested for their school. What was my opinion? That was difficult. It was easier when I was asked to suggest a candidate, but if the one mentioned by the committee did not "fit" the particular position, I was betwixt and between. Morally, it was my duty to speak up and warn them, but if I did, the candidate would accuse me not only of undermining him but also of ruining him forever by killing his reputation and making him unemployable.

One must remember that all of this concerned people's bread and butter, which at best was scanty and precarious.

I could have relieved myself from all those traps by shunting to some committee the task of teacher placement, but I did not choose that easy road. I regarded teacher placement to be of key importance. Just as water does not rise above its source so does no school rise above the competence of its teachers. One unsuitable teacher may ruin a whole class or even spread injury to the spirit of entire school. As I saw it, teacher placement was a holy task which I dared not bypass, and if it involved headaches they had to be taken in step, else I had no right to head the Associated schools. It took years before a way was found to cooperate with the *Agudath HaMorim* in teacher placement. But, until the way had been cleared for true cooperation, the road was very thorny, and every teacher candidate for a position which was given to someone else had thereby additional proof that I was devoid of any conception of justice and fair play.

As to the "Thorns" which head this chapter, they never discouraged me. After several more years a new spirit pervaded Boston

teachers. Points of contact began to appear. Friendship and mutual trust came to the fore, and, for decades thereafter, the *Agudath HaMorim* as a body and most of the teachers as individuals became true friends and coworkers. Very much of the success achieved in Boston was because of the sympathy and cooperation of the Boston teachers as a body and as individuals.

THE AGUDATH HAMORIM

The Hebrew Teachers Association of Boston and Vicinity

The Hebrew Teachers Association of Boston and Vicinity was among the first of its kind in America. Among its organizers in 1912 were Alexander Goldberg, Benjamin Hirsh, S. Slobbins and M. M. Tumaroff. From the very first it had been a positive factor in the development of the modern intensive Hebrew school. In fact, Hebrew was used exclusively at all meetings. Membership had been open only to teachers who were worthy of the appellation. There was never a Hebrew teachers strike in Boston. The Association always tried to protect the teacher's interests through direct negotiations with the *Baalei Batim*.

The uninterrupted cooperation of the *Agudath HaMorim* in teacher placement enabled Boston to maintain high standards in fitting the candidate to the position. The Association did much to maintain a high spiritual and educational awareness in its ranks. Lectures on cultural and educational subjects were an integral part of its own program. It also joined the Bureau of Jewish Education and the Hebrew Teachers College in conducting professional programs for Principals and teachers and for the community at large. These facts contributed greatly to the continued progress of the Boston Hebrew schools.

In 1946 it merged with the Principals Association under the name of *Agudath HaMorim V'Hamenahalim D'Boston Usvivoteha* (Hebrew Teachers and Principals Association of Boston and Vicinity). During the coming years it continued to cooperate with the United Hebrew Schools and the Bureau of Jewish Education in the formation of a Code of Practice which delineated regulations whereby the interests of the schools and the teachers could be best preserved.

Since the first graduation of the Hebrew Teachers College in 1925, Hebrew graduates have been admitted to *Agudah* membership upon

receiving their diplomas. Thus, each year fresh blood was added to the organized body of Hebrew teachers who have done much during the last half-century to keep Boston Hebrew schools at the forefront of Jewish education in America.

Mr. Herman Lowenberg, President of the Associated Boston Hebrew Schools since its inception in the summer of 1917, was a thoroughly Americanized attorney whom destiny brought into our midst. He was modest, personable, every inch a gentleman, honest to the core—a man of high moral standards. He joined the Associated Hebrew Schools when the entire project seemed a far-fetched dream. He served as President for nearly three years and guided the organization ably and efficiently, avoiding any reflected honors and recognition. One had to be truly wise to steer an organization composed of mutually repelling elements, which were at a near explosion point on more than one occasion. Sagaciously, he guided his craft away from shoals and rocks, and when the need arose to reorganize, a usual occurrence in public institutions, the Associated Boston Hebrew Schools had already became a well-knit entity which grew quickly and became a fruitful, decisive force that has been functioning to this day (1966).

Historically, the recognition and honor of being the first President of organized Jewish education on a community basis belong to Herman Lowenberg, President of the Associated Boston Hebrew Schools which, under a different name and a changed form of representation, is functioning today as the Bureau of Jewish Education of Boston.

Mr. Lowenberg's sterling character and noble personality, and our close association for the first three years of organized Jewish education in Boston, left upon me an impression which even the passage of nearly five decades has not effaced, and I shall continue to remember him with a blessing.

In the 1917 survey I proposed the formation, on a community basis, of two organizations: one of the Hebrew schools and the other of the Sunday Schools. An abyss separated these two types of schools in their basic approach and the people who operated each type. It would be impossible to start the schools' organization with these opposing elements around the same table. It was therefore proposed that a Joint Board, composed of representatives of each type, should serve as a bridge between them in all matters of common interest.

The creation of the Hebrew schools' central organization was *ex nihil,* but the Sunday schools already had an organization. Rabbi H.

H. Rubenovitz of Mishkan Tefila, Rabbi M. M. Eclair of Temple Ohabei Shalom and Rabbi Harry Levi of Temple Israel, the last two being Reform Rabbis who maintained Sunday schools of their own, joined in 1911 in forming a Society for the Extension of Jewish Education for the benefit of the Sunday schools. A number of laymen joined them. During 1911–1917 Rabbi Rubenovitz was President and Mr. Herbert Ehrmann, Secretary. In 1913, the name of the above Society was changed to "The Jewish Education Society." In behalf of this Society Rabbis Levi Rubenovitz opened a Training School for Sunday School Teachers in the fall of 1914. In 1917 I found that this society was in a sort of suspended animation. Most of the Sunday school work was done by the YMHAs, which conducted one such school in Roxbury with some 500 children, and one in the West End with 200 children.

After the Federated Charities approved the proposal to subsidize Jewish education, the Jewish Education Society became active and represented the seven Boston Sunday schools (outside the three schools of the above three congregations). Until then, all teachers were volunteers. I suggested that Sunday school teachers be paid to maintain requirements of teachers in terms of knowledge and standards. In January of 1918, when school subsidization began, the Jewish Education Society began to pay the Sunday school teachers, although central supervision began only with the next school year. Teacher pay was two dollars a Sunday.

The Society now changed its name to The Bureau of Jewish Religious Schools. In September, 1918, Rabbi Hyman Solomon, a graduate of The Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York, was elected Superintendent of the Bureau of Jewish Religious Schools. He started energetically and with an embracing point of view. He invested much energy in the development of The Training School for Sunday School teachers until it had a registration of over 100, most of whom were women and many were already teaching. Young people were attracted by the courses offered, and occasionally there were out-of-town lecturers. One of them was Professor Max Margolis of Dropsie College, Editor-in-chief of the body of scholars who translated the Bible into English in 1917 for the Jewish Publication Society of Philadelphia. Rabbi Solomon also broadened his area of activities. The South End was considered the poorest quarter in Boston. Poverty invariably begets juvenile neglect and delinquency. Rabbi Solomon rented a house at 14 Compton Street and converted it into a neighborhood clubhouse. A

public school teacher, Miss Edith Ricles, organized clubs of local Jewish children there and also supervised them. Club work was now becoming a major project.

The Federated began to give more and more to the Hebrew schools while it also added to the subsidy of the Sunday schools. In 1921, it gave the Hebrew schools $28,170 (instead of $20,000 for 1918) and $16,607 to the Sunday schools (as against $10,000 in 1918). Rabbi Solomon's plan was typical of an Extension Education program: infrequent contacts with the maximum numbers of children—a thin program, held occasionally. Such programs require constantly growing budgets, and Rabbi Solomon's program was no exception.

The Bureau of Jewish Religious Schools did not have the difficulties that the Hebrew schools encountered. It operated 100 percent on what the Charities subsidies permitted. It had complete control of the schools in its orbit, and it had full freedom to organize its work as it saw fit. It also benefited from the warm sympathy of the rich Reform Temples and the one Conservative congregation of Boston, as well as the hearty support of most of the Federated Trustees.

Here the stage was set for a budget conflict between the Hebrew and the Sunday schools. With both budgets increasing from year to year, the Federated would soon have to decide which of the two was to be preferred. This unpleasant competition was created because extension work needed increases, and Rabbi Solomon's program had the Federated as its only financial resource. But since the Hebrew schools and their needs also grew, while the Federated total income grew slowly, the problem of supporting both types of education was bound to come to the fore. Then the unexpected occurred.

At the beginning of 1920 Rabbi Solomon had a prolonged illness. I was asked to take over his department temporarily, which I did. After six months Rabbi Solomon notified us that he decided to return to the rabbinate. That occurred at the very time when the Associated Hebrew Schools reached a crisis and it was imperative to make a fundamental change in that organization. Therefore, the question arose as to whether there should be one central office for both types of schools. That would save a substantial amount in administration costs and would also bring about greater cooperation all along the line. That, of course, would require the merging of the Administrative

Boards. The Sunday School Board was willing to merge, and on the Hebrew schools side, many saw the benefit of a merger.

The demand for a merger came especially from the Federated Charities. The new Executive Director of the Charities, Maurice B. Hexter, who succeeded Morris D. Waldman in 1919, was well acquainted with our work. He said to me: "At first there was a need for two separate offices because of the deep misunderstandings between the exponents of the two types of schools. Now, however, we see that a merger is possible. Factually, such a merger had already been effected. You have been managing both types and neither side complained about being a "stepchild." A merger will reduce the total cost of administration and invigorate the total manpower for education."

It should be noted that no problem of principle was involved in the merger proposal. It became clear that each type of school met a special community need. A change at the top should cause no unpleasant reverberations.

Yet, trouble was around the corner.

Organization of the Bureau of Jewish Education

Mr. Lowenberg thought that the merger of the Associated Boston Hebrew Schools with the Bureau of Jewish Religious Schools should have a new type of administration. From then on he no longer took part in our work.

Neither the Hebrew schools nor the Sunday schools felt that changes took place; neither was the daily routine of the office affected. The Federated continued to send the appropriated monthly amounts. My office was next to Dr. Hexter's, who followed developments and was always ready to cooperate and assist.

I maintained communications with the delegates of the Hebrew schools and the synagogues. Those who were connected with the Sunday schools continued their connection with the office. We began to meet in small groups for exploratory talks, and it turned out that all agreed the merged organizations be called "The Bureau of Jewish Education." Thus, our name.

Since 1910 there had existed a Bureau of Jewish Education in New York under Dr. Samson Benderly. Since its inception it had achieved much in terms of training personnel, programming, extension work, textbooks and teaching aids. Dr. Benderly was very anxious that his Bureau of Jewish Education should become a national institution in scope and prestige. For various reasons that last part of his plan did not materialize and the Bureau of Jewish Education remained a New York organization. It appeared to me that a short, self-explanatory name like Bureau of Jewish Education could be given in every city to its central educational agency. Through the years a chain of such "Bureaus" would be created. The similarity in name would indicate similarity in scope and effort, and then the

ground-work would be ready for the creation of an umbrella organization for Jewish education on a national basis.

Dr. Benderly opposed that view and urged that the New York Bureau must remain the only organization that was so named. I disagreed with him, especially so because I disagreed fundamentally with his basic ideas as to the substance of Jewish education. His approach, which he preached for years, was that Jewish education must be easy, and limited by what the environmental conditions permit. On that issue many of the European-trained Jewish educators violently opposed him. Now, if the New York Bureau were to remain a "sacred cow" and a symbol to be followed everywhere, as he aimed to make it, I would be untrue to myself if I were to cooperate with him in abstaining from the use of a name that suited our needs. I talked the matter over with some educators whose opinion I respected. Nearly all said that I had the right to suggest the name "Bureau of Jewish Education." The members of the new Committee voted to accept it and in June, 1920, we decided as a temporary committee to appoint a Constitution Committee, with Lewis Goldberg as Chairman.

Serious tasks were ahead of us.

The change of form and the idea of merging the two central educational organizations met with no difficulty of any kind among the *Baalei Batim*. They knew the Federated was willing to subsidize Jewish education. They also saw that since the formation of the Associated Hebrew Schools a desire had developed to intensify and improve Jewish education in every possible manner. They also understood that the Sunday schools could operate as a separate entity without hurting the Hebrew schools. The lay leaders of the Hebrew schools, the representatives of the congregations together with their respective Rabbis, were also ready for the merger.

But there was difficulty with some of the Hebrew teachers. The assistant teachers stayed away from the debate; nor were quite a few full time Hebrew teachers concerned with the matter. But spokesmen for the *Agudath HaMorim* were violently against changes in representation which might be different from the manner of the Associated Schools. They assumed that all the proposed changes were just so many tactics to undermine the older teachers. They heard that in the New York Bureau of Jewish Education it became a rule to retain the older teachers who were there already, but that all professional development opportunities as well as all the chances for advancement and better positions were to be given only to the

American youngsters. That meant a systematic displacement of the European *Maskil*—teacher. They were sure that Boston would follow the same plan, and they opposed it mightily. One evening in the summer of 1920, I talked with the President of the Agudath HaMorim. We continued to 2:00 A.M. The President repeated again and again that the Bureau of Jewish Education we were about to organize out of the two centers would be the greatest misfortune for the Hebrew teacher personally and for the Agudath HaMorim as a body.

I knew the laymen didn't care much whether the teachers agreed or disagreed, but the teachers were "inside men," and we would have to work with them. It was in their power to put plenty of obstructions in our way.

With few exceptions, the laymen neither knew the teachers nor regarded them as more than so many store clerks. *The employee is expected to do what he is told,* otherwise he is replaced by another, more obedient employee! The laymen were unaware of the fact that all over America there was a very serious teacher shortage. Years might pass before that shortage could be overcome. Even the active *Baalei Batim* did not know their own teachers the way that I knew them. I realized we were up against suspicion and distrust of what was done even in their presence. The veteran teachers also feared that, shallow as it may be, some day we would succeed in training the assistant teachers, and then we would replace the older teachers with youngsters who could teach for many years. No one can be blamed for worrying about himself and holding suspicions about his security and *parnassah* (livelihood). Sometimes a man does not realize the hidden factors that urge him to make a stand. The opposing teachers saw everything their own way, and no amount of clarification overcame their inner fears. Weeks of talks with individuals helped to soften a few teachers, but the leaders were adamant in their opposition.

Ever since the Associated was organized, we used to meet about every two weeks. Pending the fundamental reorganization, when only laymen would represent the schools, we needed a cooling off period. It was, therefore, decided that the actual reorganization be postponed for a few months. In the meantime, work continued with the existing committees, which functioned as an Executive Committee of the two centers. All of this I explained to Dr. Hexter and he agreed to continue the subsidies without any change. He left the details of reorganization to us as an internal matter. And so it

happened that although representatives of both centers reached full agreement on the merger plans in June, 1920, the first official meeting of the reorganized body was held six months later, when the body was named the Bureau of Jewish Education.

During the second half of 1920 preparations were made for the reorganization of The Associated Boston Hebrew Schools. As it appeared on the letterhead of that period the affiliates were:

20 Hebrew Schools;
Beth Midrash LeMorim; and
10 of the leading Boston Synagogues.

In the new organization, as it appeared on a letterhead dated April 12, 1921, there were:

18 Hebrew Schools;
Beth Midrash LeMorim;
Teachers Training School (for Sunday School Teachers);
13 Sunday Schools;
10 Synagogues (those originally with the Associated Hebrew Schools); and
5 Educational Organizations.

Thus, both central organizations came together with their entire educational and cooperative entourage. The Federated Charities regarded all this as an internal affair of its constituent affiliates. Our total budget depended upon the amount raised by the Federated for its entire family of agencies, and there was no change in our combined subvention. From 1920 to 1925 the total allocated for Jewish education each year was approximately $44,000, about 10 percent of the amount raised by the Federated. Only in 1925–26 was there an increase to $54,392.

On January 12, 1921, the first meeting of the merged organizations was held. Only laymen were delegates, with the Hebrew schools and the ten synagogues sending two delegates each. From the Sunday schools their top officers came and from the five educational organizations, which included 2 YMHAs where Sunday schools were conducted, came two delegates each. There were also delegates-at-large, people of the community who, because of their standing and prestige, might be helpful to Jewish education. At that meeting it was decided that the name of the merged organization should be: the Bureau of Jewish Education.

The second Delegates' meeting was held March 1, 1921, at the Roxbury YMHA. A few items, taken from the minutes of that meeting, included:

1. The monthly subsidy given to schools would from now on be given to the Bureau in a lump sum, which would then be distributed to the constituent schools. The Federated agreed to this change, which would enhance the Bureau.
2. The allocation to each school would be based on its needs and the ability to maintain itself; the Bureau would examine each school's budget.
3. The Delegates appointed an Arbitration Committee for any school where internal friction developed.
4. The Building Committee was requested to assist the Ahavath Zion school in Roxbury to prepare a building repair plan.
5. The group decided to apply for a Charter from the city of Boston for the Bureau of Jewish Education. The Charter was granted on March 21, 1921; the seven organizers were: Leon S. Medalia, Abraham S. Hirshberg, Meyer J. Sawyer, Morris Fineberg, Simon Finberg, Jacob Rosenberg, Louis Hurwich.
6. The Bureau would send representatives to the public reception for Dr. Chaim Weizmann and Professor Albert Einstein which was scheduled for Tuesday, May, 17, 1921.
7. The Delegates voted to conduct joint Graduation Exercises of all the affiliated Sunday schools at Temple Ohabei Shalom in the South End on June 7, 1921. Live tableaux would symbolize the leading community institutions.
8. As an educational measure, the pupils of all the affiliated schools should be asked to raise $1,000 among themselves toward the *Keren Hayesod*, which was established that year by the Zionist Organization.

The Delegates also voted:

9. To assist the organization Committee for the *Beth Midrash LeMorim,* and to assist that institution materially and morally;
10. To approve the Superintendent's plan to give a general Jewish examination to all the teachers of the Sunday schools, and to take that test into account in the selection of next year's teaching staff;

11. To appoint a Committee to assist in the planning of summer activities for our school children; and

12. To request the local Rabbis to speak on the formation of the Bureau of Jewish Education during the coming Passover.

The next delegates' meeting was held on May 31, 1921, at Brunswick Hall, of Congregation Adath Jeshurun (Blue Hill Avenue Synagogue) Roxbury. The meeting heard a report on the reorganization of The Hebrew Teachers Training School which would henceforth be called "The Hebrew Teachers College." Words now began to be translated into action!

I reached the conclusion that under the given circumstances in America in general and in Boston in particular, *the future of Jewish education was conditioned upon the development of teacher training schools with local student material.* We could go on as best we could with the capable teachers who came from abroad, but there would still be left an immense vacuum which could be filled only with suitable local products trained here in institutions created for the purpose. The challenging condition was on our doorstep in Boston: there were 25 adequate teachers and 30 assistants who should have studied for years before they began to teach! I decided, therefore, that whatever happened, all resources must be concentrated upon the development of a higher institution worthy of its task. As it turned out, the birth-pains lasted more than nine months and plagued us for years after the "baby" was born. Its growth demanded increased means from year to year, but since sufficient funds could not be obtained from the outside, the only thing to do was draw from what we already had. It was also clear that money which might be applied to general expansion must be directed toward the normal growth of our training institution. As much as possible, I usually did what I could with the approval of the officers of the organization. But there were also cases which I handled upon my own understanding and responsibility, prompted by a clear conviction that it was all for the good and welfare of Jewish education. I made myself responsible for this policy.

THE HEBREW TEACHERS COLLEGE— *BETH MIDRASH LEMORIM*

From the beginning I realized that a great community like Boston need not depend upon other communities or upon overseas imports to meet its spiritual needs. With that point of view I started to deal with the teacher shortage. Due to the stoppage of immigration from Europe, as a result of World War I, the number of qualified Hebrew teachers kept on shrinking. By 1917, 30 percent of the teaching body consisted of assistant teachers, who were only Talmud Torah (Hebrew elementary school) graduates. It was a case of "betwixt and between": either these assistant teachers be employed or one-third of the Hebrew classes had to be closed. It was in the face of that hard fact that I said, "*Boston can help itself. We could place those young teachers in the classroom again as students.*" Locally we had men who could teach them. As the assistant teachers continued to study they would grow in quality. Several months after my appointment as Superintendent, I proposed regular twice-a-week sessions for all assistant teachers. The principals and teachers approved and the delegates voted to proceed. On April 21, 1917, the course began with 21 students (later the number grew to 48). The success of this project was punctuated by the constant increase in registration and by the willingness of the students to take on a heavier schedule. In 1919, a third session a week was added for work in Education under Ben Rosen.

I soon realized that despite its initial success the total program fell short of meeting the needs either of training teachers worthy of the title or of supplying the number required. The speedy opening of new schools and the swelling registration forced us to employ more and more assistants until, in 1919, more than half of the chil-

dren (54 percent) were taught by them. There was no hope that in the space of two years these young people could acquire the requisite knowledge and rank as qualified teachers. Meantime, an anti-immigration movement was growing in America to restrict immigrant admissions. That would quash all hope that enough good teachers could come from Europe to fill the growing gap in the teaching ranks. It was also crystal clear that *whatever had to be done should be started immediately.*

There was one encouraging development: *Hebrew teachers' salaries were higher than the salaries in the Boston Public Schools.* That offered solid grounds for convincing American young people to pursue a career in Hebrew teaching. In that case, however, their preparation had to be on the same level as those people preparing themselves for any profession. What was done until then was an encouraging beginning, but it had to be broadened and considerably intensified. On that basis I made a daring proposal: *recruit Talmud Torah graduates who were not teaching and impose upon them daily study, five days a week, for four years.* The financial loss they would sustain by not being assistant teachers would be made up partly, in cases of financial need, by a subsidy in the form of $150 scholarships during each of the four years of study. I estimated that in all four classes there would be 75 students and that 50 of them would require scholarship assistance. That meant the first year we would need $7–8,000, and larger sums in subsequent years.

I discussed the project in all its details with Dr. Hexter, the successor to Morris D. Waldman, who promised to secure 15 annual scholarships of $150 each. Privately, I presented the plan to a number of financially able *Baalei Batim* and they encouraged me greatly. Shalom Cabelinsky promised two or three scholarships; Lassor Agoos promised 2–3 of his own and one or more from his family fund. Nathan Pinanski offered a scholarship of his own and at least one from his congregation, Adath Jeshurun. Rabbi Louis M. Epstein offered one from the members of his congregation and Joseph Rudnick offered one from the family fund. All in all, the total of 50–150 annual scholarships was well within reach, even if some of the other students might need help in smaller amounts.

The scholarships were to replace the loss of students' income from part-time teaching in the Hebrew schools during their four-year stay with us. That would assure regular attendance until graduation and cover the tuition fee at any college in Boston, which was the greatest worry of many students. It was hoped that with the

above plan young students would rather attend the *Beth Midrash LeMorim* than work as assistant teachers. Prizes would be awarded for academic excellence and also in cases of need.

A budget proposal was made for the Federated Charities and particularly for the attention of Dr. Hexter. Very much depended upon his approval. The cost would be much less the first year since we would start with only one class. Only in the fourth year would we reach the plateau of four graded classes. That would give us an opportunity to build up more support.

The Dean's salary was $3,600 a year, which in 1920 was a rate unequaled anywhere in Jewish education. Two full-time teachers, each having 20 teaching hours a week, earned $2,400 each, and one teacher working only 6 hours a week earned $720. The Dean would teach 6 hours a week. That would total 52 teaching hours a week, or 13 hours a week for each of the four classes.

We estimated the maintenance on a suitable building that was offered for sale to us at a bargain price. The maintenance of the Hebrew Teachers Training School and the Training School for Sunday School Teachers cost us $4,500. That sum would be transferred to the new institution to match the number of those students who would want to take the 4-year course. It was further hoped that the Federated would gradually increase its allotment. The total annual expenditures would be approximately $30,000 a year.

Dr. Hexter examined the proposed budget carefully and thought that it could be managed. I relied largely on his support because the Board of Trustees of the Federated trusted his expert judgment. His warmhearted sympathy for Jewish education had been a source of strength and assured our continued progress.

I purposely abstained from submitting a detailed budget to the delegates of the Associated Hebrew Schools, primarily because the proposed College budget equaled the total annual tuition fee income of all the Boston Hebrew Schools. After regaining their breath the delegates would have voted it down as an impractical dream. On the other hand, Dr. Hexter and all those who pledged one or more of the $150 scholarships and saw the detailed budget, thought well of it and promised assistance.

As it turned out, we did not have to spend large sums on student subsidies; in fact we even began to require tuition fees from students who could afford to pay. The idea of subsidizing students was not new. Most of the Rabbinical training schools as a rule, gave their students full support during the entire course. (Even toward

the end of the forties, when a large western U.S. community wanted to open a teacher training school, it began with a subsidy of $500 a year to every student, including those who did not need it.)

In retrospect, I can see in our Boston planning much *naiveté* about the College budget, but it was just because we were naive and optimistic that we dared to plunge where the practical and the "wise" abstained.

In Search of a Home for the Training School

In the process of reorganizing the existing *Beth Midrash LeMorim* we could not proceed serially, step by step, but concurrently. We had to strike while the iron was hot, and work had to be done on all fronts at the same time. The Special Committee on the Training School, that had been appointed to consider the reorganization plan, approved it. That meant we would be getting a home of our own. Until then we had met at the *HaTeḥiah* School on Friday and Sunday afternoons, and on the short winter days we met on Saturday evenings instead of Fridays. These were the hours when Hebrew schools had no sessions. The third (pedagogic) session with Ben Rosen was held at the Mishkan Tefila Hebrew School in Roxbury.

In both schools the lack of facilities was a serious roadblock. A note about school buildings: Since the United States entered the World War in April, 1917, private building ceased all over America. In the intervening years the population grew by millions. And as to buildings, their numbers kept shrinking through fires, ruination, and the conversion of residences into stores and factories. The housing problem became very acute and so was the problem of finding public buildings. The war needs were so varied that every possible hall and every building facility that could be converted was taken over by the government for its own needs. Regarding our needs, without a suitable building, the plan for a reorganized training school was inoperative.

One day I received a phone call form Mr. Ezekiel Leavitt, who had been on the teaching staff of our training school, informing me that a building was available at 14 Crawford Street in Roxbury. Originally it was a church, then it was converted into a synagogue, and then a bank foreclosed the mortgage and took it over. The building was quite big and had been unoccupied for a long time. It was located near Warren Street in Roxbury and now belonged to the ultra-orthodox Congregation Agudath Achim, which bought it when it

was still a church. They lost the synagogue once, recovered it and, finally a bank foreclosed on it again, and it had been unoccupied for the last two years. We could buy it from the Wareham Savings Bank for $10,000, with no down payment, and the bank would accept small amortization payments for a stretch of years.

I contacted the bank, and the president said that he had to be in Boston and would visit me. He came with the treasurer who said that if we could pay in cash we could have the building for $8,000. I said I was interested and would talk to my Board. I visited the building. It stood in the middle of a 16,000 square feet lot. It had large windows on all four sides. It had one auditorium (30 x 64 feet) with a vaulted, artistic wooden ceiling. Joseph Rudnick, who was a building expert, said it could not be duplicated now for even $50,000. The building stood on a small elevation, airy and full of light. Later I found out it was erected over 100 years earlier. It was one of those structures which was planned to last for centuries, and every part of it was beautiful.

It ideally suited the needs of the *Beth Midrash LeMorim.* Adjacent to the hall was a fine side-room and above were two small rooms. A movable partition on one side would provide an additional room. In the hall was a stage. The building would amply accommodate a maximum registration, as we estimated then, of 75 students, who would come in two sections. In short, it was a heaven-given chance!

But at that time there was no one in authority I could turn to. The Associated Boston Hebrew Schools no longer met. Its projected successor, the Bureau of Jewish Education, had not yet met officially. Financially, I could turn to no one. And yet I felt we had to do something. The creation of a worthwhile Teachers Training School depended on getting a home, and where could we find a more suitable home and at better terms than the one now offered us?

Once again, I turned to Dr. Hexter, our friend in need and deed. I explained the situation: It would be months before the new Bureau of Jewish Education would function normally. In the meantime we might lose our great opportunity. I said that I was ready to risk a moderate sum and buy the building on my own financial responsibility. I wanted Dr. Hexter to advance me several hundred dollars against my salary, by which I would bargain with the bank. I added that every year on the High Holidays a temporary synagogue would be conducted there. It netted about $1,000. Even if nothing could be done for a long time, the building would carry itself. Dr. Hexter promised to meet my request.

To assure myself, I called on several very experienced real estate men. Unanimously, they said the building was solid, and despite its hoary age it could last another century. We would have to repair it, paint it, erect a movable partition, and then it would be in excellent condition. That was all I needed to hear! I telephoned the bank and again the president and treasurer came to my office, at 25 Tremont Street, where all the offices of the Federated were located.

I said to the bank officers:

> "You said that for cash you would sell for $8,000. Suppose I paid cash. What would you do with the cash? You would immediately seek to invest it in a safe interest-bearing mortgage. Now I have a proposition. The organization of which I am the Executive is ready to invest a considerable sum in the building to repair it and ready it for immediate use. That will increase its value. Your $8,000 is already invested in the building, which thus far has been and still is deteriorating from day to day and year to year. Why not let us occupy the building and repair it thoroughly. We will amortize the mortgage by $250 every six months and pay 6 percent on the outstanding debt. Then, if it should turn out that we cannot comply with our obligations, what have you lost? You are now getting a $300 bonus, and all that we would subsequently pay in, and the building, which is now being progressively ruined, would come back to you in full repair and greater value!"

The officers exchanged glances, whispered to each other and said they agreed. The purchase was effected on December 9, 1920. The bank officers made out an "agreement to buy" on the above terms, and I handed them the $300 check. Afterwards, I informed the men whom I had consulted previously. They said there was nothing to worry about and that the purchase would be approved by the board. The terms were excellent for us since the bank wanted to rid itself of deteriorating equity and I exploited a favorable opportunity.

Dr. Hexter promised to include the interest payments in our budget, since they were a form of rent. The amortization payments we would have to raise ourselves, since the Federated had no allocations for building purchases. We had half a year till the first installment and in half a year God in Heaven may mercifully do something miraculous. The purchase was finally approved, and it was decided that a special committee deal with *Beth Midrash LeMorim* matters.

The Building Committee engaged Mr. Nathan Fritz to give the badly neglected building a new face from the basement to the roof. The contractor painted it inside and outside, fixed and repaired, or replaced, everything that was not in first class condition. He also installed a new heater and new radiators, and installed a new, movable partition in the auditorium which could section off a room-sized space. Otherwise the auditorium had light and air on all four sides. We bought new furniture, especially fine school armchairs and, in the front of the building, planted new grass. Mr. Fritz was deeply religious and a lover of Torah. For him, the enterprise was not an ordinary contractor's job; it was a holy task! All in all, it cost $4,000 to get the building into top shape.

Years later Mr. Fritz was happy to bring his gifted grandson to register at this institution. We recalled when he labored devotedly to repair the building and how he waited patiently until he was paid in full. Now he got his reward: his grandson would study here! Tears welled in Mr. Fritz's eyes.

Other important matters now demanded immediate attention.

In Search of a Dean; Birth Pains

In the spring of 1920, immediately after the Special Committee reported to the Associated Schools on March 13, 1920 that it approved my proposal for an expanded *Beth Midrash LeMorim* with a four year course and five sessions a week, I began the search for a person to head the school.

A dean for the *Beth Midrash LeMorim* was an absolute requirement. The development of the existing *Beth Midrash LeMorim* into an institution that would produce teachers worthy of their calling required that the Dean be a leading educator, head and shoulders above the Boston teachers and principals in his Jewish and secular scholarship. He should also possess an urge to advance Jewish education, and in terms of character, be a *Rodeph Sholom*—a lover of peace. Only such a person would gain the respect and cooperation of the Boston teachers. He must be free from worry about the external aspects of the institution. I was ready to maintain such conditions for the Dean and, like the Biblical cloud that separated the Egyptians from the children of Israel, I was willing to be the target for arrows and stones directed toward the institution, if only it would be what we hoped it to be.

But where could such a man be found? I knew that Jewish America had not yet produced such a many-sided educator. Moreover, in New York, only American-born and trained people could find security and advancement in the profession of Jewish education. But those who did come to the fore were not real *Talmidei Ḥakhamim*, at home in the source material of Jewish knowledge. High Jewish scholarship had to be a basic attribute of our man. Boston teachers would not respect an outsider to Hebrew and Hebrew literature.

Such a person was Dr. Nisson Touroff, who impressed me deeply. He had a most charming personality. I knew what he did in *Eretz Yisrael* and that he ranked among the foremost Jewish educators of our age. I imparted all this to Dr. Hexter, without whose help the total program would not materialize. He said the Federated would never approve a salary of $5,000; a year, whoever the candidate might be, the salary must be less than $5,000. I returned to Dr. Touroff, offering $4,500 and giving the underlying reason. He answered that he would accept no offer for less than $5,000. Once more I was betwixt and between, though I thought that, in time, a way would be found.

The fact that a man of Dr. Touroff's stature was willing to came to Boston encouraged me greatly. It meant that I now had to work harder, get more men and means, and then the sailing would be smoother. In the Fall matters eased at the Federated. Again I met Dr. Touroff. He had no other offers, and I told him that it was only a question of time. He said that he had no other alternative but to wait. Though I knew that people would not stand in line with offers just because of his reputation, I also knew that the gap in salary would be eliminated somehow, and we would be able to have him.

On April 6, 1921, a special meeting was held at the instance of the Bureau of Jewish Education, at which it was decided that we organize the "Hebrew Teachers College"—*Beth Midrash LeMorim*. Dr. Leon S. Medalia was elected President. That month Dr. Touroff came to Boston. The committee was deeply impressed with him and he was also pleased with the committee. He was elected as Dean of the Hebrew Teachers College for the next year, beginning September 1, 1921. The summer months were needed to repair the building and to get it into shape. As already mentioned, the merger of the Associated Boston Hebrew Schools with the Bureau of Jewish Religious Schools was effected *de jure* after they had been merged *de facto* for nearly a year. The name of the new organization was the "Bureau of Jewish Education." From its first formal meeting on June 12, 1921,

steps were speeded towards the reorganization of the *Beth Midrash LeMorim*. The purchase of the building on 14 Crawford Street in Roxbury as the future home of the Training School was approved. The financial condition of the Federated improved and Dr. Hexter told me there would be no objection to a $5,000 salary for the Head of the Training School. A committee was appointed to deal with all matters pertaining to the *Beth Midrash LeMorim*.

Thus, after a long period of birth pains, the problem of getting a suitable Dean was solved. Early in September Dr. Touroff came to Boston.

I lodged with the Abrams family in Roxbury opposite Franklin Park. Dr. Touroff visited me and decided to live with the Abrams, also. We saw each other daily and that enabled me to give him a detailed description of life in Boston, what went on in Jewish education, and some of the behind-the-curtain activities in that field. We took account of every detail pertaining to the opening of the school. The building was ready, but before sessions could begin two basic items had to be attended to: 1) Appoint a teaching staff; 2) Get students. And in these Dr. Touroff experienced painful disappointments.

The first was in connection with finding a teaching staff. Before accepting the position, Dr. Touroff laid down one condition: *that he start with a blank slate.* He refused to begin with discharging the teachers who had served for over 3 years in the *Beth Midrash LeMorim.* We agreed to this logical requirement. The Trustees decided to let the existing classes, in which most of the students were assistant teachers, continue with their 5 teachers, and to allow Dr. Touroff to begin with a new group for the 4-year course. We assumed that many of those now attending the twice-a-week training school would not transfer to the new plan, because they were already assistant teachers with an income. In the new plan, however, no student teaching for pay would be permitted before completing the 4-year course. That meant we were to start with an entirely new student element of which only a few would come from those now attending existing classes. But first of all, a teaching staff had to be appointed, and that lay entirely with Dr. Touroff.

Even after living for decades in America, Dr. Touroff did not know life in America. He carried with him his own world which was logical, well-organized, solid and harmonious in all its aspects and objectives. He never stepped out of that world and those who didn't grasp its significance deserved to be pitied. There was no reason why he should step out of his world, or to even change it a

bit, simply to adjust himself to the outside. Let the outside adjust itself to him! Perhaps here was the wellspring for his adamant stands and intransigence in his views and ways of doing things. Always a bachelor, the lodgings he first took remained his permanent quarters for years without any change whatever. For many years he spent his summer vacation in Asbury Park, New Jersey, where he always returned to the same hotel, sat at the same table, and the same side of that table, year after year. The owners knew his habits and did their best to please him.

The outside world adjusted itself to him.

In the brief autobiography which he published in the *Sefer Touroff* we read that he suffered much during his lifetime. Life also pampered him in many ways and for adequate reasons: he was unusually handsome and his speaking voice was musical and captivating. At all times he was friendly and a fascinating conversationalist. Despite all that he underwent at various times and in different lands, he was always in the midst of admirers and friends. They knew of his delicate sensitivity, that any change or variation pained him, and did their best to clear obstacles from his life. He needed only to express a wish that something be done and immediately someone tried his utmost to fulfill his wish.

As an educator, in *Eretz Yisrael* Dr. Touroff was ranked highly, and also in America his name commanded respect. He sent letters to many of his *Eretz Yisrael* friends, inviting them to come and teach under him, but none were willing to leave the Jewish homeland. Dr. Touroff tried some other prospects but to no avail.

What was to be done? I told him that I knew of a local man. He was scholarly, gentlemanly and ethical. I thought that he might meet our requirements. Years ago he taught in the local Talmud Torahs, but he graduated as a chemist and held a government position. Now the government was planning to close many plants and his position was to be abolished. He told me that if we wanted him he'd be glad to resume work in the Hebrew field. Dr. Touroff had planned to surround himself with men of fame and standing, the best obtainable. Apparently he was sure that many would be glad to work under him. Now it turned out that he didn't even have a single candidate. Should he begin with a local person, totally unknown as a writer or scholar, only just a *Maskil*! That was a blow.

Having no other alternative, he agreed to meet my candidate. His name was Israel Haim Pollack. After the interview, Dr. Touroff said

that the visitor rather impressed him. But he had planned to begin with a team of giants, and now . . . salt was sprinkled on the first still raw wound.

Since we had no idea how many students would register, we agreed not to get tied up with too large a faculty. We decided to begin with a minimum of one "and a half" teachers, which together with the few hours that Dr. Touroff would teach, would mean 30 teaching hours a week. A full-time teacher would have 20 hours a week (in *Eretz Yisrael* teachers had 30 hours a week, and even more), and a part-time person would give 6–7 hours a week. Of course, we could not bring a person from out of town just for part-time teaching. I suggested one who was very much at home with Talmud and in the rabbinic literature. He knew Hebrew well and had been teaching in the existing *Beth Midrash LeMorim* since its inception over 3 years earlier. His name was Solomon Zucrow. Again an unknown! I arranged for an interview, and Dr. Touroff saw that he was a real Talmudist. There were no other candidates, so both local men were engaged.

Again and again, Dr. Touroff gave vent to his disappointment. He had given up living in Palestine for a stay in America. He thought that here was his opportunity to do something for this Jewish educational wilderness and now see with whom he had to start![13] I believe he was hurt by the fact that none of his intimate friends wanted to come and teach under him. The formation of the faculty took several weeks. In the meantime, we applied ourselves to getting students.

As to the plan to give most of the students $150 stipends every year, Dr. Touroff said it was not at all necessary, except in rare cases. Rather, the contrary: we should require every student to pay a regular tuition fee of $200 a year. Reductions and also free tuition in cases of financial need would be available. That announcement was distributed as a circular and also inserted in the local *Jewish Advocate* and in the Hebrew press.

The day set for student registration arrived. The building was completed and spotless. Dr. Touroff was there. Not a single student appeared the first, second and third day. One man did rush in: "When will they *daven Minhah*?" (He remembered that years ago the building was a synagogue). One week passed, and another and another and no one came! That was a terribly humiliating experience for Dr. Touroff. He was certain the reputation he had gained at

the cost of years of infinite effort in Russia and *Eretz Yisrael* would precede him here, and that many would line up to benefit from the instruction headed by him, and, now, not a stray cat popped in!

We never stopped talking about it. We listed all the elements involved: the opposition of the teachers, the fact that the Hebrew Teachers Training School classes were still meeting; the five-day-a-week schedule. Were we expecting too much from American-born students? We concluded that the fault lay with our $200 a year tuition fee. Those who had money didn't crowd Torah schools, and those who loved Torah had no money. We sent around another circular letter, and also published it in the *Jewish Advocate*, that the tuition fee requirement was annulled, and that qualified students would be admitted *gratis*. Day after day passed and not a student came in. I could only imagine Dr. Touroff's heartache. He, the renowned educator, at whose door many lined up and considered themselves fortunate when admitted, had lost his way in a God-forsaken place and had to beg people to come to him! That was his second disappointment.

To facilitate registration, we announced that students could also register at the office of the Bureau of Jewish Education, which was in town. One day a man brought his 16-year-old son to register him. The youth was tall and handsome. He had arrived in America recently, spoke a good, fluent Hebrew, had studied in *Yeshivoth* and lived through the terrors of the First World War. Now he worked in a factory and wanted to study.

"Will you continue to work after you start in the *Beth Midrash LeMorim*?"

"Of course!"

"Wouldn't you find it too hard?"

"No," he said with a shrug of the shoulders, while looking at me somewhat puzzled because of my very idea.

His name was Benjamin J. Shevach. He was first to register and he remained first in terms of advanced knowledge, which he brought with him from abroad, and in his grasp and assimilation of new material. He completed the four year-year course in half that time. Years later he joined the Hebrew Teachers College faculty on which he served 13 years, and since 1947 served as Executive Director of the Boston Bureau of Jewish Education.

The ice broke! We now had our first student. Others would surely follow. A small group was collected, each differed widely in age,

background, Hebrew and general knowledge. Several transferred from the *Beth Midrash LeMorim* which still continued its sessions. Altogether, there were 13 students—men and women.

The first session was held on Sunday morning, November 27,1921 (26 *Heshvan* 5682), three months after we opened registration. Because of the disparity in age and knowledge, the 13 students were divided into 3 groups, the third consisting of three was much above the rest. The teachers were: Israel Haim Pollack, full time at 20 hours a week, and Solomon Zucrow, part-time at 6 hours a week. Later, Dr. Touroff began a course in Education with the oldest students. *All subjects were taught in Hebrew.* During those months of water-treading none of the Boston Hebrew teachers came to meet Dr. Touroff. It was crystal clear he had joined the nefarious scheme whereby "*Inglech*" youngsters would be trained to replace the full-fledged, heavy-weight teachers!

But work began. The first birth-pains were behind us and ahead of us was a vision!

The Hebrew College Arrives

Dr. Nissan Touroff, Dean of Hebrew Teachers College, 1921–26 (1923)

At the reorganization meeting on April 6, 1921 (27 *Adar Sheni* 5681), the Hebrew name "*Beth Midrash LeMorim*" remained unchanged and the name "Hebrew Teachers Training School" was changed to "Hebrew Teachers College." That was a wise step. A College commands prestige. In all of our publicity we stressed that American Jewry had to stand on its own feet and not rely on overseas for the supply of our elementary needs for people of knowledge. All the benefits derived from the services of European trained teachers were of great value, and every effort had to be made to retain them in our ranks. The public generally had no conception of the suspicions and fears of the Hebrew teachers. At

the same time we had to a make a supreme effort to begin producing our own well-trained Hebrew teachers.

The celebration in honor of the opening of the College was set for November 16, 1921. It was held in the College auditorium. The speakers were Rabbi Harry Levi of Temple Israel, Rabbi H. H. Rubenovitz of Congregation Mishkan Tefila, Rabbi Louis M. Epstein of Congregation *Beth HaMidrash Hagadol*, Rabbi Samuel Abrams of Temple Ohabei Shalom, Dr. Touroff, Dr. Maurice B. Hexter and me. Dr. Leon S. Medalia presided. Dr. Touroff made an excellent impression. All greeted the oncoming new era in Jewish education. Elihu D. Stone made an encouraging impression at the head of a delegation of Amos Lodge, *B'nai B'rith*. He greeted the institution and announced that *B'nai B'rith* had created an annual $200 Hebrew Teachers College scholarship.

Because of the inequalities of their backgrounds, the College students were placed on a temporary curriculum. Also, the curriculum for all four years was subject to changes.

Freshmen spent 10 hours per week; Sophomores—10; Juniors—13; and Seniors, including time for practice teaching, studied 20 hours.

As to general education, graduates would have to complete a full High School course or its equivalent. Three students, who recently arrived from overseas, did not know English. They were too old to go to public school, and they worked during the day, so we gave them a private English teacher who taught them for about 2 years.

Dr. Touroff placed homework in the very center of the student's program. Unless one devoted several hours a day to homework, and extra hours on Fridays and Saturdays, when there were no College sessions, there was no chance to succeed. To meet this requirement, the student needed time and willpower. Except for those who worked during the day, all the others attended High School where the curriculum did not impose much homework. Students had quite a few free hours each day. But trips to and from the Hebrew College, the sessions and the assigned home work took up all the free hours and, at times, even more. That was possible only when the student had enough mastery over himself, otherwise there was plenty of competition for his free time such as sports, free play, avocations, playing an instrument or belonging to a club. All these have a rightful place in the day of a typical adolescent; but we dealt with the exceptions, who readied themselves for a profession that was the very foundation of Jewish life.

Here only superior will-power would prevail, and Dr. Touroff revealed himself as the greatly gifted educator that he was. He said, "*Superior will-power must be created.*" For this purpose he arranged informal meetings with small groups outside the regular sessions. Attendance was voluntary. He called them *sihot*—chats.

In these informal talks Dr. Touroff tried to discuss the basic urges for Jewish education, Jewish life today, the strategic function of the teacher and how he creates new worlds, how a teacher can condition the children of today for the world of tomorrow, and the aspirations of the teacher and the horizons that he envisions. The promise that the Jews would become a guiding beacon in the world lies with the teacher. The teacher is the greatest force in our life and is peerless. But this exalted position cannot be attained offhand. It requires hard work, day by day, week by week. One would teach but also study, never stopping to be the disciple of our great men who graced us age after age, and who recorded the best creations of their minds in old parchments, which are now between book covers.

Tradition tells us that the Ten Commandments were given to each Israelite *in accordance with his capacity to conceive.* These ideas were presented by Dr. Touroff in different forms and approaches to each group *in accordance with its assimilative capacity.* I said that attendance at these chats was voluntary, but they were so enchanting, gripping and provoking that they became the most precious part of the curriculum. Dr. Touroff was a superlative teacher and a rare conversationalist. The chats were informal with room for questions. With delicate sensitivity he knew how to find a way to the innermost feelings of his listeners. Step by step he raised the appreciation and understanding of the ultimate goal.

His was an all-embracing grasp, a delicate approach which touched the heart. Touroff's voice was like quiet music that fused with one's being, and bit by bit the end aim became clear and his determination was slowly lined with iron. A flame was lit in the heart, a holy flame, steady and full of love for the Torah, the people and the spiritual world of the people. No wonder Dr. Touroff could lay down plans which appeared to outsiders like chasing rainbows. His words gripped; the students enthusiastically gave themselves to their studies with assiduity and conviction.

That was a pedagogic achievement of a master teacher!

But, there were also other ingredients which invigorated the process, such as the Classroom Sessions. From the very first day everything was carried out in an orderly and punctual fashion. No

detail was unimportant; everything was planned beforehand. At the first ring of the bell Dr. Touroff stood near the door, watch in hand, greeting everyone. Late arrivals saw him standing there. He said nothing, but pain was written on his face, and who would willfully want to cause pain in this handsome man?

Like Dr. Touroff, the teachers approached their tasks as priests to a service. All was prepared and calculated. At the end of each lesson the teacher entered in his Class Register what he covered during the session. And the teachers were masters in their calling! They, too, regarded their work as a holy performance. Invisible rays emanated from the teacher to the students, and at the end of each session every student felt not a moment was wasted. He acquired something. The students felt that mutual respect prevailed between teacher and learners and the respect of the teacher to his students conditioned their attitude to him. Thus the atmosphere of the classroom was characterized by the warm human relationship obtained there.

Each lesson terminated with an explanation of the homework assignment, which was substantial but normal. Every student felt that the class would function best only when every member fully met his own task as an organic part of the institution. Just as all the parts of the living body cooperate for the sake of good health and normalcy, so in this institution every detail done well contributed to the total good and altogether constituted an educational entity the likes of which Jewish Boston never had.

There were three achievement tests each year. They were all-embracing, searching and probed the amount and extent of what was acquired. There was also an oral test, which probably was the most serious. Students felt the tests were meant not to trip them but to demonstrate to the teachers as well as to each student personally what was really gained since the last test. The teachers would rather give good marks; for days before the tests the teachers came early. They meant to be available to students who needed private help or an explanation of details which were not quite clear. That, too, indicated teacher interest in each and every student. That "each student must be enabled to do his own best" was basic to the entire educational apparatus.

Normalcy

Two developments aided in bringing normalcy into the entire situation:

1. The classes of the original *Beth Midrash LeMorim* no longer had a *raison d'etre*. They were replaced with much more intensive classes aimed to overcome the chronic shortage of qualified Hebrew teachers. From the outset Dr. Touroff refused to interfere with these classes. He started with a fresh group of students, whose splendid work showed there was no rhyme or reason to continue the others. Three months after Dr. Touroff started, the original classes were dissolved, quite a few of the students registered with Dr. Touroff, and we ended the first year with 23 students.

2. With all the other students, most of whom were assistant teachers, we continued the two Hebrew sessions a week on Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon on the same level they had been studying up to that time. Thus, while nothing constructive was abolished, the main effort was with the new intensive group.

The Hebrew Teachers College—Second Year; and the *Prozdor*—the Hebrew High School

As time passed, there were new students. Dr. Touroff wanted to engage a new teacher, a Mr. Jacob Newman, from Palestine who had been in Cleveland one year and was now in Philadelphia. Dr. Touroff knew him as a superior teacher, a real Talmudist, a fine Hebraist and a man of excellent character. The only question was whether or not he would agree to join us. Dr. Touroff suggested that I go to Philadelphia to see him.

I met Mr. Newman and was soon convinced that I was talking to a gem of a man. He was Principal of a Talmud Torah but wanted a change and had heard about our institution. He agreed to teach 20 hours a week for $2,400 a year. I told him that his salary would be somewhat less than Mr. Pollack's (who got $2,600 a year) since he was still new in America and to us. In September, 1922, he arrived and remained in Boston for 19 years until his untimely passing in 1941.

The school year closed at the end of June. July was set as sort of summer session for those who failed in some subject or felt weak in one or more areas and wanted to be better prepared for next year. Pollack and Zucrow took care of this session. The summer session for the weak lambs continued for about half a dozen years, then it was abolished and July and August became vacation months.

In our second year, the total registration had grown to 50 students: 26 Freshmen, 20 Sophomores, and four in the higher grade

consisting of those who came from overseas with a substantial background in the subject matter. There was particular satisfaction with the registration of Oscar Feinsilver of Worcester, Massachusetts, which is 40 miles from Boston. Daily, Oscar traveled 80 miles in order to attend our institution. We had another out-of-town student, Ruth Sheinfield, from Manchester, New Hampshire. Like the *Yeshivah* students of old, this young girl left her home to live and study in Boston. These two proved that real love for Torah resided in the hearts of the growing generation who had a chance to begin early in a good elementary Hebrew school. Difficult as it was for these fine young students, they braved everything, and after four years were graduated as Hebrew teachers. In the Special Courses, which met on Saturday evenings and Sunday afternoons, 26 registered, most of whom were assistant teachers who began at the first *Beth Midrash LeMorim.*

The increase in registration resulted from the fine cooperation gained by the College and also from the change of heart by the Hebrew teachers. Dr. Touroff made a sagacious move by inviting the *Agudath HaMorim* to send a regular representative as a guest to the Faculty meetings. The *Agudah* sent its President, Leon Bardin. At the meetings curriculum details were discussed. Each teacher reported in detail on the progress of every class in each subject. The inner life of the institution, reflected in the minutes of these meetings, added up to a record of a very busy institution. That and the favorable comments circulated in the community impressed the teachers and they became active participants in the College's constructive aim. They began to sing the College's praises in their classrooms, and at the opening of the second year students came from various Talmud Torahs and even from nearby communities. From neighboring Cambridge, where an excellent school operated, seven graduates registered. During the coming years that rather small community had at one time 20 students in the College.

A student society, "*Hatikvah*," was devoted to social and literary activities. Celebrations were arranged in honor of the holidays. There were also theatrical performances, outings and games. Enjoyable social life became a habit at the College.

Among those who registered at the opening of the College were a few who studied in Europe before they came to America. A four-year course would prepare them well for Hebrew teaching. However, in the second year most of the new students were American products. All of their Jewish education was acquired in local

Hebrew schools. It was evident that the local products needed a longer course. The faculty suggested a 2-year pre-College course that would be on a Hebrew High School level, followed by the four years of Hebrew College. This meant an added expense which had not been in the budget. The College Trustees decided to present the problem at a special meeting of Talmud Torah representatives together with rabbis of the larger synagogues. Some College Trustees would also be present. Dr. Touroff addressed the meeting and said that essentially it was a Talmud Torah problem. It was they who depended upon the College for their teachers, and it would be they who would lose educationally if the teachers were ill prepared. Two Hebrew High School classes should be formed requiring 20 teaching hours a week, or a new full-time teacher. With other expenses that would cost $3,000 a year. What could the school and the synagogues do?

There was a lengthy discussion. The schools maintained that without their supplying incoming students there would be no College, and that they had their hands full trying to meet their own budgets! Essentially, they were right. Theirs was a never-ending struggle. On the other hand, the synagogues were affluent. They began to engage rabbis at lucrative salaries. They also began to erect costly buildings, but they were parochial with regard to community problems.

I reported to Dr. Hexter. "Go ahead!" he said, and the problem was solved. On September 1, 1923, the first High School class was opened.

A Principals Association Is Formed

After establishing contact with Dr. Touroff the teachers became convinced that they gained a real friend. Dr. Touroff knew how to make this good will productive. At the beginning of the second year, when many new students registered, the differences among the Talmud Torahs stood out. It was very difficult to teach the graduates of the Talmud Torahs as a group. The schools differed in their emphasis on the choice of biblical books studied, Hebrew and its use in reading and writing, and in the methods of instruction. In talking with individual principals, Dr. Touroff pointed out that obstacle and he brought up another point: The *Beth Midrash LeMorim* aimed not only to train teachers but also to enthuse young people to study *Torah Lishmah*—study for the sake of study. Not all students would become teachers, but every new day the College

added that much to the Torah knowledge of the growing generation. Therefore, this led to the conclusion that the Talmud Torahs had to adopt a uniform program of studies. Only then would their graduates achieve maximum gain from their College attendance.

At the very inception of the Talmud Torah organization in Boston in 1917, when the Associated Hebrew Schools had just come into being, the problem of a uniform curriculum for all schools was raised. The first steps were taken, a general framework was proposed, and then it froze into inaction until Dr. Touroff began to discuss the subject with individual principals. He convinced them that the principals ought to meet from time to time to discuss matters pertaining to them. That would not trespass on the area of *Agudath HaMorim*. The principals began to get together to deal only with education problems until the Principals Association emerged as an entity. Its constitution stated that it consisted of Talmud Torah principals, the Dean and Faculty of the Hebrew Teachers College and the Superintendent of the Bureau of Jewish Education. It aimed to standardize and improve Jewish education.

The participation of the College faculty helped to keep deliberations on a high level. Dr. Touroff presided, and it became a tradition that the Dean of the College be the head of the Principals Association. That tradition obtained for about a quarter of a century until the Principals Association merged with *Agudath HaMorim* in 1946.

In 1924 all prospective Talmud Torah graduates participated in a Joint Examination. Members of the College faculty marked the papers, and all who passed the test were admitted to the Hebrew High School freshman class. That lent impetus to the spread of a uniform curriculum for all schools. Every school took pride in the number of its graduates who passed the Joint Examination. The idea of joint examinations was expanded in 1929 into periodic achievement tests for all grades of the Greater Boston Hebrew schools (excepting Grade 1), to be given twice a year.

The elaboration of the Uniform Curriculum took about 2 years. Jacob Newman was Chairman of the Curriculum Committee which adopted a standing rule to include in the proposed curriculum only such matter which at least one of the participating principals had found workable in his school. That made the entire curriculum practicable and within reach. At the regular meetings the principals went through every detail of the proposed curriculum with a fine-toothed comb before it was finally approved and adopted for all the

Greater Boston Hebrew schools. From then on the teachers and principals advocated that curriculum in their own schools. This effort toward the adoption of minimum curriculum standards which came from within the teaching ranks proved a lasting blessing in maintaining quality education in Boston schools. Of course, despite the serious attempt at basic uniformity, individual differences among schools continued due to factors such as differences in length of daily sessions, number of school hours per week, size of classes, differences in pupils' age and primarily the differences in ability and capacity among teachers. Yet the positive, unifying elements outstripped by far the divisive factors.

Agudah Ivrith

In Boston an *Agudah Ivrith* (Hebrew Speaking Society) existed which hovered between life and death. Its members met once or twice a year, and it ceased all efforts for two years. However, Dr. Touroff put new life into it. He invited not only Jewish educators but also the Boston *Maskilim*, those Hebrew scholars including Dr. Ben Zion Weiss, who loved Hebrew with all his soul and owned a good-sized Hebrew library, Dr. M. J. Berman, who also had a fine Hebrew library, and Dr. Boris Greenberg, Superintendent of the Beth Israel Hospital. The aim of the *Agudah Ivrith* was to disseminate Hebrew literature and to publicize Hebrew speaking. The program included many items found on the agenda of most Hebrew speaking societies but with a difference. With Dr. Touroff they did not remain merely paper resolutions. He presided at the meetings which included:

1. *A serious lecture.* Among the lecturers were Dr. Touroff, the College teachers, some of the local *Maskilim* and, occasionally, an out-of-town guest.
2. *An artistic period.* Instrumental or vocal music by local talent.
3. *Punctuality.* Every meeting opened exactly at the time stated in the invitations, something which the local teachers and *Maskilim* never experienced before. The meetings were opened even if only a handful of people were present, but since the lectures were instructive and interesting, members learned to come on time, which spelled dignity!

After the new wing of the College was completed in 1924 it had a large enough stage and auditorium so that Hebrew performances

could be staged there. The college auditorium was a well-ordered, warm, clean, well-lighted place which added up to an atmosphere of welcome. Hebraists already knew that College students presented fine Hebrew performances in honor of holidays or special occasions. A potential Hebrew audience thus existed in Boston.

Dr. Touroff was essentially an artist. He saw to it that within a few years the following plays were presented: *Mi Navi Ve'-yeda* by I. D. Berkowitz, *Ha-ḥozeh Roeh Et Kalato*, by H. Sackler, and *Yosse Ben Yokrath* by H. Sackler, and other plays. Performers included Zevi Slobbins, Aaron Rashish, Rebecca Rabin, Ḥayim Shevach, also the students: Frank Manuel, Joseph Diamond, Shifra Klayman and others.

In 1926, the celebrated *Habimah Ha-ivrit* came from Soviet Russia on a visit to the United States. At all the performances in Boston the house was filled and the *Habimah* whetted the appetite for a local amateur Hebrew stage.

The Hebrew performances at the College were well received and the auditorium was always filled. Within our limits they were in good taste and they helped to develop local talent. The *Bimah Ivrit* could have looked forward to an encouraging future, but with Dr. Touroff's leaving Boston in the summer of 1926, it lost its main motivating force. The *Bimah Ivrit* had some repeat performances, but without its main inner strength it disappeared.

The expansion of the College course of study to six years increased the total registration to over 100. When the building was purchased we thought the maximum number of students ever to be attained would be 75. Now all indications pointed to a constantly increasing total. For immediate relief we rented a vacant store across the street where the two high school classes met. The need for larger quarters grew apace. For the erection of a new building we needed men who knew how to raise funds. Luckily, we had such men: Max Shoolman, Joseph Rudnick, Morris Morse, Nathan Pinanski, Dr. Louis Arkin, and others. It was because of their standing at the Charities that we were granted permission to raise a Building Fund.

At first, we thought four classrooms behind the present structure would meet our needs, but upon further study it proved insufficient. The Board of Trustees then decided to build a large annex that would be big enough for further expansion for many years. Much assistance was given by Mr. Shalom Cabelinsky. The final building plan included the following:

The old and new buildings were connected and all rooms were airy and full of light. At that time (1925) the Hebrew Teachers College was better housed than any other teachers training school in America. It could comfortably accommodate 250 students.

The contractor, Mr. James Cantor, gave us a fine, well-planned, well constructed building that was ideally fit for its purpose. The new 3-story building measured 30 × 80 feet, and together with all its equipment cost $65,000. The Charities had allowed us to raise a Building Fund. Mr. Louis E. Kirstein, the outstanding Jewish personality in Boston, accepted the chairmanship of the campaign.

Construction on the new College wing began in the spring of 1924 and was completed in the Fall of the same year. The College family was jubilant.

The Library

The Library opened concurrently with the *Beth Midrash LeMorim* in the Spring of 1918, when two sessions totaling 6 hours a week were considered giant steps ahead. The first World War had still been in its see-saw stage. Rumor had it that the Germans, who captured Lithuania and Warsaw, destroyed all the Hebrew printing centers and among them the famous Rom Publishing House of Wilna, which published the finest edition of the Babylonian Talmud that had ever appeared. Now (1918) it was four years since Hebrew books stopped coming from Europe. Bookstores remained with practically empty shelves. One day I was told that a traveling book salesman was in Boston and that he had 40 volumes of modern Hebrew books for sale. I bought them all for $50. *That was the beginning of the Hebrew Teachers College Library.* From then on I kept a watchful eye on any possibility to get books. Shortly thereafter a Hebrew bookstore was opened on Causeway Street, West End, by a fine and learned man, I. Green. He had bits of the modern and the rabbinic literatures and helped us get small editions of books. After the building for the *Beth Midrash LeMorim* was readied in the Fall of 1921, I transferred all the material that had been collected in the Bureau of Jewish Education. The books took up less than one bookcase. Despite the fact that by then the World War had been over for more than three years, hardly any Hebrew books came from Russia to America. In Russia, internal wars continued incessantly. One evening a Boston Talmudist, M. G. Gordon, told Dr. Touroff that he had a *Shas*, a complete set of the Babylonian Talmud consisting of

18 volumes, which he wanted to present to the College. That was a gift from Heaven! About that time I also succeeded in getting additional collections of books.

That was how the Library began its slow growth.

The real beginning occurred in 1923. Rabbi Louis M. Epstein visited Germany. That was at the peak of the post-war inflation which developed in Europe and particularly in Germany. The American dollar was "King." Upon his return Rabbi Epstein told that he met a bookseller who offered a 2,000-volume library for $500. He thought the College ought to buy it. He brought along a catalogue of that library. It was a fine collection of Jewish works through the ages down to modern Hebrew literature. It also had Jewish works in foreign languages. It fitted as a basis for our library.

Among my insatiable desires was to build a great Jewish library in Boston which would not only serve the needs of the Hebrew Teacher's College but would be an institution where students and trained scholars could find what they needed for their own studies and works. When Dr. Touroff left Boston in 1926 we already had 3,000 volumes.

During the critical decade of the thirties, the Jewish book market suffered terribly. Buying a book was a luxury, and who could allow himself luxuries when the bottom fell out of the American economy?! In those crisis years I used to visit New York frequently. In all the Hebrew bookstores one could find bargains. Mr. Reznik, of the Reznik and Menshel store on East Broadway used to receive very large quantities of books in all fields of Jewish interest. He knew of my hunger for the Hebrew Teacher's College library and every once in a while he informed me of special sales.

Joseph Shenkerman was a traveling bookseller. He kept a select load of books in his car and carried them from place to place. On his way he picked up his wares from old people who dismantled their home and from heirs who could not even read the Hebrew titles on their father's books. At times he secured gems. Through him our library received a photographic copy of the Munich Manuscript of the Babylonian Talmud of which 200 copies were originally made, but many of them were lost in the wars, pogroms, immigration and especially in the ravages of World War I. We also acquired a 1657 edition of a Polyglot Bible in which the Hebrew text of the Torah is translated into eight languages and a complete set of the first Talmudic Encyclopedia, *Paḥad Yitzḥak*, by Isaac ben Samuel Lampronti (1679–1756), physician and Rabbi. One day Mr. Shenkerman sold us

315 unbound pamphlets. Later it was found that among them were copies of the published doctoral theses of many of the greatest Jewish scholars of the 19th century, some being very rare copies.

In 1929, Max Shoolman and Louis E. Kirstein bought Dr. Maurice B. Hexter's library, which consisted of 1,500 volumes including many works on the social sciences, and presented it to our library. The late Rabbi Louis M. Epstein, after his resignation from Kehillath Israel in Brookline, willed his very valuable library to the College. In such stages our library grew, and when I resigned in 1947 we had over 20,000 volumes in several languages.

The library project had been a co-operative effort which generated a lot of excitement. Among those who never relaxed their efforts were Dr. Hyman Morrison, Chairman of the Library Committee, and Dr. Harry A. Savitz. Even during the crisis years of the thirties there was one unfailing source of funds for the library. It originated and was nursed through the years by the New England Women's Association of the Hebrew Teachers College, and it deserves to be recorded. Through the years members donated in honor or in memory of certain events in their own families or in the families of friends whom they wanted to honor. This culminated in a Book Festival on the day of *Lag B'Omer,* which they designated as Library Day. In time, this project acquired thousands of books, duly inscribed, for the library.

A decisive change came with the appointment of Rabbi Joseph Marcus as Librarian in 1946. As a professional, experienced librarian he introduced a scientific cataloguing system, an effort which never ends in a growing library. This task requires wisdom as well as technical knowledge. In 1963 he retired to settle in Israel. The Hebrew Teachers College library is now one of Greater Boston's spiritual treasures.[14]

Inside the College

During Dr. Touroff's term of office (1921–1926) the following individuals were on the College faculty: Israel Ḥayim Pollack, since 1921, full-time; Jacob Newman, since 1922, full-time; Yishai Adler, since 1923, full-time; Solomon Zucrow, since 1921, part time, (ten hours a week in the Hebrew High School); Dr. Touroff taught Education, five hours a week.

Registration grew from year to year. At the end of the first year there were 23 students; at the end of the second, 50; at the end of the

third, 116; at the end of the 4th, 128; at the end of the 5th, 140. The numerical growth, however, was not an adequate measure which reflected the popularity of the College in Boston and other communities. Registration depended on the annual output of qualified graduates from the Talmud Torahs and Talmud Torah graduation was a relatively new phenomenon in Jewish education in America.

The Talmud Torah course of study was set for six years. Entrance examinations at the Hebrew High School were hard. Quality, more than quantity, was preferred. All this tended to circumscribe the number of entrants.

There were out-of-town students from Manchester, New Hampshire, Worcester, Lowell, and Haverhill, Massachusetts. There were also students from Boston suburbs, including Cambridge, Chelsea, Malden, Revere, Lynn and Somerville, which involved a total of 2 hours each day for travel. All of these students attended 2 schools, and did a quantity of home work for each school.

The 1925 and 1926 College graduating classes attended only four years each at the College. In the 1925 class more than half of the graduates were European-born, where they got a good basic start in the *ḥeder*, and some students even stayed for some time in a *Yeshivah*. The courses of the College were fitted to their level of knowledge. The American-born and trained students had to work harder year by year to keep pace with the European trained, and they did! In the 1926 graduating class there were only four European born students, and the other 8 were American. They followed the curriculum of the 1925 class in every detail.

Evidence of the thorough basic preparation of the 1925 and 1926 graduating classes was recorded in the 1925 students' year book, in which there is an historic treasure: a complete transcript of all the final examination questions given in June, 1925 in all subjects of all the classes of the College. The writer does not know of a similar record of all the final examination questions given in any responsible Jewish institution of learning. In 1925, nearly all the members of the four College classes were American-born. The examination questions take up 29 pages in the year book. The level of these tests could serve as a basis for comparison with present student achievement in our teacher training schools.

In all the subsequent years we did not attain the levels of knowledge achieved in those four years of study, culminating in 1925, and then matched again in 1926. As I already indicated, the success was the result of the massive home work done daily by the students, and

also because of their attitude to their Hebrew studies, which were considered equally important as the tasks of the secular college. The students knew they were attending a professional school where everything was planned to prepare them to be Hebrew teachers.

The Curriculum of the Hebrew Teachers College

Bibles: The Five Books of Moses, in the original, with Rashi commentary; the Early Prophets; all the Later Prophets; the Psalms, Proverbs and Job; Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah; the five Scrolls (particularly the Scroll of Ecclesiastes). All were studied *in toto* and in the original texts. Acquaintance with commentaries, other than Rashi.

Talmud: Mishnah, Aggadah and selected sections of *Gemara.*

Jewish History from the initiation of the Jews as a people to date.

Hebrew Literature: a) The *Haskalah* and the modern Hebrew literature b) Medieval Hebrew prose and poetry.

Hebrew and Hebrew Grammar: Hebrew Composition. A thorough course in the use of Hebrew and Hebrew grammar.

Spoken Hebrew: Oral tests in correct, fluent Hebrew speaking.

Codes: Jewish customs and ceremonies, based on the *Kitzur Shulḥan Arukh.*

Education: Principles of Education; Practice teaching, including school visit and several days of teaching under supervision.

Extra-curricular activities: Celebrations, students meetings, a student society (*Hatikvah*), choir, a student orchestra and physical exercises.

During the entire course Hebrew was the language used in the classrooms and among the students. The aim was to make spoken Hebrew an everyday experience, while in school and thereafter.

Together with the above tasks, which were hard, there was also much joy. The relation between teachers and students was friendly and cooperative. All felt that the College was the students' second home and that the teachers were devoted friends who exerted their utmost in behalf of their disciples. All these bound the students to their institution and to its requirements. It was axiomatic in our College life that sincere effort leads to success.

The First Commencement – 1925

On June 25, 1925, the first Commencement was celebrated. There were 14 graduates, 11 males and 3 females: Joseph Diamond, Leslie Flaksman, Eva Goldman, Leah Kaplan, Joseph J. Kekst, Sophie Klayman, Frank Edward Manuel, the youngest, just 15, Jacob Rotman, Samson Aaron Shain, Alexander Sidney Shefner, Benjamin J. Shevach, Aaron Schwartz, Max Simons, and Joseph Wilfand. Rabbi Stephen S. Wise was the Commencement Speaker. The Valedictorians were Leah Kaplan in Hebrew and Joseph Diamond in English. About 350 people jammed the College gymnasium.

Right after the 1925 Commencement the graduates met. Dr. Touroff said it was very important that they now organize themselves. They would then be able to proceed with some advanced studies, continue their bond with the College, while their numbers would grow. The Alumni organized and Joseph Diamond was elected President. Some of the Alumni joined the Board of Trustees of the College and rendered notable service both through the Trustees as well as through the New England Women's Association, where they took a prominent lead. The Alumni can point to some of the most prominent leaders in Jewish education as well as in Jewish scholarship throughout the world.

The Graduates as Teachers

The incorporation of the graduates as teachers was taken up with *Agudath HaMorim* long before the Commencement. Of course it was inconceivable that our graduates should *compete* with the other teachers who had done so much to enthuse the pupils of the higher Talmud Torah classes to continue their studies with us. Without this cooperation there would not be that steady supply of new students.

Two antithetical conditions confronted us: a) All the graduates had to be placed as teachers, else the enthusiasm for Hebrew teaching as a profession would chill and die; b) The graduate's salary must be sufficiently high, or there would be a tendency in the schools to replace the experienced, higher-paid teachers, with graduates. At the same time, if our men were to get a salary equal to the level of the experienced teachers they would not be employed since they were novices. However, the young teacher had to work, so to meet his growing cost of living the following was decided:

1. Every graduate was to receive $30 a week for full-time teaching (20 hours a week) and $15 a week for part-time teaching. That scale would apply to Boston and its nearby suburbs.
2. Graduates who serve in more distant communities would get more than $30 a week.
3. None of the alumni must solicit employment on their own. A Joint Placement Committee of the Bureau of Jewish Education and *Agudath HaMorim* acted as an intermediary. Schools would apply to that Committee which would then send Alumni candidates to them.

This plan satisfied everybody. The Alumni could fill only part of the growing vacuum, which had hitherto been filled with assistant teachers, who were generally regarded as sub-standard. Experienced teachers were paid more than the proposed Alumni, and great care had to be taken not to send an alumnus who might compete with an experienced teacher. Many schools were glad to get one of their former pupils as a teacher. Each year, all the alumni were placed.

One outstanding fact was that all the graduates taught at least for some years. Some remained in it for life while others stayed on for many years. This was true for many of the subsequent graduating classes, and thus helped to realize the hope of making the Hebrew College a true agent in the promotion of Jewish education.

The Second Commencement – 1926

In June, 1926, the second Commencement was celebrated. In addition to Frank Manuel, whose diploma was withheld the previous year because of his youth, there were 11 graduates. Among them were four girls (Oscar Feinsilver, Ruth J. Goldstein, William Metcalf, Anne Orris, Samuel Orris, Arthur I. Rapport, Morris Ravinsky, Anna Shapiro, Ruth Sheinfield, Isadore Austryn Stone, Bernard Wantman).

The Commencement speaker was Professor Nathan Isaacs of Harvard, who had been elected that year President of the Bureau of Jewish Education, and Vice-President of the College. The Valedictorians were Ruth J. Goldstein in Hebrew, and A. I. Rapport in English.

This graduation was an event in its own right. All of the first group of graduates were placed in Boston and out-of-town. Now another dozen teachers would enter the field. From now on the Col-

lege would annually produce an additional group of teachers, and the teacher shortage problem would soon no longer be a problem. In addition, American Jewry would be enriched with men and women, well-trained and knowledgeable, who would spread out, exert positive influence and slow down the trend of assimilation which thrived mostly on widespread Jewish illiteracy.

At this graduation ceremony, though, the main interest was on the change at the top, that is, Dr. Touroff's departure and the introduction of Dr. Samuel Perlman. He arrived from France the previous April and served as Assistant Dean. All oration dealt with this change and every one appreciated the basic, far-reaching contribution made by Dr. Touroff. The second Commencement ended with Dr. Touroff introducing Dr. Perlman as the new Dean amid much curiosity, hope and excitement.

Among the new graduates were Oscar Feinsilver, who traveled daily the 42 miles between Worcester and Boston for four consecutive years and Ruth Sheinfield, who left her home in Manchester, New Hampshire and settled in Boston to study at the Hebrew College. All the 1926 graduates studied for four years, followed the program, and achieved the quality of the preceding class (1925).

The members of this class published "Student Year Book II," which was larger than its predecessor. They published it at a cost of $600 which they collected through ads. All of them also joined the Alumni Association, which now became a nucleus of growing influence of young teachers in Jewish education.

The second Commencement bore evidence to the inherent vitality of the College. A new constructive force had evolved in Jewish America.

Dr. Touroff Leaves Boston

In 1923, the Trustees offered Dr. Touroff an agreement for a number of years thereby assuring the stability of the College. Dr. Touroff agreed to stay until two graduating classes had been produced, namely to the end of the 1926 school year. On that basis he was appointed for three years. At the time of this agreement his salary exceeded mine as Superintendent of the Bureau of Jewish Education, of which the College was a department. I advocated a level of salary that would be fully satisfactory to Dr. Touroff.

Dr. Touroff planned to go to *Eretz Yisrael* immediately after leaving Boston, but during 1926 he saw that he would have to remain for

some time in America. He then accepted a Professorship at the Institute for Jewish Religion which was headed by Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, who had tried four years earlier to have him join his institution.[15]

In 1926 the problem of a new Dean had to be solved. The new person had to be of no less stature than his predecessor. But in America there was no such educator available. We could not take one of lesser standing. It would do the College no good, nor would it help the new Dean. We then decided to bring a someone from abroad. Dr. Touroff canvassed among his friends and finally recommended Dr. Samuel Perlman.

Dr. Perlman was born in Minsk, Belarus. In his youth he devoted himself to Talmud; later he went to Germany, where he received his Doctorate. Afterwards, he settled in Palestine. There, he had several occasions to work with Dr. Touroff. Their last collaboration was editing the Hebrew Daily *Ha-aretz*. During World War I he was exiled to Egypt where he headed a Hebrew High School. Dr. Touroff knew of all this, and he proposed Dr. Perlman as his successor. The College Trustees accepted the recommendation, but there was a serious roadblock: an American entry permit! The need became more pressing when Dr. Touroff said the new man should work with him for half a year to familiarize himself with the details of the College.

The new anti-immigration laws, which were enacted in 1924, now operated in full force. No immigrant was admitted above the prescribed quota for each country as a teacher unless he had been professor in an institute of higher learning for at least two consecutive years prior to his application for admission. Where were the European Jewish institutions of higher learning from which we could draw upon for a person near Dr. Touroff's stature? Washington gave us a deaf ear. Elihu D. Stone, who then held a government position, arranged a special hearing for us. Several important Bostonians went to Washington for that purpose; I joined them. We pleaded before a Committee on Immigration and explained the importance of the College for the promotion of religious education. Thus far, Jews in America had not developed institutions capable of meeting our needs. We had, therefore, to import suitable talent from abroad. We now had such a man, and were asking that he be admitted above the quota. That plea, too, was in vain; but finally a way was found to get a permit and Dr. Perlman came right after Passover, 1926. His wife and only son remained in Palestine. He was alone all the time that he was in Boston.

Dr. Touroff had friends and admirers who were pained by his departure and expressed that feeling at the second Commencement. He left behind him an excellent institution that could serve as a model for other Hebrew teacher training schools in America. The small building that he found in 1921 had trebled in size and could accommodate 250 students. As against the 13 original students, there were now 140. The total of four years of study had been enlarged by a 2-year Hebrew High School preliminary course.

In the College many extension activities were carried on which pulsated with life and vigor. Prospects for further expansion and improvement were good. The early suspicions of the teachers had changed to mutual trust and an ardent desire to cooperate and help. Dr. Touroff organized the Principals Association and revived and revitalized the *Agudah Ivrith*. Several *bon voyage* parties were held and in early July Dr. Touroff left for New York.

The College under Dr. Perlman – Expanded Curriculum

In September, 1926, the new school year began. The students already knew Dr. Perlman, but a serious problem confronted us during the previous summer vacation. Who would teach Dr. Touroff's subjects in education? In Boston there were many education professors. We could easily get one for a few hours a week. *But we had an iron rule that all subjects must be taught in Hebrew.* A non-Jew, even if he knew Hebrew, would not do, since he was not familiar with Jewish education in America, and even a Jewish professor had to know Hebrew. No such person was available in Boston, and we did not know of any suitable unengaged teacher elsewhere. Dr. Perlman, as a newcomer, could do nothing in that area, and it was up to me to find someone. I discovered that a recent arrival from abroad, Dr. A. Kohn-Shachter, was at home teaching Education. I met him, engaged him and the problem was solved.

Dr. Perlman found the College well-ordered and smoothly operating. Nothing of the earlier "labor-pains," which confronted Dr. Touroff in his early months with us, existed now. There was a well planned building, an excellent faculty, a comprehensive curriculum, a hearty attitude on the part of the elementary school teachers and an attitude of respect on the part of the community. No serious changes were warranted. All that was necessary was to continue within the trodden paths, and that was done. The incoming freshman high school class raised the total registration to 157. Dr. Perlman

taught six years, and I remember him well as a superior teacher and a thought-provoking lecturer.

Elihu D. Stone of Boston excelled as a public servant. The Zionist movement will some day inscribe his name in golden letters in the history of Zionism in America. In his youth in Russia he studied in *yeshivot*. He knew Hebrew, was an ardently active Zionist, and knew of the College from its inception.

One day he met me at the Bureau offices on Tremont Street in downtown Boston and said the Hebrew Teachers College ought to try to get a charter as a College. That would raise its status in the community as well as among the students. He detailed the necessary steps beginning with a petition to the Massachusetts Legislature. The State Commissioner of Education had to approve the petition first. The legislature would then have the petition go through several stages until it was finally brought as a bill before the legislature providing for the creation of a College having certain rights and privileges.

Personally, I did not believe the non-Jewish world could really help us maintain the vitality of our own institutions. However, being a chartered College with the right to award degrees would raise the status of Hebrew teaching and accord it dignity as a profession. That would help attract young men and women to Hebrew teaching.

I brought up the matter at a meeting of the College Trustees. Previous to that, I spoke to Dr. Hexter, and particularly to Professor Nathan Isaacs of Harvard, who was familiar with the phases of such propositions. They all gave their approval to the proposal. The board of trustees appointed a committee to examine it and prepare the text of the petition. The Committee was given full power to take all the steps necessary to obtain a charter. The members of the Committee were: Judge of the Massachusetts Superior Court David A. Lourie, a member of our Board of Trustees, Judge Jacob J. Kaplan, who in his early career was affiliated with Louis D. Brandeis, and Lewis Goldberg, who at that time was State Commissioner of Public Utilities, and some years later appointed Judge of the Massachusetts Superior Court. Professor Nathan Isaacs joined the Committee in its discussions. The following was decided:

a. that a Charter would be highly beneficial to the College;

b. that we should seek to award special academic degrees, not Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) or Bachelor of Science (B.S.);

c. that we apply for a maximum of rights to award degrees.

On this basis it was decided to apply for the right to award the degrees of Bachelor, Master and Doctor in each of the following three fields: Hebrew Literature, Hebrew Law, and Jewish Education.

Many years would pass before the College would be equipped to award all of these degrees. At the start, the Bachelor of Jewish Laws was all that we could afford to award. The degree of Hebrew Laws was meant for specializing in Jewish *Halakhah*, but without the title of Rabbi.

The committee decided to extend to me, as the originator of the idea of having a Hebrew Teachers College and as its founder, the honor of being the only signatory to the petition submitted in January, 1926. We were then advised to re-submit the petition toward the close of the year.

Before re-submitting the petition, I communicated with Dr. Payson Smith, State Commissioner of Education. His department would have to give its approval, and then the petition would be presented to the Legislature in the name of the State Department of Education. Of course, Dr. Smith could not express an opinion before visiting our institution. He saw it during the summer vacation, when he went through the building and examined the Library. I told him that the College was maintained by the Federated Jewish Charities, which represented all classes of Boston Jewry. I also explained why Jews maintained a system of schooling, supplementary to the public schools, and the need for American-trained teachers, for which the Hebrew Teachers College was the only source of supply for the New England Jewish communities.

Dr. Smith asked about the hours of our sessions. When I said that they were in the late afternoon and evening, he asked:

"And what will the students do during the morning and early afternoon hours during the four years that they'll be with you?"

"Most likely they will attend a secular college for their higher education," I responded.

"If you will add some secular education on a college level as a requirement for graduation from your college it will help greatly in getting my department's approval of your petition."

What a world of good this noble minded non-Jewish scholar did for Jewish education with his proposal! On our own we would not have dared to make such a requirement of our students, but by his condition, Dr. Smith made us realize our extra-ambitious hopes.

At the next meeting of the trustees I reported the substance of the conversation with Commissioner Smith. We had proposed to

extend our Hebrew High School course to four years, which would involve adding an extra 20 teaching hours a week, or a new full-time teacher, and that was a budgetary problem. The trustees decided to accept the proposal, and, if our financial condition would not permit us to introduce it in next year, we would simply postpone the proposal until we had the needed funds!

The trustees decided to accept Dr. Smith's conditions both as to entrance and graduation requirements, namely, that a degree would also require two years of academic study at a recognized secular college. So, I re-submitted my petition in the fall of 1926. The Legislative procedure required a public hearing in the presence of members of the State Department of Education. Six members of the committee were present, one of whom was Edward Filene, one of the most prominent Boston Jews. From our side the following attended: Prof. Nathan Isaacs, President of the Bureau of Jewish Education, which maintained the College; Dr. Maurice B. Hexter, Executive Director of the Federated Charities, which supplied the funds to the Bureau for the maintenance of the College; Dr. Leon S Medalia, President of the Board of Trustees of the College; Rabbi Harry Levi, of Temple Israel, who was well-known to the members of the State Board and was regarded as one of the foremost leaders of Boston Jewry, and I as the signer of the Petition.

Prof. Isaacs and Rabbi Levi were the chief spokesmen. Members of the Board asked for an itemization of the course of study, which I gave. At that session we emphasized that graduation from high school would be one of our entrance acquirements, and that a minimum of 2 years of study in a recognized college would also be required to receive a Hebrew teacher's diploma but no degree.

The next step was the appearance of representatives of the College at a hearing before a specially appointed committee of the Legislature. Prof. Isaacs, Rabbi Levi, Dr. Hexter, Dr. Medalia and I attended. Now, Dr. Payson Smith was the chief spokesman on behalf of the College. He spoke about half an hour and then introduced Prof. Isaacs, who supplemented Dr. Smith's statements.

On December 29, 1926 the Massachusetts Department of Education transmitted the petition and accompanying bill (which I authored) of the Hebrew Teachers College of the City of Boston to authorize the College to grant the degrees of Bachelor, Master and Doctor of Hebrew Literature, of Hebrew Laws and of Jewish Education to its graduates. The bill was passed unanimously by the House of Representatives and the Senate on March 13, 1927, and was

signed by Governor Alvin Fuller on March 15, 1927, and thereby made into law. The pen with which the Governor signed the bill, together with a letter by the Governor, and a copy of the bill and the Charter were then forwarded to the College.

Sixteen men were named in the Charter as the Organizers of the College Corporation: Abraham K. Cohen, Maurice B. Hexter, Abraham S. Hirshberg, Louis Hurwich, Nathan Isaacs, Albert W. Kaffenbergh, Louis E. Kirstein, David A. Lourie, Leon S. Medalia, Morris Morse, Nathan Pinanski, Milton J. Rosenau, Meyer J. Sawyer, Max Shoolman, Nisson Touroff and Harry A. Wolfson.

The Charter covered a very wide mandate, which only decades of successful growth would fulfill. All the stages named were *permissive, not obligatory.* The granting of the College Charter made us all rejoice, and the College rose greatly in status among New England Jewry. The right to grant degrees was of more than local significance. It interested many communities and from far and wide congratulatory messages were received. Until then there was only one Jewish educational institution which had received the right to grant an Academic degree. In 1919, the Baltimore Hebrew College, headed by Dr. Israel Efros, was granted the privilege of awarding the degree of Bachelor of Hebrew Literature, and that was considered an event! Now our College was permitted to grant degrees of Bachelor, Master and Doctor in each of three fields: Hebrew Literature, *Halakhah* and Jewish Education.

Post-natal Pains

The extension of the Hebrew High School course from 2 years to 4 raised some serious issues. It did not affect those who were already in the College. That meant that two classes would graduate without having had any of the Hebrew High School work. In our present condition we were confronted with serious difficulties. If we said that the new arrangement would apply only to those who entered the Hebrew High School the following year then *eight years would pass* before we would produce graduates on the Charter level (4 years in Hebrew High and 4 in our College) and during the next six years we would be graduating (from the classes that were already with us) teachers who by our own programs would be rated sub-standard. Even disregarding the Charter, it had already been recognized that the two years of Hebrew High School were insufficient.

A moral issue was involved here. Those six sub-standard graduating classes we would produce would teach thousands of pupils who would be short-changed by their inadequately prepared teachers. By what right could we inflict this loss upon them? On the other hand, the students who were already with us had a strong case. By registering them we entered into a reciprocal agreement; that is, you, the students, have before you a course of study for so many years. You undertake to abide by the obligations the course of study imposes upon you including regular attendance, meeting lesson assignments, etc, for so many years. The institution promised you certain rights: evidence at every stage, year after year, that you complied with all requirements, and at the end of six years you would be entitled to a teacher's diploma. On that basis the students invested one or more years of effort. Time is irrevocable and could not be refunded to the students.

If the lower classes had not yet made a serious time investment, the situation with the upper classes was different. What about the College juniors and seniors who were soon to graduate? Shall they, too, have to stay in for two more years?

There was also a serious financial aspect. Graduates were getting $30 a week. In 2 years this would have added up to $3,000 for each student, and they certainly were not so rich as to forego such a sum simply because we wanted to achieve a higher standard.

The faculty, of course, sided with introducing the new program the following year but the students had their own claim to have their day in court. We first spoke to the students of the upper classes. We described how the Charter would dignify the College and Jewish education. We posed the question of the 2 added years, beginning with the Seniors, who were scheduled to graduate that year (1927). We analyzed the inherent factors and had to consider that attendance at the Hebrew College spelled a daily financial loss to each and every student since he could have invested the hours he spent here in some remunerative occupation. The fact that our students made no such calculation showed they were motivated by altogether different considerations. Now it was just those considerations which did not center on money that urged the acceptance of the two added years, which would benefit the teaching of Torah immeasurably.

It should be recorded with deep satisfaction *that many students accepted the added years immediately.* But there was also opposition. Some could not bear the extra financial burden. They planned

ahead for years and had to abide by those plans. To others it was a matter of principle; that is, there was a reciprocal agreement which could not be renounced unilaterally.

The difficulty lay in the fact that both sides were right!

There were drawn out discussions and one thing became clear. We could not conduct two different courses of training, six years and eight years since the graduates of both programs would be accepted as full fledged teachers.

An impression that an injustice was practiced in the College could have ruined it! We had to find a formula that would meet with all around approval, and such approval could be gained only by personal contact with the students. This formula was worked out:

1. The Charter provisions would take effect immediately.
2. The members of the present Sophomore, Junior and Senior classes would be awarded temporary diplomas, entitling them to teach part-time only, *provided* that at the same time they continued to attend the Hebrew College two more years, at the completion of which they would get regular teaching diplomas.
3. The present Freshman Class would have to attend on the basis of the 8-year plan (4 years High School and 4 years College), with no temporary diplomas in between.
4. Beginning with the next school year, and continuing for three consecutive years, 1927–28, 1928–29, and 1929–30, the Senior classes would have their Sunday sessions on Sunday afternoons, and on Mondays, Tuesdays Wednesdays and Thursdays their sessions (to be held in the evenings) would enable those Seniors, who wanted to do so, to teach part-time, from 4:00 P.M., and earn their full secular College tuition fee and also save enough for small personal expenses.
5. No temporary diplomas would be given after 1930–31.
6. Those who receive temporary diplomas and did not continue to attend the Hebrew College to cover the 2 additional years of study, would not be classed as Graduates or Alumni.

The above straightened out almost all kinks. All students would comply with the requirements of eight years of study, after their six years of elementary attendance in a regular five-day-a-week Talmud Torah. Those who wanted to earn some money, especially for their

secular college, could do so. Their potential financial loss would be made up later by their higher status as better-prepared teachers.

The plan was presented to the trustees and approved. The trustees also decided to conduct graduation exercises in each of the coming intermediate years, though only temporary diplomas would be given.

Through all of the above one fact stood out—ours was a wonderful group of students! Only 6 years before, the general feeling was that "young Americans must first lose their minds before deciding to sacrifice four long years to become Hebrew Teachers." But not only had increasing numbers of students registered, now we also had introduced another two years and that, too, was accepted!

Those two added years confirmed my life-long belief that even in our own times our precious youth could face very trying tests when confronted with the study of Torah. The two added years had no effect upon the registration in the new high school freshman class. A full-time additional teacher was now needed, so Dr. Nathan Ben-Nathan joined the faculty in September, 1927. He remained with us 7 years. In 1935 he left for Palestine where he settled permanently.

Reverend Smith

It was already related that missionary activity was widespread in Boston, and that it was deeply resented by the Jews. I recall how I used to see at Scollay Square, opposite the Court House, a man wrapped in a *tallit* who had singers and instrument players with him. The program opened with music. People gathered and then the *tallit*-wrapped man proceeded with the customary missionary style of preaching. Passing Jews paid no attention to him. In general, Jews don't mind missionary preaching which is done openly. The story is different when it is done among children. Such activity was carried on by a man named Reverend Smith.

He was clever and energetic. He used to say that he never meant to divert Jewish children from their religion; he was rather interested in having them stay religious. But, since the Jews proved by their daily conduct that their religion played no part in their lives, he stepped in and tried to create something more effective from a merger of what was best in Christianity and Judaism. In time, he visited all the Jewish spiritual leaders of Boston. He also visited me, but at that time I did not know who he was. Upon entering a Jewish home he used to kiss the *Mezuzah* at the door. He acquired some Yiddish and Hebrew words and employed them in talking to ordinary people. He frequented the poor sections, was particularly interested in youth, and organized several clubs. He concentrated on the West End where over 30,000 Jews lived. His apartment had a meeting room. Local churches lent their facilities for interviews and for classes of children and youth. He worked quietly, as a sort of social service, and children responded as they always do to a friendly approach.

In early summer of 1922 word spread that a 14-year old Jewish boy, who had been in contact with missionaries, converted to

Christianity. People were shocked. Amos Lodge of the *B'nai B'rith* called a meeting of representatives of various organizations. The meeting reflected people's agitation: we had lost control of our own children! They could be snatched from us. How far might missionary influence reach? As Superintendent of the Bureau of Jewish Education, people turned to me for guidance. An angry public demanded action. I promised basic, anti-missionary action. I found the help I needed from an unexpected source.

The following July my friend Emanuel Gamoran of New York invited me to be his guest at a summer camp near Springfield, Massachusetts. I spent a weekend with him. That was my first chance to see a well-organized summer camp. The owners were four Jewish High School teachers who, with their wives, took charge of the management of the camp. There were 150 campers. I was intrigued by the fact that parents relegated to strangers the care and responsibility of their children 24 hours a day for two months, and the project worked!

Two weeks later I received an invitation from another friend, Dr. Mordecai Soltes of New York, to spend a weekend with him at another camp which was of a different complexion; its program combined play with study. That interested me, so I went. The name of that place was "C.J.I. Camp,"[16] located in Central Valley, N.Y. It was bigger than the other camp, having 215 campers of different ages. 70 adults were employed as counselors, kitchen help, and in other services. The Director was Miss Leah M. Konovitz, daughter of the well-known Jewish educator Israel Konovitz.

The camp program was interesting. Both boys and girls were admitted. Study was obligatory and their courses were in Hebrew, Jewish history, customs and ceremonies. Among the counselors were some experienced Hebrew teachers, who also taught.

Friday evening and Saturday morning religious services were held and they were attended by all the campers as well as all the camp adults. During the Sabbath meals a Sabbath atmosphere prevailed. There were chants and songs, and everyone seemed to be happy. Following the afternoon rest period, groups met with individual counselors. Talks, discussions, stories, songs and dances constituted the program. At the Sabbath exit there was an inspiring *Havdallah* service.

Counselors spoke well of the camp, which had then been in its 4th year. They also praised highly the very capable Camp Director

who managed a camp that was unique in America. They added that only about half of the campers stayed the whole season while the others came for only a three-week period. The Yiddish daily, *Tageblatt*, sent 50 poor children for a 3-week stay, by means of a fund raised by its readers.

I conversed with counselors, campers, teachers, workers and guests. My friend Soltes told me details which a short visit would not reveal. On Saturday evening I had a talk with the Camp Director, who headed the camp from the beginning. She said that initially the camp was started with a small group as an experiment. The camp succeeded and expanded from year to year. She added that she had just returned from an 8-month stay in Palestine where she was engaged as a teacher. She was called back to become the head of the camp. The camp was an integral part of the general program of the Central Jewish Institute of New York, which was responsible for the camp budget.

Miss Konovitz added that daily study was integrated into the camp program. Among the campers were children whose Jewish studies at the camp were the first that they ever had. Study in an all-Jewish environment obviously impresses deeply.

The camp intrigued me. I was also impressed with the Director. I had met many social workers before; in fact, in Boston there were quite a few women social workers who were particularly capable. But none of them had a Jewish outlook on life, since they had never gotten a Jewish education worthy of the name. Miss Konovitz was the first I had ever met. I invited her to Boston to join our staff and establish a similar kind of social service for Jewish children, and thus counteract the missionary influence of Reverend Smith.

The *B'nai B'rith*, who were the first to react to the conversion of a Jewish boy, and the West End Jews thanked the Bureau of Jewish Education for its successful counteraction of the missionary activity, which had run on until then unabated, and especially for stopping Reverend Smith, the cleverest and most active missionary. Now Miss Konovitz returned to her real task of conducting the Bureau's extension activities, which included the Sunday Schools. For Sunday mornings we rented a large meeting place on Washington Street, usually unused on Sunday mornings, and about 300 children were accommodated there.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOLS IN NEW GARB

A diametrical difference of opinion obtained about the Sunday Schools. In Reform circles, especially, it was assumed that the Sunday School provided the basic attitudes and information about things Jewish. For exceptional children one additional session per week might be conducted. It all depended upon the home, and the Reform home as well as many Conservative homes as well, had no oversupply of special hormones which excited an urge for more and more Jewish education. The simpler, the easier and the least burdensome were considered the best, particularly for girls. The children needed supplementary accomplishments, such as music, club life, etc. These had a primary claim upon the children's after-school hours. The Hebrew school, it was thought, took too much of their free time. This view largely nursed the Sunday School in America.

But there was also a different view; that is, *the Sunday School was seen as a screen for the poor appetite for Jewish studies.* Many of the Orthodox maintained that girls didn't need much Jewish education; *a taste is enough.* Also, in many homes the boys didn't take to the daily sessions of the Hebrew school. Sunday School supporters maintained that even a little was better than nothing. In reality, however, it was all a matter of appetite.

Miss Konovitz said: "Even in the Sunday School field we must find ways of increasing the appetite. Let us not conclude that this type is a forlorn cause. Maybe we can persuade parents to send their children twice a week, for two hours each time. We could then introduce some Hebrew, history, customs and ceremonies. Our children come from Orthodox and Conservative homes. Their parents would be happy to see us endow their children with a little more Jewish knowledge." I heartily agreed.

Miss Konovitz began meeting with the parents and pointed out how vital it was to increase the attendance from one to at least two times a week. Parents reacted favorably. Many agreed to pay $1.00 a month tuition fee to help cover the increased cost of the second weekly session. In September, 1924, three Sunday schools changed from one-day to two-day a week schools in the West End, South End and Mattapan. In the West End and South End the local centers of the Federated Charities, at 6 North Russell Street, and 11 Florence Street, were used. In Mattapan, the Charities had no center of its own. Also, the Sunday school there was particularly large. Jews kept moving into that section, but only one moderately-sized Hebrew school was there (*Hashaḥar*) which could not possibly accommodate all the newcomers. At that time there was a movement to open a new Hebrew school. Many children were potential Hebrew school candidates, but the new Hebrew school had not yet come into being. The Bureau Board, therefore, decided to rent a building in Mattapan and to maintain various classes there through the week. Such a house was rented at 1258 Blue Hill Avenue for $110 a month.

In compliance with the above plan, 3 Sunday schools were abolished and were replaced by 3 twice-a-week schools. For those children who, for one reason or another, were not absorbed in the twice-a-week schools, we continued to conduct Sunday schools. No Hebrew was taught in those schools. The Sunday schools go a full week from one session to the next. Altogether, there are about 30 sessions a year, with a full three months interval between one school year and the next. It would be an educational farce to say we should have taught Hebrew under such conditions. It was best to tell the truth, that under Sunday school conditions it was impossible to teach Hebrew and expect the children to remember anything after they left school. Even mechanical Hebrew reading cannot be retained unless the child *davvens* (prays) daily at his home, a practice rather infrequent in homes where children are not sent to the Hebrew school.

It was different in the twice-a-week schools. There we could at least familiarize the children with *Ivre* (mechanical Hebrew reading), and give them some feeling of Hebrew, the original language of the Bible. For that purpose, we employed teachers who knew Hebrew. Later, we even employed graduates of the Hebrew College who did not want to teach daily in a Hebrew school. Thus, all subjects were

taught by teachers who were much better informed Jewishly than those who taught at most of the Sunday schools.

About 600 attended the twice-a-week schools. Some children, especially in Mattapan, later transferred to Hebrew schools (once that type of facility was created there). Many continued until graduation, and it was from among them that pupils were recruited for the Extension High School, which also met twice-a-week for a total of 4½ hours a week offering a course of 3 years. Graduates of the Extension High School were admitted to a 2-year course for adults, meeting twice a week. Its graduates helped to meet the need for Sunday School teachers. All of this lasted until the outbreak of World War II in 1939.

In the twenties, the conversion of Sunday schools to twice-a-week schools was a revolutionary step, and helped to narrow the gap between them and the Hebrew Schools. The transfer of hundreds of children to the twice-a-week schools was not a fly-by-night innovation. It lasted for years and served as an argument against those in Jewish education who strove to make the whole web of Jewish education "less burdensome and easier." The effect of this step cannot be given in statistics but it was positive, and it reached many hearts.

This plan also countered the prevailing idea that the shrinking curriculum resulted from the fact that American Jewish children had no interest in Jewish education. That opinion was groundless. *It was not the children who did not want a more intensive Jewish education, but rather our spiritual leaders who did not want it.*

Our new version of two-day-a-week Sunday Schools proved Herzl's saying, "Will it and it will be a fact!"

New Talmud Torah Buildings

It was already mentioned that in the early twenties new community buildings began to appear, immediately new Talmud Torah buildings. Several factors should be mentioned in our analysis of this phenomenon:

a. *Good schools deserved good housing.* For as long as "peddler teachers" and private *Ḥadarim* were the main dispensers of Jewish knowledge, Jewish education was a "necessary nuisance" (the boy "should know how to *davven*"). Any kind of housing sufficed for that, but there were new developments:

the organization of education on a community basis; the creation of the Bureau of Jewish Education; the opening of many new schools and the increased interest of many pupils to continue their studies until graduation, and, especially, the opening of the Hebrew College, which proved that there were young American students for whom Jewish studies was something serious. Even in America, Torah could find an asylum and, if so, the near-hovel condition of most schools was a crying shame. Daily, the children spent five hours in a beautiful Public School, and then they were crowded in shanties for their Jewish education. Could these undignified conditions lend dignity and respect in the minds of the children to what was done in those schools?!

b. *The longing to have the prosperity that had been with us stamp itself on our community interests.* Coolidge, the reticent President, was in the White House. There was a general belief he possessed a magic wand whereby prosperity would endure, therefore one could consider plans for expansion with an open purse to realize them.

At that time an interesting character trait of the American Jew emerged: progress meant erecting a new building. In America, the Jews desired to articulate themselves in new, fine community buildings, and the religious schools also benefited, ultimately.

c. *The presence of builders on Boards of Trustees.* Businessmen, artists, doctors, lawyers and other professionals customarily join the boards of many organizations. The same is also true for builders. Wherever a project for a Talmud Torah building was considered, one could find some builders on the school's board. They enjoyed prestige and publicity as building experts, this being a factor in pushing the project ahead. One basic shortcoming was that most of the builders were ignorant of the special needs of the Hebrew school, and because of this, some serious mistakes were made in the planning and construction of some Hebrew schools, which will soon be described.

Appreciation of the need to maintain children's respect for the Jewish school, plus the inner push by the builders, helped to generate local public opinion in favor of new school houses.

d. *The prosperity of the synagogues was another factor.* As many members of the community became rich, they felt that a beautiful new synagogue, "their own creation," would be a great prestige asset. That was a very healthy feeling.

At that time I made a very bad mistake of omission. Boston had many good Jewish architects. I could have called together enough of them to develop a model Hebrew School building plan that could have been a standard for the community. It would have meant prestige for the architects and the Bureau and, above all, it would have obviated the bad planning mistakes at some schools. I never did it, though. One reason for that oversight lay in the fact that no one thought at that time of "a Hebrew School building movement." Only in those communities where the Bureau helped to conduct building campaigns could they think of a standard school plan. Yet, had I taken that step, it would have been a real service.

The new buildings were created in the following order:

1. *Shaare Tefila,* 15 Otisfield Street, Roxbury, erected in 1921. Shalom Cabelinsky, whom I already mentioned, was the initiator. He was a remarkable person in many ways. He knew much about building, and had a fine understanding about the special needs of the Jewish school. (In fact, he helped in 1924 in planning the large addition to the Hebrew Teachers College.) The 4-story building cost $125,000. It had 20 classrooms, an auditorium and a playground in front of the building. The maximum seating capacity in each room was thirty. (Mr. Cabelinsky did that to block the tendency to fill the classroom, whatever its size.) That limitation was an excellent concept for a layman.

   Upon completion the school had a registration of over 500. The synagogue, Shaare Tefila, which built the school, also supported it. But as a school it had no luck. The school was located in one of the poor districts of Boston. Mr. Cabelinsky died several years later (in 1938). As Principals came and went, the school lost ground.

2. *Menorah Institute,* 222 Elm Hill Avenue, Roxbury. Erected in 1922 at a cost of $125,000, its two stories had 5 classrooms, an assembly hall seating 200, an office and a room for a library and meetings. That building was the product of the competition between the Beth HaMidrash Hagadol and Adath Jeshurun,

otherwise known as the Blue Hill Avenue Synagogue, both in Roxbury. At the completion of the Beth HaMidrash Hagadol in 1918, Rabbi Louis M. Epstein became its spiritual leader. He was a sensation. Until then, Boston Orthodoxy had never seen an Orthodox Rabbi who was also a real *Talmid Ḥakham*, a university graduate, a thoroughly Americanized person, and he was also a fine orator. That synagogue soon became a center of interest. Congregation Adath Jeshurun became jealous. The richest Orthodox Jews in Boston belonged to it. They engaged, as a counter attraction, Rabbi Raphael Gold. Events began to demonstrate the superiority of Adath Jeshurun, but it was a healthy competition. Nearby a very large plot was then for sale. Rabbi Gold planned to erect a multi-branched center on that site, of which a Hebrew school would be a part.

Before long, the synagogue realized the plan was beyond its ability to carry through. Half of the plot was sold and the other half was retained for a Hebrew school building. On *Kol Nidre* evening (*Yom Kippur*), Rabbi Gold made an appeal for the erection of a new Hebrew school building and a total of $107,000 was pledged. That was a record for any plan sponsored by Boston Orthodoxy. A modest-sized, very beautiful building was built.

3. *Beth El,* 6 Bradshaw Street, Dorchester, with three floors, 10 classrooms, one auditorium seating 1,000, one smaller auditorium, outside rooms. Cost: $175,000. It was dedicated November 27, 1924. Beth El Synagogue in Dorchester constructed this building in 1917. I found the Hebrew school, then named Moriah, in the vestry of the synagogue. It had a Principal and one assistant teacher. Later, the school was moved to 179 Glenway Street, Dorchester. At that time Joseph Levenson was the school president and David White was the builder. David M. Shoḥet was the Rabbi and Kaddish Waldman was the Principal.

The building was too wide and the ceilings in all the classrooms were too low. The auditorium cost as much as all the classrooms, which were under it. That meant a much larger mortgage, which stayed unpaid for many years and choked the school endlessly. Finally, this large school had much too small a yard.

In general, however, the school was well built. It is imposing from the outside, and even now (1953), 30 years after its

dedication, it is impressive. Most of those interesting years it had a daily roll of 400 pupils, and for about a quarter of a century it was the largest Hebrew school in New England.

4. *Mishkan Tefila,* 124 Elm Hill Avenue, Roxbury had two floors, 12 classrooms, a large auditorium and stage, offices and rooms for occasional need. Cost: $250,000, opened in 1925. From the start that building was too big. After all the work was done, the initiators realized they had too many rooms. They then assigned rooms to other purposes: 3 to a Jewish museum, one for a library, another for meetings, etc. The museum was the brainchild of the Rabbi's wife, Mrs. Rubenovitz, who invested much thought and ingenuity in it and was justly proud of it. The school had a large playground.

   The schoolhouse was an annex to Temple Mishkan Tefila, which cost about one million dollars and was at that time, one of the finest in America. The Temple building had no offices and other facilities for necessary services. The annex provided all these plus luxurious facilities for the school. The annex also served as a place for simultaneous meetings, celebrations, performances and weddings. Its main purpose, of course, was to house the Mishkan Tefila school.

   Rabbi Rubenovitz was the moving spirit in all that vast project. He was opposed to so many classrooms. "Where will we get so many pupils? From Franklin Park that just faces us?" But the laymen were carried away by their enthusiasm for bigness. The school building was planned well and done with good taste. About 300 children attended that school daily.

5. *Hateḥiah (Hebrew Educational Alliance)* in Roxbury. This school added an auditorium to its facilities, which cost about $25,000. That was the poorest school building job of that period. Everything was planned by laymen. The President of the school, Mr. Morris Feinberg, loaned most of the money needed for the building project. Ultimately, he lost his entire investment, the school was abolished, and the auditorium was converted into a small synagogue.

6. *Hatikvah* in Dorchester. Cost: $12,000. This small project began hopefully, but it ended in failure.

   One day a Committee, appointed by the School Board visited the Bureau asking aid in planning their school building,

which they intended to erect. The prominent architects Blackwell, Clap and Whittemore prepared an outline plan for a building with a capacity of 150 pupils. One day the School President told me that some members urged that the ceiling be raised from 11 feet to 14 feet. I told him that if you do that you'll have a *schul* not a School!

Some time later, I visited the place and saw that the ceiling was raised to 14 feet, much too high for a classroom. My warning was in vain. From the very start the building was a synagogue. The school was assigned 2 tiny cubby holes in the basement, which was worse than when residences were converted into schoolhouses. In that section of Boston there was a lot of good will for a good school. For years, effective teachers served there, but the building handicapped them. It was impossible to do real teaching there and they could not plan for a new school building because now they already had a schoolhouse!

7. *Dorchester-Mattapan Hebrew School in Mattapan,* with two floors, 8 large classrooms, a very large auditorium, 2 small halls and a very large plot, part of which served as a playground. Cost: $150,000.

   This project had wonderful possibilities and could have become the nerve center in that most populated Jewish quarter of Boston. But it threw away those possibilities. It cost me endless effort and heartaches, and at the end, only a part of the great program was realized.

I saw in that project an opportunity to create a center that would serve the entire family—the school child, the adolescent, and the adults—in ways that would be compatible with everyone's interests. Then it should be possible to develop diverse activities for the different elements of the district, all of them aiming toward one great goal, that is, to increase and deepen Jewish consciousness. All would be planned in terms of cooperation, rather than competition, between activities, as is so often the case. That goal was worth whatever time and energy it would cost. The architects Blackwell, Clap and Whittemore helped to draw up the basic outline of a building which would have a Hebrew School plus facilities which are characteristic of "Y" work, as follows:

a. 12 classrooms of varying sizes, an office and a Library.

b. Double partitions between some rooms. When open, the two rooms would become a small hall, suitable for meetings of societies and clubs.

c. A strong enough foundation and flat roof so that another floor could be erected, if there be need for it.

d. On the second floor, a large auditorium and two small halls.

e. A playground for the children.

f. Play facilities for the children of the neighborhood. That would include an elliptic running track, 8 laps to the mile, and, within the ellipse, 4 tennis courts, which would draw youth interested in sports.

g. In the basement there would be showers and a place for central heating.

The classrooms could accommodate 600 pupils in daily attendance. The total apparatus of the institution could serve several times that number of the Mattapan population. In this large Jewish district, which was still growing, there was no Jewish public institution except two medium-sized synagogues and some tiny houses of prayer. The street, with all its ills and dangers was the only place of recreation for children and youth. My plan was based on maintaining large-scale contacts with the neglected neighborhood youth. Those who would attend the Talmud Torah would also join some social activity, and those who would attend the social activities would be the raw material that the institution would try to win over Jewishly.

Such a program would become the foundation stone of the institution. The Federated Charities would become interested in it, even while it was in its early stages of construction. The Federated could not possibly withhold its support from an institution that undertook to fill a void in Jewish social life, which was really its own responsibility. With the Federated interested, the school could design a budget for the total program. The institution would then become a challenge for all of New England Jewry.

At the public meeting, however, it was apparent that I was ahead of my audience. The audience was not at all prepared for such a many-faceted program. They came to consider a Talmud Torah building, but I had added activities which had nothing to do with a Talmud Torah! What puzzled most was the large drawing of the

open space, a running track. What has a running track to do with a Talmud Torah?! The people added their own explanation and next morning word spread that Mr. Hurwich wants to organize horse races on the Talmud Torah grounds! I learned a lesson. New ideas must be fed very carefully, slowly and with a great deal of preparation of the public mind. I had not done that, and the audience perceived an absurdity instead of an all-around plan.

The committee could not raise even the minimum sum needed for starting the foundation. Had I brought a contribution of $5,000 from the Federated Charities, I could have exercised considerable influence upon shaping the plan of the whole institution. But the Charities were then trapped in a net of debts to such an extent that it could not pinch off even a few thousand dollars for so promising a project as we had.

One day I was informed that the School Board decided to lay a foundation for an 8-room building, which would be strong enough for an extra floor. On both sides would be open spaces for outdoor activities. In the meantime, Mattapan Jewry kept increasing and new members with means and initiative joined the Board. They began building and decided to erect a large auditorium alongside the classrooms because in all of Mattapan there was only one private hall, which had always been rented for weddings and celebrations. The Talmud Torah hall could also be used that way when not needed. In particular, it could serve the educational and social needs of Mattapan. On the High Holidays it could conduct services there and bring in substantial income for the school. Upon completion, the building had 8 excellent classrooms, of which 2 had movable partitions, which upon opening, formed a small hall. The auditorium could seat 1,000. Also, in the basement there were facilities: 2 halls and accessories.

When the school opened, 500 children registered. Mr. Zvi H. Slobbins, who started the Hashaḥar in 1916 and maintained it with his life's blood, died suddenly. (October, 29, 1928) His pupils transferred to the new school which looked glorious. Even now, after 40 years, it is still attractive in its fine setting with the open space on its right and left and the way it is set back from the sidewalk.

The Board, however, remained impotent. Many of its original members remained. They meant well but they needed new blood. The building had been deeply in debt and for many years it had been in a state of crisis.

The Mattapan Jewish population kept on increasing until more than half of Boston Jewry lived there. In all those years no social institution had been developed there. *The street remained the best liked place for Mattapan youth,* and, in time, the inevitable results of the street being the only recreation place began to emerge. Much can be said as a comment on the total community policy through the years, but that is outside the periphery of this book.

The large plot was ultimately reduced by half. When construction started, the Board sold the back half for $20,000, more than the cost of the entire plot. That, of course, canceled many of the social and recreational activities that were possible for the benefit of the district. Then came the critical thirties, followed by the World War years when all construction was restricted to war needs only.

In the early forties I was told there was support in the Board to convert the large auditorium into a synagogue. A new generation of workers came in. They did not realize that even the auditorium was built for the exclusive benefit of the school. A synagogue would ultimately deprive the institution of ever becoming a social center as well. I invited for consultation the Executive Directors of the Y of Roxbury and the Hecht House of Dorchester. We came to the conclusion that, for a relatively small outlay, the existing facilities of the building could be equipped for sports, youth gatherings and meetings so droves of young people could spend their free time with Jewish friends and under the direction of trained workers.

Simultaneously, the institution could engage them in some Jewish educational programs. I was told that the Philanthropies had a large fund for a social center in Mattapan, but that War conditions prohibited unnecessary building. I submitted to the Philanthropies the above plan for converting part of the school facilities, including the large auditorium, into a social center. I emphasized that a quick decision was imperative, otherwise the advocates of converting the auditorium into a synagogue would win out, and the present great opportunity would be lost forever. The school board gave me two months to bring in a positive answer from the Philanthropies. The Philanthropies appointed a committee to study the proposition. Two months passed and there was no report from the Philanthropies. The school board told me they decided in favor of a synagogue and they were in the market for a Rabbi.

I reported the board's decision at a meeting of the Philanthropies, pointing out that a wonderful opportunity was lost because of inac-

tion. An important member then said to me, "Mr. Hurwich, you now at least have the satisfaction that you were right."

My long-cherished hope of seeing a real Education-School-Center remained a dream.

New Buildings for Sunday Schools

Two splendid buildings were put up by Reform congregations for their Sunday Schools. The first was Temple Ohabei Shalom in Brookline, adjoining the Temple. It had 16 classrooms, a large auditorium, and a number of offices serving the combined needs of the Temple and the school as well as the Rabbi. Ohabei Shalom was the first synagogue in Boston (1843).

The second building was erected by Temple Israel in Boston. It had 20 splendid classrooms, equipped with the best school equipment obtainable at that time. It also had an auditorium seating 600, part of a large building plan which, as was mentioned previously, was never fully realized. To the credit of these two Temples it should be recorded that each began its extensive building plans with a schoolhouse. In the case of Temple Israel, the school facilities and the auditorium, known as "The Meeting House," were as far as the planning could go. The 1929 economic crisis ended all further planning.

Thus during the twenties a veritable metamorphosis was effected in the housing conditions of nearly all schools in Boston. Most pupils were taken out of the vestry rooms of synagogues and homes that had been converted to schoolhouses. The community accepted the idea that a schoolhouse had to be originally planned and built as a school. Within a decade, Boston created a chain of school buildings that were a credit to the community.

Having largely solved the school housing problem, Boston could now apply itself to education proper. To what extent we succeeded in retaining our children in the fine buildings that were theirs to attend is a chapter on its own, and I will deal with it elsewhere. It should be stressed here that by far most of the money needed to erect all those structures were funds borrowed from banks guaranteed by private individuals. Most of the signatories were members of the building committees who volunteered their time and efforts. All this was done in the belief that they who helped to erect those luxurious buildings would also help to liquidate the indebtedness.

A Uniform Curriculum for All Boston Hebrew Schools

Having described Boston's fine school buildings, what was done inside those buildings?

When I described the formation of the Principals' Association through Dr. Touroff's influence, I also told how bit by bit a uniform curriculum was adopted for the greater Boston Hebrew schools. Hebrew Teachers College faculty voluntarily harnessed themselves to the elementary school tasks. From the very beginning one basic rule was laid down: *to include in the proposed curriculum only such elements which at least one of the Boston Principals had succeeded in attaining in his school.*

In those days courses of study were presented in many communities by individuals and by organizations. *All had one characteristic in common: they were not realistic.* They included many subjects, and much territory in each subject. On paper such programs were very encouraging, except for one thing: the Hebrew schools were miles below and behind them. It became a matter of habit. Put all that you want on paper. It does not obligate you, and it didn't! We determined to construct a curriculum that we could and must live by, maintaining the highest standards that were within our reach. After two years of study, preparation, and sifting of each item at the meetings of the Principals, a six-year course of study for all the greater Boston Hebrew schools was adopted. It included a six year course, with five sessions a week each year. The main elements:

- In the first 2 years, 7½ hours a week. During the other four years, 10 hours a week.
- The first 2 years were essentially biblical-preparatory.

- All subjects, except in the first few years in Jewish history, were to be taught in Hebrew.
- During years 3 through 6 (totaling 4 years) the following was to be covered in the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, using abridged texts such as Scharfstein's *Sipurei Hatorah* or Pollack's *Humash Le-Talmidim.*
- All of Deuteronomy in the original, with a little of the Rashi Commentary.
- All of the Early Prophets in the original. Joshua should be started in the 4th year.
- History, at least all of the biblical period.
- Hebrew, fluent reading, conversation and composition, as presented in the current textbooks.
- The basics of Hebrew Grammar.
- Customs and ceremonies.
- A Children's Congregation on the Sabbath.
- Celebrations in connection with Jewish holidays and significant events.

Every affiliated school was responsible for covering all of the above. Each year at the end of June a joint examination would be given under the auspices of the Principals Association to all prospective graduates of the 6-year course. This examination should take place at the Hebrew Teachers College and members of the College faculty should mark these examination papers. Those who passed had on their diplomas "Passed the Principals' Association Examination," and they were admitted to the Hebrew High School without any further tests. A school might also have a "psychological graduation" for those who did not pass the Principals' examination, and did not get the above seal. That was done to preserve the good will of those who had attended all six years in good faith.

Most schools abided by the above regulations. There was one school which could not be persuaded to change its old plan of concentrating most of the time on mechanical Hebrew reading. During the decades it had only one class of six pupils who took the final examination.

There were also two congregational schools where the number of hours per week was much less than the prescribed minimum per week, although they had five sessions every week. For about a dozen years they could not produce a single class that could qualify for the Principals' test. Once they were shocked into full realization of their

defect they, too, produced every year a graduating class on the level of the other schools.

The graduation examinations were held yearly. The principals regarded them as a source of encouragement toward greater effort on the part of their students and teachers. The entrance of Hebrew College alumni as teachers in the school system helped to standardize the methods of instruction in all the schools. The uniform curriculum met with favor in all quarters.

The laymen, too, respected it. They were particularly impressed by the fact that upon moving to another part of greater Boston a pupil could enter a parallel class. "Why, this is like the public school!" Parents remembered the time when a child moving to a new neighborhood had to begin with Grade 1. Of course, he soon left the Hebrew school!

The general approval of the uniform curriculum helped to eradicate a fault which had obtained for years; that is, admitting beginners at any time of the year. Teachers complained bitterly that late registrations held back the entire class, but the laymen would not forego the loss of the extra tuition fee. Now registration was limited to the first 2–3 weeks of the school year. The laymen, too, felt the gain of the whole class was worth the loss of some fees, and this attitude permeated the entire school system.

Uniform Tests

After Dr. Perlman succeeded Dr. Touroff as Dean (1926–1932), the Principals asked, "Why deprive the undergraduate classes? Why not have regular achievement tests for all grades, so we may know as we go along how we are doing?" Early in the school year 1927–28 it was decided to give achievement tests twice a year, at the end of each semester, in January and in June, to grades 2, 3, 4 and 5. Grade 6, the Graduating Class, would continue to be tested only in June in all its work during the six years. Because of the heterogeneity of the incoming children, the first grade would not be tested. Nor would the "special class" for pupils experiencing difficulty. With these parameters, only about 50 percent of the entire registration would be subject to the twice-a-year tests. (It should be noted that about 35 percent of a school's registration were in the first grade). These semestral tests were called "general tests," differing from the "graduation tests" given since 1924 at the end of June to those who completed the 6-year Talmud Torah course.

I promised all possible cooperation on the part of the Bureau of Jewish Education in the development of the semestral tests. This new step involved factors which were intimately bound up with the personal interests of most teachers and its realization had to be planned and executed with great care, understanding and tact. In every school the faculty had to wrestle with specific local conditions, some of which are inappropriate to discuss in public.

There also existed an inarticulate competition between local schools, as well as among the educators themselves, for we were dealing with people's bread and butter. No teacher who was conscious of some professional weakness in himself could afford to have it discussed since it might ruin him. All of these and other differences might be revealed by the general tests, and only an agency that had everyone's confidence could be entrusted with these "secrets." It was decided the Bureau of Jewish Education should handle the entire project. It was also voted that persons who were not Talmud Torah teachers should mark the papers. A committee was formed with Louis Hurwich as chairman, and included Israel Pollack and Jacob Newman of the Hebrew College faculty.

In the fall of 1928 this committee completed its study and began the selection of examination material. The committee decided to include only word-forms that appeared at least five times in the textbooks used. That greatly narrowed the source from which questions could be drawn, but since we dealt with an experimental uniform test, we thought that if it proved too easy we could make it more difficult later on.

The scholastic progress of the greater Boston Hebrew schools of that period (1929) deserves to be recorded. Present day Hebrew schools may compare their own progress with it and draw their own conclusions.

Not all the participating schools covered all the material in the examinations of each grade. We therefore ascertained beforehand the actual amount covered by each class, and we indicated what questions that class should answer. It should be emphasized that individual differences among classes did not affect the final amount of work to be covered for graduation. At the end of the sixth year the prospective candidates for Talmud Torah graduation were assumed to have covered all that was prescribed in the Uniform Curriculum for the six year course.[17] In all schools, most of the sixth year was devoted to a review of all that had been previously studied to assure their success in the examinations.

Since 1929 many changes were effected in the life of the Jewish communities of America. The modern reader is bound to take more

than a passing interest in the facts of the not so distant yesterday. One very important fact was the continued deterioration, in the level of achievement of the Talmud Torahs, otherwise known as the afternoon Hebrew schools.[18]

The first General Examination was given February 11, 1929. Twenty-three schools from greater Boston including 75 classes and 1,309 pupils, participated.

The General Examinations were given by the Principals Association with the cooperation of the Bureau of Jewish Education.

The Results

That was the first time in the United States an attempt was made in an area like Boston and vicinity to evaluate achievement in Jewish schools. For weeks the schools prepared for it. The teachers said the prospective tests stimulated greater effort. The Principals Association adopted measures to preclude any suspicion about the honesty of these examinations. Principals and teachers had no prior knowledge as to the contents of the examinations.

Detailed instructions were printed on each examination sheet in a way that every child could understand. Teachers had no right to answer any questions from students, except in cases where the instructions were not understood. All papers were transferred to the Bureau of Jewish Education, where they were sorted and distributed between Mr. Pollack and Mr. Newman. I, too, took some papers, wanting to see how the pupils reacted to the tests on which I worked a whole year. The general impression was excellent. Everyone said it was an auspicious beginning, a constructive step in semi-annual achievement testing. The next test was set for June 18, 1929.

Because of its intrinsic importance, I described the results and conclusions of the Uniform Examinations in the magazine "Jewish Education"[19] (which had begun to appear under the auspices of the National Council for Jewish Education). I did this hoping that administering such self-searching tests might also become a practice in other communities.

These tests shed much light on our day-by-day work. They also uncovered painful facts.

Over 50 percent of the total enrollment was in Grade 1, registered in the fall, and those who attended the ungraded "Special Classes," who were not considered to be of regular school quality. These "special" students were either mentally "poor" or those who generally took no interest in their studies. The large percentage in grade 1 emphasized the great ratio of drop-outs every year. (An attrition

rate of 30 percent–35 percent of the total registration in Grade I and less than half as many in Grade II, had been a regular occurrence in American Hebrew schools.) Much had been written about this subject. It is of interest that *even in Boston,* where intensive Jewish education had struck root and prospered for many years, we did not find a remedy for this condition which nullified much of our best efforts and kept the whole system in a state of near-anemia.

The total registration in the 23 participating schools was 3,595. Of these, 1,571 (44 percent) were qualified for testing. To these should be added about 100 who were in Grade VI, the graduation year, and who were to take their finals that June. 1,571 were qualified for the examinations but only 1,309 took them. The absence of 16.7 percent was substantially higher than the usual average. The prevalence of "flu" kept some at home, but there was also another reason: the results of the examination were of personal and professional importance for every teacher. Every class had one or more students who were far behind the class in their achievement because of excessive absences, lack of ability or disinterest. These would lower the general class average. Many teachers excluded such pupils and told them to stay home that day.

However, the marks were satisfactory, especially since it was certain that they reflected the real knowledge of the class. Following are the average marks for each of the grades and also the average-age for that grade:

Grades	**No. of participants in examination**	**Average Grade Mark**	**Average Grade-Age (Years & Months)**
II (1st & 2nd semesters)	634	79.3 percent	10.3
III (1st semester)	381	77.3 percent	11.2
III (2nd semester)	106	78.0 percent	11.8
IV (1st semester)	132	67.7 percent	12.1
IV (2nd semester)	6	38.5 percent	13.2
V (1st semester)	37	66.0 percent	13.7
V (2nd semester)	13	74.0 percent	13.4
	1,309	76.9 percent (for all participants)	10.11 (average of all participants)

There was a general impression that all boys stopped their Jewish studies right after *Bar Mitzvah*. It should be noted that from the middle of the 4th grade the average age was over 13.

That means that among them were many over 14. Also, many planned to continue until graduation from VI, and those were also there who entered the Hebrew High School and then the Hebrew College. 1,271 gave their exact age and of these 103 were between 13–14 and 51 were between 14–15. That means that 154 were above *Bar Mitzvah*.

Uniform Examinations became a regular practice of the Boston school pattern: semestral (February and June) for grades two through five, and a graduation exam for the sixth. In time, many communities asked for samples of our examinations to see whether they could introduce them into their systems, but they usually informed us that they found them too hard. From 1929–1945, 32 semestral tests were given and over 25,000 pupils participated. They shed light on much of our work. Through the years there were teachers whose devotion did not swerve from giving their very best and with unvarying success. There were also individuals who could not control themselves and used past tests as a means of acquiring professional standing based on their classes scores.

The Charities Suspend Direct Subsidies to Schools

Since January, 1918, the Boston Talmud Torahs had been receiving, through the Bureau of Jewish Education, direct subsidies from the Federated Jewish Charities. The amounts varied from $200 to $2,000 a year in monthly installments, for a total of $14,000 a year. The amounts were not big, but they meant much to the schools. They came in regularly, and without any of the one thousand and one ways used in the schools' individual fund raising. There was also a psychological aspect: the struggling educational institution had an address to turn to. It was not alone in the field. There was a seeing eye and an ear listening to the heartbeats of an institution struggling to carry on. That subsidy was also important for the Bureau of Jewish Education. Monthly, it sent a check to affiliated schools. Its contact was not limited to giving advice or orders. A sort of reciprocal relationship obtained with the schools.

One day in May, 1928, I was called to the office of Dr. M. B. Hexter, Executive Director of the Charities. He informed me that the Board of Trustees of the Federated Charities had decided to discontinue immediately the direct subsidies to the Talmud Torahs. The desperate condition of the Philanthropies allowed it no other alternative. I was dumbfounded. The very creation of the Bureau in 1917, and the subsequent founding of the College, resulted from the Charities' interest in Jewish educational institutions.

In other communities the central educational agency (the Bureau) chose a number of schools and supported them 100 percent. That enabled the Bureau to control them as it saw fit and proper. Those schools were supposed to serve as models for the

rest of the community. Fluctuations in their budgets were taken in stride, since those schools had no voice of their own.

Not so in Boston. With the exception of the College, whose total support came from the Charities, all of the elementary Hebrew schools in the community had organizations of their own which bore the responsibility for their budgets. Notwithstanding the small direct subsidies, the Bureau succeeded in maintaining a vital contact with them. Its leadership was acceptable and even desired. Now, if we cut this lifeline, what would happen to the Bureau's influence? Dr. Hexter said the Trustees' decision was irrevocable.

I said, "Let's at least give the schools some breathing spell within which they may create a substitute source of income. Let's continue for the next 4 months, to the end of the school-year, since every subsidized school had based its budget upon the receipt of the subsidy."

"Even that is impossible" said Dr. Hexter. "The subsidies are stopped now!"

I notified the President of the Bureau, Professor Nathan Isaacs, and the other members of the Executive Committee, which met immediately. It became clear that the Charities' hands were bound by its very critical financial condition, and that we had to notify the schools. We had no right to campaign by ourselves for the schools, unless we chose to step out of the Charities' organization, but then we would have to raise not only our previous allotment but also the not inconsiderable cost of a new campaign. Without help from the Charities, such a campaign had no chance of success.

With an aching heart I transmitted the news to the schools. It fell like a thunderbolt. Invariably, they all demanded that the subsidies continue to the end of the school year. I quoted my conversation with Dr. Hexter. The schools accused the Bureau of bad faith.

The amount needed for the coming 4 months, to the end of the school year, was $4,800. The Bureau had no resources of its own to cover this gap. Some schools said the amount should be taken from the budget of the College. "Without a foundation, no structure is safe," argued the schools, "and we are the foundation of the College!"

I expected that, and feared it. My rebuttal was that each of the schools had its own Board which had developed channels for its support. Now those Boards would have to work harder, while the College never had a money-raising capacity, and if we took away nearly $5,000 from its budget we would have to close it, and that was unthinkable! The relations with the Bureau became strained,

but Jewish life always found an antitoxin to crises, and the schools found a way out.

In practice, the episode turned out to be a blessing in disguise. The schools were forced to find new means of financial support. The sudden suspension of the subsidies impressed many *Baalei Batim* and the response to the appeal of the schools resulted in new donations and also new workers. That occurred about 1½ years before the outbreak of the great financial crisis in October, 1929. When it came, it found the schools reinforced with new sympathizers and workers as well as friends who helped them keep above water during the long crisis years which hit all civilized nations. If not for that extra strength that was built into the schools during the good years, there is no telling how they would have fared.

Early Zionist Fund Raising

After the Balfour Declaration in 1917, all eyes turned to America. The fulfillment of the Zionist dream demanded large funds. Russian Jewry could give nothing; European Jewries were impoverished during World War I. American Jewry, however, had been in a prosperous state after the War. It had developed a many-sided program of war-relief work. American Jews began to contribute generously.

After the War's outbreak in the summer of 1914, Dr. Shmaryahu Levin found himself stuck in America. There was no way of returning to Palestine. But his stay here was a manifold blessing! His first speech in New York in 1907 had made a tremendous impression. Since then he had visited America frequently and gained an immense audience. Now he devoted himself to the task of disseminating the Zionist ideal all over the United States. Throughout the War years he traveled constantly, and with his unmatched oratory he drove home the idea of Jewish Nationalism and the re-settlement of Palestine. He was an orator by the grace of God. American Jews had never heard the likes of him in Yiddish. He knew how to exploit all of our literature, history, and the Jewish status all over the world *to make his listeners think.* His greatest weapon was his irresistible logic. He was a wonderful elucidator. Frequently he used a vignette, a parable, or a biting joke, which enjoyed a long life all over the country. His constant appearances made him "The Teacher of Zionism" of the generation. More than any other man he prepared American Jewry for the Balfour Declaration in 1917.

At first, Jewish leaders thought that a flood of contributions would pour in from all over the world. But no such flood came and fund raisers had to arouse interest to get greater sums of money than they ever dreamed of before the Balfour Declaration.

The first step was made in 1921 by the two giants, Dr. Chaim Weizmann and Professor Albert Einstein. The latter had postulated the Theory of Relativity (which only 12 people understood). His visit was a sensation. For days the English press featured him in the largest type. The fact that such a world-renowned figure took such a warm interest in Zionism touched many hearts. Thousands came to see and hear these great Jews, and they also visited Boston.

3,000 Jewish school children and 4,000 adults assembled to greet them on the large open Mishkan Tefila Plot in Roxbury as a part of the reception arranged in their honor.

They visited many communities and were greeted everywhere most enthusiastically. Contributions came in, but they were far from the total needed. Two factors combined to make one big negative:

1. Even Dr. Shmaryahu Levin's immense efforts during the War years still left very large masses of Jews who did not understand the meaning of Zionism. Most of Dr. Levin's audiences were not wealthy. He always spoke in Yiddish, and the rich did not go to hear Yiddish speakers. When Dr. Weizmann came here to get really big sums, he discovered that the men of means hardly knew anything about Zionism. In those days the big contributions made up 75–90 percent of all collections, and since big contributions were few the totals collected were far from the goals.

2. The campaign was proclaimed as having "a disaster goal." We must "save," and do it now, otherwise all will be lost! The entire effort appeared as a *one-time appeal*, and contributors assumed that is what it was. So, the Zionist leadership had to create a new "disaster-call" each year. Weizmann and Einstein were indeed a sensation, but next year Weizmann came again and, in later years, other great leaders came, including Nahum Sokolow, M. M. Ussishkin, James Rothschild, M. Shenkin, David Yellin, and others. Dr. Shmaryahu Levin, who left for Palestine after the War, revisited America again and again. But, by the law of diminishing returns, the more the prominent men came, the less the effect. Now even small communities wouldn't start a campaign without having one of the famous guests decorate the occasion with his presence, even Weizmann. What a pity! Our overworked and over-strained precious leaders had to be fund raisers to get at least the minimum needed to carry on

the work of the Zionist Organization and meet the most necessary needs of the *Yishuv* in Palestine.

Then someone suggested that we should bring Bialik to America.

Bialik in America

Ḥayim Naman Bialik's name had a magic of its own. On Bialik's list of priorities, however, a visit to America was the very last thing in the world. He spoke no English, and unlike his intimate friend, Dr. Shmaryahu Levin, never took part in fund-raising campaigns. He was immersed in his literary project at the time, the edition of the poems of Rabbi Solomon Ibn Gabriol and of Moses Ibn Ezra of the Spanish Golden Period.

But the Zionist leaders said that he must come to America and, in spite of himself, he agreed. He arrived in America in February, 1926, with his friend Dr. Shmaryahu Levin, who watched over him in the complicated protocol of banquets, campaigns, meetings, receptions and conferences with Jewish and non-Jewish groups.

The visit lasted five months (from February to July 7, 1926) and caused him much suffering, especially in two areas: he did not know English, (and the American Jews would speak nothing but English), and the obligation to wait endlessly at each meeting, listening to interminable speeches until his turn came, which was always about midnight if not later. In his letter to *Ahad Ha'am* (Asher Zvi Ginsberg) (Bialik's Letters no. 530), on his way home, he says, "Yes, let someone else sit, as I did, for, two, three or four hours . . . and absorb speech after speech until his insides turn, his mind is woozy, he bathes in his own perspiration, and his mind is squeezed dry. Invariably I was the last on the scaffold of speech-making. . . . My turn came after midnight, when I was overstuffed with the haranguing, and dead tired."

Toward the end Bialik was pleased with his American visit. In his letter to Jacob Fichman,[20] prior to his return, he says: "I don't regret my trip to America. The Hebraists woke up a bit."

Near the end of his American visit Bialik came to Boston. Shortly before that another celebrity visited us, Dr. David Yellin and he, too, appeared at Symphony Hall. About 20 speeches preceded Dr. Yellin. Many out-of-towners attended, and they had to make the last train home. However, no trains left Boston after midnight, and all local street cars stopped shortly after midnight. Still the massed attendance sat on pins and needles. They came to hear the guest and

there appeared an endless array of local stars! Many could speak only for a limited period because the audience had to leave.

With Bialik, exactly the same occurred: Nearly 3,000 people jammed Symphony Hall. A legion of speakers came before him; he was the last. He, too, had to be brief, though so many wanted more of him. Many had to leave because of the late hour and the others had already been overfed with loquacity.

The next day, at noon, a gathering of a few invited guests took place in one of the large rooms in the Boston City Club. Bialik came early. As was usual with him, he immediately began to talk to those who happened to stand near him. He sat at the end of the table and spoke informally in Yiddish. For some reason he began to describe how lonely, scattered Jews in Ukraine used to come occasionally to the city "to warm up" at the Rabbi, and how their longing for the holy was met in the environment of Torah and holiness. It was a simple, unprepared conversation. Words flowed from him. His listeners were chained and charmed and under no condition would they interrupt the speaker, who was now a flaming torch. Waiters came and left. The head-waiter came to see why prepared food was allowed to spoil, but no one would have minded even if the meal were canceled. Bialik spoke without interruption for over an hour, until the earthly overcame the heavenly and waiters finally brought in the food.

No sessions were held that day at the Hebrew College. Dean Samuel Perlman, who knew Bialik well, brought him there. The faculty was there, and Bialik was particularly happy with the occasion because now he was among his own. He stayed about an hour and was delighted to hear we had a Teachers College in Boston. He saw it as a sign of the general "awakening."

Bialik had been a phenomenon all by himself. At any time, and at any occasion, flashes of wonderful ideas, interpretations, brilliant sayings and also new linguistic creations just rolled from him as so many diamonds. A small fraction of this "oral Bialik" was published, and it is a treasure! Only after his untimely death was it realized what a unique, multi-faceted treasure it would have been for our own and for coming generations. I will recount here only one thing that I heard from him.

I happened to be in Baltimore when Bialik was there and addressed an evening. In his address he touched upon the observance of the Sabbath. He said

"many people complain that in their severity the Rabbis piled up through the ages so many restrictions for the Sabbath that a modern man cannot possibly live with them. That is the farthest from the truth. A serious examination of the Sabbath laws *in toto* would prove that we have constructed through the ages something eternal. The many laws and restrictions, which seem to be so many stumbling blocks, are really so many bricks and basic features in this wonderful, ingenious creation. In its totality, Sabbath is a complete, perfect and astounding creation. The laws are not the result of the caprice of men with stomach ulcers. Generation after generation was happy to abide by them, live with them, find real joy in their observance, and derive from them new strength for the colorless weekdays. The laws and customs supplement each other in a marvelous architectural structure. You cannot pull out some of them without deeply damaging this ingenious creation called Sabbath."

Thirty three years passed since I heard Bialik, but his words still make my heart throb and my soul sing. Tens of thousands heard him during the five months of his visit. Much of what he said stayed here. Much of what he said sank into the soul. They were sacred seeds which later bloomed and ripened into deeds. Thanks to our National Poet, who voiced the divinity of Israel, his works added strength to American Jewry.

THE 1929 CRISIS

Causes of the Crisis; How it Began

On several occasions I have referred to the galloping inflation of the twenties. After the first World War when peace was restored, people threw themselves into the task of reconstruction. The worker received a relatively high wage, but the supply of goods fell short, by miles, of the demand. Buyers competed with each other and prices rose. People paid the increases and then asked for a raise in their pay to equalize their expenditures. Strikes were an effective weapon and wages rose. The increased earnings again caused a rise in the price of goods that were in insufficient supply and in constant demand. Thus began the "Devil's Dance" of an increased cost of living on the one hand and increased wages on the other.

At first the tempo of the tipping scales was slow, but then it kept speeding up to the extent that in some European countries workers began to get their pay *every day*, since the value of money would drop the next day. In terms of monetary units, wages were in thousands, then in millions, of units. Even the victorious nations in the war were plagued by inflation, except that their tempo was slower.

The causes for inflation also existed in America. The war had not reached her territory, though she waged the war with all her might. America had developed her industry and agriculture to fantastic heights. From all over the world there came demands for American products. Countries could not pay immediately for their orders, but they arranged for credits. In a few years America changed from a borrowing nation to an international lending country. Its productive capacity grew at an accelerating pace. Demand for manpower kept increasing, but in 1924 the new immigration laws became effective, and instead of the average of one million immigrants a year that

came to America before the War, the new laws permitted the entry of no more than 150,000 a year.

The manpower surplus that had been maintained, thanks to the hundreds of thousands of immigrants who arrived each year, vanished. The law of supply and demand now set in wages began to rise and with that the standard of living. Labor conditions also began to improve. Buying power also increased and, as a result, the demand for products outstripped the supply and prices rose. Here, too, the inflationary cycle began: higher prices forced salary increases, which in turn raised the cost of products.

Millions of people were now in the stock market. They knew absolutely nothing about the real condition of the companies whose securities they bought. Experienced speculators knew how to manipulate prices. The speculators always profited, and the blind buyers were the sheep whose wool they sheared. The present reader can hardly imagine the state of mind in those days. The laborer, office worker, small trader, industrialist, merchant, even the Hebrew teachers, were all convinced that Prosperity had come to stay.

"Easy come easy go" was true of the easy profits of the prosperity years. People became extravagant not only with themselves but also with public needs. That explains why it was quite easy to erect large, expensive synagogues, hospitals, YMHAs and also Hebrew schools. In all such cases the total cost of the buildings was much greater than the amounts actually collected. The gaps were covered by loans or mortgages from banks, in the form of mortgages. People were ready to sign these mortgages as guarantors as an inexpensive favor.

This sense of extravagance benefited the Jewish community organizations. Their budgets rose because of increases in costs and salaries of workers with children. *Eretz Yisrael* also benefited. In that period Dr. Weizmann succeeded in organizing the *Keren Ha-Yesod,* in which many non-Zionists participated, and this helped to finance the increasing *aliyah* since the Balfour Declaration of November, 1917.

Everyone believed that the wheel of prosperity would continue to revolve, that all would continue to enjoy the prosperity that had been with them for years, and that nothing in the world could interfere with the economic growth of the land.

However, rumor persisted that something went wrong with the economic machinery. On October 29,1929 people began to sell their securities through the New York Stock Exchange on Wall Street at a

greater rate than usual. Prices began to fall. Terror spread with lightning speed all over America. Rich men, who were among the safest customers, suddenly found themselves between the hammer and the block.

That day over 16 million shares were sold, about eight times as many as on a normal day. This was only the beginning of the crisis. The next day the same tumbling of prices was repeated, though not with such fury as the day before. Those who held their own the day before now had the floor slip from under them, and in most cases lost everything.[21] The impoverishment of so many individuals and corporations brought with it a legion of troublesome implications. Many remained with only their shirt on their back.

The buying power of very large portions of the population was seriously reduced. In stores goods remained on the shelves; manufacturers began to reduce their working personnel. One by one factories closed altogether. All of this had an impact on the social and community services and institutions. The crisis caused unemployment which snowballed all over the country until the unemployed numbered in the millions. It reached a point where one sixth of the entire working force of the United States was unemployed.

Presidential elections were held in the fall of 1932. Total helplessness embraced the land. The Republicans were badly defeated, and Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Democratic candidate, was elected. The inauguration of Roosevelt took place on March 4, 1933. His inauguration address was like a refreshing breeze. A new era was to start.

Farmers were less hurt than city dwellers, but Americans were largely city dwellers and they were very badly hurt. Those who were in real estate had lost their shirts. Also, almost every Jew who had some money participated in the securities orgy, and these were smoked out. Many wage earners were discharged, and others had to take very severe cuts in their pay. Many turned to the Federated Charities. Their request: only vital needs such as food, rent and, in the winter, coal. Applicants numbered in the thousands. Their demands increased the pressure for a larger budget, just when people's capacity to give shrank, if it did not dry up altogether. Also, many former contributors were now applicants, or on the way to that state. Four factors helped out:

First, he who never received charity will do his utmost to scrape up all he can so as to postpone, if not avoid, that fearful day. People had some reserves and these helped to carry many of them. Second, the Government created means of assistance and thereby eased the

pressure on private charities. Third, even though the suffering during the crisis was fearful, many people strained themselves to the utmost to contribute to the Charities. Fourth, in the crisis the buying power of the dollar increased greatly. The Charities could finance its expanded program with less money and the remainder was applied to the new cases. Despite all of the above, the Charities were under terrific pressure. The situation worsened as the crisis continued.

The Crisis Hits Jewish Education

As mentioned above, the Government began to enter the charity field, but this was not so with parochial Jewish needs. These remained the concern of the traditional Jewish sources. The impoverishment of the Jewish community reflected itself in the diminished support of synagogues, schools, social institutions, literary efforts, work for *Eretz Yisrael*, etc.

Jewish education was hit very badly. Usually, much of the support of Jewish education stemmed not so much from people's inner urge, but because the solicitor could not be refused. Also many of the regular workers of the Talmud Torahs were themselves caught in the vise, and they could not continue their former activity. The most likely income, tuition, normally amounted to 40 percent of the total budget. Now people did not know from day to day how they could meet their basic needs. Concurrently, many competitors for teaching positions appeared. People who once were *Melamdim* of the old style, former Hebrew teachers who left the field many years ago and did not know of the newer and better methods of instruction, or just Hebraists who once studied in a *Yeshivah*, all realized they could increase their family income by Hebrew school teaching. Even the so called full-time-teaching-load meant only four hours a day, and a part-time position was 2 hours a day. Such employment was mere child's play when compared with the daily efforts to maintain a family, particularly if the head of the family was unemployed!

I saw in this a greater danger to Jewish education than the shortage of funds. In the latter case, salaries could be reduced, classes combined and, payments postponed until relief arrived. When an unfit teacher is appointed, however, he is like a festering cancer in the body. Outwardly, no one may see the body of education being consumed from within. Such a teacher does not contribute anything to his pupils, and just because he is ignorant of what good

teaching is, he is sure that he is a superior instructor and what he cannot do isn't worth doing.

Meanwhile another type of basic damage is inflicted. The capable teachers, whose places these unfits might occupy, leave Hebrew teaching altogether and without many regrets, since even in good times Hebrew teaching had been a poorly paid profession. Their loss is a body-blow to Jewish education. Many favorable conditions had to combine to produce a capable teacher, and it was almost miraculous that under the given conditions we still had teachers, but it would have been foolhardy to rely upon miracles for the maintenance of an adequate teaching staff for our school system. I knew this; but how could I make the school trustees see it?

Almost every attempt of an unqualified person to break into teaching was reported to me. I was like a fire-horse hearing the fire alarm bell. I immediately concentrated upon the case. The most difficult part was that I dared not say outright that so and so was unqualified. At first I started to do that, but I soon learned it was a loaded bomb, even when it was in answer to a question by a school president as to what I thought of so and so as a Hebrew teacher. I emphasized that under no circumstances must my answer be quoted, because it sounded like libel. I stated my opinion only because it was my duty to protect the high quality of teaching in our schools. Of course the questioner promised on his honor that he would keep the whole matter to himself. On the morrow, however, I found I had been quoted at the board meeting as well as in private conversation and that my statement had been amplified with details I never touched upon.

That happened whenever I attempted to show someone was not qualified to teach in a Hebrew school. I soon learned that under no circumstances must I evaluate anyone to anyone else. There were other ways, and the best was to be on the alert that there never be a free teaching position; if one occurred, fill it ere it became known outside. That formula spelled eternal awareness of the teaching conditions in all of the greater Boston Hebrew schools. It was a hard road, but the safest against the intrusion of incompetents.

The Worst Sufferers in Education

The Hebrew school teachers suffered more than anyone else in Jewish education. True, since the creation of the Associated Boston Hebrew Schools in 1917, which later was re-named the Bureau of

Jewish Education, teachers' salaries kept increasing. A Hebrew teacher's salary began to reach the level of the public school teacher and in some instances even surpassed it.

However, with the outbreak of the crisis, the Hebrew teachers were the first victims. The shrinking budgets, which began immediately after the October, 1929, stock market crash, made it necessary to spend less. The Bureau and the schools considered resorting to these steps:

1. Merge classes and reduce the size of the teaching staff.
2. Reduce the salaries of the teachers who were retained.
3. Abolish, or reduce to the absolute minimum where we could not abolish, any and every activity outside the actual classroom teaching such as celebrations, prizes, decorations, purchases of books and replacement of furniture.

There was one more possibility; that is, to reduce the number of days per week of each class, and also to reduce the number of hours per class per week. That would further reduce the number of teachers and save a substantial sum. Laymen as well as teachers realized that the reduction of days per week from five to two or three would deal a body blow to the whole plan of Jewish education. The days which the Hebrew school gave up would probably be absorbed by other normal activities of the children, and *would never be restored to the Hebrew school.*

That could not be permitted! *The five-day-a-week plan of Boston Hebrew schools held fast throughout all the crisis years.* On the other hand, the time per week and per day was reduced, so that a teacher who had two classes a day for four hours now taught for three hours.

Despite these economies, we could not maintain the pre-crisis level of salaries, and even these reduced salaries were not always paid on time. Often, and particularly in the summer, schools owed salaries for weeks, or even months. Schools resorted to eliminating teacher pay for vacation time when the schools were not in session. The Directors even tried to lengthen the vacation so as to have a breathing spell from salary worries. Also, there was no uniformity in salary cuts. The richer schools made smaller cuts, and had better teachers. The reverse occurred in the poorer schools, which saw their best teachers transfer to the richer schools. However, there were some teachers who did not follow the salary trend and remained in their positions no matter what happened to their salary.

Overall, teachers' salaries were cut at least by fifty per cent. Twenty dollars a week became standard for a full-time, experienced teacher, with no vacation pay. In one case a teacher, who had 3 children and got $20 a week, said to his school board: "I can't possibly support my family on my present salary. I am interested in giving my children a good Jewish education, which is possible only in a city like Boston." He had to accept an outside position for double his present salary, and a very successful teacher was lost to greater Boston.

It should be noted, however, that in the Hebrew schools, despite the economic crisis, the teacher did have security. Only in rare cases was a teacher discharged in the middle of the year, a degree of security which mitigated, to some extent, the hard lot of the Hebrew teacher.

Shortly after the Depression began to affect education negatively, teachers' organizations began to address the Hebrew Teachers Training Schools, expressing fear that now there would be more teachers than jobs, and that would further depress salaries. Quite a few training schools agreed there was such a possibility and they toned down their teacher output to a trickle, perhaps 3–4 a year. In 1933, Chicago's College of Jewish Studies suspended its Hebrew Teachers Department entirely, and it was not reopened until 1939. This trend lasted about a decade.

Boston refused to give in. No suspension or any diminution of the Teacher Training program was made at the Hebrew Teachers College. Every year there was a graduating class, and about 100 students received their Teachers diplomas during the crisis years. Of course, there were more teachers than positions, a situation dealt with realistically by the Teachers Placement Committee, which operated during the entire crisis period. It consisted of 5 members of the *Agudath HaMorim* and the Superintendent of the Bureau, who acted for the laymen. As a rule the placement Committee gave new graduates only part-time teaching positions, especially to those who attended a secular college, or were not vitally dependent on their income as teachers. Preference for full-time positions was given to heads of families or those as did not have any other source of support.

By the end of the thirties many communities began to suffer from a Hebrew teacher shortage, which deepened from year to year, until it reached catastrophic proportions even in the late forties. But, Boston had its 100 graduates of the crisis years to draw upon. The part-time teachers became full-timers and, with the new crop of graduates the College produced yearly, the teacher shortage did

not overtake Boston until a full decade after it started elsewhere. *Thus, Boston's school system maintained its full intensive program for that entire period.*

The advantages from the uninterrupted maintenance of the intensive Hebrew school curriculum were demonstrated by the recurring attempts of many communities to introduce our Uniform Achievement Tests, which we gave twice a year, into their own schools. But, again and again we were told, "*these are too difficult for our pupils.*" One basic reason for our ability to continue the intensive program for so many years stemmed from our decision to maintain our full-fledged teacher training program even in the most difficult crisis years—an approach to the total program of Jewish education which differed in fundamental aspects from that of other communities.

The Organization of the New England Women's Association of the Hebrew Teachers College

The Hebrew Teachers College came into the world on the *pianissimo* "The wise speak softly" (Ecclesiastes 9:17). What was there to shout about? It would take four years before the first crop of graduates would be harvested, and only then would each teacher be a living advertisement for his Alma Mater. Even in 1927, when the institution became a chartered college, and in 1930 when we began to award degrees, we publicized it modestly.

The College operated on this basis during its first decade. Even the Trustees were selected on the understanding that their work would be directed to the internal affairs of the institution. As an example, when it was decided, in 1924, to erect an addition to the College building, a total of $30,000 was collected by the trustees after much time and effort. That occurred in the years when Boston community buildings costing hundreds of thousands of dollars were put up. Bit by bit it became clear that something had to be done to make the College more than a well kept secret, but how?

My wife, Leah M. (Konovitz) Hurwich, who made the missionary Reverend Smith leave Boston, and who converted Sunday Schools into twice-a-week schools, had been urging the organization of a Women's Auxiliary for the College. She offered to create an active auxiliary if the Board of Trustees would give the nod, and said that an auxiliary would strengthen the College and publicize it in a

becoming manner. In the beginning of 1931, the Trustees voted in favor of a women's auxiliary. On March 19, 1931, a meeting was held at the home of Professor Nathan Isaacs in Cambridge for that purpose. Seven women attended: Mrs. Nathan Isaacs, Mrs. David A. Lourie, Mrs George Wyner, Mrs. Nathan H. Friedman, Mrs. Alexander Burmon, Mrs. Posner and Mrs. Leah M. Hurwich, the originator of the idea. On behalf of the Board of Trustees of the College were Prof. Nathan Isaacs, Morris Morse and myself.

Most of the women were leading workers in Hadassah, the largest women's organization in Boston. They were well aware of the needs of Jewish education and, despite the fear that the attempt might fail, they decided to organize a women's auxiliary to be named The New England Women's Association of the Hebrew Teachers College, and to call an organization meeting as soon as was practicable. Mrs. Hurwich was chosen as temporary chairman.

Shortly thereafter, about 40 women attended a founders meeting. Among them were leaders of most of the Boston women's organizations. Mrs. Alexander Burmon moved that a Life Members group be created, each one paying $100 and hers was the first contribution as a life member. Her proposal was accepted. The income from the life members helped the college in the most critical period of its history. Leah was elected President. It was voted that all who would join up to a certain date would rank as Founders. Over 200 joined, paying dues set at two dollars a year.

In its constitution the aim of the organization was "to work for the welfare of the Hebrew Teachers College," and "to assist the Board of Trustees of the College to realize its program." The following activities were started: tuition scholarships, expansion of the library, and creation of a mortgage fund to pay off the $15,000 second mortgage (there was also a first mortgage of $27,000). Also, the proviso that no president should serve more than 3 consecutive years avoided an endless stranglehold on the presidency, as had been the case in quite a few organizations, making for an all-around hardening of the arteries.

With the creation of the women's organization many people began to hear of the College. It soon became a topic of conversation and evaluation on an unprecedented scale. A medium had been created to transmit to the public at large information on its lofty aim and on its many activities. In the coming years, even during the depths of the depression, the Women's Association's help grew apace.

How the Bureau of Jewish Education Fared in the Crisis

The Bureau suffered greatly during the crisis years. To save on rent, the Philanthropies transferred most of its departments to 6 North Russell Street in the West End, which it owned. Only the office of the Executive Director and the bookkeeping office remained downtown. The transferred departments had to accommodate themselves in cramped office space. Two tiny rooms were assigned to the Bureau. It stayed there 12 years, despite the fact that it was hard to get to, particularly from the suburbs.

The Bureau had another disadvantage: it existed mostly in people's imagination. People are used to institutions that can be seen and touched, such as a synagogue, a school, a hospital, a home for the aged or an orphan asylum. The Hebrew Teachers College, for example, was a concrete entity: a building, a library, students, teachers. But what was the Bureau? The Bureau had no building. All of its activities were those which she chose to tell about herself, and she hardly ever tooted her own horn. Education is an abstract concept. Even in critical times there is approval of schools for children. Perhaps the Bureau existed just to provide a position for its Superintendent?

To make things still harder, I decided to attribute to the College many of the Bureau activities for which people give credit, such as courses for adults, a school for Jewish women, and educational conferences of representatives of most of the greater Boston women's organizations. I did that because the College needed maximum assistance. All other educational institutions had insufficient budgets and they were all jealous of each other. There was a strong tendency to reduce the number of institutions so that the remaining ones might have a little more financial oxygen. But why support the College, attended by young people who were big enough to support themselves in all other needs, when the city had thousands upon thousands of hungry families? Surely the College was nothing but a luxury!

One of Boston's prominent attorneys, who had been active for many years in youth work, said to me once: "When I wanted my son to attend college (secular), I paid for him. Many who want to attend college but lack the needed means go to work and pay for themselves out of their earnings. Why then should the Hebrew College be an aristocrat? Why should it not require every student to pay for himself? The College would then be self-supporting, and the money

which the Philanthropies is now giving the College every year could be diverted to other, greater needs in our poor community. I even said as much at a meeting of the trustees of the Philanthropies."

That from a man who was also a devoted Zionist; if he spoke that way, what would others, who were less familiar with youth and its needs, say on this subject? Most probably they, too, were complaining about supporting the College. In fact, Dr. Ben M. Selekman, Executive Director of the Philanthropies, told me of his frequent battles with those who opposed supporting Jewish education.

Under those circumstances, I felt it was of the utmost importance to publicize the College and its activities dealing with adults, representatives of leading organizations, and with conferences and public discussions. These would help to justify the existence of the College, but, of course, at the expense of the Bureau. As I had already emphasized, it was crystal clear that with the College there was hope for Jewish education. Without it, the Bureau, too, might close up! With the Bureau or without it, analphabetism would be more widespread if we desisted from continuously preparing teachers worthy of their calling. The budget of the Bureau was very small, since the lion's share of the Philanthropies' allotment went to the College. A small budget aroused less jealousy.

To prop up their shaky existence, even the Talmud Torahs would have been ready to accept the closing of the College if its budget were transferred to them.

Meanwhile, the area of the Bureau's activity was quite extensive and required much effort. First and foremost was the vital need to hold back the many attempts by incompetents to invade the field of Hebrew teaching. To them it meant a part-time job. Small as the teacher's salary had become, it still meant a lot to people who could not make both ends meet. Also, the very fact that the Hebrew teacher wasn't afraid of being discharged every week made teaching highly attractive compared with other occupations where, every week, even every day, might mark the end of one's employment. The *Baalei Batim* welcomed the *Agudath HaMorim* (The Hebrew Teachers Association). It gave them some respite from the drudge of trying to balance the weekly budget. The teachers would come back by themselves since the empty larder at home would compel them, so why worry about a teachers strike? Boston never had a Hebrew teacher's strike. The only avenue open was that of moral persuasion. As middleman between the teachers and the lay-

men, I could speak informally as well as at meetings of school boards. I emphasized the need to preserve our tiny group of teaching manpower in America; otherwise the situation would be hopeless even when prosperity returned.

Another aspect required eternal vigilance during the depression: competition among the teachers themselves. Salaries were not standardized in greater Boston; they depended on the financial capacity of each institution. The very competition among the teachers would, in compliance with the law of supply and demand, depress the salaries even in the better-paying schools. Here the *Agudath HaMorim* played a vital role. Back in the twenties a Placement Bureau was formed. Delegates, representing the *Agudath HaMorim* and speaking for the teachers, and I, representing the Bureau of Jewish Education, worked together. At the beginning of the depression an iron rule was adopted that the Placement Bureau should send only one candidate to each open position. The procedure was for the Principal of the school needing a teacher to come to the Bureau office. He stated his school's requirements and the salary offered. We had a list of all candidate teachers, since it had been decided that all candidates first register with the Placement Bureau. The Principal saw the list and chose one candidate to be seen by his education committee. If the chosen candidate could not come to terms with the school, another candidate was sent. No candidate was allowed to present himself on his own account. This allowed a degree of control over teacher placement.

A much better control obtained over the graduates of the Hebrew Teachers College. Here we examined the condition of each graduate. Only in case of real need did we allow a new graduate to take a full-time position, otherwise we offered a part-time job. The graduates had no families to support. They required income for their College tuition fee and even a part-time position gave them all that plus a surplus for some personal expenses.

The Uniform Achievement Tests, described earlier, were administered regularly every February and June. They helped to maintain standardization and basic uniformity in all greater Boston Hebrew schools. Even nearby out of town schools participated in these tests. At the end of June of each year a graduation test was given to all who completed the 6th Talmud Torah grade. This test took the place of an entrance test to the freshman class of the Prozdor. They were conducted in the College library.

Both of the above tests were given under the auspices of the Principals Association. The Bureau did all the other tasks connected with these projects. It prepared the tests, had them marked, and then submitted the results to the participating schools. Year by year the Bureau tried to maintain conditions whereby the schools would want to participate in these achievement tests.

The Bureau did all the administrative work connected with the adult classes which we offered at the College, and also with the School for Jewish Women, conducted in a hotel in the center of the city. It also did all the work connected with the high school extension classes. There were two sessions a week, 2½ hours each session for a total of 30 weeks a year, and the course extended for 3 years. These courses continued preparing students for 16 years.

In the Talmud Torah world the Bureau served as mediator in cases of difficulty between schools and teachers. In their own localities the Bureau assisted schools in whatever way it possibly could. It also mobilized speakers from among the Rabbis and laymen for special occasions, as required by each school. The Bureau handled all the financial aspects of the Hebrew College.

The New England Women's Association of the College did much for it on several levels, and it grew from year to year. All its administrative work was done by the Bureau, and in all of the above, Miss Frances Levin, Administrative Assistant of the Bureau, did all the inside work, skillfully, efficiently and with boundless devotion.

About 40 women's associations used to send delegates to the Bureau's annual day-long Women's Conference on Jewish Education. The deliberations did more to broaden and deepen the understanding of the aims and tasks of Jewish education than vociferous, banal publicity.

It should be emphasized that despite the many drawbacks brought about by the depression, there was solid progress in terms of increased enrollment, and, qualitatively, Boston did much better than other communities which just yielded to the fright of the crisis years.

In sum, the uniform standard curriculum for all schools, the uniform achievement tests given every semester, the graduation tests which covered all six years' work, the professional influence of the *Agudath HaMorim* and the influence of the Bureau and the College had all merged into a force which made it possible to maintain an intensive system of Jewish education. It required a full five-day

week of study, a total of 7½–10 hours per week, which obtained in 75 percent of the schools during all the years of the depression and the better years which followed them, so that educators from other communities often asked, "How do you manage to achieve all that?"

Endnotes

1. Awareness of the need for guidance grew through the years, but even now, 47 years later (1964), society is still much behind in affording proper guidance to all young people.

2. Lee M. Friedman, "The Jewish Advocate," Boston Tercentenary Issue, Magazine Supplement, p. 3. Jan. 7, 1955.

3. One reason why the early settlers started with a Sunday School was that those who taught the children were peddlers, who were out of town during the week-days trying to find *parnassah* (income).

4. Israel Abrams later headed the large Hebrew Institute of Pittsburgh, PA for over 40 years.

5. "the proportion of children who annually leave the Hebrew schools is between 80 percent and 100 percent of their total registration." Israel Konovitz, *Luach Ahiever,* 1918, p. 47.

6. Among those whom I met after returning to Boston was an attorney, Herman Lowenberg. He was active in the Hebrew Educational Alliance in Roxbury.

7. *Zei Gezund*—Be Healthy, a traditional Yiddish blessing.

8. The Bureau of Jewish Education of Greater Boston celebrated its 75th Anniversary in June, 1996.

9. The Sunday school was the standard educational medium of the Protestants: sessions were held primarily on Sunday, and in some congregations also on Saturdays.

10. In 1919, the range of Public School salaries in Boston was from $698 to $1398 a year. In the Boston Hebrew Schools, teachers salaries ranged from $728 to $2080 a year. This applied to the regular 24 teachers. 8 of them received from $1560 to the maximum of $2080; 5 received $1300; six $1144 and 3 $1040. Only 3 teachers received less than $1000 a year.

11. Manuscript: "Survey: Associated Boston Hebrew Schools by Louis Hurwich and Ben Rosen, 1919, p. 10.

12. *Bereshit Ha-hinuch Ha-ivri, B'America* (in 1913). "In most of the Talmud Torahs the annual drop-out was greater, or even double the number found

in the school at any given time." *That meant that in those institutions a pupil remained, on the average, less than one year.*

13. Shortly after work began, Dr. Touroff said, "It seems that I underestimated Mr. Pollack. I find that he possesses deep knowledge! One day he said, "I am sure that in our own age there are but few teachers of Mr. Pollack's rank." He did discover that the quiet, sedate, taciturn man was an all around scholar. Mr. Pollack stayed 24 years with the institution and was a veritable pillar of strength. He passed away in 1945. Also in Mr. Zucrow Dr. Touroff found an instructor of rare vintage in terms of knowledge, devotion and student influence. The rocks became cornerstones, but how deeply Dr. Touroff suffered until he got over his first frustrations!

14. In the immense Harvard Library there is a very select collection of over 20,000 volumes on Hebraica and Judaica.

15. "Sefer Touroff," p. 47

16. The examinations of grade II to V, inclusive, were based on the following: Grade II, only language material involved. Grades III, IV and V, Biblical Hebrew Language. Bible: Genesis, Exodus and Numbers in the abridged texts. The book of Deuteronomy, the unabridged text. The Early Prophets, Joshua, Judges, and Samuel I all in the unabridged texts.

17. The examinations of grades II to V, inclusive, were based on the following: Grade II, only language material involved. Grades III, IV and V, Biblical and Hebrew Language. Bible: Genesis, Exodus and Numbers in the abridged text. The book of Deuteronomy, the unabridged text. The Early Prophets, Joshua, Judges and Samuel I all in the unabridged texts.

18.Compare following details of the structure of the 1929 examinations with today's schools' curricular expectations:

Grade II

First Semester (pre-Bible) total 60 questions:

- 40 (questions): translation from Hebrew into English of individual words or phrases from five multiple choice answers, of which only one was correct. The examinee had to underscore the correct answer.
- 10 (questions): translation from English into Hebrew. Five answers offered. Underscore the correct answer.
- 10 (questions): a Hebrew sentence in which one word was omitted. Underscore the correct answer.

Second Semester (pre-Bible), total 60 questions:

- 50 translation and 10 to fill in the missing word, as in First Semester

Grade III

First Semester (beginning Bible), 60 language and 40 Bible questions.

- The language questions: 50 translations and 10 to fill in missing word.
- In Genesis: from the story of the serpent (chapter 3) to chapter 24.

  A) 20 Complete sentences from the Bible. Explain, in Hebrew or English the underscored word.

  B) Who said what to whom (*Mi Amar El Mi*) and then followed a complete quotation from Genesis.

Second Semester: (60 language and 40 bible questions).

- Bible: from chapter 25 to the end of *Miketz* (chapter 43): 20 *Mi Amar El Mi* questions as above for first semester. 20 complete sentences; explain underscored word.

Grade IV

First Semester:

- 70 questions on Exodus, Chapter 1–23. The middle of *Mishpatim*. 30 questions on Book of Joshua (chapters 1–10). Of the above, 50 *Mi Amar El Mi,* and 50 complete sentences. Explain the underscored part.

Second Semester.

- 70 in Book Numbers, Chapters 1–22 (middle of Balak); 30 in Joshua, Chapters 10–23. 50 *Mi Amar El Mi,* 50 explain underscored part.

Grade V

First Semester:

- 45 questions on Numbers, Chapters 23–35, end of Numbers: Deuteronomy, Chapters 1–7. On Book of Judges, Chapters 1–16, 55 questions.
- 50 *Mi Amar El Mi,* 50 Explain underscored phrase.

Second Semester:

- 30 in Deuteronomy, Chapters 1–10; to question Samuel 1 Chapters 1–30).
- 50 *Mi Amar El Mi*
- 50 Explain underscored phrase.

Grade VI

- Examined at the end of June in all of the *Ḥumash*, the Early Prophets, History, Grammar and a composition on an assigned topic.

19. Louis Hurwich, "Standard Examinations in the Greater Boston Hebrew Schools." *Jewish Education*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 114–118.

20. (1881–1958), Hebrew poet, critic and editor; considered a member of "Bialik's School."

21. By mid November securities lost 40 percent of their combined registered value on the New York Stock Exchange. The "paper loss" amounted to 26 billion dollars. *The Crisis of the Old Order*, Arthur M. Schlesinger, p. 159, 1957.

Louis Hurwich, ca. 1935

III

Recovery and Revitalization

A New Method of Teaching Hebrew

Hebrew was a critical component of our curriculum for the schools *and* the College. The following is a description of a six year experiment in teaching Hebrew, when we demonstrated the success of the method, but we were not able to follow it up after some initial trials.

Originally, our schools used a method based on memory and constant review. The child had to remember the translation of each word separately. To understand a sentence, he had to connect the translations of the individual words. The translation method proved particularly difficult in America, primarily because the Hebrew class came after the child already had a few hours in the public school. Much of his mental freshness had been used up, and in the Hebrew school he had to follow a program which was largely a matter of memorization.

Meanwhile, experience had shown that the best results in teaching reading were obtained by teaching whole words and expressions in place of starting with individual letters. In time, the child learned to differentiate the individual letters. The same occurred in the proposed experiment. It was our premise that Hebrew speaking is best served by beginning with "thought units" rather than with individual words. By the immediate translation of the thought units, the child begins to sense the variations in word forms, the grammatical structures and even the idiomatic expressions.

The experiment began in October, 1933 at the Hebrew Teachers College, Roxbury, Boston. The aim? To test the efficacy of a new method of teaching Hebrew.

The teacher was Miss Anna Appel, who graduated in New York City the previous June, and was to enter the senior class at Radcliffe College. She had no previous teaching experience, but was a supe-

rior student, a fine personality, a clear enunciator, sedate, with a deep sense of responsibility. She also had a special advantage. Her father was well off, and she could allow herself the luxury of accepting a very lean salary: $10 a week for part-time teaching. Miss Appel devoted much more than part time to her task.

There were five sessions a week, Monday–Thursday, for one and a half hours each day. On Sundays the class met for two hours for a total of 8 hours of classroom sessions.

Locally, there were four struggling Talmud Torahs. All were very sensitive about registration. The loss of a pupil meant an increase in the school's deficit. The College always maintained very friendly relations with all the Talmud Torahs for very good reasons, of which the most important was that these schools were the main source of new students for the Hebrew High School, whose graduates supplied the College its registration.

How then was the College to get enough pupils for the above experiment without competing with the elementary schools? There was one possibility since the Talmud Torahs were not particularly hungry for *poor* students. They had more than they could carry of partly-paying and free pupils. I therefore decided to concentrate on recruiting pupils who could pay only a reduced fee, or even nothing. In that way, 23 boys and girls, 7–8 years old, were registered. All were beginners.

One condition was made with the parents, namely, when the child leaves the public school at 3:30 P.M., he should not first go home, but should come straight to the College where he would get a sandwich, a piece of cake and a glass of milk. The parents would pay 15 cents a week for this. Even the free students paid that.

This condition was of prime importance.

The mother was always chained to the house to meet the child upon his return from public school. He had to be fed and supervised to reach Hebrew school on time. In the mother's heart there was the hopeful prayer, "Oh, when will I be relieved from this task?" Our plan was an answer to that prayer. The mother was relieved from that daily task. Even more, she was relieved from worrying about the safety and care of her child from after breakfast until supper. A half-day of freedom for four successive days each week! Under such conditions, the mother would think twice before taking her child out of the Hebrew school. She would have to pay for it with her freedom. Thus, the Hebrew school program turned from a burden into an appreciated relief.

Between what is taught in the Hebrew school and what is practiced in the home, there is usually a gap, and sometimes even definite contradictions. We aimed to teach not only Hebrew language but mainly Jewish life including observance of Sabbath and holidays, prayers and blessings, and create a positive attitude to Jewish life as such. *All that must have its counterpart in the childrens' homes.* This was a demand on our part. Those who felt they could not meet it, had better keep their child at home. He would largely waste his time here, and might even develop a negative attitude to Jewishness as such. As it turned out, not one child left because of this demanding requirement. Parents told us that in many cases basic changes in home practice were made in compliance with the children's demands.

For textbooks, I chose A. H. Friedland's *Sipurim Yafim*. At that time we did not have anyone in America who was as successful in composing Hebrew story material for children as Friedland. He had over 100 stories, each in a separate folder. The relative range of difficulty was not according to their order of publication, which was numbered, but according to a special list issued by Mr. Friedland. The easiest, "A Kitten Story," has a vocabulary of 41 words and extends over 8 pages. Each page is illustrated. Every *new word* is translated into English (in parentheses) on the same line. Every story has action and requires a number of performers to act it out. After a while, the teacher read the whole story to the class. Every "thought unit" was translated, and the entire reading was acted out by her. She read it twice in succession.

Every holiday served as a special project which was given serious attention. Mothers were requested to assist their children in preparing special decorations for the classroom. The teacher always prepared a program which engaged most of the mothers, and thus helped to bring the spirit of the coming holiday into the home. For every holiday, there was also a dramatic Hebrew presentation to which the parents were invited. The children organized themselves into small groups and rehearsed their assigned parts at home.

All the above was carried on in Hebrew with the teacher employing it on a broad basis. Hebrew thus served as a live, functioning language in response to immediate needs. The teacher kept on translating the thought units wherever needed. The children felt no strain and their interest was not affected in any way by that form of conversation. The teacher was always on guard, and whatever *all*

the children understood she did not translate. In that way, the amount of untranslated Hebrew grew from one week to the other until the class attained a level where no translation was needed. Writing began concurrently with reading. Both were done with apperceptive material. The children loved to write, and they wrote a lot.

The school year ended very promisingly. At the end of the first year, Miss Appel went to Harvard to study with Prof. Richard Cubat, who wanted her to enter his course in social service. For the next year, Mr. Ralph Goldman, who graduated the previous June from the Hebrew College, took Miss Appel's place. With the class in its second year, Mr. Goldman had practically no translation work. The word-stock of the class sufficed for the explanation of anything new. Mr. Goldman stayed with us one year and then transferred to a Talmud Torah where he taught full-time. He was very successful as a teacher, both with us and in his new position.

In 1934 we opened a new beginner's class. Miss Bessie Siegel, who was to graduate from the College the following year, was appointed for that class. Miss Siegel stayed with us five years and conducted most of our experiment. Originally, we planned to add a new class every year until we would have all six grades of a Talmud Torah that would enable us to take full measure of my proposed method as compared with the other greater Boston Hebrew schools. Also, in these classes, the junior and senior students of the college could do most of their practice teaching to a greater extent than conditions permitted up to this time. They would also save valuable time by eliminating travel to schools, which in many cases were at a distance. We would also spare the schools from the task of accommodating practice teaching in their classes. But our well-meant plan stumbled upon exceptional difficulties.

At the very beginning of the experiment we discovered a vital weakness. Most of our children came from charity-aided homes. Such families move frequently. In every such case all that was invested in the pupil is wasted, and that is what happened. Out of the 23 who began in October, 1933, only 17 returned for the next year, and at the end of that school year only 13 remained. Nearly all 10 dropouts occurred because of changes in residence. Similarly, the new beginners class which was opened September, 1934, with 14 children, remained with only 9 at the end of that school year. Such a proportion of dropouts had been the experience of all the

Hebrew schools in greater Boston, and in many other communities it was even worse.

There was another inherent weakness. Most charity-supported families are essentially broken families. Typically, one of the parents is missing or there is no authority at all. In all such cases, there could not be that cooperation which had been a pillar of my new method.

In June, 1935, at the end of the second year of the experiment, we decided to transfer to nearby Hebrew schools all those who remained with us. The principals of the schools where they were admitted later informed us that in their knowledge and fluent use of Hebrew our former pupils stood out and that they had better prospects for advancement. Unfortunately, due to the dispersion of our children among several schools they could not be grouped together.

In September, 1935, we registered 18 new children from "normal" homes, the kind that usually register in Hebrew schools. After two years *only 3 of the 18 dropped out*, one, because he moved to another district, and the other two because of illness.

This was a source of interest and pleasure. I visited it daily. The children loved their work with all their heart and soul. At their regular meetings parents used to tell of occasions when a child did not feel well and the mother said, "Today you'll miss your school." "But not from Hebrew!" was the child's reply.

An unexpected phenomenon developed. The children did not want to part with their Hebrew School. When the dismissal bell rang, all the children rose to leave, but most of them lingered. All kinds of excuses were offered to stay on. One wanted to talk to the teacher, another wanted to complete something on the blackboard. Another said he wanted to do his home assignment in the classroom and still another said that he was waiting for his buddy. Often it was a half-hour before all the children left. These were links in a chain of love which linked them to the place, the teacher, their work and to the very atmosphere there. Their luncheon period before the lesson, their play period on the roof, the lesson, their plays, the stories, writing, dramatizations, songs, drawings, preparations for Sabbath and holiday celebrations were all so many facets in the life of children that had interests, awareness of constant enrichment and love for our values which grew in meaning as they made progress.

The parents were of the opinion that even if their children were not to continue their Jewish education they would still retain the

memories of their pleasant days in Hebrew school, and such memories often have a decisive influence upon their later attitude to Jewishness and Jewish values.

Now it was time to spread out, to have the new method tried with a number of teachers and under the prevailing conditions of several schools so the new method might have a broad test. However, we did not pursue the experiment further for the following reasons:

a. At that time, I contracted a series of illnesses which kept me in the hospital for several weeks each half year. I had no assistant either in the College or the Bureau of Jewish Education, and I could not possibly train new teachers.

b. Just because the new method was my own brain-child, I did not think it proper for me to come to teachers and urge its acceptance. I might be suspected of being self-seeking.

c. There was another reason why the method did not promote itself: at its very initiation, teachers took it to be just another disguise of the translation method, which had been opposed for so many years.

In 1944, this method had another trial under different circumstances in Camp Yavneh. I planned the camp but opened it with the assistance of my wife who had experience in conducting summer camps. The plan called for two hours of obligatory daily class sessions with Hebrew the only language used on all occasions. Yavneh was the first Hebrew *study* camp in America and was planned for students of Hebrew High Schools and Hebrew Colleges. I wanted to see what we could achieve with a small group of children who were beginners. We arranged that the teachers of Camp Yavneh and its counselors should employ the method of translating thought units. The plan called for the dropping of the translations as soon as all the campers of a group understood the Hebrew. That allowed the use of all the words and expressions needed for each occasion, without ever stopping to ask, "Don't you remember?" This plan worked out very successfully. The campers got used to being spoken to in the bi-lingual way, and daily their stock of Hebrew expanded and became more and more the conversational medium of Yavneh.

Re-Vitalizing the *Agudah Ivrith*—The Hebrew Speaking Society

One link in the chain of miracles that brought about the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 was the revival of Hebrew as a living and spoken language. For nearly 2000 years it continued to serve only as a literary medium. Retaining its charm as the language of the Bible, Hebrew kept on developing and meeting the needs of Jewish life in prayer, poetry, law, philosophy and history. A vast Jewish literature was created. All of this was done in writing, but Hebrew was not a spoken tongue.

Eliezer Ben Yehudah (1858–1928) was the first to urge the revival of spoken Hebrew as a part of Jewish nationalism and as the vernacular of Jews in their homeland. His was the first home in modern times where Hebrew became the everyday spoken language. His son was the first child in Palestine whose mother tongue was Hebrew. The second Hebrew speaking home was that of the Hebrew teacher David Uhilewitz, and the third home was that of Abraham and Min Cohen of Rehoboth whose daughter, Michal (born 1894), spoke only Hebrew as a child (she was my mother's second cousin).

Outside of Palestine, Hebrew speaking evoked considerable interest. In Russia and Poland Hebrew speaking societies existed; in America, the first Hebrew speaking society was organized in 1902. Shortly thereafter, in Boston, the Hebrew Speaking Society (*Agudah Ivrith*) was instrumental in bringing about the organization of the University Hebrew School.

It sought to achieve the following:

a. Increase interest in Hebrew literature.

b. Serve as an occasion for conversation in Hebrew.

c. Increase the sale of Hebrew books and subscriptions to Hebrew periodicals.

d. Develop a body of Hebraists and serve as an "address" for the Hebrew movement in Boston.

e. Offer opportunity to people whose knowledge of Hebrew became rusty through disuse.

The beginning was propitious. Spoken Hebrew was still an intriguing novelty, but there was a permanent attraction for the Society's members, Dr. Touroff. He charmed people into cooperating in whatever he undertook. He created Hebrew devotees.

At every meeting there was a well prepared lecture by one of the College Faculty, Dr. Touroff or an out-of-town visitor. There was also a musical period for a half hour. Typically, sixty or seventy members attended, but when a prominent outsider lectured about 150 came.

The *Agudah* also nurtured a Hebrew stage for people with dramatic talents. A number of plays were very successfully presented. The *Agudah* and the *Bimah* (stage) were parts of a harmony, a totality. They continued after Dr. Touroff left Boston. His successor, Dr. Samuel Pearlman, did much to maintain these two important activities. The *Agudah Ivrith* continued, but after the October, 1929 stock market crisis its meetings were infrequent.

I had always been interested in the *Agudah Ivrith* programs and the Bureau of Jewish Education was always ready to lend its cooperation. After my appointment as academic head of the College in September, 1932, I began to search for means for the *Agudah Ivrith* revival. One course seemed logical: to attract people we had to have prominent lecturers.

The Trustees released a budget for the *Agudah Ivrith*, regarding it as a part of the College's extension courses for adults, which we had conducted for years. For the 1932–1933 school year, lecturers were invited including Professor Zevi Izzendruk, Professor Salo W. Baron, Dr. Nisson Touroff, and Dr. Chaim Greenberg. A similar array of the best in the Hebraic field was offered the second year. Boston and vicinity Hebraists began to realize that each lecture was an enriching experience. We hoped that this infusion of new blood would revitalize the *Agudah*, but in the second year attendance began to lag again, and we were confronted by an iron wall of indifference.

The early days of the Hebrew movement were the honeymoon; they did not last. That was the experience of Hebrew speaking organizations elsewhere. The traditional enthusiastic and active Hebrew societies were no more. No *Agudah Ivrith* enjoyed longevity either among the youth or the adults. Why?

I believe we were confronted with a basic factor about groups; that is, a social organization can be sustained only when each participant finds in it a response to a personal need. That was the case with the Hebrew movement. At first the very idea of making Hebrew a spoken tongue, which would create some magical strength for our community, captured people's imagination. Persons of all strata were brought together. The very fact that meetings were carried on in Hebrew was sufficient unto itself. Everything else was secondary

to the main aim of having spoken Hebrew as the medium. As time went on, however, individual differences began to assert themselves. Differences in Hebraic and general education began to condition the degree of a person's interest in the meetings. The same subject may have been new and informative to some while it meant nothing to others. Such people may be brought together once or twice, but it soon became clear that they didn't have enough in common to stay together. The decisive factor was not indifference, *but the basic educational background and general interest in Hebraic values of the persons that are called together.*

The *Aggadah* tells us the Ten Commandments were given to the Israelites *each one in conformity to his receptive capacity.* The same is true with Hebrew speaking societies. They hold together only when the participants have *a basic factor in common.* We thus find that Hebrew Teachers Associations held together for decades because they had professional interests in common, and because their Hebraic background was largely of the same character. The Hebrew Teachers Association, which was organized in 1912, held together for 40 years (actually until the early 1980s, over 80 years, *ed.*). Common interests and common problems held them together. Hebrew as the permanent medium of discussion prevailed as a matter of course. Hebrew teachers organizations all over America had similar experiences.

Since 1950, divisive professional interests entered the field and at present (1964) even the powerful *Agudath HaMorim* of New York, which enjoyed uninterrupted active life for over 40 years, is now only a shadow of its former self. This offers additional proof that interests often outweigh interest. For many years, repeated attempts have been made in many communities to create viable Hebrew speaking societies. In nearly all cases, the same cycle repeats itself, and the efforts fail.

From its earliest, the Hebrew Teachers College maintained Hebrew Adult Extension classes, one of the basic aspects of the Hebrew movement. As far back as the days of the Hebrew speaking societies in the first decade of this century, the New York society conducted Hebrew classes for adults. The task of disseminating Hebrew knowledge had been inherent in being a Hebraist! Therefore, there was no tuition fee and no teachers' salaries. Despite the very difficult economic struggle for most of the members, it would never have occurred to any of them to expect tuition fees.

Boston, too, began on that basis. Israel Pollack and Jacob Newman taught *gratis* Hebrew adult classes at the Hebrew Teachers College. The project aimed at preparing adult beginners to find themselves at home in Hebrew literature. Hebrew culture would thus gain adherents. In practice, the results were different. Adult beginners' classes were short-lived. Apparently, many joined out of curiosity to see what Hebrew culture was like. But when regular attendance for several years was expected, along with homework for every lesson, many lost heart. Only a few re-registered the second year and hardly any came back the third year.

There was another inherent weakness—the singular focus upon the study of Hebrew. Not much could be achieved in only one session per week for one or one and a half hours. Also, the method of instruction had been very dry; that is, mastery of single words, grammar, writing, with subject matter taken from the Talmud Torah or children's textbooks. These hardly aroused the interest of adults. Many communities followed the above pattern and obtained similar discouraging results.

The challenge to educators became clear: we had to make adult study more interesting. In 1933, I planned to revive adult Jewish education on a wider basis. We prepared a three year course of study requiring two sessions a week. The curriculum included Hebrew, Jewish history, customs and ceremonies, Zionism and the Jewish community. We also offered courses in club leading and Sunday school teaching. We meant to offer adult students Jewish education for itself and with *goals* to *use* what they were studying. There was a real need for leaders of youth clubs (whose membership counted in the thousands) and for Sunday school teachers for a school population above 1,500. Thus, we approached the double task of preparing qualified club leaders and Sunday school teachers, while we met the need for courses for adults.

The High School Extension Courses were designed as a three year program, for the Sunday school graduates. While some congregations also maintained high school classes, ours were the most intensive. They had two sessions a week for two and half hours each session. The school year lasted thirty weeks. Every year there was a graduating class of ten to fifteen students which demonstrated the holding power of the program. About half of all the hours were given to Hebrew; the other subjects included Jewish history, customs and ceremonies, Zionism, and current Jewish life.

Among the students were also some graduates of Boston Hebrew schools who did not see their way to attend the Hebrew high school where sessions were held 5 times a week. One such student was a graduate of the Mishkan Tefila Hebrew School. He stayed with us one year, doing very satisfactory work. In his student days, he was a very focused *protégé* of Serge Kussevitsky, the famous conductor of the Boston Symphony. He later became a world renowned composer and conductor. His name was Leonard Bernstein.

Graduates of the High School Extension classes were admitted to the Adult Extension class. They were the very backbone of that program and from them came club leaders and Sunday school teachers. Even today there are still some people serving schools who came through these training courses. These graduates were more knowledgeable and had better basic preparation than most of the former personnel. They also brought more understanding and sympathy for Zionism, which at that time began a breakthrough into Reform circles. Our graduates were effective educating agents.

I had a special feeling for those adults who came to study after a full day's work. I saw how they withstood occasional trying tests. They came from all parts of Boston and nearby communities. Boston winters are long and often quite harsh, but even in the very difficult days, attendance at these classes was unaffected. Love for study overcame all obstacles. My heart warmed at the sight of this unostentatious devotion; it served as additional proof that, even in modern times, Torah and Judaism may become native to our life in America.

The administration of these courses was greatly facilitated by the devotion of Anne Pollack, daughter of Israel Pollack, who served as the College's Administrative Secretary for nine years. (Later, she married Dr. Benjamin Shevach, my replacement at the Bureau.) Like her illustrious father, she, too, was bound heart and soul to the institution. She always remained until the last of the students left. Her warm interest in each and every student contributed much to the success of these classes. She graduated the Hebrew Teachers College in 1932, but she preferred the Secretaryship at the college. Her term of service fell during the long crisis years of the thirties. To help the institution Anne did much of what normally would have been done by additional paid staff. I still recall her warm attitude with heartfelt admiration and blessings!

With the outbreak of World War II in 1939, everything was upset. The demand for workers grew from day to day. Shortages began to spread in all aspects of life and with them came waste of time and energy in waiting for cars and trains, long waits in line, and at times these reached the limits of patience. Under these worsening conditions, we had to close the courses for adults which had meant so much to the community.

Since Dr. Touroff left Boston in 1926, I tried to keep alive a "Touroff Myth." During his five year stay in Boston we boarded together at the home of Mrs. M. Abrams in Roxbury. After I was married he visited us quite frequently, and hardly a day passed without our being in contact by telephone or by my visiting the College. I clearly saw the characteristics which marked him all around—his devotion, honesty and brilliant personality. Those who studied at the Hebrew College under him always adored him. The principals, teachers and Hebraists of greater Boston developed a deep respect for him. He became symbolic of the love of Hebrew language and culture. To keep his spirit alive, I planned to invite him every session as a lecturer at the *Agudah Ivrith*. We had him as a commencement speaker on several occasions. From time to time, the Women's Association of the College also invited him as a guest speaker. On his part, Dr. Touroff gladly accepted those invitations since they afforded him an opportunity to visit his youngest brother who lived near Boston.

Every visit gave us an opportunity to publicize him and retell of his standing as an educator and author. Long before his sixtieth birthday in 1937, we discussed at the College how to celebrate the occasion. I suggested that we publish a book in his honor. The faculty liked the idea and promised their hearty cooperation. Dr. Touroff gladly approved. The Alumni of the Jewish Institute for Religion of New York, which was founded by Dr. Stephen A. Wise, and where Dr. Touroff first served as Professor and later as Dean until 1932, said they would contribute $200 toward the publication of such a book. Also the Boston *Agudath HaMorim* promised $100. I brought up the proposition at the meeting of the Board of Trustees. They accepted the idea and promised their moral support, but they could not promise financial support without first getting approval from the local Associated Jewish Philanthropies. The Philanthropies were then in the great squeeze of the prolonged economic crisis which seemed to be endless. I then said that I would personally try to get the needed means for the proposed publication.

The book appeared in 1938 in splendid form as a Hebrew Teachers College publication, printed by Future Press of New York. Over 400 copies were distributed free to libraries, authors and other learned men who appreciated getting it. We also sent complimentary copies to all who contributed to the publication fund. About 150 copies were sold at $2.00 each. The number of buyers was considered satisfactory. The great Hebrew poet, Saul Tshernichowsky, who later visited Boston, told me that publications of even famous Hebrew authors sold no more than 200 copies, while the balance are sent as complimentary copies to other writers and personal friends. We were interested in a wide distribution of the book, and that was fully realized. A small number remained with us, and were distributed as prizes to students.

In those critical years very few Hebrew works appeared in America. The 379 page *Sefer Touroff* had been the largest individual book that the Hebrew Teachers College sponsored.

A Successful Experiment to Direct Some Graduates of the Hebrew Teachers College to Social Service (1938–1942)

Note: this experiment is described in detail because it can still serve as an example of how to utilize best those who have already acquired a solid Jewish education but do not choose to enter career teaching.

In 1938, with Dr. B. M. Selekman, Executive Director of the Associated Jewish Philanthropies, I discovered the lack of active Jewish backgrounds among our own social workers. Those professionals had developed into a massive power in American Jewish life; almost all the philanthropic and social institutions were directed by them. They had direct contact and great influence with most of the wealthy Jews, who held power in each community. By the very character of their work they also had direct contact with hundreds of thousands of Jewish families and individuals. They belonged to no party and were hardly exposed to any criticism. But many of them had no positive Jewish point of view related to their occupation, though they worked almost exclusively with Jews and were financed by Jews. Many social workers maintained that their work was exclusively human, and no influence of religion, race or nationality influenced it. This attitude stemmed from a general Jewish illiteracy, which produced two negative outcomes, among others.

a. Many social workers were unable to employ those positive influences which are embedded in our life and culture.

b. Their faceless approach to their professional fields served as a catalyst for developing faceless Jewish life facilitating assimilation and intermarriage.

All the above was known to Dr. Selekman who deeply regretted it. I suggested that at the Hebrew Teacher's College there was a small opening for a solution to this problem. Though many of our graduates did not choose careers in Hebrew teaching or related fields (they were preparing for some other white collar profession) if we could assist them, after their graduation from the Hebrew Teachers College and from secular college, for the two years of graduate study in social service, we could then start addressing the need for Jewish social servants. With increasing numbers, the influence of the Jewishly prepared workers would grow in the centers where they concentrated upon work with adolescents.

"Why don't you do this in Boston?" Dr. Selekman asked.

"That is a financial question. We must aid them for two years after they complete the Hebrew Teachers College course."

"Prepare a detailed plan," said Dr. Selekman, "and if it's practical, means will be found for its implementation."

It was quite clear that the introduction of the Hebrew Teachers College graduate into Jewish Social Service was a pioneering attempt. Our graduates had to measure up to the best standards in terms of personality, character, general and professional education. They also had to possess fundamental training in the Jewish content of their profession. That meant special training and direction theoretically and practically in how to create and maintain a warm and infectious Jewish tone in their work. Further, the fact that Hebrew Teachers College graduates would also qualify for another Jewish profession would certainly add to the College's prestige.

My proposal contained the following:

a. It should be limited to persons who graduated the Hebrew Teachers College and a general college.

b. A full course in Social Service at Boston University (BU) leading to a Master of Science in Social Service (M.S. in S.S.). That degree was imperative for all who specialized in social service.

c. The Hebrew College would add to the BU courses to expand the students' social work skills, generally and their own Jewish "specialty," in particular.

d. The second year would be for field work in a chosen institution, and, under Boston University's supervision, the Hebrew Teachers College would suggest Jewish institutions where our students would get practical training. Our students would receive additional training in order to fit them for our program. The fieldwork institution would be in unbroken contact with us, and also allow us to observe from time to time to see how our students were progressing.

e. The trainees would have to dedicate full-time to the project and have no right to engage in any other tasks.

f. The Hebrew Teachers College would give each trainee a stipend equal to what he could earn as a novice Hebrew Teacher—$750 a year. The economic crisis which began in 1929 was still with us. Salaries in all phases of life fell to very low levels; for example, experienced Hebrew teachers received $20–$25 a week, and beginners, $15. In most instances summer vacations were unpaid. On the other hand, the dollar's buying power rose correspondingly. (College tuition was $350 a year.) The $750 stipend would, therefore, cover the graduate's tuition fee and leave enough for the trainee's small personal expenses. He would thus be carried during his two years of study. If it turned out that Jewish social service was not for him, he could return to Hebrew teaching, but if he did fit he would enter a better paying profession.

Dr. Selekman liked the plan. The project was presented for discussion to the board of trustees of Hebrew Teachers College. The board approved it heartily.

The experiment began in the fall of 1938. BU accepted our proposition and promised its full cooperation. Leah M. Hurwich was appointed supervisor of this project. We did not publicize this project, saying that if it did succeed it would grow its own wings, and if it failed, we would be spared offering apologies. We saw it as an attempt to lay a new path for the strengthening of Jewish life in America.

The two-year graduate course at Boston University earned the degree of "Master." On a similar level was the supplementary "Jewish" program, which was integrated with the general course.

Prior to the start of the course, several meetings were held between Professor Anna L. Morgan, representing Boston University,

and Leah M. Hurwich, representing the Hebrew Teachers College, to prepare all pertinent details, especially those dealing with the field work in various Jewish institutions under the auspices and direction of the University, but with periodic visits from us. During 1939–1942 when the experiment was conducted, regular meetings took place with Prof. Morgan, the Dean of the Faculty, and others from Boston University and Leah Hurwich in order to deal with problems that arose as the work developed.

We were well aware our entire effort was but a first practical step. The continuation of the experiment, especially if other Hebrew Teachers Training Schools did likewise and made it part of their total effort, meant greater progress would be made in every phase of professional preparation. The entrance of more and more graduates of Teachers Colleges into Social Service careers would benefit the American Jewish community in many respects.

We had planned to publicize the results of our experiment properly so that the other Hebrew Teachers Training Schools in the United States might do likewise. But on December 7, 1941, Japan attacked the United States at Pearl Harbor and America joined World War II. One by one our trainees were mobilized. Young men 18 years old and up joined to serve their homeland. The experiment had to be postponed until peace was restored.

The experiment cost the Associated Jewish Philanthropies $10,000. There were only five participants. "One swallow does not bring the Spring," and the first few graduates did not bring about a total change in Jewish Youth Work in America. But the experiment had the value of a laboratory test. Together, the Hebrew Teachers Training Colleges in America could have diverted at least 25 of their graduates, who did not turn to teaching, to social work. In a few years they could have created an core that would grow from year to year and begin to influence the entire field of Jewish social work constructively! Neither criticism nor preaching can affect this very important aspect of American Jewish life. But trained people, enhanced with a thorough Jewish education through the College level, who have also covered a full course in social service in theory and supervised practice, could turn the present trend in a more Jewish direction. Instead of the heretofore indifference, and in many instances even opposition, to Jewish values which obtain in so many of our social institutions, this plan would bring in much of the spiritual and cultural wealth that is ours, and would thus have

strengthened our spine in these confused times that modern life flounders in.

As I write these words, 27 years have passed (1965) since the above experiment was initiated. In our teacher training schools we still continue to be disinterested in those of our graduates who do not take up Hebrew teaching . . . and most of them do not. Some enter Rabbinical schools and some enter Jewish social service entirely on their own. Modern society long ago recognized that, by itself, knowledge of a subject does not necessarily qualify one to teach it. For that one must also master the process of how to teach it, and the process differs from subject to subject and field to field. There were many cases where rabbis and also teachers training school graduates entered social service. Most of them did it through the medium of the general social work school. In many instances even workers who possessed basic Jewish knowledge were no different than others who got no Jewish knowledge at all. Against this, even a new worker who possessed real Jewish education and who also learned how to infuse it into his special communal service tasks, achieved results that were eye-opening. It is not always easy, nor does such a person have a bed of roses before him, but continued application yields blessed results. Our small experiment just described continues to lay before us its importance, indicating the broad challenge which beckons us to come and take hold of it!

One problem always shadowed me; that is how to extend and deepen the knowledge of our Hebrew Teachers College students and, how to create a real religious warmth in our institution? The latter did not apply to those who brought active religious consciousness from home, but a very substantial percentage did not have much of that ingredient at home. Yet, virtually all our students were preparing to teach in Hebrew schools, all of which were religious. How could a teacher transmit what he does not possess? Children have an acute intuition, and they know whether the teacher's words come from her heart. The College atmosphere was not at all anti-religious, but much depended upon the attitude of the individual teacher. Some were definitely personally observant, but there were also some for whom religion was something only to be discussed. One such teacher once answered me when I asked him whether he would teach *Shulan Arukh*, the code of Jewish religious practices, "Yes, but I would treat the text only as literature." I did

not assign him that subject, but his aloofness stayed in the institution, refusing to mix religion in his teaching.

One could ask, why did we not take care at the inception of the Hebrew Teachers College to engage only religious teachers? The answer is that in 1921 we had a very limited number of people in America qualified for college teaching who were not already tied to institutions. We always insisted upon one all-around qualification, that the candidate be a real teacher in addition to being a man of knowledge. We made that a *sine qua non* condition.

We had one iron rule: there was no place in the College for anti-religionism, no matter who the candidate was, but there is a world of difference between one who is "neutral" and one in whose heart religion is a flaming torch. Yet, sometimes we had to engage a teacher for whom religion was but a dormant factor. Nevertheless, once a man had been engaged and was with us for several years, we would not replace him simply because a more suitable professor could be found. While it was not a written condition, "tenure" had been a living force in the college faculty at all times.

Through the years we had been attempting to solve the problems of how to increase a student's knowledge and the use of spoken Hebrew outside the classroom by assigning more homework, giving prizes for progress, and urging and encouraging individuals alone as well as whole groups. But it became increasingly clear that most of the students had already extended themselves to the utmost! Traveling to and from a university as well as to the Hebrew Teachers College, the unavoidable effort of doing a full day's work at the university and, in many cases, also doing some paid work in order to meet expenses, all left our students little time to give to the Hebrew Teachers College assignments beyond the basic requirements. Here and there some small improvements could be made, but fundamental changes for the better were absolutely beyond them.

Camp Yavneh

Since I was married, in 1923, my wife had been talking about organizing a Hebrew speaking camp for the Hebrew Teachers College students. Hers was a pioneer effort, based on her earlier experience in summer camp work; later it developed and grew to an extent that deserves to be recorded.

In 1917, Leah was appointed to head the extension program of the Central Jewish Institute, located at 125 East 85th Street, New York. The Ladies Auxiliary of that institution used to finance a summer project whereby groups of boys were sent to YMHA camps for a few weeks. In those days, the Talmud Torah did not know about summer vacations, and sessions were held even during those weeks when homes were like heated ovens and the streets were even worse. The Central Jewish Institute maintained Hebrew classes which were attended by about 500 children. Leah M. Konovitz had an idea: why not take the entire school, teachers and pupils to a summer place where they could merge study with play? The body and the soul would benefit by such a program. The Ladies Auxiliary would provide for some of the boys, but no one did anything for the girls. In the summer of 1919, the Principal of the school went on vacation and turned over the supervision of the school to Leah. That gave her an opportunity to test her plan.

By chance, she found a Jewish farmer in the Catskill Mountains who agreed to provide room and board for $10 a week for each child and their counselor. Miss Konovitz found two young ladies, Miss Stella Cohen (later Mrs. Burstein) and Miss Lillie Weitzman (later Mrs. Max Newman) who offered to go with the children as volunteer counselors. They even paid for their own room and board. Eight girls were selected from those who attended the CJI Hebrew School. The Ladies Auxiliary appropriated funds for the most nec-

essary expenses. Some gymnasium equipment was borrowed from the CJI and thus the foundation was laid for the Central Jewish Institute Camp, (CEJWIN), which later branched out through the years to a total capacity of over 1,000 campers.

The above experiment with the handful of girls lasted 3 weeks, but it proved it was possible to introduce Jewish content in a summer camp. The next summer (1920) a house was rented near Ellenville, New York. Boys and girls were admitted and the season lasted 8 weeks. Campers were also admitted for a part of the season, so that a total of 100 campers benefitted from that summer program.

During the third year (1921), Mr. Albert Schoolman, director of the CJI, rented a camp at Central Valley, New York. 115 campers registered. Among the counselors were several Hebrew teachers, and Jacob Golub, Principal of the Central Jewish Institute Hebrew School supervised the Jewish classes. All campers had an integrated program consisting of play and Jewish studies. Some campers had Jewish studies for the first time in their lives.

In the fall of 1921 Miss Konovitz went to *Eretz Yisrael* where she taught English at the *Beth Hasefer Lebanim* in Tel Aviv. In the spring that followed the CJI wired her to come back and again take charge as Director of the CJI camp. Leah heeded the call. That summer there were 215 campers; this was no longer a mere test. Daily class sessions were an integral part of the program. Sabbath was beautifully observed and the atmosphere was filled with songs, some of which were in Hebrew.

I visited the camp that summer and was deeply impressed. In the fall of 1922, I invited Leah Konovitz to head the Extension Education Department of the Boston Bureau of Jewish Education.

I had no experience in running a camp, but my wife learned much in that field from her years of experience. At the end of the thirties I thought we should rent a small place that would serve as a summer camp and would not be expensive. We might try it for one summer. Because of the economic depression that had lasted for nearly a decade, building had almost ceased all over the country. Well kept places were not for rent. In the meantime I kept trying to sell my idea of a Hebrew study camp. One interesting point was that the local Jewish educators were almost unanimous in opposing it. Even the Hebrew Teachers College faculty did not favor it. They said, "Through the school year our students bear a double load of two schools each day. How will it be possible to pile upon them another

school program during the summer vacation?!" On the other hand, I found a favorable response among laymen.

As time went on I became more convinced that a summer study camp would give us a partial solution to the two problems mentioned above, that is: to get greater depth in our students' knowledge and to create a really warm religious attitude in our student body.

The Hebrew Teachers College board of trustees voted in favor of the camp, provided the Associated Jewish Charities would allow us to conduct a special campaign for that purpose. In the spring of 1943 I took a definite step: I sent a circular letter to a number of prominent men in Jewish education in America asking their frank opinion about the value of a Hebrew study camp in America. 18 answers were received and all supported it! Many doubted its practical feasibility, but all were unanimous that if it were at all possible it should be tried. Their approval helped to tip the scales in favor of creating the Hebrew Study camp.

We had to buy a fully equipped camp and pay for it in full, leaving behind no debts in any shape or form. The depression had taught me the dangers inherent in mortgages on public institutions. It was up to me to get all the investment funds, otherwise the entire project would remain a fleeting dream. Meanwhile, I had never before taken part in a fund-raising campaign.

As against my lack of experience in getting contributions, I had years of experience in getting cooperation. That had really been my task ever since I came to Boston in 1917; that is, to sell new ideas to people and get them to work for them. There is much in common between getting work and getting money. One other thing was clear: it takes about as much effort to get a large sum from a rich man as it does to get a small sum from one who is not rich. I decided to limit myself to contributors with means. The Associated Jewish Philanthropies conditioned its permission on our getting contributions of $500 or more. I decided to make $1,000 the standard contribution, no more and no less. The contributors would be "Founders" of the camp. I set $20,000 as the minimum to be raised.

We advertised for an equipped camp. In total we had 37 Founders, three of whom contributed $2,000. All told, we raised $37,000.

In November, 1943, we found a camp that met our requirements. The owner had to sell it because war conditions made it impossible to find counselors and suitable help. The camp was located in

Northwood, New Hampshire, about 60 miles from Boston. It was the only camp on the shore of a lake which was about three miles long and one-half mile wide. The camp had a total of 60 acres, most of which was wooded. Near the lake there was a flat area of several acres. New Hampshire is mostly hilly and a stretch of flat land is rather rare. The camp had a central building, a farmhouse which had been erected about 100 years ago, but was still in excellent condition. The house had six bedrooms. On the flat area were five wooden tents with a total of 60 cots. The dining room could accommodate 60 campers. The central building also had a well-built kitchen. Everything was in very fine condition since it had been in continuous use. We bought the camp and all its equipment for $18,000.

New Hampshire winters are very severe, and we could not start on any changes to suit our needs before the coming spring. Our most important need was to find counselors. On our part we were adamant. In addition to the usual qualifications, such as age (20–30), a college background, camp experience, specialization in certain areas (swimming, athletics, art, music), we had additional requirements which we made very clear: fluent Hebrew speaking and religious observance in theory and practice was a must. Even in normal times one had to search endlessly to find persons who could meet these requirements. How then could we dare dream about finding them in war time?! However, the alternative to not insisting upon the above in quality and quantity meant the entire camp plan might be aborted.

In the face of the above Mrs. Hurwich, who was chosen as volunteer director of the camp, undertook to recruit out of a vacuum the required corps of counselors and camp help. My task was to solve the construction and supply problems.

There were only two sources for counselors: the *Yeshivah Rabbi Isaac Elanan* (later Yeshiva University) and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, both in New York. The students of these institutions were exempt from military service. They were also the only two "islands" where we might find counselors who would meet our special requirements. However, this was an open secret which all camp owners knew. So, the demand exceeded the supply, and counselors' pay rose sharply. We decided to offer higher rates provided we got the person we needed. Many trips were made to New York, and, finally, Mrs. Hurwich succeeded in getting together a staff that met all our needs. We had one advantage, namely, the very idea of

a religious Hebrew study camp had a special appeal, and a number of persons preferred to participate in our pioneer effort.

We were lucky in the choice of a Head Counselor, Yoseph Levin. He was the soul of the camp. He had many years of experience and was also the head swimming counselor. He knew how to introduce order and discipline in the camp. Mr. Levin was not very much at home in spoken Hebrew, but here he was favorably balanced by his wife Sarah whose Hebrew was correct and fluent. Together the Levins were a positive force in creating order and good camp spirit throughout the season.

I dealt with the educational phase of the camp. Each teacher had 15 teaching hours a week. The total of 60 teaching hours a week enabled us to grade the campers properly and to maintain very small study groups in various subjects.

The *Sipurim Yafim* ("Nice Stories") by H. A. Friedland were used as a basis for formal study. The children dramatized the stories in various forms and were also involved in writing, singing and short games. Sessions were held daily, except Friday and Saturday, from 9:30 to 11:30 A.M. All the rest of the time the children had a regular camp program. All conversation was in Hebrew with immediate translation into English which was dropped when the children understood the Hebrew. Because of the repetitive daily camp program which prevailed in most of the camp life, the children picked up a great deal of Hebrew by the third or fourth week. Hebrew was the only language used in most of the repetitive phases of the camp activities. The three sections of the *Shema* prayer and the first and last sections of the *Amidah* ("Silent Devotion") were the main parts of the morning service. At the end of the season many children knew these prayers by heart. The children's correspondence and the statements of the parents testified that our efforts succeeded. Upon their return to school in September, most Yavneh campers were skipped a whole year in their respective Hebrew schools.

The next season (1945) we expanded our efforts to include a group of 9 children who had no Hebrew school experience. An agreement was made with the parents of this group that after the summer they would register their children in a Hebrew school. Our aim was to find out how much could be accomplished with beginners during the camp season.

The results were astonishing! During the 8 weeks of the camp season the children mastered Hebrew reading and writing. They

covered a number of the above mentioned *Sipurim Yafim*. The children covered 39 pages out of the 50–60 pages which Hebrew School first graders usually covered during the whole year. They mastered mechanical Hebrew reading in almost no time at all! Large cards, each having one letter of the Hebrew alphabet on it, were hung around the walls of the *Sukkah* (a small gazebo-type structure in the middle of the Yavneh campus), and in about one week the children learned all there was to learn in mechanical reading.

In the winter of 1946 I had a serious heart attack (coronary thrombosis). I was hospitalized for five weeks, followed by months of slow recovery. I returned to my former posts as Dean of the College and as Superintendent of the Bureau of Jewish Education, but I could not go back to the 12 hour days to which I had been used for decades! The doctors banned such a long working day; they also prohibited my going outside in very cold weather. No longer could I go out anytime, anywhere to meet people. Still the two institutions which I headed demanded daily attention and neglect might cause serious damage. The winter passed and the spring. Preparations for Yavneh's third season were made, and in the first week of July Yavneh opened with 105 campers, its maximum capacity. We had a larger staff, including more teachers. On the second day of the camp season, the Yavneh course of study began. All groups and classes fell into gear, as if they had been functioning for weeks.

Camp Organization and Programs

The rising bell sounded at 7:15 A.M. At 8:00 A.M. all the campers, counselors and teachers met for morning services. There were three *minyanim*. The older students, with the counselors and teachers, had their services in "the tent" which was open on all sides. They had complete morning services, and on Mondays and Thursdays there was also Torah reading, just as is done in adult morning services in synagogue. Campers and counselors took turns as *Hazanim* ("Cantors" or leaders of the service). All the girls, together with the women counselors, had their own *minyan* that met in the Social Hall, which was airy and full of light. A Holy Ark was built in a depression on a wall for the Torah scrolls needed for services. A curtain covered that part of the wall, and, when covered, there was no indication that a Holy Ark was behind it. This was done upon the advice of Rabbis, since the social hall was also used for stage performances, gymnastics and dances, all of which do not conform with the respect due to a Holy Ark.

Excepting the kitchen, where breakfast was prepared, no other activity took place during the prayer period which began at the same time for everybody and concluded after 20–25 minutes. (On Monday and Thursday, when reading of the Torah took place, the service lasted a bit longer.) After the service the flag-raising ceremony took place. The raising of the American flag was followed by the flag hymn, after which the blue and white Israeli flag was raised over the *Sukkah* followed by the biblical quote, "If I forget the Jerusalem may my right hand be forgotten."

At 8:45 A.M. everyone went to the dining hall for breakfast, followed by campers returning to complete the cleanup of their bunks to have them ready for morning inspection.

At 9:30 the bell rang, signifying that the study period began. No outside activity was permitted until noon. All the morning hours were dedicated to study.

Barring some groups which wanted to extend their study sessions and had a third hour session from 11:30 A.M.–12:30 P.M., the rest of the campers broke up at 11:30 A.M. to engage in free games such as tennis, ping-pong, or swimming (this was in addition to the prescribed swimming period). There were no formal study sessions on Friday, which was set aside for outings under the supervision of counselors.

At 12:30 P.M., lunch was served, lasting about one hour, followed by a rest period until 3:00 P.M. From then on, until supper, all groups were engaged in sports programs.

Outside of formal studies we had special purpose counselors for music, arts, sports and dramatics. Frequently, several specialists joined in planning a special activity such as a dramatic performance.

Supper was served at 6:00 P.M.; Singing was an integral part of all the meals. Generally, camp life was permeated with song and joy. The evening hours were in most cases open for individual or group engagements such as contests or dancing. On such occasions boys and girls met. The counselors were always there and the atmosphere was always social and enjoyable. On all such occasions Hebrew was the only language spoken.

At 9:30 P.M. the retiring bell sounded for the young Yavneh campers. 10:00 was the general "curfew" for all other campers.

At 3:00 P.M. on Friday campers returned from their hikes. They all applied themselves to prepare for the Sabbath. They cleaned the tents and put everything in order. Each camper washed and dressed in white. A group of campers arranged for the Friday eve

services in which the whole camp participated. We arranged 150 chairs in a large circle under the open sky in front of the Social Hall with a prayer book on each seat. In the middle of the circle, facing east was a table covered in white for the *Ḥazzan*. From all sides campers assembled in front of the porch of the central house. On the porch there was a small table covered with a snow-white cloth and on it were two brass candlesticks with two unlit candles. The directors of the camp stood near the table. Bunk representatives told how much each bunk contributed during the week to the charity fund known as *Keren Ami*. The assembly then sang the beautiful Bialik Sabbath greeting poem *Ha-hamah me'rosh ha-ilanot nistalkah* ("The sun disappears from the tops of the trees"). Silence. Leah, the director of the camp, lighted the candles. She covered her face with her open palms and recited aloud the blessing, *Barukh atah adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu lehadlik ner shel Shabbat.* (Blessed art thou o Lord who . . .) Then she prayed silently.

Sabbath had arrived in Yavneh.

Now all turned to the large circle of chairs. The service was the same as one conducted in orthodox synagogues. Sunset was about two hours away, but in Yavneh *Shabbat* began earlier. Everyone came together, saw each other, and became one big Jewish family. The service ended with mutual greetings of "*Shabbat Shalom.*"

Everyone now entered the dining hall. Again the whole camp was together. The Sabbath *Kiddush* was recited over a cup of wine, and the Friday evening meal began. The hall was decorated and well lit. A white cloth covered each table with a lit candle in the middle. The campers brought a sharpened appetite from their long hike and happily ate the well-cooked *Shabbat* meal. The meal was unhurried and was followed by the grace after meals ("*Birkat Hamazon*") in which all participated. On weekdays the grace was shortened, but on *Shabbat* nothing was omitted. All recited the entire text in chorus. Afterwards, benches and tables were pushed aside and an extended period of song and dance commenced. The dining hall was too small to allow all the campers to dance together so they arose in groups and began a series of Israeli dances in which the participants invested their very being. The modern structure shook in response to their rhythmical heavy steps.

On Sabbath morning rising time was one hour later. Breakfast was served at 9:00 after which morning services began. Between the end of the services and the midday meal there was time for a

dip in the lake. The *Shabbat* lunch was like the one on Friday eve. No organized play or study were scheduled for the afternoon. Some campers played chess, which was very popular among all ages, some just walked around, and others met socially or listened to someone reading a story. Quite a few studied. The library was filled with readers. Some "kidnapped" a teacher to go over the weekly portion of the Torah. The youngest ones preferred free play in the open. At 6:00 P.M. we served supper. As the Sabbath ended the whole camp participated in the *Havdallah* ("separation") ceremony. On Saturday night there was community dancing in the social hall. The entire camp was there as one large happy family, having a good time and ready for an interesting tomorrow.

Thus the Sabbath passed. Many campers had never experienced a real Sabbath observance. All adored the Day of Rest, an impression that became rooted deeply in their souls, urging similar experiences from then on. Many visitors said, "The Yavneh Sabbath reflects a *Shabbat* in *Eretz Yisrael*."

Excepting the obligatory study program and the all out use of Hebrew as the language of Yavneh on all occasions, Yavneh was a typical summer camp. Great emphasis was placed on gains in the physical development and strength of all campers. Daily, the campers were engaged in swimming, baseball and basketball games, archery, outings, boating, etc. Every camper had to progress in his swimming ability. A special head swim counselor with a staff of assistants took charge of this part of the camp program.

A registered nurse lived in the camp and a local physician visited the camp regularly. He was on call day and night. In Yavneh's third season (1946), a special bunk was equipped as a clinic. In it we placed campers who contracted any infections, as is frequently the case with youngsters of camp age.

In 1946 we began having visiting lecturers, each being an authority in some field of Jewish activity. The lecturer was invited for at least a one week's stay. He lectured daily after the noon rest period. The audience consisted of the C.I.T.s, the oldest campers and all the counselors who were unengaged at that period. Among the lecturers were Dr. Ben M. Edidin, Dr. Leo L. Honor on the development of the American Jewish Community. Dr. Noah Nardi on Zionism and *Eretz Yisrael*; Mr. Isaac Seligson of the Boston Associated Jewish Philanthropies on "Charitable Institutions in America," and Professor Kurt Lewin on "Child Psychology" and "Group Work With Children."

In five successive lectures, each lecturer could develop his subject in some depth. Together, the series constituted a mosaic of American Jewish life and served as an appetizer for more of the same in seasons ahead.

1947 was the best of Yavneh's four seasons since its founding. Even financially it netted a surplus which wiped out the total deficits of the first 3 seasons. It did not cover the new construction, but that was essentially an investment. Pressures in so many phases of life vanished. It was much easier to find suitable counselors, food and building supplies, and workmen. It was also easier to get financial support. The capacity of the camp remained unchanged, since there was no new construction.

Academically and spiritually we reached record highs. The general feeling was, "We have done it!" The final day of the season came. Tomorrow all would be gone. A banquet was scheduled for the evening, the most sumptuous meal of the season. In all camps tradition provided that the season ended with the best foot forward; that is, to have a good-bye banquet whose taste would linger and maintain a desire to re-register next season. The campers were excited. All had a deep tan and muscles that had been strengthened by daily exercise in swimming and games. Most campers gained in weight, some as much as 15 pounds and some had attained an inch in height. Camp life reached a plateau and city life began to charm and wink. Also the prospect of returning to a new school regime had a halo of its own. Above all stood out the return home, to the lap of the loved and loving family.

After the morning services we went to the dining hall where a full breakfast was consumed with the appetite of youth. The meal was over but the campers remained seated. Physical hunger was met but there was still a desire of the soul and this was met by song. No one told the campers what to do. Melodies followed in an unbroken chain. The songs were surcharged with joy over a grand yesterday and a glowing tomorrow. It was an achievement, Hallelujah, and all of it in Hebrew, charged with memories. The counselors sang as one with the campers, feeling as one big, dearly loved family.

That was one of the happiest days of my life. I recalled the hardships of the camp's formation in the War years. It was no longer an experiment, but had became a model. From communities in America and Canada people came to see it in order to duplicate it in their own region. That happy singing group was superior in many respects to its predecessors, proving that the very structure and purpose of Yavneh

were vital and growing. Even more, the maximum attainment of that day was bound to be but a basis for greater attainment the next season which would, in turn, become a basis for the next year after that.

The 1947 season, Yavneh's fourth, was the last for Leah Hurwich as director of the camp and mine as Dean of the Hebrew Teachers College summer school. Each of the preceding seasons served as an experiment for the one ahead of it. Each season did better so that the fourth season was ahead of its predecessors in every respect.

When I began arguing for a Hebrew Teachers College a quarter of a century before, I had been asked whether I believed American youngsters would be struck crazy to devote four years of hard study and for what—to become Hebrew teachers?! I answered in the affirmative, and since then I saw hundreds of them, their great potential love for Torah, a potentiality that needed but a chance to materialize. I felt sure that in the far flung American Jewish communities we had many wonderful youths. We only had to know how to arouse them, to offer them suitable channels for the articulation of their committment. God knows how greatly we need more and more *Talmidei Ḥakhamim* ("Students of the wise") among our precious growing generation. Faith in the capacity of American Jewry, an iron will and an iron decision that our young students should receive gold coin instead of fiat in exchange for their time with us, are the basic conditions that would enable us even today to begin high-aimed and far-sighted projects. The Torah storehouse is open, the suitable human material is at hand. We need dedicated and courageous people who will not shrink from beginning a project which may appear to be a pipe-dream.

One of my dreams was to introduce serious Torah study into the summer camp program. I was not fortunate enough to turn that dream into reality. But I still believe the day will come when many educators will realize that the summer vacation offers a most precious opportunity for added Torah acquisition, while our young students live and act in an environment that is all Jewish.

There is one *sine qua non*. All the achievements during the summer must be an addition to, not a substitute for, a full study program during the regular school year.

I knew that I would not return to Yavneh the following year. But such is life. Our most loved ones, our children, whom we carried in our arms as infants, flew out from our arms. They were now grown up and being hugged by other arms. Yet they never stopped being ours. So it will be with Yavneh.

The mighty song outburst at the end of the 1947 season that lasted over an hour still lives with me, and I say: what a privilege to have had a hand in its creation!

Epilogue and Analysis

The detailed story of the birth and growth of Yavneh has been told in detail for two reasons. One reason is personal. I loved the project from the moment my wife suggested it to the end of my affiliation with it. The other reason is inherent in the project itself; *it was an example of how a healthy idea overcame the prevailing despair in Jewish education.* Factually, despair has been indigenous to Jewish education in America, being transmitted from age to age to this very day, with the Day School as the outstanding exception.

In the Americas, Jews were free to maintain their faith, but they had very few men of knowledge who could help in maintaining them as informed Jews. Their very freedom exacerbated the difficulty to preserve their Jewishness. They continuously compromised with the amount of information to impart to their children and the degree of observance of *Mitzvot.* Only ten years after a handful of Jews succeeded in establishing the first synagogue in Boston (Ohabei Shalom, 1843), a number of members seceded and organized a new Temple, (Adas Israel, later Temple Israel) where the "burden" of Torah and *Mitzvot* was much lighter. These chose not to maintain the full program of traditional Jewish life and went over to the recently devised program known as Reform Judaism. The history of Reform Judaism is the story of disbelief in the ability of the Jews in America to hold on to the old rooted standards of Jewish knowledge and extent of observance.

Also, the older immigrants from Eastern Europe were full of despair. Even prior to their arrival reports reached them confirming that America was "A-*treifene*-land," an impure, faith-destroying land. What they found here confirmed these reports. The aim of Jewish education reduced itself to *Zoll er Chotch Keunen davnen* (At least, let the child learn how to pray)! It was the quintessence of despair about the possibility of a child's attainment in Jewish education. That view was responsible for the decades when mastery of *Ivre* (mechanical Hebrew reading) was the alpha and omega of the curriculum of American Jewish schools.

In the first decade of this century, a slight deviation occurred. Among the hundreds of thousands of Jewish immigrants who began

to stream to the American shores from Eastern Europe were some Hebrew teachers who had both knowledge and experience. Their greatest asset was their faith that even in America Jewish life could be developed on the basis of knowledge. There were two parallel currents. One believed that real institutions based upon Torah and Faith were feasible. These would make Jewish education the vehicle leading to that end. In 1902 the late Samuel Andron opened a "Yeshiva," a day-school, with three pupils. That institution was named "*Yeshivat Rabbi Jacob Joseph*" (located for many years at 165 Henry Street, East Side, New York). Slowly but steadily the idea spread and now, over sixty years later, over 300 Day Schools are spread all over America and Canada, and this type is still gaining in extent and depth.

The other current consisted of moderns. They had their faith in Jewish nationalism and national revival in *Eretz Yisrael*. They, too, were lone wolves. They brought with them the method of teaching Hebrew known as *Ivrit B'Ivrit* (the "natural" method with no translation). In 1907 two such attempts were made: in the Stone Avenue Talmud Torah, Brownsville, New York, and in Boston, with the opening of a school in the West End. Within a few years, similar schools were opened in many communities, employing the *Ivrit B'Ivrit* method, and they succeeded! A network of these schools was created. All began as elementary schools. Some of their graduates were then attracted to continue in advanced levels of Hebrew high schools, and then in Hebrew teachers training schools.

Despite basic elements that divided these two currents, they had one element in common: faith in place of despair, faith that Jewish life in America could be based on Jewish consciousness and knowledge. They had another element in common, namely, the belief that even lone individuals, if they give of themselves unstintingly, can create important, viable institutions.

At the beginning of the second decade of the present century a third current appeared: the "adjustment" plan. Dr. Samson Benderly of New York was its creator. He believed in the superior power of the environment and maintained that Jewish education had to adjust itself to it. On that basis he developed the "Adjustment to the Environment" system of Jewish education. Dr. Benderly and his disciples disseminated it all over America for nearly two generations. Now (1965) almost nothing was left that could still be adjusted to the environment. Concurrently, the very soul of Jewish education disappeared. There is no excitement, and no pioneer efforts are expected.

Excepting the Day Schools (*Yeshivot*), and some of the afternoon schools, yielding to the surface conditions of the environment is now widespread all over the country while the external forms are still preserved. We still speak of *Ivrit B'Ivrit*, of Jewish Nationalism and Israel, but as to content, such as root knowledge of Hebrew, the *Ḥumash* and the Prophets, Jewish history, and the fundamentals of Judaism, all these are a hollow sphere. Congregational schools have replaced the former community Talmud Torahs (Hebrew Schools). The 2–3 day afternoon schools continue to expand and that is making the whole process of Jewish education anemic and this, in turn, is ruining the very vitals of Jewish studies. This anemia is spreading from the roots upward. Hebrew teachers training schools and our higher educational institutions, which rely upon the lower schools for their supply of students, have to reduce their entrance requirements again and again, which affects their own courses downward. No wonder then why their own students fail to be attracted to Hebrew teaching as a profession. That is one basic reason for our catastrophic shortage of teachers, which will increase the effect of internal decay in Jewish education. All the concessions to the environment and whatever we have actively contributed to worsen further the unfavorable external conditions emanate from our conscious or unconscious feelings of despair.

An unresolved dispute goes on between God and the body of Israel: "Return unto me and I will return unto you," says God (Malachi 3), and the body of Israel says, "Restore us first and we will return unto You" (Lamentations 5:21). Similarly an unresolved sort of a contest now goes on between Jewish educators and the community. The educators maintain, "Let the community change its indifferent attitude and Jewish education will get a shot in the arm." The unimpressed community says, "Let Jewish education first demonstrate its indispensability in life and we'll change our attitude towards it."

In Jewish schooling, a generation is a period of 5–6 years, and while the debates continue unresolved, generations of children are lost to us as conscious Jews.

It was this situation that demanded something basic and realistic, some effort that could be implemented within our given situation. That something had to be intriguing and inviting emulation because of its inner appeal and practicability. It was on the basis of that real need that the Yavneh project was born. Instead of *wrestling*

with an indifferent environment, we decided to *create an environment* that would be our own. Instead of competing with general education for the spare time of the child, there would be no competition at all. The total child and all of his time would be left at our disposal. And as to the proper care for the child's health, we would keep her in the very lap of nature, on the shore of a lake where everything supports physical comfort and good health. Counselors and teachers would be with him. Body and soul would be enriched. Admission would be open to all ages, from grade one of the Hebrew School to the Hebrew College seniors. A well-planned study program, as well as a religious way of life would prevail in theory and practice, and let's see what we would achieve!

The Yavneh project required complete faith in its value to Jewish education. Indeed, Yavneh was recognized and accepted as a model. The summer vacation became a gold mine for Jewish education!

DANGERS AHEAD!

It is my firm opinion that a revolution in public attitude to Jewish education is not a *sine qua non* condition for basic improvement in education. We do not deal in revolutions, nor can we generate them. But we can produce good, intriguing educational examples. With all the great changes in modern living conditions, parents still love their children and those who prove that they are benefitting children find parents standing in line to engage their services. That is why there is still room for experiments. I refer to real attempts which are initiated because of an abiding determination to disseminate Torah, knowledge and faith.

I believe that we still have people who might even now risk their livelihood and security and give themselves to projects that don't bear the seal of approval of current practice. The real roadblock lies in the fact that for decades all had been flowing smoothly along trodden paths. There have been no protests, no rebellions. Also, pioneering is a matter of current style. During its first years in America, the *Ivrit B'Ivrit* method was launched as a protest movement against the totally ineffective ways children were taught in the Talmud Torahs. In every important community there were one or two diversionist teachers. They sought new ways of inculcating knowledge, particularly in the use of spoken Hebrew. The more the teacher kept on talking about his plans, in order to gain cooperation, the more he convinced himself, until the plan became his aim in life, and he devoted himself unstintingly to its realization. Thus, Jewish education was enriched with one more well-meant experiment of a pioneer. That was good for Jewish education, and much of what was achieved in those years was largely due to the devotion of those pioneers.

Now, since conformity in Jewish education has been the rule for many years, dissent is much harder. But, as I said, I firmly believe we have with us people whose peace of mind is much disturbed by the sterility of so many of our schools, and that they are potentially anxious to make a more promising start. For these potential pioneers, I described Camp Yavneh in such detail. Let them read how a daring plan was proposed, how it got sympathizers, overcame much opposition, developed activities which succeeded, and how the success of each year became a new floor on which a new level was built the next season. This description should make clear that "its realization is not in heaven, nor is it overseas, but rather very near you, in your own mouth and heart." (Deuteronomy 30: 12–14)

Since my resignation as Dean of the Hebrew Teachers College in 1947, I have not visited Yavneh, nor do I have a clear picture of what is being done there. One thing, however, is quite clear: the ugly duckling grew into a swan and Yavneh, which was born amid strong skepticism and opposition in the Hebrew College, later became "The Summer School and Camp of the Hebrew Teachers College." And one more item is now crystal clear: Yavneh has shown the way of adapting the summer months for additional intensive experiences in Jewish education. This very important contribution was made possible thanks to the wholehearted help and devotion of those who worked and transformed a seemingly impractical vision into a solid fact; that is, the Yavneh faculty, the counselors, and the lay workers who threw themselves into the project. Above all came the Yavneh campers who proved that "Wherever Jewry was exiled, Godhood stayed with them," (Megillah 29a) and that our modern generation is fit and willing to absorb the light inherent in our Torah, faith and hopes.

Jewish Education During World War II

World War II broke out in September 1939 and, on December 7, 1941, swept the United States into its whirlpool. The worst economic crisis of modern times which began in October 1929 and lasted through all of the thirties came to an end. Jewish education was deeply affected since the draft for military service drew teachers as well as those who were preparing to teach. Losses from the teaching ranks kept increasing through the war years.

Furthermore, with the outbreak of the War in 1939, America not only received immense orders from France and England for civil

and war supplies, but also began to arm itself seriously. It would have been suicidal to stay unprepared after Hitler made a pact with Russia, and he had been conquering all around him. For its own security, America had to arm on an unprecedented scale, and to produce the newest weapons in maximum quantities. All these lent tremendous impetus to America's industry and everything produced was absorbed by the war machine which kept on demanding more and more.

The increasing demand for workers reflected itself in the area of Jewish education because Hebrew teachers, and particularly young teachers, saw the general employment market could pay them much more than Hebrew teaching could, even under the best circumstances, so they transferred to the general market. Those who could not make the change remained in the teaching field but felt frustrated, a feeling that was far from favorable to Hebrew teaching.

The effects of the war were particularly noticeable in the Hebrew College. Students from age 17 or over began to leave. Some were drafted, others volunteered ahead of their turn. There were also young men and women who were attracted by the high salaries for workers, even if they were untrained. Before the outbreak of war, there were 209 students in the Prozdor (Hebrew High School) and the College. During the war the total dropped to 150. Thirty-six students and 48 graduates were drafted. This restricted even further the ability of the College to meet the annual demand for new teachers. A partial solution was found by making part-time teachers assume full-time positions. That step also had another favorable aspect; that is, it increased the total income of these transferred teachers and thus avoided their change to an outside field.

The War prosperity created many jobs. People began to have money, and when Jews have money they readily contribute to community needs. The improvements in the general economy enabled schools to raise salaries. Inflation came and with it came escalation of wages.

Women, even married women, began to enter various fields of employment. The rate of women's employment kept on rising. Some filled the vacancies of drafted men while others just entered the areas of business and industry. There was a problem, however, about what to do with children who left their Public School at 3:30 P.M. while the working mother had to stay on her job until near supper time. A ready answer was given: register the children in Hebrew School. There they would be safe from the danger of roaming the

streets. Also, there they would learn some important items as Jews. The tuition fee was justified when balanced against the children's safety. That helped to increase Hebrew School registrations.

We had decided that teacher training had to be above temporary economic cycles, and that we must continue with our teacher training programs irrespective of the immediate economic conditions. We softened the conditions and expectations in every way possible, especially to provide only part-time positions to those new graduates who were not entirely dependent upon their earnings as teachers. Between 1930–1940 the Boston Hebrew Teachers College graduated 106 new teachers. If we hadn't taken these steps to insure a continuous supply, we would not have been in a relatively good condition. For even deducting those who were drafted into military service, and those who took up career Hebrew teaching, there was still a substantial reserve of qualified teachers. That reserve was a life-saver during the War years and the years immediately thereafter. It took the edge off of the teacher shortage in Boston, while in other communities the teacher shortage reached catastrophic dimensions.

The delay of about a decade in the acuteness of a teacher shortage in Boston was a great blessing. It enabled schools in greater Boston to maintain their intensive Hebrew programs (5 sessions a week) which had been the standard program in Boston for decades, (and which is still observed in Metropolitan Boston as this is written—1956.) Under such conditions it was possible to maintain a high quality curriculum. The basic preparation in the 6-year course in the Boston Hebrew Schools enabled the Prozdor and the Hebrew College to continue their traditional intensive programs.

Of course, it was not long before the smell of smoke from the crematoria in Germany began to reach America. At first many took it as an exaggeration of war propaganda against Germany. Some recalled that during World War I Germany's enemies asserted she was using human bodies for the extraction of fat, of which she was short. But reports of the present holocaust kept increasing. The Jewish press kept very reliable evidence that the Germans were practicing total murder of all Jewish communities wherever they made conquests, and these reports continued to spread. The American press also reported the same. Public opinion was aroused.

American Jewish reaction expressed itself in a mass protest meeting at Madison Square Garden in New York on July 24, 1942.

Twenty-thousand filled that auditorium. August 12, 1942 (*Ab* 24, 5702) was set by the Orthodox Rabbinate of the United States and Canada as a day of fast and prayer. Protest meetings were similarly held in Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Los Angeles and St. Paul, Minnesota. Many decent Americans expressed their bitterness in various ways. Editorials appeared in the American press during the war years. President Roosevelt said on numerous occasions that what the Nazis were doing to the Jews was unforgivable, that they were responsible for those crimes and would ultimately be punished. Also, in the House of Representatives and the American Senate protest resolutions were adopted! However, the real protests, coming out of the heart, were never made, not by Roosevelt nor by Churchill, the masters of expression when they really wanted to express themselves.

From the very first, the Foreign Offices of England and the United States knew much more than the public at large about the Nazi activity and their resolution to exterminate all Jews wherever they could be found. The Allies had the moral power to threaten the Nazis that unless they stopped their mass murders and at least allowed the Jews an exit from their territories, a "measure for measure" scale of revenge would be inflicted upon them. Nothing of the kind was ever said and Germany murdered six million Jews!

That lack of mercy and hardness of heart spoke volumes for itself, and many Jews felt themselves as "a lamb among seventy wolves." We felt, despite the fact that about half a million Jews served in the American armies, and many tens of thousands served in the armies of the other allies, that Jewish blood is cheap and that human responsibility to us as Jews is of a much thinner weave than to other elements of the population.

That feeling kept intensifying until it articulated itself in a degree never before equaled in American history. The wheel of events presented the United Nations on November 29, 1947, the problem of the division of Palestine and ended in the destiny-making decision to divide it between the Jews and Arabs and ultimately brought the State of Israel into being.

In retrospect, the writer is convinced that even in the area of Jewish education we failed to rise to the greatest call of destiny in all of Diaspora history, neither during the war nor during the post-war years. By way of analysis or explanation—and not excuse—one must understand that Jewish educators felt caught betwixt and

between. If they were to elaborate upon what befell the European Jews during the War, how they were being systematically annihilated, while all other nations didn't lift a finger to help them, the children would come to the conclusion that Jewishness is a misfortune. We suffered for ages and there is no solution. Our situation is hopeless. That would definitely create among the children a determination to escape the hopeless Jewish world in every manner possible. On the other hand, we as educators no longer possessed the tools once used effectively for defense and offense by our forebears during our long exile, even in the worst periods of our persecution.

It is a fatal mistake to assert that throughout our long exile we have submitted spinelessly to whatever hate and malice brought upon us. The reverse is true. Our faith in our course of staying Jewish had poured over into our blood and maintained in us a "happen-what-may" will to live and function, age after age. Without that will to live, it is doubtful whether we could have generated courage out of adversity for so long and in so many situations. The fact is that we fought for our existence, in defense and offense, in all places and all times. Our weapons were entirely different from those of our enemies; they were spiritual, and what we called defeat or victory were diametrically different from how our adversaries understand defeat or victory. Our approach was that all is determined by God.

One part of the ongoing, unresolved dispute resounded at times like these: "Return unto me and I will return unto you," said the Lord of Hosts. (Malachi 3:7). Our future would not be determined by our enemies but by ourselves. All we needed to do is to return honestly and truthfully to God.

From that point of view there was no reason to despair. We could inflict a decisive defeat upon all our adversaries if only we really turned to our Heavenly Father. It was from that view that the Jew had always battled for his existence. "Seven times the Just may fall, but he invariably rises again." (Proverbs 24:16). That was the Jewish "secret weapon." The non-Jewish world never realized it, but the Jew always knew the source of his own strength.

I remember the simple untutored Jews, who hardly rose above reading the punctuated Hebrew and a bit of the *Ḥumash,* and how they read for hours on end the Chapters of the Psalms, in which their souls spoke to God. They prayed and found therein strength and hope and could continue to carry on with new strength. Those tools of resistance vanished from the world of our modern educators.

When confronted by the dilemma whether or not to tell their pupils about the true catastrophe that hit us, what our educators did was superficial and banal and failed to reach the hearts and souls of our children. And why could we not transmit to our children our time-tested weapons of survival? The reason is well-known. The real source from which our forebears derived strength, endurance and hope for ages had dried out. Faith in our Almighty God had shrunk. New Gods tailored to taste came to the fore. Torah as we had known it was put into some far away background. New Gods and new Torahs occupied the center of the stage. We relied upon them, believing that we were thus at the forefront of progressive life. But when a real hour of distress arrived, we found that our new treasure house was empty, the tailored Gods were bankrupt, and all trails leading to the road of the God of Israel were lost. We lost contact with our ancient sources of supply which had always kept us prepared for whatever the morrow had for us. Jewish education, which could have been the strong bridge connecting us with our in-exhaustive source of supply, had become impotent, leaving us with an orphaned generation.

And now (1965), 20 years after World War II and 18 years after the creation of the State of Israel, Jewish education in American is still looking for a goal. We are still searching for substitutes for our own source of supply, and meanwhile wave after wave of pupils comes into our schools and most of them leave with no more than they had when they first joined us.

When the war ended in 1945, about 70 demobilized alumni and students of the Hebrew Teachers College returned to Boston and nearby communities. All found occasions to visit us at the College, and we were happy to see them alive and well. With the exception of three who lost their lives, all the others returned in good health. Not all of our men were sent to the fighting front. The high educational level of most of our former students, and the exceptional capacity of many of them, made them highly desirable in special services. One of our men had specialized in Japanese, others were taken to Washington and still others were attached to the High Command. Their appearance was like a refreshing wind in our education world. Reinforcements had arrived; we would no longer be in a state of progressive deterioration.

Some Alumni soon returned to Hebrew teaching, mostly part-time. Like other demobilized men, they were confused. But they

had a profession, as active or potential teachers, whenever they decided to take it up. That was an important asset. Knowing they could resume teaching was a stabilizing factor. "Why worry? I can teach two hours a day. Temporarily, that would meet all my economic needs. It will give me ample opportunity to look around, examine matters carefully and reach a decision as to my career." The number of returning alumni grew. Nearly all of them found they could take on a college study program together with full or part-time Hebrew teaching. Government help to the returning G.I.s, in addition to their income as Hebrew teachers, made it possible to launch a far-sighted career program. Developments were mutually favorable for the returned alumnus as well as for the Hebrew school system. The fear of a teacher shortage passed. Now, at least, Hebrew studies would grow and Talmud Torah boards were happy with that. They could also offer increased salaries. The armistice had not brought with it an economic crisis, as some "experts" predicted, basing their opinion on the experience of developments after World War I. Now people had money and the Hebrew schools had no difficulty in meeting their budgets.

Also, qualitatively, there was no sudden drop in school achievement, as many feared. There was, however, another serious negative factor: the dispersion of the Jewish population to the suburbs that began to mushroom around Boston. In every suburb they promptly open a Hebrew school, but they were 3-day instead of 5-day schools. The reduction from five to three days a week had brought anemia into the whole program of Jewish education. Despite all arithmetical calculations, achievement in the 3-day a week school is less than half of the achievement in the 5-day school.

With regard to teacher supply, Boston had been in a generally favorable position, drawing upon the surplus of graduates of the Hebrew College that was created during the critical thirties. That surplus had postponed the anticipated teacher shortage for about a decade, but the extra supply of teaching talent had by now been absorbed, so that while all rejoiced over the continuing growth in school registration, there came the worry as to where to get capable shepherds for those increasing dear little lambs.

Additionally, although the Hebrew Teachers College had produced a graduating class every year, almost every graduating class had some who did not want to enter even part-time teaching. Only a small percentage became career teachers. The Hebrew Teachers

College had been the only source for the training of teachers in the entire New England area, and it was its proclaimed aim to keep our Hebrew schools supplied with enough teachers to fulfill its original mandate and purpose.

No one can complain about those graduates who abstained from Hebrew school teaching; nor will I now discuss those negative factors, such as low salaries, which of necessity divert many graduates to more remunerative occupations. The outstanding fact remains that the Hebrew College failed in the post-World War II period to meet even half of Boston's annual need for new teachers. In addition to the negative factors mentioned and the expansion of schools to the suburbs, this also occurred despite many favorable conditions, such as the participation of the net of greater Boston Hebrew Schools in a uniform curriculum to prepare students for the "*Prozdor*" (the Hebrew High School), which had always been under the aegis of the College, and had been its main source of supply of new students. Also, the lion's share of annual subsidies from the Associated Jewish Philanthropies had first and foremost favored the Hebrew College. Without assigning blame, our condition is that the fate and quality of Jewish education in Boston and in most other New England communities depends on a renewable full complement of well-trained Hebrew teachers, which the Hebrew Teachers College is expected to supply, but such provision had been reduced to a trickle which did not meet with the annual needs of the schools.

One didn't have to be a prophet to predict that qualitatively Jewish education in Boston was bound to continue to worsen, despite the extensive efforts of the Bureau of Jewish Education to bring teaching talent from outside. Boston is not the only community in search of Hebrew teachers. Elsewhere the shortage is even more serious. All of this had created a very sharp competition for teachers. Part of the demand is met by qualified teachers, while another part is filled with people with experience but who usually change places. Still another part of the demand is filled with teachers who have very little or almost nothing to qualify them as such. Together, the above factors combined to produce a growing weakness which undermined the quality of Jewish education and subsequently, the Hebrew College itself. When Hebrew School graduates who were insufficiently prepared enter the *Prozdor*, they reduce the quality of that institution and when the graduates of the *Prozdor* enter the Hebrew College they again, of necessity, reduce its quality. In their

turn, these college graduates produce Hebrew school graduates who are still less prepared than their teachers were in their time. That is an inevitable, circular, downhill development!

Nothing can compensate for a chronic teacher shortage. Other educational and cultural activities, no matter what their extent and value, cannot make up for a chronic shortage of teachers who are well-prepared and in sufficient numbers. The Hebrew teachers training schools, not only in Boston but all over America, were created, as their name implies, to produce well-prepared Hebrew teachers in sufficient supply. Since all our training schools as a group do not supply even 25 percent of the annual need for new teachers, it means that fundamental changes in the approach and preparation of our teaching personnel must be made. One possible solution might be to organize all-day Hebrew teachers training schools, where only students qualified as to personality, attitude and capacity who mean to make Hebrew teaching their life-career will be admitted. Should the given situation be allowed to continue it is quite clear that our entire educational setup will go from bad to worse.

Shortly after the end of the War, a bit of relief came with the arrival of some teachers from Europe and from *Eretz Yisrael*. These last came to America to advance in certain fields of study which have no connection with Hebrew teaching, yet quite a few of them were engaged as teachers. Most of them had no preparation or experience in teaching, except for the fact that they spoke Hebrew. But even that source kept on shrinking due to immigration restrictions and also because in many schools the authorities realized that Hebrew speaking by itself was not sufficient to qualify a person as a teacher.

The Hebrew Teachers College After the War

When some of the demobilized students and alumni returned to study and to Hebrew teaching on a full-time or part-time basis, the terrific demand for manpower in all lines of work and at very high pay was over. Directly or indirectly this change affected young peoples' attitude to schooling, and registration for Hebrew studies increased. One inner change opened the door for a wider attendance at the *Prozdor*, which later brought about an increase in Hebrew College attendance. Near the end of the forties, admission to the *Prozdor* was opened also to graduates of the 3-day a week

schools, if they studied an extra year (the seventh), attending five days a week. Concurrently, another change was made in the final examinations of the Talmud Torah graduating classes. Those exams were equivalent to admission tests to the *Prozdor*. Up to that time prospective Talmud Torah graduates had to pass examinations in all they had studied in their six-year Talmud Torah course: Hebrew, Torah, Early Prophets, History, and Hebrew grammar. The above change reduced the examinations to the studies of the sixth year only. These changes amounted to a lowering of the admission requirement to the *Prozdor* and it opened the door to more students. The continued increase in the birth rate ultimately brought more students to the Talmud Torahs, which later sent more of their graduates to the *Prozdor*. These factors increased the total registration in the Hebrew College, and by 1954–1955 the total registration was 271 (189 in the *Prozdor* and 82 in the College classes), as against the pre-war maximum registration of 209, which produced 14 college graduates. The College continues to produce a graduating class annually. Since the first graduation in 1925 the College has produced a total of 270 graduates. In 1951, the College began to award the Master degree to those who completed the prescribed course of graduate studies.

For years Jews kept moving from Roxbury and Dorchester to other districts of Boston. Most of Boston's Jews lived in those two districts, and most of the *Prozdor* and College students were derived from them. With the movement of most Jews, the Hebrew Teachers College decided to move to new quarters and in 1952 it occupied its present quarters at 43 Hawes Street, Brookline, Massachusetts.

The library grew considerably. During 1947–1955 over 10,000 volumes were added, a substantial part of it coming from books rescued from the Germans which, after the war, were distributed among various institutions. The library had (in 1955) a total of about 32,000 volumes.

Financially the college had also been gaining. Men of influence were added to the board of trustees and the Associated Jewish Philanthropies had been increasing its subsidies so that for 1956–57 its allotment to the college was $93,993, more than double the $42,168 allocated for 1946–47. Income also increased from other sources such as from the Women's Association, tuition fees and occasional contributions.

In 1955 the institution was accorded recognition as an accredited College. That included it in the list of recognized colleges, and when the Ford Foundation announced its immense allotment in 1956, the largest single grant to colleges in the history of education in order to enable them to raise professional salaries all over the country, the Hebrew Teachers College received a sum equal to the total faculty salaries for one year. That allotment, set up as a fund, will yield enough to add 4 percent annually to the regular salaries of the faculty.

The Hebrew College cooperates with the Bureau of Jewish Education and the Hebrew Teachers and Principals Association in conducting a series of lectures which are given mostly by visiting lecturers. The College also continues to conduct Camp Yavneh. The New England Women's Association of the Hebrew Teachers College, organized in 1931, continues to broaden its activities in behalf of the College as an institution and each student as an individual. The basic goal of this warm-hearted organization is to be "Mother and Sister" to the college and continue to support it in many helpful ways. The Alumni Association, founded in 1925, continues to cooperate with the college. It began with the creation of an annual scholarship which finances one student in Israel for a full year. Alumni serve as officers and trustees of the College. Its members, who are dispersed in America as well as Israel, are radiating points of constructive influence in our national and spiritual life.

The Hebrew Teachers College continues as the only accredited source for the supply of trained teachers for the schools of Boston and the rest of New England.

The Bureau of Jewish Education

The fear of a serious depression after the end of World War II did not materialize. Rather the reverse was true; that is, a state of increasing economic growth set in and, thank God, it is still growing. In the Jewish sphere, two miracles occurred: first, the United Nations' decision to divide Palestine, and second, the creation of the state of Israel. These two miracles shook American Jewry to its very soul. A flood of contributions, the likes of which no one ever dreamed, began to pour in to meet the manifold needs of Israel. Individuals began to contribute on an unprecedented scale. The United Jewish Appeal raised 100 million dollars, and even more each year. In many communities the needs of the local charities were joined to the overseas needs and joint Jewish appeals were conducted. As the total increased, so did the share of the local charities. Thus, the restoration of the State of Israel brought about increases for local charities all over America.

In Boston, the increase in the income of the Associated Jewish Philanthropies was reflected in the allotments for the Bureau of Jewish Education and the Hebrew Teachers College. The increases to the Bureau of Jewish Education stemmed also from the expansion of its area of activities to Metropolitan Boston, which included about 30 towns and suburbs in its vicinity, following the lead of the Philanthropies. Increases in the staff meant an increased budget. The Bureau had also expanded its former services and introduced new ones. For their maintenance there was only one source, the Associated Philanthropies. The expanded Bureau program touched on finding teachers, curriculum, supporting principals and teachers, adult education, the library, school enrollments, and subsidies.

Search for Teachers

The surplus of trained teachers that was created in Boston during the critical thirties was absorbed during the forties. The increase in births and and population growth later in suburban areas later reflected itself in increased registration and the need for more teachers.

By the late forties, Dr. Benjamin Shevach, my successor as Executive Director of the Bureau, had to seek teachers outside Boston and to engage teaching talent where he could find it. The greatest source was New York City. At the beginning of the fifties the Hebrew Teachers College supplied less than half of the annual need for new teachers. It became increasingly hard to find enough qualified teachers outside Boston who met the normal Boston standards and it became necessary to accept less qualified people. The situation worsened from year to year and became a major concern of the Bureau. Unless standards were maintained, the whole Boston structure of intensive, five-day-a-week education would be imperilled, and the teacher shortage was general in America.

The Curriculum

The uniform curriculum, adopted in Boston in 1923, through the cooperation of the Principals Association and the Bureau of Jewish Education was maintained without interruption since its adoption. This plan had vigorous support in the "Uniform Tests" that were given all prospective Hebrew school graduates and were accepted as admission tests for the *Prozdor*. Additional support came with the decision of the Principals Association in 1929 to administer Uniform Tests to all grades, except Grade I and special grades. Thus, all grades from 1 to 6 were tested annually, and only one test (instead of the former two) was given in June.

Dr. Shevach introduced important revisions in the uniform curriculum. These came as a result of meetings with principals and teachers, who evaluated the achievements of each grade, and the changing conditions under which the schools worked. A detailed syllabus was then prepared for each of the six grades of the 5-day-a-week schools. A similar syllabus was prepared for the 3-day-a-week schools. Both syllabi were revised each year to conform to the changes effected by certain factors, such as the length of the school year, the total number of hours per week, and the quality of the

teaching staff. Many teaching aids had been introduced. All was in a fluid state and every year adjustments were made in compliance with the capacity of the given teaching staffs.

The 3-day-a-week Hebrew schools had been and still are a problem unto themselves, let alone those schools with fewer than 3-day-a-week programs. They originally came into being by the trend to organize schools on a congregational instead of a community basis. That stemmed especially from the Conservative congregations which sought to have schools maintained by each congregation. (The factors which brought this about will be discussed later in this volume.) In many cities the community Talmud Torah practically disappeared to be replaced by the congregational schools. Most of the latter type offer 3-day-a-week sessions for each child. At the present writing (1955), Boston still has most of the Hebrew schools on a 5-session-a-week basis, but the trend in the six years from 1948–1954 has been towards a reduced schedule per child.

Relative Increase of Registration by Types of Schools During 1948–1955

	1948 Enrollment		1955 Enrollment		
School Type	Students	%	Students	%	Growth Rate in %
5 Day-a-week	3,221	39	3,224	27	0.7
3 Day-a-week	787	9	2,582	21.6	228
2 Day-a-week	127	1.5	320	2.7	152
Day Schools	386	4.6	551	4.6	43
Yiddish schools (3 days)	0		95	.1	N/A
Sunday schools	3,833	46	5,187	43	35
Totals	8,354	100	11,979	100	42

This table indicates that while enrollments increased overall, there was greater growth—in both absolute and relative terms—in the less intensive programs (with marginal growth in the all-day schools.) For example, in 1948, Boston had 787 children in the 3-session-a-week schedule, as compared with 3,221 who were on a 5-session-a-week schedule. In 1954, there were 2,582 on a 3-session-a-week

schedule as compared with 3,244 on a 5-day-a-week plan, or 79.6 percent. This rather emphasized how anemia in transmitting Jewish knowledge was becoming an epidemic.

Activities with Principals and Teachers

1. Principals' Workshop. In 1944 with the cooperation of the Hebrew Teachers and Principals Association, Dr. Shevach organized Principals' Workshops, aiming to deal with problems inherent in school conduct. Monthly meetings were held throughout the school year. At each meeting there was a seriously prepared lecture followed by questions and discussion. Except for one lecture by an outsider, all the other lectures were given by members of the workshop. Subjects were assigned about a year in advance. The Bureau supplied the lecturer a bibliography and other material pertinent to their subject. With but one interruption of a year, this workshop had been operating until the current writing (1965).

Several times I was honored to lecture at that workshop, and was delighted to see the fruit of that cooperative effort between the Bureau and the Hebrew Teachers and Principals Association.

2. Teachers' courses. In 1949 the Bureau organized in-service courses for teachers. These courses continued through the entire year, even during the summer vacation. They became an integral part of the pedagogic opportunities for Boston teachers given for a number of years. Each course had 10–15 sessions and included the following subjects: history of education, educational philosophy, intelligence and achievement tests, educational theory (teaching methods, teaching of foreign languages, with emphasis on the teaching of Hebrew.)

In the above workshop and at the courses for teachers there had always been a good attendance and never any perception of duplication with offerings at the College. Also, in all the years since these two projects began no academic credit had been given, nor any addition in salary for participants, yet there were many who kept on attending year after year. This was a great tribute to Dr. Shevach, the originator of these two projects, who had been their guide and leader.

Adult Education

In cooperation with Boston's Zionist House, the Bureau has been conducting classes for adults during the school year in Hebrew and

other Judaica subjects. The Bureau also maintains a School for Jewish Women. Hebrew remains an area of primary interest for the Bureau. Together with the Hebrew Teachers College and the Hebrew Teachers and Principals Association, the Bureau conducts a Hebrew Forum. Prominent out-of-town lecturers are invited. The Bureau also maintains a special Forum in English for those who don't know Hebrew.

A Pedagogic Library

Bit by bit the Bureau created an extensive pedagogic library. In 1956 it had over 7,000 volumes in Hebrew and other languages. That library keeps on growing, and it is used primarily by teachers and students. A special project nurtured by Dr. Shevach, it once carried the name of Judge Lewis Goldberg, to honor the many years he served as President of the Bureau.

School Registration

The reduced birth rate in the critical thirties was a factor in Jewish schools' registration, and until the mid-forties there was a plateau in Boston Hebrew schools (about 3,000). The rise in the birth rate that began with the outbreak of war in the beginning of the forties reflected itself in increased registration in the late forties. The enrollment increase also reflected the expansion of Bureau activities to include Metropolitan Boston, and the inclusion of "non-affiliated" schools (i.e., those which did not altogether subscribe to Bureau requirements in curriculum and personnel standards).

The analysis of the registration increase (see table on page 263) and of what kind of schools experienced this growth tells us much more than the mere statistics.

First, we should comment on the national context of the registration increase, since it was a general phenomenon all over the country. For example, in New York all types of elementary schools had increased in size. From a total registration of 60,298 in 1948–49 it rose to 91,670 in 1954–55, a rise of 51.4 percent. The Boston increase during the same period was 41.6 percent.

By itself the above rise is astounding. However, upon analysis as to where the rise took place we see the blessing was not unmixed. First and foremost, there was the explosion in the birth rate. The total U.S. population rose from 146,993,000 in 1948 to 161,183,000 in

1954, a numerical increase of 14,190,000, which was nearly all due to the increased birthrate, plus some immigration. Then we should take into account the rise of interest in Jewish life which spread through all layers of American Jewry. That greater interest articulated itself also in greater registration in all types of Jewish schools.

But dry statistics are very thin fare. In Boston, the 5-day-a-week schools had not benefitted from that rise, and it had been because of that type of school, beginning with the Evrio Hebrew school of nearly half a century ago, that all the real progress in the quality and content of Jewish education had been made. The entire gain in registration had been made by the 2-day and 3-day-a-week schools, from 787 to 2,582 in seven years. Almost all were congregational schools and no Messiah is bound to rise from that level of Jewish education! In that type of school achievement in knowledge of Jewish sources is on a very low level, and, excepting some individual children, very few, if any, *Talmidei Ḥakhamim* (true scholars) will arise from that educational garden.

The current trend that Jewish Education must be an "easy load," had given rise to a new type, the 2-sessions-a-week school. In 1948–49 they had 127 students and in 1954-55 they had 320. At the least intensive end, the Sunday School increase in registration was 35.3 percent. One fact deserves attention: outside of New York, Boston is the only city among all the large American Jewish communities where from 1917 until the present writing (1956) registration in Hebrew Schools was invariably larger than in Sunday Schools.

The Yiddish School is disappearing. The growing generation does not take to Yiddish in any of its forms. No tears need be shed over the vanishing of "*Yiddishism*" as a movement, but the disappearance of Yiddish as a living medium among our young is nothing to shout "Hurrah" about. It constitutes a loss of a fundamental and very useful and enlightening element from our life, with little to compensate for that loss.

Sunshine and great promise prevail in the realm of the all-day schools, known as *Yeshivot*. The rise of these schools in Boston is in tune with a similar rise all over America.

Direct Subsidies to Hebrew Schools

Unlike most of the Bureaus of Jewish Education in the U.S., the Boston Bureau never supported even one Hebrew School's budget

completely. In its first decade (1918–1928) it gave partial subsidies to most of the schools which were affiliated with it at the outset, in 1917.

In May, 1928, Dr. Maurice Hexter (Executive Director of the Federated Charities) informed the writer that all direct subsidies to Hebrew schools would be cut off immediately since the Federated Charities had been at that time in a financial crisis and no improvement was seen on the horizon. A partial relief lay in the reduction of its outlays. The cutting off of the Hebrew school subsidies was a part of that plan to reduce the charities budget.

The Hebrew Schools took this bitter pill graciously. They went to their contributors for assistance. Many of these saw that the schools needed not only financial but also human assistance for the coming year when there would be no contributions from the Federated Charities. These contributors joined the several Hebrew school boards as workers and before long the loss of the charities subsidy was covered and there was even an increase. 1928–29 began with increased manpower. Their determination not to be bound to the good will of the "rich uncle" strengthened the morale of the several boards of directors, and their faith in their own capacity to continue, no matter what.

That rise in the schools' morale was an unforeseen source of strength and security.

As a result of, the economic crash in 1929 teachers' salaries hit bottom and classes were merged so as to save on the number of teachers. Despite these hard blows the Hebrew schools continued to function and the qualitative level was not compromised too much.

One could not imagine what would have happened to Jewish education in Boston were it not for the constructive responses generated by people who felt the schools were treated unjustly in the allocations process. During this period additional workers came to work at the schools and continued to work even during the depression years and many of them continued when the crisis passed.

For over 20 years no direct subsidy was given to any of the affiliated Hebrew schools. In the early fifties, an accelerated population movement away from the old time Jewish districts began. The overcrowding caused by World War II, when no new apartment construction was allowed, was now alleviated by the erection of new apartments. Movement to other, newer districts assumed the proportion of a flight. It began with the well-to-do families whose leav-

ing deprived the schools in the older districts of their customary support. Roxbury was the first to be hit and Dorchester followed suit. Concurrently, the cost of living began to rise rapidly, and the schools had to raise their teachers' salaries. Their inability to make up fully for the rise in the cost of living meant the loss of their better teachers who were enticed by the newer Jewish districts where the higher economic stratum settled. The old schools were hit by decreasing income and increasing outgo of membership, enrollments, and personnel.

The schools that were hit hardest were the biggest and best in the city. A large proportion of students who registered in the *Prozdor* and who then passed on to Hebrew College came from those schools. All that translated itself into a need for assistance from a big reliable source. The Associated Jewish Philanthropies was that source. The Bureau of Jewish Education was the intermediary and four schools began to receive direct subsidies once again.

These direct subsidies also solved another serious problem. In Roxbury the Jewish community shrunk so that three Hebrew schools were on the verge of closing. The Bureau again came in as an intermediary. The three schools united and all met at the Mishkan Tefila schoolhouse. The synagogues whose schools merged pledged generous sums toward their support. The Philanthropies pledged its share and in 1955-56 the merged school had a registration of 250 pupils who met 5 times a week.

The Inherent Strengths of the Bureau of Jewish Education

After the suspension of the direct subsidies to the Hebrew schools in May, 1928, the Bureau of Jewish Education would have dissolved had it not been for the inner bond and the vital service which the Bureau had continuously rendered since its creation. The financial subsidies were only one of a series of services, including:

a. *The continued effort to maintain a high level in all the curricular work of the affiliated schools.* This fundamental aim fathered many activities which were vital, such as the maintenance of a uniform curriculum in all affiliated schools, a rigid standard of recommending only high quality teachers to all schools and the urge to have efficient and high quality teaching in all classes. The continued effort to maintain good will and cooperation with all the school boards, each of which was an independent

institution, and the maintenance of good will and willingness to cooperate on the part of the principals and teachers on various levels, especially in the pedagogic areas, were also very important factors.

b. *The maintenance of a working relationship with the Hebrew Teachers College.* Until the outbreak of World War II, the Bureau's activities were deeply intertwined with the total budget of the College. Quite often the Bureau independently conducted some of its own activities in order to maintain the qualitative level of the College. In the forties, when budgets were increased all around, the Bureau no longer had such concerns. That was particularly true since the armistice. On the other hand, the success of the College was vitally dependent, educationally speaking, on two areas: 1) the quality of students who apply for admission to the *Prozdor*; and 2) employing the Hebrew Teachers College graduates locally so their continued contact with the Bureau would enable them to grow professionally. These two areas required uninterrupted attention on the part of the Bureau. That vital interrelationship between the two institutions continued even after 1947, when the Bureau and the College had begun to function as entirely independent bodies, each having an executive head of its own.

The Bureau had never been "conformist." It believed that the road to Torah knowledge was never easy; it did not follow any pattern that suggested "go easy and be successful." That sheds light on the Bureau's continued efforts on behalf of the College to help it attain a really qualitative level of education for its students. It also helps to explain why it had been concentrating all its efforts to maintain an intensive system of instruction, based upon a five session a week program even when Boston had been left as the only big Jewish community in the U.S. in which the intensive system still prevailed. It also sheds light on why Dr. Benjamin Shevach, Executive Director of the Bureau since 1947, invested much time and energy in order to maintain pedagogic workshops and courses for principals and teachers whose inherent aim is to increase Jewish and professional knowledge for its own sake. These activities have enjoyed continued growth and longevity. Thence stems the vitality of the Bureau.

Twenty-fifth Anniversary Dinner, Hebrew Teachers College, June, 1947 (*Leah and Louis Hurwich are standing second and third from right, next to Judge Goldberg*).

THE POST-WAR PERIOD: CONCLUSION

Ten years after World War II we find the following developments in Jewish education:

- Increased registration in all types of schools due to a more positive attitude to Judaism (the Holocaust and the creation of the State of Israel were basic influences) and the explosive birth rate which began with the outbreak of World War II (1940) and has not stopped to this day (1956).
- The spread of congregational Hebrew schools to the suburbs, which is still going on, brought about the near-disappearance of community schools in most of the large Jewish communities. This was a decisive factor in the reduction of time given to Jewish studies to 2–3 sessions a week, as compared to the 5-session a week, prevalent heretofore in the Jewish community schools. That change brought about a decided downgrading in the quantity and quality of the education afforded Jewish children in Hebrew, Torah, Early Prophets and Jewish history. It created a time schedule for teachers that made it impossible to have 20 teaching hours per week for full-time teachers.

Only by maintaining a regular 20-hour teaching week could schools pay something like a living wage to their teachers. Today, the so-called full-time Hebrew teacher in a congregational school cannot teach for twelve or 15 hours a week. The present reduced teaching load in congregational schools has been undermining Hebrew teaching as a profession. Because of this condition young people don't take up the career of Hebrew teaching, and unless a real remedy is found the modern Hebrew school will become like the 2-dimensional man who has appearance but no substance. At

the same time it is clear that the afternoon Hebrew school is most vital for those tens of thousands of children who do not enter the *Yeshivot*, the all-day schools.

The writer is convinced that if the future of American Jewish life were to depend on the Hebrew Schools as they are conducted in most of our large communities, then Jewish life in America has no future.

Hope is now pinned on the all-day schools, the *Yeshivot* which have been spreading at an unprecedented rate. Though some *Yeshivot* are still of mediocre quality, one characteristic is common to all, namely, the conviction that Jewishness can be preserved only with serious work and application for a stretch of years. There is also another conviction that lies at the foundation of every all-day school: despite all innovation in modern Jewish education *we have not yet discovered an effective substitute for Torah study, sincere faith and observance of mitzvot.*

To what extent does the State of Israel figure in our education today? Our Hebrew Schools are not homogeneous in that respect. We can say, however, that the subject of the State of Israel has not yet become a truly active discipline in the life of the American Jew.

True enough, during the United Jewish Appeal campaign there develops a mighty wave of local activity. Also, the Day of Independence of the Jewish State is a major subject in Jewish synagogues and much of the Jewish press each spring. Most of the contacts, however, are superficial, and the child accepts what his teachers say. For example, Hebrew is the spoken language in Israel; Jews come to visit Israel from all over; Hebrew literature is blooming; deserts are converted into garden settlements; there is an open door to receive Jews when they flee persecution in the diaspora, etc. *But there is nothing in the day by day experience of the child* to make him feel the inherent bond with the Jewish homeland.

Despite all this, in the hearts of a great many people there is a fiery love for Israel, *though it does not necessarily emanate from the American Jewish school.*

This is not presented as an accusation. We should rather say that, generally, the American Hebrew School knows very little about producing enthusiasm, even about Israel. In America people do not enthuse about much. Everything flows smoothly, and the overwhelming majority are hardly interested in anything outside their day by day trivia. That is why schools are rarely centers of social restlessness. A lethargic sleep seems to have fallen over the

American community and the Jewish community conforms to the state of mind of the majority.

Yet there is no reason for despair. There are positive aspects of Jewish life, particularly in suburbia where third generation American Jews settled. If Jewish education in its present state is too anemic to serve as a dynamic force, the Jewish treasury of values still can have much influence in the Jewish spiritual realm and from this emanates constructive opportunities.

What are some of the positive aspects of Jewish life? The year after year success of the Combined Jewish Appeal is one source of evidence. The many new synagogues and schools in the new suburbia are another source of evidence. There is a recognition that a hunger pervades, not hunger for bread nor thirst for water but rather a hunger for the word of God that seems to be seizing many of our young.

The United Hebrew Schools (UHS)

In the early forties the Associated Synagogues began to expand its program, and there were plenty of opportunities in the war years! At that time they began talking about the formation of a separate organization of Hebrew schools under the aegis of the Conservative movement national office. A beginning was made with occasional meetings at which lectures on Jewish education were delivered.

In the Spring of 1945 the Associated Synagogues called a special meeting. They invited the schools to send delegates. I also attended. The President of the Associated Synagogues proposed that the Hebrew Schools of greater Boston should form their own organization. *That was the strategy whereby the Conservative movement planned to begin exerting their influence upon Boston Jewish education.* I saw the danger and its consequences. I knew that if the Conservatives created a separate organization then it would only be a question of time until all would follow.

I opposed the proposal to preserve the integrity of the intensive program of studies.

Fifty-six persons were present. We did not know what institutions they represented, but there was no official representation of schools as such. The proposal was given to a vote. Nineteen approved it, 6 were against and 31 abstained from voting. The meeting closed and it appeared that it was decided to create an organization under Conservative sponsorship.

Two days later I met with the chairman of that meeting. He spoke of the "Commission on Jewish Education," that the Boston community "imposed" on the Associated Synagogues. He added, "Of course that will split the community but it will be worth the price of the desired goal." In other words, it was worth splitting the Boston community which had worked as a united body for nearly 30 years and attained achievement levels which placed it ahead of all other American communities. Now, even splitting the community would be welcome if by doing so the Conservatives could break into Boston Jewish education which had remained as Masada, the last and only fort not yet conquered.

I said to myself, " This is an hour for action!" I would not take it up with the Bureau of Jewish Education officers. They would shrink from a likely quarrel. I was going to take a decisive step on my own responsibility and immediately call another meeting of all the Hebrew schools of the city. The meeting would be on a democratically representative basis, in proportion to the size of each school: less than 100 pupils, 2 delegates, 100–200, 3 delegates, 200–300, 4 delegates, 300–400, 5 delegates, 400–500, 6 delegates.

In the invitation to the meeting I described the meeting of the Conservative movement. How could we allow such a fundamental change in the total structure of our Jewish education system to be decided by the results of such a meeting? That made it imperative that at the coming meeting there be full attendance from all schools on the basis of proportional representation. At that meeting we would reach a final decision.

I phoned each school and explained the importance of the coming meeting. In each case I was assured of the school's participation with its allotted member delegates. I added that I was calling that meeting on my own responsibility as the Superintendent of the Bureau of Jewish Education and the Dean of the Hebrew Teachers College. The invitation was sent to all the Boston Hebrew Schools and to the Associated Synagogues.

That was the most daring step in my life. The Executive Director of the Philanthropies, Mr. Sidney S. Cohen, and his associate, Mr. Isaac Seligson, told me they would not dare to undertake such responsibility. If the Conservatives won, then, at the age of 59, I would have to resign from my two offices at the Bureau and the College, and after having a history of illnesses, the latest being my heart attack only a year ago, would I be able to find a suitable position after having to leave Boston? Also, the likelihood was that the

movement, which I resisted for many years, despite its many efforts to gain a foothold in Boston, would pursue me wherever I went.

All that was perfectly clear, but it did not restrain me. In my public work I never took account of my personal interests. It was crystal clear to me that everything that was created in Boston in the area of intensive Jewish education was now in danger, that the Masada of Jewish education was about to fall. There was no other man or organization that would risk opposing the Associated Synagogues, which included the Rabbis and the most influential laymen among them, as well as the Reform Rabbis. I was the only one who could call together a meeting in time before they could begin to implement the vote of a few days earlier. Conscious of that, I did not hesitate a minute. My duty was clear and I went ahead with the necessary preparations.

The meeting was held at the Hebrew College. I chaired it. All the schools were represented and the Associated Synagogues also sent a delegation.

I presented the problems, explaining that it is was time for the laymen to organize a body of their own, just as the teachers had their professional body. They should be an absolutely independent body, with relationships to the Bureau of Jewish Education and the Hebrew Teachers College. They alone should be masters of the situation. I then analyzed the program of the Conservatives and how poor and inadequate it was. We in Boston had been the only keepers of the intensive education program on a city-wide basis, and we had to sustain it with energy and devotion until the day would come when American Jewry would wake up and realize that its education had been perilously misdirected.

I explained how imperative it was that at the time of awakening there should be at least one large-scale example of a chain of Hebrew Schools doing intensive work efficiently and successfully in the very midst of normal American life. *Boston was the only large community that was doing it and could continue to do it.* I proposed that the laymen, the supervisors of Jewish education in the community and the congregational schools, should organize as the United Hebrew Schools, absolutely independent, unencumbered by ties of any kind to a local or national body.

There was a long discussion. On the part of the Associated Synagogues there was sharp opposition. One man spoke for three-fourths of an hour telling why he opposed it. Other speakers favored it. When it came to a vote almost all present voted for the

proposal to organize as an entirely independent body. Immediately, an organization committee was chosen to implement the whole plan.

The stages of organization moved fast. All Boston Hebrew schools notified us that they had chosen their delegates. At the first meeting it was decided on the name of United Hebrew Schools. Every school had the right to send two delegates. On behalf of the Bureau of Jewish Education I announced that it would perform all the needed technical work in support of the new organization. The United Hebrew Schools would function as an autonomous body and the Bureau's help would be to translate the United Hebrew School decision into action.

My place in the new organization was as educational consultant. The United Hebrew Schools would not deal with finances. Its main task would be on the educational level. It would keep guard that educational quality would always remain high and also deal with all matters pertaining to this goal. The United Hebrew Schools would cooperate with the Bureau of Jewish Education and the Hebrew Teachers College as the need arose.

Even the person who spoke for three-fourths of an hour opposing the proposal, changed his mind and became a devoted worker in this body. He was a man of truth. Though, he first thought that it would be best if the Conservative group set up its own group, now, seeing his error, he became a devotee of the new organization.

The United Hebrew Schools was created in 1945. Eleven years have passed since then. The organization continued to develop and gain experience in the intricacies of Jewish education. *It became the carrier of the educational conscience of the community.* It deals with all the problems inherent in the practical and spiritual aspects of education in cooperation with the Bureau of Jewish Education and the Hebrew Teachers and the Principals Association. Together, the three organizations have been able to sustain the "system." They adopted procedures (by-laws) relating to the scale of teacher's salaries, tenure, retirement, pension and the mutual obligations between teachers and schools.

Later, several schools became financially helpless. The UHS asked the Bureau of Jewish Education to request a direct subsidy from the Philanthropies for those schools. The request was met first by subsidies in the form of loans, then in direct subsidies. In 1955–56 four schools received $25,000 in direct subsidies. The United Hebrew Schools helped to unite 3 schools which lost ground

because Jews kept moving from Roxbury to other districts. The United Schools had 250 pupils. In 1957, as the Jews kept leaving Roxbury, that entire school was moved to the Beth El School, Dorchester, which is adjacent to Roxbury. That year the Philanthropies raised the subsidy to $30,000.

Many problems were solved with the help of this organization. It does not collect or distribute funds but it is the legislative body of the schools through their representatives. In other words, it became the central body of the schools.

The End of the Road

In all my life I held only two positions: in Indianapolis, Indiana as organizer and Principal of the United Hebrew Schools in 1911–1916 and in Boston as Superintendent of the Bureau of Jewish Education since 1917 and Dean of the Hebrew Teachers College since 1932. The above two positions were offered to me. I always said that a position must hold me. When it developed that I must hold the position, it meant it was time for me to resign. It developed that I had to hold my positions.

Throughout my career I went ahead with resolution. I knew what I aimed to attain in Jewish education and did all I could to realize those aims. Often I met resistance but when I saw clearly that I was right, I kept on advocating my program until it was approved.

Four basic creations were realized in Boston during my incumbency there. The Bureau of Jewish Education, the Hebrew Teachers College, Camp Yavneh and the United Hebrew Schools. All of them came into being the hard way. Each of these first met with sharp opposition. But I resisted. In each of these four creations, time and results justified my insistence. They are still the foundation stones of Jewish education in Boston.

Being human, I could not escape mistakes in planning and in execution.

My series of illnesses began to make people wonder whether I could continue holding concurrently two very responsible positions: Superintendent of the Bureau of Jewish Education and Dean of the Hebrew Teachers College. I realized that it was up to me to use means which I had never used to hold my position.

On June 12, 1947 there was a splendid celebration in honor of the 25th anniversary of the Hebrew Teachers College. I decided to resign from my two positions and notified the President of the

Hebrew Teachers College, Mr. Lewis H. Weinstein and the President of the Bureau of Jewish Education, Judge Lewis Goldberg.

Near the end of that inspiring celebration, my two-fold resignation was announced and I delivered a departing talk to those present, many of whom I had worked with for 30 years. I made no conditions in connection with my resignations. I was elected as Dean Emeritus of the Hebrew Teachers College and Superintendent Emeritus of the Bureau of Jewish Education. A pension was voted for me from both institutions. Dr. Eisig Silberschlag, who had been on the faculty of the Hebrew Teachers College since 1932, was elected Dean of the Hebrew Teachers College. Dr. Benjamin J. Shevach, who had been on the Hebrew Teachers College faculty since 1935 and in the last year served part-time on the college faculty and as Associate Superintendent of the Bureau of Jewish Education, was elected Superintendent of the Bureau of Jewish Education.

The educational set-up in Boston continues to deal successfully and productively with its multitudinous tasks.

The verse from *Pirkei Avot* ("Sayings of the Fathers," *Mishnah Avot*, II:21), "You are not obligated to finish the task, neither are you free to neglect it" has been one of my basic principles throughout my life. What I have accomplished is but one part in a chain that is as old as the history of our people. Though my physical strength may be waning, in my heart I feel like a young man, filled with plans and hopes, and convinced that the next generation will be ready and capable to do even more.

It is said that there is old age in the world. If "old age" means a loss of interest in the world today . . . then old age, it appears, has forgotten me.

Memoirs of a Jewish Educator

Louis Hurwich, ca. 1940

"[We] must maintain the highest spiritual goals set for us in our Torah. The image of God must be more clearly stamped on tomorrow's children."

—Louis Hurwich

"Louis Hurwich's ambition was to create in Boston 'a miniature Volozhin' and to educate generations of American Jewish children to be 'the spiritual heirs of the traditional Ben Torah.'"

—Walter Ackerman