The Talmud Torah in America: Its Structure, Philosophy and Decline (1860-1960)

Edward Orentlicher

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The Talmud Torah in America: Its Structure, Philosophy and Decline (1860-1960)

Abstract
The scope of this subject includes an analysis of the traditional goals of Jewish education and of the great importance the Jewish people have attached to Jewish education since biblical times up to the present. An historical description is also presented of the origin of the Talmud Torah in Jewish history.

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Comments

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THE TALMUD TORAH IN AMERICA
Its Structure, Philosophy and Decline
(1860-1960)

by

Edward Orentlicher

June, 1962.
This dissertation, entitled

THE TALMUD TORAH IN AMERICA
Its Structure, Philosophy and Decline
(1860-1960)

by
Edward Orentlicher
Candidate for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A. Scope of Study

The period of 1860-1960 chosen as the subject of study for this dissertation constitutes one of the most interesting periods in the lives of the Jews in America. This period witnessed the immigration to the shores of the United States of millions of Jews from eastern Europe. These immigrations of 1890 and 1910 and to a smaller extent of the years in between brought to these shores Jews that were different in background and in social, religious and educational philosophies than either the Spanish-Portuguese and German immigrants who came to the United States previous to 1880 or to the Americanized and native-born American Jews who controlled Jewish communal life after 1935.

Many among the Jewish immigrants to this country in 1890, especially those who came here in the great immigration wave in 1910 were eastern European enlightened Jews who were greatly influenced by the philosophy and spirit of Zionism and the Haskalah or the Jewish enlightenment movement that enraptured many of the Jews of Poland and Russia. These were dynamic Jewish nationalists, culturalists and intellectuals whose arrival on these shores heralded the reawakening of the Jewish consciousness and strengthened the beliefs and aspirations of the Jews in the United States in the future of the Jewish people in America and throughout the world.
Among their outstanding contributions to Jewish life in America were the creation and establishment of numerous philanthropic, social, religious and educational institutions. As a result of their achievements, there appeared in the Jewish educational field which was practically dormant until 1880, new and refreshing signs of hope for Jewish educational progress in this country at the beginning of the twentieth century.

During this period Jewish educational institutions, especially Talmud Torahs, became widespread in cities having large Jewish populations. Jewish education was elevated to one of the chief interests of the American Jews with an intensification of interest for the Hebrew language in the school curriculum as well as provision for the education of girls on an equal level with that of boys. Many changes in the curriculum, standards and methodology were introduced by these immigrant Jews into the Talmud Torahs which they established. They also influenced other types of educational institutions that came into being at that time. These educational modifications in the educational program, philosophy, goals and methodology of Jewish education were of tremendous significance and they left their imprint on Jewish education up to our own day. As Professor Scharfstein expressed it, "all the good and healthy in our lives came from this period and from the carriers of Jewish national thought." ¹

The European Talmud Torah was now transplanted to the shores of America. It was an immigrant educational institution having educational goals, program and methodology similar to a large extent to its European counterpart. However, many modifications were made in its content of studies in the United States as a consequence of the influences exerted on it by the general American and Jewish environments.

Some changes were then made for the better in its aims and goals and methodology. However, in spite of all these new educational reforms, it still remained practically throughout its existence an educational institution of immigrant Jews designed primarily for immigrant children in an immigrant milieu. "It aimed to perpetuate an immigrant tradition in almost complete disregard of the larger American environment."¹

Strictly speaking, it is not correct to say that the European Talmud Torah was transplanted to this country and came into existence in the eighties. In New York, a Talmud Torah was established by Russian Jews as early as 1862 and continued until 1879. It was later reorganized in 1883 as the Machzikei Talmud Torah which was one of the first Talmud Torahs of the period under discussion. In Chicago also, the first two Russian Jewish congregations set up Talmud Torahs at an early date, one in the sixties and the other in the seventies. However, these Talmud Torahs that were established before 1880 differed from

¹Uriah Z. Engelman, Hebrew Education in America (New York: Jewish Teachers' Seminary and People's University Press, 1947), p. 35.
those founded later in that they were conducted under congregational auspices whereas the Talmud Torahs of the eighties and afterwards were all communal institutions.

It might be of interest to note here briefly that some fundamental changes in the character of the American Talmud Torah were due, in part, to a different perspective on Jewish life as it was affected by the American environment. Jewish life in America with all of its hopes and aspirations for the future came to be emphasized to a greater extent than previously and was integrated with the already great interest in Jewish life, traditions and goals of the past. This change was due primarily to the community's greater interest and support of Jewish education.

The change in emphasis was also brought about in part by the introduction of new methods of instruction and by the use of English as the medium of conversation and teaching. "The effect of these several changes in the best Talmud Torahs has been to bring public school and Hebrew school procedure closer and to promote thereby a greater integration of spirit."¹

The east-European Jews when they came to the United States founded many congregations and Talmud Torahs simultaneously, sometimes in association with each other. However, the Talmud Torahs that are the subject of this study in this dissertation were those that were

¹Israel S. Chipkin, Twenty-five Years of Jewish Education in the U. S. (Jewish Education Association of New York City, New York, 1937), p. 96.
separately founded and independently organized although some of these educational institutions had synagogues as a means of obtaining additional income for the school, but they were primarily known, organized and conducted as strictly educational institutions.

As will be noted later, these communally controlled Talmud Torahs were considered for a time in the United States as being the main institutions for Jewish elementary education.

The period of 1860 to 1960 was chosen for analysis and study in this dissertation because during these years these communally sponsored and controlled Talmud Torahs flourished in America. Towards the end of the 1930's, these schools were superceded by another type of educational institution, the congregational Hebrew school which retained many of the educational features of the Talmud Torah as will be seen later in this study but introduced some modifications in methodology, schedule of instruction and financial support.

This period serves as an interesting subject for study since this type of educational institution later became the foundation on which the orthodox and conservative congregational Hebrew schools were established which as we know are the basic educational institutions of modern present-day Jewish education in the United States.

The scope of this subject includes an analysis of the traditional goals of Jewish education and of the great importance the Jewish people have attached to Jewish education since biblical times up to the present. An historical description is also presented of the origin of the Talmud Torah in Jewish history.
This is followed by a presentation of the origin, structure and philosophy of the Talmud Torah in America. The purpose of such a study is to show that notwithstanding its religious emphasis in its curriculum and ideology, the Talmud Torah in the United States was, nevertheless, modern as well as traditional. It contained in its educational philosophy and program of studies a synthesis of Hebraism and Zionism combined with the traditional literary religious subjects of study. It was this "modern" yet traditional philosophy and subject matter that made the Talmud Torah in America, compared with other Jewish educational institutions then in existence, the most effective Jewish school in the United States for more than half a century.

This thesis is held and proven by the writer in this study contrary to other opinion that purport to minimize the importance, role and achievements and contributions of the Talmud Torah during the period it flourished in America.

The demographic, economic and ideological factors are then discussed to show how they affected the decline of the Talmud Torah in America.

Finally, an evaluation is offered of the Talmud Torah in the United States to show its achievements, contributions and influences on future Jewish educational progress and planning.

It is regrettable that the Board minutes of many of the largest Talmud Torahs of the period under discussion were unobtainable. This is because most of the old Talmud Torahs have long ceased to exist and consequently their records have been either destroyed or lost. At any
rate, contact with them has not produced the desired results with the exception of the minutes available in three New York City Talmud Torahs and those of New Haven, Connecticut and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The writer, therefore, was compelled to rely for his information on the Talmud Torah in America, on other primary sources as well, as listed in the Bibliography. A wide range of secondary sources was also made use of in connection with this study.
B. The Talmud Torah in Jewish History:

Its Origins and Development

1. Traditional Goals of Jewish Education

To the Jew since biblical times, learning became one of the primary functions of his life. The study of Torah in its narrow and limited connotation encompassed a religious duty and an essential intellectual activity.\(^1\) This was not merely an ideal with the Jew but it was actually practiced whether he lived in Babylon or later in Judea or after the dispersion in the Diaspora. It was for this reason that, to the Jews, "the Book became the portable homeland, the community of ideas took the place of the physical community; indeed, the Jews became known as 'the People of the Book.'"\(^2\)

We might say, then, that throughout the centuries of Jewish exile in different lands, learning and education were the two most cherished and important ideals and preoccupations of the Jews. "The outstanding ideal of Jewish life may be truly said to be learning - the love of learning and its broader synonym, education."\(^3\)

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\(^1\) Blau's article on "Torah" in the Jewish Encyclopedia (New York, Funk and Wagnalis, 1904), Vol. XII, p. 97.


\(^3\) Emanuel Gamoran, Jewish Education in the U. S. (Nashville, Tenn., Cokesbury Press, 1923), p. 492.
Although the study of Torah was considered by the sages a worthwhile goal, they, nevertheless, held that such study should be undertaken not merely for its own sake or as an end in itself but for a purpose, for the observance of the Law. "Which is greater, study or doing? Rabbi Akiba answered: study. The majority agreed that study is greater, for study leads to doing."¹ While "learning leads to doing" it is equally true that "not study but doing is the main thing."² Learning then became the means to an end since Sinaitic times - studying of Torah to better observe the commandments of Judaism. "Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the ordinances which I speak in your ears this day that you may learn them and observe to do them."³ This concept is also divinely proclaimed to Moses in Exodus. "And thou shalt teach them the statutes and the laws and shalt show them the way wherein they must walk and the work that they must do."⁴

The precept that learning and doing must be closely associated is also mentioned repeatedly in post-biblical writings. "An ignorant man cannot be a God-fearing man."⁵ Also, "He whose works exceed his wisdom, his wisdom endures, but he whose wisdom exceeds his works, his wisdom does not endure."⁶

¹Kiddushin 40b. ²Abot 1, 17. ³Deut. 5:1. ⁴Exodus 18:20. ⁵Abot 2:6. ⁶Abot 3:10.
Thus, there existed in Judaism a very close and interacting relationship between the studying of Torah and the observance of its commandments. Studying or learning was a means to an end. "To study and to teach" was closely related "to observe and to do." The ideal of the "good life" and "proper conduct" was "Torah u-Ma-asim Tovim or Torah u-Mitzvot."2

The education of Jewish children was also regarded throughout the ages primarily as a means to an end. It was motivated and related to religious observance and practice. For example, when, at the Passover Seder, the son asks the father the "four questions" the sages advise the father to teach him if he lacks understanding of the holiday.3

Thus, "Jewish teaching emphasized above all else that study is essential and worthwhile and must be brought to the people for guidance in everyday affairs. The emphasis was definitely on the pragmatic aspects of education."4

We might also comment that in Judaism there always existed the right and duty of every male Jew regardless of his social or economic status to obtain a religious education. This concept existed since

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1 Berakot 11 b. Morning service prayer instituted by Men of Great Assembly.
3 Pesachim 10:4.
Biblical times and was reemphasized by the sages and other Jewish leaders up to the present time. "Scholarship or learning was never restricted to a particular class in Jewry. Scholars themselves insisted on the educational obligations of the community and individuals so that education was more widespread among Jews than in any other community down to the nineteenth century."¹

This striving for Jewish knowledge by both old and young can be seen from the fact that although in most Jewish communities in eastern Europe, religious education was not compulsory, nevertheless it would have been almost impossible for a parent to deliberately deprive his child of religious education. On the contrary, parents prided themselves that their offspring were growing up steeped in Jewish learning to become a scholar or Talmid Hacham. This was the chief pride of a Jewish parent for which he would undergo all types of personal sacrifices. Not only did an intensive love of learning exist among the Jewish people and this is one of its main characteristics, but there was a high regard and great consideration for those possessing it. "Heads of communities were even enjoined to lighten the local taxes of those devoting themselves to study."²

This all-encompassing ideal of the Jew in the past - that of being a better religious Jew - entailed, naturally, the idea of self-


improvement. However, conduct and morality, which were ideals the Jew
strived for, were not apart from his religion. On the contrary, these
were part of his religious idealism and part of his life. His everyday
activities, social, intellectual and even economic, were based on Torah
or the Jewish religion. Ethics and the development of proper attitudes
towards life and people were part of his religious training since these
ideals were the foundations of the Jewish religion.

At present, Jewish education, as exemplified by the Talmud Torah
and as enunciated by most Jewish educators, is to a large extent
composed of religious instruction. This is true for all grades of
Jewish elementary and secondary education whether they are under
orthodox, conservative or reform auspices. Even on the graduate level,
the orthodox element of present-day American Jewry still clings to the
past religious goals of Jewish education. In fact, the Hebrew term for
education was until recently Talmud Torah, the study of Torah. The
emphasis of Jewish education in the past and to a large extent in the
present as well was hence not on the pursuit of knowledge and the
attainment of culture as in our modern secular (and in some cases
Jewish) systems but rather on conduct and religion.¹

Three outstanding ideas run like a central thread throughout
the history of Jewish education. It is religious in its character and
content and is primarily concerned with the development of an ethical

¹Hertz, J. H., Jewish Religious Education-Its Meaning, Scope and
and religious personality. It is intellectual and holds to the ideal of learning for its own sake, and not for personal aggrandizement or for any material gain, "Whoever uses the crown of the Torah shall be destroyed." Finally, it is practical and necessary as a means for the survival of the Jewish ethnic group and the preservation of its cultural, social and religious values. However, the first of these concepts was considered of primary importance and as instrumental in preserving and fostering Jewish life and ideals. The study of Torah which is synonymous with Jewish education was not just studied as "Torah Lishmah" merely for its cultural and intellectual values but as was noted previously it was and is at the present as well tied up with religious practices and ethical conduct. "Jewish education is focused upon the study and the observance of the Torah. The emphasis of Jewish education is hence not on the pursuit of knowledge and the attainment of culture as in our modern systems of culture but rather on conduct."

One of the important values of Jewish education throughout the ages was that learning and the practice of the Jewish religion became the means of unity and survival of the Jewish people. This was particularly true after the destruction of the second temple and Judea by the Romans in 67 C. E. "The survival of Jews and Judaism is in a

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large measure due to the continuous emphasis throughout Jewish history upon education or the transmission of ideas and practices from old to young and from one generation to another."¹ The transmission of a complete system of religious and ethical ideas regulating the life of the Jew thus became the bulwark against disintegration. "Education which was at once religious and national, served to bind the people together and aided in their survival through centuries of invasion, servitude and oppression."²

John Dewey points out that "just as the human organism perpetuates itself physically by biological reproduction or by transmission of vital energies from one generation to another, so the social organism survives and renews itself through a process of education - the transmission of social and spiritual elements."³ By the same token, it might be stated that Jewish education or the process of transmission of Jewish values is the means of assuring Jewish survival and continuity.

These traditional goals of Jewish education, religious and cultural and national, as will be seen later in the study, were also the aims and embodiment of the Talmud Torah program of studies and philosophy of education in the Middle Ages as well as in modern times in eastern Europe and in America.

¹Finkelstein, op. cit., p. 896. ²Ibid., p. 896.
2. **Origin of the Jewish School System**

The emergence of formal education in Judaism or the rise of an organized universal elementary school system and tradition was a post-Exilic phenomenon. Up to this time, Jewish education was concentrated almost wholly in and about the home and the family. It was in the home that the parents taught their children the basic tenets of Judaism. Its customs, laws and historical and religious traditions became the basic elements in the content of the education of the young by the family.

The father, especially, undertook to instruct his son in the customs and practices of Judaism as a religious duty. "Thou shalt teach them to your children"¹ and "Make them known unto your tiny children and children's children."² "It is the father's duty to teach his son" is plain statement of the rabbis.³ This duty was incumbent not only upon fathers but on grandfathers as well and applied only to sons and grandsons.⁴

On such occasions, the father did not only instruct his son in the Jewish ceremonials but in the history and law of the Jews as well. In the Fourth Book of Maccabees, the author makes Hannah recall to her seven sons the teachings of their father: "He read to us of Abel who was slain by Cain, and of Isaac who was offered as a burnt-offering,

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¹Deut. 11, 19. ²Deut. 4, 9. ³Kid. 29 a.
⁴Mekilta 22 b. Mishnah in Kid. 17. Tosefoth Kid. 1, 8.
and of Joseph in the prison. He glorified also Daniel in the den of lions and blessed him. And he called to your mind the words of David, the Psalmist. Philo also informs us that "the husband seems competent to transmit knowledge of the Jews to his wife, the father to his children." The father was also obligated by biblical and rabbinic law to teach the young reading of the prayers, the recitation of the blessings and the writing of Hebrew.

The training received by the Jewish child at home was immensely practical and contained religious, historical and social elements. "Training was in the form of direct sharing in the activities of the family and through it in that of the community." The observance of the practices of Judaism by the parents at home became the means of initiating the young into the actual practice of the Jewish religion and of inculcating in them a reverence for Judaism. "Education was eminently practical and came, initially at least, largely through participation in the life of the family."

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2 Philo: Hypotheca 7, 13. 3 Deut. 4, 9; Joshua 13,9; Judges 8,14.


5 Emanuel Gamoran, Recent Tendencies in Education and their Application to the Jewish Schools (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1923), p. 238.
In addition to the active participation and observance in the ceremonials and rituals at home, Jewish children were also trained in the practices of Judaism by accompanying their fathers to the Temple in Jerusalem and later to the synagogues. On such occasions they learned through observation the different modes of worship in Judaism, and they witnessed there the holiday celebrations and the performance of the rituals.

The Bible furnishes us with numerous examples of the direct religious training of the young boys. We read, for instance, of children accompanying their parents to the temple.¹ Later, in the period of the Soferim or Scribes, even in its earliest form the Synagogue supplied an important means of indirect education of the young. By going with their elders on their visits to the religious gatherings in the synagogues they would listen to the discussions and learn to join in the prayers.² According to Jewish law women were entirely exempt from studying Torah.³ Fathers were not obligated to teach their daughters Torah nor were women required to teach it to their sons. Girls and women were actually excluded from the school system that was established later.⁴

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¹ Samuel 1, 1; Jeremiah 9, 7 and 18.
² Hagigah 3 a. ³ Kiddushin, 29.
⁴ Maimonides states that the talmudic exemption of women from study of the Torah refers only to instruction in Oral Law but a woman's self-study of Scriptures was to be encouraged. (Maimonides, Moses, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Talmud Torah, 1, 13. Tur Yoreh Deah, 245).
However, the Haskalah movement in the mid-nineteenth century changed all that. Education was then also provided for girls. But up to this period in Jewish history girls were educated not in public institutions but privately either by their parents at home or by private tutors.

The synagogue was the first institution to offer systematic instruction in Judaism to the young. In Ezra's time, "apart from the services, the synagogues main hall or annexes frequently accommodated a school or Bet Hamidrash for both adults and children."  

1 The synagogue was the parent of the scribe college and the Jewish elementary school. Out of it arose the movement which resulted in universal Jewish education, and under its influence and that of the scribes all Jews became students of the Torah. The synagogue also became the center for discussion and decision of all matters in the lives of the Jews, religious as well as those of a cultural and social nature.

The Scribes, after the Restoration to Judea under Ezra and Nehemiah in 458 and 445 B. C. E., respectively, at first restricted their educational activities to adults, delivering free lectures in synagogues while the education of the children remained yet, as in olden times, in the hands of their fathers. However, for orphaned boys who lacked this advantage the state employed scribes as traveling teachers to whose care these children in Jerusalem and the provinces were entrusted. This was the beginning of Jewish popular education. As these schools did not suffice, Simeon ben Shetah also arranged

during the first century B.C.E. that schools be established for advanced studies for young people of sixteen and seventeen\(^1\) with the Soferim as teachers. A further important step was taken in the extension of Jewish education when in 64 C.E. Joshua ben Gamala instituted universal elementary education for the young supported by each community. Without the actual use of compulsion, the provisions made by Joshua ben Gamala made Jewish education practically compulsory for the children of the age of six or seven. "At first, he who had a father, was taught by his father, but he who had no father did not study the Torah...Till Joshua ben Gamala came and arranged that teachers for elementary schools be on duty in every province and in every city and that the children enter at the age of six and seven."\(^2\) The teachers of the elementary schools were the scribes also. Their main object was to teach the Torah to the Jewish masses and to the Jewish youth in particular.\(^3\)

Since the Soferim or the Scribes were the teachers at these

\(^{1}\)Yer. Ket. 8. \(^{2}\)Baba Batra 21 a. \(^{3}\)In regard to the establishment of universal elementary schools, scholars are disagreed as to whether Joshua ben Gamala or Simeon ben Shetah was responsible for the establishment of such a system of schools. This is because of the difficulties of dating properly the school reform which is mentioned at the end of the report as given by R. Judah in the name of Rab in Baba Batra 21 a. Most modern scholars agree, however, that Simeon ben Shetah is responsible for the establishment of the secondary schools and Joshua ben Gamala for elementary schools. Drazin, *op. cit.*, p. 37 ff.; Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 20; Ebner, Eliezer, *Elementary Education in Ancient Israel* (New York: Block Publishing Co., 1956), p. 97 ff.
schools as well as the expounders of the Law in the synagogues they were in a position to gain almost complete control over religious thought and over the education of both the young and the adult population. They not only were the interpreters of the Torah for the masses but they also furnished the textual material upon which instruction at all age levels was based.

The decree issued by Joshua ben Gamala brought the development of Jewish popular education to its final stages with the establishment of publicly organized and controlled elementary schools. This type of school after that decree spread very rapidly until by the fourth century C. E. it became practically universal, at any rate as far as boys were concerned.¹

The Scribes established elementary schools and academies or colleges for Jewish learning in Judea and served not only as the founders and organizers but as their teachers as well. Later, the five Zugot or pairs of rabbis heading consecutively the Sanhedrin (165 B.C.E. to 10 B.C.E.) beginning with Jose b. Jaizer and Jose ben Johanan who headed the Sanhedrin at the time of the Hasmonians and ending with Hillel and Shammai at the time of King Herod, established schools of their own for higher Jewish studies.²

The fall of the Second Temple in 70 C. E. scattered and practically wiped out the priestly group of teachers and the Sopherim whose

¹Morris, op. cit., p. 12.
²Abot 1, 4. Mishnah Hagigah 2, 2.
place was now taken by the rabbis. Before Jerusalem fell, Johanan ben Zakkai had obtained permission from the Roman general to set up an academy in Jabneh.¹ His successor, Rabban Gamliel directed the academy that trained the future educational and religious leaders of Jewry such as Joshua ben Hanenah, Akiba, Elieser ben Hyrcanus and many other great rabbis in Jewry. There were academies or colleges both in Palestine and in Babylonia throughout the early centuries of the common era for the study of the Talmud or Oral Law. In Babylonia, especially, were established two great Yeshivoth or academies, the one founded by Rav in Sura in 219 C. E. functioned with only brief occasional interruptions until about the 13th century, C. E. The second academy founded by Samuel about the same time at Nahardea was later transferred by Judah ben Ezekiel in 260 C. E. to Pumbeditha and flourished with some intermission for about eight centuries. These academies, both in Palestine but, especially, in Babylonia attracted many students and were authoritative not only for the Jews in Babylonia but for the Jews living in Palestine, Spain, Africa and other lands.²

During the following centuries many Yeshivoth were founded in North Africa, Spain and later all over the European countries in

¹Gittin 56 a, b.

accordance with the Talmudic dicta "to form groups for the purpose of study of the Torah for it can be acquired only in a group."¹

Not only were Yeshivoth established during the middle ages for advance talmudic studies but we also witness during this period the organization of privately and publicly sponsored Jewish elementary schools, including communally supported Talmud Torahs.² For "He who teaches (provides for the teaching) his neighbor's son Torah, it is as if he had begotten him."³ Furthermore, "a Jewish community without a school was as rare as one without a house of worship."⁴

 Provision for Jewish education on all levels also continued to be of consuming interest of the Jewish communities after the migration of Jews from western to eastern Europe in the centuries following the middle ages with the establishment of Hadarim and publicly sponsored Talmud Torahs culminating in the great Yeshivoth in the larger cities of Poland and Russia down to the twentieth century.

Three stages may thus be distinguished in the development of the Jewish school system after the Restoration - a) The founding of the academies for higher Jewish learning by the Men of the Great

¹Berakot, 63 b.


³Sanhedrin 19 b.

⁴Maller, op. cit., p. 905.
Assembly in the period of the Soferim, b) The establishment of secondary Jewish schools of learning for adolescents at the initiative of Simon ben Shetah during the first century, B.C.E. and, c) The establishment of compulsory, free, and universal elementary schools for all boys as a result of the decree of Joshua ben Gamala in 64 C.E., shortly before the last days of the Second Temple. Such schools were subsequently established in all provinces where Jews resided in sufficient numbers.

The levels of Jewish elementary education were clearly set forth by one of the late Tannaim, Judah ben Terna. The ages of five, ten and fifteen, respectively, were designated by him for the study of Mikra, Mishnah and Gemara or Talmud.¹ The point that must not be overlooked here is that there was no abrupt change from one level to the next. The three stages were really a gradual and continuous development of the study of Torah.

3. Origin of the Talmud Torah

Among most of the nations of the world in ancient times, education was always the possession of the few, of the nobility and of the wealthy classes. Large segments of the population, both adults and children were completely left out of the system. Even when the ideals of democracy spread among the civilized nations in modern times when the opportunities for education became more widespread and elemen-

¹Aboth, 5, 21.
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⁴Maller, op. cit., p. 905.
Assembly in the period of the Soferim, b) The establishment of secondary Jewish schools of learning for adolescents at the initiative of Simon ben Shetah during the first century, B.C.E. and, c) The establishment of compulsory, free, and universal elementary schools for all boys as a result of the decree of Joshua ben Gamala in 64 C.E., shortly before the last days of the Second Temple. Such schools were subsequently established in all provinces where Jews resided in sufficient numbers.

The levels of Jewish elementary education were clearly set forth by one of the late Tannaim, Judah ben Terna. The ages of five, ten and fifteen, respectively, were designated by him for the study of Mikra, Mishnah and Gemara or Talmud. The point that must not be overlooked here is that there was no abrupt change from one level to the next. The three stages were really a gradual and continuous development of the study of Torah.

2. Origin of the Talmud Torah

Among most of the nations of the world in ancient times, education was always the possession of the few, of the nobility and of the wealthy classes. Large segments of the population, both adults and children were completely left out of the system. Even when the ideals of democracy spread among the civilized nations in modern times when the opportunities for education became more widespread and elemen-

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1 Aboth, 5, 21.
tary and secondary schools became public institutions, education on
the collegiate and university levels is still until this day aristocratic. Jewish education, on the other hand, was from its very incep-
tion public and universal, at least as far as boys are concerned.
There was no aristocracy in Judaism in a cultural sense except learning
and the learned.

To what extent knowledge and the educated were regarded as
criteria of prestige is indicated in the Mishnaic assertion: "A
bastard who is a scholar is superior to a High Priest who is an
ignoramus". The study of Torah was regarded "greater than the rebuil-
ding of the Temple; than the offering of regular sacrifices; than the
priesthood or kingdom." Also, "The scholar takes precedence over the
king of Israel" and "even a non-Jew who is engaged in the study of
the Torah is equal to the High Priest."

Even in the middle ages and up to more recent times, especially
in European Jewish communities the principle of the "aristocracy" of
learning and the learned was widespread among the Jews as part of their
social system. "As long as the ghetto community was intact, the leader-
ship of the scholar, no matter how well the communal plutocracy succeeded
to concentrate it in its own hands in making local rabbis and other
officials subservient to its end, the leadership of the scholar was

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1 Mish. Horayot 3, 8. 2 Megillah 3 b.
3 Berakot 8 a. 4 Sanhedrin 59 a.
was recognized on principle. The community leaders failed to undermine the hegemony of the intellectual elite. It was only the rise of early capitalism and Enlightenment that a general deterioration of the social status of scholars took place.¹

Although the education of the young was considered a parental responsibility, the community also recognized its obligation to provide for the education of the children of the poor as a religious obligation in accordance with the Talmudic injunction, "Take heed of the children of the poor, for from them does the Torah come forth."² Education of the poor was, thus, made a religious responsibility of every Jew since talmudic times.

Consequently, there was hardly a Jewish community in the middle ages as well as in modern times which did not have an organization known as a Hebrah Talmud Torah or a Talmud Torah Society which organized, maintained and supervised a Talmud Torah or free Hebrew school in which the children of the poor might receive a thorough training in Hebrew and in the Bible. These Talmud Torahs were specifically established for the free education of poor and orphaned boys with the purpose of preparing them to lead religious lives and to prepare those excelling in their studies for entry into a Yeshivah.³

²Nedarim, 81 a, Kid. 30 a. Sanhedrin 17 b.
³Asaf, Simcha, Mekorot Letoldot Ha-hinuch Be-Yisrael (Tel Aviv: 1942, 4 vols.) Vol. I, p. 156. "We find in the 14th century
These community schools or Talmud Torahs were educational institutions supported by voluntary contributions and by all types of self-taxation. In some cases, however, communities did not maintain Talmud Torahs but offered free tuition grants to children of poor parents. "Tuition fees which cannot be paid by poor parents are to be paid by the community."\(^1\)

In the middle ages, private teachers or melamdim were also frequently taxed for the support of the community Talmud Torah.\(^2\) In the 16th century, for example, the community of Wilno taxed its private teachers 6.66% of all their tuition fees for the support of the local Talmud Torah.\(^3\)

The Jewish communal educational institution for the education of the poor and orphaned known as a Talmud Torah probably originated in the beginning of the 12th century. During this period are found many auxiliary societies under the name of Hebrew Talmud Torah which were organized to support the study of Torah.\(^4\) Vol. II, op. cit., p. 66. (Mentioned by Nissim ben Reuben Gerundi in his She'elot u-Teshubot, Metz, 1896; Warsaw, 1907.) These societies extended elementary and secondary education freely to the children of the poor. But the Kahal, as a rule, was not called upon to establish communal schools for elementary and secondary education even in the 14th century. They did so in the middle of the 16th century. (Ibid., p. 66).


\(^2\)Ibid., p. 53.

\(^3\)Asaf, Ibid., Vol. I, p. 152.
Talmud Torah societies, especially, in the larger Jewish settlements in northern Europe. These schools were maintained by fees, by voluntary contributions, by a share of the contributions to synagogues, by allocations made at circumcisions, marriages and funerals and by charity.¹

The Talmud Torah is an old Jewish communal educational institution. It is very difficult to trace it to its origin for it is many centuries old.

Spanish Jewry, in particular, building more directly on the foundations laid by the talmudic and geonic leaders was the first community in Europe to evolve a comprehensive system of Jewish public education.²

As far back as 1290 in the early middle ages a Talmud Torah already existed in Toledo, Spain, whose spiritual leader was Rabbi Asher ben Jehiel. In one of his responsas there is mentioned a decision "allowing the withdrawing of the funds of the local Talmud Torah to meet the annual tax collected by the local governor."³ We must assume then that similar public educational institutions existed also in some

³Responsa, rule VI, No. 2 of Rabbi Asher ben Jehiel.
other Jewish communities in the middle ages not alone in Spain but in other European countries as well.¹

The Talmud Torah in Europe was established primarily for the poor and orphaned children of the community. The well-to-do parents did not send their children to such a school even as late as the beginning of the 20th century. As a charitable institution, the Talmud Torah was supported partly by the organized community and partly by the free offerings of the people.

The maintenance of the Talmud Torah was one of the main concerns of every Jewish community. Neither economic adversity nor political persecutions were allowed to stand in the way in the improvement and maintenance of the educational system, especially that of the communal Talmud Torah. Generally speaking, every Jewish community, even small ones consisting of only ten householders, were expected to engage a teacher or to provide the proper educational facilities for the education of the young, rich and poor alike and to support and provide educational opportunities for poor pupils.²

¹In talmudic times they did not differentiate between Heder and school (Bet Sefer) or Talmud Torah. The schools established by the Soferim under Ezra and the Men of the Great Synagogue in Jerusalem were originally called Beth Sofer since the scribes were the teachers. Later, in talmudic period the name was changed to Beth Safra (Beth Sefer). Sukkah, 29. Yer. Taanith 84. Only in the middle ages did the Talmud Torah begin to stand for publicly supported schools for orphaned and poor children. This was because of the development in Jewish life of the Kahal system with its Hebra Talmud Torah completely in charge of the organization, support and supervision of such schools.

²S. Dubnow, Pinkas Vaad Hakehiloth Haroshiyoth Bimdinath Lita, p. 126, para. 528.
Members of a Jewish community were always conscious of the great responsibility of the community in providing educational opportunities for the youth. They were cognizant of the common responsibility for Jewish education. "He who teaches his neighbor's son Torah, it is as if he had begotten him."\(^1\)

Community responsibility for Jewish education was also acknowledged by the rabbis of the time. Concerning the payment of salaries to teachers, even by the small communities, one rabbi stated that "the salaries of the teachers in the small villages which cannot be paid by individuals are to be paid by the community as a whole."\(^2\)

Community responsibility for Jewish education was also established by the following rabbinical ordinance of the middle ages, "We make it a rule that in all cities and in all communities each one shall be required to provide for the study of Torah."\(^3\)

The principles of universal elementary education and community responsibility for Jewish education were well established ideas among Jews since Joshua ben Gamala proclaimed these ordinances in 64 C. E. However, the rabbis strengthened this concept in later centuries by

\(^1\)Sanhedrin 19 b.


even forbidding a Jew to live in a community having at least ten Jewish families which had no elementary school teacher. "A city without a teacher should be put under a ban until the inhabitants of the city appoint one."¹

Simcha Asaf describes a curriculum in such a communal elementary school or Talmud Torah in Amsterdam in 1440 in his work on Jewish education during the middle ages.² This Talmud Torah, maintains the author, was typical of other similar communal educational institutions during that period.

First, a synagogue was built and near it six classrooms for a Talmud Torah. In each classroom a teacher taught different phases of the curriculum. In the first classroom the children were taught prayers. In the second classroom, the Pentateuch was taught with the traditional melody until the pupils were well versed in its content. After completion of the study of the Pentateuch, the pupils were promoted to another teacher to study the weekly portion of the Pentateuch until they could translate it into the vernacular with the Rashi commentary. In the next room were to be found pupils who had advanced to the study of the Prophets and the Hagiographa. These were also taught in their traditional melodies, with pupils taking turns to read in Hebrew different verses and to translate them into the vernacular. In the fifth room the pupils were trained to read and translate the Prophets and Hagio-

¹Yore Deah, 245:7.
grapha by themselves and speak only Hebrew but translate the biblical laws into the vernacular. Here, too, were the rules and mechanics of Hebrew grammar studied as well as a daily lesson in one of the laws of the Talmud.

Before a Jewish holiday, all the pupils studied the laws and religious precepts pertaining to that particular holiday.

Finally, in the sixth room, which is part of the Yeshivah or Bet Hamidrash, the students studied Talmud with Rashi and Tosefoth every day. The Rambam commentary as well as some of the other important talmudic works were also studied.

In this Talmud Torah, each session started promptly in the morning at eight o'clock and continued until eleven. It began again at two and continued until five in the evening, and in the winter months it continued until after the evening services. At home the pupil had a teacher engaged by the parents to teach him to write in the vernacular and in Hebrew and to review with the pupil daily his lesson in the Talmud Torah. He also composed Hebrew poems and undertook other studies in which he was interested.

The teachers in the Talmud Torah were appointed by the community Hebra Talmud Torah and paid from a special fund established for the education of the poor and orphaned children of the community. Each teacher was paid according to his experience, training and needs on an annual basis.¹

The community society or Kahal taxed each resident for the support of the Talmud Torah. This was in place of the half shekel that was given to the Temple in ancient Israel. The fund collected was used to feed the poor pupils, to pay for their teachers and to buy books.¹

Jewish children were educated much in the same way all over the civilized world in the middle ages and the divergence only becomes apparent when the years of boyhood have passed. This only occurred in Spain and in Italy with practically no changes in the curriculum in other countries.

The hours of instruction in a Talmud Torah were long. The pupils studied seven years and about six hours a day beginning at the age of five and continuing until Bar Mitzvah. The first two years were devoted to Siddur and Humash, the next two years to the prophets and Hagiographa and the last three years to small talmudic tractates, usually Berakot and Moed. Those excelling in their studies continued for another seven years in the big study hall or Bet Hamidrash that was part of the synagogue. Here they undertook the study of larger talmudic tractates under the supervision of a Rosh ha-yeshivah or the head of the higher institution of learning.²


²Guedemann, ibid., p. 75.
A child started his Jewish studies at a Talmud Torah beginning with Nissan or before Passover. The first month was devoted to Hebrew letters; the second month to vowels, and the third month to a continuation of the consonants with their vowels into syllables. Three months were thus devoted to this step of teaching Hebrew reading. In the fourth month, the reading of the Pentateuch was started with the Book of Leviticus. During the second three months the pupils read a portion of the weekly lesson in Hebrew. The following six months were used in translating the weekly lessons into the vernacular. By this time the pupil was six years old. "Books were naturally scarce, but the teacher took a tablet or slate and wrote on it three or four verses, or even whole chapters and this served as the week's lesson."¹

In the next year's course, the pupil was taught the Aramaic version of the Pentateuch which he translated into the vernacular. The next two years were devoted to the prophetic books and the Hagiographa. At the age of ten, the boy began the Mishnah and by the age of twelve he had studied a selection of the most important of the smaller tractates of the Talmud with those qualifying for higher studies continuing with their talmudic studies for another seven years.²

Great importance was attached to repetition. The same lesson was delivered by the teacher three times and the pupils repeated it at


²Ibid., p. 351.
home in the evening. There were in addition regular recapitulations at weekly or monthly intervals.  

Thus religious literature was the foundation of the Talmud Torah curriculum and the training that the child received was designed to form his character as well as his religious convictions and adherence. Hebrew scriptures were taught to children as language and as ethics concurrently. Though the combination of moral with intellectual training ruled Jewish life everywhere, it was modified in some countries. For example, Hebrew grammar and Hebrew prose and poetry were taught in Spain and in Italy as separate and special subjects in and for themselves. Hebrew grammar was, however, not entirely neglected in the Jewish schools of Germany and northern France, but it simply had no independent place in the school curriculum. "It was learnt as a means to an end, that end being the true exposition of the Scripture."  

It is of interest to note here that "the Talmud Torah of the Jews of Spain excelled in their order, curriculum and pleasant looking buildings. The schools in Amsterdam, Salonica, and Hamburg set examples for all Talmud Torahs in all other European countries during the middle ages."  

Because of the deplorable conditions that existed in the

1Ibid., p. 352.
2Abrahams, ibid., p. 359.
Hadarim and communal Talmud Torahs in Poland and Germany, a few of the great rabbis of the fourteenth century tried to improve these conditions by making numerous suggestions in the form of Takanot or ordinances to be enforced by the local rabbis and their educational committees. Outstanding among these fighters for a better Jewish educational system was the Maharal of Prague. Not only was he the leader of this movement but the city of Prague of which he was the spiritual leader became the center for this movement even after the Maharal's death. His brother, Rabbi Lontshit and Rabbi Horwitz, both of whom also held rabbinical positions in Prague after the Maharal, also greatly contributed to the improvements of Jewish education in the middle ages. However, their contributions were not as extensive and successful in their life time as the Maharal had achieved in his life time.

In his many books the Maharal speaks fervently of the many changes necessary in Jewish education in order to improve it quantitatively as well as qualitatively. Some of his ordinances, though not all, were eventually enforced and accepted by the local educational councils. For example, the Maharal favored following the talmudic recommendation for the order of Jewish education. According to this regulation a child begins to study the Pentateuch at the age of five, Mishnah at the age of ten, and Talmud at the age of fifteen.¹ This required changes since up to this time the child studied Talmud at ten years of age. The Maharal was of the opinion that "learning should be

¹Aboth 5, 21.
according to the capacity of the child and was not to be forced on him. The study of the Rashi commentary should be started when the child was ready for it, with the study of the Mishnah in his later years to be the chief emphasis. After the child has mastered the Mishnah and is versed in a good deal of it orally, he should then proceed to a study of the Talmud.¹ The Maharal and his followers were the reformers in Jewish education during the middle ages. They were opposed to Pilpul in the study of Talmud by children, and that they should be taught Hebrew grammar and the Hebrew language as part of the Talmud Torah curriculum. Some of these reforms were accepted for a while but then discarded, while others were completely opposed and never instituted in any of the Talmud Torahs during the middle ages. The opposition came from rabbinic authorities as well as from parents and teachers who were accustomed to the old Jewish school curriculum and looked with disfavor on any reforms or innovations in Jewish education.²

Religion did not figure as a formal subject in the Talmud Torah curriculum but was often taught incidentally or as the festivals approached. Biblical history as a specific subject was also not provided for by the Talmud Torah curriculum. Hebrew grammar was also neglected as a subject of study in most Talmud Torahs, but in the Talmud Torah of Cracow, Poland, it was taught from a textbook called Lashon

Hayeled. It was intended for boys of the age of seven to teach them to write Hebrew grammatically and to speak the Hebrew language fluently.\(^1\)

The teacher in the Cracow Talmud Torah, for example, was restricted to a maximum of forty pupils but two assistants were appointed by him to help him in the classroom. In addition, a minor assistant was appointed to bring the pupils to the school. A teacher of Talmud in the Talmud Torah, on the other hand, was restricted to a minimum of twenty-five pupils and two assistants who had to take the children themselves to school.\(^2\)

In the Cracow Talmud Torah the three members of its committee visited each week in rotation every classroom and observed the teacher presenting his lesson. In particular, they noted his methods and whether his subject matter was suitable to the intelligence of his pupils.\(^3\)

A further check on the efficiency of the teacher was the regular examination of the pupils conducted by the rabbi or school officers. The examinations were held weekly during the term on Thursdays.\(^4\)

Before a pupil of the Cracow Talmud Torah was admitted to a class he was examined for a period of over three weeks to test his suitability for studying his subjects and then only was he placed in

\(^1\)Asaf, ibid., p. 100. \(^2\)Ibid., p. 101.

\(^3\)Ibid., p. 100. \(^4\)Ibid., p. 160, para. 6.
the right class. 1

The school year was divided into two terms. In Cracow, the summer and winter sessions lasted from the first of Iyar to the fifteenth of Shebat, respectively.

The hours of instruction were long. The teacher of prayers, Bible and Mishnah taught for twelve hours a day and of the instructor of the more advanced subjects for ten hours a day. Both in winter and summer there was a short break at eleven in the morning when the children went home for lunch. They also had to attend the morning services at the synagogue, then go home for breakfast and be back at school at nine o'clock. Lessons were resumed until three in the afternoon when the children again went home for some refreshments. After this short break, lessons continued until the time of the minha service at the synagogue at which both teacher and pupils attended before dismissal time.

There was no freedom from class lessons during vacation. The only concession was that formal lessons were given only during the first half of the day. After midday the pupils were permitted to practice letter writing or were left to do what they liked either by themselves or under the direction of the teacher. 2

An example of what the course of study was in a Talmud Torah of the middle ages can be seen from the brief curriculum of the Cracow Talmud Torah. This included the study of the Aleph Beth with the vowels, the Prayer Book, the Pentateuch with the commentary of Beth

1Ibid., p. 103. 2Asaf, ibid., p. 118.
Moshe, the Pentateuch with Rashi, the order of the prayers, morality and good behavior (a form of Musor), reading and writing in the vernacular, Hebrew grammar, elementary arithmetic, and finally, Mishnah and Talmud with Rashi and Tosefoth.¹

Elementary Jewish education conformed to generally accepted practices during the middle ages in all the various lands where Jews lived. However, in Arabic Spain due to favorable political, social and economic conditions and as a result of the contact between Jewish and Arabic cultures, a broadening of the Talmud Torah curriculum took place. This included on the elementary level arithmetic and Hebrew in addition to Bible, Mishnah and Talmud. Jewish schools in Italy were influenced by the schools and educational ideas of Spanish Jewry and by the classical renaissance. The elementary school curriculum of the Talmud Torahs in Italy, therefore, showed a similar breadth in curriculum construction.²

The Talmud Torah, as has been shown, originated in the early part of the middle ages and it became an established educational insti-

¹ Ibid., p. 101.

² Asaf, ibid., p. 123. Dr. Neuman states, however, that "it may be confidently premised that nowhere in the Middle Ages did the educational system built up by the Jews make room for an extensive training in secular subjects. The teaching of the secular disciplines to the extent that it was practised, was mainly private and individual." Neuman, Abraham, The Jews in Spain, Their Social, Political and Cultural Life During The Middle Ages (Phila.: The Jewish Publications Society of America) 2 vols., 1942, pp. 73-74.
tution not only because it provided free education for poor and orphaned children but because of its practices and educational codes as manifested by the many regulatory statutes of the rabbinic authorities and by the Kahals or Jewish community councils throughout the centuries of its existence. It influenced future educational ideology and organization and was one of the contributory causes for the preservation and unity of Jewish life in the Diaspora.
CHAPTER II

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE TALMUD TORAH
IN THE UNITED STATES

A. Causes for its Rise

For a better understanding of the causes that gave rise to the development of the Talmud Torah in America we must first review briefly the Jewish educational institutions that existed prior to the establishment of the Talmud Torah in this country.

Jewish educational thought and planning up to the last decade of the nineteenth century will, no doubt, shed light on the origin and development of the educational institution that we are concerned with in this study. The currents in Jewish life in general and in Jewish educational thought in particular that led to the creation or rather transformation of the European Talmud Torah to the shores of America will then be more readily discernible.

When the Spanish and Portuguese Jewish immigrants first came to colonial America in 1654 from Holland and Brazil, tutors were engaged to give instruction to their children in religious education. Later when additional Jews arrived in New York to compose a Jewish community an organized effort toward Jewish education was made in 1731 by the Cong. Shearith Israel when it established a Yeshivah, the first of its kind in North America under congregational auspices. Children of the poor were instructed without fees. Its support came from community
fund allocations and from tuition of those able to pay.¹

In 1762, Cong. Shearith Israel established in New York an all-day parochial school or Yeshivah that combined both Hebrew and secular studies.²

From 1800 on, this school was changed only in name to Talmud Torah. However, it still functioned as a parochial educational institution until 1842 when the general public school was established. It then became an afternoon Talmud Torah providing only Jewish studies for its students who now attended the regular public school for their secular studies.³

In 1848, the real German-Jewish migration began to this country. It brought to these shores a type of government that came under the influence of the Haskalah or enlightenment movement of that period which was widespread in Germany. Many of these immigrants were idealists and men of general culture who brought with them to these shores the new social ideal that of the emancipated Jew and the new interpre-


tation of Judaism, of Reform Judaism. It was their purpose to have
the Jews in this country adjust themselves to their new American
environment.¹

In educational matters they followed the same philanthropic
ideas as in taking care of their dependents and the needy. "They took
philanthropic education out of the synagogue and communalized it, in
the form of the Hebrew Free School Association. But normal religious
education, that is, the education of their own children, they combined
under synagogue auspices."²

At first, these German Jews organized their religious schools
as parochial day schools which they called Talmud Torahs. Later, they
introduced in America the Jewish Sunday School which became widely
accepted as a new type of Jewish educational institution of the German-
Jewish immigrants. Side by side with the Sunday School, private Jewish
boarding schools existed at that time exclusively for the education of
wealthy children.³

Since communal institutions were neither well organized nor did
they function successfully in the middle of 19th century America,
early Jewish congregational growth in this country demanded that the

¹Kohler, B., "The German-Jewish Migration to America." American
Jewish Historical Society, Vol. 9, p. 87.

²Dushkin, op. cit., p. 33. American Hebrew VI (Feb. 27, 1882)
p. 10.

³Grinstein, op. cit., p. 31. Asmonean I, 23, 61. The Occident,
I, pp. 104-105.
Jewish school become an integral part of synagogue life. While the private tutor always existed, most of these German-Jewish congregations organized in the first half of the 19th century found it necessary to establish afternoon religious schools for the children of their members with sessions held in the afternoons, three to four times a week including Sunday mornings. 1 These German-Jewish Talmud Torahs later reduced their number of sessions per week, so that by 1914 most of these schools often met only once a week, on Sunday mornings. This type of school became the widespread educational institution of Reform Jewish congregations. 2

The congregational Hebrew School became, then, the predominant and most common type of Jewish educational agency among the new settlers in this country, first of the Spanish-Portuguese Jews and later, especially, that of the German Jews.

However, even before the German-Jewish immigration to this country, communal schools existed in some of the larger cities, particularly where communal associations existed to provide Jewish education for the children of the community. 3 Thus, there was early established in America the principle of community responsibility for Jewish educa-

1Grinstein, op. cit., p. 33.


3Grinstein, op. cit., p. 32.
tion, especially that of poor and orphaned children. Private or congregational parochial schools also existed side by side with the communal schools. Most Jewish children, however, attended the communal schools. Also, Sunday Schools existed for religious instruction in German-Jewish communities. In some cities, one day a week religious schools existed such as the Sabbath School which remained for a time the only medium for Jewish education in those cities.

In Philadelphia, the need for free schools for the religious education of children whose parents could not afford the fees of the congregational Hebrew schools was felt as far back as 1838. Rebecca Gratz and a group of women founded the first of the Free Sunday Schools in that year. After the mass immigration of Jews from eastern Europe such free schools were organized in most of the larger cities throughout the country. The newcomers, however, soon established their own Hadrim and Talmud Torahs.

In 1890 when Russian Jewish immigrants came to Philadelphia, and this occurred wherever these immigrants settled, communal schools called Talmud Torahs were established providing a free Jewish education for the poor children of the community. These first Talmud Torahs in America were supported by membership fees, contributions and donations

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1The Occident, X, 158 ff., XI, 231 ff. The Asmonian (1849-1858), I, 45, 72.

by philanthropic and rich Jews.¹

Thus, with the coming of the eastern European Jews, the commun-
alizing tendency was accelerated. Their earliest schools, the Mach-
zikei Talmud Torah and the Yeshiva Etz Chayim, were not connected with
any congregation but were organized and managed by special educational
societies and were supported by the community at large. Most of the
large Talmud Torahs and Yeshivoth which came later were also communally
organized and supported. Not only philanthropic education for the
children of the poor but all religious education was now separated from
the control of the individual synagogue. Jewish education was now,
therefore, not denominational but communal. The teachers, organizers
and most of the directors of Jewish education were now not rabbis but
laymen.

The causes for the rise of the Talmud Torah in America lie
primarily in the fact that educators and parents became dissatisfied
with the existing educational institutions which provided only a minimum
of education for their children. They made great efforts, therefore,
to establish religious schools under communal auspices which would
offer an enriched program of studies.

This factor coupled with the necessity of providing schools for
the great number of children of poor immigrant parents led to the
establishment, mostly by these immigrant Jews themselves, of communal

¹E. J. James, The Immigrant Jew in America (New York: B. F.
Talmud Torahs as the most desirable form of educational institution.

The tradition of Talmud Torah or the study of Torah was thus not neglected by the eastern European Jews when they began to arrive in this country in large numbers after 1881. Bringing with them their experiences and not knowing how to modify their traditional standards in accordance with the new conditions, they proceeded to reproduce the educational institutions that they were familiar with and knew best.¹ They established private schools and communal Talmud Torahs for the poor in cities such as New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, Indianapolis, Minneapolis, etc.²

These new arrivals were brought up on the idea that the teaching of Torah is a sacred obligation. They developed their philanthropies early and provided facilities for the religious education of the poor. It was also natural that the traditional name, Talmud Torah, should have been chosen for the educational institution set up for this purpose.

**B. Influences of European Jewish Immigrants**

It is known that there was an immigration of Sephardic Jews to New Amsterdam, mainly Marranos, from a Dutch settlement in Brazil in

¹Weinberger, Moshe, Hayehudim Vehayahdut Be Nuyork (Hebrew), (New York: 1887), pp. 17-25.

degree of Jewish culture whether finding expression in talmudic lore, modern Hebrew literature or in socialist philosophy. They all had in common a great and eager desire to accumulate knowledge. Intellectualism then affected their desire for Jewish knowledge and education. This is seen from the high educational standards of the Jewish schools established in this country by these eastern European immigrants. These schools were on a higher Jewish cultural plane than the schools established previously by the Spanish-Portuguese and German Jews in this country.

The eastern European Jews emphasized in their educational planning, the literary elements of their Jewish cultural heritage. The "Yodea Sefer" or the cultural goal was the most essential in their educational ideals.

Another common social trait of the eastern European Jews was their desire to separate their social life from the domain of the synagogue. Even among the most orthodox, the tendency was to make philanthropy and Jewish education more and more communal and less and less congregational. The Talmud Torah, the Heder or private school, the Yeshivah, the National Hebrew schools, the Yiddishist schools - all of these educational institutions were controlled and supervised by special educational societies outside of the control or jurisdiction of any particular synagogue.

The idea of public responsibility for the social and educational life and institutions of a Jewish community, the immigrants had achieved in eastern Europe. There the Kahal or community council supervised and controlled many of the social, religious and educational activities of the Jewish community. Its agency, the Hebra Talmud Torah, was responsible for the control and supervision of the education of the poor and orphaned children enrolled in the community Talmud Torah.¹

The eastern European immigrants were in the main artisans, small merchants, men of scant vocational training and small financial means. Most of them came from small European towns and villages in economically backward countries and settled mostly in the large metropolitan centers in the United States. But they came from communities where the ideal of Torah had been intensively cultivated and the youth was raised in the spirit of the Jewish religious, social and cultural traditions, especially in the spirit of the classics of Jewish religious literature such as the Bible, Talmud, Midrash and Zohar.

With this educational, Zionist, and religious background, the first Jewish European immigrants that came to this country in the 1880's experimented in manifold ways to enrich and mould Jewish education in this country on the principles of tradition and nationalism. Among the first Hebrew teachers at that time we find many Hebrew writers, grammarians and scholars who turned to teaching not merely

for a livelihood but as an ideal. The work and accomplishments of these first modern Hebrew pedagogues on American soil inspired many Jews to become interested in American Jewish life as educators, rabbis, and Jewish leaders. They received their training and encouragement from these first Hebrew educators.¹

The Russian immigration to this country brought a type of Jew that was reared to regard the Jewish religion as co-extensive with life. He possessed a considerable amount of Jewish knowledge and for a time he was unaware of the secular social and cultural environment which later threatened his way of life. He was able to maintain his traditional cultural, religious and social ideals in this country that he brought with him from Europe and to employ the means to achieve them for his children. "He knew the means that had been adopted to train him as a Jew and he sought by the same methods to make his children Jews."²

He had a great desire to maintain his identity and the social, religious and literary traditions of his people. He wanted to live the life of Jews and to give the same opportunity to his children in spite of the fact that they were living in a divergent environment.³

¹Scharfstein, op. cit., p. 195.
³I. B. Berkson, Theories of Americanization (Teachers College, Columbia University, 1920), p. 53.
The great achievements of the Talmud Torah system in this country were, therefore, made possible because of the idealism of the immigrant teachers and "enlightened" laymen. They brought with them to this country the idea of a synthesis of "modernism" and traditionalism that they found existing in some of the new Talmud Torahs and, especially, in the Heder Metukan in Russia and Poland. They adopted this synthesis as the fundamental concept and underlying educational philosophy of the Talmud Torahs that they founded in the United States. But its curriculum laid greater emphasis on religious literary subject matter than was the case of the European Heder Metukan. Here, too, Hebraic and Zionist studies, in addition to the traditional Jewish curriculum became part of the course of study of the Talmud Torah. In addition, modernism in the sense of new pedagogic methods in instruction and new and improved ideas in supervision and administration was introduced into the Talmud Torah. 1

In almost every large city and even in many small communities were found at least a few of these Jewishly cultured and traditional

1Leo Honor states that the American Talmud Torah "attempted to synthesize modernism and Hebraism." Honor, Leo L., "Jewish Elementary Education in the United States." American Jewish Historical Society, Vol. XLVII, No. 1, 1952, p. 10. However, Hebraism was one of the basic modern elements in the philosophy of the Talmud Torah. Honor failed to mention also the other important concomitant of this synthesis, that of traditionalism. Not only did religious subject matter form a significant part of its philosophy and curriculum but the leadership, teaching staff and student body and the entire atmosphere of the Talmud Torah were permeated with a religious ideology.
Jews who were responsible for the establishment of a "modern" yet traditional Talmud Torah or another type of educational school in their particular communities. They were not only the organizers and founders of such schools but many of them acted as teachers and supervisors as well.

Thus, the influx of eastern European Jews from 1880 to 1920 stimulated greater efforts and achievements in all phases of Jewish life in this country, particularly in Jewish education.

The immigrants were zealous and conscious of the importance of religious education for their children. They, therefore, set about to organize and transplant here the educational institutions which they were accustomed to for generations.

A factor which exerted perhaps the greatest influence on the American Talmud Torah was the Haskalah movement in Poland and Russia. The word is derived from the Hebrew "sechel" which means "intelligence" or "understanding." In its wider sense Haskalah denotes "enlightenment." It applies to the movement started by Moses Mendelsohn in Germany about the middle of the 18th century to "enlighten" the Jews. From there it spread to eastern Europe where the objective of, at least, the early maskilim or the "Jewish intelligensia" or "enlightened" Jews who participated in the spread of this philosophy among the masses of Jews, was not just to "enlighten" the Jews of Russia and Poland but to bring about among them "a social revolution and a complete transformation in education and habits of life."¹

Most of the Jews in East Europe due to the Russian governments enforced isolation of them in the Pale of Settlement were attached to whatever was characteristically Jewish and sought refuge from an inimical world in the study of the Torah and the observance of every minutiae of the Jewish religion. The maskilim thought that equality and the treatment of the Jews as social equals with the non-Jews or Jewish emancipation could be achieved if they would do away with their distinctiveness. Should the Jews adopt the vernacular as their everyday speech, modernize their educational institutions and cultivate manners of the people among whom they lived they would be fit for citizenship and social and political equality would be granted to them. "The aim of the Haskalah was primarily at a studied adjustment of Jewish life to the modern world as a prelude to the social and political emancipation of the ghetto Jew."1

The pogroms and the harsh May Laws of 1882 changed all that. The maskilim became disillusioned in their efforts and hopes of obtaining social, economic and political equality for the Russian Jews. They realized the despair and hopelessness of ever seeing the disabilities of the Jews removed. The rallying cry of this later or second phase of the Haskalah movement now became "O, House of Israel, come and let us work out our own salvation."2


2 Pinsker, Leo, Auto-Emancipation (Berlin, 1882).
Similar sentiments were expressed by Nahum Sokolow in his Sinath Olam Le-am Olam (The Eternal Hatred to the Eternal People; Warsaw, 1882) and more, especially, by Perez Smolenskin who in his Am Olam (Eternal People) as early as 1873 predicted the uselessness to try to obtain social and political equality for the Jews in Russia and Poland. He, therefore, aroused the Jews to devote themselves more ardently than ever before to their own culture and awakened in them the hopefulness and need to prepare themselves for their rehabilitation as a nation in their own land, Palestine. This was the new clarion call and ideology of Zionism. It was not just the awakening of Jewish national consciousness because the Jews since the destruction of the Second Temple and their dispersion in different lands in 70 C. E. considered themselves a people and a nation deprived of their state. The idea of Am Yisrael, the existence of the Jewish people was always with them in the Diaspora and was part of their social and religious philosophy. But this new current in the life of the Jews in Russia and Poland was more than Jewish nationhood, it was the idea of Jewish statehood, of political Zionism. Enlightenment was to be spread, secular knowledge was to be encouraged, yet no longer as a means of obtaining equality but, on the contrary, as an assertion of Jewish identity. The Hebrew language was to become a spoken language and Hebrew literature was to be advanced and cultivated among the Jews. These ideals of a Hebrew renaissance and the striving for the ancient homeland resulted in the founding of the "Hoveve Zion" movement in Russia of Ahad- Ha-Am and his followers and in the development of Zionism.
The Haskalah movement in Russia thus "changed its tendencies and motives more than once from its inception to Ahad Ha-Am. Some wanted just to remove the ban from secular learning. Others advocated the levelling of all distinctiveness between Jews and Gentiles. Others like Gordon wished to see his brethren "Jews at home and men abroad." Smolenskin dreamed of the rehabilitation of Jews in Palestine and Ahad Ha-Am hoped for the spiritual regeneration of his beloved people. To each of them, Haskalah implied different ideals and through each it promulgated diverse doctrines.¹

The Hebraic and Zionist movement influenced to some extent Jewish education in Russia and Poland. It brought about, in particular, the creation of the Heder Metukan or the improved Heder and the introduction of new subjects such as Hebrew, Hebrew grammar and literature and Jewish history into the curriculum of some of the Talmud Torahs in those countries with the Ivrit Be-Ivrit or Hebrew conversational method now used in instruction. These educational concepts were, consequently, brought to the United States by the immigrant Jews. Zionism and Hebraism became parts of the educational philosophy of the American Talmud Torah. Similar subjects and methodology as in the Heder Metukan became important elements in the Talmud Torah curriculum in this country. New and improved Hebrew texts were now employed by

the American communal schools. In these ways did the later Haskalah influence on Jewish education in East Europe also affect the philosophy, curriculum and methodology of the American Talmud Torah. "The Talmud Torahs were brought into existence by individuals whose outlook had been formed by Zionism and the Hebraic renaissance and who were seeking a means of transmitting the Jewish heritage which had its roots in the past but with relevance to the present and with potentialities for the future."¹

The Talmud Torahs in America were left intact but in time they changed their character in such a manner as to fit them into the new American environment. The result was that the Talmud Torah, the Yeshivah and the Heder all underwent profound modifications in this country. Beginning with the first European Talmud Torah on American soil, the forerunner of the present Machzikei Talmud Torah (1862)² and extending to 1960, the Talmud Torahs have been gradually transformed from charitable institutions for the education of poor children only, to democratic communal institutions for the education of all children.

The immigrant Jews endeavored to create in this country those educational institutions such as the Talmud Torah on the model of the home institution with which they were familiar. While vaguely realizing that they could not be the same here as they were in the small village and town in Russia, they allowed modifications in it only when

necessary. New conditions demanded modifications in methodology, supervision and administration, finances and even in basic policies such as providing also for the education of girls and admitting poor and rich children alike.

The Talmud Torah developed here in spite of the unfavorable setting and in spite of the numerous drawbacks, ever seeking a high ideal even while submitting to the demands of changed conditions, ever aiming at the accomplishment of difficult tasks while giving in grudgingly to the forces of the new life and the new environment.¹

They insisted, however, that the additions to the curriculum of Hebraic and Zionist subjects must be related to the religious ideals of the Jewish people. Hence, the Talmud Torah became as will be shown later at greater length, "a school for intensive Hebraic, religious and Zionist studies."²

C. Influences of the American Jewish Environment

The German-Jewish immigrants who arrived in this country close to the mid-nineteenth century were greatly influenced by the enlightenment and assimilationist movement of the land of their origin, Germany. They, therefore, favored the complete emancipation of the Jews and their complete Americanization into the American environment with its modern social system and way of life.

They accustomed themselves more readily than the Jews that came to this country from Russia and Poland to the culture and spirit of

¹Greenstone, op. cit., p. 30.
their new country. Later when they became integrated with all phases of the American way of life and culture they became wealthy and gained a social and economic position equivalent to and perhaps surpassing other minority groups in this country.

The German-American Jews became interested and devoted to Jewish communal needs, but mostly only from the philanthropic and Americanization points of view. They, therefore, accepted the burden as a holy obligation to Americanize the Jewish immigrants that streamed into this country later from Russia and Poland. They established educational institutions for them to study English and to become better American citizens and to train them in the American way of life.

However, most of the newly arrived immigrants from Russia were not only interested in creating charity agencies for the support of their needy but were also vitally interested in Jewish education. They not only embraced their new home, America, with love and loyalty, but found the American ideals kindred and friendly to their own Jewish ideals. They experienced no real or serious spiritual conflicts within themselves. They understood that only through the Jewish educative process could both sets of ideals be translated and perpetuated in their lives. They, therefore, added to the American public school to which they became greatly attracted, a supplementary week-day afternoon school or Talmud Torah for the education of their children. "These Jewish schools in the United States are the most concrete expressions of the attempt of the Jews to adjust themselves to America. The
variety of types in Jewish educational institutions results from a variety in methods of adjustment."1

The First World War acted as a great stimulus to unite the Jews of America in a common cause to help their unfortunate brethren overseas. As a result of the many casualties that the Jews suffered on the battlefields and, especially, because of the local pogroms in Russia and Poland in which many Jews lost their lives and possessions2 the Jewish question was raised to the forefront of thinking and future planning by the Jews in America.

The conditions and plight of the European Jews aroused the sympathy and understanding of the American Jews who now began to worry about the future of the Jewish people. Their complacent attitude towards world Jewry as well as to the social and cultural needs of American Jewry was now terminated. The Balfour Declaration of 1917 as a beginning for the redemption of the Jewish people on its ancient soil not only aroused feelings of joy and gratitude in the American Jews but stimulated and strengthened to a large extent Jewish nationalism, Zionism and a cultural and spiritual renaissance on the part of the Jews in America.3

1Dushkin, op. cit., p. 16.
These currents of nationalism and the awakened needs for a revival of Hebrew culture for the survival of the Jewish people directly inspired, influenced and strengthened Jewish education in general and that of Talmud Torah education in particular.

The Jewish community in America now was stimulated as never before to expand its educational facilities and to consider Jewish education as a major instrument of Jewish nationalism and Jewish survival.

However, in spite of the changed attitudes during this period towards Jewish nationalism and Jewish education in general, there was a weakening in the further development of large communal schools or Talmud Torahs. This came about because over a period of many centuries, Jewish children were sent in European countries to private schools or Hadarim and for generations only the poor went to the community school or Talmud Torah. Consequently, many of the Jewish immigrants still felt uncomfortable about sending their children to the communal Talmud Torah.

Secondly, the Talmud Torah in America was also further weakened as a result of the influences of the Jewish social, economic and religious environment. The Jews of America became attached to different Jewish religious tendencies in this country such as orthodoxy, conservatism, and reform. They had different conceptions of Jewish nationalism and of Americanism, of preservation of Jewish unity and even of assimilationism. Each of these denominational groups had its own theory of Jewish life and wished to impart it to the next generation.
in its own schools and to decide the content, goals and philosophy of its educational system. As a result of this division in the social, cultural and religious affiliation of the Jews in America, the Talmud Torah was compelled to change its character and philosophy by introducing new subjects, accepted American educational methods and techniques in its pedagogy and to admit rich and poor children alike to its school and some Talmud Torahs, especially in the small communities, began to employ English in instruction. The Reform and Conservative movements also attracted many of the Jewish immigrants to enroll their children in their schools with the result that the further expansion of the Talmud Torahs, at least the large ones, was greatly limited and the enrollment in the Talmud Torahs was greatly reduced.

The influences of the American Jewish environment on the Talmud Torah in America were, therefore, beneficial to some extent in that the intensification of Jewish nationalism and Hebraism brought about the introduction in the Talmud Torah curriculum of new subjects. It also resulted in the introduction of new methods in instruction. However, the Jewish environment was also detrimental to the further development of the Talmud Torah in America in that denominational groups arose with their own educational systems and philosophies exerting a powerful influence on many of these immigrant Jews. The result was that a reduction in enrollments in the Talmud Torahs and their future development and progress in this country was checked and limited.
D. Influences of the General American Environment

The democratic spirit in America gradually exerted a powerful influence on the immigrant Jews in this country after they had been here for a number of years. It made itself felt in numerous ways and it reached a large proportion of the Jews.

In the economic and social realm, the immigrant Jews after a few decades in this country succeeded in accumulating some wealth, and advanced to a higher social stratum in society in general and among their fellow-Jews in particular. Many of them became in time thoroughly Americanized and due to their newly acquired social and economic position, they did not acquire and follow entirely the cultural and religious traditions of their forebears. The Jewish cultural and spiritual values that the Jews in eastern Europe cherished for centuries were now greatly modified and to some extent were now completely denounced and not practised. Financial success, ability to attain a higher social and material stratum were glorified by them. This brought about the forgetfulness and even the destruction of the traditional Jewish respect for learning and culture.

Psychological and social changes brought about by a new environment such as a new language, new manners and new educational and economic opportunities coupled with the desire to adopt the new American culture and way of life under the stimulus and influence of democracy and equality, all created for the American Jew new problems.

In spite of the prevailing currents of secularism and modernism which strengthened the assimilation tendencies of all strata of the
Jewish population in America during the period under discussion, especially among the wealthier elements that achieved financial success and social position, other even stronger factors and currents strengthened the affirmative attitudes of many Jews towards Jewish survival.

These elements were Jewish nationalism and the Jewish religion. These factors were further strengthened by a positive and practical philosophy of Zionism and Jewish education both acting as centripetal influences in Jewish life and as instruments for the unity and survival of the Jews in America.

The great progress made by the Talmud Torahs during the first few decades of this century have been achieved mostly because their educational philosophy and intensive course of study which were traditional and yet, at the same time, were based on the new currents of Hebraism and Zionism satisfied the religious, national and educational needs and goals for Jewish survival of the American Jewish community. But the philosophy and curriculum of the American Talmud Torahs could not have succeeded to fulfill these needs if the character, methodology, supervision and administration procedures of these communal schools still followed the ways of the eastern European Heder and Talmud Torah and had not been modified at least to some extent by the American environment.

They were greatly influenced by some of the prevailing educational ideas and practices of the American public system. The Talmud Torahs adopted many of its current educational methods of instruction and instituted reforms in the supervision and administration of these schools similar in many ways to those existing in American public education. They transformed their character also due to the influence of American public education from an educational institution for poor children only to that of a public school for all children, poor and rich alike. Particularly is this democratic process noticed in the education of girls. Jewish girls were now admitted to Talmud Torahs as well as boys. This has caused the Jews to cease their traditional neglect of providing formal schooling for their daughters.

Democracy and improved educational methods have thus played important roles in raising the standards of Jewish education and were responsible for the great progress made by the Talmud Torah in adjusting its instruction process and school system with the general American environment. "The American Jew accepted both the scientific method and the modern concepts of Democracy for his educational endeavors in this country because they helped him preserve his power of spiritual

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self-preservation."

The influence on the American public schools of newer methods for instruction, supervision and administration have affected the Talmud Toras as well. "Its example has caused marked improvement in the equipment, supervision and administration of the better Jewish schools (the Talmud Toras) of New York." 

The Talmud Toras were now able to attract Americanized Hebrew teachers and educators to fill the ranks of the Talmud Torah staffs utilizing the newer methods of instruction of American education to improve the instruction of the American Talmud Toras as are discussed later in this study.

The American democratic ideals of freedom of thought and action, initiative and individuality have also entered into the methodology and philosophy of the American Talmud Torah. Although accepted American educational methods have been introduced into the Talmud Toras, unfortunately, they have not been employed to such a large extent as in present-day Jewish education.

There is no doubt, therefore, that the American Talmud Torah had greatly benefitted from the standards of American public education. Good school buildings, thoughtful programming, careful grading and the employment of newer methods of teaching have made the Talmud Torah in

1Dushkin, op. cit., p. 141.

2Idem., p. 289.
America far more attractive than was its counterpart in eastern Europe.

In the improvement of the educational management of the Talmud Torah the general standards prevailing in American public education were operative rather than the traditional in Jewish education. Indeed, it is remarkable how rapid was the process of transformation of the American Talmud Torah from the medieval standards that prevailed in the eastern European Talmud Torah to the accepted standards existing in America. "The Talmud Torah, the communal school sponsored by an independent group rather than by a particular congregation has been modelled after the public school in its essential aspects."¹

E. Distinctive Characteristics of the Talmud Torah in the United States in Contra-Distinction to its European Counterpart

The Heder in eastern Europe was usually a private venture conducted by an individual who received a stipulated sum per semester for every child that he instructed. The instruction continued for the whole day and the subjects included in the curriculum extended over the entire range of elementary Jewish education from the Hebrew alphabet to the study of the Talmud and its commentaries. Religion or Jewish history were rarely taught in the Heder. The pupils were expected to derive their knowledge of these subjects as part of their study of the Bible and the Talmud. The Talmud Torah in eastern Europe

was, on the other hand, an elementary Jewish school for the children of the poor. Its aims, curriculum, methods of instruction and organization were the same as those of the Heder. Whatever differences there were between these two institutions arose from the fact that the Talmud Torah was a philanthropic undertaking which was under the control and care of the elders of the community through the Kahal’s or community council’s agency, the Hebra Talmud Torah or Talmud Torah Society.¹

As a result of the high regard for Jewish learning in general and of the educational training of Jewish children in particular, especially that of providing educational opportunities for poor Jewish children, the Kahal, through its educational committee, the Hebra Talmud Torah, organized, maintained, supported and supervised the community school for poor children, the Talmud Torah.

That was in the days when Jewish autonomy existed in Poland and Russia. However, when Jewish autonomy or the Kahal system ceased to exist as a result of governmental restrictions on its powers and influence, the Talmud Torah was as unsupervised as the Heder.

Both of these European educational institutions had to undergo considerable changes in places in Russia where the doors of the government secular schools were opened to the Jews and where the spread of general culture among the Jews due to Haskalah influences was widespread.

As a result of these new trends some Talmud Torahs were even established in the form of all-day schools that combined both secular and Jewish studies. Special financial aid was granted by groups of enlightened Jews to those institutions that introduced into their schools a general program of studies in addition to their traditional Jewish subjects of instruction.

However, the number of such Talmud Torahs was small in comparison to the total number of Hadarim and Talmud Torahs. This was mainly due to the opposition and even antagonism of religious Jews to any modern currents in their educational institutions. They feared in all these changes attempts to de-Judaize these important educational agencies.¹

Another important change developing due to Haskalah influence was the attempt on the part of the Maskilim to introduce into the Talmud Torahs vocational education, especially for those children whose aptitude did not permit them to continue with their other studies.

But the influence on the Talmud Torahs in eastern Europe by the Maskilim should not be exaggerated. Although it is true that here and there Maskilim were responsible for changes in the Talmud Torahs and in some schools courses in Russian were introduced and the old curriculum gave way to the new, this transformation was, however, never instituted in most of the Talmud Torahs.

This situation existed at the start of the Haskalah in Russia up to the beginning of the 20th century "when the majority of Talmud Torahs were very little affected by the modern trend with most Talmud Torahs remaining as in the days of old, deficient both in physical and educational aspects."\(^1\)

However, at the beginning of this century because of the failure of the Haskalah program in Russia a new movement that of Zionism and Hebraism came to the forefront of Jewish thinking in that country. It was not like the early Haskalah concerned mainly with the introduction of secular subjects into the Jewish school or with bringing about social changes in Jewish life. This new movement undertook to bring about important improvements in the philosophy, curriculum and methodology of the Jewish schools on the basis of Hebraism and Zionism. These two concepts in the life of the Russian Jews gradually became the fundamental educational philosophy of some Talmud Torahs and, especially that of the Heder Metukan of East Europe.

Zionism and the revival of Hebrew as a living language influenced in these ways the Talmud Torah curriculum. This period now witnessed the introduction of Hebrew and Jewish history into the Talmud Torah curriculum by young modern Hebraists and educators imbued with the fervor for Zionism and Hebrew.\(^2\)

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 57.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 28.
In the beginning of this century, as a result of this new trend, the new type of Heder or the Heder Metukan arose in some small and large communities in Russia and Galicia. It caused a great revolution in the educational methodology and in the curricula of the Jewish elementary schools of eastern Europe. It created a Hebrew-nationalist curriculum to replace the old solely conceived religious curriculum of the Heder and Talmud Torah. "The philosophy of the Heder Metukan was to combine tradition with modernism, rooted in the past but with eager anticipation of a brighter future in order to bring up a generation of modern Zionist-minded Jews and in order to compete successfully with the age-old school system." ¹

The Heder Metukan had a great influence on the eastern European Talmud Torah as well as later on the American Talmud Torah. Its Hebraic and Zionist philosophy became also the basis of the American Talmud Torah curriculum.

The new method of Ivrit Be-Ivrit or the natural, conversational method was now widely employed in Talmud Torah instruction both abroad and in the Talmud Torahs in the United States. Other educational concepts such as the use of very little corporal punishment by the teacher and the creation of proper physical facilities more conducive to study were all adopted by many of the Talmud Torahs abroad and employed by European educators in the American Talmud Torahs.

The introduction of some of the new subjects taught in the

¹Ibid., p. 36.
Heder Metukah in eastern Europe such as music, Jewish history, Hebrew and Hebrew literature and the use of the phonetic method in teaching reading were first used in some European Talmud Torahs and the Heder Metukan and were later taken over by the Talmud Torahs in America.

If one were to examine the curriculum of the American Talmud Torah in its hey-days in the 1920's with the curriculum of the Heder Metukan in the nineties he would find not only great similarity but what is equally important, an element of continuity as though the Talmud Torah of the U.S.A. were one of the heirs of the European Heder Metukan.¹

New educational concepts, goals, aims and techniques were now brought to this country by immigrant educators and Jewish culturalists and were absorbed into the content, program and philosophy of the American Talmud Torah.

The Talmud Torah in this country was now housed in a modern building and provided a consistent and broad curriculum of Jewish studies. Beginnings were made to train teachers for their tasks. Class work took the place of individualized instruction with some new methods being used as noted later in this study. All subjects were taught mostly in Hebrew but some Talmud Torahs still employed either Yiddish or English as the language of instruction.

The pupils of the American Talmud Torahs were also of poor parentage and "in many instances they provided the children (like their European counterparts) with shoes and clothing and in a few cases even with meals. However, on the whole, about 50% of the pupils paid some

¹Tbid., p. 144.
tuition.1

The American Talmud Torah thus borrowed a great deal from its European counterpart. It adopted many of its educational goals, aims, organizational set-up, supervisory and administrative techniques and methods of instruction and even similar sources of income. However, because of the difference in the general and Jewish environment in this country which was unlike that existing in Russia, the American Talmud Torah was compelled to modify its educational objectives and to plan to be more in consonance with the American Jewish spirit and environment. These changes were on a whole wholesome and beneficial to its existence and progress in this country, so that the Talmud Torah was considered for a few decades superior in its educational aims, philosophy and course of study to any other educational institution.

Its organizational sponsorship and set-up were similar in many ways to its European counterpart. It, too, was organized by a group of individuals for the purpose of educating the poor and orphaned children. It, too, was communally sponsored, supervised and supported through an educational association called the Hebra Talmud Torah. This school committee was also, as in eastern Europe, composed of laymen many of whom were ignorant of the aims and needs of Jewish education but held important committee posts because of their large financial donations for the support of the Talmud Torah.

1Jewish Education, Vol. XX, No. 3, p. 114 (Whiteman, Kalman, "The Talmud Torah").
In its early days of existence in this country towards the end of the nineteenth century, the American Talmud Torah used Yiddish like its European counterpart as the language of instruction. However, in later years, due to the influence of enlightened Jews and educators in the second large wave of Jewish immigration to this country, the language of instruction for all subjects was changed to Hebrew with some Talmud Torahs using English or Yiddish.

The Yiddish Talmud Torah followed the classic curriculum of the European Talmud Torah and employed Yiddish in instruction. Its teachers were necessarily recruited from the recent immigrants and it still used the old methods of teaching as in the Heder of eastern Europe. Its students were mostly the children of recent arrivals in this country.

The outstanding schools in New York City and elsewhere in the beginning of the twentieth century were the Hebraic Talmud Torahs which were conducted under communal auspices. "Their chief characteristics are their spirit of nationalist-religious, and their chief emphasis is upon the study of the Hebrew language and literature."¹

The American Talmud Torah in contradistinction to the European Talmud Torah had in many cases a synagogue under its control and even a private cemetery for its membership may have been under its care both of which were instituted as sources of income for the support of the Talmud Torah.

These communal schools were like their European counterparts controlled and supervised by a school board or Hebra Talmud Torah whose powers were granted to it by a Board of Directors. However, the American Talmud Torah board was much larger than the European Hebra Talmud Torah or school committee. The American Talmud Torah Board of Directors had a membership ranging in numbers from twenty-five to seventy-five with many prominent names of the community on it but only a few actually conducted its affairs. Because of the need for funds, some of these educational institutions were turned over at times to people ignorant of educational needs and planning, who ruled forcefully for their own personal glorification without understanding the aims and purposes of the Talmud Torah.

Also, in contrast to the European Talmud Torah whose students were examined periodically by the local rabbi, the students of the American Talmud Torah were examined weekly by a special examining committee appointed for this purpose by the Board of Directors which also controlled to a large extent the conditions of management, supervision, methodology, facilities and programming.¹

The sources of income of the American Talmud Torah were in many ways similar to those of the European Talmud Torah. It also received

¹Constitution of Machzikei Talmud Torah, Articles X and XVI. See also Appendix A, section B on the periodic examinations instituted in the Machzikei Talmud Torah. The same procedure was also followed by other Talmud Torahs in the country. However, since the 1930's written and oral formal examinations have taken the place of committee exams in nearly all existing Talmud Torahs.
financial assistance from the local philanthropic federations. The Talmud Torahs in New York City, for example, received financial aid from the New York Committee for Jewish Education in the form of outright grants through subsidies and through scholarships for poor pupils who were unable to pay their tuition fees. This assistance was granted, however, if the Talmud Torahs fulfilled certain usual conditions such as maintaining sanitary quarters, balancing the budget, employment of certified teachers and providing certain minimum essentials in the course of study.¹

All the sources of income were not of a stable nature and practically the entire time of the meetings of the Board of Directors was devoted to questions of finance. In the eight largest Talmud Torahs of New York City, only six sources of income were found. In other Talmud Torahs many other types were undertaken even income derived from selling books and notebooks and from the pupils accompanying the dead for a fee.²

Originally, the Talmud Torah in America followed the European pattern as a school for the poor. However, because of its large financial burden, it was soon compelled to charge tuition to pupils whose parents could afford to pay.

²Y. Kanowitz, Reshis Ha-chi-much Ha-Ivri, Sefer Hayovel shel Agudath Hamnahalim Be-Amerika, p. 120.
Its physical facilities were also better than those of the European Talmud Torah, though by no means satisfactory. This improvement came about through the necessity of the American Talmud Torah to meet the sanitary requirements set by law.

As for class instruction, the European Talmud Torah followed the patterns of the Heder. It employed antiquated methods that were used in the middle ages. Learning was done by the rote method and classroom instruction was unknown with the pupils taking their lessons in turn for a few minutes at a time. The American Talmud Torah, on the other hand, instituted a grading system but, especially, in the early period of its existence in this country, it had no systematic and coherent system of pupil placement. Children of practically all ages were found, especially in the beginners classes, with practically individualized instruction given. In the upper grades, however, there existed a better grading system with different subjects taught to the entire class.

The course of study of the American Talmud Torah included the main subjects of the traditional European Talmud Torah such as Siddur, Humash, the Former Prophets, and occasionally other parts of the Bible as well as Talmud. This traditional course of study was later modified by Hebraic and Zionist influences. The most important change was in the teaching of Hebrew. Formerly Hebrew texts were translated into Yiddish but beginning with the second decade of the twentieth century, most Talmud Torahs employed Hebrew as a language of instruction and it was studied also for its own sake. Jewish history was also introduced,
but was generally taught inadequately. Singing of Jewish songs, secular and religious, was also included. Zionism and Palestine were also subjects of interest of the Talmud Torah curriculum.

The Talmud Torah in America was, therefore, an outgrowth of the traditional Talmud Torah and its philosophy, curriculum and methodology were modified by new Jewish movements and changed by general American-Jewish conditions.

Thus, a decade after the first large-scale immigration of Jews to this country from eastern Europe, the immigrant Jew became Americanized and as he prospered economically and became adjusted to the new social life of the country, his memories of the European Heder and Talmud Torah weakened and the basement where the Heder and Talmud Torah were housed in a cold, dark and poorly lit structure was now razed and in its stead magnificent school structures, spacious with well-kept classrooms were built. New methods of teaching were introduced, replacing the old hard "ruler" of the Rebbi. The curriculum was broader in its inclusion of a larger number of new subjects and it was completely Hebraic in emphasis and philosophy.

The course of study of the American Talmud Torah resulted from a compromise between the curriculum of the traditional European Talmud Torah and the Heder Metukan. The addition of new subjects and new methods in instruction brought about a vast improvement in the results of teaching.

The best Talmud Torahs in America were also well-organized schools
with little resemblance either to the Heder-like institution of the same name which prevailed in America in the 1890's or to its European counterpart.

The American Talmud Torah also differed from the European Talmud Torah in its instruction schedule. The sessions of the European Talmud Torah occupied practically the whole day from morning till evening and in the winter time also part of the evenings throughout the year with the exception of short vacations during the months of Passover and New Year (Nisan and Tishrei). The time schedule of the American Talmud Torah, on the other hand, was particularly adapted to the American conditions with the Talmud Torah becoming merely a supplementary afternoon school with "free" time during the week for recreation, study and other activities. It provided instruction on every week-day afternoon except Friday, and also on Sunday morning. On every one of these days three classes came in alternating shifts from four to eight in the evening. During the summer vacation, sessions were held in the morning between 9 a. m. and 1 p. m. Each class was taught from one hour and twenty minutes to two hours per day, making a total of from six hours and forty minutes to ten hours per week.

The later-day American Talmud Torah also differed from the European in that it did not relegate the education of Jewish girls to home or private instruction but that in this country instruction was provided also for girls. This was done because American Jewish leadership and educators realized that the Jewish home environment as
fostered and preserved by Jewish womanhood could contribute and influence greatly Jewish education in general and the preservation of Jewish values and the way of life in particular. The example of the American public school system and the influence of the American democratic environment also influenced to a great extent the inclusion of girls in Jewish education.

The similarities of the European post-Haskalah Talmud Torah and the later-day American Talmud Torah are numerous with some differences due rather to the degree of emphasis in its course of study and in the organizational and instructional aspects rather than in institutional and ideological differences. Both the later European and American Talmud Toras were Hebraic and Zionist with new subjects being added to the traditional Talmud Torah curriculum. The American Talmud Torah, however, due to prevalent conditions, condensed its schedule of hours of instruction, admitted girls to its classes and introduced changes in instruction and in supervision and administration.
CHAPTER III

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF THE AMERICAN TALMUD TORAH

A. Zionist Orientation

The educational philosophy of the American Talmud Torah was greatly influenced by the Zionist movement that prevailed among the Jewish intelligentsia in eastern Europe towards the close of the nineteenth century. It was stimulated by the newly formulated ideas of political and cultural Zionism. They awakened the age-old longings of the Jewish people towards the rebirth of a homeland in Palestine.

Its leaders hoped that the realization of such an ideal would strengthen world Jewry, prevent its disintegration and assimilation and thereby assure the unity and survival of the Jewish people. Zionism became the symbol for the will of the Jewish people to live as a national and cultural entity.¹

Politically, Zionists like Herzl emphasized homelessness as being the main cause for the plight of the Jews in the Diaspora, economically, socially and culturally.² He touched but slightly on the problem of Judaism or of a Hebrew renaissance. Cultural Zionists, like Ahad Ha-Am and his followers emphasized the need for a rejuvenated


Judaism as a prerequisite for the rebirth of Jewish nationalism.

The essence of Zionism, according to the cultural Zionists, lay in the revival of the Jewish cultural spirit as would be manifested in the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. The Jews in the Diaspora would then be guided, stimulated and inspired by the cultural and educational developments in Palestine. This would bring about a revival of the Jewish will to live as a people both spiritually and culturally.\(^1\)

The combination of political and cultural ideas of Zionism was brought over to this country by the first and, especially, by the second influx of Jewish immigrants to these shores and made part and parcel of the curriculum of the American Talmud Torah. Hebrew and Zionism became then the basis for an enriched curriculum and philosophy in the Talmud Torah.

Thus, beginning with 1903 there came to America Hebrew educators and "enlightened" Jews who were imbued with this new spirit of Zionism and of a new educational philosophy and wherever they settled they brought with them the enthusiasm, the faith, the love for the Hebrew language, the love for the land of the fathers and they revived the dry bones. They brought to the old type Talmud Torah a new spirit and vitality.\(^2\)

The pupils under their care in the American Talmud Torahs just

\(^1\)Ahad Ha-Am, Al Parashat Drachim, Essays, (Warsaw, Hebrati Yeshurun, 1907), pp. 128-135.

\(^2\)Scharfstein, op. cit., p. 206.
as in the Heder Metukan in eastern Europe were reared in this new spirit and love for Zionism.

The Zionist ideology was now made part of the educational philosophy and program of the American Talmud Torah. The students were taught the history of Zionism, its philosophy, leadership and development. The acquaintance of the children with modern Hebrew literature, prose and verse, was encouraged and fostered and the children participated in activities furthering the Zionist cause through plays and J. N. F. campaigns.¹

The Zionist educators and laymen who served on Talmud Torah boards felt keenly the desire and need for a widespread knowledge by the children of Zionism since this was indispensable to a future vigorous and creative Zionist movement in America.

The educators in the American Talmud Torah who were without exception Zionists introduced Zionism into the Talmud Torah program of studies through the following devices and points of interest. Discussions were held on the development of Zionist ideology and its application to Jewish life. Biographies of outstanding Zionist personalities were read and discussed. The Yishuv, Zionist history, the Kibbutzim and Moshavot and the Halutzim movement were discussed. Games, songs and dances of Palestine were undertaken. Maps, movies, slides, film strips, and audio-visual aids and photographs about life of the

pioneers in Palestine were utilized. Stories of the Jewish pioneers in Palestine, the development and functions of the Vaad Leumi, the Jewish Agency, the Jewish National Fund and the Hebrew University were clearly presented to the children. Through these means did the Zionist educational philosophy take root in the program of the American Talmud Torah.\(^1\)

While the attitude of the Boards to the teaching of Palestine and Zionism was mostly that of sympathy and indifference, there was very little interference with the school curriculum by them. This matter of teaching Palestine and Zionism except in isolated cases was left to those directly responsible for the work of the school such as some of the officers, the principal and the teachers.\(^2\)

There were two ways in which Zionism was taught in the Talmud Torahs. One, indirectly through each of the regular subjects of the curriculum and by comparisons with life in Palestine, and two, directly through some textbook and pupil activities and projects in the classes.\(^3\)

References to Zionism and Palestine were implied in the study of every


subject of the Talmud Torah curriculum such as Hebrew, Bible, Jewish history, the prayer book, customs and ceremonies, the synagogue services and Jewish current events. These subjects were utilized by the teachers as the best way to emphasize the ideology, development and importance of Zionism. Palestine and Zionism, therefore, occupied a rightful and important place in the Talmud Torah curriculum and educational philosophy.

However, in spite of the inclusion of Zionism as part of the Talmud Torah program of studies, Dinin's survey showed that the opportunities for linking up Palestine and Zionism with each of the subjects of study were not always successful. They had no central direction and lacked a syllabus and proper reference materials. The whole matter was left entirely to the resourcefulness of the teachers and to hit and miss methods. Palestine and Zionism were taught as extra-curricular activities and projects but not directly as subjects of study.¹

B. Hebraic Influences

The "enlightened" teachers and laymen of eastern Europe also brought with them to this country the idealism for the revival of ancient Hebrew as a modern spoken language. As part of the Zionist ideology Hebrew played an important role as a medium for a better understanding of Jewish life in the past and of the new forms of Jewish life

¹Dinin, ibid., p. 68.
that was developing in Palestine.

The fundamental object of Zionism is not the regeneration of Palestine; it is the regeneration of the Jewish people in and through Palestine. Hence, the cardinal importance for Zionism of the Hebrew language is of paramount importance. It links the future of the Jewish people securely with its past, it unites the Jews of the Diaspora with the Jews of Palestine by a thread which external forces cannot break.¹

Hebrew, thus, became the instrument through which the ideas of Zionism and the Jewish national renaissance were to be inculcated in the minds and hearts of the Jewish masses and through which ties were to be created with the Yishuv in Palestine. "Hebrew was to infuse all of Jewish education with the breath of life by transforming the bookish Hebrew into a living, vibrant, spoken language through which the Jewish national renaissance will be more genuine and more meaningful."²

The revitalized Hebrew language became for the Jewish people more than just a medium of communication in the ordinary sense of the word. It served as an instrument of survival and as an expression of the essential unity and eternity of the Jewish people. "Hebrew is Jewish consciousness projected into speech."³

The revival of the Hebrew language became a symbol and an instrument for Jewish national unification. The colonization of Palestine

¹Ibid., p. 17.


³Engleman, op. cit., p. 43.
and the revival of the Hebrew language were two halves of a single whole—namely, the rebirth of a vibrant Jewish national life after two thousand years in a Galut (Diaspora) environment. As the great Hebrew writer Perez Smolenskin stated:

You ask me what good a dead language can do for us? I will tell you. It confers honor on us, it girds us with strength, unites us into one. All nations seek to perpetuate their names. We have neither monuments nor a country at present. Only one relic still remains from the ruins of our ancient glory—the Hebrew language.1

The Hebraist teachers in the Talmud Torahs emphasized the importance of Hebrew as a connecting link with Zionism and as indispensable to the survival of the Jews in America. They also used it as an educational instrument for a better understanding and appreciation of the practices of Judaism. "The knowledge of Hebrew is a sine-qua-non for a full integration into Jewish living and experiencing."2

The teachers of the Talmud Torahs imbued and inspired their pupils with the song and love for the Hebrew language and literature. The pupils felt these longings and responded by their attachment and devotion to their Hebrew studies taught to them in the Hebrew language and by becoming thereby better and more faithful and devoted Jews.3

3 See Appendix B for the role that Hebrew had in the curriculum of the Talmud Torah Tifereth Israel of Brooklyn, New York. Similar Hebraic influences also affected the curriculum of all Talmud Torahs in the country.
The teachers also influenced the Talmud Torahs to become more ideologically rooted in Jewish nationalism and Hebraism. The whole character of Jewish education in general and of Talmud Torah education in particular took on new meaning and transformation under their influences. "The growth and development of the completely Hebraic school (the Talmud Torah) was the largest single factor in the spread of the Hebrew language and culture."\(^1\)

These pedagogues introduced into the Talmud Torah in America the new natural or conversational method of Ivrit Be-Ivrit as it was used in the Heder Metukan and in the Tarbut schools and in a few of the modernized Talmud Torahs in eastern Europe. Through this new method of study, they hoped to revitalize the ancient Hebrew language as a modern and spoken language and as a means of fostering and perpetuating the ideals of Judaism and not merely to employ Hebrew as it was used in the European Heder and Talmud Torah "mainly as the means of an understanding of Jewish theology and legalism."\(^2\)

The impact of the movement to modernize the Hebrew school through the teaching of the Hebrew language as a living language was not limited to the East. There were similar experiments begun by Dr. Benderly in other large cities throughout the country as well such as in Minnesota.

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\(^1\)Dinin, op. cit., p. 14.

\(^2\)Engelman, op. cit., p. 15.
The Hebraists laymen and educators insisted on the centrality of Hebrew in the curriculum of the Talmud Torah. They felt that the study and mastery of the Hebrew language and its literature should be one of the most important objectives of the whole educational program of the Talmud Torah and that the supremacy of Hebrew must be recognized in an adequate program of Jewish religious education.

Accordingly, Hebraic studies were included in the course of study of the Talmud Torah. They succeeded in their endeavors and Hebrew was made the language of instruction in all Jewish subjects in most of the Talmud Torahs.

This important concept has continued to occupy and play a most important role in the educational philosophy of the Talmud Torahs in America up to the present time. Intensive Jewish education as was provided by the Talmud Torahs meant not only increased emphasis on religious literature but what became symbolic of a Talmud Torah education was the study of all subjects in the Hebrew language in the natural or Ivrit Be-Ivrit method. "The high mark in the goal of intensive Jewish education (as provided by the Talmud Torahs) was to teach the students the Jewish sources in the original. To this end the Hebrew language was both the key and the very subject matter."  


The attitude of both educators and management was positive with regard to Hebrew. However, the Talmud Torah time schedule did not provide an adequate amount of time for an intensive study of modern Hebrew literature. At its best, it could only lay the foundation for post-elementary Hebrew instruction. "Due to an average of six to ten hours a week of instruction, the degree of achievement in Hebrew of the average Talmud Torah school pupil was, therefore, not very encouraging."¹

C. Religious and Cultural Ideals

The aims of the American Talmud Torah were not merely Hebraic and Zionist although they both played important parts in its educational philosophy and curriculum. The training of the children in the ideals of Zionism and Hebraism was employed for higher educational aims. They were merely used as instrumentalities through which a Jewish child could be inspired with and reared in the principles of Judaism.²

As was the case of the Talmud Torah in eastern Europe, the educational aims of its American counterpart were to indoctrinate the young with a set of absolute beliefs, values, outlooks, and Jewish attitudes that are consonant with the morality of the Torah.³

¹Dinin, op. cit., p. 68.

²See last paragraph of Appendix A, section on curriculum giving the sum of the educational philosophy of the Bronx "Y" Talmud Torah as illustrative of the aims and purposes of the curriculum of the Talmud Torah in America.

³Appendix A section on the educational philosophy of the Bronx YMHA Talmud Torah. Eisenstein, M., Jewish Schools in Poland, 1919-
The relative importance attached to the major aims and goals of Jewish education by the non-congregational schools which included the Talmud Torahs can be judged from the following list of objectives.\(^1\)

Though this list has been prepared by Dr. Israel Chipkin in 1951 in a survey sponsored by the Jewish Education Committee of New York, it may be said to summarize the educational philosophy of the Talmud Torah in America throughout its period of existence up to the present time.

First place – Observance of Jewish Practices

Second place – Knowledge of Subject Matter

Third place – Favorable Attitudes Towards Jewishness

Fourth place – Participation in Jewish Communal Life

Fifth place – Self-identification with Things Jewish

Sixth place – Ethical Behavior with One's Fellow Men

Seventh place – Personality Development.

From the above set of goals it can be seen that the American Talmud Torah set for the primary goals of its educational program the inculcation in the young of religious beliefs and practices and the mastery of religious subject matter so that the other aims of its educational concepts could be better realized as the child grew older and participated more actively as a Jew in his community.

Jewish ideals and aspirations and to lead Jewish lives. Its religious character is evidenced from the high position that Bible, the Prophets, the Talmud, customs and ceremonies and prayers held in the school program and philosophy.

The educational goals as drawn up by the Hebrew Principals Association of the New York Talmud Torahs were "to transmit to the child the knowledge, sentiments, attitudes and habits which will create in him the desire as well as the ability to live as an intelligent, loyal, religious and nationalist Jew." 2

The Committee of Seven established in 1917 by the Federation of New York reported that

The Talmud Torahs are agencies for ethical instruction giving in modern garb to the children a presentation of Judaism leading to a sympathetic knowledge of their past. They foster an intelligent self-respect through an understanding of Jewish history. They tend to establish a bond of sympathy between the parents and the children, and thereby maintain the solidarity of the family and beneficent home influence. 3

The typical Talmud Torah curriculum confined itself almost exclusively to teaching the Jewish past and the religious-cultural creations of that past. Classic literature, chiefly the Bible, liturgy


3Report of Special Committee of Seven to the Federation for the Support of Jewish Philanthropies, March 12, 1917, pp. 10-11.
and ancient history form the predominant bulk of the cultural and spiritual food given to the children. Attention to the Jewish present is of minor importance except in the form of the Jewish feasts and fasts and of synagogue ritual. To be sure, some of the Talmud Torahs provided for a general interest in Palestine, in Jewish current events and in modern Hebrew literature. However, the time devoted to these studies was in most cases insignificant in relation to the time devoted to the classical subjects. The main emphasis was on ancient Jewish literature and the Hebrew language with the center of attention given to the Bible. Evidently, the "Yodea Sefer" or the mastery of Jewish literary works was and is still strong among the goals of a Talmud Torah education. The aim was that through these means the Jewish child would grow up to be a religious-nationalist Jew proud of his heritage and devoted to the beliefs and practices of Judaism.
CHAPTER IV
SCOPE, STRUCTURE AND PROGRAM
OF THE TALMUD TORAH IN AMERICA

A. Organization

The American Talmud Torah was organized by "enlightened" Jewish immigrants who upon their arrival in this country found the schools then in existence such as the Hadarim and the Sunday Schools of the German Jews inadequate educational institutions for their children. They, therefore, organized communal Talmud Torahs patterned after the East European Talmud Torah and, especially, the Heder Metukan with which they were familiar.

As a first step in organizing such a school the most prominent laymen and educators of the community established a Hebra Talmud Torah or Talmud Torah Society to obtain proper facilities, recruit the best possible teaching and administrative staff for the proposed school. In many cases, the teachers and principal came from the local community and more often the sponsors and organizers of the school served in these posts themselves.

The School Society next organized a Board of Directors with a number of permanent committees that were necessary for the proper functioning of the Talmud Torah. The members of these committees came first from the School Society itself and later from its Board of Directors.

Each of the committees was allocated by the Board of Directors
a specific task to perform in the school organization. The Building Committee was to obtain the necessary facilities for the school in a proper location. The Finance Committee was to organize and supervise the means and methods to obtain the necessary income for the support of the Talmud Torah. The Executive or Administrative Committee was to coordinate all the activities, plans and proposals made by the different committees and assist the principal in the administration of the school. The Education Committee after obtaining the approval of the Board of Directors for its proposed school curriculum which it organized with the assistance of the principal was responsible for its execution. Similarly, other committees were organized of major or minor importance. Some were established as permanent committees while others served only as the need for them arose from time to time. The primary purpose for organizing these different committees was to make it possible through these agencies to provide an efficient system to best serve the educational, organizational and administrative needs and aims of the Talmud Torah.¹

The first Talmud Torah society or Hebra Talmud Torah in America was organized in New York City in 1883 under the name of the Machzikei Talmud Torah Society and a school very much after the type of the old

¹Dushkin, op. cit., p. 199. See Appendix A, Case Studies, Section B, giving a detailed description of the organization of the Machzikei Talmud Torah as illustrative of the organization of similar schools throughout the country.
European Talmud Torah was opened soon after. This was followed by the organization of similar institutions wherever Russian Jews settled in large numbers. In a few of these Talmud Torahs, as for instance in the Yeshivah Jacob Joseph in New York City, the attempt was also made to introduce the study of secular subjects as well.

Many of these Talmud Torahs were housed in buildings of their own although some of them were not always well adapted for a school. Synagogues were attached to many of these schools but not so much for the benefit of the children attending them as for the revenue it might yield.

The Talmud Torah as a daily afternoon Hebrew elementary school patterned after the European Heder Metukan was introduced into America soon after the great Russian Jewish immigration in the early eighties. This was because the Jewish immigrants were eager to perpetuate their religious, national and cultural ideals in America and decided to provide for the education of their children in that type of educational institution best known to them such as a Talmud Torah. They knew that this type of school under other environments such as in eastern Europe had produced the results they desired so anxiously to achieve here.

Some of these communal Talmud Torahs soon expanded their facilities and also organized branches in other districts of their cities such as in Minneapolis, Indianapolis, Pittsburgh and Cleveland. In larger cities, independent Talmud Torahs were joined into one organization, usually known as the Associated Talmud Torahs or United Hebrew
Schools as in Boston, Philadelphia, Detroit, Baltimore, Milwaukee and Dallas.

In the beginning of the 1930's due to the depression some Talmud Torahs were compelled to close their doors permanently while others because of their financial plight and the inability of an increased number of parents to pay tuition fees, united into larger units in order to function economically and efficiently as educational institutions. In many large as well as small cities throughout the country, Talmud Torahs united and established a central office directing overall general policies of the constituent schools and especially raising the funds for their support on a community-wide basis.

These central educational offices became in time, with the admission of congregational schools and Yeshivath, central bureaus of Jewish education in the larger cities in the United States.

The central educational organ had many different committees under the guidance of an Executive Director to assist the individual Talmud Torahs with their educational and financial problems. As of 1934, for example, the Associated Talmud Torahs of Philadelphia had a number of important committees in addition to the local Talmud Torah committees such as an Executive Committee, a Board of License, Extension Activities Committee, a Finance Committee, etc.¹ A closer relationship was established by these Associated or United Talmud Torahs

with the constituent schools by the appointment of a few members of the Executive Committee to serve on the different local school committees. These individual members would bring to the discussions of the particular local committee their more intimate knowledge of the other local school committees providing thus for unity of purpose and action and for the harmonization of the different points of view. Such a policy was first initiated by the Associated Talmud Torahs of Philadelphia and was soon imitated by other such central educational agencies throughout the country.¹

The number of Talmud Torahs gradually increased throughout the country, especially in the larger cities where the Jewish population was at its greatest.

In New York City, beginning with 1894, many new Talmud Torahs were established such as the Downtown Talmud Torah in 1894, the Montefiore Talmud Torah on the East Side in 1894 and in 1895 the Uptown Talmud Torah in Harlem. In Brooklyn were founded the School of Biblical Instruction, the Stone Avenue Talmud Torah and the Talmud Torah Tifereth Israel.

As the Talmud Torahs increased in number in New York City, they influenced the organization of similar schools in other cities with the Machzikei Talmud Torah due to its well organized curriculum and school organization serving as their model.

The expansion in the number of Talmud Torahs throughout the

country was the outcome of the changed conception of the Talmud Torah as merely an educational institution for poor children and of the generally increased interest in Jewish education. Parents now saw that the Talmud Torah offered greater educational opportunities for their children than the private Heder, and even those who could afford tuition fees now sent their children to a Talmud Torah.

So it was that gradually this educational institution shed its old form and donned a new garb. It stopped being merely a school for the poor and it was converted into an educational institution for all Jewish children, poor and rich alike, with the European stigma of being only a school for the poor disappearing.\(^1\) The communal Jewish school or the Talmud Torah now became the central agency of the community, the institution around which it built its social life and by means of which it transmitted the significant culture of the ethnic group.\(^2\)

One of the most striking facts about the organization of the Talmud Torah was the large number of members on their Board of Directors. They ranged anywhere from twenty-five in the small Talmud Torahs to seventy-five in some of the largest. This was because of the necessity of recruiting wealthy contributors to serve as Board members in order to alleviate the precarious financial position of the schools. "The major, and in many instances, the exclusive, qualification for membership on

\(^1\)See Appendix B for the type of children enrolled by the Talmud Torah Tifereth Israel of Brooklyn, New York.

\(^2\)Berkson, op. cit., p. 102.
a Board of Directors was the ability to contribute or collect funds for the institution.\textsuperscript{1}

Most of the Boards contained three types of directors: those who were active members such as the officers of the institution, some inactive but influential members and finally, active pious members who had little influence on the affairs of the Talmud Torah.

These large unwieldy Boards gave rise to many evils. They prevented in many Talmud Torahs the proper planning for the future and the effective execution of school policies and goals.

These bodies became unwieldy and too large to function effectively. They gave little attention to the problems of improving standards but devoted their energies to keeping costs down. The schools were generally too preoccupied with their immediate financial problems to do any planning or to make provisions for the future.\textsuperscript{2}

Although many different committees were appointed to supply all the members with work, they interfered too often with the employed executives such as the principal of the school, the secretary and with the teachers.\textsuperscript{3}

The staff of the school was greatly handicapped at times by this interference from accomplishing its assigned tasks properly and efficiently.

\textsuperscript{1}Rudavsky, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 80. Also Dushkin, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 197.

\textsuperscript{2}Rudavsky, \textit{ibid.}, p. 80.

\textsuperscript{3}See Appendix A, section B on the number and type of committees of the Board of Directors of the Machzikei Talmud Torah as illustrative of other boards of Talmud Torahs in America.
Meetings of these Boards were held frequently but attendance at them was poor. A good deal of the time expended by the Board of Directors seemed to have been devoted primarily to a hearing of the committee reports and the disputes which took place thereafter. This was due to the disinterest shown by many members in the discussions which because of their pettiness and unimportance took up at times whole meetings.

"Of all the matters discussed at these Board meetings more than one fifth consisted merely in the appointment of committees and hearing their formal reports."\(^1\) The Boards were preoccupied a good deal of the time with small matters of detail which should have been left to the executive officers. The consideration of the actual business of the school was oftentimes thought as secondary in importance.

It might be said, therefore, that the poor management of many of the Talmud Torahs can be traced directly to the abnormal size of their Boards making it almost impossible to function properly and their great interference with the actual affairs of the schools.

In spite of the mismanagement or lack of proper management in the Talmud Torahs and in spite of the difficulties encountered by them to meet their annual financial budget they, nevertheless, thrived and increased in number throughout the country as the best possible educational institution desirable under the existing Jewish and general conditions in this country.

The increase in their number was so great that by 1910 there

\(^1\)Dushkin, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 197-8.
were merely thirty small and large Talmud Torahs throughout the country and by 1916 there were seventy-one. This was because in comparison with other types of educational institutions then existing, the Talmud Torahs showed the greatest progress and achievements. It was the best available educational institution to which parents could send their children for a broad Jewish education.¹

B. Finances

It is very difficult to determine the actual financial conditions of the Talmud Torahs in America. This is because of the inaccessibility of obtaining the financial records of these institutions. However, from the general picture of Jewish education and particularly of the Talmud Torahs of this period, it could be noticed that even the best and largest of the Talmud Torahs were laboring under great financial difficulties.²

Since the Talmud Torah in America became in time a communal institution for the education of the children of poor and rich parents alike, it derived its source of income from the community at large as well as from the tuition fees paid by the parents. It devised numerous ways to obtain income for its annual expenses. Besides obliging the parents to pay for the tuition of their own children, the community at

¹See A Brief Survey of Thirty-one Conferences held by Talmud Torah Principals in New York, 1912. Bureau of Jewish Education of New York, Publication No. 4, pp. 2-4.

large also undertook the financial responsibility for the education of poor children in the form of membership dues, donations, special entertainments, bazaars, benefit theatre performances, raffles and similar unreliable sources of income.¹

Other sources of income of the Talmud Torahs during the first few decades of this century were collections from charity boxes placed in homes, income from sale of Matzoth for Passover and from a tax placed on every fowl slaughtered, income from subletting rooms of the Talmud Torah to Chevras or landsmanshaften societies for religious services and meetings, and income from having the children recite psalms at funerals and accompany the dead. Income was also derived from the sale of Yahrzeit candles, from mi-Sheberachs (benedictions at reading of Torah), from pledges on Sabbaths and holidays and from donations at weddings and circumcisions.²

In addition the principal also had the duty to raise funds for it in every way possible. He visited every synagogue and Society or Fraternal Association to appeal for their support. The teachers too were obligated to collect tuition fees from the children in their class during the study period. Most of them bringing ten cents a week and getting a receipt for it from the teacher. In better Talmud Torahs due to the instigation of local educational bureaus during the 1930's

¹See Appendix B for a list of sources of income of the Tifereth Israel Talmud Torah of Brooklyn, New York. Similar sources of income were undertaken by other Talmud Torahs throughout the country to meet their annual budget.

²Ruda'sky, op. cit., p. 123 and p. 141.
this practice was abolished with the principal or the secretary of the office doing now this chore. However, children were not admitted to class without a tuition receipt.¹

It should be pointed out here that from its early beginnings in the United States up to 1935, the primary sources of income of the Talmud Torahs had been from tuition and, especially, from all kinds of donations and membership dues. But, beginning with 1936 a good proportion of their income came from the local philanthropic agency which has as one of its main responsibilities to support the local educational institutions.

In 1910, in New York City, practically all funds derived by Talmud Torahs came from parents and local donations. However, by 1935, 45 percent of the income came from tuition fees, about 43 per cent more from local sources such as membership dues, synagogue income and local charity campaigns and the remaining 12 per cent came from central sources such as the Federation and the Jewish Education Association of New York City.²

In some cities tuition fees contributed a much smaller proportion to the annual budget than in other cities. For example, Ben Rosen states in his annual report that tuition fees contributed only about 30 per cent of the Associated Talmud Torahs budget in 1935 in Philadel-

¹Scharfstein, op. cit., pp. 185-190.
²Chipkin, op. cit., p. 45. See also Appendix A, section B, on the sources of income of the Machzikei Talmud Torah during its first few decades.
"The total associated budget of $126,000 was raised by $30,000 from tuition fees and textbooks, $90,000 from Federation and $6,000 from donations, subscriptions and synagogue tickets."1

Due to the decline of the enrollments in the Talmud Torahs and the increased cost of Jewish education after 1935 up to the present, the Talmud Torahs like other non-congregational schools have increasingly applied and received large grants from local federations. As revealed in a study of tuition fees and federation grants in such schools in 1959 "the Federation subventions play a bigger role than tuition fees in financing the non-congregational elementary weekday afternoon schools."2

The Bureau of Jewish Education in large cities persuaded the local Talmud Torah Boards to take out the collection of tuition fees which amounted in some cases to one third of the income from the hands of the teachers and children and instituted instead a systematic gradation of tuition fee collections. College students were engaged as investigators and collectors.3 They also acted as a connecting link


between the home and the school. They brought to the parents a monthly report of their children's progress and attendance and reported back to the school any complaints of the parents.

The Bureaus also assisted the local Talmud Torahs by providing them with important educational materials. They offered them advice as to programming, curriculum construction, pedagogic aids and various ways of financial and educational planning. The Bureaus set-up special departments to deal with these communal educational problems and needs. They even undertook for the communal Talmud Torahs their task of canvassing their neighborhoods for new pupils and were responsible for the increase in some years in their total registration.¹

Ever since the beginning of this century the Talmud Torah leadership, especially in a number of large Jewish communities, came to understand the advantages of cooperative and joint efforts in campaigning for funds and, therefore, organized themselves into associations in the form of United or Associated Talmud Torahs. These groups appealed for community assistance of Jewish education on the basis of the Jewish tradition that the community is obligated to furnish charity funds for the education of the poverty-stricken. In Chicago and Baltimore, for example, where Orthodox Jews formed separate federated charities, support of Jewish education was included almost from the very start. In a survey

of Jewish education made in Chicago in 1919, Louis Hurwich states that the Orthodox Charities in that city supported seven local orthodox Talmud Torahs.¹

The conception of "community responsibility" which was being tried out widely in philanthropy and overseas relief at this time as a result of the First World War was also applied in a limited sense to the field of Jewish education, namely, that of caring for the education of the poor. "The prevailing idea of the central education agency - the Associated Talmud Torah or the United Hebrew Schools or the Bureau of Jewish Education - was to act as a federated fiscal agent on behalf of the Jewish community in the area of religious education."²

The Federation of Jewish Philanthropies or the Welfare Fund as it came to be known granted funds directly to individual Talmud Torahs if they were not united or associated or indirectly to these central educational associations through which the member Talmud Torahs received their share of the grants. In New York City, however, funds were allocated directly to each of the Talmud Torahs included in Federation and the Bureau of Jewish Education.³ But this arrangement was continued only until the Jewish Education Committee was established in 1939 when


²Gannes, op. cit., p. 34.

when it alone became then the sole agency to grant financial assistance to the Talmud Torahs after they met certain stipulated organizational and pedagogical conditions.¹

Increasingly over the years and after many battles with welfare officials the local welfare agencies contributed greater allotments to the support of the local Talmud Torahs either on an individual basis or indirectly to its central agency, the Associated or United Talmud Torahs.² In Philadelphia, for example, the Federation of Jewish Charities contributed to the ten associated Talmud Torahs in that city in 1920 - $30,000; in 1928 - $47,000; in 1930 - $58,000; and in 1935 - $90,000. These allotments covered from 40 percent of the total budget for all Talmud Torahs in the city in 1920 to 70 percent of the total budget in 1935.³

During and after the depression of the 1930's, the Talmud Torahs were unable to meet their annual budgets. This was because the average tuition fee paid by parents of children in a Talmud Torah was in 1936 somewhere between $1.50 and $1.75 per month. This was considerably lower than was current in previous years when the average was between


$2.00 and $2.50 per month. Formerly, the required standard fee was $3.00 or $4.00 per month and in 1936 it was reduced to $2.00 or $3.00 per month. The proportion of free cases had also been increased in 1936 from what they were in previous years. In 1928, the percentage of such free cases was 20 per cent as against 32 per cent in 1936. It might also be noted here that before the depression years there was a steady increase in tuition fees both in total amounts and in rates.¹

The number of "free cases" continuously increased so that out of a total enrollment of 2,083 students in 1935 in the ten Associated Talmud Torahs in Philadelphia, for example, there were 742 "free" pupils or 32 per cent.²

On a whole, it may be said that in congregational schools tuition fees collected were enough to cover the full expenses of the school. However, in some of the communal Talmud Torahs, particularly those in poor neighborhoods, parents' fees yielded only a minor portion of the school budgets.³ Because of the increased cost of instruction and of administering a school after the depression,⁴ the Talmud Torahs were

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¹Berkson Survey, op. cit., p. 22. See also Appendix A, section on Finances of the Bronx "Y" Talmud Torah.


³Dushkin, ibid., p. 372.

compelled to increase substantially their tuition fees up to the present
time. The average tuition fee in 1959, for example, in non-congrega-
tional schools reached an all-time high of $80.76 with the annual tui-
tion fees ranging from $45 to $240 a year, depending on the type of
community the school was serving.\textsuperscript{1} However, only one third of the total
operating budget of the fifty-three non-congregational schools through-
out the country included in the survey was raised through tuition fees
with 49 or 92.5 per cent of the schools receiving Federation grants.
The average per pupil Federation grant being $85.70 or 46.7 per cent of
the total budget in each school.\textsuperscript{2}

Teaching costs per capita increased substantially over the years
so that in the New York Talmud Torahs they were $7.29 and approximately
$22.00 for 1910 and 1935 respectively.\textsuperscript{3} These costs were only about
60 per cent of the total Talmud Torah expenditures as of 1935 with other
expenditures such as operating and repair of school plant costing 15 per
cent, administration 12 per cent, debt service 6 per cent, textbooks and
extension activities 7 per cent, and fund raising expenses between 10
15 per cent - are noted.\textsuperscript{4}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{1}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{2}Engelman, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 35. See also Appendix A, section on
Finances of the Bronx "Y" Talmud Torah.
\textsuperscript{3}Chipkin, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 44.
\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., p. 45.
\end{flushright}
These factors, therefore, placed heavy financial obligations on the Talmud Torahs in America as they expanded their facilities and increased in number until the mid-1930's. Afterwards when a decline set in and until the present their financial plight became over the years greater even than in the previous years. Increased financial assistance from local federations and from central educational agencies has become an urgent matter. The result being that many Talmud Torahs are finding it more difficult to meet their annual budgets in spite of the aid received from these sources.

C. Personnel

The personnel of a Talmud Torah consisted of a number of teachers, a principal and an office secretary. Most of the teachers as well as the principal were, especially in the early Talmud Torahs, ill-trained pedagogically. They did not understand fully the social aspects of the school program nor the goals of the Talmud Torah. Many of them received no professional training although they had a thorough knowledge of Judaism. Most of them were also born in eastern Europe and came to the United States at a mature age.

The principal's supervisory and administrative responsibilities were reduced in these institutions to a minimum. The principal merely enforced the policies of the board and attended to their detailed execution but without engaging in supervision in the form of constructive criticism of the actual work of the teachers or aiding them in solving their educational problems.¹

¹However, in some Talmud Torahs the principal actually formulated
However, there were some Talmud Torahs, especially in smaller communities, where the principal was granted by the Board of Directors of the school wide powers not only to enforce the decisions of the Board but was required by the Board to visit classes, consult with the teachers and assume other supervisory duties.\footnote{1}

The secretary of the school office had the responsibility to take care of the school records and attended to all administrative details so that her powers varied in different Talmud Torahs from those of virtual superintendent of the school to those merely of bookkeeper.

Most, if not all, of the teachers in the American Talmud Torahs, especially in the first few decades of this century, were greatly influenced by and came under the spell of the eastern European Haskalah movement. Many of them were highly cultured in Hebrew and Biblical literature, with many of them well versed in the Talmud and other Jewish studies and some even having received a general secular education.

Many of these pedagogues were also teachers in the Talmud Torahs and especially in the Improved Heder or Heder Metukan of eastern Europe. They brought with them to this country their religious, Zionist and Hebraic idealism, and were, therefore, in a position to influence the approach, philosophy, goals and aims as well as the methodology of the policies of the school. See Appendix B, about the formulation of school policies of the Talmud Torah Tifereth Israel of Brooklyn, New York.

\footnote{1}Minutes of Board of Directors of Hebrew Institute of New Haven, Conn., Oct. 21, 1922.
American Talmud Torah. However, "most of the teachers were not specifically trained for their profession, although many were well versed in the subjects they taught."¹

Many of these European pedagogues were engaged as teachers in the Talmud Torahs of the United States. They favored the natural or Ivrit Be-Ivrit method and incorporated into their teaching the song, love and desire for Hebrew, Judaism and Eretz Yisrael. "They considered themselves as the high priests who labored as their holy duty to revive the spirit of the Jewish nation and its language and to revitalize the Jewish people with nationalism and Judaism."²

They began to come to the United States from 1903 onward imbued with the spirit of Hebraism and Zionism. Everywhere these educators went, they brought with them the enthusiasm, the belief, the love for the Hebrew language and the love for the land of origin.

Despite the versatility and Jewish cultural background of most of these teachers, there was also a good percentage of these teachers, especially in the early Talmud Torahs who lacked not only a sufficient pedagogic training but were deficient even in the subjects they taught in the Talmud Torahs. For instance, in a Survey of Instruction conducted by Dr. I. B. Berkson of the Associated Talmud Torahs of Philadelphia in 1923 he found after rating the teachers in its eight Talmud Torahs according to their Hebrew knowledge, general cultural background (such as

¹Greenstone, op. cit., p. 103.
²Ibid., p. 105.
English, American History, etc.), teaching effectiveness, personality, and professional relationship, that thirty-five teachers ranked as follows: one as being fairly good, twenty-one as being passable and nine as being poor.¹ There were also teachers employed in the Talmud Torahs, especially beginning with the late 1930's, who were American born men and women with a college education and with pedagogic training. Many of them, however, used teaching in a Talmud Torah as a "stepping stone" to other occupations and lacked a sincerity and devotion to their tasks as did the immigrant teachers.²

On a whole, it may be said that most of the teachers and principals found in the Talmud Torahs in America brought with them from eastern Europe the high standards of Jewish learning of the Yeshivah and the Heder Metukan or the modernized Heder. They invigorated the American Talmud Torahs with a passionate adherence to the ideals of Jewish tradition, a self-dedication to the revival of the Hebrew language and literature and support and devotion to the re-establishment of the Jewish homeland in Palestine. "Religious idealism and Zionist aspirations were the warp and woof of their pattern of life."³

Thus, a great change had taken place in the type of teachers employed in the Talmud Torahs during the years 1910 to 1960. Even in


²See Appendix A, section on Teachers of the Bronx "Y" Talmud Torah.

the beginning of the period under discussion in the Heder-like Talmud Torahs, there were undoubtedly individual examples of teachers "modern" in their training and outlook but the typical Hebrew teacher in this early period was that of the "Melamed" type. Some of them, but far from all, were well versed in the traditional Jewish lore and had become proficient as teachers often through long and bitter experience in their tasks.

But with the exception of some "maskilim" who had strayed into the humble profession of the "Melamed," the teachers from 1860 to 1910 had very little if any secular education and, needless to say, no professional training. They also lacked the sympathy with American conditions and the appreciation of the American institutions and environment under which their pupils lived. They did not understand the psychology of the American child nor were they familiar with new pedagogic methods to be used in teaching the American Jewish child.

This situation was greatly changed in the 1910-1960 period as a result of the development of several teachers' training schools such as the Teachers Institutes of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and of the Yeshivah College, the Herzliah Teachers Academy and the Hebrew Teachers College of Boston, Mass.

In contrast to the woeful old type of melamed in 1910 we find today (1936) a host of well-trained and modern teachers who have attended American colleges and professional schools, both secular and Jewish.\(^1\)

\(^{1}\)Chipkin, op. cit., p. 13.
This new type of teacher was the most prevailing type to be found in the Talmud Torahs beginning with the 1930's, 80 per cent of whom were college trained while in 1910 due to the employment of teachers trained abroad, as many as 10 per cent of the teachers had less than high school education or its equivalent.\(^1\)

Dushkin and Engelman in their 1959 report on Jewish education in the United States found that "the typical teacher in the Hebrew weekday schools (which included the Talmud Torahs) is rather likely to be a man born abroad, aged 25 to 45. He comes from a Yiddish speaking home and can speak Yiddish. He is likely to have heard Hebrew used in his home 'always or occasionally,' and very probably can speak Hebrew more or less fluently. He received his Jewish education on a collegiate level either in the United States or abroad and in his general education he is either attending or has been graduated from a college or university. He may have attended pedagogic courses in a Jewish teachers' seminary or less likely in a general teachers' college. His Jewish teaching experience in general is likely to average between five and ten years, but he has been less than three years in his present position. Jewish teaching is his main occupation but to gain his livelihood he may have to teach in more than one school or to find other supplementary income. Probably he has no Jewish teacher's license."\(^2\)

\(^1\) Berkson, op. cit., p. 49.

In addition, the teachers in the American Talmud Torahs today, especially those in the larger cities which still follow a broad course of study and are completely Hebraic, possess a wider Hebrew and general Jewish background than those employed in the Talmud Torahs in the smaller Jewish communities in the United States where the language of instruction might be English.

As for the number of teachers in the Talmud Torahs in the country, there are no accurate statistics available. However, it is known that in the twenty-four Talmud Torahs in Greater New York, there were 163 teachers in 1910,\(^1\) while in the rest of the country there were 270 teachers in the Talmud Torahs. In 1936, there were in all Talmud Torahs in the country 736 teachers.\(^2\)

It is also known that in 1927 there were 1,335 teachers in the Hebrew Weekday Afternoon Schools in the ten largest cities of the country with New York City having 891 teachers of both communal and congregational schools.\(^3\)

The turnover of teachers in the Talmud Torahs was very great with the average employment of a teacher in a single school confined to a small number of years. The 1928 New York City Survey by Berkson indicates that practically 60 per cent of those employed in the Weekday Hebrew Schools which includes the Talmud Torahs served five years or

\(^{1}\)Benderly, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

\(^{2}\)Chipkin, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

\(^{3}\)Cedarbaum, *op. cit.*, Table II.
The Survey also shows that 85 per cent of the teachers in all types of Hebrew afternoon schools had ten years of experience or less and only 4 per cent of the teachers had been engaged in teaching for twenty years or more.1

This situation existed especially in the early period where there was no well organized system in the Talmud Torahs to regulate and control the methods of appointments and the conditions of employment of teachers. In each institution either the rabbi or the principal with the approval of the school board made the final decision in reference to the appointment and salaries of the teachers. There was no central agency up to the mid-1940's that could protect and regulate teachers employment as to salary, tenure and benefits. Even as of 1960 in spite of the existence of local central bureaus of Jewish education with accepted codes of employment there still is a great turnover of teachers in the Talmud Torahs throughout the country. This is primarily due to the inability of such agencies to enforce effectively their codes regulating the conditions of engaging teachers. "One of the reasons for the large turnover and migration of teachers from school to school will be found in this lack of system in appointments and lack of standards with reference to salary and security."2

Until 1905 there were very few women teachers in all types of

1Berkson, op. cit., p. 48.
2Ibid., p. 56.
weekday schools, particularly in the Talmud Torahs. However, the growing economic independence of women and the example of the American public school system had brought about an increase in the proportion of women teachers in the Talmud Torahs. This was due to the lower salaries that women teachers requested. This aided considerably in the employment of women teachers by the Talmud Torahs. In 1918, Dr. Dushkin noted that 23 per cent of the teachers in the Talmud Torahs were women,¹ while Dr. Berkson's 1928 Survey showed that in the community Talmud Torahs the proportion of women teachers rose to one-third.²

However, as of 1960, the percentage of women teachers in the Talmud Torahs, especially in the larger cities, is much smaller now than in the mid-1930's. This is because women teachers make similar demands of employment as men teachers. Thus, the incentive and financial benefits derived in previous years by engaging them is now diminished. Although there are still some female teachers employed by Talmud Torahs the number of them, however, has been on the decline for the past two decades.

Aside from their daily teaching duties, many of the teachers in the Talmud Torahs in the country were expected by their principals to render voluntary services such as conducting children's services, leading clubs, preparing for school assemblies, coaching backward children

¹Dushkin, op. cit., p. 175.
²Berkson, op. cit., p. 47. See also, Chipkin, op. cit., p. 43.
and helping in Bar Mitzvah instruction.

Some of them engaged in these extra school activities either voluntarily or as a means to supplement their insufficient salaries since only a small proportion of these Talmud Torah teachers had any other occupation.

This extra work would occupy the teachers from one to eight hours a week in addition to the required instruction. In most cases these activities were limited to two or three extra hours per week with only about one-fifth of the teachers required to do these extra-curricular activities.¹

The teachers were greatly underpaid even under the standard of living of the late 1920's with the average monthly salary being thirty-eight dollars a month.² This was hardly enough even in those days to make a living.

This salary was not much better than the average salary of ten dollars a week that the teacher earned in the 1890's.³ In 1935, however, the teacher's salary in a Talmud Torah was about $1300 per year, with a few receiving as high as $2000 per annum.⁴ But in some Talmud Torahs salaries were much higher especially in those located in distant localities. In Philadelphia, for example, the average teacher's salary

¹Chipkin, op. cit., pp. 50-54.
²Benderly, op. cit., p. 94.
⁴Chipkin, ibid., p. 44.
as of 1919 was $1,100 per annum with proportionate increases being granted until in 1943 the average teacher's salary became $2,800 for a twenty hour week of instruction. In 1958, the average salary in a Talmud Torah was $1,500 a year with some earning in the better schools as high as $4,500 a year depending on the number of years employed and on the number of hours of instruction given in the particular Talmud Torah.

Teachers with administrative experiences were paid higher salaries of a few hundred dollars per year and women teachers received a few hundred dollars less in salary per annum than the men teachers. However, during the depression especially, but even in post depression years, the teacher in the Talmud Torahs, particularly in the smaller ones, did not receive 100 per cent of his salary. This was because of the tragic financial conditions of these institutions with the teacher being compelled oftentimes to carry the school deficit through reduced pay or through unpaid arrears.

Until central educational agencies organized employment standards and codes of practice to safeguard the interests of Hebrew teachers,

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2Dushkin and Engelman, op. cit., p. 115.
3Ibid., p. 54.
4Ibid., p. 55. See also Appendix A, section B as to salaries of teachers of the Machzikei Talmud Torah.
their security and even livelihood in a Talmud Torah, especially in the early decades of this century was precarious, indeed. "The teacher had no tenure, no security, and no minimum salary to expect and no maximum to look forward to."\(^1\) However, beginning with the middle 1940's and up to the present, due to the establishment of teachers' unions and codes of practices and standards especially in the large cities of the country, the teachers of the Talmud Torahs as in other Jewish schools are being paid larger minimum salaries with annual increments and receive protection of their tenure and conditions of employment. This was due to the initiative taken by the heads of central educational agencies to educate the board members of the Talmud Torahs as to the importance and need of standardizing the employment of teachers according to accepted rules. Their endeavors resulted in the establishment of codes of employment practice and standards in many Talmud Torahs, especially in the larger cities of the country. Hours of instruction, minimum salaries, annual increments, pensions and vacations now became part of written regulations for the protection of the personnel of a Talmud Torah.

D. Students

The doors of the American Talmud Torahs were open to all types of children, poor as well as those who were in a position to pay for their education. Unfortunately, there is only very little data as to the total enrollment and the number of teachers in all Talmud Torahs of

\(^1\) Ibid., p. 56.
America except of New York City. But as of 1912, there were about twenty-four Talmud Torahs in Greater New York with an enrollment of 10,716 children.¹

These Talmud Torahs employed a staff of 163 teachers at a cost of about $100,000 per year.² Eight of the largest had about 7,000 pupils and engaged 83 out of the total of 163 teachers employed by all of the twenty-four Talmud Torahs averaging 881 pupils and 11 teachers to a school. The other sixteen Talmud Torahs were smaller in size and enrollment and averaged 228 pupils and about five teachers to a school.³

The pupils in the early Talmud Torahs came from recent immigrants of eastern Europe and hundreds and perhaps thousands of children entered them because their parents were dissatisfied with the Hadarim and private tutors.

The Talmud Torahs continuously succeeded in enrolling more pupils and increasing in their number so that by 1918 the total enrollment in the Talmud Torahs in New York City alone was 18,754 (12,775 boys and 6,034 or 32 per cent girls.)⁴

¹A Brief Survey of Thirty-one Conferences, op. cit., p. 3.
²Benderly, op. cit., p. 6.
³Ibid.
⁴Dushkin, op. cit., p. 504. See also Jewish Communal Register (1917-18). See also Appendix B wherein it is stated as an example of the progress in enrollment of the Talmud Torahs during the 1920's that the Talmud Torah Tifereth Israel of Brooklyn had, in 1919, an enrollment of 1100 pupils.
The increase in enrollment over the years in the Talmud Toras can be judged by the fact that in 1910 there were 3,314 pupils in the five largest Talmud Toras in New York City. By 1918, the Uptown Talmud Torah of New York City alone had for a time about 2,000 pupils. In Chicago, the Montifore Talmud Torah had in the same year two branches in that city with a total enrollment of 1,800 pupils.1

From these totals it can be seen that not only at their peak in 1936 but even in their early period in this country the Talmud Toras, especially those located in the larger communities, were fairly large educational institutions both in enrollment and in the number of teachers employed on their staffs. In 1936, when these schools were at their peak in enrollment and progress, the total enrollment in all of the Talmud Toras in New York City increased substantially over the years to the total of 37,540 pupils.2

While in the Talmud Torah of New York City the proportion of girls to boys seems to have been low, it is nevertheless proof of the positive effects of the American environment upon Jewish education although Jewish tradition confines the education of girls to the home. This widening of educational opportunities for both sexes was due to the increasing equalization of opportunity for American women, the training

1James, Edmund, The Immigrant Jew in America (New York: Buck and Co., 1907), pp. 177-178.

of both sexes in the American public school system and the spread of Jewish "enlightenment."

All these factors have been important influences in aiding the Jews of America to overcome the traditional neglect of the schooling of Jewish girls with the Talmud Torahs providing more and more facilities for girls' education.

Thus, in 1936 in the Talmud Torahs of New York City there was a decided increase in the number and proportion of girls receiving a Jewish education over 1910 when the formal Jewish education of girls did not practically exist. In 1936, girls constituted about one-fourth of the total pupil enrollment in the Talmud Torahs.¹

In a survey conducted by D. Cedarbaum of the ten largest cities in the United States composing 75 per cent of the total Jewish population, it was found that of the 26½ per cent of Jewish children receiving a Jewish education as of 1927, 22.4 per cent were in organized schools. But of a total of 715 such organized elementary schools 454 were Hebrew weekday schools under both congregational and communal sponsorship. Since in 1927 the congregational schools first began to increase in number and in enrollment in some communities in the country and the communal Talmud Torahs were then not too far from their peak, it must be assumed that perhaps 75 per cent to 80 per cent or about 350 of the 454 Hebrew weekday schools then in existence in these ten large cities

were Talmud Torahs. Cedarbaum also found that 73,500 children were enrolled in these Hebrew weekday schools or 57.4 per cent of the total enrolled in all types of elementary schools in the United States.\(^1\) Thus, there must have been about 55,000 pupils in the Talmud Torahs in 1927 in these ten large cities in the United States. It is further assumed that what was found in these ten largest cities paralleled closely the other 25 per cent of the Jewish population in the United States. As is stated by Pilch in a study,

> The number of students in these Talmud Torahs varied according to the general Jewish population in the communities. In the heyday of the Talmud Torah type of Jewish education, there were even in communities with Jewish population of no more than 10,000 more than 200 students in each Talmud Torah.\(^2\)

In New York City, for example, which had the largest total of Jews in the country, Talmud Torah enrollment also depended on the general Jewish population of the particular community where the Talmud Torah was located. Of the twenty odd Talmud Torahs in New York City in 1910, four of the largest which were located in greatly populated areas, the Downtown Talmud Torah, the School of Biblical Instruction, the Uptown Talmud Torah and the Rabbi Israel Salanter Talmud Torah had the largest enrollment of students, a far larger number than sixteen of the smaller Talmud Torahs put together.\(^3\)

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\(^3\)Benderly, *op. cit.*, p. 97.
In 1908 Dr. Benderly reported that out of the 100,000 children receiving some form of Jewish education, 26 per cent were enrolled in the 236 Talmud Torahs throughout the country taught by 705 teachers, while in the 1935 survey of Jewish education, Dr. Benderly reported that 25 per cent of the total of 200,000 children receiving a Jewish education attended the Talmud Torahs. This increase was due to the great influx of Jews since 1910 to the United States from eastern Europe.

Similarly, Dr. Berkson's study showed that in 1936 out of the 75,000 children receiving a Jewish education about one-half of these were enrolled in the Talmud Torahs. The percentage in 1936 as compared to 1910 remained the same but the number of children enrolled increased proportionately.

The continued progress made by the Talmud Torahs in the number of their students until they reached their zenith in 1936 can also be judged by the enrollment totals of the Talmud Torahs in Philadelphia.

The Associated Talmud Torahs of Philadelphia, which was composed of ten schools, had as of 1935 a total enrollment of 2,083 students. These ten schools were divided into eighty-one classes and were taught by thirty-seven teachers with the largest Talmud Torah having 569 students and the smallest 53. The years of the decline of the Talmud

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2Berkson, op. cit., p. 32.
Torahs throughout the United States resulted naturally in the great reduction in the number of students attending these associated Talmud Torahs of Philadelphia. As of June, 1961, there were only about 540 students in the four Talmud Torahs of that city as part of the system of the United Hebrew Schools and Yeshivoth of Philadelphia.\(^1\)

It should be noted here that although the Talmud Torahs have declined greatly in number and enrollment due to demographic, ideological and social influences as will be shown later in this study, nevertheless, they are considered even at the present time an important educational institution in the Jewish educational system in this country. There still exist even today many Talmud Torahs throughout the country with enrollment totals in small Jewish communities of less than 100 per school and even higher than 1,000 pupils in some of the largest Talmud Torahs in the country.

**E. Curriculum and Methodology**

1. Curriculum

During the first few decades of its existence, the Talmud Torah in America did not follow a standard and uniform curriculum. Each school adopted a course of study based on the European Heder and Talmud Torah curriculum and adjusted it somewhat, especially in its schedule, to best serve the needs of its pupils and its own educational aims.

The subject matter in this early period consisted of teaching

\(^1\)Jacob Levin, Ex. Dir. of United Hebrew Schools and Yeshivoth of Philadelphia, Annual Report, June, 1959.
the Aleph-bet, reading of the Siddur, study of the Bible and the principles of Hebrew grammar, customs and ceremonies and Kitzur Shulchan Aruch.\textsuperscript{1} In some of these early Talmud Torahs the pupils also studied in the highest grades Orech Hayim and Talmud.\textsuperscript{2}

However, due to the dissatisfaction of both parents and educators with this type of curriculum, a Central Board of Jewish Education was organized in 1909 by the Talmud Torahs of New York and "after some time and labor this board reached only negative results and an improved curriculum remained only a mere dream."\textsuperscript{3} But under the auspices of this Central Board, the principals of the New York Talmud Torahs outlined a graded course of study for seven years in a series of conferences in 1911 which included the study of Hebrew, Bible, selections from the Mishnah and the Midrashim, portions of the Talmud and of Medieval Jewish poetry, Jewish history and Jewish religious observances.\textsuperscript{4} This program now formed the basis for unifying the work of the various Talmud Torahs with each principal agreeing to carry out the program in his own school as far as possible. In order to insure cooperation among themselves, the principals were organized into an Association of Hebrew Principals

\textsuperscript{1}David Hoffman, Six Months in New York, in Hamagid 30th Year, 1886, Op. 68.

\textsuperscript{2}Hatzfirah, 1887, Vol. 50.

\textsuperscript{3}Principals Conference, op. cit., p. 4.

\textsuperscript{4}Tbid., pp. 30-33.
of New York City.

The above represented early attempts at coordination and systematization of the Talmud Torah curriculum. It was limited in scope and objectives and did not represent joint efforts on the part of an organized community interested in Jewish education until the Bureau of Jewish Education was established in 1910 in New York City.

The changed conditions in America now called for various adaptations of the traditional course of study of the European Talmud Torah. Not the goals of the school but the demands of the parents generally determined the selection of Jewish studies. Parents insisted that their children acquire fluency in reading, a knowledge of the basic rituals and benedictions and preparation for the Bar Mitzvah or confirmation. Some more ambitious parents expected the child to learn to translate portions of the Huna sh as well. The Talmud Torahs met these demands and a small number of the better Talmud Torahs even exceeded these modest aims. They provided for advanced pupils to study the Rashi commentary, complete a number of books of the Prophets and prepared them for the study of the Mishnah and Talmud. 1

The teaching of Jewish history was, of course, not included in the traditional European Talmud Torah curriculum. The practice of the European Heder Metukan or Modernized Heder to include the study of

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1Kanowitz, op. cit., p. 52 ff. Also Rudavsky, op. cit., p. 125.
2Ibid., p. 126.
history in its course of study influenced its adoption also by the national Hebrew schools. From here it spread to other Jewish schools including the Talmud Torahs. In most of the Hebraic schools such as the Talmud Torahs, however, history did not attain the dignity of a regular subject. Bible tales and legends dramatically presented passed for the study of actual Jewish history.

The teaching of Jewish customs based largely on the historical, liturgical and ceremonial aspects of Jewish holidays and festivals, was another innovation in the American Talmud Torah curriculum.

The influence of Jewish nationalism and Zionism as well as the example of the American public school contributed to the introduction of yet another subject, singing, into the American Talmud Torah course of study. Liturgical chants as well as Yiddish and modern Hebrew and Palestinian songs formed the basis of the music curriculum.

In a few Talmud Torahs attempts were also made to introduce the teaching of contemporary Jewish life through a discussion of Jewish current events and problems. However, this was left largely to the initiative of the teacher who, lacking proper teaching aims, rarely gave it adequate attention.

The typical curriculum of a modern Talmud Torah, for example as of 1916, would include the following: A. Reading - instruction in the mechanics of Hebrew reading by the alphabetic method in addition to Hebrew writing were given in the first and second years. The aim of

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1Dushkin, op. cit., pp. 322-324.
teaching reading was to develop an ability on the part of the pupils to read fluently at sight the prayer book. After the pupil mastered these elements, he was taught to translate the more important prayers into simpler Hebrew. B. Hebrew - Taught in all grades. The purpose being to develop in the pupil an ability to understand, narrate and write simple stories in the Hebrew language. All instruction was given in the natural, conversational or Ivrit Be-Ivrit method. Hebrew grammar in all its forms and conjugations was also undertaken beginning with the second year. C. Bible stories - In the first two grades, the most famous Biblical stories were narrated orally. D. Customs and Ceremonies - Blessings, meaning of festivals and the sabbath were taught in the first two grades as part of religious training. From the third class onward religious instruction embodied a more detailed study of these religious elements in addition to Jewish ethics and ideals. An abridged Shulchan Aruch text was now used in such instruction. E. Jewish History - From the days of Abraham till our own times. F. Bible and Jewish literature - Formal text studies was undertaken beginning with the third grade. They included all of the books of the Pentateuch with the Rashi commentary and the books of the early Prophets. G. Mishnah and Talmud - Beginning with the fourth year, the pupils studied parts of the Mishnah and portions of the Haggadah and parts of the Gemarrah. H. Music - Jewish, religious, Hebrew and Zionist songs and chants were taught in all grades and integrated with customs and ceremonies and prayers. I. Bar Mitzvah- Preparation for the ceremony in the synagogue and the teaching of its religious significance. J. Arts and Crafts -
Tied in with the above subjects have later been added. Clubs and separate courses in Jewish music, arts and crafts, dramatics and school assemblies have also been later added. Especially were later included as an important part of the course of study in a Talmud Torah medieval and modern Hebrew literature.1

The Talmud Torahs thus emphasized the Hebrew language and literature, Biblical and Talmudic studies with the Hebrew conversational method being used in class instruction although in some Talmud Torahs Yiddish reading and writing were also taught.2

The course of study was broad and completely Hebraic. It was based on six or more years of study and aimed to give the pupil a fundamental knowledge of the prayers and their meaning, a familiarity with the Bible and Rashi's commentary as well as the Former Prophets and parts of the Later Prophets. Also, the ability to read and understand selections of modern Hebrew literature - both verse as well as prose. Finally, the Talmud Torah aimed to give the pupil some understanding of the Mishnah, Talmud and Haggadah.3

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2Chipkin, op. cit., p. 51. However, beginning with the mid-1930's conditions were such that it made necessary for some Talmud Torahs, especially those in small Jewish communities to employ English as the language of instruction to compete more successfully with the congregational schools in the same localities.

3See Appendix A, section on Curriculum of an institutional Talmud Torah of the Bronx "y". See also Appendix A, section B discussing a communal Talmud Torah curriculum, and Appendices D and F presenting...
This curriculum which seems today visionary, far-conceived and idealistic was about thirty years ago the traditionally accepted curriculum of the large Talmud Torahs in America.

Some of the best Talmud Torahs also had extra-curricular activities such as arts and crafts, student organization, assemblies to celebrate Jewish holidays, children's services, a school paper, and occasional participation in local charitable, Palestinian and civic events and enterprises.¹

The usual Talmud Torah curriculum provided for six years of study. The schools were in session forty-eight weeks during the year with some ranging from forty-four to fifty weeks with two weeks vacation to pupils for the Succoth and Pesach festivals and two weeks vacation during the summer months.

The number of hours of instruction each week varied with the grade and ranged from an average of six and a half hours of instruction per week in the lowest grade to nine and a half hours in the highest grade.² A teacher usually taught from two to four classes daily, meet-

¹See Appendix A, section on curriculum and school activities of the Bronx "Y" Talmud Torah.

²Dushkin, op. cit., p. 305.
ing in different "shifts" in a three to four hour session extending from four o'clock in the afternoon after public school hours to seven or eight-thirty in the evening with, of course, some variations in this daily schedule.¹

As for the text-books being used in the Talmud Torahs, "most of them were written for children in eastern Europe and contained, therefore, many foreign elements not understood by the American child." ²

This was the situation in 1918 when these texts were also not adequately graded so that they could be used systematically one after the other in different grades. New text books were issued by an editorial board composed of the principals of the Talmud Torahs of New York after 1916 which overcame this difficulty. Graded series of texts were now issued, four books for each of the seven years of the Talmud Torah course of study which alleviated somewhat the condition of a lack of proper text-books.

The Talmud Torahs used until 1916 many texts written in eastern Europe and others that were written in America such as Reshith Daath by M. Krynski, published in Russia, Hamekin by Tavyev also published in Russia and translated into English and Hebrew textbooks such as Safah Hayah by Bercus-Bergman both published in Russia.

These texts had many shortcomings. They were ill adapted for use


²Dushkin, ibid., p. 108.
in American Jewish schools. They were written for Russian Jewish children. They were not properly graded and were unattractive. However, the new texts that appeared since the First World War in America succeeded partially in embodying in them new principles of pedagogic organization and presentation. They were also properly graded and made appealing in both content and form to the American Jewish child.

Most Talmud Torahs in the United States had accelerated an intensive programs of Jewish studies. This influenced Jewish parents to send their children to these types of schools rather than to the congregational or Yiddishist schools. They felt that only in a Talmud Torah could their children receive a broad Jewish education. "Because of this accelerated and intensive program we boast now of the fact that every class in our Talmud Torah above Beth Beth is engaged in the study of Torah. Our upper classes study the prophets and Talmud and Shulhan Aruch."

In many Talmud Torahs the students entered for their studies at a very early age. "The curriculum is so planned that the child is afforded the opportunity to engage in the study of Torah at the age of seven-eight and in the study of Prophets at the age of nine-ten. This gives the school the opportunity to bring the child to advanced studies of Mishnah and Gemara, Hebrew literature and related subjects at the age of

1 Annual Report of Isaiah Chernichowsky, Principal, Hebrew Institute of New Haven, Conn., June, 1935.
The tendency was also of many Talmud Torahs in the past ten years to open Hebrew kindergartens to prepare the younger children for the program of Hebrew studies in the regular Talmud Torah. The United Hebrew Schools of Philadelphia, for example, which is composed mostly of Talmud Torahs organized as recently as 1948 has as of 1961 one such schools for children of three, four and five years of age in order to begin their Jewish experience as early in life as possible. The program is Jewish in content and Hebrew in form and offers fifteen hours a week of instruction.

Some Talmud Torahs offered the Jewish population of their communities not only a pre-school and elementary department but a Hebrew Junior High School and even a complete Hebrew High School program of studies as well. Such a set-up is still found in many Talmud Torahs in the larger cities of the country as in Philadelphia, Newark, Rochester, Minneapolis, Cleveland, New York City, New Haven, San Francisco, and in many other cities in the United States.

Not only have many Talmud Torahs instituted Hebrew high school departments but the number of students attending them has greatly

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increased over the years. In the Associated Talmud Torahs of Philadelphia, for example, there was a continuous increase in the number of students in the Hebrew High Schools departments of its constituent Talmud Torahs from 177 in 1925, to 383 in 1959.\(^1\) Due to the closing of two such departments in 1961 the number is now 231. Many of the graduates of the Hebrew High Schools apply for admission to Gratz College in Philadelphia and constitute a large percentage in comparison with the enrollees of other Jewish schools of the entering classes at the College.\(^2\)

2. Methodology

The methods of instruction in the Talmud Torahs in America although greatly improved since 1885 were by 1915 still far from satisfactory. During these early decades, the methods were for the most part imported from abroad. Not only was the language employed in these schools still Yiddish as in the European Heder and Talmud Torah but reading was also taught mechanically and the other few subjects mostly Bible and a little Talmud were taught in the primitive manner by the rote method. This was due to the lack of proper textbooks on the one hand, and the lack of pedagogically trained teachers, on the other. "There is a great need to engage teachers who have greater mastery of the pedagogies of

\(^1\)Minutes of Executive Board of Associated Talmud Torahs of Philadelphia, June, 1925 and of United Hebrew Schools and Yeshivoth of Philadelphia, June, 1959.

teaching than the teachers we have at the present. There is also a
great need to utilize the new textual materials that have been recently
published in order to increase the progress of our schools.\textsuperscript{1}

All of the teachers of this early stage of the Talmud Torah in
this country were trained and received their teaching experience in the
European Heder, Talmud Torah or Yeshivah. It was only natural for them
to bring with them to this country old antiquated methods of instruction
that they were accustomed to employ in their European schools.\textsuperscript{2}

The grading system as it existed in the American Talmud Torah
also made it almost impossible and unworkable for the employment of new
methods of teaching in this early period. All of the classes in a
Talmud Torah, especially on the lower and intermediate levels, were
composed of children of all ages and backgrounds. This made it extremely
difficult to maintain proper decorum and proper standards of grading
and placement in the classes. Consequently, the teacher was compelled
because of circumstances to resort to European ways of teaching on a
sectional basis and by the rote method. Since the classes were not
properly organized and graded, the educators of that day found that the
Heder-like methods of teaching were the only ways feasible and possible

\textsuperscript{1}Minutes of Board of Directors of Hebrew Institute of New
Haven, Conn., April 22, 1914.

\textsuperscript{2}Greenstone, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 103. Kaplan, M. M. and Cronson, B.,
"Report of Committee on Jewish Education", (Kehillah of New York, 1910);
under the conditions they labored. However, when educators entered this country from 1910 onward, they brought with them new approaches as well as, what is even more important, new methods of instruction as they were successfully employed in the Heder Metukan and in some of the better European Talmud Torahs.

Beginning with 1915 progress was made in adopting new methods of instruction. New and improved textbooks were used which necessitated the employment of various new teaching aids. Teachers familiar with these new teaching methods were now engaged by the Talmud Torahs. "It is at the present time of great importance to engage teachers with not only the proper Hebrew background but especially those that have the preparation to employ modern aids and techniques in their classes."¹

The phonetic method began to be employed in reading since 1915. The natural method or Ivrit Be-Ivrit although used in the larger Talmud Torahs, especially those organized since 1910, now became the standard method not only in conversation but as in instruction in all subjects in most Talmud Torahs, large and small although some Talmud Torahs still used Yiddish and in some smaller Jewish communities English was employed in the Talmud Torahs as the language of instruction.²

The institution of the Ivrit Be-Ivrit method in instruction was


greatly aided by a better grading system that now existed in most Talmud Torahs enabling the teachers to apply new and improved teaching aids such as teaching from the simple to the complex and from the known to the unknown. Some forms of audio-visual aids, maps, posters, arts and crafts, slides and dramatizations were also used as "technical" aids in classroom teaching.¹

The Ivrit Be-Ivrit or natural method became a cardinal principle and fundamental to the philosophy of the Talmud Torah in America. It was not only employed in the class in instruction but the entire atmosphere and educational goals of the American Talmud Torah were based on it. It became one of the cornerstones of a Talmud Torah education. It was due to the employment of this method in teaching and conversation that appealed to many parents to send their children for a Jewish education to a Talmud Torah.

F. Supervision and Administration

The American Talmud Torah was always managed by a Board of Directors. However, the Board sacrificed much of its time and energy to collect the necessary funds to maintain the institutions. It received reports from the principal and offered advice and criticism on his supervision and administration of the school with the director of the school

being granted by the Board just enough powers to administer and execute its school policies.¹

The only external aid the principals received in the execution of their duties was from the Bureaus of Jewish Education in cities where such central agencies existed. The Bureaus sent general and special supervisors to the Talmud Torahs in order to aid them in their work. They took charge directly of central educational activities such as investigation of truancy, the collection of tuition fees, granted financial aid to the schools and coordinated the work of all of the principals of the constituent Talmud Torahs. "The aims and purposes of the central office of the Associated Talmud Torahs are to supply pedagogic and financial assistance to its constituent schools and to assist them in every way possible to increase the progress and enrollment of their schools."² Thus, in many parts of the country, assistance concerning any and all educational matters that concerned the individual Talmud Torah was granted by central educational agencies as they came to be organized over the years, especially in the larger cities in the United States.

The principal of a Talmud Torah was otherwise in most Talmud

¹See Appendix A, section B as to the functions and control of the Board of Directors of the Machzikei Talmud Torah as illustrative of the powers of such boards in most of the Talmud Torahs in America up to the present time.

Torahs merely an employee entrusted by the Board to carry out certain administrative details. The principal did not guide the policy of the school; he merely obeyed.  

In the first few decades of the Talmud Torah in this country all of the school records were kept by the secretary without any supervision or assistance from the principal. This was because many of the principals although possessing a thorough Jewish education were not pedagogically trained nor understood fully the business phases as well as the social aspects of their school work. Neither did they have secular training sufficient for the proper management of an American Talmud Torah. However, during the past two decades many changes have taken place in Jewish education in general and in the type of personnel engaged by the Talmud Torahs in particular. Dr. Dushkin describes succinctly in his report on Jewish education in the United States the type of principal engaged in the afternoon weekday schools which included the Talmud Torah. According to his findings, the school principal resembles the typical teacher in his school with the difference that he is somewhat older, more experienced in teaching and is likely to be engaged in a full-time position much more so than his teachers. A good number of them have been in other Jewish professions such as rabbis, cantors as well as teachers. The principal, too, is likely to have been less than

1However, in some Talmud Torahs especially those that were institutional or center Talmud Torahs, the principal was in complete charge of the school. See Appendix A, section on Supervision and Administration of the Bronx "y" Talmud Torah.
three years in his present position and his formal pedagogic training is not much better than that of his teachers although he receives a much larger salary.¹

The principal's administrative and supervisory duties consisted of admitting new pupils, supervising the collection of tuition fees, conferring with the Committee on Education concerning the curriculum and some of the policies of the school and carrying out these policies. The actual classroom supervisory work by him was in most cases sadly neglected. Such supervision as did exist was practically all of the "checking up" or "inspecting" kind of both the teachers and the pupils and not for the purpose of improving their work.²

In many schools, the principal did not even have the power of appointing his own teachers. The school Board did that without even consulting him.³

Teachers meetings were held but these were of an administrative nature and dealt with trivialities and details rather than with the educational problems concerning their educational work in the Talmud Torah.

¹Dushkin and Engelman, op. cit., p. 125.

²See Appendix E for supervisory duties of the principal at the Talmud Torah Tifereth Israel of Brooklyn.

³See Appendix B where it is shown that in the Talmud Torah Tifereth Israel of Brooklyn, New York, the principal had the power to engage or discharge teachers with the approval of the Board.
On a whole "the Jewish school principal in the large Talmud Torahs was charged with the same administrative duties as the public school principal but in practice he exercised little authority as the school boards of directors zealously retained complete power and control."¹

In the first few decades of the Talmud Torah in America when proper grading of pupils was still unknown and impractical, it was the principal's duty to admit new pupils to the school. However, since there was no definite time for the registration of new students, the admission of such new pupils was held throughout the year. New pupils were admitted at all times during the year without checking up on their age and background. There was, therefore, a great admixture of children on all levels and background. Children from six to twelve years of age were put into the same class from beginners to advanced pupils and as they were admitted so were they taken out by the parents any time they wanted. "In most Talmud Torahs on the average per year more children were taken out than admitted sometimes even double."²

During this early stage in almost all of the schools, several classes were instructed by each teacher. The children came in shifts at alternating hours with all the pupils receiving practically the same sort of training with no difference made between the capable and the

¹Rudavsky, op. cit., p. 119.
²Kanowitz, op. cit., p. 126.
their boards at the present time with the management of the affairs of the schools left entirely in their hands. These increased duties include also the right to engage and release teachers, prepare the school curriculum and plan and execute school policies. However, in such cases, advice and aid by the bureaus have always been received gladly by the principals of the member schools who in turn cooperate gladly with the bureaus to further the progress and achievements of the schools.
CHAPTER V

DECLINE OF THE TALMUD TORAH IN AMERICA

A. Effects of Sociological Changes in the American Jewish Community on the Talmud Torah in America

1. Demographic

The communal Talmud Torah was very successful for a few decades in rearing and training Jewish children in the religious, cultural and social aspects of Judaism. They reached their zenith during the 1930's when their number, influence and educational achievements were the greatest.

However, the greatest impediment to their existence and further progress was their inability to retain a large proportion of their students. This came about because of the continuing shift of the Jewish population from one neighborhood to another as it became more Americanized and began increasingly to climb the economic and social ladder of the American society. Its increased wealth and social position affected to a great extent the social, religious and cultural outlook of the Jewish parents. They hoped to lead different lives than their immigrant parents in a modern suburban area where they could throw off the old shackled attitudes of the immigrant Jew, and become thoroughly Americanized. The result of this movement of the Jewish population to new areas was that it tended to reduce greatly the number of pupils attending the communal Talmud Torahs which were located mostly in the old neighborhoods.
The decline in enrollment of the communal Talmud Torahs since the middle 1930's is best illustrated by a study of the enrollment figures of the Hebrew Institute of New Haven, Connecticut, for the years 1936 to 1960. During these years there was a continual annual decline of pupils attending this Talmud Torah. The decline began in 1936 when the school like other similar educational institutions was at its height in enrollment and progress. In 1936 the Talmud Torah had about 400 students with a gradual decrease taken place in enrollment during the following years until it has reached the low figure of 53 for the year 1960. With the exception of relatively few of the larger Talmud Torahs which maintained over the years up to the present fairly large enrollments similar declines in enrollment have taken place in most Talmud Torahs in the country.\(^1\)

Another illustrative example is that of the Associated Talmud

\(^1\)From Annual Reports of the Executive Directors of the Bureau of Jewish Education of New Haven, Connecticut, showing decline in enrollment over the years (1936-1960).

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<th>Year</th>
<th>No. pupils</th>
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<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>1942</td>
<td>112</td>
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<td>1937</td>
<td>178</td>
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<td>1938</td>
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<td>1944</td>
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<td>1939</td>
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<td>1941</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>1947</td>
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From 1948 on, the enrollment was practically stationary. It averaged between 62 and 51 pupils annually.
Torahs of Philadelphia. Ben Rosen, its Executive Director for many years reported the decline of the Talmud Torahs in that city as follows: In 1919 there were 23 communal Talmud Torahs with an enrollment of 3,900 students while the congregational schools totalled 150 with 2,600 pupils. However, in 1929, the number of Talmud Torahs in the city decreased to 11 with 2,100 pupils enrolled and the congregational schools increased to 21 with 4,430 enrollees which included also those attending the Sunday Schools.¹

In the Tenth Anniversary Issue of the Associated Talmud Torahs of Philadelphia, the continuous decline of the Talmud Torahs is further punctuated. In 1938, for example, the number of Talmud Torahs in that city decreased to nine with an enrollment of 2,058 pupils while the congregational schools increased to 28 with a total enrollment of 5,760 students which included also those attending on Sunday.²

This sad situation was caused primarily by the movement of a large segment of the Jewish population to the suburbs in both small as well as large cities in the United States. Although this exodus to new neighborhoods started in the middle 1930's it has been increasing in intensity during the following years and has not even stopped at the present time. "Even in 1959 neighborhoods continue to change and the


²Tenth Anniversary Issue of Ass. Talmud Torahs of Philadelphia, June 1938, Ben Rosen, Editor.
city's Jewish population continues its geographic realignment at a very rapid pace.\textsuperscript{1}

The Talmud Torah boards have, therefore, undertaken as a solution to the further disintegration of such schools a process of closing old Talmud Torahs and relocating them in new Jewish populated neighborhoods with the hope of being able in this way to secure and advance its existence in this country. Such a process has been in existence in Philadelphia for the past few decades. "It becomes apparent at this time that several of our schools continue to decrease the student roll due to conditions in their respective neighborhoods. We are currently reducing our faculty in those schools for the coming year. It is difficult to predict whether we will be justified in continuing these schools past 1959. It will be necessary to transfer the students to the nearest school that was recently opened even if we have to provide transportation facilities. It is my opinion that a new unit will have to be established further west to provide educational facilities for both old and new students of the new neighborhood."\textsuperscript{2}

The changes in enrollment that have taken place in many Talmud Torahs in the country due to demographic factors since their heyday and up to recent years have been enormous. In Philadelphia, for example, where demographic conditions have resulted as in most of the other cities

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{1}Jacob Levin, Ex. Dir. of United Hebrew Schools and Yeshivoth of Philadelphia, \textit{Annual Report}, June, 1959.

\textsuperscript{2}Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
in the country in the combination of local Talmud Torahs into associations or united educational agencies for purposes of economy and with the hope of achieving greater educational results than was possible on an individual basis, the decline of the Talmud Torahs in that city did not so much affect the teaching effectiveness or the standards and progress of the schools but in enrollment figures. Almost annually there has been a continuous drop in the number of students attending the Talmud Torahs of that city since they reached their zenith in the middle 1930's. This process has continued without any significant intermittent changes up to the present. "We are facing a constant and regular loss of enrollment. This is due above all to the shifting of the Jewish population from the old neighborhoods into new areas. As a resultant, schools such as the Ben Rosen Jewish Educational Center (a Talmud Torah) which housed during the years of its glory over 700 students, must be satisfied at present with an enrollment of 200. West Philadelphia came down from 300 to 160; Aitz Chaim from 160 to 100; and so on in the other branches.¹

Closing of schools due to shifting of the Jewish population to other localities continues unabated in that city even at the present. The Ben Rosen school has, as of 1961 only 140 pupils, West Philadelphia and Aitz Chayim closed their doors entirely.²


Similar conditions also existed in other cities in the United States although in some cities the decline in enrollment could have been even greater had not a transfer system been instituted whereby pupils moving to new neighborhoods were admitted into the closest communal Talmud Torah. "As a resultant of the movement to new neighborhoods, one of our large institutions, the Jewish Educational Center on Moore Street, which at one time numbered some 500 students on its roll, had to be closed altogether and turned over to another communal agency. Some of these children in the vicinity were transferred to the neighboring Ben Rosen Educational Center." ¹

In other cities, Talmud Torahs solved their demographic problems by combining into single educational units as a result of decreases that had taken place in enrollment at these institutions. The combined schools had greater longevity and were in a better financial position to exist up to the present time. However, even such schools suffered during the years from decreases in enrollment. Many of them eventually were compelled to close their doors entirely. In New Haven, Connecticut, for example, many of the Talmud Torahs were combined but this did not prevent some of them from closing their doors not long after they were merged with other Talmud Torahs while others were eventually taken over by the new congregations that were being built in their vicinities and they became thereby two or three-days-a-week schools. The only excep-

tion being one Talmud Torah, the Hebrew Institute of New Haven, which managed to survive the accepted transformation tendencies of other Talmud Torahs. Although it cost its own building the school is still existing even though being housed at present at the Jewish Center of New Haven. All the other nine Talmud Torahs of the city have been either closed permanently or have been transformed into congregational schools.¹

In some cities it was not always possible to erect new buildings for communal Talmud Torahs in new neighborhoods because of the financial burden required, and in many other cities this was done too late. As a result of this considerable lag in the establishment of new Talmud Torahs most of the Jewish parents in the new neighborhoods sent their children to the congregational schools which were then springing up in the new areas or which were coming into existence as the Jewish population increased in these new localities.²

Thus, much of the apparent elimination or "leaving" in the communal Talmud Torahs from the mid-1930's onward can be attributed to the change of residence by the parents to different sections of the city.


²See Appendix A - The Bronx YMHA Talmud Torah. Section under organization shows the effects of the movement of Jews into new neighborhoods on the eventual decline of the Talmud Torah. See also Appendix B as illustrating the effects of sociological changes upon the further progress of the Talmud Torahs.
Owing also to the decentralized condition of Jewish education in general during this period, no transfer system existed among the Talmud Torahs, so that it was not possible to tell whether the pupil who left one school attended another near his home. In many instances the child was compelled to discontinue his studies completely because there was no suitable Jewish school near by. Some of those who left, however, continued their Jewish education in the neighborhood congregational schools.

The extent to which the school population in the Talmud Torahs in the larger cities throughout the country shifted yearly was enormous. "It varied among the different schools from as low as 40 per cent to over 100 per cent of the register during the year."¹

The result of these demographic influences was that the congregational school in the new areas fell heir to the Talmud Torah which was heretofore concentrated in a few congested areas. The tendency has also been for the congregational school to be smaller than the communal Talmud Torah with the average congregational school having about 160 pupils and the most frequent size being less than 100. The communal Talmud Torahs had, consequently, lost in the number of such schools but they were still fairly large in their student body.

The decline of the Talmud Torah since the middle 1930's because of demographic, sociological and ideological factors, is made more apparent by the following facts.

¹Dushkin, op. cit., p. 255
The number of children attending Talmud Torahs throughout the country in 1901 was 11,000 whereas in 1908 it was 26,216 or 26.2 per cent of the total enrollment in all Jewish schools.\(^1\) In 1935 when the enrollment in the Talmud Torahs was at its peak, there were 110,000 children enrolled in the Talmud Torahs in the United States or 55 per cent of the total enrollment in all types of Jewish schools.\(^2\) However, beginning with 1936 the enrollment in the Talmud Torahs began to decline gradually annually so that by 1942 there were 57,400 children enrolled in the Talmud Torahs or 28.7 per cent of the total enrolled in all Jewish schools.\(^3\) Finally, the most recent educational survey reports that 46,123 children are enrolled in non-congregational schools which includes also the Talmud Torahs or 17.3 per cent of the total in all Jewish schools throughout the country.\(^4\)

On the other hand, the constant growth of the congregational schools at the expense of the Talmud Torahs is attested to by the fact that the number of children attending such schools in 1908 was 9,550 or

\(^1\)Benderly, op. cit., p. 95.

\(^2\)Benderly, ibid., p. 117. See also Chipkin, op. cit., p. 47.


9.6 per cent, and in 1942, 49,200 or 24.6 per cent. \(^1\) More recently, in 1950, the enrollment in the schools under congregational auspices increased to 88.5 per cent of the total enrollment in the country. \(^2\)

In New York City, for example, as of 1929, the waning of the communal Talmud Torah and the growth and importance of the congregational school resulted in a decrease of 2,000 pupils in total enrollment in New York City since 1916 and the number of Talmud Torahs dropping from 77 to 68. Congregational schools, on the other hand, had risen in number during this period from 50 in 1916 to 209 in 1927, an increase of 300 per cent in New York City alone. In the same period of time, the enrollment in congregational schools in New York City had increased over 200 per cent. \(^3\)

The tendency of the congregational schools to supercede and in many cities even to surpass by far the Talmud Torahs of their cities in the number of schools and in total enrollment of students was constantly evidenced in many cities throughout the country. Many educators interested in an intensive Jewish education as the Talmud Torahs offered constantly bewailed the growth of the congregational school at the expense of the Talmud Torahs. These new congregational schools

\(^1\) Benderly, Jewish Exponent, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 120.

\(^2\) Dushkin and Engelman, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 47. See also Appendix A, section on Enrollment of the Bronx Y Talmud Torah.

\(^3\) Jewish Communal Survey, 1929, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 54.
they considered as an unwelcome replacement of the Talmud Torah with its high educational standards and achievements. As one prominent educator after viewing the situation of the Talmud Torahs in his city expressed, "Is it not clear that the nine or ten units which our school system contains is but a fraction compared with the dozens of congregational schools in this community. Similarly, the number of a thousand or so pupils attending our schools does not compare favorably with the many thousands of students attending the other school systems."\(^1\)

The shifting of the Jewish population to different areas resulted in the loss in size of even the best Talmud Torahs. They lost also in quality and some even closed their doors. The Salanter Talmud Torah, for example, one of the best Talmud Torahs in the country, closed its doors in 1929 due to this demographic situation.\(^2\)

Supporting directors and those who could afford to pay higher tuition fees moved away from the neighborhoods. Those who took their places represented the poorer classes. These schools continued to exist now primarily as in the earlier period for the benefit of the poor through the bounty of the local federations and with the aid from parents and local sources.

Finally, we might say that before 1925, the student body of the American Talmud Torah consisted of children of immigrant parents who

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2 Berkson, op. cit., p. 19.
settled mostly in the larger American cities and in densely populated Jewish neighborhoods. These parents before they became Americanized and "modern" in outlook felt and appreciated the need of providing their children with a broad Jewish education as was exemplified by some of the better Talmud Torahs in their particular neighborhoods. They conceived Jewish education as being not only necessary for self-identification and enrichment, but as an important concomitant of Jewish aspirations and living. The observance and practice of Judaism and the fostering in the young of Jewish values and way of life were important factors in their lives. The instrumentality through which these ideals and goals could be realized was in a Talmud Torah education for their children. However, such idealism could be realized only in the old and closely knit Jewish neighborhoods where Judaism and the Jewish way of living were openly practiced by most Jews in these "ghetto" neighborhoods. But when the Jews in these old localities became more Americanized and economically prosperous, their traditional attitudes and ways of living underwent considerable modification with the result that many of these immigrant Jews moved to less populated and "less Jewish" neighborhoods where their newly acquired changed values of Jewish living began to flourish.

The first objective of these "new settlers" in the new neighborhoods was to modify the traditional Jewish curriculum of the Talmud Torah. The result was that the curriculum in the congregational schools which were founded by many of these Jews was less traditional in approach and philosophy.
During the period when mass migration of Jews to the suburbs took place, the Talmud Torahs in the old neighborhoods also lost a good many of their more Americanized teachers to the newly organized congregational schools. Some were also compelled to make some modifications in their curriculum and hours of instruction. The outcome of this was that there was a decline in the quality of instruction and in the educational standards and progress of the Talmud Torahs.

However, the larger Talmud Torahs in the country obstinately rejected the tendency of some parents and the pressure of even some of their directors to modify the standard Talmud Torah curriculum and to reduce the prevailing schedule of instruction in order to prevent a further decline in enrollment and to attract new enrollees in their neighborhoods. "Although under pressure from parents there was no lowering of standards as regards curriculum hours of instruction or quality of the teaching staff."¹

Thus, Jewish life, beginning with the 1920's was destined to take a course which halted the growth of the Talmud Torah along the lines originally anticipated. As the wealthier and more Americanized Jewish families moved out of the congested areas to new neighborhoods, they organized their Jewish communal life around the synagogues. The school in which their children received a Jewish education was an integral part of that synagogue. In addition, the conflict among different religious

denominational groups and social conceptions struggling for supremacy within the Jewish community resulted in the establishment of a variety of weekday afternoon school systems. Finally, the number of parents willing to subject their children to ten hours of weekly instruction steadily diminished. The Talmud Torah, therefore, was not able to fulfill the role that was originally intended for it by Jewish educators and idealistic laymen. It still is even today an important educational agency but it no longer dominates the scene as it did a generation ago.

2. Economic and Religious

When the immigrant Jews first came to America in large numbers in 1910, they attempted to integrate themselves into the American social and economic life. Because of their European background and social position, they tended to settle in densely populated areas with other immigrant Jews. As for the Jewish education of their children, they were pleased with the instruction they received in a Heder or Talmud Torah. However, as the immigrant Jews became more Americanized and prosperous and gained social standing in the community and this was especially true of the new generation of Jews born and reared in this country. They tended to be satisfied with a minimum Jewish education for their children and began to send their children to a Heder or Talmud Torah for a "Bar Mitzvah" education.

They felt that it was more important and they looked forward to the day when their sons would find their places in the commercial,

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industrial and professional world and would share freely in the social life of America.

They also tended to move because of their better economic and social positions and as the new Jewish middle class into the suburbs. As their scale of living was rising steadily, more and more of these wealthy Jews moved into new neighborhoods where they founded congregations and schools attached to them for the education of their children.

These economic and social factors contributed greatly and brought about the decline of the American Talmud Torah and threatened its existence.

The native-born parents did not possess the Jewish cultural background nor the proper reverence for Jewish learning as their predecessors, the immigrant Jews. They sent their children to Hebrew schools not for a traditional, intensive Jewish education or for scholarship. They were primarily interested in maintaining their identity as Jews. They tended, therefore, to be satisfied with a minimum of Jewish education for their children.

The middle class Jews enjoyed leisure, economic security and all kinds of conveniences, and they provided their children with all types of outside interests. They were, therefore, disinclined to enroll their children in a Talmud Torah, which entailed long hours of instruction.

Under prevailing conditions such as these, the Talmud Torah educational philosophy, program of studies and teaching schedule could not be acceptable to these Jews in their new localities. The American environment with its social and economic advancements prevented the expansion
on a large scale of the Talmud Torah into new neighborhoods and depleted, furthermore, its student body in old areas.

The element of Jewish nationalism, the ideals of Jewish culture and learning which were part of Jewish life and education in the old neighborhoods and of the American Talmud Torah no longer played important roles in the lives of the Americanized and native-born American Jew.

The hope and dream of Jewish educators that the Talmud Torah would be the typical American Jewish school, supplementary to the public school did not materialize. A changed school pattern became evident when Jews who moved from Jewish population centers to newer neighborhoods organized their social and religious activities within the synagogue framework. The Hebraic Talmud Torah conducted on a ten-hour five-day-a-week schedule did not seem to fill the needs and the desires of the Americanized and native-born American Jews. The congregational school and the conservative movement representing and reflecting a different and more amenable and acceptable religious and social philosophy of Jewish life, Jewish education and Judaism now grew rapidly and gradually replaced in many areas in the country the communal Talmud Torah.¹

Thus, in the 1930's due to a configuration of a number of factors-sociological - such as the breaking up of old neighborhoods and the

increase in the number of young native-born Jewish families, economic — the increase in the number of the Jewish middle class, religious — the attenuation of the religious and ritualistic aspects of the conservative denominational aspects in American Judaism with its greater emphasis on social activities by the congregations, all contributed to the decline of the Talmud Torahs in America and the emergence of the congregational school as an important educational and religious institution in America.

Although the primary reason for the decline of the Talmud Torah in America can be attributed to demographic and denominational factors, nevertheless, other related tendencies were also responsible for the decline of the Talmud Torah. Mr. Isaiah Chermichowsky who was principal of the Hebrew Institute of New Haven, Connecticut for many years presents a list of these consequences which existed in his school and which the writer has also found to be the most important causes for the disintegration and decline of the Talmud Torah in other parts of the country as well. These factors were: a) Satisfaction of parents with little learning on the part of their children. Most young parents received a Jewish education of a little Ivri and Bar Mitzvah instruction and felt that this would be enough for their children as well. To achieve these educational goals a year or two of attendance at the Talmud Torah before Bar Mitzvah would suffice. b) Moving to new neighborhoods. Dislocation of students was one of the greatest factors in reducing the enrollment of the school. c) Indifference of parents to Hebrew studies. Many parents had a negative approach to Hebrew studies and were satisfied
with a minimum number of years of instruction for their children in a
Hebrew school. d) Preparation only for Bar Mitzvah wanted. e) Health
reasons caused some students to drop out of school after a short stay.
f) Due to higher age in comparison with other children in the same
class, some older students refused to be placed in lower classes and
dropped out after a short stay. g) Dissatisfaction with the Talmud
Torah educational philosophy and curriculum. h) Helping parents. Dur-
ing the depression and even for some time afterwards pupils stayed away
from their classes or dropped out completely to help their parents
financially by doing odds and ends.1

In spite of the above-mentioned reasons which, no doubt, played
their part in the reduction of the enrollment in the Talmud Torahs as
they still do even nowadays in our different Jewish educational systems,
it is, nevertheless, the writer's opinion that the most important cause
for the decline were as mentioned previously, a) Demographic - young
parents moved to new neighborhoods far from the location of the old
Talmud Torah. b) Economic reasons - because they were now the "nouveau
riche" and in the middle class they tended to favor a more "modern"
school with lower hours of attendance and with a lesser emphasis on the
cultural and religious aspects of Judaism. They, therefore, sent their
children to a congregational school in their vicinity. c) Their relig-

1 Isiah Chernichowsky, Principal, Hebrew Institute of New Haven,
VII, No. 2, pp. 2-4.
ious conceptions of Judaism could be more readily satisfied in a congregational school where its educational philosophy would harmonize better with their view of Judaism and of Jewish education.

During the second and third decades of this century, congregational schools already showed great increases in number and importance. There was a definite trend towards congregational schools throughout the country. "In New York City, for example, in 1917, less than 24 per cent of the schools were under congregational auspices but in 1926, the proportion had increased to 56 per cent. Outside of New York City, it is estimated it was 75 per cent." These congregational schools grew at the expense of the communal Talmud Torahs. "From 1918 to 1923, they increased their enrollment by 50 per cent and again by 65 per cent in 1928."

In New Haven, Conn., for example, the great increases of enrollment of the newly organized congregational schools brought about a decline of the Talmud Torahs in that city causing the termination of the activities of all the Talmud Torahs in the city with the exception of one, the Hebrew Institute of New Haven which consisted as of 1960 of a small number of students in comparison to what it was in its heyday in the middle 1930's. The conservative schools, on the other hand, began with three schools in 1936 and 70 pupils and advanced in 1960 to ten

1 Chipkin, op. cit., p. 98.
2 Rudavsky, op. cit., p. 342.
schools with 128 students. The ten congregational schools were composed of four conservative, five orthodox and one reform school while the community had but one Talmud Torah since 1934, the Hebrew Institute of New Haven.

The following relative enrollment figures show the decline of the Talmud Torah and the rise of the congregational schools. Similar conditions prevailed also in other parts of the country.¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Hebrew Institute pupils</th>
<th>Congregational Schools</th>
<th>Hebrew Institute pupils</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>70</td>
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<td>1946</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1281</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The differences at the present between the communal and congregational schools are, however, waning in recent years. The congregational schools, particularly the larger schools, have become more Hebraic in recent years. Moreover, they now admit children of non-members as do

¹Statistics taken from Annual Reports by principals of school and from records of the Bureau of Jewish Education of New Haven, Conn. for the years mentioned.
the communal schools. However, the congregational schools are still generally smaller in size than the communal Talmud Torahs with the proportion of the total enrollment growing from 24 per cent in 1918 to 36 per cent in 1944.\(^1\)

Methods in instruction and even most educational aims in both the communal and the congregational schools do not reveal great marked differences as far as religious attitudes are concerned. The whole question is purely a matter of emphasis.\(^2\) The Talmud Torahs are nearer to the Jewish traditional conception of Judaism and education while some of the congregational schools particularly the conservative schools place the emphasis on the synagogue as the center of Jewish life.

Although many of the congregational schools, both orthodox and conservative, are becoming somewhat more Hebraic in emphasis, the Talmud Torah is still the only Jewish elementary afternoon school where an intensive Hebrew education is to be obtained. It still maintains its educational philosophy, that of traditionalism and Hebraism. No other Jewish afternoon school offers even today such a wide curriculum of literary, religious and Hebrew subjects as the Talmud Torah. While the auspices are becoming more and more congregational, the course of study of the congregational schools has been strongly influenced recently

\(^{1}\)Rudavsky, \textit{ibid.}, p. 344.

by the Hebraic emphasis of the Talmud Torah.

In spite of the decline of the Talmud Torahs in America during the past few decades, there still can be found even at present in many Jewish communities in the United States one or two of these educational institutions. They still maintain their high educational standards as in their glorious years of existence and follow a curriculum which with but small modifications has been an outstanding contribution to the ideals of an intensive Jewish education for many years. They still maintain practically the same time schedule as in previous years in order to make progress and achieve results in their goals and program of studies. This is being realized by many Talmud Torahs even nowadays in spite of the fact that their influence and total registration is far from what it was in previous years. It is the opinion of many parents, especially those interested in a broad Jewish education for their children that the Talmud Torah still offers the best type of Jewish educational program of an afternoon Hebrew school. These Talmud Torahs still maintain high scholastic standards and schedule from $7\frac{1}{2}$ to 10 hours of daily instruction per week in spite of their decline on the Jewish educational horizon in the past few decades. There can be found in some of the largest cities in the United States a few Talmud Torahs that have an enrollment of a thousand students or more which is much above that of any single congregational school in the country. Many of these leading Talmud Torahs also maintain advance programs in their Hebrew Junior High Schools and Hebrew High School departments whose graduates become the registrants of higher Jewish educational institu-
tions of learning in the country. For example, the Minneapolis Talmud Torah had until recently (1954) close to 1,000 students in all its departments. Similarly, in Boston, Detroit, St. Louis, Cincinnati, New York, Philadelphia, Los Angeles and in many other large and small cities we still find Talmud Torahs flourishing but in relatively small sizes in enrollment compared to previous years. In Pittsburgh, there is a Hebrew Institute or a Talmud Torah which has 1,200 pupils attending its long double sessions from 4 to 8 p.m. daily amounting to ten hours a week of instruction. In this fashion has the Talmud Torah left its imprint on Jewish education in America even as of today in spite of its decline in recent years.¹

CHAPTER VI
AN EVALUATION OF THE TALMUD TORAH
IN AMERICA

The American communal Talmud Torah contributed greatly and performed many vital functions in American Jewish education. It will be needed for many years to come not only to provide instruction for the children of the poor as was the original intention of their organizers, but what is even more important, it will be needed to take care of the great number of children whose parents are unaffiliated with any congregation.

The Talmud Torah system makes us realize that all types of Jewish children, poor or rich alike and, especially, those whose parents are not members of any particular congregation, should have equal opportunities to receive a Jewish education.

The Talmud Torah not only contributed to Jewish education the idea of the importance of teaching and rearing a young generation of Jews to be loyal to the Jewish traditions and religion but the concept of the great need for giving our children an intensive Jewish education. The progress and achievements made by the Talmud Torahs prove without doubt that only the maximum of Jewish education could have an everlasting effect on the training of the Jewish youth to grow up devoted to Jewish ideals and traditions. Its whole ideology, philosophy and goals were imbued with this important concept of an intensive Jewish
education. ¹

The American Talmud Torah further contributed to American Jewish education the concept of community responsibility for Jewish education. Its organizers established it as a communally supported school. This idea has become one of the cardinal principles of present-day American Jewish educational philosophy. It emphasized the educational concept that only if the entire community sponsors and takes an interest in the Jewish education of its youth could a maximum Jewish education be successful and possible of attainment.

On the whole, it may be said that the community Talmud Torah two or three decades ago provided a more enriched program of Jewish studies with practically twice as many hours of instruction per week as the present-day Hebrew school provides. This was true whether the school is an orthodox or a conservative congregational Hebrew afternoon school. In fact, as was shown in the study, in many of the old and large communal Talmud Torahs, the program of studies surpassed by far in content and even in tangible results and achievements the best congregational school of today.

The program of studies of many of these Talmud Torahs also included advanced courses of study that could be compared most favorably even with some of the Hebrew High Schools of our own day whether they are congregationally or privately sponsored.

Furthermore, the type of students produced by these old Talmud Torahs was by far superior to the present-day students, religiously and in Jewish culture.

Even as far as Jewish consciousness and Jewish nationalism and idealism are concerned, the Talmud Torah students were not less imbued with these educational ideals than the students of the present-day Hebrew afternoon schools. On the contrary, the students of the old Talmud Torahs were better educationally and religiously trained to become nationalist and religiously minded Jews devoted to the ideals of Judaism and of the Jewish people than our present day Jewish educational programs provide.

Bar Mitzvah may have been one of the goals of Jewish education then as it is, unfortunately, true nowadays. However, the curriculum of the old Talmud Torah provided for a course of study past the Bar Mitzvah stage and its entire program on all levels of instruction was imbued with a definite Hebraic, Zionist, and religiously enriched course of study that could be the envy of present-day Hebrew schools both elementary as well as secondary.

The progress made in Jewish education today as far as the curriculum of the congregational Hebrew school is concerned may be partially traced to the foundations laid by these old Talmud Torahs although the educational goals and some of the methodology of these "modern" Hebrew schools have been modified to some extent as a result of various educational and religious concepts such as Jewish and general educational
theories and practices, the rise of denominational ideologies in American Judaism with their own philosophies and goals of Jewish education and the influences exerted on present day Jewish education by the general social, economic and cultural environment.

The American Talmud Torah was greatly influenced by the philosophy and methodology of the European Heder Metukan. It transplanted to this country those ideas by emphasizing in its school curriculum the concepts of Jewish nationalism and Zionism as well as Hebraism.

In addition, it evolved in its philosophy a synthesis or a fusion of traditionalism and modernism, that of Hebraism and Zionism. This has paved the way for the creation of a broad course of Hebrew and traditional religious studies which proved extremely effective in meeting the religious, zionist and educational needs of its students and their parents. These concepts became part and parcel of the American Talmud Torah educational philosophy and course of study and influenced their acceptance in some ways by the congregational schools and, especially, present day all-day or parochial schools.

The American Talmud Torah also contributed the idea of providing extracurricular activities in its program as exemplifying and demonstrating what is being formally taught in the classroom.

Finally, the American Talmud Torah adopted many of the new and "modern" general American pedagogic methods as used in public education and applied them successfully to Jewish teaching. This new methodology in addition to the natural or Ivrit Be-Ivrit method which the Talmud
Torah emphasized in classroom instruction became important educational principles of Jewish education up to the present time.

Contrary to the views expressed by some educators such as Dr. Chipkin, \(^1\) the opinion of this writer is that the successes of the Talmud Torah were numerous and that it made important contributions to American Jewish educational philosophy. Its achievements in the content of its curriculum and in its emphasis on Hebrew and Zionism and instruction in the natural method have greatly influenced Jewish education in the past and will further exert a powerful stimulus to an even greater extent as guides for educational planning in the future.

This came about because the leaders and teachers of the Talmud Torahs were cognizant of these important educational factors and emphasized in their school programs Hebraic and traditional values and educational goals which have made the Talmud Torah an important institution in American Jewish education which has assumed great importance in Jewish education until the present time. They emphasized a maximum Jewish education program of studies based on Hebraic and religious subject content. This ideal has assumed importance to some extent in our present-day educational thinking and planning.

However, the Talmud Torah curriculum did not unite the various elements of its course of study into an harmonious and well-integrated whole. As Dr. Chipkin points out, "it was not expressive of the

\(^{1}\) Chipkin, *op. cit.*, p. 125.
culturally and spiritually integrated American Jewish group life. ¹
Neither did the Talmud Torah curriculum take into consideration completely the interests and needs of the American Jewish child. It also did not correlate entirely the subject matter taught in the classroom with that of the American Jewish and general environment. It was mostly a literary curriculum and unrelated to actual communal life. It did not utilize the interests of the American Jewish child to a large extent in instruction for the type of course of study and educational philosophy it pursued made it difficult to emphasize such factors in relation to the instruction provided.

The course of study that the Talmud Torah provided was deeply rooted in Jewish tradition but it also contained "modern" elements although it was not adjusted to all the needs of the American Jewish child and to the American community in which he lived. Such new and "modern" subjects as Hebrew and Hebrew literature, Jewish history and Hebrew and Jewish songs and Zionism were part of the Talmud Torah curriculum.

However, the goals of the American Talmud Torah program did not provide positive instruction in the intelligent and meaningful participation of the American Jewish child in the life of the Jewish community. Learning for its own sake except for its practical religious values as was emphasized by the Talmud Torah philosophy could only be mastered as an objective of a select minority. Jewish institutions, communal and

¹Chipkin, op. cit., p. 99.
national, with their organizational goals and achievements should have been elements to be emphasized as well and not merely the mastery of the literary and religious practices no matter how great their importance.

Although its greatest difficulty was its inability to hold its pupils for long periods of time, due to demographic and sociological influences and these were the main causes for its decline, the American Talmud Torah, nevertheless, achieved many important educational goals. It inculcated in the hearts and minds of its pupils a love and reverence for Jewish traditions, Palestine and for the Hebrew language and literature. It supplied an increasing number of students for Hebrew high schools, for teachers' institutes and rabbinical seminaries and it became a model for other types of religious schools to imitate. Among these was the congregational school and Hebrew day-school which adopted some of its educational philosophy and course of study.

Dr. Benderly looked upon the Talmud Torah "as the most significant educational institution in America since it had the potential of coping with the large numbers in the congested Jewish centers and it was theoretically able to adopt and adapt the methods and externals of the public schools."¹ Not only was the Talmud Torah supplementary to the public school but it successfully adopted some of the administrative techniques and some of its new methods of teaching. Among these

¹Benderly, op. cit., p. 4.
were the phonetic method in teaching reading, visual aids and extra-curriculum activities.

The Talmud Torah was also the most popular school of its day, so far as numbers and achievements are concerned. It was the most representative of mass interest in Jewish education. "Its roots are imbedded in the Jewish tradition of learning from which it derives its vitality."\(^1\) It was an outgrowth of the American Jewish consciousness in whose stream European and American Jewish Hebraic, Zionist and religious philosophical currents were mixed.

The tenacious attachment of the Talmud Torah to traditional values was expressed in its insistence on the study of the Hebrew language, of the prayer book and Bible in the original, on the celebration of Jewish festivals and on the regard for religious practices. The historical experiences and yearning of the Jewish people were expressed in its philosophy by the inclusion in its curriculum of Jewish history, literature and Palestine lore and activity. The instructional aims of the Talmud Torah were to motivate in the pupils a desire to appreciate Jewish spiritual and cultural ideals and to develop in them loyalty to Jewish religious concepts and observances. These formed the basic elements of its synthetic educational philosophy.

Its course of study was, however, overweighed with linguistic elements and too much time, relatively speaking, was spent in teaching

\(^1\)Chipkin, op. cit., p. 9.
mechanical reading of the prayer book and in teaching Hebrew and Hebrew literature with content subjects such as Jewish history, Jewish religious and ethical concepts and Jewish current events relegated to a small proportion of the program. Similarly, general aspects of Jewish life and the general needs of the child were but slightly touched upon. It needed a broader and more rounded curriculum although it did not have too much time at its disposal.

The Talmud Torah, therefore, failed to give the Jewish child an all-round Jewish education. Certain studies were emphasized while others were neglected or not given enough emphasis. However, the Talmud Torah was successful in the purpose for which it was organized in spite of its failures. It succeeded in developing in the child the kind of Judaism that was needed in the type of life that the parents of the children followed. It tried to produce a cultured Jew or an "edeler Yid" by opening to the child the main sources of Hebrew culture and religion.

Despite its failures, pitfalls and shortcomings, the Talmud Torah in America has earned great merit through its pioneering efforts and experimentations and through the faith it commanded by its many educators, parents, and leaders.

It was this faith in its Hebraic-religious educational philosophy and program of studies that made the Talmud Torah in America an outstanding educational institution for many decades. Its philosophy can best be understood as representing an harmonious synthesis of the
religio-nationalism ideology of the East European Talmud Torah on one hand combined with the Hebraic and Zionist elements of the European Heder Metukan on the other in addition to improvements made in its schedule, methodology and administration as a result of the Jewish and general American environments. It was this successful fusion of traditional religious subjects with that of modernism in the sense of Hebraic and Zionist studies that enabled the American Talmud Torah to flourish for many decades in America and to influence thereby future Jewish educational planning and systems in this country up to our own day.
APPENDIX A

CASE STUDIES

A. Bronx YMHA Talmud Torah

Organization

The Bronx YMHA was established in 1909 by its first president, Julius Tobias. It was primarily organized as a community center designed to serve the entire community culturally and recreationally. Its facilities and general program were very appropriate for effective and efficient training of the Jewish youth in the neighborhood.

At that time, there were only three schools in the vicinity of the Bronx "y" offering a course of Jewish studies for children. Two were Hebrew schools and one was a Yiddish school. These schools were, however, not sufficiently equipped to provide an adequate program of Jewish education for the American Jewish child. The disadvantages were the poor physical surroundings of these schools which were not conducive to a well-balanced program of Jewish education and the small number of pupils in these schools which made it impossible to organize...

1 See Appendix B for a detailed study of Talmud Torah Tifereth Israel of Brooklyn, N.Y., based on an oral interview with Dr. Shmuel Linik, its principal for many years.
2 Constitution of the Bronx "Y".
all the needed classes and to classify the children properly nor could they follow any sort of standardized curriculum. They also could not engage in children's activities which would help in the building of proper attitudes and dispositions. Because of the lack of a sufficient number of children, clubs and other activities could not be properly conducted by these three schools. There were also large numbers of Jewish children in the neighborhood who could not be reached by any of these existing schools and did not, therefore, receive a Jewish education of any sort. It was felt that a Jewish community school was needed within their reach that would provide all suitable educational and recreational activities, and that would also offer an all-round program of Jewish studies. Since Jewish education was recognized by the "Y" leadership as being an integral part of the type of cultural program which a community center should engage in for the welfare of the community, a Talmud Torah or Hebrew school was, therefore, established in 1919 as part of its educational offerings to the community. It tried to integrate the Hebrew school with its general activities and to consider the educational work of its Talmud Torah as part of its general program. Consequently, the lay and professional leaders of the Bronx "Y" have seen fit to conduct a Hebrew

2 Bronx YMHA Board Minutes, May 14, 1919.
school in the form of a Talmud Torah up to 1953 when, because of a low registration of pupils it closed its doors.

During the time of its existence, however, the "Y" integrated the Hebrew school program with its youth work to such an extent that it established a Pioneer Division in 1945 for children between the ages of eight and fourteen for the purpose of implementing the Hebrew school work with a program of activities that would be both educational and recreational in nature. It was hoped that this Pioneer Division would influence school children who were enrolled in the various clubs to want to attend the Talmud Torah and receive a more intensive Jewish education. In this Pioneer Division, school children spend an extra hour either before or after the classroom period for additional educational and recreational activities.

This combined program was beneficial to both the Talmud Torah and the "Y". Meetings were held of the staffs of the school and of the clubs in an effort at coming to grips with problems of mutual interest.

The "Y"'s first home was at the corner of Boston Road and East 165th Street in the Bronx. In 1916 with immigration and a continual stream of Jews into the area which in 1916 had risen to 211,000 according to estimates made public by the Board of Jewish Social Research, a

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1 Bronx YMHA Board Minutes, Sept.21,1945.
2 Bronx YMHA Board Minutes, Sept.30, 1945.
substantial building was bought at Franklin Avenue and East 169th Street. This was remodeled and provided a small gymnasium, club rooms and an auditorium and classrooms for the Talmud Torah which grew to include 200 children. In 1921, the facilities at the Franklin Avenue building became totally inadequate because of the large number of students enrolled in the Talmud Torah, and a new building was purchased on Fulton Avenue, the Bronx. In this new building the enrollment increased further so that by 1924 the total registration in the Talmud Torah reached a maximum of 800 pupils. From 1932 onward, the Talmud Torah continuously lost in enrollment every year so that by 1953, the Board of Directors of the "Y" decided not to open the Talmud Torah in their new location on the Concourse and East 167th Street. This was decided on since the Jewish population gradually moved to new neighborhoods and was replaced by a continuous stream of colored, Puerto Rican and other non-Jewish elements. The pupils of the Talmud Torah were shifted now to other Hebrew schools in the neighborhood.

The numerical decline of the Jewish population in the district can also be seen from the figures of the Jewish enrollment in the public schools of the area. In 1930, 75 per cent of the total school population was Jewish;

1 History of the Bronx "Y" in The Jewish Review, April 21, 1949.
in 1940, the percentage dropped to 49.2 per cent and in 1945 to 30.5 per cent.

Thus, the Bronx YMHA school was a communal institutional Talmud Torah conducted under the auspices of the Bronx YMHA. It began in 1919 with a handful of pupils and two volunteers as teachers to become by 1940 one of the largest educational institutions of its kind not only in New York City but in America.

Physical Facilities

In the old quarters of the Bronx "Y" buildings, the Talmud Torah occupied spacious quarters on the first floor with the principal's office being part of the general administrative offices. However, with the "Y" moving to its new building on the Concourse, the school office was located on the third floor and the class-rooms occupying the second and fourth floors. The rooms were large and airy, sanitary facilities were satisfactory and the general physical surroundings were adequate. On the third floor there were a game room, a lounge, and a library so that the children had convenient places for their waiting period before or after classes. Thus, the physical set-up of the school was one of the best in the city.

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2 E. Bortniker, Survey of Bronx "Y" Talmud Torah, 1951, J.E.C. of N.Y.
3 Ibid.
Educational Philosophy

The educational goals of the Bronx "Y" Talmud Torah were the aims of the Talmud Torah conceptions of Jewish education in general. "The aim of the Talmud Torah of the YMHA is to transmit to the Jewish children of the community the cultural heritage of the Jewish people, the best teachings of the Jewish religion and a spirit of love and respect for things Jewish to the end that they may develop into better Jews and better American citizens."

The Talmud Torah of the Bronx "Y" tried to develop in the Jewish child a desire to participate intelligently as a Jew in his home, in his synagogue and in his community and to build up in the child a feeling of belonging to the Jewish group as a whole. In order to do so the Talmud Torah of the Bronx "Y" had a two-fold responsibility:

1. To promote such activities as would prepare the child for active participation in Jewish life, such as in club activities, assembly programs, holiday celebrations, school council, school choir and many other school activities that develop leadership and proper habits and attitudes towards things Jewish, and

2. To engage in a well rounded program of teaching which would give the child the Hebraic, Zionist and

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1 20th Anniversary Issue of the Bronx "Y", The Observer. Published by the Bronx YMHA, 1929.
cultural basis of his Jewishness through the medium of the Hebrew language.

The Bronx "Y" Talmud Torah thus tried to develop in the children the proper dispositions and attitudes, interests and abilities which they could receive in a school program based on the Hebrew language. For many years, therefore, the school program was Hebraic in nature and was being taught in Hebrew although because of the demands of the parents, Yiddish was also part of the school curriculum. Zionism or Jewish nationalism also played a large role in the school's educational program and ideology.

Finances

The Talmud Torah of the Bronx YMHA was mainly supported by tuition fees received from the parents of the children enrolled in its school. Although this source of income only provided it with about 60 per cent of its budget, it was able to meet its expenses by receiving a large allotment from the Jewish Welfare Board and from monthly receipts of its active Parents-Teachers Association. This group paid membership dues which helped sponsored many undertakings for the benefit of the Talmud Torah such as bazaars, theatre parties, picnics and raffles. However, most of its external support came from the Jewish Welfare Board which appropriated to it almost annually approximately $6000 of its funds.

1 Bronx "Y" Board Minutes, Jan. 14, 1934.
The Talmud Torah of the Bronx "Y" has also been the fortunate recipient of approximately $200.00 a month from the Jewish Education Association for a number of years until it was discontinued in 1929. This subvention enabled the Talmud Torah to provide for nearly sixty free cases. However, although its support was later diminished and eventually ceased from this source, the Jewish Education Association and later the Jewish Education Committee of New York have made available a number of prizes such as scholarships based on good attendance, progress in curriculum construction and improvement of physical facilities.

The Bronx "Y" provided the necessary budget for its Talmud Torah and carefully kept accounts of it. The Talmud Torah held for many years a record of the highest per capita cost per pupil. For example, during 1950-51, the cost per capita was $97.02 per pupil per year.

In spite of the decreased enrollment over the years, the changes in the income from tuition were relatively slight. For example, the income from tuition was in 1947 $4,584. This sum was collected mostly by a collector who was engaged for this purpose and who received ten per cent of the collections as against $5,158.00 in 1941. This occurred in spite of the fact that enrollment

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1 Bortniker, op. cit.
3 Bortniker, op. cit.
was only a third of that of 1941. It is obvious, there-
fore, that the tuition per child has increased substan-
tially over the years. This was because the pupils came
from homes of the middle income brackets and not only the
low group. The fees were paid in monthly installments
beginning with 1947 although previously payments were
made weekly.

The Talmud Torah always had a large percentage of
free pupils. In 1931, for example, it was 32 per cent
whereas in 1947 it was only 20 per cent. On the other
hand, the percentage of those paying $3.00 or more a month
rose from 1 per cent to 20 per cent during the same period.
The per capita cost had, however, risen sharply by 1947 in
view of the increase in the cost of teaching. It was close
to $30.00 per pupil in 1931 and $75.00 in 1947.

Departments and Classes

The Bronx "Y" Talmud Torah consisted for many years
of two divisions: (1) the Hebrew Division and (2) the
Extension Division. The curricula in these two divisions
differed, one being that of the more or less traditional
Talmud Torah; and that of the Extension Division consist-
ing primarily of studies of Jewish subjects in Yiddish
and in English.

1 Bortniker, ibid.
3 Bortniker, Survey of Bronx "Y" Talmud Torah.
The Extension Division was composed of pupils who came to the school at a somewhat older age, so that there was no likelihood that their stay in the school would be sufficiently long to cover the Hebraic curriculum.

The Hebrew Department consisted as of 1947 of eight classes. The Extension Division of four. While the Hebrew Department curriculum had been worked out for a course of study of six years or twelve terms, the organization of the school as of 1947 did not embrace the entire curriculum as a number of classes were missing.

The Table of Appendix B reveals a maldistribution especially in the lower grades. The beginners' class had children ranging in age from six to ten inclusively. The explanation for this situation is quite obvious. The relatively small number of pupils that enrolled at the beginning of the term did not permit the organization of more than one beginners' class which thus became the receptacle of all newcomers, regardless of age. In this respect, the situation was considerably worse in 1947 than in previous years when the Talmud Torah had a large enrollment. Thus, in the school's hey-day, the number of beginners' classes was considerably larger, as many as four and

1 Bortniker, Survey of Bronx "Y" Talmud Torah.
five beginners' classes having been opened allowing for proper age placement. However, attention should be called to the fact that in the course of time the older children who enrolled in the beginners' class were promoted to higher grades which made for greater homogeneity in the upper classes. The age distribution was, therefore, somewhat better in the higher classes because these pupils had been classified according to their ages in previous years when enrollment in the school was considerably greater.

The Extension Division was organized for the benefit of those pupils who could not do well in a Hebraic curriculum. The public school grades of the pupils were frequently used as a guide in such placement. Pupils who were retarded in public schools would be assigned to this division.

The Talmud Torah had consistently older graduates (14-15 year olds) than had most other Talmud Torahs in the country. More than half of the 1951 graduating class enrolled to continue in the Hebrew High School (Marsheliah) which met in the "Y" building as has been the rule for graduating classes many years past.

Up to 1923, the Bronx "Y" Talmud Torah held classes

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2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
from September to the end of June. However, beginning with the summer of 1923, the "Y" Board of Directors decided that the Talmud Torah should continue its sessions throughout the summers but making some adjustments in the curriculum and in the combination of classes.

**Enrollment**

The Bronx "Y" Talmud Torah began with five pupils in February, 1919, and wound up its activities for the season with 135 pupils.

Since the organization of the school in 1919 it had undergone remarkable growth. The maximum registration attained at the Franklin Avenue quarters was 104 pupils who were taught by one full-time teacher and one part-time teacher. In 1929 the registration was 750 and it was then considered the largest Hebrew school in the Bronx and one of the largest Talmud Torahs in the country. The school was looked to for leadership in educational methodology and curriculum construction.

A steady drop in the total registration is noticeable since 1935 when the total enrollment reached 800 pupils. In 1941, the approximate school enrollment was 680, in 1944 - 600; in 1946 - 193; in 1948 - 95 and in 1950 - 125. The decline in the school population seemed to have been

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1. Bronx "Y" Board Minutes, June 14, 1923.
2. Ibid., June 19, 1919.
intensified beginning with the middle 1930's. Only once
during the years 1937-1950 was there a rise in registra-
tion of 3 per cent from 1939 to 1940. On the other hand,
the decline since 1935 had been very substantial, the
drop being as high as 30 per cent from 1943 to 1944.

The Extension Division had 93 pupils in 1943 and 61
pupils in 1947. Compared with 1943, then, the total en-
rollment in 1947 was 40 per cent of the enrollment of 1943,
while the Hebrew Department was 30 per cent of its 1943
size. It might be pointed out at this juncture that a
similar situation existed in all Talmud Torahs in Greater
New York and throughout the country.

The 1947 Jewish Education Committee Report on the
Bronx "Y" Talmud Torah points out that 40 per cent of its
student body attended the "Y" Talmud Torah for more than
two years and that the largest age group were the eleven-
year-olds, emphasizing the fact that the school was not
merely a Bar Mitzvah preparation school. The report also
points out that as of 1947 boys became a large majority of
the school's student body (70 per cent) whereas previously
boys and girls had been more evenly balanced.

In 1948, the school year ended with fewer than
100 pupils. The situation had improved somewhat so
that by 1950 the enrollment was 125. This came about

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1 Ibid.
2 Ibid.
through a greater interest of the "Y" in the Hebrew school. However, in the following years, the management of the "Y" was convinced that the school must continue its rapid decline and as indicated eliminated it completely in 1953 when it had only 74 pupils.

Supervision and Administration

The Bronx "Y" Talmud Torah nominally functioned under the auspices of a school board. Actually, however, this board hardly met at all. Its chairman met from time to time with the director of the "Y" and with the principal of the school to discuss school matters at various times. But the actual administration and supervision of the school were left completely in the hands of the principal.

The Talmud Torah had outstanding educators as principals such as Dr. Oscar Janowsky who served as head of the school from 1925 to 1929 and who was followed by Dr. David Rudavsky and Oscar Divinsky who served as members of the teaching staff before their appointments to the administrative post. The last principal until the Talmud Torah closed its doors in 1953 was Mr. Elihu Klopman.

The principal was in charge of all administrative matters of the school. He was effectively assisted in actual implementation of his duties by the "Y" management. Adequate records were kept concerning all pertinent matters
of the school such as enrollment, class schedules, staff
meetings, assembly programs and tests and pupil progress
and attendance records.

Supervision of teacher-functioning was limited par-
ticularly to their class work and guidance for teachers
and supervision of their work was given by the principal
but in a limited degree.

The principal and the teachers were all licensed.
Only one unlicensed full-time teacher was employed by
this school since 1945.

The "Y" management and the school principal admin-
istered the school during the time of its existence fairly
efficiently with the School Board having complete confi-
dence in the principal.

Teachers

The teachers at the Bronx "Y" Talmud Torah through-
out its existence may be divided into two categories:
(a) those who were very skillful, efficient and effective
in their work and those (b) who while they performed their
duties satisfactorily were not inspired teachers. All of
them have had years of experience in teaching Hebrew schools
especially since 1945. Previously, some of the teachers,
especially those engaged for part-time work were student

1 Bortniker, Ibid.
2 Ibid.
teachers who had very little experience in the field and were unlicensed. However, the majority of the teachers were well equipped for their profession, many of them being graduates of a Hebrew Teachers College and having had a good general education as well. For about twenty years after its establishment, the Talmud Torah employed many teachers who were trained and received their teaching experience both abroad and in the United States. However, beginning with the 1930's many native-born American Jewish teachers were employed.

Many of the teachers of the Talmud Torah have been connected with it for a number of years. For example, the teachers employed as of 1947 have been with the institution for one, seven, and twenty-six years, respectively. In the seven years previous to 1947, three out of seven teachers left after a stay of only one year. However, only one such case occurred after 1945.

Teachers' salaries at the Bronx "Y" Talmud Torah have been for many years the highest in the city according to the number of hours taught. However, throughout the interval 1945-51, teachers' salaries have tended to be somewhat low in comparison to other Talmud Torahs and Hebrew schools in the city. Nevertheless, "they have consistently been the highest of all center schools."

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1 Twenty-first Anniversary Issue of the "Y", The Observer, 1930.
3 Bortniker, op. cit.
The maximal salary for full-time teachers in 1951, for example, was $3,167 per annum.

In its hey-day, the Talmud Torah employed in 1929 fifteen part and full-time teachers and it gradually decreased its staff because of a decrease in enrollment until it employed only two teachers in 1953 when it ceased its operations.

Curriculum

The curriculum of the Bronx "Y" Talmud Torah was a schematic one and was based on a curriculum that was popular in the communal Talmud Torahs. It was patterned after the curriculum of the Hebrew Principals Association of the Greater New York Talmud Torahs. Its outline was rich and ambitious and the school attempted to follow it and achieved remarkable results with it. The regular graduate of the school had a considerable knowledge of Hebrew, Bible in the original, a rich stock of information in Jewish subjects and a fair understanding of Jewish history, Palestine, American Jewish history and life and Jewish current events. The accomplishment in both Hebrew and other subjects was relatively high and compared favorably with the achievements in many of the outstanding

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1 Bortniker, op. cit.
2 Brond "Y" Board Minutes, June 19, 1953.
Talmud Torahs of New York City and throughout the country. However, beginning with 1947, owing to the decline in enrollment and in reduced hours of instruction as compared to previous years, a somewhat outdated "intensive" curriculum was nominally adhered to. But it was difficult to follow in practice because the shrinkage in enrollment resulted in the forced combination of classes and the inability, therefore, to adhere completely to the course of study as prescribed by the school curriculum. Nevertheless, relative to other similar schools the "Y" school made good progress, and notable successes were attained in Hebrew. Hebraic elements were strongly emphasized and in the upper grades the language of instruction was almost exclusively Hebrew. While the curriculum provided for the teaching of all the basic subject areas, the greatest success of this Talmud Torah was in Hebrew with supplementary Hebrew reading of the Friedland series of stories and of the children's Hebrew magazine, Hadoar Lanoar, as common practice. Some of the other areas, however, were relatively neglected or were taught in a non-stimulating manner with Jewish history the weakest subject.

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1 Twenty-fifth Anniversary Issue of the Bronx "Y", The Observer, 1934.
2 Bortniker, op. cit.
3 Ibid.
In 1944, Yiddish was introduced as a subject of study in the curriculum upon requests from the parents, with 45 minutes being devoted to it per week. The rest of the time was devoted to Hebrew, review of the weekly Sidrah, reading of selections from the Prophets and Psalms and an intensive study of Jewish history and customs and ceremonies — all in English. In addition, the study of the Siddur and the meaning of the important prayers and blessings was also undertaken.

The curriculum of the regular Hebrew Department also provided for the study of the Pentateuch with the Rashi commentary, Ethics of the Fathers, Hebrew literature and songs and melodies.

The Talmud Torah offered a special three-year course in its Extension Division for the children between the ages of eleven and fourteen who were too old to begin the regular course. This included the following subjects: Jewish history, Yiddish, Bible translation, study of Jewish movements and American Jewish community life, Hebrew and Siddur.

Extra-curricular activities played an important part in the pedagogic process of the Talmud Torah. The choir, Junior Congregation, dramatics, clubs, and the school paper constituted only a few of the varied opportunities.

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1 Thirty-fifth Anniversary Issue, The Observer, 1944.
2 Twentieth Anniversary Issue, The Observer, 1929.
offered the student for satisfying expression in a Jewish environment.

The discipline of the school, while it was not harsh or severe, nevertheless was sufficient to imbue the child with respect for his Hebrew school, comparable in many respects with that of the public school.

In the words of Oscar Janowsky, its principal for some years, the school through its curriculum "did not merely aim to develop fluency in the Hebrew language or dexterity in finding and reading the prayers. It aimed to bring up Jews. It aimed to impart to the children an appreciation of the meaning of the liturgy, of the spirit of the Bible, an acquaintance with the Jewish heroes and with the general continuity of Jewish history and with the fundamentals of Judaism."

Methodology

It might be pointed out that with regard to the method of instruction, the teaching of certain subjects seemed to be rather mechanical. Little attempt was made to give these subjects of instruction a rich meaning, sufficient motivation and purposefulness.

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1 Oscar Janowsky, in "The Eye" (Center magazine of the "Y"), April 29, 1923.
2 Ibid.
Judging from the Jewish Education Committee report on the school there seemed to be no motivation of reading of prayers, no explanations and comments regarding ideas expressed in the content of prayers and there was no integration of ideas contained in the prayerbook with other school subjects. There was also no proper stimulation and motivation as to the content and of the ideas expressed in the Bible, Prophets and Jewish history. There was a lack of purposeful interpretation of the material as it is relevant to a meaningful understanding of Jewish life and Judaism.

The method employed in the Hebrew Division was the natural method or Ivrit Be-Ivrit. However, for Jewish History and Jewish Current Events as well as Bible stories in the lower grades, English was used. In the Extension Division all subjects were taught in English except Hebrew.

Mechanical and technical aids to proper teaching were also not sufficiently utilized by the school such as all types of visual aids (slides, films, maps, pictures, etc.).

However, in spite of these methodological deficiencies, the J.E.C. conducted at the school in 1947 three types of standard tests with the pupils being tested in Jewish history, customs and ceremonies, Hebrew and Bible. The results tabulated showed that the scholastic achievements of the students at the school compared very favorably with those of other Talmud Torahs in Greater New York. Their average score was approximately the same as that of the Talmud Torahs in Brooklyn and Manhattan that followed the same curriculum.
School Activities

In addition to the activities of the different general and Hebrew clubs of the Bronx "Y" itself including the Pioneer Division, the Talmud Torah provided instruction in Jewish music. A special music teacher was engaged for that purpose. It also conducted Junior Congregational services on the Sabbath and Jewish festivals and published periodically a children's magazine in which the pupils expressed their literary talents in Hebrew and in English on Jewish topics derived mostly from their studies at the school.

There were also general school activities such as assembly programs to celebrate Jewish festivals and important events and class celebrations.

The school also had a very active P.T.A. which met regularly to discuss school problems and to raise funds for the school. The school and its P.T.A. both were very active in community activities and frequently participated in undertakings organized by the Jewish Education Committee of New York and by the Bronx Council for Jewish Education such as in registration drives, J.N.F. rallies and in educational conferences.

The P.T.A. supported the school in the form of membership dues and collections received from bazaars and raffles. It particularly cared for many free students who were unable to pay tuition fees. For example, in 1934,
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the P.T.A. cared on the rolls of the school for 200 free students. It also undertook a program of self-education so that its members would be in a better position to supplement the training of the school. Lectures and discussions on Jewish education and Jewish life were part of its program.

B. Machzikei Talmud Torah of Boro Park

This educational institution is not only one of the oldest Talmud Torahs in America but is one of the fortunate ones still to be in existence today. Although it has undergone numerous changes and has declined in enrollment figures as have other Talmud Torahs in the country, it has managed, however, to operate still as a progressive yet traditional Hebrew school in New York City. As of 1960, it still had a registration of about 200 pupils which is comparable to many other communal and congregational schools in the city.

This Talmud Torah, like many others in New York City and throughout the country, reached its peak in enrollment and progress in the middle 1930's. Yet because of the migration of the Jews in its area to other sections in the city, it suffered like other Talmud Torahs a gradual decline in registration and in educational progress. However, because a good deal of its neighborhood still remained

\[1\] Twenty-fifth Anniversary Issue of the Bronx "Y", The Observer, 1934.
Jewish, it still can function today as a prominent educational institution.

The Machzikei Talmud Torah of Boro Park can serve as a good example of how the eastern European Jewish immigrants imbued with the ideals of Judaism and Jewish education tried to transmit their Jewish heritage to the young by establishing a community Talmud Torah. A similar process also took place at about the same time throughout New York City and in many other cities in the country by the establishment of many Talmud Torahs that had similar problems of organization, curriculum planning and financing as the Machzikei Talmud Torah. A study of the organization and operation of the Machzikei Talmud Torah could shed a great deal of light as to how other similar educational institutions took shape, were organized and functioned and later declined due to the same influences and currents that existed throughout New York City and in the country.

It is interesting to note how the Machzikei Talmud Torah was organized from a perusal of its Pinkas or the minutes of its Board of Directors.

Beginning with the 1890's many Jews came to the United States from eastern Europe and settled mostly in New York City and in other large cities in America. Many of these immigrants settled in the old Jewish sections in New York City including the Boro Park section of Brooklyn. Before 1904 when serious consideration was given by a
group of prominent Jews in this section for the establishment of a communal school to take care of the Jewish educational needs of the young of that community, Jewish parents were satisfied with the educational system then prevailing in the neighborhood. They sent their children for a smattering of Jewish education to private schools, or they engaged a tutor for the boys a short while before becoming Bar Mitzvah. These teachers as the Pinkas of the Machzikei Talmud Torah points out considered themselves specialists in the type of Hebrew used in the Galicia, Lithuania, Rumania and Russia, places where many of these immigrant Jews came from. These teachers also claimed to be able to convey to their pupils all of the Jewish studies in a relatively short time, as in a few years or even in three months. They charged only from ten to twenty-five cents an hour depending on how popular these teachers were with the parents. Many of the parents were, however, gullible enough to have their children educated by these so-called professional teachers especially when it came to the Bar Mitzvah training of their sons. Under such circumstances, the parents considered this type of teacher as God-sent to absolve them from giving their children a thorough and intensive Jewish education.

As the Pinkas point out the Bar Mitzvah teachers charged a little more than the other type of teachers and considered themselves the "aristocracy" of the teaching fraternity.
This situation continued for more than a decade in the Boro Park section of Brooklyn as it was prevalent throughout New York City. Then on one Saturday morning in 1904 after the morning services in the Beth El synagogue in Boro Park one of the most prominent and idealistic Jews invited the entire congregation to partake of Kiddush refreshments. Among the invited guests was a Samuel Zevi Wein known as the "Rabbi of Wizon." He asked one of the boys there if he was Bar Mitzvah and the lad answered, "Yes, now I am absolved of all of this plague (Tzarah). That is a matter for greenhorns, not me." The father of the boy then added that the American children will not be "batlanim" or waste their lives away like the old generation of Jews.

These remarks by the father and son described briefly the state of affairs prevalent in Jewish education in the community and made those present at the "Kiddush" realize that something drastic had to be undertaken to save the future of the Jewish community in Boro Park. Rabbi Wein and the others present at this convocation then expressed their beliefs and aspirations that "the time has come for them to establish a Talmud Torah in the community if not even our memories are bound to be forgotten by our sons." ¹

Due to the effort, exhortation and inspiration engendered by the Rabbi of Wizon and a few other prominent

¹ Pinkas of the History of the Machzikei Talmud Torah, 1904.
individuals of the community and with a strong will and desire on their part they were able to attract support for their idea and plans of some more people in the community. Thus it came about that after two years of such arduous labor a room was rented with a family for the purpose of operating it as a classroom. A teacher was then engaged to conduct this class. However, until pupils were solicited and registered, the teacher resigned and when a substitute was engaged it was found that only a handful of children were registered.

Later the family of Aharanson that was very prominent in the community joined this effort and undertaking to establish a Talmud Torah for the Jewish children of Boro Park. An important meeting was then held in Rabbi Wein's house at which were present R. Shalom Aharanson, his son Meyer and his father-in-law, Sh. Friedland and two other prominent Jews of the community, Sh. Rabatzki and Sh I. Silverman. After much discussion this group of Jewish leaders of Boro Park decided to open in the community a Talmud Torah as a permanent educational institution. Thus, in the beginning of 1907 a school was opened in the name of the Machzikei Talmud Torah in a room that was rented for this purpose in a house on 1140 40th Street. A teacher was engaged to conduct the school at eight dollars a week. At the same time, a ladies' auxiliary was established by some prominent

1 Ibid.
women of the community to help support the new institution. On opening day eight children registered of the ages nine to thirteen among whom was also a fifteen year old boy who wished to learn the Hebrew alphabet. The remainder registered knew a little of reading in the Siddur. In addition to reading and writing, the teacher taught also a little of Humash. That included the whole program of Jewish studies at that time when the school was in its infancy. However, the parents in the community did not take to it and the enrollment was not increased. In fact, after two weeks of operation the enrollment decreased to two pupils. It was due to this situation that the new school was on the verge of closing its doors again. However, a strenuous effort was made by all the members of its Board of Directors who girded themselves to the task of canvassing for pupils by house to house visits. They were successful in this attempt and managed to bring new pupils into the Talmud Torah. Thus, in 1908, the Talmud Torah had more than 100 children and three teachers with one of them serving as teacher and principal as well as secretary of the school.

Now that the school grew in size a curriculum was drawn up with a complete course of studies for each of the

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1 Machzikei Talmud Torah Board Minutes, November 15, 1908.
four classes that met five times a week for a total of ten hours of instruction. This was not a difficult undertaking since the principal of the school, A. Kilson, was a prominent educator who was well qualified for his task. However, there were different points of view as to methodology which was basic to the aims and purposes of the Talmud Torah. Up to 1911 the method used in teaching was Ivrit Be Anglit. This was instituted in order to attract more pupils. However, since the school was now to be considered as a permanent institution, some of the members of the Board of Directors, especially the young members who were Hebraic minded such as Meyer Aharanson and Solomon Friedland, demanded that the natural method or Ivrit Be-Ivrit should be the basis for instruction at the school. Their efforts, however, were unsuccessful and they had to wait a number of years for its realization.  

Under Kilson's supervision of the school the Talmud Torah made great progress in enrollment and in scholastic achievements. In his time the school received a form of an established and permanent large institution. Since many Jews were now moving into Boro Park, the number of pupils enrolled at the Talmud Torah increased continuously so that the school could not continue to hold its classes

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1 Board Minutes of Machzikei Talmud Torah, October 10, 1911.
in rented homes. In 1912, therefore, after four years of wandering, the Talmud Torah moved into a building of its own on 43rd Street where the school has been located until today.

The increase in enrollment was so great by 1912 that the school had at that time an enrollment of 250 pupils divided into seven classes and employed three teachers on its instruction staff in addition to a principal who also taught part-time.

The Machzikei Talmud Torah was so popular and grew in such size in a relatively short time that the directors tried to seek larger quarters and decided to buy property and erect a new building in Boro Park that will have many classrooms, an auditorium and up-to-date improvements for the pupils including a gymnasium with shower baths.

Its educational progress even as of this early date of its existence can be judged from a report on the Talmud Torah given in the American Hebrew. "Although the school has been organized but a comparatively short time, the children have made substantial progress. Those in the highest class

1 Machzikei Talmud Torah Board Minutes, May 20, 1912.
2 Brooklyn Eagle, September 2, 1912.
3 Ibid, September 20, 1912.
can translate many passages of the Books of Moses on sight. This is an accomplishment that few children in some of the so-called progressive Talmud Torahs can claim. Many of the children can translate with ease difficult English sentences into perfect Hebrew - and discuss intelligently the grammatical rules of the language. Its success is due to its capable teachers and principal and to the wise management of its Board of Education.¹

The young members of the Board of Directors now resumed their demands for changes in the supervision and methodology of the school. After much discussion as to the better method with the old members opposing the natural method, the young Machilim members had a majority. Thus, in 1912, Kilson resigned as principal and in his place was engaged Rabbi Sh.Y. Finkelstein. There was then instituted the new Ivrit Be-Ivrit method as the ideology and basis for instruction of the school. ² However, the acceptance and the ground for such a transformation was not well prepared and in the beginning this new method did not take well. The result was that in 1913 Finkelstein left after only one year and in his place came Ch.A. Goldin and the old Ivrit Be-Anglit method was again instituted.³

² Board Minutes of the Machzikei Talmud Torah, June 10, 1912.
³ Machizikei Talmud Torah Board Minutes, Feb. 24, 1913.
However, in the summer of 1917 Goldin left and with his departure the question of methodology arose again. The young members of the Board won again over the old and in the beginning of winter 1917 Sh.I. Borowsky became principal and the Ivrit BeIvrit method was again instituted. Borowsky organized the teachers into an education committee and with the support of the younger elements of the Board the Ivrit BeIvrit method became the accepted and dominant factor of the school. It has remained so up to the present time. During his tenure as principal a new modernized building was added to the school in 1920 and good progress was made in enrollment, scholarships and in the general progress of the school.

In 1923 Borowsky left and B. Yoffe became the principal. However, this was only a transition period because in October 1924 Dr. Simon Ginzberg became the head of the school. A complete program of intensive Jewish studies was then instituted by him. The result of these reforms was that the Machzikei Talmud Torah became in time the foremost Jewish elementary educational institution in New York City and one of the greatest in the country.

The Talmud Torah now had two buildings. One was built in 1912 and the other was dedicated on October 22, 1922. Both buildings contained seventeen classrooms and a kindergarten room, a high school room, administration.

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1 Machzikei Talmud Torah Board Minutes, Oct.10,1917.
2 Machzikei Talmud Torah Board Minutes, Oct.21,1924.
offices and two auditoriums for assemblies and Junior congregational services and the other for the men's services.

The school made its greatest progress during the next decade with the enrollment for that period varying from 400 to 900 pupils per year. It reached its peak of enrollment in 1921 when it had 900 pupils. That year and a few years after that, the school had an enrollment of about 850 to 900 pupils with two-thirds being boys and one-third girls. The school had a staff during those years of fourteen permanent full-time teachers besides a kindergarten, a Bar Mitzvah and a music teacher. There were also two teachers in the high school division during the year 1921.

The budget for 1921 amounted to $45,000 with tuition fees taking care of one-half of the budget of the school since many children were either completely free cases or they paid only half of the estimated tuition fee. The other half of the budget was met by the Ladies Auxiliary contributions, financial support received from the Federation of Jewish Charities, allotments granted to it by the Jewish Education Association, from membership dues and donations and from synagogue dues and donations.

The part that free cases played in the income of the

1 Machzikei Talmud Torah Board Minutes, Nov.7,1922.
2 Machzikei Talmud Torah Board Minutes, July 19, 1921.
3 Machzikei Talmud Torah Board Minutes, Sept.11,1921.
Talmud Torah budget and income during its first few decades of existence can be judged by the fact that in 1917, when the school had on its registry 573 pupils, income received from tuition fees totaled only $357.40 with the fees divided at the following rates: 2 - $3; 42 - $2; 24 - $1.50; 4 - $1.25; 140 - $1; 14 - $0.75; 16 - $0.65; 131 - $0.50 and 200 were free cases. It was then resolved by the Board of Directors of the school to establish $3.00 as a fixed and standard rate for tuition per month in order to increase the income.

As far as the income received from membership dues was concerned, about 500 members that belonged to the Talmud Torah paid from $3.00 to $25.00 a year but of this number about 400 paid on the average $4.00 a year as membership dues. The approximate income from this source for the year 1925 was $2,639 and the income from the 215 members of the Ladies Auxiliary that paid $3.00 a year as dues for the same year was about $700.00.

During these early years of its existence, the Machzikei Talmud Torah was in effect controlled by its Board of Directors. Theoretically, it was responsible only for the proper collections of the various sources of income for the institution to meet its annual budget and to listen to reports from its Board of Education chairman, as to the

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1 Machzikei Talmud Torah Board Minutes, May 8, 1917.
2 Machzikei Talmud Torah Board Minutes, May 20, 1925; Ladies Auxiliary Minutes, June 4, 1925.
general progress of the school. Actually, however, because of the lack of interest in the affairs of the school on the part of the members of the Board of Education, the Board of Directors assumed its powers as well and regulated and controlled in time all the affairs of the school. Complaints were continually made at the Board of Directors' meetings that the Board of Education did not attend to its duties and that their meetings were not attended regularly, and that all the work was left to the principal himself. He acted on his own responsibility in the absence of activity on the part of the Board of Education or even of its chairman.

The Board of Directors of the school had hundreds of members so that by 1935 when the Talmud Torah was at its peak in enrollment and achievements the total membership reached approximately 500. In addition, because it was a communal institution it resolved to solicit the financial and moral support of the various large congregations in its neighborhood by allowing each of these congregations to be represented on its councils by two representatives.

However, in spite of its large membership, its work was divided among only a few standing and special committees with relatively few members serving on each. Such were,

1 Machzikei Talmud Torah Board Minutes, Apr.19, 1928.
2 Machzikei Talmud Torah Board Minutes, Dec.9, 1916.
for example, the Finance Committee, the Library Committee, the House Committee, and the Journal Committee. The largest representation was, however, on the Board of Education which had over 200 members but met infrequently with most of its actual work done by a few devoted members. Even the Board of Directors in spite of its large membership met only once a month and occasionally bi-monthly and not more than fifteen members attended its meetings.  

The principal practically had a free hand in the management of the school with some assistance being given to him by the chairman of the Board of Education. In the absence of the chairman of the School Board, the principal reported to the Board of Directors on all the affairs and activities of the school. Such a situation existed for years at this school and is not representative of the activities of the Board of Education at other Talmud Torahs. They were actually controlled and managed by their School Board with the principal merely carrying out their orders. At the Machzikei Talmud Torah, however, the principal was in complete charge of its affairs; such a situation has continued until the present time.  

The best qualified teachers were employed by this institution and the best salary and terms of employment 

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1 Machzikei Talmud Torah Board Minutes, Feb.19,1937.
2 This information was given to me by Rabbi Hochberg, its present principal.
were offered to them. However, during the first World War and during the years of the depression and its aftermath, when the school suffered a great reduction in its income, there were many occasions when salaries to the teachers, principal and office staff were not paid regularly. On August 14, 1915, the principal reported, for example, to the Board of Directors that salaries to teachers were eight weeks overdue. Again the principal reported such a situation to the Board of Directors on June 11, 1931, and on March 10, 1934.

The difficult financial position of the Talmud Torah was somewhat alleviated when the Board of Directors at the suggestion of the representatives of the Ladies Auxiliary resolved to charge each child on the free list ten cents a week for tuition. It was also decided to ask the Brooklyn Federation of Jewish Charities to increase its financial support to the institution. After three months of negotiations this arrangement was granted.

In regard to the greater participation of the School Board members in the affairs of the school, the membership of the Board of Directors authorized a committee of two members of the Board of Education to visit the classes at least once a week. The members were to take turns on different weeks and to report their findings to the Board.

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1 Machzikei Talmud Torah Board Minutes, Aug. 19, 1915.
2 Machzikei Talmud Torah Board Minutes, June 11, 1931.
3 Machzikei Talmud Torah Board Minutes, Sept. 30, 1925.
4 Machzikei Talmud Torah Board Minutes, Jan. 11, 1925.
of Directors. However, visits to classrooms by committee members were instituted in 1914 and proved for many years thereafter unsuccessful since many of these committees were composed of but a few educated laymen who could understand proper methodology and pedagogics of teaching. Such visits could not, therefore, result in the submission to the Board of Directors of intelligent reports by these committees on their findings in the classes.

Beginning, therefore, with the new term of 1938, these visiting committees were entirely eliminated and periodical examinations were instituted by the principal at his suggestion to the School Board in order to better determine the progress and achievements of the school. This has been the method of testing and evaluating the progress of the school up to the present time.

Previous to this arrangement the principal also examined the children in each class in detail twice a year in addition to the weekly visits to the classes by committees. The principal's examinations were in every subject and took place in the middle of the year and at the end of the year. On the basis of these examinations the pupil's standing in his class was determined and his promotion decided. For example, promotional exercises

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2 Machzikei Talmud Torah Board Minutes, Oct. 21, 1924.
Machzikei Talmud Torah Board Minutes, Nov. 9, 1914, and May 17, 1937.
3 Machzikei Talmud Torah Board Minutes, Sept. 4, 1938.
4 Information supplied by Rabbi Hochberg, its present principal.
5 Machzikei Talmud Torah Board Minutes, Feb. 14, 1914.
were held towards the end of June 1914 and out of a total registration of 357 pupils as many as 270 pupils were promoted. Of these, 46 were skipped; and of the 87 that were left back, most were new pupils. These figures accentuated the great progress made by the Machzikei Talmud Torah even in those early years of its existence.

These promotional examinations by the principal took place toward the end of each of the three terms that the school operated on with a summer session included in its schedule of instruction.

Until 1914, the school did not have a regular and specific curriculum. The principal drew up such a curriculum at the beginning of each school year. This loose and irregular course of study included, depending on the grade, such subjects as reading, writing, Humash, Jewish History, Prophets, Aggadah, Mishnah, Hebrew language and Hebrew literature. However, in 1914, the principal was authorized by the Board of Directors to work out in conjunction with the teachers a standard curriculum for the coming year to be approved by the Board of Education. This curriculum with minor modifications has been the

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1 Machzikei Talmud Torah Board Minutes, June 19, 1914.
2 Board Minutes of Machzikei Talmud Torah, May 10, 1908.
3 Machzikei Talmud Torah Board Minutes, Oct. 21, 1914.
course of study of the Machzikei Talmud Torah up to the present time.

After the school had functioned for but a few years it organized separate classes for boys and girls. Some classes were in English, others were in Ivrit Be-Ivrit. Some were classes for younger children while others were for older. Some classes were for slow and others for brighter and more advanced students. Only two classes in the upper grades used the natural method while the rest of the school used the ordinary method. Each teacher was given a class program attached to his roll book by the principal directing him what subjects to teach and how much time to be allotted to each subject. He was held accountable for the work prescribed in the program which was drawn up by the principal with the approval of the Board of Education. This same procedure has persisted over the years down to the present. Not only is curriculum construction the entire responsibility of the principal but for many years the Board of Education conducted very few of the affairs of the school. The chairman of the Board of Directors and one or two other officers

1 See Appendix F for the curriculum of Machzikei Talmud Torah as of 1959-60.
2 Principal's Report to the Board of Directors, Oct. 4, 1913.
3 See Appendix E for school composition, as of 1959-60, and Appendix G for a sample class program, 1951. See Appendix H for a sample report card.
meet periodically with the principal and discuss the activities of the school. They undertake everything that requires action. This is accomplished outside of the meetings of the Board of Directors of the School Board. The principal just presents general reports at these Board meetings concerning the activities of the school.

The Ladies Auxiliary of the Talmud Torah has always been a powerful group and has influenced greatly the policies and affairs of the school. It was originally organized in 1908 "to support financially and morally the Machzikei Talmud Torah in every way possible. Its monthly collections from membership dues and other activities sponsored or conducted by it have since its organization been turned over to the Board of Directors for the support of the school. Its officers attended the Board of Directors' meetings and reported about their activities such as raffles, banquets, benefit parties, bazaars, picnics, etc. Members of the Ladies Auxiliary helped the school with its holiday celebrations and provided refreshments at assemblies and at Junior congregational services.

At the present time it has only about 200 pupils

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1 Minutes of Ladies Auxiliary, Dec.15, 1908.
2 Information supplied by Rabbi Hochberg, its present principal.
in both the elementary and high school departments. It has been on the decline since the middle 1930's due to the shifting of the population in its neighborhood to new localities. However, it has made great progress in the past and is continuing its high standard of progress in the present. It still maintains high educational standards and is still considered one of the greatest educational institutions in New York City.

1According to Rabbi Hochberg, its present principal.
APPENDIX B

TALMUD TORAH TIFERETH ISRAEL
OF BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

The following is a description of one of the oldest Talmud Torahs in New York City. Since records were carelessly kept by this institution it was necessary for me to obtain all the relevant data by a personal interview with Dr. Shmuel Linik who has a thorough knowledge of this Talmud Torah since he has been connected with it for the past fourteen years as its principal.

The Talmud Torah Tifereth Israel of East New York, Brooklyn, known as the Pennsylvania Avenue Talmud Torah, has been in existence for fifty-four years. It was originally organized by a group of Maskilim Jews from eastern Europe who because of their religious and educational beliefs were anxious to establish a religious school that would follow the curriculum, methodology and ideology of the Heder Metukan as it existed in eastern Europe.

These Jews were idealists and were dedicated to Jewish education in general and to the philosophy and ideology of the American Talmud Torah in particular as it came to the forefront of Jewish education in this country. Contrary to the purposes of many of the oldest Talmud
Torahs in this country, the Talmud Torah Tifereth Israel, although it is also one of the oldest in the country, was not established primarily for poor and orphaned children. Its doors were open to all types of children regardless of the economic status of their parents. It provided a Jewish education for rich and poor alike. All of its enrolled student body paid tuition fees. However, those unable to pay the full tuition fee paid a nominal fee in accordance with the economic position of the parents.

The original founders of this Talmud Torah took it upon themselves with the full cooperation and support of its first principal, Nahum Aharanski, to make this Talmud Torah one of the finest and most important not only in New York City but in the United States. It became a model to be imitated and envied by many other Talmud Torahs in the country. This may be attributed to the fact that throughout its existence it stood for a maximum Jewish educational program in the Ivrit Be-Ivrit method. Its entire curriculum, methodology and philosophy were imbued with the Hebraic spirit which was felt not only among its organizers and staff of teachers but what is even more important by its student body.

The Talmud Torah Tifereth Israel left its imprint not only on Jewish education in this country but had a great moral and intellectual influence on its students.
It numbered among its graduates many prominent rabbis, principals and teachers and outstanding communal leaders such as Rabbi Solomon Goldman, Dr. David Rudavsky, and so on.

In the last three decades, however, due to changes which have occurred in the social and economic position of its inhabitants, a good deal of its Jewish population, as it occurred in other densely populated areas in the city, moved to the suburbs. These demographic and sociological changes resulted in a severe reduction of its student body and a gradual decline in its progress. Instead of the over one thousand students that the Talmud Torah had three decades ago, it now numbers only about two hundred. However, during all the years of its decline, it maintained its high standards and it is still one of the few Talmud Torahs in the city that has remained loyal to its traditions of a maximum Jewish education.

As Dr. Linik, its present principal, has informed me, the Talmud Torah Tifereth Israel had in 1919 a Board of Education of ten active members. All dues-paying members were considered also members of the Board. These ten members were actually in charge of the affairs of the Talmud Torah. It had its own building on Pennsylvania Avenue, Brooklyn, which included facilities for classrooms, a synagogue, club rooms for its boys' congregation and administrative offices. It had in 1919 an enrollment
of about eleven hundred children with a staff of eleven teachers. Each teacher had three classes averaging from twenty-five to thirty-five children per class depending on whether it was a beginners or an advanced class. Each teacher taught from four to five hours a day and received $32.50 a week depending on the number of hours being taught. The principal received $55.00 a week and was not required to teach but only to supervise and administer the school.

The children whose parents were in a comfortable economic position paid four dollars a month for tuition while those of poor parentage paid from one to two dollars a month. Collectors obtained the tuition fees receiving for their labors ten per cent of the income. The budget for the year 1919 was approximately fifty thousand dollars with the Brooklyn Federation of Jewish Charities, with whom the Talmud Torah was an affiliated member, providing about eight thousand dollars annually. Other sources of income of this Talmud Torah included legacies and other individual contributions, special appeals in the synagogue on holidays for the Talmud Torah, theatre parties sponsored by the Ladies Auxiliary of the Talmud Torah, bazaars and raffles undertaken by its Ladies Auxiliary and income from its annual Journal, and donations
at the reading of the Torah in its synagogue and at the youth congregation services. It is interesting to note here that some of the other sources of income undertaken by other Talmud Torahs as noted in the text seem to be frowned upon by this Talmud Torah.

Although the synagogue was part of the Talmud Torah and was organized simultaneously with it, its rabbi was just another member of the Board of Education and interfered very little in its affairs.

The principal engaged and dismissed teachers with the approval of the Board. He had a wide latitude of powers to fulfill his duties as head of the school. However, members of the Board on their own initiative dropped into classes periodically, sometimes even daily, to examine the pupils but especially to observe the instruction by the teachers. They submitted reports at the Board meetings which were held once every month. The actual policies of the school were, however, first discussed at the staff meetings which the principal scheduled with his staff of teachers almost every other week. The principal then conveyed the proposals and suggestions of the staff to the Board and after some discussion the Board members made the final decisions for the principal to enforce.
Besides the sporadic visits to classes by the Board members, the principal very often visited classes to observe instruction and consulted with the teachers either privately or at staff meetings on his observations.

Although the principal had broad powers in this Talmud Torah to carry out his supervisory and administrative duties, very few permanent administrative records were kept by him or by the secretary of the Talmud Torah so that the writer could not find even a single record for his research on this subject. There was a great laxity in keeping for long periods of time any records of even a permanent nature.

Programming and the scheduling of subjects and their time of instruction were undertaken by the principal with the cooperation of the teachers at the staff meetings which were then submitted by the principal to the Board for its approval.

The curriculum was also drawn up first by the principal and his staff for the approval of the Board. As of 1919, the curriculum of this Talmud Torah constituted the following with the main emphasis on the study of the Bible and in the natural or Ivrit Be-Ivrit method for all instruction. Hebrew was not only the method of instruction but of all school activities and conversation.
in and outside of class. The curriculum was based on a ten hours a week schedule over a period of six years course of instruction. Classes were in session from September to the end of June four afternoons during the week from four to eight thirty in the evening in two-hour sessions and from nine to one thirty on Sunday mornings. Sessions were held on all legal holidays except Jewish holidays.

The daily sessions were then subdivided into periods allowing a certain number of minutes per period for each subject.

In the first grade, the curriculum called for reading (first mechanical from the Reshit Daath by M. Krynski followed by some prayers in the Siddur), writing (of alphabet and words) and Hebrew language (orally and in second half of school year from Bilshon Ami, part one). These subjects were equally divided as to time allotted for their instruction. Hebrew songs, Zionism and the traditional synagogue and holiday melodies were incorporated into the reading of the Siddur and Hebrew instruction. Bible stories (Sippuray Hatorah) were also given on Sunday mornings.

Second grade curriculum included: Siddur (most important prayers), Hebrew (Bilshon Ami, part two), Bible stories, songs and writing. In second half of year, Pentateuch (Beraishith by Sh.L. Gordon).
In the third grade the curriculum consisted of Siddur, a continuation of Humash Bereshith and Shemot by Gordon, Prophets (Joshua in the original) Rashi (in second half of year), Hebrew (Safah Chayah by Fishman and Lieberman, part I), and songs.

The fourth year curriculum included Siddur, Pentateuch (Vayikra and Bamidbar with the Rashi Commentary), Prophets (Judges and Samuel I), Hebrew (Safah Chayah) and songs.

In the fifth year, the students studied Siddur (according to daily services), Pentateuch (Devarim with Rashi), Prophets (Samuel II and Kings I), Hebrew (Safah Chayah, part III), and Mishnah (selections).

In the final year the students studied: Siddur (Services), Review of Pentateuch, Prophets (Kings II and Isaiah), Hebrew (Safah Chayah, part IV) and Talmud (Hamafkid or Hameniach).

The Talmud Torah also held graduation exercises annually and the graduating class issued a literary journal in Hebrew encompassing their literary efforts.

The school also issued a few times during the year a school newspaper, Itonenu, which contained many literary contributions by its student body, also all in Hebrew.

Jr. congregational services were held on each
Saturday morning and on Jewish holidays for which the teachers trained the cantors and the students to participate in the services. In addition, there were clubs and social events and a youth service conducted by a boys' congregation for all the youth of the neighborhood whose facilities were provided for by the Talmud Torah.
APPENDIX C
CLASS COMPOSITIONS OF BRONX "Y" TALMUD TORAH AS OF 1947

_Hebrew Division_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Glass</th>
<th>No. of pupils</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Teaching Time Daily</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1A</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>Mr. Grant</td>
<td>1 hr. 15 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2A</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7-11</td>
<td>Miss Levine</td>
<td>1 hr. 15 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7-11</td>
<td>Mrs. Saul</td>
<td>1 hr. 50 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4A</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7-11</td>
<td>Mrs. Grant</td>
<td>1 hr. 50 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4B</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7-11</td>
<td>Miss Reichman</td>
<td>1 hr. 15 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9-13</td>
<td>Mrs. Grant</td>
<td>1 hr. 15 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>Mrs. Saul</td>
<td>1 hr. 50 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11-14</td>
<td>Mr. Klopman</td>
<td>1 hr. 50 min.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_Extension Division_

| Ext.1 | 24            | 19   | 5     | 10-13| Miss Reichman | 1 hr. 15 min.       |
| Ext.3 | 24            | 11   | 11-13 |     | Mr. Klopman | 1 hr. 50 min.       |
| Ext.4 | 17            | 5    | 12    | 12-14| Miss Levine | 1 hr. 15 min.       |
| Ext.Grad. | 15 | 10    | 5   | 12-15| Miss Levine | 1 hr. 15 min.       |
APPENDIX D
BRONX "y" TALMUD TORAH CURRICULUM

Hebrew Department

Class 1A
a) Hebrew; Beth Israel to page 24
b) Prayers and Benedictions
c) Customs and Ceremonies
d) Stories from the Pentateuch in English
e) Writing

Class 1B
a) Hebrew; Sifri
b) Fluent Reading
c) Writing
d) Prayers, Benedictions
e) Customs and Ceremonies
f) Bible Stories (in English)

Class 2A
a) Hebrew; Scharfstein's History, Part I
b) Fluent reading
c) Prayers
d) Customs and Ceremonies
e) Bible Stories (in English)

Class 2B
a) Hebrew; Sifri, part 2
b) Fluent Reading
c) Prayers
d) Customs and Ceremonies
e) Humash - Pollack's Breshit - chapters 11-18
f) Jewish Current Events
g) Weekly Proverb
h) Hebrew Reading of Easy Stories
i) Jewish History (in English)

Class 3A

a) Hebrew; Sifri - part 2
b) Humash - Pollack's Breshit - chapters 19-31
c) Fluent Reading
d) Prayers
e) Customs and Ceremonies
f) Jewish History (in English, Soloff's part I, chapters 1-12)
g) Weekly Hebrew Proverb
h) Jewish Current Events

Class 3B

a) Hebrew; Scharfstein's History, part III
b) Humash - Pollack's Breshit, chapter 32 to end
c) Fluent Reading
d) Customs and Ceremonies
e) Jewish History (in English), Soloff's part I, chapter 13 to end
f) Jewish Current Events
g) Weekly Hebrew Proverb
Class 4A
(Beginning with this class all Hebrew studies were conducted completely in Hebrew.)
a) Hebrew; Scharfstein's History, part II
b) Humash - Pollack's Shemot
c) Prayers and their meaning
d) Customs and Ceremonies
e) Jewish History - Soloff's part II
f) Jewish Current Events (in English)

Class 4B
a) Hebrew; Sifri - part III
b) Humash - Pollack's Shemot and Vayikrah
c) Prayers and their meaning
d) Jewish History - Soloff's part III
e) Jewish Current Events (in English)

Class 5A
a) Hebrew; Sifri, part III
b) Humash - Pollack's Shemot and Vayikrah
c) Prophets - Joshua
d) Prayers and their meaning
e) Jewish History - Soloff's part III
f) General reading of Hebrew and English books especially Hadoar Lanoar
g) Jewish Current Events
Class 5B
a) Hebrew Sifri, part III
b) Humash - Pollack's Bami'dbar
c) Prophets - Judges
d) Prayers and their meaning
e) Customs and Ceremonies
f) Jewish History - Soloff's part III
g) Reading of Hebrew and English books especially Hadoar Lanoar
h) Jewish Current Events (in English)

Class 6A
a) Hebrew Composition, Grammatical Review
b) Humash-Pollack's Devorim and Rashi
c) Prophets - Judges and beginning of Samuel I
d) Prayers and their meaning
e) Customs and Ceremonies
f) Reading - Hebrew and English books - Hadoar Lanoar
g) Palestine and Zionism
h) Jewish Current Events (in English)

Class 6B
a) Hebrew composition and Grammar
b) Humash - Pollack's Devarim and Rashi
c) Prophets - Samuel I
d) Prayers and their meaning
e) Customs and Ceremonies
f) Reading - Hebrew and English books and Hadoar Lanoar
g) The Jews in America
h) Jewish Current Events (in English)
### APPENDIX E

**SCHOOL COMPOSITION OF MACHZIKEI**

**TALMUD TORAH - 1959-60**

197 pupils - 175 in elementary grades, 22 in High School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Pupils</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
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<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1B</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2A</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>H.S.1</td>
<td>13-15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.S.3</td>
<td>14-15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tot.10</td>
<td></td>
<td>197</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1A to 4A - Sun. to Thurs. - 1 1/2 hrs. each day
4B & 5 - Sun., Tues. & Thurs. - 2 hrs. each day
H.S.1 - Sun., Tues. & Thurs. - 2 hrs. each day
H.S.2 - Mon. & Wed. - 2 hrs. each day

Two full-time teachers teach 17 1/2 hours a week and four part-time teachers teach 7 1/2 hours weekly. One teacher in High School teaches ten hours weekly both classes.
APPENDIX F
CURRICULUM OF MACHZIKEI TALMUD
TORAH - 1959-60

Grade 1
a) Reading and Writing - Sefer Aleph Reshis-Doat
b) Prayers and Blessings - orally
c) Language - objects and simple sentences - orally and Shaar Haloshon, part I
d) History - orally - creation to Joshua; historical stories in connection with holidays
e) Customs and ceremonies - Sabbath and holidays
f) Meaning of prayers and blessings

Grade 2
a) Reading and writing - Siddur Shilo; writing short stories and sentences
b) Prayers and blessings - Sabbath prayers
c) Language - Beth Sifrenu I and Beth Yisrael I
d) Humash - Ani Loned Humash I to page 29
e) History - orally - Joshua to David. Also Soloff's How the Jewish People Grew Up
f) Customs and Ceremonies - Laws of the Sabbath, Tefillin, Tzizis, Mesuzah, etc.
g) Meaning of Prayers - Shemh, Ashray, etc.

Grade 3
a) Prayers - Morning service, parts of the Haggadah
b) Humash - Humashenu I
c) Language - Beth Sifrenu II
d) Writing - Hebrew compositions
e) Customs and ceremonies - Holidays and Sabbath laws and customs
f) History - Historiah Lilodim, part I
g) Grammar - Hebrew Grammar by S. Lichterman
h) Current Events - world over

Grade 4
a) Humash - Humashenu, part II and Humash Liladim - Shimot and Vayikra up to chapter 10.
b) Language - Historiah Liladim, part II to page 70
c) Grammar - plural of nouns and adjectives, conjugations of verbs in all tenses
d) Prayers - orally - silent prayer and Shema, kiddush, blessings, etc. Reading for fluency. Sabbath services
e) Customs and ceremonies - Review of all holidays
f) Current Events - world over

Grade 5
a) Prayers - Sabbath and holidays
b) Humash - Humash Le'talmidim by Pollack - the whole book of Leviticus
c) Prophets - N'viim Rishonin Me-kutzarim - Scharfstein
d) Language - Amenu, part I to page 36
e) History - Historiah Liladim, part II
f) Grammar - Rubinstein's Elements of Hebrew Grammar
g) Customs and ceremonies - Sabbath and holidays
h) Current Events - world over
## APPENDIX G

### PROJECTED CLASS PROGRAM

#### 1951

**MACHZIKEI TALMUD TORAH**

- **No. of Pupils - 19**
  - Boys 12
  - Girls 7
  - Age range 9-13

### Class schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of hours:</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>1 1/2 hrs.</td>
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<td>Total hours:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sessions per week:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ground to be covered:</td>
<td>Morning services, Sand., Fri.eve., services</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>No. of minutes per week</td>
<td>Text Used</td>
<td>Ground to be covered</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prayers</td>
<td>35 min.</td>
<td>Prayerbook</td>
<td>Morning services, Sand., Fri.eve., services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hebrew</td>
<td>95 min.</td>
<td>Pollack's Sifri Part I</td>
<td>pp.1-62</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Humash</td>
<td>75 min.</td>
<td>Pollack's Humastenu Part I</td>
<td>pp.1-11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>75 min.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Various exercises and small compositions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>55 min.</td>
<td>Soloff's How the Jewish People Grew Up</td>
<td>pp.1-50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Singing</td>
<td>25 min.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hebrew songs and liturgical chants</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Please confer with the principal if your child has received a D (Daled).
Your child should attend our Junior Congregation every Saturday.
Please sign on reverse side (in ink).
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