

JEWISH EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

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In the more thorough organization of the Jewish communities in the United States, the problem of religious education naturally occupies a prominent position. It is a problem both of adjustment and self-preservation. It affects the relation of the Jew to the rest of the population, but more vitally the maintenance of the peculiar traits and ideals, life and habits, that go to make up his Jewishness. It is true that the problem existed from the moment the first Jewish family settled in this land, and attempts at its solution were made by all successive generations. The instinct of self-preservation, so highly developed in the Jewish people, asserted itself in the lives of our forefathers, and received more or less adequate attention in private endeavor as well as in communal action. It is only now, however, when the Jewish population has increased to large proportions, when the several communities have become more firmly established, and the consciousness of mutual responsibility and helpfulness has thereby been more keenly stirred, that the problem assumes extensive scope, and becomes the object of serious consideration and concerted action. Sporadic efforts, temporary makeshifts, may save the situation for a time, but they cannot be tolerated by a settled community with ideals to guard, with a glorious past to maintain, and with a strong desire to perpetuate itself. More comprehensive measures must be devised, more permanent institutions established, and a more thorough system of Jewish education organized, to suit the peculiar needs and require-

ments of Jewish life in America, in order to preserve our identity and to carry on, in this land, the great work God has imposed upon us. The interest evinced in the problem of Jewish education, the zeal with which the Jewish communities of this land are approaching it, and the generosity displayed in the various attempts at its solution, are perhaps the most gratifying and encouraging signs in our present-day life.

Jewish education should aim primarily at the rearing of a generation of Jews conscious of their descent and past glory, permeated with the feeling of loyalty to the demands of their religion and their history, and actuated by a great hope for a more glorious future for Israel. To inculcate and foster such emotions and make them the permanent possession of the rising generation, it is essential that the future Jew and Jewess should be familiarized with the events that have made Israel a great people and with the literature wherein the record of Israel's greatness is embodied. Throughout our history the greatest source of the pride and stability of the Jew has been the fact that knowledge was universal and ignorance the most shunned disgrace. Jewish history in the Diaspora knows of no aristocracy except that of learning, an aristocracy that constantly seeks to extend its limits and widen its circle. We must have an intelligent laity if we would continue existence along natural lines of development. We must allow our children to drink deep of the springs of Jewish learning if we would develop in them an appreciation of their past, a dignified feeling of pride in their descent, and a strong attachment to their people and their God. Living in close relationship with a highly civilized group of humanity, confronted at every step with institutions and habits of life that are foreign and often hostile to their own, constantly surrounded by an

atmosphere that breeds the germs of assimilation tending to destroy all racial and national distinctiveness, the Jewish youth in this land must be provided with a large fund of knowledge, he must be trained with great care, and inoculated with the efficacious serum of Jewish learning and Jewish feeling, which has always been the most potent means of withstanding the dangers of epidemics of all kinds. The problem with which American Jewry is now confronted is nothing less than the problem of self-preservation—the problem of preserving the Jewish people in Judaism in the new environment.

It was therefore regarded appropriate, at this time, when efforts are being put forth everywhere to cope with this problem, to present, in brief form, a résumé of conditions as they exist, of the forces that brought them into being, and of the number and nature of the agencies now engaged in the instruction of our youth. The following pages will thus, in a measure, serve the purpose of stock-taking of our resources. Beginning with an historical sketch of the development of the various Jewish educational institutions in this country, we proceed to give an analysis of their respective places in our system of education, touching upon the various phases of the problem as we proceed in the discussion, and quoting reliable data, where such were obtainable. For the sake of completeness, a short sketch is given also of the history of our institutions for higher Jewish learning, although the main purpose of this article is to discuss the problem of Jewish elementary education.

HISTORICAL SKETCH

EARLY BEGINNINGS

There is no mention of educational institutions maintained by the Jews in this country until the early part of the eight-

eenth century. Although Jews were settled here by the middle of the seventeenth century, their number was small, and they were probably scattered in various communities, so that there could hardly have been any thought of organized effort. The oldest Jewish congregation, the Shearith Israel of New York, organized as early as 1656, had no house of worship at first, and the education of the children was probably confined to religious training at home. One year after its first synagogue was formally consecrated (1730), a school was opened for the use of the congregation, undoubtedly one of the earliest schools in the land. The following entry in the minutes of this congregation, dated April 15, 1747, will give us an idea of the character of that school: "Agreed that Mr. David Mendez Machado shall attend at the Hebra to Teach Children Hebrew from Nine to Twelve Each morning and from Two until Five Thursday Afternoon to receive Eight Shillings per quarter from Each child that comes to said school weekly. Also, that said Mr. Machado shall teach such children Gratis that Cannot afford Payment." A later entry, dated December 7, 1755, provides that the Hazan open a school at his own house, and teach Hebrew, Spanish, English, Writing, and Arithmetic, in the summer from nine to twelve and from two to five, and in the winter from ten to twelve and from two to four. It also provides that poor children be taught gratis on showing an order from the Parnas. This school is later (1762) designated as a public school, the teacher having been engaged at an annual salary (twenty pounds), with the privilege of having offerings made in his behalf in the synagogue. He was to teach gratis all children that could not afford to pay. All others were to be paid for quarterly. It appears that the school was still in existence at the begin-

ning of the nineteenth century, when the teacher was paid the sum of \$700 per annum for teaching six hours each day. The Polonies Talmud Torah, opened in 1803, is still in existence, although now it has sessions only on Sundays.¹

Other congregations that existed in various communities during the eighteenth century apparently made no organized provision for the instruction of their children. The beginning of the nineteenth century witnessed the organization of most of the German Jewish congregations; but then the public school system had already been introduced in many of the larger cities, in which the Jews congregated, gradually supplanting the denominational school of colonial times. The Jews were quick to avail themselves of the new opportunities, and sent their children to the public schools for their secular training, while their religious education was intrusted to private teachers, and later to the schools established in connection with the newly-organized congregations. There are sporadic cases of Jews maintaining regular day schools as late as the third quarter of the last century. Thus Kehillat Anshe Maariv of Chicago established such a school in 1853, and kept it up for twenty years. In Lyons and de Solla's Jewish Calendar for 1854, we find mention of several schools that appear to have been conducted as regular day schools, English branches being taught together with the regular Hebrew subjects. Among these was one in Albany, connected with Congregation Anshe Emeth; one in Boston, connected with Congregation Ohabe Shalome; two in Cincinnati, and possibly one or two in New York. In Baltimore, a school for the study of Hebrew as well as of English subjects was opened in 1851 by the Reverend

¹ See Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society, xxi, 14, 54, 72, 75, 84, 85, 149, 161.

Solomon Jacobs, and it had fifty-three pupils in 1853 (see the *Occident*, x. 171).

We also find that Congregation Rodeph Shalom of Philadelphia, one of the earliest Ashkenazic congregations in this country, which had a Hebrew and German school in connection with its synagogue, wished to include public school branches in its curriculum as late as 1852, because "the children attend the public school and afterwards ours, so that they have no time for recreation." The attempt, however, was not realized, probably because of the large expense involved (see David Sulzberger, *Fifty Years of the Hebrew Education Society of Philadelphia*, 1899, pp. 27-30). A fervent appeal, made in 1866 by the Reverend B. Felsenthal for the establishment of such schools in Chicago, met with no response (see Felsenthal, *Jüdisches Schulwesen in Amerika*, Chicago, 1866).

In 1848 the first independent Jewish school was established in Philadelphia. The Hebrew Education Society, the creation of the genius of Isaac Leeser, opened its first school, with State authority, in 1851, for the instruction of the Jewish youth in all branches of study. Its scholastic standing was regarded so highly that the graduates were, by an act of legislature (1866), admitted to the city high schools without examination. The society maintained its school as a day school for nearly thirty years, when new conditions arose to induce changes in its policy. The public school system, which had become widely extended and perfected, became too strong a factor for the society to compete with, and, on the other hand, the congregations, which constantly increased in number, put forth every effort to have their children attend their schools. In 1878 the society abandoned its secular branches, but ex-

tended its activity in the establishment of Hebrew as well as trade schools, which had become necessary with the influx of a new stream of immigrants.

CONGREGATIONAL SCHOOLS

The origin of the Jewish elementary school is closely identified with the origin of the synagogue, both having their source in the tendency inaugurated by Ezra and his followers, the popularization of religious observances and of religious knowledge. The school was originally housed in the synagogue building and formed part of it. In later times, indeed, the school was frequently detached from the synagogue, becoming either a communal institution or a private undertaking. Hence, we have the Talmud Torah and the Heder of the Middle Ages and of modern times. This, however, was the case only when the community superseded the congregation, and undertook to care for all Jewish institutions, including the school and the synagogue.

Early congregational growth in this country demanded a return to the old order, so that the school again became an integral part of synagogue life. While the Heder and the private teacher always existed, most of the congregations organized in the first half of the past century found it necessary to establish schools for the children of their members. Hebrew naturally formed the chief subject of instruction, although in many of these schools the study of German was given considerable prominence in the curriculum. The sessions were held in the afternoon three to four times a week and also on Sunday mornings. The school rooms were in many cases situated in the basement of the synagogue building, and lacked the comfort and conveniences to which the

pupils were accustomed in the public schools, where they spent the greater portion of their time.

The most serious drawback to the healthy development of these schools was the lack of properly equipped teachers. Many were recent immigrants unfamiliar with the language and the life of the American child, and consequently unable to establish a bond of sympathy between themselves and their pupils. Some possessed but a rudimentary knowledge of the subjects they were expected to teach, and many were entirely ignorant of the most elementary principles of pedagogy. The compensation offered the teacher was very small, so that few competent persons were attracted to the profession. There were some notable exceptions, and in every community the names of these exceptional teachers, who not only imparted knowledge, but inspired respect and reverence for themselves and for the religion they endeavored to foster, are mentioned with affection and love to the present day. In general, however, the teacher in the congregational school rarely succeeded in his efforts, although he had the assistance of the rabbi and in many cases also of the parents of the children.

With the spread of the Reform movement, which permitted the use of the vernacular in the service, and with the increase of the number of English-speaking rabbis, these schools assumed a somewhat different character. The study of German was little by little discarded, the study of Hebrew was given a secondary position, and the main subjects of study were Bible History and the elements of the Jewish Religion and of Jewish Ethics. The number of sessions was also gradually reduced, so that at present most of these schools meet only once a week, on Sunday mornings. In many of these schools Hebrew is not taught at all. There are, however, a number of congre-

gational schools even now, especially such as are connected with synagogues established in more recent years, which still maintain the older system, having three or four or more sessions a week, and laying the greatest stress on the study of Hebrew.

SUNDAY SCHOOLS

The Heder, the congregational school, and the private teacher soon proved inadequate to the needs of the constantly growing communities. Outside of the fact that they were in large measure foreign in their methods and unable to adjust themselves to the new environment in which the Jews were placed in this land, they were also too expensive and made too many demands upon the children's time. The result of the heavy tax these institutions imposed on parents and children alike was that many children remained without religious training. Furthermore, these agencies provided education mainly for the boys, while the girls grew up without any knowledge of their religion.

The need of free communal schools unattached to any congregation was realized early in the nineteenth century. The first attempt at supplying it was made in Philadelphia by a band of women, mostly members of the Mikve Israel Congregation, who were under the influence of Isaac Leeser, the dominant spirit in American Jewry in that period. The first free Sunday school was established in that city in 1838, under the immediate guidance and direction of Miss Rebecca Gratz. A similar school was opened the same year in Charleston, S. C., and the following year in Richmond, Va. Soon after similar institutions were established in Cincinnati, New York, and other communities. The movement proved successful from the very beginning, and these schools attracted large

numbers of children, who were taught by volunteer teachers, mostly young women. The course of instruction usually included Bible History and catechism, and text-books were soon provided by several authors. The language of instruction in these schools was English instead of the German used in the congregational schools, and the teachers were for the most part young people who had had the advantages of the American public school system, and were familiar with the conditions that surrounded the children under their care. Many of them were deficient in their knowledge of Jewish matters, but they possessed zeal and enthusiasm for their religion and the ability to influence those with whom they came in close contact.

Some of the wealthier congregations in the larger cities also realized their obligations to the general community and opened free or mission schools in the poorer sections. Others made their own schools free, admitting children of non-members on a par with the members' children.

TALMUD TORAHs

The free public school has been an important element in the system of Jewish education from the remotest antiquity. The origin of this institution is ascribed to Rabbi Simon ben Shatah, and its further extension to Rabbi Joshua ben Gamla, who flourished during the last years of Israel's national existence. The Jewish parent is responsible for the education of his children, and if he is unable to bestow it, he is obliged to engage the services of a teacher. The fatherless child or the child of poor parents must also be provided with religious training, and the duty to do this rests upon the community at large. There was hardly a Jewish community in the Middle Ages in which there did not exist an organization for the

support of free schools, in which the children of the poor might receive a thorough training in Hebrew and the Bible. These organizations were known as Talmud Torah Societies, and the schools under their charge as Talmud Torahs.

The Talmud Torah as well as the private school (Heder) were not religious schools in the sense in which the term is understood to-day, except insofar as the whole life of the Jew was religious. Religious tenets and practices were supposed to have been learnt by the child in the home and in the synagogue. The atmosphere of Jewish life was surcharged with religion, so that there was no need of making it a subject of special study. In the Heder and Talmud Torah, the emphasis was laid on a thorough knowledge of the Hebrew language and of Jewish literature and law. Bible and Talmud were studied, not as guide books to religious practice or to a knowledge of Jewish history, but for their intrinsic value. The study was an end in itself. The sessions were held during the whole day, in the winter time also part of the evening, and extended throughout the year, with the exception of short vacations during the months of Nisan and Tishri. The teachers in these institutions were not always necessarily learned men, nor even specially trained for the profession. Indeed, in every community there were some teachers that possessed native aptitude for imparting knowledge, who were therefore highly successful in their work. There were many, however, whose only qualification for teaching was their inability to make a living in any other way, so that the term teacher (Melammed) and ne'er-do-well (Shlemiel) became synonymous in the Jewish vernacular. The method of instruction was primitive, and the hygienic conditions in the school rooms were rarely wholesome. Still, both the Heder and the Talmud Torah produced excel-

lent results, and were the only educational agencies in most lands in the pre-emancipation period. Both institutions, however, had to undergo considerable modification and reform in places where the doors of the secular schools were opened to the Jews, and although they still exist in many lands, their nature and purpose are quite different from their ancient prototypes, the former giving way to the congregational school and the latter to the free Sunday school.

The largest influx of German Jews to this country occurred at a time when their hope for emancipation in their native land was beginning to be realized, and when the struggle for religious reform there was at its height. By that time, the Heder was almost obsolete there, and the Talmud Torah, where it still existed, was given a more modern aspect. The congregational school became the unit of Jewish education, and therefore it was also the most common educational agency among the new settlers in this land.

In Russia, the Heder and Talmud Torah are still in vogue, although slightly modified, due to the influence of the Haskalah movement and to the spread of general culture among Jews, in spite of the many obstacles placed in their way by the Government. The congregational school is practically unknown there; and because the elementary secular school is not widely spread, and is difficult of access to the Jew, the old types of Jewish schools have been preserved. Hence these two classes of schools became predominant in this country with the large immigration of Russian Jews subsequent to 1882.

The first Talmud Torah society was established in New York in 1883, under the name of Machzike Talmud Torah, and a school very much after the type of the old Talmud Torah was opened soon after. This was followed by the organi-

zation of similar institutions wherever Russian Jews settled in large numbers, while the Heder continued to exist everywhere, even in very small communities. In but few of these Talmud Torahs, as, for instance, in the Yeshibat Jacob Joseph in New York, the attempt was made to introduce the study of secular subjects. In the vast majority sessions are held every afternoon except Friday, and in some also in the evenings, while on Sunday instruction is given in the morning. The study of the Hebrew language and of the Bible is the main content of their curricula; in some Jewish history is added. On the average, every child in these schools receives instruction about twelve hours a week. Many are housed in buildings of their own, although these are not always adapted to school uses. Synagogues are attached to many of these schools, not so much for the benefit of the children attending them, as for the revenue they might yield.

The financial condition of most of these institutions is very precarious and uncertain, so that improvements and reforms that involve any considerable monetary outlay are out of the question. The main sources of income of most of the Talmud Torahs are the dues collected from monthly or weekly subscribers, the tuition fees of the children, and the uncertain proceeds of balls, parties, raffles, and other such expedients to make both ends meet. They are governed as a rule by large and unwieldy boards, the members of which sacrifice much time and energy to collect the necessary funds to maintain the institutions. It has been estimated that the cost of collection in many of these amounts to nearly one-third of the income, an index to the absolute lack of organization and co-operation in their management.

The method of instruction, although greatly improved in recent years, is still far from satisfactory. Most of the teachers are not specially trained for their profession, although many are well versed in the subjects they teach. In many of these schools the language employed is still the Yiddish, a language that is only imperfectly understood by the children, who spend most of the day in the secular schools; and the system of grading and the manner of instruction are still in a primitive stage. In almost all of them the lack of proper textbooks is felt.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Time and again attempts have been made by individuals as well as by organizations to establish institutions of higher Jewish learning in various communities. As early as 1840, Mordecai M. Noah proposed the establishment of a Jewish college in America. In 1852 Mr. Sampson Simson, the founder and first president of the Mount Sinai Hospital of New York, organized there the Jewish Theological Seminary and Scientific Institute, which was chartered by the State in the following year, with the specific object, among other things, "of training rabbis and teachers for the Jewish congregations in North America, conformably to their law, ancient doctrines, and traditions, confided to them by the sages of Israel, etc." He also deeded a tract of land in Yonkers, N. Y., to the institution, which in 1888 became the property of the newly-organized Jewish Theological Seminary, and is still owned by the Seminary corporation. Although the institution had a Board of Trustees, who held the land in Yonkers, it was never organized for purposes of instruction. (See Marshall, Argument for the North American Relief Society, in the Court of

Appeals, etc., Syracuse, 1889; Second Biennial Report of the Jewish Theological Seminary, New York, 1890, p. 15.)

In 1854 Doctor Isaac M. Wise urged the establishment of a college in Cincinnati under the name of Zion College, but this plan also remained unrealized. The first successful attempt to organize a college for Jewish learning was made in Philadelphia, in 1867. Through the efforts of Isaac Leeser, the Hebrew Education Society of that city established Maimonides College, with a very imposing program and with an efficient staff. The Reverend Isaac Leeser, its first provost, died soon after the college was opened, and he was succeeded in office by the Reverend Doctor Marcus Jastrow. For six years the college maintained its existence, but it had to be closed on account of lack of support.

In 1875 the Union of American Hebrew Congregations established the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati with the Reverend Doctor Isaac M. Wise as its president. The college, which has been in existence for forty years, has graduated a large number of rabbis, who occupy the pulpits of many of the important Reform Congregations in the land.

The Jewish Theological Seminary was organized in New York by the Reverend Doctor Sabato Morais in 1886, with the purpose of training rabbis for the more conservative element of Jewry. In 1902 this seminary was reorganized under the name of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, under more favorable conditions, when Doctor Solomon Schechter became president of the institution.

Besides these two special theological schools, there have been established within recent years several schools for the training of Jewish teachers. Gratz College, which was established in Philadelphia in 1895, was the first school to make the training

of teachers its special object. During the twenty years of its existence it has sent forth about seventy-five graduates, many of whom have made teaching in Jewish schools their vocation. A School of Observation and Practice is now being conducted by the college for the practical training of its students. The two seminaries maintained courses in pedagogy, which, through the generosity of several donors, were recently established special departments of their respective institutions. Thus we now have in this country three Jewish normal schools, one in Philadelphia, one in New York, and one in Cincinnati, besides the several local organizations conducted by various congregations for the benefit of their own teachers.

Through the efforts of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis, there have been organized, in several of the larger communities, Yeshibot, or high schools, for the study of the Talmud and other Rabbinic subjects. These are intended mainly for boys that have been graduated from the Talmud Torahs and wish to continue their studies along the lines laid down in those institutions. In the main, these are not vocational schools. Those who go there for study wish to perfect themselves in the subjects offered. One Yeshibah in New York (Yeshibat Rabbi Isaac Elchanan) has an ambitious program of studies, the completion of which entitles the graduate to officiate as rabbi in an orthodox community.

Through a munificent bequest made by Moses A. Dropsie of Philadelphia, who died in 1905, the Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning was founded in that city in 1908. The purpose of this institution, according to the will of the testator, is "the promotion of and instruction in the Hebrew and Cognate languages and their respective literatures, and in the Rabbinical learning and literature." By the

charter granted it in 1907, the college has authority to maintain a school for higher learning in the branches indicated in its name and to confer upon its graduates the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Almost all of the more important congregations endeavor to hold their young people attached to the synagogue by means of auxiliary societies and clubs, in many of which Jewish studies are pursued, usually under the guidance of the rabbis. There are also a large number of independent societies that devote their time to the study and discussion of subjects of Jewish interest. Notable among these are the Young Men's Hebrew associations, the various sections of the Council of Jewish Women, and the lodges of the beneficial orders, all of which, though having other purposes and objects, maintain and conduct classes and circles with Jewish educational purposes. The Jewish Chautauqua Society, which was organized in 1893, with branches all over the country, has as its primary object the popularization of Jewish learning. Through the publication of manuals and course books and the establishment of study circles, the society has done much towards the spread of a knowledge of Jewish literature and Jewish history, especially in the smaller communities. The work of the society in behalf of the teaching profession will be referred to later.

Some of the larger congregational schools maintain circulating libraries in connection with their work, in which books of Jewish interest are given special prominence. Some of these are also open to the public. A number of public libraries have, within recent years, established Jewish sections for their Jewish readers; and in several libraries connected with higher institutions of learning, there are special divisions for Judaica

and Hebraica. The Jewish Publication Society of America has been an important factor in the spread of Jewish knowledge through the large number of books it has published and distributed. The Jewish Press serves a similar purpose. Besides the many weeklies which, though serving primarily as newspapers, occasionally have articles and essays of scientific value, there are also a few monthlies in English, Hebrew, and Yiddish. Since 1910, the Jewish Quarterly Review, a strictly scientific journal, is being issued in this country under the auspices of Dropsie College.

ATTEMPTS AT REFORM

Organized efforts to improve and extend the system of Jewish education and standardize our schools have been made by various organizations. The Hebrew Sabbath School Union, established in 1886, set for itself the object of providing "a uniform system for all Hebrew Sabbath Schools in the United States by promulgating uniform courses of instruction and by training competent teachers." This object was never entirely realized, but the Union published several text-books and leaflets, prepared a manual for teachers, and helped in various ways to improve the general tone of the Sunday School. Since it has become part of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (1905), the subject of Jewish education has received frequent attention and discussion at the annual meetings of that body. The Synagogue and School Extension movement of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations has accomplished much in the organization of schools in smaller communities through its traveling agents and in the publication of text-books and aids for teachers. In a smaller degree, the Council of Jewish Women, the Zionist organizations, the fra-

ternal orders, and other societies have from time to time endeavored to help in the solution of this problem by establishing schools wherever such were needed and by raising the standard of Jewish education as much as lay in their power. The problem has received consideration and attention at the gatherings of our national and local bodies, and several of them have made it part of their regular course of business. Such bodies as the Union of Orthodox Congregations, the Union of Orthodox Rabbis, and the more recently organized United Synagogue have standing committees on education. All these efforts, however, have thus far met with limited success, because of a lack of concerted action and general public sympathy.

The Jewish Chautauqua Society, in its efforts to popularize Jewish knowledge, naturally appealed first to those who were engaged in the work of teaching in the Jewish schools. The society, realizing that, made its courses especially helpful to teachers. An important feature of the work of this society for a number of years was its Summer Assembly, which attracted large numbers of teachers from various parts of the country for the discussion of problems of particular interest to them. Recently the society inaugurated, with the help of a special fund established by Mr. Jacob H. Schiff of New York, who has done so much in behalf of Jewish education, a Correspondence School for Teachers. This is to serve the teacher or the prospective teacher in the smaller communities the same purpose that is served by the normal schools in the larger communities. The society, with the assistance of other organizations, has recently endeavored to organize Jewish educational institutions in the Jewish agricultural colonies, and the work is meeting with considerable success. The Syna-

gogue and School Extension movement is making efforts in the same direction.

The most comprehensive plan for reform in our present educational system was inaugurated by the New York Kehillah in the establishment of its Bureau of Education in 1910. Though it is primarily a local organization, dealing mainly with local problems, its work has already had a tremendous influence on the general progress of Jewish education throughout the land, so that it is proper to give here a brief sketch of its purpose and accomplishments.

The Bureau of Jewish Education was established by the New York Kehillah soon after its first annual meeting, through the generosity of the far-sighted philanthropist whose interest in the great cause of Jewish education has been unflagging. Later the fund was considerably augmented by several other donors and also by popular subscription. Doctor S. Benderly, formerly of Baltimore, was appointed Director, and the objects of the Bureau were formulated as follows:

- (1) To study sympathetically and at close range all the Jewish educational forces in New York City, including alike those that restrict themselves to religious instruction and those that look primarily to the Americanization of our youth, with a view to co-operation and the elimination of waste and overlapping.

- (2) To become intimately acquainted with the best teachers and workers who are the mainstay of these institutions, and organize them for both their material and their spiritual advancement.

- (3) To make propaganda through the Jewish press and otherwise, in order to acquaint parents with the problem before them and with the means for solving it.

- (4) To operate one or two model schools for elementary pupils, for the purpose of working out the various phases of primary education, these schools to act also as concrete examples and

guides to now existing Hebrew schools, which will undoubtedly avail themselves of the text-books, methods, appliances, etc., worked out in the model schools, as soon as public opinion shall have ripened.

During the three and a half years of its existence, the Bureau has striven to serve these objects, and, to a large extent, has met with success in its endeavors. It has made a thoroughly systematic study of conditions of Jewish education in New York City, and has published the results, with illuminating comments, in several pamphlets. It has succeeded in establishing friendly relations with several of the larger educational institutions of that city and in introducing reforms in their management. It has endeavored to bring order into the teaching profession by supplying the peculiar needs of the various classes of teachers and by issuing licenses to those who were regarded, by an authoritative committee, as competent to teach. It has encouraged and assisted in the formation of an association of Talmud Torah superintendents, who, after a long series of meetings, set forth the purposes and objects of the religious school and formulated its curriculum. It has published a series of graded, illustrated text-books for the study of Hebrew and a number of slides and maps for the study of Jewish history. It has taken over from the Talmud Torahs the collection of their finances from their pupils and members, and, by introducing more efficient methods and a more systematic organization, has considerably increased their income. It has opened several extension schools for girls between the ages of eight and eleven, where, by a novel system, large groups of children are taught the rudiments of Hebrew and Jewish history by competent teachers. It has organized a number of high school girls, judiciously and carefully

selected, for the purpose of doing Jewish work, so that in the course of time many of them may take up Jewish teaching as a profession. It has succeeded in interesting, in the problem of Jewish education, a number of college men, some of whom have become so enthusiastic about it that they have determined to make it their life work. More important perhaps than all these activities is the part the Bureau has taken in arousing the conscience of New York Jewry and, through them, that of the Jews of the whole country to the gravity of the situation and to the need of concerted efforts in providing a solution of the problem at the earliest possible date.

While it has a definite policy and definite principles with regard to the aim and methods of Jewish education, the Bureau has, in a measure, become the clearing house of all educational ideas and plans, and through its established machinery has rendered assistance to all kinds of schools that have sought its aid. The study of Hebrew is regarded by the Bureau an essential in the curriculum of any Jewish religious school, and provision is made for its study even in those schools that meet only once a week. One of its principles is that larger school units are better able to maintain themselves under present conditions, and consequently it has extended its financial and moral aid only to several of the largest Talmud Torahs, which have their own buildings. Recently its influence has been extended to several congregational schools and even to Sunday schools, and its methods and to some extent its text-books have been adopted by a number of institutions, even outside of New York City. Education is a slow process, and many years will pass before the actual results of the work of this Bureau can become patent to all. It may, however, be fairly assumed that the establishment of this Bureau under the guidance of

its resourceful and enthusiastic Director will mark an important epoch in the history of Jewish education in America.

In some localities, where Kehillahs were established within recent years, the status of Jewish education was one of the first considerations of these bodies, and in some of them special boards were organized to deal with the problem. In other places, the subject received serious attention at the hands of special committees, representative of the different shades of thought in the community. The interest of the people at large has been aroused, and the investigations undertaken in some towns have helped to open the eyes of the people to the gravity of the situation and the necessity of devising a remedy. Special studies of the status of Jewish education in separate localities were prosecuted in several of the larger Eastern cities, to which reference will be made later, and these, together with the publicity given to the matter by the Jewish press, have helped greatly in arousing public sentiment in behalf of this weighty problem, the most serious with which American Jewry is now confronted.

PRESENT CONDITIONS

SCHOOLS

The various types of schools found in almost every large Jewish community in this land may conveniently be divided into two main classes: the Sunday School and the Talmud Torah, or Day School. The former may either be attached to a congregation or directed by some society or lodge; the latter is, as a rule, maintained by a society, although several of the day schools connected with some of the more conservative congregations may well be included in this category. The most conspicuous distinction between these

two types of schools is the number of sessions devoted to Jewish studies, but their real differences are much more vital, affecting the subjects of instruction, the methods of teaching, the system of organization, and sometimes even the very aim of the school. The institutional schools connected with our orphan asylums and settlement houses, which provide instruction for their wards only, as a rule partake of the nature of one or the other of these two classes. Besides these, there are still the private school (Heder) and the itinerant teacher, who imparts instruction to his pupils at their homes.

There are two main considerations in favor of the Sunday School, which will guarantee its existence among us for some time to come. It is the most inexpensive of institutions, and it is most in harmony with present conditions in this country. The congregational Sunday School, housed in the synagogue building and supervised by the rabbi, has but little expense outside of the salaries of its teachers. In a number of congregations, the teachers are volunteers, and even those who receive payment are satisfied with a very small amount, since they are expected to give but little of their time to this work. In other Sunday Schools, where rents and superintendents' salaries have to be considered, the majority of the teachers receive no remuneration. It is safe to assume that the average cost per capita of a Sunday School Jewish education does not exceed three dollars a year. On the other hand, the demands made upon the time and the energy of the pupil in these schools is insignificant as compared with the demands made upon the pupils of the Talmud Torah. The management of most of these schools differs but little from that to which the child is accustomed in the secular school, and very often the teachers in these schools also teach in the public schools, bringing to

the Sunday School all their pedagogic training and teaching experience, which help to hold the respect and affection of the child for the school. The Sunday School is not something foreign to the pupil, out of harmony with his surroundings. His Christian friend also goes to a Sunday School. It fits in more closely with the mode of life which he sees around him. It is more attractive to the child because it makes less demands upon him, and is in harmony with his environment. It is cheaper and more easily established, and will therefore continue to appeal to communal leaders, who aim at the extension of Jewish education at the smallest possible outlay. It is for these reasons that the Sunday School will maintain itself in this land.

If, however, the study of Hebrew is considered essential in the curriculum of a Jewish religious school—and it is still so considered by most Jews—the Sunday School cannot be regarded as adequate for the educational needs of the community. A knowledge of Hebrew, sufficient to enable one to read the prayers intelligently and to understand the Bible in its original tongue, cannot be imparted in one session a week, thirty sessions a year. Even if the organization of the school is perfect, the teachers most efficient, and the method most modern, satisfactory results can hardly be expected. Many of the Sunday Schools that have abandoned the study of Hebrew did so more because of their discouragement at the meager results obtained than out of a conviction that the study of Hebrew is unnecessary. They are conscious of the anomaly of maintaining the use of Hebrew in their service and yet failing to prepare their own children to understand the service. They admit that their position is untenable, but regard themselves helpless in the face of conditions. The Sunday School is thus

tacitly admitted to be a makeshift, necessary under present conditions, but certainly an insecure foundation upon which to build the future of American Israel. Realizing, however, that for a large number of children it is the only source from which they obtain a knowledge of Judaism, those who still give to Hebrew a prominent position in the curriculum act wisely and well. If a sufficient familiarity with the language cannot be obtained in the short time given to its study, that is no reason for abolishing it altogether. Under competent teaching, even in this short period some acquaintance with the language can be gained. Besides, Hebrew gives a Jewish tone to the school to a degree that can be secured through no other subject in the curriculum.

The Talmud Torah, whether congregational or communal, contains within itself the elements that may, in the course of time, make it an efficient agency for Jewish education. The communal Talmud Torahs have, in most cases, their own buildings, some of which are provided with all modern school appliances. The more progressive of these have competent superintendents and able teachers, and their curricula, if carried out successfully, furnish a satisfactory course of studies. The congregational school that meets several times a week and gives a prominent place to the study of Hebrew also has a more or less adequate course, given by competent teachers under the supervision of the rabbi. The school rooms are not always satisfactory, but nearly all synagogues established within recent years either have separate buildings for school use or make the lower part of the synagogue suitable for the purpose. Both the Talmud Torah and the congregational school, however, impose a heavy tax upon child and parent or upon the community, and are as yet not en-

tirely in harmony with the life of the American Jewish child. The average cost per capita in the congregational school is about \$12, and in the Talmud Torahs about \$8, a year. In the latter, the child is expected to attend school for two or three hours every afternoon, when he is wearied after a day's work in the public school. His teachers are not always in sympathy with him, often do not understand him, and are themselves worn out from other work in which they are occupied in the forenoon. Similar conditions, although to a smaller degree, exist also in the congregational day school. Sessions are held there only two or three times during the week, outside of Sunday, and the teachers, in many of them, are of the Americanized type, who are able to establish a more cordial relationship between themselves and their pupils. Though extensive reforms are needed in both these classes of schools, which still have many drawbacks and defects, they can be relied upon to produce the best results.

That both these types of schools are necessary is due to the peculiar composition and development of our communities. The ideal condition would be for all Jews to be members of congregations and their children members of their schools. The synagogue is and should be the natural center of all religious activities and especially of religious education. In it the principles and teachings of the school are put into practice, and forming an attachment to the synagogue in the Jewish child is a most invaluable aid to its religious training, especially now when the Jewish home has ceased to be intensely Jewish. For this reason alone, the congregational school should be looked upon as the most important unit in an educational system that might be established. There are, however, a number of considerations that

assure a certain degree of permanence to the Talmud Torah. Only a small fraction of the Jews in this country are affiliated with congregations, and many of the more recently organized congregations, not realizing the important asset a school would be in the upbuilding of their institution and in assuring its future, have no schools attached to them. The question of economy also enters into this problem. It is by far more economical to conduct a large school than a small school, and the congregational school is of necessity a much smaller school than the Talmud Torah. Hence the Talmud Torah is an absolute necessity under present conditions, and of the two it is also the cheaper to maintain.

The institutional school contains splendid possibilities for reform and progress. Since the mother institutions have also other than educational purposes in view, it can hardly be expected that the initiative for extensive reform will be taken by them. Nevertheless, in a reorganization of the educational system, these schools can be relied upon to improve and extend their facilities without much difficulty.

The Heder is the most expensive and the most unsatisfactory educational agency we have. The average cost per pupil in the Heder probably exceeds the sum of \$20 per annum. The data on this point are not absolutely reliable. Since it is entirely a private enterprise, it does not allow of any considerable improvement, unless it happens to agree with the interests of the parties concerned. A more perfect organization will eventually eliminate a great many of these schools, and others will have to fall in with the new standards set up by the public institutions.

A new agency, the most recently developed, is the National Radical School, established within the past few years in sev-

eral of the large cities. These schools do not claim to be religious institutions; in some of them anti-religious teachings are inculcated. They are Jewish only insofar as they are conducted by Jews for Jewish children, and make Yiddish the language of instruction. Since their tendencies are opposed to the strivings of the great majority of Jews, they have no place in this inquiry.

PUPILS

What proportion of the Jewish child population is reached by these several educational agencies? This question is difficult to answer as long as adequate statistical data are not obtainable. Several communities, notably those of New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Newark, have recently made investigations with a view to determining the number of children reached by the various schools, and the results proved staggering to all who love their people, and are concerned for its future. It appears that on the average not more than twenty-five or thirty per cent of the Jewish children of school age in this country are provided with any kind of Jewish training—an appalling condition, unparalleled in any other Jewish community in the Diaspora.

In 1889 the Hebrew Sunday School Union endeavored to take a census of Jewish schools. About 200 schools were addressed, of which only 114 gave more or less adequate replies. According to the tables published in the report of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations for that year (reprinted in a report on Sunday Schools, by James A. Blodgett, issued by the United States Bureau of Education, 1898, p. 413), these 114 schools had an enrolment of 13,406 pupils, who were taught by 563 teachers, of whom 186 were paid, and 377 were

volunteers. Hebrew was taught in most of the schools, and the length of the sessions varied from one to ten hours per week. The Jewish population of the United States in 1888 was estimated at about 400,000, which would give us a child population of school age of about 80,000. The data given in this report are obviously incomplete. None of the Talmud Torahs which had been established in the few preceding years are included in the inquiry, and not a few of the more important congregational schools of the time failed to make returns. Nor is any reference made to the Hadarim or the private teachers, of whom there must have been a considerable number even then.

In a Summary of Jewish Organizations in the United States, prepared by Doctor Charles S. Bernheimer and published in the AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK for 5661 (1900-1901), p. 506, mention is made of 415 educational organizations, of which 291 were religious schools attached to congregations, with an attendance of about 25,000 pupils, taught by 1127 teachers. To this number should be added about 27 free religious or Hebrew schools, with about 11,000 pupils and 142 teachers. The Jewish population of the United States in that year is given in the same volume, p. 624, as 1,058,135, so that of an estimated child population of over 200,000, only 36,000 were provided with any sort of systematic Jewish education. These data are much more accurate, and are quoted by Doctor Cyrus Adler in his article "America," in the first volume of the *Jewish Encyclopedia*.

The AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK for 5668 (1907-1908) contains a full directory of local and national organizations then existing in the United States. The number of Jews in this country in that year was estimated at 1,800,000, giving

us a Jewish child population of school age, *i. e.* between the ages of six and sixteen, of about 360,000, counting children of school age to be one-fifth of the total population. Doctor S. Benderly, who made a study of the statistics given in that volume, came to the following conclusions: There were then 235 one-session Sunday Schools, with 1277 teachers and an enrolment of 26,500 pupils; 92 two-session Sunday Schools, with 444 teachers and 9551 pupils; 236 daily schools, with 705 teachers and 26,216 pupils; total, 563 schools, with 2426 teachers and 62,327 pupils (see *Jewish Exponent*, January, 17, 1908). Doctor Benderly estimated that about 40,000 boys, not included in this number, were being taught in Hadarim and by private tutors, while the remaining 260,000 children, of whom there were probably about 170,000 girls and 90,000 boys, received no Jewish education whatsoever. In other words, nearly three-fourths of the rising generation were allowed to grow up without any Jewish training or influence.

This estimate, made six years ago, is probably as near the actual state of affairs as could be made under present conditions, and is borne out by the figures now obtainable in several of the larger Jewish communities. In Greater New York, where there is probably a Jewish child population of school age of about 200,000, only 41,404 were enrolled in the various educational institutions in 1911. Similarly, in Philadelphia, with an estimated Jewish child population of 41,322, only 10,189 were enrolled in its schools in 1912. Newark, with an estimated Jewish child population of 12,466, has had during the present year (1913-1914) 2355 children in its various schools. A somewhat better showing is made by Baltimore, where, of an estimated child population of 7000, 4373 are provided with some kind of religious instruction.

In the Western cities, for which data are not available,¹ conditions are probably not much better. In the smaller communities the status of Jewish education is no doubt worse than in the larger communities, although within recent years efforts are being made, by various organizations, to provide schools for them.

We are thus confronted with a tremendous problem, requiring for its solution the combined ingenuity and effort of all who are concerned for the welfare of their people. More than two-thirds of the future American Jews are now allowed to grow up outside the sphere of any religious influence and guidance. Such conditions should not be tolerated by a self-respecting community, which seeks to establish itself in this land. Comparing our own with some of the older Jewish communities of Europe, we should feel not only anxious about our future, but thoroughly ashamed of our negligence in this matter. London, with an estimated Jewish population of 150,000, provides instruction, through various agencies, for 24,234 children (*Jewish Year Book*, London, 1914). This means that more than four-fifths of the entire Jewish child population of London are getting some Jewish training, while in New York only one-fifth is so provided.

Of course, this estimated proportion of children provided with religious education to children not so provided applies only to the number of children actually enrolled in our various schools at a given time. There are many Jewish children who attend a religious school only one or two years during their public school career. Many boys who have not been taught in

¹ In "A Brief Summary of Jewish Religious Education in Cincinnati," published after this article was set up, it appears that out of an estimated Jewish child population of 6000 in that city, only 1740 children are provided with a systematic Jewish training.

their early years are given, for a few months preceding their Bar-Mizwah, a Hebrew teacher to prepare them for the ceremony. Including these children, the real proportion of children who have at one time or another received some Jewish education will probably be somewhat higher than that here assumed. It is not necessary to comment on the value and efficacy of such an education. All persons who are sincere in their desire to have their children grow up as Jews, and who know the prevailing conditions, agree that we ought to aim to have our children under some Jewish religious influence at least during the period of their school life.

Nearly one-half of the total number of children in our various schools are taught at one weekly session, extending over one or two hours, when Bible history and religion are imparted under unfavorable conditions. About fifteen per cent of the remainder are taught by private teachers, without any authoritative supervision, in unsatisfactory surroundings and by primitive methods. Due to an old notion that obtained among the Jews, that girls need have no regular religious training, the great majority of those who do not receive any religious training are girls. Modern conditions demand that the education of our girls receive attention equal to, if not greater than, that of our boys. In recent years some of the more progressive Talmud Torahs have made provision for girls, either by opening separate schools for them or by having them taught together with the boys.

TEACHERS

In the endeavor to find a solution of the problem of Jewish education, we are constantly confronted with the lack of competent teachers to whom this work may confidently be in-

trusted. So much is expected of a teacher in a Jewish school, and the remuneration is so meager, that a very small number of efficient men and women has been attracted to the profession. The teacher in the Jewish school must be possessed of a strong faith and deep love for Jewish ideals and for the Jewish people. He must be fully conversant with Jewish literature and with the Hebrew language, so that his religious sentiments may have a firm foundation. But even if he possesses faith and knowledge, he will not succeed as a teacher unless he understands the psychology of the American child, and is familiar with its environment. It is not merely a question of English or Yiddish. Unless the teacher is fully cognizant of the conditions that surround the child, in the home, in the street, and in the public school, and appreciates these conditions at their full value, his efforts will meet with but scanty response. The teacher who succeeds best in Jewish religious schools is he who has himself had the experience and the training the child under his charge is undergoing. Such teachers, combining a thorough knowledge of Jewish lore and a deep faith in Jewish ideals with a sympathetic attitude towards child life, are very rare; and to raise such a school of men and women should be the initial step and the chief aim in the attempt to solve the question of Jewish education.

The 2500 or more teachers engaged in Jewish schools at present may easily be divided into two classes. The larger number of young men and women brought up in the atmosphere of the American public school system and inspired with zeal and devotion to their religion, who make the successful teachers in many of the congregational and free Sunday Schools, are as a rule not adequately conversant with the sub-

ject they teach. The great majority undertake the work without expectation of revenue, and it can hardly be supposed that they will devote much time and energy to preparing themselves for their profession. The other class, consisting mainly of men and women who have received their Jewish training abroad, and are entirely familiar with the subject of instruction, are those who teach in the Talmud Torahs and the Hadarim. In most cases these lack the sympathy with American conditions and the appreciation of American institutions under which their pupils live. Fortunately, with the establishment of our normal schools and other agencies for higher Jewish learning, a new class of teachers is rising into prominence—teachers who come up more closely to the required standard. Most of these young men and women, brought up in this country under our school system, are possessed of great love for their work and of much enthusiasm, and have also acquired adequate familiarity with Jewish subjects under the guidance of men who are awake to the needs and requirements of our schools.

In order to make this new class of teachers extensive and permanent, it is essential that teaching in Jewish religious schools become an honorable profession, commanding the respect and the appreciation of the community expressed in adequate remuneration. The salaries of the Jewish religious school teachers should be proportionately higher than those of the secular school teacher, because the qualifications demanded of the former are greater.

CONCLUSION

The Jewish community of the United States is thus faced by a tremendous problem, which it must proceed to solve at

the earliest date. It will require the combined wisdom and ingenuity of all our communal leaders and the deepest interest and co-operation of all the people to make adequate provision for the Jewish education of our 400,000 or more Jewish children. Large funds, much energy, and self-sacrificing devotion, and, above all, concerted action on the part of all the various elements in Jewry will be demanded to cope with the situation. Organization is needed as much as money in the present crisis. If Doctor Benderly is correct in his summary of the conditions existing in 1907 referred to above, more than one-half of the entire financial outlay for Jewish education goes to maintain the Hadarim, or private schools, the least organized and least satisfactory of our educational agencies. This is corroborated also in the summary made of New York institutions, in 1911, and in other cities subsequently. What a sad commentary on the chaotic conditions existing to-day! Is it not possible that at least twice the number of children could be reached if these sums had been expended on organized schools, under communal or congregational supervision? A more modern system in the management of our various institutions will help to increase their respective budgets, and will probably save hundreds of souls to Judaism.

The financial status of our educational agencies will, however, have to be considerably improved in order to make the organization enduring. The present annual expenditure for elementary Jewish education in the United States is probably in excess of a million dollars. Even at the minimum rate of \$8 per child, we shall need an annual budget of \$3,200,000, if we are to reach all the children of school age. This sum will have to be increased every year, with the increase in the population; it does not include the cost of new buildings and

of the maintenance of the normal schools required to raise a staff of teachers for this army of children. These figures may appear enormous, impossible of realization. But the greater part of this outlay will undoubtedly be provided by the parents of the children themselves, after organization is effected, and the schools are opened. If we would have truly democratic schools, the element of charity should be eliminated from Jewish education as much as possible. It is only the initial cost of organization and the first outlay in the erection of new schools that will have to be supplied by the communities. This may be accomplished, through wise management, without imposing too great a burden on the communal treasury. Public-spirited Jews will be found in every community ready to make the investment, which should serve as the foundation upon which our future system of education may be erected. When this foundation is laid firmly and well, the work of improving the course of Jewish education and extending the usefulness of the institutions, so that they reach as many of our children as possible, will commence.

The conscience of the whole community, irrespective of religious profession or party affiliation, must be stirred to the seriousness of the present situation. Communal leaders must be made to realize that no expense is too large, when applied to the cause of Jewish education, when the future of Israel, of our own children, is concerned. Poverty, sickness, and want make a direct and immediate appeal to the most primitive of men, influencing him to contribute his mite. It requires a much wider outlook to have a concern for education, the results of which can be perceived only after a number of years. It is time that our Jewish communities threw off their swaddling clothes, and approached the problems that beset

them with a broad mind and a clear vision. We dare not wait until the results of the present state become too apparent and stare us in the face with their ghastly forebodings. We have already waited too long, much too long.

We are building not only for the present, but also for the future; not for American Israel only, but for all Israel. It is obvious even to the most superficial observer that the immediate future of Israel will be in this glorious land, that hither the center of Jewish activity will soon be shifted if it is not here already. What that future is to be depends largely on us of the present generation. The form and content of Judaism and Jewish culture in this land will depend largely on the system of education with which we provide the rising generation of Jews. This is a great responsibility and also a glorious opportunity. To realize this opportunity to its fullest extent and to set to work to discharge the responsibility to the best of our abilities is the duty of American Israel at the present time.