

BERNARD
REVEL BUILDER OF
AMERICAN JEWISH ORTHODOXY

by Aaron Rothkoff



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*BUILDER OF AMERICAN
JEWISH ORTHODOXY*



AARON ROTHKOFF

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**יברכך ה' מציון,
וראה בטוב ירושלים כל ימי חייוך.
וראה בנים לבניך; שלום על ישראל".**

for Malkah
and our daughters
Teyna
Raye
Ranni Sipora

PREFACE

BERNARD REVEL'S NAME was one which I heard constantly during the many years I spent at Yeshiva University as both a student and a teacher. His name always cast a mystic and august aura. It was known that he molded the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary into a major institution and also founded the Yeshiva College. Nevertheless, only scant details of his life were available and deplorably little had been published about him since the memorial volume which appeared soon after his death. I therefore eagerly accepted the suggestion of the faculty of the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Yeshiva University that I write my doctoral dissertation on the life of its founder. This book is a revised, expanded, and more popular version of the material covered in the dissertation. Any reader requiring more exact technical documentation is referred to the dissertation, which is entitled "Vision and Realization: Bernard Revel and His Era" (Yeshiva University, 1967).

Many individuals encouraged and aided me during the years that were spent researching and writing this volume. I am most indebted to Mrs. Bernard Revel, widow of Dr. Revel, and to their son Norman Revel, for their gracious help and cooperation. They gladly made all Dr. Revel's papers and correspondence available to me and facilitated my task in sorting and filing these documents. There was no item they withheld from me, and even those papers which Dr. Revel considered classified and kept in his private

file box were made completely accessible to me. May they find solace in this portrayal of their unforgettable husband and father.

My instructors of Talmud at the Yeshiva have earned my eternal gratitude. They opened the vistas of rabbinic literature to me and made it possible for me to master intricate talmudic texts. I therefore reverently acknowledge the guidance and inspiration provided by the following distinguished members of the Yeshiva faculty: Rabbis Michael Katz, Joseph Weiss, Noach Borenstein, Samuel Volk, and above all my *rebbe muvhak*, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik.

I am also indebted to other teachers and friends at the Yeshiva University. Dr. Samuel Belkin, president of the Yeshiva, encouraged me in this undertaking and opened the archives of the Yeshiva to me. Dr. Hyman B. Grinstein, professor of American Jewish history, served as chairman of my doctoral dissertation committee and was a constant source of information and guidance. Dr. Abraham G. Duker, professor of history and social institutions, carefully read my original draft, and his erudite comments and suggestions were of unlimited aid. Dr. Sidney B. Hoenig, professor of Jewish history, also read the dissertation and recounted many episodes about Dr. Revel from his student days at the Yeshiva. Appreciation must also be expressed to Dr. Bernard Lander, director of the Bernard Revel Graduate School, for his encouragement and interest. Mrs. Pearl Kardon, recorder of the graduate school, a friend of all students, was particularly friendly and helpful to me. Mr. Sam Hartstein, director of public relations, was most cooperative in responding to my many requests and placing his department's excellent facilities at my disposal. Gratitude is also expressed to Professor Morris Lutzki of the Yeshiva's Mendel Gottesman Library for his aid in deciphering difficult handwriting in documents and letters. Rabbi Murray Heisler of the library staff was most helpful in securing many of the volumes which I had to consult. Mr. Mory Korenblit, a student of Yeshiva College, graciously assisted me in the reading of the proofs.

Thanks are also expressed to my students, who saved me many precious hours by obtaining the necessary books and photographing documents for me. In particular, I wish to thank Howard Horowitz, Judah Lifschitz, and the late Mitchell Marmorsch.

Mitchell was a brilliant and dedicated student, “and he was not; for God took him” (Genesis 5:24). May his memory be for a blessing.

Acknowledgment is made to Mr. James Marshall and the Marshall family for permitting me to cite the Louis Marshall papers. Deep gratitude is expressed to Dr. Stanley F. Chyet and the American Jewish Archives of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati for making these papers available to me.

The members of Beth Ephraim-Maplewood Jewish Center, the congregation which I served from 1962 until 1969, were most understanding during the time I devoted to my research. I particularly wish to thank Simon Attermann, the president of the congregation, and Muriel Izenman, the president of the sisterhood, for their encouragement and thoughtfulness during those years. Since my aliyah to Jerusalem in 1969, Rabbi Moshe Horowitz, dean of the Jerusalem Torah College, has been a constant source of aid and inspiration.

Before this work reached its final form, careful typing was necessary. Sincerest gratitude is expressed to the following devoted women for their aid in this task: Coty Blank, Faigie Kopschitz, Evelyne Lerner, Jean Libby, Evelyn Melnick, and Anne Storfer.

It is a pleasant filial obligation to state my gratitude to my dear parents, Max and Jennie Rothkoff. They unstintingly gave of themselves in bringing up their children and raised us to love Torah and study. May the good Lord bless them with long, happy, and healthy years.

The last, in accordance with the rabbinic dictum, is the dearest. It was the cooperation of my wife, Malkah, and our daughters, Teyna, Raye, and Ranni, that made this book possible. They were most thoughtful and patient when I was preoccupied with my research and study. Many a family day was sacrificed so that this work could achieve fruition. It is to them that this volume is dedicated.

At the conclusion of my labors in portraying the life of a man of unique vision, I humbly pray that we be privileged to witness the fulfillment of the prophetic vision, “My spirit that is upon thee, and My words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor

out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and forever" (Isaiah 59:21).

A. R.

Jerusalem

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BERNARD REVEL

I

THE ORTHODOX IMMIGRANT
COMMUNITY IN 1906

BERNARD REVEL was one of the multitude of Russian Jewish immigrants who arrived in the United States in 1906. The start of the Russo-Japanese War, the Russian Revolution of 1905, and above all, the Jewish massacres drove 92,388 of them to immigrate in 1905. In 1906, a year of continued pogroms, Russian Jewish immigration reached 125,234, the highest figure in the entire period of mass immigration. The total Jewish immigration to the United States during this record year was 153,748, and almost all of the new arrivals were East European in origin. In 1880 East Europeans numbered only about 10 percent of the total Jewish population in the United States, but by 1906 it was estimated that they constituted 75 percent of American Jewry.¹ Although the vast majority of the newcomers were steeped in Orthodoxy, they soon encountered vexing difficulties in retaining and perpetuating their traditions in their new home.

Life in Europe was geared to meet the needs and requirements of Judaism. The rabbis, scholars, and sextons were ever present to guide the faithful Jewish masses. In America, however, the new arrival was immediately caught up in a strange world where he no longer could consult the rabbis and scholars he knew so well back home. An elite Reform Judaism held sway over the few chosen Americanized Jews; and most of the Orthodox community was in feeble disarray and confusion.

The new immigrant faced an immediate problem the first

Sabbath after becoming gainfully employed. In Europe the Jewish masses managed to attain employment without desecrating the Sabbath, since the community was geared to a working week which set aside the Sabbath as a day of rest. In America the new arrivals were caught up in an economic society which designated Sunday as the day of rest and demanded full participation during the other six days. These immigrants generally entered the United States with little more than the clothes on their backs and their meager personal effects. They desperately needed jobs so they could gain a secure footing on their new soil. Many were undoubtedly greeted with the advice which was given to Harry Fischel upon his 1885 arrival. Fischel, later to become a wealthy lay leader of Orthodoxy, related in his autobiography what he was told by an earlier arrival:

Young man, you have just landed in the great city of New York where all the opportunities are opened to you, but if you want to succeed, you must forget about God and your religion and especially about the Sabbath and dietary laws. You must work every day including the Sabbath and eat what you can get, for God has been left on the other side of the ocean.²

Many succumbed. Without deep thought or soul-searching introspection, the Sabbath was soon discarded. The immigrant was completely caught up in the daily struggle for economic survival, and the newcomer was rapidly introduced to the highly impersonal and competitive world of peddling, storekeeping, and factories. It is little wonder that he had no time for spiritual contemplation and rejuvenation. Even though some of the arrivals heroically succeeded in remaining Sabbath observers, their Sabbath was also marred by the fears of economic insolvency.

The religious dilemma was further intensified by the immigrant's lack of a deep-seated knowledge of the Jewish classics and texts. Most erudite European Jews feared to emigrate to the United States because they considered it a "trefa [impure] land." During a 1900 visit to the United States, Rabbi Jacob David Willowski of Slutzk chastized a public gathering of East Europeans for having emigrated to this "trefa land where even the stones are impure."³ Those who did come were not from the elite class of scholars, but rather from among the masses who observed Orthodoxy out of rote and habit. It was not an observance fortified by intellectual

commitment and understanding. When their rapidly Americanizing children questioned their religious practices, many could only respond like Morris Raphael Cohen's father: "I am a believer."⁴ They were not capable of citing talmudic, halachic, and philosophic sources to elucidate their observances and customs.

When a learned Jew did emigrate to the United States, he was also caught up in the economic webs of his new community, and his talmudic ability barely expressed itself on the American scene. Hutchins Hapgood, a keen observer of New York's East Side, found few sights more pathetic than that of a talmudic scholar behind a pushcart or in the sweatshop—for example,

an old man with a long beard, a little black cap on his head and a venerable face—a man who had been perhaps a Hebraic or Talmudic scholar in the old country, carrying or pressing piles of coats in the melancholy sweatshop; or standing for sixteen hours a day by his pushcart in one of the dozen crowded streets of the Ghetto, where the great markets are selling among many other things apples, garden stuff, fish and second-hand shirts.⁵

Under these conditions it is understandable that to their parents' request that they recite the *maariv* (evening) prayers, many children growing up on the East Side responded with a typical utilitarian American answer: "Ah, what yer givin' us!" and then made a "bee-line for the street."⁶

The newcomers' stress on secular education also contributed to their children's flight from Orthodoxy. They insisted that their youngsters attend the best schools and raise themselves above the pushcarts and sweatshops. When the Orthodox mother of Morris Raphael Cohen was asked how she could afford to send him to college, she replied: "If need be I'll go out as a washerwoman and scrub floors so that my Morris can have a college education."⁷ Cohen did go to college and went on to become a most influential professor at the City College of New York. But he did not remain an Orthodox Jew.

The parents were not the only ones anxious for their offspring to attend college; their children also viewed higher secular education as the stepping-stone to success and culture. Himself an East Side product, Abraham Cahan vividly portrayed the young immigrant who could not wait to learn English:

He was in a fever of impatience to inhale the whole of the Gentile language—definitions, spelling, pronunciation, and all—with one desperate effort. It was the one great impediment that seemed to stand between him and the enchanted new world that revealed itself to him.⁸

The City College of New York was soon filled with the children of the newcomers. In college, philosophic and theological challenges confronted whatever commitments the students still retained toward Orthodoxy. This vague commitment to an Orthodoxy which they barely understood was soon swept away by the critical spirit engendered by a liberal arts education.

Further challenges were presented to Orthodoxy by the socialist and anarchic movements which flourished within immigrant circles during this period. The great awakening which had been gradually spreading throughout East European communities found unlimited expression in the immigrant ghettos of a politically free United States. The spirit of these antireligious movements was typified by Feigenbaum's parody of Psalm 113. Instead of praising God, it became a hymn to liberty:

Hallelujah—Praise, O ye honest people, praise the name of Liberty. Blessed be the name of Liberty from this time forth and forever-more. From East to West the name of Liberty is to be praised. She hath risen high above all nations, unto the heavens hath she reached. She hath ascended heaven and driven away the gods, hath come down on earth and broken the chains. She raiseth up the friendless out of the dust, the needy she lifteth up from the dung-hill.⁹

Radicals sponsored Yom Kippur balls on New York's East Side. While the pious prayed, the irreverent element in the community marched to the dance hall. A ticket to an 1890 Yom Kippur ball read:

Grand Yom Kippur Ball with theatre. Arranged with the consent of all new rabbis of liberty. Kol Nidre Night and Day in the year 6851 (5651), after the invention of the Jewish idols, and 1890, after the birth of the false Messiah. . . . The Kol Nidre will be offered by John Most. Music, dancing, buffet, Marseillaise and other hymns against Satan.¹⁰

A portion of the young immigrant generation was influenced by these ideologies, and it was not uncommon for children to parade

mockingly to dances and feasts while their own parents walked solemnly to recite Kol Nidre. A novelist of this era described the Fort Lee ferry on Yom Kippur, when “both decks were jammed with the exuberant new generation.” These young people were traveling to spend “the solemn Day of Atonement in frolics and feasts in the woods, even as their parents were spending it in lament and fasts in stifling synagogues.”¹¹

The few established Americanized Orthodox synagogues were of little aid to the newcomer, since they were not located in the immigrant areas and were not geared to meet immigrant needs. On occasion newcomers found their way to these Westernized Orthodox synagogues. Nonetheless, these houses of worship could not serve the religious needs of tens of thousands of East European immigrants. Although dedicated rabbinic leaders such as Bernard Drachman of the uptown Zichron Ephraim Congregation and Henry Pereira Mendes of the Sephardic Congregation Shearith Israel ministered to Orthodox Jewry in New York at this time, they could not guide the new arrivals. Their backgrounds, culture, and Weltanschauung were vastly different from those of the East European immigrants. The newcomers looked upon these rabbis with suspicion and doubt. Rabbi Drachman, a native American, articulated these feelings and emotions when he described his initial search for a rabbinic position after his return from the completion of his rabbinic training in Germany:

There were a few Orthodox congregations whose members were American-born or Americanized immigrants, and whose pulpits were occupied by English-speaking rabbis, but there were no vacancies. . . . There were considerable groups of Eastern European, Polish and Russian, Jews, in the East Side or Ghetto districts of the great city, who adhered to the Orthodox Traditions of their native lands, but they were Yiddish-speaking and wanted rabbis of that type. They were strange to me, and I was even stranger to them. I preached by invitation in a few of these synagogues, but while my sermons made considerable impression and there was a great deal of admiration—as well as amazement—for me as an American young man who had renounced Reform and was energetically championing the cause of the ancient Traditional Jewish faith, these sentiments did not materialize in the form of a call to the rabbinate of any of these congregations.¹²

The newcomers organized their own synagogues, and by 1900 there were two hundred small synagogues servicing East Europeans in Manhattan. Most of these synagogues were “mere rented rooms in tenement houses or sometimes halls or lofts.” Often they consisted of no more than “a few seats for the men, a little shut-in, stuffy gallery for the women, and an altar toward Jerusalem.”¹³ These synagogues were all Orthodox and retained the European customs of the immigrants’ fathers and forefathers. This constituted a further impediment to the newcomers’ successfully establishing an American Orthodoxy, for their houses of worship were all transplanted European institutions.

The majority of the immigrant youngsters received their formal Torah education at the *heder* (school), which also was a transplanted European institution. Besides the lack of modern pedagogic techniques which characterized the European *heder*, the American counterpart was also hindered by its own distinctive problems. In Eastern Europe the *heder* was the only educational institution attended by most Jewish youngsters, and it occupied a good portion of their time and attention. In America the *heder* could only supplement the secular instruction given by the public schools. The few hours spent in the European atmosphere of the basement or storefront *heder* were no match for the influence of the worldly American public school. A 1909 study described this dichotomy:

The public school is so far better than the dingy, unsanitary, unpedagogical *chedar* where only Hebrew is taught, that it [the public school] speedily swallows up all the children. Hundreds, indeed, of the little Hebrew *chedarim* are still maintained by the contributions of pious parents, and many children are compelled to go to them after public school hours, but they go under compulsion and stop as soon as possible.¹⁴

Another drawback peculiar to the American *heder* was the low standard set by the *heder melamed* (teacher). In East Europe the *heder* and *melamed* were esteemed and were subject to educational standards imposed by a discerning public. In America there was no organized public opinion to condemn the substandard *heder*. The immigrants were much too occupied with their daily struggle for

existence to be able to devote the time needed for the supervision of the hederim. They were satisfied if their children learned to read their bar mitzvah haftorot (prophetic portion) and the kaddish (prayer recited for the deceased).

The heder was entirely a private enterprise opened by an individual seeking a livelihood. The American melamed was more commercial-minded than his European counterpart and was generally a man of less scholarship and devotion. He was also less convinced of the usefulness and importance of his work. Many times he was simply a misfit who opened a heder because he could not succeed at any other type of employment. A novelist gives a classic portrayal of an East Side melamed and heder:

David scanned his future teacher closely. He was not at all like the teachers at school, but David had seen rabbis before and knew he wouldn't be. He appeared old and was certainly untidy. He wore soft leather shoes like house-slippers, that had no place for either laces or buttons. His trousers were baggy and stained, a great area of striped and crumpled shirt intervened between his belt and his bulging vest. The knot of his tie, which was nearer one ear than the other, hung away from his soiled collar. . . .

From the rabbi his eyes wandered about the room. Bare walls, the brown paint on it full of long wavering cracks. Against one wall stood a round-bellied stove. . . . Against the other wall a long line of benches ran to the rabbi's table. Boys of varying ages were seated upon them, jabbering, disputing, gambling for various things, scuffling over what looked to David like a few sticks. Seated upon the bench before the rabbi's table were several others obviously waiting their turn at the book lying open in front of the rabbi's cushioned chair.¹⁵

Because anyone could open these schools without any restrictions, the heder system was completely impaired educationally.

A minority of East Side children received their Hebrew education from an equally inefficient "Siddur peddler," or itinerant melamed, who taught the boy in his home. A 1918 study of Jewish education in New York City described their ineffectiveness:

The entire school equipment of the itinerant teacher consists of a worn-out prayer book securely placed under his arm. He goes from house to house, bringing the *Cheder* to the child, for in aim,

content and method, the home instruction which he gives, differs in no way from that of the *Cheder*. There are hundreds of these teachers in New York City. They are either maladjusted individuals whose earnestness must not be underrated, or mercenary dis-bursers of *Ivri* [Hebrew reading], who are an obstacle to the progress of Jewish education in America.¹⁶

A transplanted European institution which fared better on the American scene was the Talmud Torah. In Europe this school was conducted by the community for poor children whose parents were unable to pay the heder's tuition fee. In America the Talmud Torah was also originally organized for poor children. Because they were situated in the congested quarters of the city, these schools attracted many pupils. The Talmud Torah was therefore capable of developing a system of grading and school management similar to that of the public schools. Since they were housed in school buildings, these structures had to conform to state standards for sanitation and safety. The early policy of educating only the poor was gradually modified in America. Parents who could afford to pay tuition were charged on a weekly or monthly basis. In the course of time some of the directors of these schools began to enroll their own children as pupils. Thus the Talmud Torah lost its charitable aspect to some extent and became a communal educational institution for all Jewish children.

The earliest American Talmud Torah was organized in 1862 by Pesach Rosenthal on the East Side of New York. In 1883 it was reorganized as the Machzikei Talmud Torah (Supporters of Talmud Torah). In 1886 it purchased property on East Broadway, and two buildings were remodeled to make one school building capable of accommodating eight hundred pupils. By 1906 such community-sponsored Talmud Torahs were rapidly gaining recognition. The Uptown Talmud Torah had already been established in Harlem in 1895, and in 1909 it was to erect its own building with facilities for two thousand pupils. Brooklyn had two highly regarded Talmud Torahs: the School of Biblical Instruction and the Hebrew Free School. In the Bronx the Tremont Hebrew Free School was organized in 1906.

Students attended classes from four to eight every afternoon, Monday through Thursday, and on Sunday mornings. The cur-

THE ORTHODOX IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY [II

riculum consisted of Hebrew, Bible, laws and customs, Jewish history, and the Torah and haftarah cantillations. The more advanced schools also introduced their pupils to an elementary study of the Talmud.

The most tragic figures on the immigrant scene were the relatively few East European rabbis who came to the United States. Moshe Weinberger, who was acquainted with the glory of the rabbinate in the old country, drew this dismal picture of its state in New York in 1887:

There are only three or four competent rabbis, who can decide ritual questions, in this great city which has over one hundred thousand Jews, and one hundred and thirty Orthodox congregations. These few rabbis were not called to their positions in a dignified manner—but they rather arrived like all the other immigrants to search for sustenance in America. After much effort, they located rabbinic positions. However, they are not secure in these positions since their congregations do not even pay enough to cover the necessities of life. . . . They barely exist on the inadequate salaries they receive from the congregations, and on the few gifts they receive from individuals.¹⁷

Although the number of East European rabbis in New York increased during the ensuing years, their economic status did not improve. Hutchins Hapgood described their situation in 1902:

As a lot, they are old, reverend men, with long grey beards, long black coats and little black caps on their heads. They are mainly very poor, live in the barest of tenement houses and pursue a calling which no longer involves much honor or standing. In the old country, in Russia—for most of the poor ones are Russians—the rabbi is a great person. He is made rabbi by the state and is rabbi all his life, and the only rabbi in the town, for all the Jews in every city form one congregation, of which there is but one rabbi and one cantor. He is a man always full of learning and piety, and is respected and supported comfortably by the congregation. . . .

But in New York it is very different. Here there are hundreds of congregations, one in almost every street, for the Jews come from many different cities and towns in the old country, and the New York representatives of every little place in Russia must have their congregation here. Consequently, the congregations are for the most part small, poor, and unimportant. Few can pay the rabbi more

than \$3 or \$4 a week, and often, instead of having a regular salary, he is reduced to an occasional fee for his services at weddings, births, and holy festivals generally. Some very poor congregations get along without a rabbi at all, hiring one for special occasions.¹⁸

Some of these rabbis began to supplement their meager incomes by attempting to supervise the production of kosher food. In Europe kashruth had been the responsibility of the organized Jewish community and its elected rabbinical leaders. But in America, where there no longer was a centralized community, kashruth soon became an impossible situation. Unqualified immigrants became shohatim, kosher butchers, and even supervising rabbis. Rabbi Willowski described the shohet who publicly transgressed the Sabbath by attending the theater on Friday nights, and the supervising rabbi who could barely comprehend the *Shulchan Aruch: Yoreh Deah*.¹⁹ He told of a poultry shohet who slaughtered over two thousand chickens every Thursday and Friday and by Friday night was so tired that he could not hold his fork and spoon in his hand; his children had to feed him. Certainly this exhausted shohet was unable to slaughter properly during the hours preceding the Sabbath. Nevertheless, the supervising rabbi allowed the chicken market to continue to function with only this one shohet. Rabbi Willowski felt that the reason this was happening in America was that in the mass conglomeration of immigrants from diverse backgrounds and countries, no individual really knew his neighbor.

This situation was further compounded by the meager regard in which true kashruth was held by the average housewife. They were mainly interested in obtaining their meat as cheaply as possible and were content simply to see some sort of kashruth certificate in their butchers' windows. The butchers encouraged the housewives by vying with one another in proclaiming cheaper prices without regard to their sources of supply. Sarcastically Rabbi Willowski cited the current adage: "*Az men ruft ihm Mendel, meg men essen fun sein fendel* [If one calls him Mendel, it is permitted to eat from his pot]." He attributed this attitude to the fact that many of the immigrants ate forbidden foods on their long sea voyages to the United States. Once they partook of nonkosher staples, their devotion to kashruth was bound to become noticeably weakened.

Controversies between these supervising rabbis, shohatim, and butchers became commonplace, and it was not rare for one rabbi to discredit the kosher certification issued by his colleague. A satirical article in a Jewish daily declared: "And they sinned . . . and they went so far as to sell pork with a Kosher stamp on it; cattle slaughterers joined the United Hebrew trades; and when a rabbi was caught who was able to read, he was placed in a museum."²⁰ This kashruth quagmire often blighted the reputation of even the truly learned rabbis who entered this dubious field of endeavor.

Two earnest attempts were made in America to centralize the religious needs of East European Jewish communities around a chief rabbi, but they both ended in abject failure. The first attempt resulted in the 1888 arrival of the venerated Rabbi Jacob Joseph of Vilna to serve as the chief rabbi of the Association of American Orthodox Hebrew Congregations of New York's East Side. When he attempted to bring order to chaotic New York kashruth, he became ensnarled in bitter controversy. The repudiation of Rabbi Joseph's hechsher (kosher certification) by many of his East Side rabbinical colleagues soon made his position meaningless. Within a year, the experiment ended in almost total failure.²¹

Later, in 1903, an attempt was made to install Rabbi Willowski as the chief rabbi of Chicago's East European Jewish community. Strong opposition to his kashruth supervision made his position untenable, however, and he resigned after holding it for ten months. The opposition centered around Rabbi Zvi Shimon Album, who resented Rabbi Willowski's interference with food purveyors previously under his supervision. Rabbi Album taunted Rabbi Willowski:

The first time he was in America, we heard him say that even the stones in America are *trefa*. Last year he came to America a second time, and now the stones became kosher and ritually pure, although they have not been purged or immersed in a *mikvah*.²²

After Rabbi Willowski's departure, no attempt was made to engage a successor.

The proliferation of self-styled reverends on the immigrant scene further aggravated the position of the East European rabbis.

These reverends served essentially as marriage performers and preachers. "They clop a high hat on their heads, impose on a poor congregation with their up-to-dateness and became rabbis without learning or piety."²³ Few mohalim (ritual circumcisers) or shohatim claimed these titles alone; their shingles usually read: MOHEL AND MARRIAGE PERFORMER OR SHOHEH AND MARRIAGE PERFORMER. Many were ignorant of the Jewish marital laws and officiated at forbidden marriages. Rabbi Willowski cited numerous examples of reverends permitting marriages between Kohanim (men of Aaronic descent) and divorcees, although this transgressed Torah Law. Men were also allowed to remarry even if they had not granted gittin (rabbinical bills of divorcement) to their previous spouses. In cases of remarriage after the gittin, the reverends did not require the couple to wait the three-month period required by rabbinic decree. Willowski even recorded a case where a reverend allowed a man to marry his sister-in-law although she already had borne children by his late brother. Not only was this a transgression of Torah Law, but the ensuing children would also be considered illegitimate by Jewish Law. Reverends also became involved in the kashruth problem, and they played a prominent role in the opposition to Chief Rabbi Jacob Joseph. At a meeting called to oppose the chief rabbi,

the oration of the day was delivered by the Reverend H. Brodsky, "Marriage performer, *mohel*, and preacher." . . . He called upon the assemblage to expose Rabbi Joseph as a tool of men who were making a business of him and his office [through kashruth supervision].²⁴

The embattled East European rabbis from across the United States joined together and organized the *Agudat Harabanim* (Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada) on July 29, 1902. Only thirteen of the fifty-nine founding members were from New York City; the remainder ministered to immigrant communities in such cities as New Haven, Connecticut; Providence, Rhode Island; Omaha, Nebraska; Minneapolis, Minnesota; and Louisville, Kentucky. Rabbi Moses Sebulun Margolies, a founder of the organization, described its necessity:

The Kashrus situation was an eyesore and an abomination to the God fearing man, and needed attention. Religious education was

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at its lowest ebb. Sabbath observance was becoming obsolete and no one raised a voice of warning. Irresponsibility in purely rabbinical functions, particularly in Marriage and Divorce, was threatening the sanctity of the marital relationship. All this was from time immemorial the particular province of the *Rav* and if changed conditions have deprived the individual rabbi of his power “to stand in the breach” then it devolved upon a united rabbinic to shoulder the burden.²⁵

By 1906 the *Agudat Harabanim* was still in its infancy, but its accomplishments already indicated that it was more successful in providing a “united rabbinic” and comradeship for the East European rabbis of America than in solving the religious problems engulfing American Jewry.

The greatest hindrance to the immigrant rabbi’s success in the United States was his inability to become Americanized. While his congregants were exposed to American ideals and standards in the sweatshops and parks, the rabbi remained in the ageless world of Torah and Talmud. David de Sola Pool said that these rabbis, having come

to this country at a mature age, . . . rarely mastered the English language and while immigrant Jewry rapidly Americanized itself in language and mores, the rabbis remained Yiddish-speaking and their deep and extensive rabbinical knowledge was of little use to the community. They grew more and more out of touch with their congregations and with the community as a whole. They found themselves with a very precarious tenure of office, and often economically stranded in some rundown street which had been a ghetto until their congregations moved away. While the community was constantly adapting itself to American standards, the Rabbis and the synagogues of these Rabbis stood still.²⁶

The highly regarded Rabbi Abraham Jacob Gershon Lesser was at the acme of his career as the rabbi of Cincinnati’s Orthodox community in 1906. A native of Mir, Poland, Rabbi Lesser was invited to Chicago by a Polish congregation in 1880. In 1898 he left to head the largest Orthodox congregation in Cincinnati, and he remained in this position until his death in 1925. In a revealing passage his biographer notes

that Rabbi Lesser never learned to talk English and the only words in English that he could write comprised his name. As a result, he

did not take part in the civic life of the community and left much of this type of activity to Reform Jews. His influence was primarily that of a humble pastor to his flock.²⁷

Rabbi Willowski castigated the rabbis and reverends who began to preach in English. Not only was he opposed to the use of English, but he was also upset by the contents of these sermons. He decried those who ascended the pulpits in Orthodox synagogues and delivered—in English—talks about morals and ethics which possessed no uniquely Jewish content:

These sermons contain no true guidance for the Jewish people. They simply make the Jewish people like the rest of the nations. If these practices will not cease, there is no hope for the continuance of the Jewish religion. These sermons will open the gates leading our brethren to Reform Judaism. Whoever fears the Lord must protest against these preachers. If one does not have the power to stop this practice, he must leave the synagogue when such a preacher rises to ascend the pulpit. Due to our sins, this practice is now becoming widespread even in Orthodox synagogues. The masses do not realize the graveness of the danger this presents to Judaism.²⁸

By 1906 Rabbi Bernard Levinthal had already achieved prominence as the leading Orthodox rabbi of Philadelphia, where he had ministered to four congregations since his 1891 arrival. A contemporary considered him “the most Americanized of the strictly Orthodox Rabbis in the country.”²⁹ Nevertheless, it was reported that Levinthal criticized The Jewish Theological Seminary of America because “by insisting upon a college education, [the Jewish Theological Seminary] curtailed the amount of time which could be devoted to Jewish studies. [Rabbi Levinthal’s] impression was that a High School education sufficed.”³⁰

Rabbi Margolies seemed to be cognizant that this lack of Americanization was hampering the success of his colleagues:

The “gathering of the dispersion” which this country became to the Jews during the last two decades, wrought great havoc with our old, established conceptions of Jewish religious life. All the old standards were upset in the hurly-burly of economic adjustment and he who, in the midst of that new Babel of tongues, ideas and habits, would stand alone, was doomed to destruction.³¹

As the lay leadership of the East European synagogues gradually passed into the hands of Americanized congregants, they began to seek English-speaking rabbis to minister jointly with their *rav*. Usually they would not dispense with their *rav*, the rabbi-scholar who served as their talmudical jurist. However, they did require the associate rabbi for their American-born children, who often viewed the Yiddish-speaking, bearded rabbi as a symbol of the past. As early as 1906 we find an Orthodox congregation in Rochester engaging a graduate of The Jewish Theological Seminary of America to serve as the English-speaking associate rabbi to its *rav*. This practice was to become more prevalent during the ensuing years, and ultimately the English-speaking rabbis became the sole spiritual leaders of most of the congregations.³²

During this period the Jewish Theological Seminary began to graduate ever-larger classes of American-trained rabbis. In 1906 eight students were ordained by the Seminary. Organized in 1886 by the articulate element of Americanized Orthodoxy to combat the influence of Reform Judaism, the school was now starting to flourish. Dr. Sabato Morais, minister of the Mikveh Israel Congregation of Philadelphia and founder of the new school, was a strictly Orthodox Jew of the Sephardic tradition. Nevertheless, he accepted the aid of non-Orthodox spiritual leaders such as Alexander Kohut, Marcus Jastrow, and Benjamin Szold, who were also opposed to the excesses of the Reform movement. The preamble to the constitution of the Seminary read:

The necessity has been made manifest for associated and organized effort on the part of the Jews of America, faithful to Mosaic Law and ancestral tradition, for the purpose of keeping alive the true Jewish spirit; in particular by the establishment of a Seminary where the Bible shall be impartially taught and rabbinic literature faithfully expounded, and more especially, where youth, desirous of entering the ministry, may be thoroughly grounded in Jewish knowledge and inspired by precept and the example of their instructors with the love of the Hebrew language, and a spirit of fidelity and devotion to Jewish law.³³

In 1902 the Seminary was reorganized on a stable financial basis, and Dr. Solomon Schechter of Cambridge University was brought to America to assume the presidency of the Seminary.

From the outset the East Europeans failed to rally around the Seminary. Reverend Morais was deeply respected by the immigrants, but the newcomers did not consider the Sephardic minister an authority on Jewish Law. Nor did the few accomplished old-country talmudists consider Morais sufficiently proficient to serve as the head of a school for the training of rabbis. A publication of the Orthodox immigrants expressed its dismay at the slow pace of scholastic accomplishment at the new school. It claimed that the two students who were in the highest grade of the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1897 had studied only seventeen pages of Talmud and a few other halachic sources in one entire year of schooling—and that they could not even read these properly. As for Rashi's commentary, only selected portions were studied.³⁴

In 1903 Ezekiel Levit, in the *Jüdisches Tageblatt* declared:

What kind of rabbis will come forth from there [the Jewish Theological Seminary]? If they will be reform . . . then we do not need it . . . because a factory for such rabbis . . . is already established in Cincinnati. If the founders mean to train Orthodox rabbis in the Seminary, then I cannot understand them either. An Orthodox rabbi must know Talmud and Codes . . . and in the Seminary . . . Talmud and the Codes are taught only as much as Hebrew may be taught in the philosophy department of a university.³⁵

The immigrant community was further alienated by the Seminary's insistence upon English as the language of instruction instead of Yiddish. This breach was further widened by Solomon Schechter, who "refused to give any favor to the Yiddish tongue, and would not admit it as a language of instruction in the Seminary. He had a scorn for that distorted Jewish patriotism which held Yiddish to be a bond."³⁶

By 1908 a *Tageblatt* editorial declared that the Seminary had failed:

What is the use of lying? The Seminary is not popular among the people. The great Jewish masses look upon this rabbinical school as upon some rich man's "uptown" institution. Among many, and in many congregations, the students of the Seminary are not considered as real rabbis although this rabbinical school calls itself



Bernard Revel, M. A. graduation, N. Y. U., 1909



Dr. Revel in 1937
in Galveston, Texas



The Revel family (l. to r.): Norman, Bernard, Sarah, and Hirschel



Bernard and Sarah Revel



Dr. Revel in his office at Yeshiva College

Orthodox and was organized to combat the principles on which the rabbinical school in Cincinnati stands.³⁷

While the Seminary was in its formative years, in 1896 the immigrant community organized the first American yeshiva for advanced talmudic study. It began with a small private class of students taught by Rabbi Moses Mayer Matlin in his own top-floor apartment at 172 Clinton Street on New York's East Side. Rabbi Matlin previously emigrated from Slutsk to serve as an ecclesiastical judge in the bet din (rabbinical court) of Rabbi Jacob Joseph. Anxious for his own son to continue his religious studies, Rabbi Matlin assembled fifteen- and sixteen-year-old graduates of the previously established elementary Yeshivat Etz Chaim and instructed them in Talmud. When the class grew, it was accommodated by the Mariampol Synagogue at 44 East Broadway. The school was later housed in various East Side synagogues until 1904, when a building was purchased for it at 156 Henry Street.

After the death of Kovno's chief rabbi, Isaac Elchanan Spektor, on March 6, 1896, the school was dedicated to his eternal memory and was named the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary.

The new institution was popularly known as the Yeshiva, and continued the tradition of the European yeshivot in teaching *Torah lishmah*, to emphasize the study of Talmud and its commentaries solely for their own sake. The distinction between the vocation of the rabbinate and the avocation of Torah study was not emphasized or even clearly delineated in the European yeshiva system of education. The American Yeshiva continued this practice, and the curriculum consisted entirely of *shiurim* (lectures) in Talmud and related commentaries by a *rosh yeshiva* (talmudic scholar).

The majority of the students soon were East European immigrants between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one. Many of the students had already been ordained as rabbis in Europe or were on the threshold of receiving ordination when they entered the Yeshiva. Often their stay at the Yeshiva was only a stepping-stone, since they soon left to engage in such Americanized endeavors as attending college or entering into commercial activity. A historian described the students at the Yeshiva around 1906:

In the main, the scholars who found their way to the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary were pressured by the need for making a decision about their future careers. The hospitality of the school offered them the opportunity to make their choice without being exposed to the exigency of making an immediate, and perhaps costly, decision. Those who wanted to continue their studies were able to do so in an environment of Torah and scholarship similar to that of an East European Yeshiva. Those who later decided to find a different calling were able to make the slow, patient and safe adjustment to a new orientation.³⁸

Of the students attending the Yeshiva in 1901, Eli Freedman, Benjamin Friedman, Moses Robinson, and Leib Salovay became physicians; Akiva Matlin attended the medical school at the University of Tennessee; Hillel Rogoff became editor of the *Jewish Daily Forward*; Ephraim E. Lisitzky became one of the best-known teachers and men of Hebrew letters in the United States; and Sampson Lederhandler became a journalist. Only Aaron Abramowitz and Harry Hendler became Hebrew teachers, and Joseph Naphtali Rosenberg entered the rabbinate.

During this period students began to make demands for secular studies under the auspices of the Yeshiva. They could not attend public high schools and colleges because of the Yeshiva's full program of religious studies. Many did the next best thing by attending public night schools. Demands were raised that the Yeshiva provide an English Department or permit students to receive secular training elsewhere during the day. The students planning to enter the active rabbinate also requested a secular education, feeling that they could not be successful in America without a broad general culture. But the East European directors of the Yeshiva deeply believed in "Torah for its own sake" without its dilution by secular studies. They felt that the ability to speak passable English was sufficient and that this achievement would change the European rabbinical student into an adequate American religious leader. They therefore rejected the students' repeated requests for a secular studies program.

In 1906 the problem erupted into a public quarrel when the directors adopted the formal position that students receiving financial support from the Yeshiva must spend their full time pur-

suing their religious studies. When a few students were suspended for violating these directives, the Yiddish papers immediately championed their cause and declared:

They are entirely justified in these demands. Jewish scholars without American education arrive daily on every ship . . . on the other hand . . . cultured students without Jewish scholarship are to be found in the [Jewish Theological] Seminary and in all colleges. The Yeshiva on Henry Street must be the common ground where Torah and culture can be blended.³⁹

The 1906 dispute was solved with the reorganization of the school's administration and the election of Rabbi Moses Sebulun Margolies as its new president. Under the leadership of the venerated Rabbi Margolies, who was gradually becoming acknowledged as the dean of the American Orthodox rabbinate, the students were tactfully pacified and the tense situation relieved. Nevertheless, no serious attempt was made at this time to Americanize the Yeshiva by introducing organized secular studies. The Yeshiva remained primarily a transplanted European institution, little known outside of New York's East Side and wielding no influence on the greater American Jewish community.

By 1906 the inability of the Orthodox immigrants to meet the American challenges had resulted in the ever-decreasing observance of all areas of Jewish Law. On the Sabbath it was not uncommon to observe outside synagogues "a score or more of boys . . . sitting hatless in their old clothes, smoking cigarettes on the steps outside, and their fathers, all dressed in black, with their high hats, uncut beards, and temple curls, . . . going into the synagogues."⁴⁰

Even among the adults themselves many religious compromises were made. It was estimated that by 1906 91 percent of the Russian Jewish immigrants ceased to be strictly Orthodox in their religious practices.⁴¹ Many members of this community were described as

tottering grandfathers, with one foot in the grave, [who] had snipped off their white beards and laid aside their skull-caps and their snuff-boxes and paraded around the streets of a Saturday afternoon with cigarettes in their mouths.⁴²

An immigrant complained that “on Yom Kippur, I was in great need of a tie, and I had to pass at least twenty blocks until I found an open store.”⁴³ On the Sabbath, however, he would not have experienced this difficulty in the immigrant district since “Sabbath observers . . . are rather a rarity among the shopkeepers.”⁴⁴ “It became an exception, even a rarity, for a Jewish mercantile establishment or shop to be closed on Israel’s sacred day of rest.”⁴⁵

Hutchins Hapgood described the newcomers who attended the theater on Friday night:

The Orthodox Jews who go to the theatre on Friday night, the beginning of the Sabbath, are commonly somewhat ashamed of themselves and try to quiet their consciences by a vociferous condemnation of the actions on the stage. The actor, who through the exigencies of his role, is compelled to appear on Friday night with a cigar in his mouth, is frequently greeted with hisses and strenuous cries of “shame, shame, smoke on the Sabbath!” from the proletarian hypocrites in the gallery.⁴⁶

Rabbi Album of Chicago decried the breakdown of kashruth standards among the immigrants residing in Chicago: “On whom do they depend [for a halachic leniency] when they eat bread which is baked on the Sabbath by Jewish bakers . . . and on whom do they depend when they eat in restaurants, which generally are *trafe!*”⁴⁷

A recently married Russian Jew of New York’s East Side, when asked whether he still observed the dietary laws, said:

In a way, yes. We don’t make much of the details like keeping the butter and meat dishes apart, but we do eat kosher food. If we didn’t, the old folks would not come to visit us. We shall keep it up as long as they live.⁴⁸

Bernard Revel stepped into this religious environment upon his arrival in America.

2



EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

IT WAS THE YEAR 1891. Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Spektor, the illustrious spiritual leader of Kovno, Lithuania, had just finished examining his colleague's six-year-old youngster. Turning to the child's father, he exclaimed: "Rabbi of Pren, the Lord has blessed you with a true genius—an *illui*. Your Dov possesses a photographic memory. He will someday be, with the help of God, a leading rabbinical luminary in Israel!"

Indeed, Rabbi Nahum Shraga Revel of Pren, a suburb of Kovno, had reason to rejoice. He was his son's first teacher, and they had begun to study the Talmud when Dov was a mere five years old. At the age of six, Dov, placed on a table before talmudic scholars, could recite from memory many pages from tractate Baba Kamma. The young student's fame gradually spread to surrounding communities, and after this encounter with Rabbi Isaac Elchanan, he was called "The *Prenner Illui*," the prodigy from Pren.

Rabbi Nahum Shraga's family name was originally Finkel. Upon his engagement to the daughter of Rabbi Moshe Yitzchak Revel of Ponevez, he adopted the Revel family name. Five children issued from this marriage. A son, Moshe Yitzchak, emigrated to the United States, where he changed his name to Morris Glueck. His son, Dr. Nelson Glueck, became the president of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion of Cincinnati and New York.

After the death of his first wife, Nahum Shraga married Leah

Gittelevitch of Kovno, who descended from a family of merchants. Dov and three daughters were born to them. He was born on September 17 (Tishri 8), 1885, and named after his mother's learned and pious grandfather, Dov Kretinger.¹

The young Dov enjoyed a happy childhood in Pren. His father was esteemed by his community, and the family lived in a large, comfortable house which belonged to the kehillah (Jewish community). A vegetable garden and a small orchard adjoined the residence, and there was a stream nearby. Although he received offers from more important cities, Dov's father chose to remain in the small community where he was so content and to continue in close contact with Rabbi Isaac Elchanan.

The joy of life in Pren ceased when Dov's father passed away after a short and painful illness in 1897. Dov, then twelve years old, stood on the top of a crate to eulogize his father at the funeral. Rabbi Nahum Shraga was placed at eternal rest next to his beloved friend Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Spektor, who had died only a short time before, on March 6 (Adar 21), 1896. The Jewish communities of Kovno and Pren erected an *obel* (joint monumental structure) over the final resting places of their late spiritual leaders.

Dov's bereaved family now moved to Kovno, where his mother's relatives resided. Kovno, the Russian name of Lithuania's interbellum capital, Kaunas, is located at the confluence of the Neman and Viliya rivers, fifty-five miles to the northwest of Vilna. From Napoleon Hill in Kovno, Napoleon is said to have watched his troops cross the Neman into Russian territory in 1812. As a Lithuanian Jewish center, Kovno was second only to Vilna. In 1897 its Jewish population numbered about thirty-seven thousand persons, or about one-half the total population. At this time Kovno was already a center for Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment) and Zionist activities.

But above all it was a citadel of Torah study. Scattered throughout the city were scores of *kloyzn* (private houses of study) where boys in their teens and young married men pursued their talmudic studies. The *kloyz* soon became Dov's new home. Here he studied without the aid of teachers, since the advanced students helped the beginners. His vistas broadened as he made the ac-

quaintances of the heterogeneous crowd that invariably frequented the *kloyz*. There were adolescents, single men, and *perushim*. The *perushim* were newlyweds who still continued to devote their full time to their studies. In addition to the local students, there were also out-of-towners. As soon as a new student made his appearance in the *kloyz*, he would be welcomed by laymen who agreed to provide him with “eating days.” The *kloyz* also had a well-furnished library. Thus he had food and books. If need be, he also was given a lodging place—the *kloyz* itself. At first Dov spent the mornings studying with an older student. In the afternoons and evenings he studied alone. Once his talmudic proficiency became apparent, however, he was readily accepted as an equal by the best students. Other youngsters soon sought his guidance in interpreting difficult talmudic passages or in locating obscure references.

Diligence in Torah study had long been the goal of aspiring scholars, in accordance with the biblical charge to “meditate therein day and night” (Joshua 1:8). This diligence, which was widespread in East European Torah centers and was immortalized by Hayim Nachman Bialik in his “HaMatmid,” characterized the Kovno *kloyzn*. Dov, in particular, became well known as a *matmid* (perpetual student). His days gradually turned to nights and the nights slowly dawned into days as Dov continuously delved deeper into the Talmud and its labyrinth of commentaries.

Kovno was also a center of the recently organized Mussar movement, since its founder, Rabbi Israel Salanter, made Kovno his main residence during the second half of the nineteenth century. As the touchstone of his philosophy, Rabbi Salanter placed his teacher’s charge to him: “Israel, study Mussar—books on moral exhortation—and you will fear God!” This movement sought to create an intellectual and scholarly climate for meticulous Torah observance. It gradually spread to many of the leading Lithuanian yeshivot. In Kovno Dov attended the Mussar lectures of Rabbi Isaac Blazer, a leading disciple of Rabbi Israel Salanter. Rabbi Blazer (who was also known as “Reb Itzele Peterburger,” since he had been the rabbi of Saint Petersburg) settled in Kovno in 1880. Until 1891 he headed the *Kollel Perushim*, a school for advanced talmudic study by newlyweds, which had been organized

by Rabbi Isaac Elchanan. Then Rabbi Blazer devoted his efforts to organizing new yeshivot in the Mussar tradition and to inspiring the scores of young Kovno Torah students to become adherents of the new movement. Dov Revel remained in contact with him until Reb Itzele departed for Palestine in 1903. His influence upon the young scholar was lasting. It motivated Revel to later engage a mashgiach, a spiritual supervisor, for the Yeshiva he was to head. The mashgiach was an innovation introduced by the Mussar movement. Revel was also to write his master's project on a classic of Mussar literature.

For a short time Dov also attended the well-known yeshiva of Telshe, Lithuania. This school was characterized by an analytical method of advanced talmudic study. Despite this yeshiva's quota system, which limited the number of students it accepted from each area, Dov was immediately received because he was the son of a rabbi. Telshe was the first advanced yeshiva to have gradations in the lectures it arranged for its students. In the mornings and evenings the students studied on their own in small study groups. During the early afternoons they attended their assigned classes.

Dov was placed in the highest class, which was conducted by the Telshe *rosh hayeshiva* (dean of the yeshiva), Rabbi Joseph Leib Bloch. Bloch soon recognized Revel's ability and befriended him. As his *chavrusa* and study companion, Dov chose Abraham Samuel Finkel, the son of a master of the Mussar movement, Rabbi Nathan Tzvi Finkel. Rabbi Finkel had previously organized the Yeshiva Knesseth Israel in Slobodka, a community adjacent to Kovno. Dov's companion was later to serve as the *rosh hayeshiva* of the Hebron branch of the Slobodka Yeshiva when it relocated in Jerusalem. While at Telshe, Dov continued to be a *matmid*. Even during vacations, while his friends were out swimming or playing, Dov continued to pore over his Gemara and its commentaries.

After spending less than a year at Telshe, Dov returned to Kovno. Undoubtedly, he was so accustomed to studying on his own that he could not adjust to the Telshe Yeshiva's formal study sessions. In 1901, when he was only sixteen, he received his semicha (rabbinical ordination). Family memoirs state that he

received his semicha from several outstanding rabbis. The names of these rabbis have not been preserved for posterity. His mother, who had been in poor health, passed away in 1903 at the age of forty-eight. The young rabbi remained in Kovno with relatives after her death.

After his father's death and his entering the *kloyz*, Dov's world was no longer exclusively Torah. The influences of Haskalah had already penetrated the walls of the Lithuanian *kloyzn* and yeshivot. Haskalah, or Jewish Enlightenment, began in Germany about the end of the eighteenth century with the success of Moses Mendelssohn as a popular German philosopher. In Germany, however, the first generation of Haskalah was also the last, since large proportions of the next generation of socially and intellectually accepted Jews gradually passed from Haskalah to assimilation and, in many instances, to Christianity. In Eastern Europe Haskalah started to make appreciable progress by the mid-nineteenth century. Here it resulted in the study of biblical Hebrew, and of the poetical, scientific, and critical portions of Hebrew literature. It also encouraged the Jewish masses to seek secular education and to organize the Jewish schools along the then contemporary pedagogical lines.

Kovno in particular was a hotbed of Haskalah. After a typical long day of pious learning, Dov joined a group of older students around the narrow table earlier used for studying. Their faces were aglow with the flames of the bright reflector lamps standing on the table. The conversation centered around purely secular matters. They discussed mathematics and propounded questions in geometry and algebra to each other. The eyes of the one who found an answer to a problem would flash with joy. Dov also joined in the discussions about articles they had read in the latest issues of *HaMeliz* and *HaZefirab*. They particularly enjoyed the scientific contributions of the pious Chaim Zelig Slonimsky, a Russian scientist and inventor, and the "Statics and Dynamics" of Leon Rabinowitz, a Russian physicist who had previously attended the yeshivot of Mir and Volozhin.

Dov, too, decided that he must become knowledgeable in secular studies and other areas of Jewish knowledge. He pursued his secular studies on his own, and also mastered Jewish history and

the Hebrew language and literature. Philadelphia's *Jewish Exponent* stated on June 25, 1909, that "he met the requirements of a Russian gymnasium." This implies that he probably did not study there, but only took exams at the school to qualify for a gymnasium certificate. While engaged in his new studies, Dov still remained primarily occupied with his first loves, the Torah and Talmud, and he devoted most of his time to their study. In addition to Haskalah, another movement was sweeping through Russia which was ultimately to result in the Russian Revolution of 1917. Revolutionary activity against the czar greatly increased during the late 1890s, and it was particularly intense in Lithuania, which had been under Russian rule since 1795. Jewish participation in this movement was at its peak, and the leading Jewish revolutionary group was the General Jewish Worker's Alliance of Russia, Poland, and Lithuania, popularly known as the Bund. Organized in September 1897, the Bund first considered itself solely a local Russian party for the Jewish worker. Afterwards, under the pressure of Zionism and the initial momentum inherent in its Jewish membership, it began to concern itself more and more with Jewish issues. The Bund was particularly active in Kovno, and even gentile workers belonged to this branch.

The ideals of social justice and human betterment were of paramount concern even within the yeshiva world. Many yeshiva students abandoned their studies and completely cast their lot with the revolutionary groups. Others envisioned plans whereby these secular ideologies could be merged with the Torah outlook. Dov was caught up in these crosscurrents and debates which dominated the conversations of many yeshiva and *kloyz* students. While at Telshe he observed rancorous discussions between opposing groups on the labor movement, socialism, and Torah. In Telshe the situation was further compounded by the lingering resentment of the senior students to the introduction of Mussar. These acrimonious debates resulted in actual fistfights, and ultimately the Telshe Yeshiva was closed for the winter semester of 1905–1906. When it did reopen, only selected students were permitted to return. Dov became an idealistic follower of the social justice for labor that was preached by Bund leaders, and he joined this movement. Years later his son was to write in a eulogy: "He pos-

sessed a many-faceted personality; he had a profound grasp of historical events, and while yet in Lithuania he contributed to the ideology of the movement for social betterment which later turned to Leninism.”²

During the Russian Revolution of 1905, when general strikes and demonstrations—more political than economic—partially paralyzed the empire, many arrests were made by the czarist government. In Kovno thousands of reform agitators were detained. Dov Revel was among those arrested following his printed contributions to the political and social unrest of his time. The Kovno jail for political prisoners, a large building behind a high wall, was filled with defendants during the unrest of 1905. Revel found himself in a large, crowded, dimly lit cell. Boards to sleep on ran the length of the whole rear wall of the cell. In the middle of the cell there were also boards which were cut in the middle to allow passage. Dirty hot water and bread served as the main sustenance of the inmates, while the lavatory facilities were even more miserable. One small receptacle, which was cleaned only once a day, served the needs of all the tens of prisoners in one cell.³

Here in prison Revel began to give serious thought to his future. He realized that his idealistic plans for universal social justice and improvement would not come to fruition in Lithuania in the immediate future. He also wanted to continue his secular education on a university level. His parents were dead, and a half sister was already living in the United States. He heard much about the country from her, and his visions turned to this land of freedom and opportunity. Released from prison, Dov Revel, using the name Bernard Revel, arrived in the United States in 1906 at the age of twenty-one.

Like many immigrants before him, he immediately enrolled in the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, where he knew that the environment resembled that of the *kloyzn* he had left behind. Here he was granted an allowance for food and board, and he felt he could remain in the school until he became acclimated to his new country. Shortly after Revel's enrollment, Rabbi Bernard Levinthal, the unofficial chief Orthodox rabbi of Philadelphia, made one of his frequent visits to the Yeshiva. Levinthal was slightly below medium height and full of figure, giving the

appearance of being squarely—or rather oblongly—built. Although he trimmed his short, dark brown beard in a modern fashion, he still wore the long black coat which characterized the European rabbi. He was introduced to the pale and anxious newcomer. As was then the vogue, they immediately began to discuss talmudic problems. The erudite Rabbi Levinthal was evidently quite impressed by Revel, who, with characteristic ease, quoted verbatim passages from both Talmuds *Bavli* and *Yerushalmi*, as well as from the *Tosefta*, *Mekhilta*, *Sifre*, *Sifra*, and the commentaries of the *risbonim* (early medieval rabbinical scholars) and *acharonim* (late medieval rabbinical scholars).

Levinthal returned to Philadelphia raving about the young man who had recently come from Europe. His judgment was seconded by the patriarchal Rabbi Moses Sebulun Margolies. Rabbi Margolies had been called to New York's Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun in 1905 after serving as the uncrowned chief rabbi of Boston for seventeen years. A saintly figure with a long flowing beard, his dress and deportment recalled the European *rav* in all his glory. After meeting the newcomer, Rabbi Margolies soon wrote a warm letter of recommendation for him. This Hebrew document, which survived the passage of time in a trunk in the Revel residence, stated:

While staying in Hunter, in the Catskill Mountains, my young, dear friend, a new flask filled with old wine, who is known as the Illui from Pren—Rabbi Dov Revel, the son of the Rabbi of Pren, visited with me for two weeks. I enjoyed discussing Torah with him since I found him to be learned in the Talmud, Codes, and all their commentaries. His erudition can be compared to that possessed by the great Torah scholars of our generation. With the help of God, I trust that he will be a bright star on the horizon of Judaism in our country. I urge all who love our holy Torah to aid and honor him as much as possible. I have been brief when perhaps I should have written at length concerning his ability. However, all who meet him will immediately recognize his outstanding wisdom in Torah and secular knowledge. This letter is written in honor of the Torah and its students on Av 6, 5667 [July 17, 1907] in Hunter.

Subsequently Rabbi Levinthal persuaded Revel to come to Philadelphia to serve as his secretary and assistant. Revel lived in

Levinthal's home at 716 Pine Street for almost two years, and he assisted Rabbi Levinthal in his correspondence, in consultations with congregants, and in deciding ritual questions. The home was a four-story house with very large rooms which always seemed to be filled with people. The young rabbi joined the master in the dining room where Rabbi Levinthal dealt with representatives of Talmud Torahs, shohatim, and charitable institutions. There were also the lay people who came to ask for the rabbi's advice regarding business ventures or to complain that their children were no longer religious.

The steady stream of visitors and the huge volume of mail that constantly arrived at 716 Pine Street gave Revel his first intimate glimpse of the complex world of American Jewry. Rabbi Levinthal was a founder of the *Agudat Harabanim* in 1902, and during this period he served as its president. Revel attended conventions and conferences with Levinthal, and his awareness of the problems and challenges that faced American Jewry intensified at these sessions. Revel was also exposed to the thoughts and values of Americanized Jews, since this group was close to the immigrant scene in Philadelphia. He belonged to the Dorshe Daat Society, which was organized in 1897 at the home of the Reverend Sabato Morais. Its members included both Americanized and immigrant Jews.

Revel revealed his first recorded impressions of American Orthodoxy in correspondence with his friend Rabbi David Rackman, whose acquaintance Revel had made during his short stay at the Yeshiva in New York.⁴ Revel felt that New York Jewry would become the focal point and center of Judaism in the United States. He wrote to his friend: "At times, I envy you because you are in the midst of the City, among the people, on Henry Street in New York." He also discussed the type of yeshivot needed in the United States. The Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary was serving as a stopover for the continually arriving young European Torah scholars, but it was not graduating rabbis capable of ministering to the needs of American Jewry. If there was not enough financial support to conduct schools to meet the needs of the recent immigrants and to train American rabbis, then American Jewry must create a yeshiva to meet its greatest need, a yeshiva

capable of producing American rabbis. Rabbi Revel assured his friend that he had not yet given up the hope that the Yeshiva in New York could meet this important need if only the proper conditions could be created at the school.

Revel also discussed the necessity for yeshivot throughout the United States to nurture an educated Jewish laity. He felt that there should be one central yeshiva to educate rabbis, in addition to numerous smaller yeshivot to train Jewish youth in elementary Mishnah and Talmud. He informed his friend that he was aiding the local Mishkan Israel Yeshiva, which was founded by Rabbi Levinthal in 1904, by teaching a class in Mishnah and Talmud during the afternoon. He hoped that other yeshivot would be organized across America after people learned of the success of this Philadelphia yeshiva, which met for three hours daily after the pupils had completed their classes at the local public high school. But the main requirement was for a yeshiva capable of graduating American rabbis.

While in Philadelphia Revel desired to implement his plans for his own advanced secular study. Rabbi Levinthal aided him with an introduction to Judge Mayer Sulzberger, the presiding judge of the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas. Sulzberger, an observant Jew and communal leader, was impressed with Revel's capabilities. He arranged for Revel to study law at Temple University for the school year of 1907–1908. Revel also took courses at the University of Pennsylvania during these semesters. His fields of study included ancient Hindu philosophy, oriental languages, and economics. In law he studied the development of the American Constitution and the Roman, Anglo-Saxon, and American legal systems. Revel was not overly interested in the study of secular law, however, and Jewish studies remained his main preoccupation.

In 1908 Revel appeared before the scholarly world for the first time, with an ambitious plan for the compilation of an index to the vast responsa literature pertaining to Jewish Law that had been written since the completion of the Talmud in 475 C.E. Young, still without family responsibilities, and vibrant with energy, Revel envisioned a lifetime of scholarship when he announced his plan in the January 2, 1908, issue of London's *HaYebudi*:

Any student of Jewish History knows that the truest sources, and many times, the only sources for an understanding of Jewish life throughout history . . . are the responsa literature and the codes of Jewish Law. Because many historians did not have these sources available to them they were not able to write an accurate account of Jewish History. They were not even able to comprehend the sources available to them since many times the unavailable material clarified the available material.

To meet these needs, we are now preparing to print an index to all matters pertaining to Jewish History and culture which are found in the responsa literature and codes of Jewish Law.

The plan called for Revel to serve as the editor of the project and for a committee of scholars to assist him. *HaYebudi's* editor, Isaac Suvalsky, and the encyclopedist Judah David Eisenstein of New York were among the members of the committee. The committee actually did print a prospectus consisting of an index to the responsa of Rabbi Asher ben Jehiel (1250–1328), of Toledo, Spain. Although Revel devoted much time to this project, no further indexes were published. It remained an unfulfilled vision in the mind of the young scholar. What did come to fruition afterward was a caustic accusation by Eisenstein in his 1929 autobiography, *Ozar Zikhronothai*, that Revel plagiarized the prospectus from him. He claimed that he himself had actually compiled the index, although Revel signed his name on the title page of the prospectus.

Revel also studied the Palestinian (Jerusalem) Talmud during this period, and he compiled notes for a commentary to portions of it. While a myriad of commentaries on the Babylonian Talmud had been composed, the Palestinian Talmud remained comparatively obscure. Revel's ambition was to publish these commentaries ultimately, but this too remained an unfulfilled dream. He did publish popular articles in Philadelphia's *Jewish Exponent* during 1908 and 1909. His subjects ranged from John Milton and Abraham Lincoln to Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch and an essay about the first volume of the *Hebrew Encyclopedia (Ozar Yisrael)*, which Eisenstein published in 1907. Revel became a prolific contributor to the ensuing volumes of this encyclopedia, finally serving as an assistant editor for volume 9, which appeared in 1912. The breadth of Revel's interests is revealed by the topics he cov-

ered for the encyclopedia. He wrote biographies on biblical personalities such as Gideon, Elisha, and Boaz and on moderns like Haham Isaac Bernays of Hamburg and Rabbi Naphtali Tsvi Berlin of Volozhin. He also published articles on the talmudic concepts about alibis and gentile cooking, and he described the Jewish communities in the Baltic and Bialystok. His interest in Karaite literature is reflected by his numerous contributions on Karaite leaders and concepts.

At the conclusion of the semester in June 1908, Revel left law school. He felt that his future was not in legal work. During the summer he returned to New York and enrolled in the graduate department of New York University, where he turned his full attention to Jewish and cognate studies. There is no record of his having received a B.A. degree. In all probability he was accepted into the graduate division on the basis of his ordination, gymnasium studies, and the collegiate credits he earned at Temple University and the University of Pennsylvania. At New York University he took courses in comparative religion, philosophy, and Semitic languages. Revel submitted a master's research project on the philosophy of the *Chovot Halevavot* (Duties of the Heart) of Bachya Ben Joseph Ibn Pakudah, the medieval Spanish Jewish philosopher. This project was later published in the *Jewish Exponent*. In June 1909 New York University awarded him the degree of master of arts.

While Revel was at New York University, preparations were being made in Philadelphia to enable the recently organized Dropsie College to begin regular courses of instruction. Dropsie College had been founded in accordance with the will of Moses Aaron Dropsie, an eminent Philadelphia lawyer who died in 1905. His will directed "that there be established and maintained in the City of Philadelphia a college for the promotion of and instruction in the Hebrew and cognate languages and their respective literatures and in the Rabbinical learning and literature." A charter was granted to the proposed college during 1907, and regular courses were instituted in September 1909. The first appointments to the faculty were Max Margolis in Jewish history, Henry Maker in philosophy, and Jacob Hoschander in Bible. All three were highly regarded scholars, and Revel was attracted to the new

graduate school. He may also have felt that ultimately he could hope to join the faculty of an institution such as Dropsie College. He was awarded a fellowship in the Rabbinics Department and entered this new school when it opened its formal course of study. Rabbinics was his major field of study, with Bible and cognate languages as his minors. In accordance with the terms of his fellowship, which paid him five hundred dollars a year, he also taught classes in rabbinics and Talmud.

On January 25, 1911, Bernard Revel submitted his thesis, entitled "The Karaite Halakah and Its Relation to Sadducean, Samaritan, and Philonian Halakah," to Professors Maker and Margolis and Dr. Hoschander. In it he refuted Geiger's claim that the Karaite halachah was a continuation of the original and ancient halachah. On May 29, 1911, Revel took his final oral examination, and the revised thesis was accepted. On March 11, 1912, six years after he left the Kovno political prison, Rabbi Revel became the first graduate of Dropsie College when he was awarded the degree of doctor of philosophy.

During the years he spent at Dropsie, he remained in close contact with Rabbi Levinthal. Revel became the only American to respond to the call of the *Agudat Israel* regarding its organizational conference in Katowice, Germany, in 1912. Rabbi Levinthal evidently received an invitation to this conference, and he asked Revel to answer it. Revel wrote a letter pledging his support of the new organization and signed it in the capacity of an executive of the *Agudat Harabanim*.⁵ However, in later years, he identified with the religious Zionist movement, the Mizrachi, and not with the *Agudat Israel*, which was anti-Zionistic during his lifetime.

Throughout Revel's first stay in Philadelphia, while he was still at law school, his rabbinic acquaintances started looking for a suitable bride for him. Rabbi Moses Simon Sivitz of Pittsburgh met the young Revel at an *Agudat Harabanim* convention. Himself a great talmudic scholar, Sivitz had been sent to Baltimore by Rabbi Isaac Elchanan in 1886, and he moved to Pittsburgh in 1888. (He ministered to the Pittsburgh community until his death in 1936.) Of his initial meeting with Revel, Sivitz later wrote: "The first time I met you I knew that a great man was before me. A hidden emotion informed me that you were an angel sent by

the Lord to bring Torah and the fear of God to the United States.”⁶

At this time Rabbi Sivitz also became acquainted with the Travis family of Marietta, Ohio. The Travises had arrived in the United States from a suburb of Riga around the turn of the century. Their original family name had been Rabinowitz, but in the United States the family adopted the name Travis. Members of the family perpetuated their original name by using it as a middle initial. At first they were farmers; later they became peddlers. In 1906 Solomon R. Travis, the eldest son, went to Oklahoma, where he bought land which proved to be rich in oil. The family soon obtained vast holdings in the rapidly developing gasoline and petroleum industries. By 1919 these interests were worth close to five million dollars.

The Travis family members identified with the Lubavitcher Chasidim, and they continued their pious traditions in the United States. Because there was no local rabbi in Marietta, they called on Rabbi Sivitz of Pittsburgh whenever there was a ritual question. Isaac Travis, the patriarch of the family, invited Rabbi Sivitz to meet his wife and children; and in 1908, on a visit to Marietta, Rabbi Sivitz met Isaac’s daughter, Sarah, then nineteen years old. He suggested that they invite Bernard Revel to their home to meet Sarah.

On Thanksgiving Day of 1908 the twenty-three-year-old student arrived in Marietta. The worldly Jewish residents of the thriving Marietta community were enchanted by him. One later wrote that “he seemed to be as one from another world, whose erudition, modesty and simplicity could only be associated with the legendary *lamid vov Zaddikim*—the 36 saints who inhabit the world.”⁷ Bernard and Sarah enjoyed each other’s company, and shortly afterward they announced their engagement. On June 24, 1909, they were married at the Travis home in Marietta. The marriage ceremony was performed by Rabbi Sivitz, who was assisted by Rabbi Levinthal. As a wedding present the Travis family signed over a substantial sum in stocks and bonds to the newlyweds. The couple went to Philadelphia immediately after the ceremony. There Bernard’s friends joined them for the week of religious celebration that followed the marriage ceremony. In

September the young couple took up permanent residence in Philadelphia when Revel entered Dropsie College.

After receiving his doctorate Revel joined his brother-in-law, Solomon Travis, in the petroleum industry. Moving to Tulsa, Oklahoma, he became Solomon's assistant and helped to supervise the twenty-three plants that the family owned. Revel traveled from plant to plant to see that they were operating at maximum efficiency. He also dealt with banks to secure adequate mortgages as the family's Oklahoma Petroleum and Gasoline Company constantly expanded. Revel became familiar with the gasoline and petroleum industry, and his business sense and judgment developed. He arose early daily and left for the plants. Returning home at midafternoon, he immediately went back to his prime interest, the study of the Talmud and its related literature. These studies generally continued into the night. On the Sabbath Revel did not indulge in the customary afternoon nap, but devoted the day to study, even when the heat was well over a hundred degrees.

On May 27, 1912, a son, Norman, was born to Bernard and Sarah Revel. Sarah returned to Marietta for his birth. (Norman later graduated from Yeshiva College and subsequently became a businessman.) On August 19, 1913, a second son, Hirschel, was born in Tulsa. (He was to graduate from the Teachers Institute and Yeshiva College. In 1942 he received the doctor of Hebrew literature [D.H.L.] degree from the Yeshiva Graduate School for his critical edition of the "Hilchot Sotah" [Laws of the Woman Suspected of Unfaithfulness] in Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, which he also published. Hirschel alternated between scholarship and business until his death on September 20, 1961.)

Revel continued in this position well into 1915. Business flourished, his studies continued, and he enjoyed his growing family. He had a large rabbinic library in his Tulsa residence, and he enjoyed the respect of his acquaintances. Nevertheless, it did seem unusual to his Tulsa neighbors and colleagues to see the frail, slightly built, yarmulke-wearing "oil magnate" move about the lusty Oklahoma oil fields. Revel appeared content. After all, he did have time to devote to study. But gradually his family noticed that a feeling of restlessness was developing within him.

The gnawing sense that some important element was missing in his life began to get the best of him.

This feeling of agitation and unrest augured well when the great New York challenge came to him in 1915.

3



REORGANIZING THE YESHIVA

DURING THE TIME that Revel was in Philadelphia and Tulsa, the Yeshiva had continued to experience difficulty with its student body because of the lack of adequate organized secular study. The elementary secular study introduced during the administration of Rabbi Margolies was administered in a haphazard, intermittent, and desultory fashion. This problem flared up again in 1908, and during August there was even an attempt by some students to organize a new Yeshiva. In resolving the new difficulty the directors agreed to appoint a president of the faculty and to establish a committee to develop a curriculum for secular studies. By 1915 these resolutions still had not been implemented, but the directors realized that an acceptable secular program must be introduced if the Yeshiva was to succeed in America.

During this period there was also much discussion concerning a merger between Yeshivat Etz Chaim and the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary. Etz Chaim had been organized on March 15, 1886, to provide advanced Torah study for European immigrant youngsters who had already mastered the subjects taught at the New York hederim. It also provided elementary secular education for its students. Its English Department was periodically examined by the city's board of education. Graduates of Yeshivat Etz Chaim often continued their studies at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, where the talmudic studies were on the high level of its European counterparts. Many rabbis

and laymen were connected with both yeshivot. Rabbi Margolies and Harry Fischel were among the group intimately identified with both institutions. As early as the first convention of the *Agudat Harabanim* in 1902 a resolution was adopted which declared "that if possible, Yeshivat Etz Chaim and the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary should be united." No serious attempt was made to implement this resolution, however, until David Cohen became the president of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary in 1910. Cohen, who had been successful in real estate, came to America in 1868. Although he moved up-town he remained an Orthodox Jew, and he devoted progressively more time to communal needs. Cohen held meeting after meeting until a satisfactory plan for merging was agreed upon early in 1911. Unfortunately, he died on April 18, 1911, at the untimely age of fifty-seven, and the merger fell through.

Nevertheless, the educational overlapping between the institutions and the financial pressures engendered by the maintenance of two separate buildings continued to keep the merger plans alive. The older students at Yeshivat Etz Chaim studied Talmud on a par with the younger students at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, and some students of the Yeshiva attended secular classes at Yeshivat Etz Chaim. In June 1912 the union was once again ratified in principle by the two schools. By the terms of the merger Yeshivat Etz Chaim was to become a preparatory school, with upper elementary and high school secular classes supplementing the religious studies program. The Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary was to be solely an advanced yeshiva to educate the more mature students being prepared for ordination. The combined schools were to be called the Rabbinical College of America. This name was later dropped because the Board of Regents of New York State required a school to have half a million dollars' worth of property as a condition for using the word college in its name. With the passage of time, the name Yeshivat Etz Chaim was also forgotten; since it was much more meaningful for the Eastern European masses in the United States to perpetuate the name of the beloved rabbi of Kovno, the school was called the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary.

Before the merger could become a reality, a building was sought to accommodate the combined schools. In 1915 two buildings were purchased at 9–11 Montgomery Street, on the Lower East Side of New York. Under the direction of Harry Fischel, the buildings were combined into one and renovated for classroom use during the summer of that year.

During the merger's planning period the directors realized fully that the new institution in an adequate building alone would not solve the problems of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary; the proper man must be found to head the school. The leaders of the *Agudat Harabanim*, which had strongly encouraged the merger, were among the influential directors of the Yeshiva. They turned the attention of the Yeshiva's directorate toward Tulsa, where their colleague resided. They knew that Revel's talmudic scholarship was respected by even the most erudite of their members. The fablelike stories of his attaining the doctor of philosophy degree, his marriage into the wealthy Travis family, and his business ventures as an oil magnate were constantly discussed in New York Orthodox circles. Rabbi Margolies led his colleagues in unanimously proposing that Revel head the combined schools. In recommending him for the post, Margolies exclaimed: "Dr. Revel is one of the Torah giants of our generation and perhaps the only one in this country who also possesses general and scientific knowledge."¹

When the proposal to reorganize and lead the combined yeshivot came to Bernard Revel, he had not yet celebrated his thirtieth birthday. He was a short, slender, clean-shaven man who spoke with a pronounced stammer. (After his induction into the new position he grew a beard which was fiery red in color.) His physical frailty, however, was amply offset by his mental powers. His busy and agile mind suggested to those who knew him a strength that his body did not have. Revel knew that the position would not be an easy one. He would probably have to rebuild and reorganize both schools. Moreover, he could not be certain whether full cooperation would be forthcoming from the directorate, since most of its members didn't possess advanced secular education and would find his changes revolutionary.

Because he lived so far from New York, he was afraid that he

would gauge the situation improperly. During a New York visit to inspect the schools, he consulted with two New York Orthodox newspaper editors whose columns he constantly read in Tulsa. Gedaliah Bublick, the editor of the *Jüdisches Tageblatt*, advised Revel against accepting the position. (Bublick, an active leader of the American Mizrachi, probably favored the selection of the Mizrachi's president, Rabbi Meyer Berlin, to head the combined yeshivot.) However, Peter Wiernik, the editor of the *Jewish Morning Journal*, urged him to accept.

Revel chose Torah over oil, and he announced his assent to the call. He realized that he was taking a chance, but he felt that this was the opportunity that would best channel his abilities. His restlessness now found direction. He refused, however, to accept compensation for his work, recalling the injunction in Aboth that one "should not make of the Torah a spade wherewith to dig" in order to earn a livelihood. He was blessed with wealth and would therefore accept only on the condition that the Yeshiva pay him no salary. To provide for his family he would retain some of his business interests and investments.

His functions were to head the religious and secular departments of the Yeshiva, and to give *shiurim* (lectures) in Talmud and the *Choshen Mishpat* and *Yoreh Deah* sections of the code of Jewish Law. The *Choshen Mishpat* covered Jewish civil law, while *Yoreh Deah* detailed the rituals. The title of his new position was *rosh hayeshiva* and president of the faculty. In a July 4, 1915, letter to Wiernik, Revel revealed his state of mind: "I hope for your continued interest and support of the difficult work which I have undertaken—not for my own honor, and not for the honor of my father's house, but only to increase the knowledge of Torah among the Jewish people." To his wife he explained that his aim was to create a bridge over which the Torah could be brought from Europe to America and without compromise be made meaningful in contemporary American life.

During the summer of 1915 the Revel family moved to Bergida's Boardinghouse at Ninety-second Street and Park Avenue in New York. On the first of September he officially assumed his responsibilities at the Yeshiva. Revel walked through the new building which was rapidly being renovated for the merged

schools. On the first floor he examined the facilities for the business offices, supply rooms, and what later became the high school science laboratories. On the second floor he saw his office, the faculty room, and the large chamber which was to serve as a synagogue and bet hamidrash. On the third and fourth floors he toured the classrooms. He gently nodded to the students who passed through the building. Many stared at Revel; they were seeing him for the first time after hearing so much about him. In his heart the former oil magnate could not help but wonder about the achievements of the future and whether he would succeed in his new endeavors.

The dedication ceremonies for the new Yeshiva building were held during the week of Chanukkah, December 5 to December 11, 1915. On Sunday, December 12, Bernard Revel was formally installed at a convocation in which many of the leaders of the *Agudat Harabanim* participated. During the banquet that followed, he was quite embarrassed by the deportment of the Yeshiva's directors, who all disappeared, leaving only Hyman Robinson, Harry Altschul, and Nathan Lamport at the dinner. A correspondent described the banquet as having taken place around long rough tables and benches with "the lack of order of an chassidic *shalosh seudot*"—the traditional third meal on the Sabbath which is generally eaten in the synagogue immediately before the evening service.²

After intimately acquainting himself with the student body and with conditions at the Yeshiva, Revel announced that his first major undertaking would be the organization of a secular high school. Together with Dr. Solomon T. H. Hurwitz, an idealistic Orthodox graduate of Columbia University, Revel planned for the high school. Hurwitz was to serve as its principal, and the school was to bear the proud name of Talmudical Academy. On Sunday, September 3, 1916, Revel witnessed the first class, consisting of about twenty youngsters between the ages of thirteen and seventeen, begin its studies with a curriculum similar to the freshman New York City public high school program. Under Revel's guidance the first American high school under Jewish auspices where secular and religious subjects were taught began to emerge.

Revel stated that the goals of the Talmudical Academy were to “coordinate and unify the forces of education of our spiritually endowed youth, to bring harmony and light into their spiritual lives, and to quicken their Jewish consciousness and widen their moral and mental horizon.”³ The students attended regular Yeshiva classes from the morning until the midafternoon, when they entered their high school classes. This innovation in American yeshiva education, which was to be copied decades later by scores of yeshiva high schools throughout the United States, proceeded smoothly. Each succeeding year additional classes were added to the high school. Early in 1919 the Board of Regents of New York State officially recognized the high school and granted it the right to issue diplomas. By June 1919 six students had completed an accelerated high school program, and on July 8, 1919, the Talmudical Academy celebrated its first graduation. Revel and Hurwitz proudly announced that Samuel Bernstein, a member of the graduating class, had won a coveted New York State Regent’s College Scholarship. Out of these first six graduates, two ultimately became rabbis, two entered business, one became a lawyer, and one a physician.

Revel apprehensively scanned the Anglo-Jewish and Yiddish press for their reactions to the first graduation. The press warmly greeted the event, and Revel was particularly moved by the editorial in the July 9 English section of Bublick’s *Jüdisches Tageblatt*, which read in part: “Combining with the course of High School studies is the Jewish education. What was doubted, what was thought the impossible has been accomplished. The students are receiving a thorough Hebrew education. They constitute the element from which the future Orthodox rabbinate in America will be recruited.”

At the commencement Revel declared that the Yeshiva high school had to traverse the “road of snow and the road of fire.” There were those who felt that such an institution would not afford the rounded secular training of the public high school, while others maintained that the Torah and secular education could not harmoniously blend. Revel complimented the brave parents and boys who first trusted in the Talmudical Academy. The journeying had proved successful.

On July 1, 1920, Revel celebrated the graduation of the first

class to attend Talmudical Academy for four years. This time he was joined by Dr. Shelley Safir, the new principal of the high school. Safir (who later changed his name to Sapphire) replaced Hurwitz after the latter's untimely death in the influenza epidemic that ravaged New York City in January 1920. Safir became Revel's close associate, and he was to remain Talmudical Academy's principal until his retirement in June 1963.

While guiding the infant high school Revel also turned his attention to the reorganization of the curriculum and faculty of the Yeshiva. He delivered *shiurim* to the more advanced students. The lower Talmud classes were taught by Rabbis Benjamin Aranowitz, Joseph Levine, and Samuel Gerstenfeld, all of whom were teaching in the Yeshiva before Revel's arrival. Revel gradually broadened the Yeshiva's curriculum, for he felt that more than just the knowledge of Talmud and codes was required if the graduates were to succeed in disseminating Orthodoxy on the American scene. He engaged Dr. Nahum Slouschz, a graduate of the Sorbonne, to teach Jewish history, and Dr. Moses Seidel of Bern University was selected to teach Bible and Hebrew. Revel early perceived the remarkable ability of Dr. Solomon Zeitlin, and he invited him to join the Yeshiva faculty in 1917 as an instructor of Jewish history. Zeitlin remained associated with the Yeshiva for the duration of Revel's lifetime, and he later became Horace Stern Professor of Rabbinic Law and Lore at Dropsie College.

These initial changes were warmly received by the student body, but the older rabbinical trainees were still not completely satisfied. They clamored for courses in homiletics and pedagogy. While Revel understood the need for pedagogy courses, he did not fully appreciate the demands for homiletical training since he had never held a pulpit. He still retained the European prejudice against formally studying "light" subjects such as Midrash, the main source for sermons. In 1917 a short notice written in Hebrew appeared with Revel's signature on it: "Students of Yeshiva are advised not to spend precious time on the study of Midrash and Sermonics. Talmudics and Rabbinics should be the main concern of a Yeshiva student." Shortly afterwards a student delegation pleaded with him, saying: "Dr. Revel forbids us the study of Midrash and quotes a Midrash to prove his point!" At this remark Revel's face lit up in a smile, and a Homiletic Department was

soon organized.⁴ The Reverend Dr. Henry Pereira Mendes of the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation of New York was assigned to teach homiletics; the Reverend Dr. Bernard Drachman of the Zichron Ephraim Congregation of New York taught pedagogy. Both Mendes and Drachman had previously been on the faculty of the Jewish Theological Seminary, but they joined the Yeshiva because Revel's Orthodox point of view was very much akin to their own.

The caustic fights between the students and the directors were no longer part of the Yeshiva scene, and the school began to grow. Since the younger students attended the Rabbi Jacob Joseph School, which was also located on the East Side, on the elementary level the Yeshiva only retained a seventh and eighth grade. By 1917 the Yeshiva had a total enrollment of 180 students, of whom 90 were in the elementary grades, 40 were in the high school, and 50 were pursuing advanced studies for the rabbinate.

Of greater significance than the increase in pupils was the fact that Revel was giving the school a direction, a guiding force, and a program in harmony with the needs of the time. The new spirit at the Yeshiva was appreciated by its rabbinic and lay leaders alike, and they joined in tendering a testimonial dinner in honor of Revel on March 1, 1917. Judge Otto Rosalsky of the Court of General Sessions of New York served as chairman, and Wiernik was the secretary of the "Committee on Testimonial Dinner." Members of the committee ranged from Gedaliah Bublick and Harry Fischel to Rabbis Moses Margolies and David de Sola Pool. Revel knew that his initial innovations had succeeded when he read the committee's letter:

A year ago, Rabbi Dr. B. Revel came to us to head the Rabbinical College of America. He has during this brief period gained our respect and admiration as a great scholar and a powerful spiritual leader.

Dr. Revel, by his complete reorganization of the Rabbinical College, has inaugurated a new era in Jewish learning in this country. He has demonstrated the vitality of Orthodoxy and strengthened the cause of traditional Judaism.

The Rabbinical College is today a great institution, bidding fair to wield a powerful influence in American Jewry.

On the evening of the event Revel was honored by more than three hundred men and women who sat down to dinner at the Hotel Savoy, at Fifth Avenue and Fifty-ninth Street. Despite the Americanized setting Revel was still “treated” to a long evening of endless speeches in the Orthodox immigrant fashion. In response, Revel stressed the urgency for training American rabbis who would be true talmudic scholars, imbued with a love for traditional Judaism.

Two years later, on March 23, 1919, the twenty-third anniversary of the death of Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Spektor, Revel led the Yeshiva in the celebration of the granting of rabbinical ordination, *semicha*, to the first five graduates trained entirely under the new program of study. Up to that time the students ordained at the Yeshiva had received the greater part of their rabbinic training in European yeshivot. These were the first graduates who had actually received their basic talmudic education at the Yeshiva. The press called attention to the “reorganized Yeshiva” where “for the first time in the history of American Jewry the *semicha* had been conferred upon American rabbinical students.”⁵ The *Jüdisches Tageblatt* declared: “From out of America shall go forth Torah,” as Judah Damesek, Sol B. Freedman, Moses Fuhrman, Mordecai Hirschsprung, and Aryeh Ralbag were ordained. Particular attention centered on Freedman, for he had previously received the L.L.B. and M.A. degrees and was the first American-born graduate of the Yeshiva.

An Orthodox monthly, the *Jewish Forum* of New York, stated editorially that the new rabbis, “equipped with a vast and intimate knowledge of the Torah in its broadest connotation, and possessed of a real modern education,” would succeed with both the un-Americanized and the already Americanized Jews. They were not only “Orthodox rabbis in the full meaning of the term, but Americanized rabbis as well.” They were the type of rabbis, who, while thoroughly American, would not embark upon compromise, nor would they seek to create a code of their own. The editorial concluded by declaring that the graduation “is an event of more than local and temporal significance. It is an important historical event in the life of our people in this country.”

Revel sat at the head of the crowd which filled every seat and

overflowed into the aisles of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue of New York for the semicha convocation. Here they listened to addresses by Rabbis Moses Margolies and Shalom Jaffe, the president and vicepresident of the *Agudat Harabanim*, whose committee joined with the Yeshiva in ordaining the graduates. Talks were also delivered by Dr. Phillip Klein, spiritual leader of New York's Hungarian Oheb Zedek Congregation, Dr. Henry Pereira Mendes of the host synagogue, and Mordecai Hirschsprung, the valedictorian. Revel was the center of attention as the reorganized Yeshiva offered its "firstfruits" to American Jewry. On Purim, March 16, a week before the public convocation, he invited the five graduates to his home for the Purim seudah. Around the beautifully set table and lavish repast prepared by his wife, Revel enthusiastically led his pupils in song and dance. Arm in arm, they circled the table singing the refrain from the Sabbath liturgy: "*V'taber . . . Libenu*—Purify our hearts to serve Thee sincerely." Sarah Revel happily observed their joy, while the two young Revels in their Purim costumes joined the spirited dancing.

At the convocation, which was held shortly after the World War I armistice, Revel expressed the sentiments of the large audience present:

With bleeding hearts have we been witnessing, for the last five years, the destruction of almost all of our great sanctuaries of Torah and Jewish learning in Europe and Palestine. Civilized barbarism, run amuck, has wiped out the great centers of Torah and homes of the Jewish spirit, which had taken Judaism centuries to build. Blessed be the Almighty who has caused us to live, kept us, and enabled us to reach this significant and solemn occasion, to behold the first fruit of the great Torah center, erected to the glory of the God of Israel and for the perpetuation of His Torah on this continent.

His charge to the graduates to remain loyal to Torah was greeted by applause:

May I address to you my young friends, who are about to enter your sacred calling as *rabanim* in Israel, a word of advice. You have been "raised on the knees of the Torah" and you are worthy sons of the Yeshiva. You have studied our holy Torah day by day and



Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, 156 Henry Street (1904–15)



Building at 9-11 Montgomery Street (1915-21)

Building at 302 East Broadway (1921-29)



night by night for many a year and you know well your duties as spiritual leaders in Israel. You know the fathomless depth of our holy Torah and its significance to Israel. You are aware that you are appointed today servants of the Torah. You are dedicating today your hearts and minds and wills to the cause of our holy faith. Yours will be the labor with little of the recompense in worldly goods. Divine will be your work, for you will need the divine aid—verily as we all need—in the decision of the many complex religious problems that will come before you.

May I remind you of what we read in the portion of this week, of the children of Aaron the high priest, who soon after their consecration to priesthood were consumed by a heavenly fire for bringing “near before the Lord a strange fire that the Lord has not commanded them.” My friends, who are entering now the priesthood of Israel, beware of “strange fires” which the Lord has not commanded. Remember that our holy Torah is perfect and complete. It needs neither additions nor embellishments from the outside, from other cults and cultures. The “strange fires” are very alluring at times, but they are indeed destructive. Our holy Torah has given light and warmth to mankind during untold generations. And even this day, humanity, upon the threshold of a new life, draws its inspiration and hope from our holy Torah, and the idealism of our prophets is the leaven that is now working in the regeneration of humanity. Only in the knowledge of our holy Torah and the observance of its precepts, is Israel’s strength and hope.

That evening, following the convocation, a banquet was held at the Savoy Hotel, where friends and families of the graduates celebrated the event together with Revel and the Yeshiva’s faculty and directorate.

Revel also aided in the dissemination of Torah knowledge in the United States by encouraging and guiding the bimonthly Torah journal, *Yagdil Torah*. The well-known Rabbi Isar Zalman Meltzer of Slutzk, and his younger colleague Rabbi Moses Benjamin Tomashoff founded the *Yagdil Torah* in 1909. After emigrating to America, Rabbi Tomashoff began a new series of *Yagdil Torah* in December 1915. Revel became a prolific contributor to this publication and encouraged the Yeshiva’s faculty members to publish in it. Most of his articles expounded the biblical laws of ritual purity and the sacrificial service. By 1919

the *Yagdil Torab* was published jointly by Rabbi Tomashoff and the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary. It remained under their joint editorship until publication was discontinued in 1921.

Revel's initial years at the Yeshiva were a time of deep ferment within the American Jewish community. The American Jewish Congress was organized during this period, and Zionism was a prime concern of American Jewry. Although Revel did not play a major role in these issues, he did serve as the Yeshiva's representative to the 1917 session of the American Jewish Congress. He also represented the *Agudat Harabanim* in the formation of the National Jewish Welfare Board in 1917, and he aided in the preparation of an abridged prayer book for American Jewish servicemen. In an article entitled "A Foundation for Educational Work in Palestine" in the *Jewish Forum* of February 1919, Revel advocated an organized Palestinian educational system to be under the administration of a central foundation. The acme of the system was to be an advanced national yeshiva in Jerusalem. The *Jewish Forum* editorially urged Revel to implement his suggestion: "One great quality of Dr. Revel is that he is a man of deeds, and we are hopeful that he will not leave his brilliant suggestion in the air, but will proceed, as is usual with this energizing individual, to have all our forces united to carry out his brilliant suggestions. We feel sure that with the hearty cooperation of his own family, the well-known philanthropists of Oklahoma, his plan will be assured of success." But there was little Revel could do to implement this plan, for he was soon caught up in full-time efforts to maintain his family's wealth.

After Revel's arrival at the Yeshiva, the Travis family had contributed generously to its support, in addition to enabling Revel himself to serve without receiving a salary. At the dinner honoring Revel in 1917, Solomon R. Travis pledged an annual contribution of five thousand dollars. Other members of the Travis family, who were preoccupied with business and could not make the long trip to New York, wired the chairman of the event: "DO OUR UTMOST TO SUPPORT THIS AFFAIR BY HELPING TOWARD UPKEEP OF INSTITUTION."

While at the Yeshiva Revel was kept informed of the family's

business activities, and on occasion he returned to Tulsa to assist in managing its holdings. In late 1919, however, the family's Oklahoma Petroleum and Gasoline Company lost its large contract with Standard Oil. The loss of a major customer was a severe blow to the company, which had expanded rapidly and was under heavy mortgage obligations. Solomon Travis had borrowed large sums at high interest rates to purchase railroad tank cars to transport his oil. The financial pressure engendered by these loans was acutely felt, and the company faced bankruptcy. Revel was called upon to aid in salvaging the business. He now had to leave the Yeshiva and return to Tulsa for extended periods of time. He dealt with the banks that held notes against the company and tried to see that payments were made on time. Once again he worked closely with Solomon Travis; together they made urgent daily decisions for the company. A typical daily work sheet from this period, prepared by Travis for Revel, revealed where his energies were being diverted. The memorandum for May 7, 1920, read:

1. We have issued two checks, balance due Mrs. Cauble, one for \$25,000 due May 10th, the other for \$25,000 due May 20th. In view of the fact that the Riverbed Receivership takes in over 2/3 of Lease 3, we should either hold up this money or at least get an extension of time.
2. The \$5,000 Taylor note is due Tuesday. There is still to be paid on this account \$20,000. In view of the fact that Leases 6 and 6A are affected by the receivership, it is likely that attorneys for Mr. Taylor will agree to a settlement for a smaller amount, or extend to us the time on the note.
3. The \$25,000 National Bank of Commerce note is due tomorrow. An extension of time must be secured.
4. We are paying Woolridge & Hodges the \$12,000 and have also promised them attorneys' fees up to the amount of \$1,000. We must see, however, that they dismiss the case pending in court for a receivership before we turn the money over to them.
5. It is essential that we know exactly the boundaries on Lease 3 and 4 affected by the receivership, as we have to get our money on Monday from Constantin. Constantin is liable to hold up money due us from leases not affected by the receivership, as they claim that we have promised to turn over the

money for the acreage affected by the receivership which they paid us on April 25th. We must know the exact situation and how we are to compute under Leases 3 and 4 the amount of the oil not affected by the receivership, as we did not at the second half of last month gauge the oil from each well separately.

6. It is advisable to familiarize yourself with the Timblin situation. We sent him yesterday full settlement of Lease 2 up to December 31, and we will forward him soon settlement up to April 1st on Lease 1 and 2.
7. In view of the receivership on Lease 3, it is advisable that we take steps immediately to get license for Gotham to do business in Texas.

Although Revel longed for the Yeshiva atmosphere and realized that his lengthy absences would not benefit the school, he felt that he had to help his family. He appreciated the financial independence they had granted him and felt obligated to do his share in saving the company from bankruptcy. While away, he kept in touch with developments at the Yeshiva by telegrams and letters. Samuel Sar was the main contact between the faraway president and the institution he headed. Although a rabbinical graduate of the Telshe Yeshiva, he preferred to be called Mr. Sar. Arriving in America in 1914, Sar first served as the superintendent of a network of Talmud Torahs in Baltimore. In 1919 he was engaged by the Yeshiva to be its secretary. In reality he was also the office manager, in charge of fund raising, public relations, and the placement of rabbis and Hebrew teachers. His wit, diplomacy, tact, and negotiating skill soon endeared him to Revel, and during this period he was Revel's main adviser and confidant. (Sar subsequently remained with the Yeshiva until his sudden death, which occurred while he presided over ordination ceremonies in the Yeshiva's bet hamidrash on June 21, 1962.) During Revel's absences, Sar was his ears and eyes within the Yeshiva. He constantly informed him of the ever-changing conditions, and Revel guided the school through his answers and directives to Sar.

After his initial absence from the Yeshiva in 1919, Revel went to Tulsa during February 1920, staying there until June 9. He returned to Tulsa for July and August, and then after another brief

stay in New York again went back to Tulsa in September, where he remained until early December 1920. Under the best of conditions, this type of relationship between a president and the institution he heads is not desirable. In this case, the problems posed by the continued absence of Revel were further aggravated by the many difficulties that were unfolding in the rapidly growing Yeshiva.

The gnawing problem of finances which was to haunt the Yeshiva for the next twenty years began to be felt at this time. The original Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary was constantly in debt, and one of the big achievements of the merger was that the new institution became solvent. But after the initial interest concerning the merger and the reorganization of the Yeshiva faded, the school found itself sinking into debt once more. Revel's not taking any salary and his family's generous contributions to the Yeshiva made many of the directors come to depend upon them for the Yeshiva's main support. They felt no need to worry about deficits; Revel would know where to make up the balance. The financial situation was worsened by his lengthy Tulsa stays, for the directorate refused to start a fund-raising drive without Revel's presence and guidance.

Revel realized that this was not a healthy situation and resented the budgetary responsibilities that were falling upon his shoulders by default. On May 25, 1920, he wrote to Sar:

The time I can spare, and I hope in the future it will be all my time, I wish to devote to the spiritual affairs of the Yeshiva, not the financial, and I am absolutely in favor that you start the campaign for funds before I return. Our directors must learn to be on their own feet.

Later that year, after the Yeshiva ran a typical emotional Yiddish High Holy Day emergency appeal in the *Jewish Morning Journal*, Revel expressed his displeasure to Sar on September 20:

I was disgusted to see the Yeshiva appeal for funds in the *Morning Journal*. For four years I have carried single-handedly the entire burden of the finances of the Yeshiva, during which time its income was raised from \$8,000 to \$80,000 without crying out for "help" in the papers. It lowers the dignity of the Institution and there is no excuse for such appeals at the present time. It does not

bring in any money and does not do any good but it does a world of harm to the prestige of the Yeshiva. . . .

In connection with this, I wish to state that I will do my best to see that the Travises do not at present send any money to the Yeshiva as it is miserable to think that our Yeshiva depends upon the good will of the Travises when there are three million Jews in America.

Another problem which reappeared on the Yeshiva scene at this time was that of secular study. But this time it was not the students who were complaining, it was some of the directors and rabbis. Revel knew that a high school under Orthodox Jewish sponsorship would be an innovation and that its curriculum would consist of some subjects which were alien to Orthodoxy. True, the directors had authorized his establishing a high school, but some only did it grudgingly as a concession to student pressures. Revel recalled full well the heated discussions that followed when science classes discussed theories of creation and English classes analyzed Greek mythology. This fear of innovation also caused many to question the program of the Yeshiva proper. The classes in Bible and Jewish history which Revel introduced were carefully scrutinized by watchful eyes. At times caustic statements were made regarding the orthodoxy of the thoughts expressed by Seidel and Zeitlin. Constant discussion of the Yeshiva's curriculum by the directors was not uncommon during this period. In the absence of President Revel—the ultimate authority for the school's curriculum—these disputes were further intensified.

Revel's absence also contributed to the nullification of an agreement which had previously been reached by the *Agudat Harabanim* and the Yeshiva to sponsor jointly the publication of a new edition of the Talmud. During World War I the major Talmud printing establishments of Eastern Europe had been destroyed. Talmudic volumes consequently became scarce throughout the world. Rabbi Revel joined with other members of the *Agudat Harabanim* in forming a committee to arrange for the printing of the entire *Shas* (set of the Talmud). The Eagle Publishing Company of Montreal, Canada, was selected to print the massive twenty-volume set. At the end of 1918 an agreement was reached between the *Agudat Harabanim* and the Rabbi Isaac

Elchanan Theological Seminary to undertake the project, with Rabbi Israel Rosenberg of the *Agudat Harabanim* as the chairman and Dr. Revel as the honorary chairman of the Joint Publication Committee.

The news that the Yeshiva was investing in the publication of a *Shas* was well received by American Orthodox Jews. They were proud that the hundreds of folios of minute rabbinic script that make up the Talmud would be published on this continent for the first time. Shortly after the announcement a Yeshiva fund collector visited Trenton, New Jersey, and raised \$633 in contributions. Rabbi Margolies felt that this large sum from Trenton was raised only because the people approved of the Yeshiva's publication plans. Nevertheless, some of the lay members of the Yeshiva's directorate worked actively to abrogate the agreement. They claimed that the entire project was simply an attempt by some rabbis for financial gain and that it was not befitting the dignity of the Yeshiva to be involved in a business venture. In Revel's absence little attempt was made to diminish this gossip. The situation was further compounded by the dependency of the venture upon the financial generosity of the Travis family.

The controversy was finally resolved when three officers of the *Agudat Harabanim*—Rabbis Eliezer Silver, Joseph Konvitz, and Israel Rosenberg—traveled to Tulsa to meet with Revel. They decided that the project should be concluded solely by the *Agudat Harabanim*. The Yeshiva was to receive thirty sets of the Talmud after its publication in return for the three thousand dollars it had invested. The publication of the Talmud was finally completed in 1920. After all the strife and gossip the venture was a financial failure, however, and the *Agudat Harabanim* lost much money. But it did alleviate the pressing demands for the Talmud throughout the Jewish world.

With the continued growth of the Yeshiva, the building at 9–11 Montgomery Street soon proved inadequate for the increased student enrollment. Shortly before Revel left for Tulsa, a committee headed by Harry Fischel was appointed by the directors to seek a new home for the Yeshiva. The old people's Home of the Daughters of Jacob had completed its new building in the Bronx, and its

former building at 301–303 East Broadway on the East Side was shortly to be vacated. This five-story building was considerably larger than the Montgomery Street structure. From Tulsa, Revel desperately urged the Yeshiva's influential directors to purchase the home. Frustrated by the lack of progress, Revel prompted the acquisition through letters and wires; but even after the purchase contract was signed, little additional action was taken to complete the sale. On July 27, 1920, Revel telegraphed Rabbi Margolies: "IT SEEMS NOTHING IS BEING DONE BY DIRECTORS IN BEHALF OF YESHIVA. I APPEAL TO YOU TO USE ALL YOUR INFLUENCE WITH LAMPORT AND GOTTESMAN AND OTHERS TO COLLECT ALL PLEDGES FOR BUILDING, AND TAKE TITLE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AND START NECESSARY ALTERATIONS. AM VERY WORRIED ABOUT THIS MATTER." The great distance of Tulsa from the Yeshiva did not aid him in bringing his plans to fruition. It was only after many additional long-distance pleas and directives that the transaction was completed in November 1920. After alterations converted the building into a suitable structure for the Yeshiva, classes were transferred to the new building at 301–303 East Broadway early in 1921. On Sunday, April 3, 1921, the new home of the Yeshiva was officially dedicated. Revel could not be present; he had to remain in Tulsa. That day he thought about the building being dedicated in New York as he was sinking deeper and deeper into the mire of big business. He envisioned the student dining room, which had been established in the basement, and the dormitory space for out-of-town students, which was situated on the top floor. The ground floor housed the offices of Safir, Sar, and the large bet hamidrash. The second floor contained his office, the library, and classrooms; the other floors consisted entirely of classrooms. But Revel's thoughts and reflections were soon disturbed when Solomon Travis entered with the latest reports on their business involvements.

During this period, another major development was unfolding at the Yeshiva. In 1917 the Mizrahi Organization of America opened an Orthodox Hebrew Teachers Training School. This organization was the American branch of the religious Zionist movement that had been formed in 1902. By sponsoring a teach-

ers' training school the Mizrachi hoped to qualify young men to staff the Talmud Torahs and elementary yeshivot, where they could inspire the youth to advocate an active political and religious Zionism. Initial classes were held in the Mizrachi's office at 86 Orchard Street on the Lower East Side, since it functioned in a supplementary fashion for students of high school age who attended the new school after their regular public high school studies. Not being an educational institution, the Mizrachi experienced difficulty in conducting the school.

Early in 1920 Mizrachi's Rabbi Meyer Berlin entered into discussions with Revel to enable the Teachers Institute to become a joint venture of the Mizrachi and the Yeshiva. Revel was sympathetic to Berlin's plea for Orthodox teachers on the American scene. There was also much pressure exerted on him by those Yeshiva directors who were active in the Mizrachi and were anxious to accommodate Berlin. While Revel was in New York, tentative agreement was reached between them to coadminister the institute beginning with the September 1920 semester. During his summer stay in Tulsa, Revel worked out the final arrangements between the Yeshiva and the Mizrachi. It was decided that the students of the institute would devote the mornings to their Hebrew studies, and in the afternoons they would attend the Talmudical Academy high school or the elementary secular grades of the Yeshiva. The Yeshiva and the Mizrachi agreed to share the expenses of the Teachers Institute. In addition, the Mizrachi was to pay the Yeshiva fifty dollars a year for each high school student of the institute and twenty-five dollars a year for each elementary division student.

While Revel was away, a lingering resentment developed against the Yeshiva's accepting responsibility for a Teachers Institute whose curriculum stressed Hebrew and Bible. The *roshei yeshiva* (talmudic faculty) objected to what they considered an elementary program of Jewish study being conducted under the auspices of the Yeshiva. They agreed that it was necessary for the Yeshiva to conduct a high school to enable the students to be successful in the United States. But they felt that the religious studies of the Yeshiva should be in the spirit of the East European yeshivot, where Talmud was the main study, and that there was

no room for the program of a Teachers Institute within its curriculum. In their opinion the institute was a “strange branch” in a true yeshiva. These resentments and objections to the Teachers Institute were to remain part of the Yeshiva scene for many years to come, and Sar kept Revel informed of the various problems involved in implementing the Teachers Institute agreement. Finally, Revel wrote to Sar on September 23, 1920: “As to the Teachers Institute, we have united ‘for better, for worse’ and it is up to us to make the best of it.” For the school year of 1920–1921, the institute did function under the joint administration of the Mizrachi and the Yeshiva. However, the Mizrachi did not meet its financial obligations to the Yeshiva, and this arrangement was not renewed for the September 1921 semester.

At first the Yeshiva students felt that Revel’s extended Tulsa trips were only temporary. With his continued absences and the resulting intensification of Yeshiva problems, the esprit de corps of the student body declined. Discipline was lax, and many curriculum problems went unsolved. When Revel returned to the Yeshiva in December 1920, the students greeted him with an editorial in their *Yeshiva News*. They declared that “a new invigorating spirit has filled the Yeshiva.” They hoped that this spirit “will not prove another temporary visitor,” only to leave after a short stay. The students claimed that they were done “with irresponsibility and the devastating happy go lucky sentiment,” and were now “good and ready for energetic wise leadership.” They were “persuaded to believe that the student body will gladly welcome the *Rosh Yeshiva’s* efforts in these directions.” To their disappointment, Travis family difficulties required Revel’s attention again, and later that month he returned to Tulsa. A sarcastic editorial soon followed in the *Yeshiva News*:

Dr. Revel’s last visit to the Yeshiva reminds one very forcibly of the institution of dictatorship in old Rome. For it was the custom there, when the Republic was in great danger and confusion, to vest all power in the hands of one individual who was then responsible for its safety and for the restoration of order. This individual or dictator, as he was called, was in honor bound to do his best and then to resign as soon as possible. The case of Dr.

Revel, though not similar in all its details to the Roman institution, still warrants and justifies our analogy. He came, he saw, he prescribed and ordered and then—he left. . . .

In the case of our worthy *Rosh HaYeshiva* even if he had not left, the success of his work, his new rules and regulations, would depend not so much upon himself as upon the students. If the students will be careful to live up to rules about proper attendance to all prescribed courses and will do all they can to strengthen the school spirit, we can safely predict that Dr. Revel's absence this time will not prove as harmful and detrimental as it has been in the recent past.

The problems he was generating at the Yeshiva gnawed at Revel's peace of mind. However, he still felt that he had to make every effort to keep the family's business in the black. The constant financial problems of the Yeshiva and the incessant interference by the directors with the school's curriculum also influenced his decision. In mid-1921, when he realized that once again he would have to spend the greater part of the year in Tulsa, Revel resigned his position at the Yeshiva and urged the school to engage a competent replacement. He felt that the well-known Rabbi Ezekiel Lifshitz of Kalish, an officer of the *Agudat Harabanim* of Greater Poland, would make an excellent administrator for the Yeshiva. Rabbi Lifshitz was known for his homiletical volumes, entitled *HaMidrash VeHamaaseh*, and he was considered a good administrator. Although a rabbi of the old school, he possessed wit, charm, and contemporary insight. Revel wired Margolies that Rabbi Lifshitz's arrival was most urgent since the "Yeshiva cannot remain without a responsible head." Revel promised to cooperate fully with Lifshitz, and he urged Margolies to "do your duty to Torah and Yeshiva and help Sar raise funds" for the appointment of Lifshitz. Revel also encouraged the Yeshiva to bring to the United States a great East European *rosh yeshiva*, Rabbi Solomon Polachek, to teach the highest class in the school. In answer to those who questioned whether Rabbis Lifshitz and Polachek would be the proper men to head the Yeshiva, on March 15, 1922, Revel wrote to Sar:

A head we must have, as you are beginning to fully realize now, but it is still a question whether Rabbi Lifshitz will be the proper

man. Now, it is worth the expense of his coming for the possibility that he will be the proper man, and for the publicity the Yeshiva will get through his coming. However, if he doesn't prove to be the right man we will have one real *Rosh Yeshiva* by the coming of Rabbi Polachek. If we cannot make certain that both of these crying needs of the Yeshiva—a proper head and proper *Rosh Yeshiva*—can be supplied, let us be absolutely certain that at least we will have a proper *Rosh Yeshiva*, and try to have a proper head.

The directors did not heed Revel's advice about Rabbi Lifshitz. Instead, the Mizrachi element in the directorate thought the Yeshiva's problems would be resolved by electing Rabbi Meyer Berlin to the presidency of the Board of Directors of the Yeshiva. They anticipated that Rabbi Berlin would also aid in the administrative and academic affairs of the Yeshiva. In late March 1922, Berlin was elected board president. Revel was deeply hurt by this move. To Wiernik he explained that he was opposed to Berlin because the Yeshiva must be above parties and movements, and now it would take on a definite Mizrachi tinge. The Yeshiva also needed a head who was a financial success, whereas Berlin's Mizrachi organization and Teachers Institute were constantly in serious financial difficulty. To Sar, Revel exclaimed: "I do not care to discuss the action of our Board of Directors, but I consider the failure to consult me before making such a momentous change as a manifestation of lack of regard for, and confidence in me and my policies."

Shortly after he assumed the presidency, Rabbi Berlin made the Teachers Institute an integral division of the Yeshiva. After the attempt to have the Teachers Institute jointly administered failed, the school became an independent institution. This did not succeed either, and beginning with the September 1922 term the institute became a permanent division of the Yeshiva at 301–303 East Broadway.

The new president concerned himself primarily with the problems facing the directorate of the Yeshiva, and he did not have the time to devote to the daily personnel and curricular questions of the Yeshiva proper. On May 7, 1922, the *roshei yeshiva* petitioned Revel to arrange for a temporary replacement to administer the internal affairs of the Yeshiva as long as he remained

in Tulsa. It is significant to note that the *roshei yeshiva* stated that, despite his resignation, they still considered Revel the “spiritual head of the Yeshiva,” but they wanted “one of the elder, learned rabbis” to be authorized to govern the Yeshiva in his absence. Soon afterward Rabbi Israel Rosenberg was appointed by the Board of Directors to serve as the acting *rosh hayeshiva*. A brilliant graduate of European yeshivot and a leader of the *Agudat Harabanim*, Rosenberg had previously ministered to various communities on the eastern seaboard before his Yeshiva appointment.

One of Revel’s fondest wishes was fulfilled when Rabbi Solomon Polachek arrived in America on September 1, 1922, to serve as the *rosh yeshiva* of the highest class in the Yeshiva. The new administration realized that Rabbi Polachek’s presence was necessary, for Rabbi Rosenberg concerned himself mainly with administering the Yeshiva and did not teach the highest Talmud class. Rabbi Berlin’s academic participation in the Yeshiva was limited to occasional midrashic lectures for the older students, and he too did not teach Talmud.

Despite the coming of Rabbi Polachek, the problems of the Yeshiva continued to multiply. A vociferous minority of the directors continued to oppose Rabbi Berlin; they, being anti-Mizrachi, felt that the school would now become a Mizrachi Yeshiva. Many of the students were not happy with the choice of Rabbi Israel Rosenberg because he did not possess a formal secular education, and they feared that he might curtail the program of secular study. A difficult problem in the daily administration of the Yeshiva also developed—Rabbi Rosenberg and Sar did not get along, and they were soon not speaking to each other. The financial plight was further compounded by the lack of decisive and accepted leadership. In a desperate appeal for funds on September 27, 1922, Berlin telegraphed his rabbinical colleagues: “YESHIVA FACING INSURMOUNTABLE DIFFICULTIES TO FINANCE ITS ACTIVITIES.”

The reports of Yeshiva difficulties reaching Tulsa continued to depress Revel. He was agitated, tense, and upset over the events taking place on East Broadway, and he pleaded with Rabbi Margolies to save the Yeshiva:

According to the reports that have reached me, the Yeshiva has reached a critical spiritual and financial state—may God have pity!

I plead with you, “the father of the Yeshiva,” to rapidly come to the aid of the school. The future of orthodoxy and Torah in this land will be greatly jeopardized if the Yeshiva will, God forbid, close. There is no hope if those directors who wish to harm the Yeshiva are permitted to continue to impair and deprecate the Yeshiva’s reputation.

During these trying days, many members of the faculty and directorate became convinced that the only solution for the Yeshiva’s problems would be for Revel to serve full time as the Yeshiva’s head. On January 3, 1923, Sar wrote to Revel that Nathan Lamport, Mendel Gottesman, and Abraham Levy, leading members of the Yeshiva’s directorate, had concluded that he was the only one who could be the true head of the Yeshiva. They also agreed, however, that Revel could only succeed if he would devote his full time to the school. “It is impossible for a man to be in one city all year and his business to be in another city.” If Revel agreed to come back, they would give him full authority to lead the Yeshiva in accordance with his own wishes and ideas.

Abraham Levy, a devoted Orthodox Jew who was to serve as a director of the Yeshiva from its founding in 1896 until his death in 1953, sent his son, Harold, to Tulsa to convince Revel to return. Levy found Revel worrying about the Yeshiva, actively engaged in business, and devoting spare moments to talmudic study. Many times while he was traveling during the week, Revel’s sole sustenance was tea and sugar, owing to the unavailability of kosher food. Levy insisted to Revel that this was no way for a scholar to live and that he was losing weight and health. In addition, Levy pleaded on behalf of the young men at the Yeshiva, who sorely missed Revel’s leadership and guidance.

Sar continued to press Revel: “Into whose incapable hands have you surrendered such a wonderful Yeshiva which could someday work wonders for Judaism, Torah study, and scientific Jewish scholarship in the United States!” Revel remained torn between his loyalties to his family and to the Yeshiva. By now, however, the family’s tottering business ventures were solvent, and he felt that he had done his share in averting bankruptcy.

Intuitively he knew that he must decide in favor of Torah; it was the focal point of his life. But this time he resolved not to return to the Yeshiva unless the directors would definitely assume their financial responsibilities and would steer clear of curriculum decisions and disputes. Finally, on March 9, 1923, Revel informed Sar of the basic conditions to be met if he was to return. There would have to be a definite contract, with the Board of Directors electing him as president of the faculty for a period of two years. The board would have to agree to his having “full power and authority to manage all the spiritual affairs of the Yeshiva, including the appointment of teachers, supervisors and the like. All the departments of the Yeshiva, including the secular, to be under the jurisdiction of the head of the Faculty.” Revel also suggested that the board form a committee of “twenty-five responsible businessmen to guarantee morally the budget of the Yeshiva for the next two years.” Finally, Revel insisted that the board agree to retain Sar’s services during this period.

On May 13 Rabbi Berlin tendered his resignation as the president of the Yeshiva’s Board of Directors. Revel’s conditions were consented to by the directors at a mid-May meeting. They authorized Rabbi Margolies to offer Revel the position of *rosh bayeshiva* at a salary of ten thousand dollars a year—on the condition that he live in Manhattan and devote all his time to the school. A letter to Revel from Dr. Pinkhos Churgin, a leading faculty member of the Teachers Institute, soon followed. He informed Revel that Berlin’s resignation was final and that everything now depended upon his decision. Churgin wrote: “Everyone agrees that the captain must come and save the ship that is presently being tossed about in stormy waters. It is in your hands to change the present bitterness into honey.” The letter closed on an almost prophetic note: “Let us pray that these difficult days are only the birth pangs of a new and glorious period in the history of the Yeshiva.”

There was no longer any doubt in Revel’s mind; he realized that the future of the Yeshiva was in his hands. With his wife’s and family’s blessings he accepted the call. On May 30, 1923, he informed Rabbi Margolies that he would surrender all business interests and would permanently return to New York City to head the Yeshiva which was so dear to him. He stated:

My heart and soul are in the holy Yeshiva which I helped to build. The Yeshiva is the most valuable fortune possessed by American Jewry and it gives life to orthodoxy in this country. One is obligated to help the Yeshiva take its rightful place on the contemporary scene. The merits of my fathers guided me in being among the builders of the Yeshiva. I now have a great dream about its future and I believe that I can implement it. Since you call upon me to once again head the Yeshiva, I know that I must stand shoulder to shoulder with you to render the Torah great and glorious. . . .

You informed me in your letter that my salary would be \$10,000 annually. Who knows better than you that during the previous years when I headed the Yeshiva, I did not accept any salary. Instead, I and my family covered a great deal of the Yeshiva's expenses. However, presently my financial status is not good. Until my financial investments will improve once again, I will only consent to take an annual salary of \$4,000.

While the Revels prepared for their permanent return to New York and the directors departed for their summer vacations, Sar still could not rest. Knowing the Yeshiva situation so well, he wanted to make certain that the directors remembered their responsibilities to the Yeshiva and their commitments to Revel. His July 1923 letter to influential directors gave a keen analysis of the Yeshiva at this crucial juncture:

The coming of Dr. Revel per se is indeed a great thing for the Yeshiva. It is an occurrence of great significance and will improve the Yeshiva in an ipso facto way, but Dr. Revel is not a magician. He cannot accomplish many things by miracles. If quarrel and strife prevail in the Yeshiva when he comes here, what then can he accomplish. Besides the lack of accomplishment, would it be fair of you directors to bring a man like Dr. Revel, who is sacrificing so much in coming to the Yeshiva, to quarrel and fight.

Poverty is the cause of quarrel: strife is the result of privation and as long as the Yeshiva is so poor and suffers so much financially, the quarrel will be even greater; strife even more bitter.

Dr. Revel has big, magnificent plans for the Yeshiva and all depends upon the directors, who are to help him carry out his wonderful plans.

4

THE VISION OF YESHIVA
COLLEGE

REVEL DID INDEED have grand plans for the Yeshiva. For years he had been agitated by the many Talmudical Academy graduates who left the Yeshiva to continue their secular education at recognized colleges. Like most children of the East European immigrants, these students also felt that a high school diploma was not sufficient for the American scene. Many of the brightest graduates therefore departed for college campuses. Even among those who remained at the Yeshiva to study for the rabbinate there were many who desired a college education as well. They found it possible to attend college only at night and during the summer. At that pace it took the students many arduous years to obtain their college degrees. Some were forced to stop after ordination and were unable to complete college because of the responsibilities engendered by vocation and marriage. The continued prospect of the Yeshiva's losing some of its brightest high school graduates and the collegiate difficulties of those who remained at the Yeshiva troubled Revel.

Early in 1919, before the first high school graduation, Revel probed the feasibility of the Yeshiva's organizing a program of study equivalent to the freshman year at recognized colleges. He felt that the graduates would then definitely remain in the Yeshiva for another year. This plan was discarded after both Columbia University and the City College of New York answered inquiries by stating that they rarely recognized the credits taken

by a student at a junior college and almost certainly would not credit the proposed course of study at the Yeshiva. A year later Revel investigated the possibility of opening a normal school for the training of teachers. After inquiries were made of the Board of Regents of New York, this plan also was dropped.

Gradually Revel concluded that the Yeshiva must open its own four-year liberal arts college. This would be the only solution to the collegiate problem, and Revel felt that such an institution would be “the natural development of the Talmudical Academy high school, which built the foundation for the college and made it of immediate necessity.”¹

Revel’s outlook was not motivated by the *Weltanschauung* of the Orthodox Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch of nineteenth-century Germany. Hirsch’s positive attitude toward secular study was in reaction to the vast inroads made in Germany by Reform Judaism, in the wake of the new epoch that had its origin in the Renaissance and humanism. Hirsch claimed that the application of the values of the Torah to a given civilization had always been the historic Jewish task. In this vein he interpreted the dictum of our sages that “it is well to combine Torah with some worldly occupation” (Aboth, 2:2). Hirsch emphatically denied that the secular education of the Jew was a concession made by him under pressure to the fashion of the day. On the contrary, the combination of Jewish and general knowledge was not a compromise but an integral part of the Jewish world concept.

Revel did not conceive of the proposed college in terms of Hirsch’s ideals. Revel would have been content with solely building the Yeshiva. This was America, however, and he was convinced that the Yeshiva would not retain its students unless it offered them a college education. He did not think in terms of a university, nor did he analyze the possible results of the Yeshiva’s sponsorship of higher secular education. Revel was only concerned with his attempts to guide the Yeshiva successfully through the labyrinths of American life. He felt that for this the proposed college was a necessity if the Yeshiva was to retain its brightest high school graduates.

But how could Revel press for a college? The Yeshiva was not even meeting its own budget, and there was constant friction

among the directors. He felt that such an innovation was not feasible. With his permanent return to the Yeshiva in 1923, however, the situation changed considerably for the better. The continued growth of the student body made it obvious that the new quarters at 302 East Broadway could not adequately house the new students. Because Revel's constant presence solved many of the problems that had previously plagued the Yeshiva, the directors also felt a new commitment to the institution. It was generally felt that the Yeshiva had a bright and important future if it could continue to be guided by Revel's leadership. Revel realized the new atmosphere he had engendered at the Yeshiva when he opened the August 12, 1923, issue of the *Jewish Morning Journal* and read an announcement published by the Yeshiva's Talmud faculty:

We, the *Roshei Yeshiva* of the great and holy Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, wish to express our deep joy and hearty blessings at the return of the *Rosh HaYeshiva*, Rabbi Dov Revel, to continue his holy work as the head of the Yeshiva with increased courage and strength. We know that Rabbi Revel will succeed in raising the Yeshiva to the true pedestal that it should occupy, in accordance with his great abilities. It is our prayer that God bless the holy work of all of us in the Yeshiva in accordance with the wish of the *Roshei Yeshiva*.

The announcement was signed by Rabbis Solomon Polachek, Benjamin Aranowitz, Joseph Levine, Samuel Olishevsky, Sholom Rackovsky, Aaron Burack, and Moses Poleyeff, all members of the expanding Yeshiva faculty.

Feeling that the time was opportune, Revel broached the idea of a college at a September meeting of the Board of Directors. He suggested that there were only two alternatives for the Yeshiva. Either most of its high school graduates would leave to continue their studies at secular colleges; or the Yeshiva could establish a liberal arts college where the students would receive both an advanced talmudic and secular education under one roof. Revel listened intently to the discussion by leading board members that followed. To his satisfaction, most agreed with his idea for a college, and a committee was appointed to work with Revel in planning for funds and a site. At a subsequent meeting conservative

members of the committee expressed the opinion that a million dollars was the total sum that should be asked of the public. Revel was inclined toward this view but was willing to assent to those who demanded a two-million-dollar goal. However, he was perturbed when the committee voted to follow what he considered the quixotic suggestion by Harry Fischel that it be a five-million-dollar campaign. Fischel felt that sufficient property must be purchased for an adequate campus for the envisioned Yeshiva College. Since they were going to appeal to all American Jewry, he felt that five million dollars was a realistic sum. He immediately subscribed ten thousand dollars to start the drive, with the pledge of another subscription of five thousand dollars for each additional million dollars collected, making his total pledge thirty thousand dollars if the full amount was achieved. Though happy that the first pledge was made, Revel still had mixed feelings about the total goal.

On Sunday, December 2, 1923, the eve of Chanukkah, the Yeshiva celebrated the ordination of sixteen graduates at a public convocation held at Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun in New York. It was decided to announce formally the Yeshiva's plans at these exercises, and in deference to Harry Fischel, Rabbi Herbert S. Goldstein, his son-in-law, was chosen to reveal the goals. In his address to the vast audience assembled for the ordination ceremonies, Goldstein, president of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, declared the Yeshiva's intentions of organizing a liberal arts college and conducting a five-million-dollar campaign. The plans were described to American Jewry through press releases and numerous articles that were published in the American and Anglo-Jewish press. An interview with Revel entitled "The Sanctuary of the Jewish Soul" was published in the *Jewish Tribune* of New York; later his article "The Significance of the Yeshiva in America" was syndicated in many leading Anglo-Jewish papers.

Revel was not the only one to doubt the Yeshiva's ability to achieve its announced goal. He couldn't help squirming when he read the sarcastic comments of a columnist in Chicago's *Sentinel*:

One thing I must say about Rabbi Herbert Goldstein, President of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, he is not

afraid to ask for what he wants. In a casual manner he invites a *five million dollar* fund—merely as an initial investment toward an institution of Orthodox Jewish learning. And if things go as happily as he expects, the new Seminary should be ready in 1925! I counted the ciphers at the end of the five, and there were six of them, so I know there is no mistake—it's \$5,000,000. You have my best wishes, Rabbi!²

By setting a multimillion-dollar goal, the Yeshiva's directors agreed with Revel that they could no longer leave fund raising to the halfhearted and haphazard methods of the past. Early in 1924 the board announced the engagement of Harris L. Selig as the director of the Yeshiva College Building Fund Campaign. Selig had studied in the Volozhiner Yeshiva in his youth, and after his arrival in the United States had engaged in business. In the ten years prior to the Yeshiva appointment he worked as an executive in American Jewish philanthropic organizations and had just completed a successful one-million-dollar campaign for the Beth Israel Hospital of Boston.

While Selig attempted to develop an effective fund-raising organization, a Committee on Site, under the chairmanship of Harry Fischel, was engaged in finding a suitable location. They viewed the Gould estate in Lakewood, New Jersey; a large tract in the area of Boston Post Road, Pelham Parkway, Gunhill Road, and Baychester Avenue in the Bronx; and the present site of the Columbia-Presbyterian Hospital and Medical Center, between 165th and 168th Streets from Broadway to the Hudson River in Manhattan. All these sites were rejected; either they were too far from New York City, too large, or too expensive. Finally in July 1924 Fischel invited Revel to view some lots in a newly developing section of upper Manhattan, Washington Heights. Standing on the site three hundred feet above the Harlem River, with its magnificent view of the river and the Bronx, Revel nodded in approval to Fischel. They agreed that this was to be the Yeshiva's future home.

In September the Yeshiva contracted to purchase the two square blocks of the Barney estate on the east side of Amsterdam Avenue, 186th to 188th Streets, and comprising sixty ordinary city building lots. Shortly afterward, the Yeshiva contracted

to buy additional property on the western side of Amsterdam Avenue, between 186th and 187th Streets. Later the Horton estate on the east side of Amsterdam Avenue was acquired. The total real estate value of the purchases was reported to be \$1,274,960, and the location dramatized the Yeshiva's intentions of coming far uptown after having been down in the Lower East Side since its inception.

To celebrate the land acquisitions Selig planned a dinner at the Hotel Astor for the first night of Chanukkah, Sunday, December 21, 1924. That evening Revel scanned the two hundred select guests that were present and once again wondered about the campaign's chances for success. He was astounded when Nathan Lamport, the new president of the Yeshiva's Board of Directors, announced a pledge of \$100,000. A moment later, Harry Fischel publicly pledged \$100,000. The entire ballroom was in an uproar, and before the banquet ended over \$800,000 had been pledged by the celebrants.

Selig saw to it that this auspicious launching of the campaign was conveyed to all American Jewry by the hundreds of columns of newspaper articles describing the unusual contributions. American Jewry was no longer skeptical of the Yeshiva's intentions, and Revel was now confident of success. He was delighted when he read a *New York Times* editorial on December 26, 1924:

American Jewry seems to have been skeptical of the ability of Orthodox Jewry to raise the millions necessary to build the proposed Yeshiva and College on three city blocks in New York. Orthodox Jews had never before raised such an amount for so stupendous an undertaking and no such ambitious project had ever before been attempted on behalf of any educational institution.

We did not think it possible to squeeze another thrill out of a drive for funds, but at the dinner held last Sunday to launch a campaign for one million dollars by February first, things happened.

When Nathan Lamport, venerable president of the Yeshiva, announced that he would contribute \$100,000 toward the Building Fund, the audience of 200 workers was electrified.

"The Yeshiva is my life," declared Mr. Lamport, "and if necessary I will mortgage my life in order to make this \$100,000 contribution toward the great institution of learning which is our hope and dream."

Harry Fischel, another of Yeshiva's indefatigable workers, matched the first gift of \$100,000 and before the banquet was over almost \$800,000 was announced.

This is the largest sum ever raised at any single meeting for a Jewish educational project and the greatest single contribution Orthodox Jewry itself has ever made. The Committee rightly feels that it has effectively answered the doubts of American Jewry.

Revel empathized with L. I. Brill, editor of the English section of the *Jüdisches Tageblatt*, when he read Brill's vivid description of the dinner:

I am still rubbing my eyes, wondering whether I was awake when I heard the announcements.

To tell the truth I went to the Yeshiva dinner to celebrate the acquisition of a site for the new buildings in a critical mood. More than that, I was cynical and skeptical. "Another dinner," I said to myself. And indeed I walked in late, hoping that most of the speeches would have been over with.

. . . Then we waited for the manner in which Orthodox Jews would respond. Up gets Nathan Lamport and after delivering a brief speech announces for the Lamport family a contribution of one hundred thousand dollars. The diners gasped. Quickly Judge Rosalsky was on his feet and told the astonished audience that Mr. Harry Fischel, for the Fischel Foundation, was giving \$100,000 as well.

Before the dinner had come to an end I had listened to announcements of contributions amounting to approximately \$800,000. Eight hundred thousand dollars for a Yeshiva! An unheard of thing.

Revel was soon treated to an additional display of Selig's skill in raising funds. A second dinner was planned for Sunday, May 24, 1925, with a cover charge of one thousand dollars; a thousand tickets were sold, and close to one million dollars was raised. Concomitant with the large individual gifts, organizations also pledged substantial sums. The members of the Women's Branch of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations assumed the goal of \$250,000 to furnish the envisioned Yeshiva dormitory. The Yeshiva's rabbinic alumni, headed by Rabbi Nachman H. Ebin, pledged \$100,000 in honor of Revel.

Gaining impetus from his successes, Selig planned a massive music festival at Madison Square Garden on May 23, 1926. Some

twelve thousand persons attended a four-hour concert of Jewish music, ranging from biblical chants to modern compositions. Osip Gabriellovich, conductor of the Detroit Symphony, arranged the music, and Alexander Smallens, director of the Philadelphia Opera, led an augmented New York Philharmonic Orchestra. Cantors Joseph Rosenblatt and Mordecai Herschman were among the artists who performed. The audience paid from \$2.50 to more than \$5,000 apiece for tickets to the festival. Mendel Gottesman, a manufacturer and a member of the Yeshiva's directorate, contributed \$50,000 for a box of nine seats.

The final major fund-raising affair in the Yeshiva campaign took place when Revel joined the Yeshiva's main contributors in honoring Nathan Lamport on his seventieth birthday at a Hotel Astor dinner on December 19, 1926. That evening, Lamport announced his second \$100,000 contribution to the Yeshiva. In tribute to him the guests at the testimonial dinner made additional pledges which totaled close to \$400,000.

While the fund raising progressed successfully and the vision of a Yeshiva College came closer to realization, Revel concerned himself with defining the aims of the college and organizing its faculty and curriculum. From the outset he declared that the college was not being organized to compete with other institutions of higher learning, but rather that it was to be a unique and singular school that would provide a dual curriculum for its students. The college was to enable the Yeshiva students to continue their higher secular education in an atmosphere harmonious with their religious teachings and commitments. In a manuscript entitled "Aims of the Yeshiva," Revel wrote:

The college which is to be added as an auxiliary to the Yeshiva is in no sense to be placed in competition with existing colleges and universities, but is to provide a general academic training to those who are also studying in the other departments of the Yeshiva, so that they may harmoniously combine the best of modern culture with the learning and the spirit of the Torah and the ideals of traditional Judaism.

Revel felt that the college would accomplish its goal of "harmonious education," in the following fashion:

The college will help bridge the chasm between intellectualism and faith. It will present to at least a portion of our academic youth, in a proper setting, the spirit and vital message of Judaism, and make it a potent force in their lives, and will thus help bring back the days when our great thinkers and intellectual giants were at the same time our religious guides. The interaction of Jewish culture and philosophy of life, and all knowledge of mankind, the harmonious development of the human and the Jewish consciousness, will help to create harmony in the heart and the mind of the Jewish youth and will help develop a complete Jewish personality. The college will, as it grows and advances, become a distinctive intellectual and spiritual center of American Jewry and will help advance Jewish culture, together with the dissemination and increase of general knowledge. . . .

The Yeshiva stands for a closer unification of the forces of education. It aims to enhance by simultaneous human and religious appeal to the mind and heart of the child, its moral consciousness, to develop a mind that is spiritually integrated and capable of seeing the harmony of life, its duties and opportunities.³

Revel decided that the curriculum of the proposed college would essentially resemble the course of study at other liberal arts colleges. But the ultimate aim of the college and the students attending the Yeshiva proper or the Teachers Institute in the morning would differ from other colleges. By studying both secular and religious subjects under the auspices of the Yeshiva, the students would obtain a “harmonious education.” He stated:

Save for the inclusion of the Bible, Hebrew Language, Jewish history, philosophy and ethics, as required subjects, the curriculum will differ little from that of other colleges, being formed after careful study of the courses of many institutions, and framed to present the tools of study, the facts of life, the avenues of cultural enjoyment, and the means of developing health in body as well as in spirit. It is rather in its aim and its possible ultimate contribution that the Yeshiva College differs from general institutions of higher learning, in its hope that the blending of the Jewish approach to life with that pointed by modern culture will make real in our lives the age-old Jewish ideal of the rabbi who is essentially a scholar and a man of the spirit, of the layman whose faith is deep-rooted in understanding.

The regular college curriculum calls for approximately 18 hours

a week class work, with an endeavor to maintain the highest scholastic standards, under the guidance of a competent faculty; beyond that, the days' activities will be devoted to the departments of Jewish learning.

To accomplish these goals, the hours of study required of the Yeshiva College students were to be demanding. The hours from 9 A.M. to 3 P.M., Sunday through Thursday, were to be devoted to religious studies; the eighteen hours of weekly collegiate studies were to begin at 3 P.M. Friday mornings were to be devoted to college classes.

Revel's viewpoints regarding the proposed college did not go unchallenged during the Yeshiva campaign. Selig, who was not content with simply raising funds, interjected his ideals regarding the proposed college into the campaign publicity. He felt that the college should be the start of a secularly orientated Jewish-sponsored university, which would ultimately compete with other leading American institutions of higher learning. In a manuscript entitled "Standardizing the Hebrew Schools of America," Selig wrote:

Practically every great college and university in America was founded originally as a religious seminary. Princeton was established as a Presbyterian, Harvard as a Congregationalist, and Brown as a Baptist seminary. Our Yeshiva College, too, springs from what was originally a rabbinical seminary, and is it too much to expect that in time, it, too, like other great American institutions, will be one of the foremost colleges in this country, its doors wide open to everyone, whatever his race or creed, the unbiased pursuit of knowledge and the truth by scholars being the open sesame to its doors.

In the period preceding the music festival this divergence of opinion regarding the college resulted in a bitter dispute between Revel and Selig. Selig's publicity conveyed the idea that the Yeshiva planned to open a secular college to compete with existing higher educational facilities and to offer a refuge for the supposed victims of anti-Semitism at other colleges. Gustavus Rogers, a prominent lawyer identified with the Yeshiva campaign, was quoted in the Yeshiva's press releases as stating that "Yeshiva . . . will cater, however, to the Jews who have been

barred from Christian schools for non-scholastic reasons.” Revel was furious with Selig’s offering his viewpoints as the Yeshiva’s official outlook. At a meeting of the Yeshiva Campaign Committee in late April 1926 there was an acrimonious exchange between them. In a subsequent letter to Samuel Levy, Revel once again clarified his vision of the Yeshiva College while criticizing Selig’s music festival publicity. Levy, a prominent New York attorney who was to become the borough president of Manhattan in 1931, served as chairman of the executive committee of the Yeshiva campaign. In an important letter, dated May 1, 1926, Revel wrote:

I feel it is my duty to write to you as *Rosh HaYeshiva* and in a sense responsible for the Yeshiva to explain my uneasiness about the recent course of our propaganda in connection with the Music Festival.

As you know, the aims of the Yeshiva are positive, and close to the heart of every Torah-true Jew: for the full realization, a college is a necessary part of the institution; and it is for the material and spiritual advancement of the Yeshiva and the college that the present campaign, of which you are chairman, is conducted. The chief purpose of the college department of the Yeshiva is, and should always be, to afford those students of the Torah who are continuing their studies in an atmosphere of love and loyalty to the Torah and Jewish ideals, an opportunity to acquire the learning and culture of the modern world, in addition to the learning of the culture of Israel. Other students who desire the knowledge of the Torah and Hebrew culture as a part of their general development, who wish to acquire their education in a thoroughly Jewish atmosphere, will be welcome to its influence, and such non-Jews as may seek to add to their own, the knowledge of Judaism, may also come. The need for the Yeshiva and for the college that will be a part of its growth, is, therefore, a religious and a cultural one, not a *racial*; the impulse behind its growth is the positive philosophy of Judaism.

Last week’s discussion and publicity in connection with the Music Festival, has produced an unfortunate transfer of the center of gravity, creating the impression that the Yeshiva College is designed and will be created as a refuge for the supposed Jewish victims of a spirit of anti-semitism. Such an attitude is doubly harmful to the true understanding and ultimate success of the campaign of the Yeshiva. We must not permit that, in the minds of

the many humble men, poor in money and in influence, but rich in devotion to God and his Torah, who have kept the bulwark of Torah upstanding in this land, there should rise doubts and misgivings as to the future of the Yeshiva. If such propaganda is continued, I do not hesitate to say that many Jews throughout the land, persons of small means, but with love of the traditions of our fathers, to whom the Yeshiva has been the embodiment of the Torah ideal will be filled with concern for the future of the Yeshiva and the spread of the love of the Torah in America, and God forbid, the impression may go out that the new institution coming into existence is a secular college with a theological department. . . . I sincerely hope that no unauthorized statements affecting the ideals and the very life of the Yeshiva will be made with the semblance of official sanction, and given wide publicity that cannot fail to do great harm to the cause we hold most dear. The Torah and the Yeshivoth in which its wisdom is preserved are as old as Israel; we must not, for the sake of possible financial gain, deviate one iota from the ideals of our long and divine inheritance, from the ideals, dignity and faith which the Yeshiva exists but to maintain.

Revel's views were upheld by the Yeshiva Campaign Committee, and the publicity immediately following stressed the idea that it was not intended that the proposed Yeshiva College "be in competition with other institutions, colleges, or universities." Nevertheless, a lingering bitterness tinged future relations between Selig and Revel. Selig finally resigned his position at the successful conclusion of the drive in December 1928.⁴

In accordance with his ideals, Revel set about organizing a collegiate faculty. He was assisted in this endeavor by Dr. Shelley Safir, later the first dean, and Dr. Joseph Shipley, later professor of English and secretary of the faculty. They introduced Revel to their former teacher, Dr. Paul Klapper, then professor of education at the City College of New York, and later the president of Queens College. Klapper also aided in selecting the faculty and in the formulation of the course of study. Regardless of religion, Revel sought to engage the best instructors available, for he wanted a faculty that would enhance the status of the young college. He readily hired the few available competent scholars who were also Orthodox Jews, feeling that such teachers would serve as positive examples for the students. Such an individual was Dr.

Moses L. Isaacs, instructor of chemistry on the initial faculty and later the second dean of the college. The new faculty was also graced by the presence of such well-known scholars as Dr. Nelson Mead, head of the department of history at the City College of New York, Dr. Charles Home, professor of English at the City College of New York, and Dr. Isaac Husik, professor of philosophy at the University of Pennsylvania.

Revel also formed a Yeshiva College Advisory Council to guide him in planning the curriculum and in administering the college. Leading educators such as Dr. Nathan Isaacs, professor of law at Harvard University, Dr. Frederick Robinson, president of the City College of New York, Dr. David Eugene Smith, professor of mathematics at Columbia University, and Dr. Charles Torrey, professor of Semitic languages at Yale University served on this council. They aided Revel in shaping a curriculum similar to the four-year program of leading liberal arts colleges. In addition, courses were planned for Bible, Hebrew, and Jewish history, philosophy, and ethics to be given as an integral part of the college program. The initial collegiate program was divided into seven departments: classical languages and civilization, modern foreign languages and literature, English language and literature, mathematics and natural sciences, history and social sciences, philosophy and ethics, and Jewish studies.

On September 25, 1928, Revel eagerly observed the first class of the new college. Years of anticipation and planning came to fruition when thirty-one students, mainly graduates of the Talmudical Academy, began their collegiate studies. Since the new building was not yet completed, the first classes were held in a temporary location at the Jewish Center at 131 West Eighty-sixth Street in Manhattan.

While Revel planned for the college and the Yeshiva campaign continued, the Building Committee, under the chairmanship of Harry Fischel, began to function actively. When close to two million dollars had been collected, Fischel informed Revel that this sum was sufficient to begin construction. In January 1926, the actual construction began on what is today known as the Main Academic Center building of the Yeshiva University complex on Amsterdam Avenue, between 186th and 187th Streets.

This building was originally intended for the high school, and additional buildings were planned for the college. However, with the onset of the Great Depression shortly after its construction, no additional buildings were constructed during Revel's lifetime, and this massive structure served the needs of the Yeshiva, Teachers Institute, Talmudical Academy, and the Yeshiva College for many years.

After the foundation was dug and the skeleton of the structure rose, Revel helped plan an elaborate celebration of the laying of the cornerstone for May 1, 1927. He agreed with Selig that this event could serve to rally widespread support for the Yeshiva. Invitations were sent to twenty-five thousand Jewish leaders across the country, and over eight hundred Orthodox synagogues were invited to participate. A National Conference of Orthodox Jewish Congregations was planned by Selig for May 2, 1927. He envisioned forming a permanent body of synagogues to aid the Yeshiva financially, but he did not succeed in this endeavor.

The celebrations on May 1 were greater than anticipated, and it became a memorable day in the Yeshiva campaign. The trolley cars of the Third Avenue Railroad Company, which ran by the construction site on Amsterdam Avenue, were rerouted, and the police cordoned off the streets surrounding the area. Early in the day masses of East European Jews began to gather. Soon the two-block-long grandstands that had been erected by the city of New York were filled with over six thousand people. Latecomers gathered for four blocks around, while hundreds watched from windows, fire escapes, and the roofs of surrounding apartment houses.

While the crowds were assembling at the Yeshiva site, more than twelve hundred gaily decorated automobiles, containing the rabbis and officers of various Jewish institutions, formed a procession at the Jewish Center on West Eighty-sixth Street. Slowly the parade wended its way to the scene of the afternoon's festivities. On entering the grounds of the Yeshiva, the procession was greeted by cheer upon cheer from the thirty thousand spectators who had assembled by that time.

Riding in one of the lead cars, Revel was overwhelmed by the size and enthusiasm of the crowd. What had been a dream was



Laying the cornerstone for Yeshiva, Amsterdam Avenue and 186th Street, May 1, 1927



Leaving East Broadway building for uptown; *first row* (1. to r.): holding Torah scrolls, Rabbis Joseph Levine and Moses Margolies, Dr. Revel, Harry Fischel, holding Torah scrolls to the right on lower two steps, Rabbis Sholom Rackovsky and Aaron D. Burack; *second row* (1. to r.): holding Torah scrolls, Rabbis Benjamin Aranowitz, Judah Weil, Samuel Gerstenfeld, Ephraim Steinberg, Chaim Shun-fenthal, Moses Aaron Poleyeff



Dedication of new building on December 9, 1928

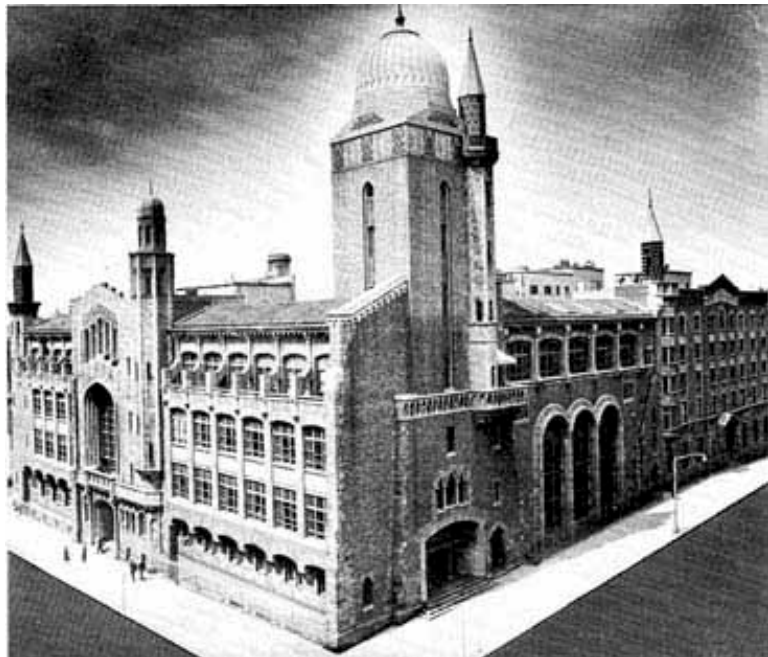


Dignitaries at dedication of new building; *center, first row*: Rabbi Moses Margolies, Harry Fischel; behind them: Rabbi Shimon Shkop, Dr. Revel (obscured); *extreme right, full figure*: Harris Selig



Revel speaking at dedication

Yeshiva's new home



now a rising structure. He no longer doubted that his vision of Yeshiva would soon be a reality. In front of the future building, he read a letter of greeting from President Calvin Coolidge. He listened intently while greetings were extended by Mayor James J. Walker and Senators Royal S. Copeland and Robert F. Wagner. He watched a scroll depicting the Yeshiva's history being deposited in the cornerstone. The cornerstone was then cemented in place by a committee headed by Nathan Lampport, Harry Fischel, and Samuel Levy. The high point of the program was reached when Revel was called upon to give the principal address. Rabbi Revel inspired the throng present when he declared that a dawn for a "brighter glory of the Torah on this continent" had taken place. He remarked:

To the great assembly of faithful sons and daughters of Israel, who on this day, sacred to God and significant to the entire House of Israel, have assembled from near and far to express their unflinching allegiance and devotion to God, and to rejoice in the fulfillment of the hope and vision of a shrine for the *Shekina* [Divine Presence], of a sanctuary on this continent, dedicated to the glory of God and the spiritual environment of our country . . . I bring the greetings and the blessings of the House of God—the Yeshiva.

This day marks the dawn of a brighter glory of the Torah on this continent and sounds a note which finds an echo in the heart of every Jew who loves God and is loyal to the Torah.

This memorable day, this rising sanctuary, this representative assembly of tens of thousands who have come distances to pay homage to the Torah, mark the resolved expression by American Israel of its inner urge to create a sanctuary in its heart and in the hearts of its children, to perpetuate Israel's spirituality and steadfastness to God and His Torah; its aspiration to a true and creative Jewish life, which rises from the sustaining strength of the Torah and its historic and abiding home; the Yeshiva. . . .

This sanctuary is consecrated to the teaching of the truths of the Torah which stand eternal in a world of changing and shifting standards and values; to the affirmations of the faith of our fathers concerning God, Israel and the Torah in their totality; . . . in union with the creative culture and humanizing forces of the time, with unshaken loyalty to our beloved country.

The Yeshiva will bring to ever-increasing numbers of American Jewish youth the true perspective of historic Judaism in the

complex organization of modern life, combining with the learning of the world today those values and ideals which have been the strength of the sustaining faith of our fathers, for the enrichment of the lives of the Jewish community and of America. The Yeshiva will help span the widening chasm between intellectualism and faith in Jewish life and thought. It will imbue our Jewish youth with an active and abiding interest in, and a spirit of service to the cause of Israel.

After he completed his address, Revel stepped back while the crowd roared its approval of his sentiments. Orthodox Jewry indeed felt that a “new Mount Sinai” was being constructed for America, and at this moment Revel couldn’t help thinking of the letter he had previously received from Pittsburgh’s Rabbi Sivitz.

From afar [it read] I look upon your achievements as you climb the holy ladder which stands next to God. You have now reached the top rung. Many attempt to climb this ladder and do not succeed. It was stated long ago, “Who may ascend the Lord’s mountain? . . . He who has clean hands and a pure heart. . . .” [Psalms 24:3–4]. However, I am sure that you will succeed as there is no impure element within your make-up.

With the help of God, I will take part in the celebration of your ascending the new Mount Sinai. . . .

Following the joyous cornerstone ceremonies, construction proceeded rapidly. It was completed in the late fall of 1928 and Revel designated December 9, 1928, for the dedication of the finished structure. Since this was the second day of Chanukkah, the consecration of the Yeshiva building would be celebrated on the anniversary of the Maccabean rededication of the Jerusalem Temple. Despite the winter weather, Orthodox Jewry once again turned out in masses to rejoice with the Yeshiva. Some fifteen thousand people viewed the gaily decorated new structure that Sunday afternoon. The new building was indeed a magnificent sight in comparison with the previous cramped quarters at 302 East Broadway. The structure rose four stories. The building took up an entire city block on Amsterdam Avenue. It contained classrooms, study halls, laboratories, a gymnasium, a library, and an auditorium with more than fifteen hundred seats. The main study hall or bet hamidrash was later named the Harry Fischel

Study Hall; the auditorium was called the Nathan Lampport Auditorium. The library, which housed the Judaic and religious volumes amassed by the Yeshiva, was named the Mendel Gottesman Library. On its northwest side the building extended into a five-story dormitory, which had facilities for 375 students, and a large, modern cafeteria. The building's unique façade of towers and turrets resembled Moorish architecture. The architect was Charles B. Meyers; Henry Beaumont Herts was the consulting architect. It was the first structure constructed on the hill that rose above the Harlem River at Amsterdam Avenue and 186th Street, and Revel often referred to it as "The House of God on the Hilltop."

That morning a solemn Rabbi Revel led the *roshei yeshiva* in carrying the Torah scrolls out of the East Broadway building for the procession uptown. The dream was now a reality. There would be no turning back, and East Broadway would soon be part of history. The new college would be in its new home, and the mortgages on the building would have to be redeemed. Soon Revel was caught up in the festivities of the day. He expressed the feelings of the vast audience when he exclaimed at the start of his consecration address: "Glorious is this day the Lord has made, a day sacred to God and significant to the entire House of Israel, whereon we dedicate to God this majestic edifice of beauty and splendor, of dignity and grace, an architectural song of praise to God."

Rabbi Revel consecrated the new building

to faith and humanity, to light and truth, to all that is noble in life and sacred to Israel; to the pursuit, interpretation, and advancement of universal knowledge in harmony with the great affirmations of Judaism concerning God and man, which are at the basis of enlightened civilization, of what is enduring in the spiritual and moral concepts and values of mankind, and which still hold a vital message for humanity. . . .

The Yeshivoth of all ages, of whose unending chain this Yeshiva is a link, are the historic interpreters of a tradition, the abiding standard bearers of a philosophy and way of life from which our civilization has drawn continuous strength. This philosophy and way of life, this sanctuary is a pledge to conserve and to advance, hand in hand with the pursuit and progress of general knowledge.

The joy of the occasion was tinged with sadness—Rabbi Solomon Polachek and Nathan Lampport had died during the summer of 1928. Revel concluded his address by recalling “the noble souls who have gone to their eternal reward, Thy faithful servants, Rabbi Solomon Polachek and Nehemiah Lampport, whose memories will be cherished in this Thy sanctuary.”

The next day the classes of the Yeshiva, Teachers Institute, Talmudical Academy, and Yeshiva College were transferred to their new location. The students soon settled down to their studies in their fresh and beautiful surroundings. They were greeted by a public letter from Revel which reminded them that it was now up to them to live up to the ideals for which the building had been erected. He urged them to take care of the physical appearance “lest ill-wishers rejoice, and our labors be rendered vain by irreverence and thoughtlessness.” In conclusion, Revel wrote:

I feel that to you, my younger brothers, there is no need of these words; yet the importance of maintaining the atmosphere of spiritual consecration bids me speak. Let us enter our new sanctuary with a prayer of gratitude to the Almighty, with unfailing loyalty to the Yeshiva and to its ideals. The future of the Yeshiva is in the hands of every student; let each resolve to make it his holy trust, so that this House of God on the hilltop may indeed be sacred and sanctified in its holy task.

5



THE ATTEMPT AT MERGER

WHEN REVEL FIRST ARRIVED at the Yeshiva it was a relatively obscure Orthodox institution which wielded little influence on American Jewry. The Yeshiva's campaign to raise five million dollars brought it to the attention of all segments of Jewry. American Jewry learned about the ideals of the Yeshiva and its president through the seemingly endless publicity for the fund-raising drive.

Revel was heartened by the singularly positive reaction of Orthodox Jewry. The success of the campaign and the munificent contributions of Orthodox laymen rejuvenated the Orthodox group's confidence in its ability to perpetuate itself on the American scene. These feelings were expressed by Revel's *Agudat Harabanim* colleagues in an announcement published in Yiddish newspapers throughout the United States. Their pronouncement urged the masses to participate in the consecration of the completed building on December 9, 1928, and went on:

How wonderful is this day on which the gates of Torah and wisdom of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary will be opened. . . . Beautiful buildings have been constructed for the Yeshiva and they represent the pride and glory of Orthodox American Jewry. These buildings have been constructed in the uptown section of New York and it represents the successful arrival of Orthodoxy in the mainstream of American Jewry.

It is obligatory upon us to celebrate the holiday of the victory of traditional Judaism over the spirit of reform and secularism that

exists in our land. Let us rejoice in dignity and nobility in the midst of the multitudes. And therefore we call out to all our brethren in America . . . come let us go to the house of the Yeshiva.

To Revel's satisfaction, there were some influential non-Orthodox elements of American Jewry who welcomed the Yeshiva campaign, feeling that it would strengthen Judaism in America. The New York Board of Rabbis, which was composed of Reform and Conservative, as well as Orthodox, spiritual leaders, endorsed the plans. A prominent Reform rabbi, Dr. Samuel Schulman, rabbi of Temple Beth-El (which was later to consolidate with Temple Emanu-El), publicly supported the Yeshiva. In a March 25, 1927, letter to Judge Otto Rosalsky of the Yeshiva Campaign Committee, Schulman wrote:

I rejoice that Orthodox Judaism is strengthening itself in our beloved country and is trying to raise five million dollars in order to erect a group of buildings for the Yeshiva proper, for dormitories and for secular education, High School and Collegiate.

It may surprise the gentlemen of the committee to learn that I, as a Reform Rabbi, am so enthusiastic about their efforts. I can assure you however that . . . "nothing Jewish is alien to our hearts."

I want to see every form of Judaism strengthened in this country, and I am optimist enough to believe that there will eventually develop in this country a very live and vigorous Judaism, based upon the historic foundations of our great religion. And that Judaism will be in perfect accord with our American environment.

I regard it as of the utmost importance that the Yeshiva enterprise is to be combined with adequate provision for secular education, with what as I learn, is to be called a School for Sciences and Arts, which will confer degrees. Such a Yeshiva will go back to the magnificent traditions of the Spanish school and above all, will show that it is a child of the spirit of Maimonides, who was a complete master of the secular wisdom of his age, and at the same time, was the great codifier of the Jewish law and the great reconciler of Jewish faith and world philosophy.

But other non-Orthodox elements reacted adversely to Revel's proposals. Their criticisms became more articulate as the campaign progressed and the first substantial sums of money were raised. The criticisms of the Yeshiva drive came essentially from three different sources: (1) secularists, who opposed Orthodoxy,

(2) doubters, who questioned the efficacy of the plans, and (3) “100 percent Americanizers,” who would deny the right to Jewish institutions to teach secular subjects because of fears of segregation.

Revel was not surprised by an editorial which appeared in the March 25, 1925, issue of New York’s *New Wahrheit*. This Yiddish paper, the organ of The Worker’s Party of America, was pro-Soviet and anti-Zionist. The editorial, which summarized the secularist opposition to the Yeshiva, was entitled HUNGER DEAD IN UKRAINE AND \$5,000,000 YESHIVA IN NEW YORK. It Stated: “Upon this institution the brainless philanthropists want to squander the millions that would be the saving of four million of our unfortunate brethren in Ukrainia.” The editorial concluded with a warning: “It is high time that the Jews of New York should stop and consider who their leaders are, and whither they are being led.”

Revel was more troubled by those who doubted the necessity and efficacy of the massive campaign. They raised their voices in protest through the medium of the Anglo-Jewish press, and Revel feared that their objections would curtail large contributions. A typical criticism by the doubters was expressed in the May 8, 1925, edition of Baltimore’s *Jewish Times*: “The charge that Yeshiva is seeking more than is warranted by its requirements is something that merits investigation. We have often thought it is quite possible for an organization to be thrilled by its own ideals to such an extent that the public may be carried away without further investigation.”

Years later, after the drive had succeeded, S. M. Melamed argued in Chicago’s *Sentinel* of December 21, 1928, that

a five-million dollar Yeshiva College is a violation of all the traditions and the spirit of Talmudic training. The students of a Yeshiva College spending their time in a five-million dollar institution, will surely not sacrifice themselves on the altar of the Torah. Nor is a five-million dollar institution apt to inspire the students intellectually and ethically.

However, the criticisms of the secularists and the doubters had little effect upon Revel and the Yeshiva campaign; few influential

American Jews were adversely influenced by their editorials. It was otherwise with the criticisms of the “100 percent Americanizers”; they affected Revel and the drive and brought about a serious attempt to abrogate the plans for a Yeshiva College. These people felt that a Jewish college would be contrary to the spirit of Americanism because it would segregate its students. The earliest “anti-parochial-school” opposition appeared in the Cincinnati Reform weekly, *American Israelite*, on December 13, 1923:

What the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary’s governors propose to establish is nothing more nor less than Jewish parochial schools similar to those maintained by the Roman Catholics. Of course, there is no way of restraining these fanatics by proceedings in a court of law, but some way should be found to put a stop on their pernicious activity, which is fraught with danger to all American Jews, and if persisted in cannot but do more serious harm.

The *American Hebrew* of New York soon echoed the same sentiments in a January 31, 1924, editorial:

But, now comes something new and fraught with greater danger to American Jewry. This is nothing less than an abominable project for establishing Jewish parochial schools, not merely religious schools, but schools for teaching the secular branches, schools in all respects similar to the Catholic parochial schools, whose existence has been continuously deplored by all non-Catholic Americans and by many who are faithful Catholics.

... It is difficult to write temperately on this subject. It is little short of exasperating to stand idly by while a band of fanatics, so blinded by religious bigotry as to the unavoidable consequences of their acts, are playing into the hands of the anti-Semites, the anti-immigrationists, the Ku Klux and all other enemies of Israel.

To Revel’s chagrin, this viewpoint was also espoused by the highly regarded lawyer and Jewish communal leader Louis Marshall. He was best known for his efforts to extend religious, cultural, and political freedom to all racial, religious, and linguistic minorities. At this time, Marshall headed the American Jewish Committee, and he served as president of New York’s Reform Temple Emanu-El. Although Reform in his own reli-

gious observances, he was also the chairman of the Board of Directors of the Conservative Jewish Theological Seminary of America. Born in Syracuse in 1856, he was a graduate of the American school system. He considered it essential that American spiritual leaders receive an education which would enable them to understand and be understood by the younger generation, who received their secular education in public schools. Marshall felt that this essential condition could only be met if the rabbis were themselves familiar with the methods employed in American institutions of secular learning. The rabbis must be thoroughly imbued with the genius of American schools, and they must know the different types of the population. They should not be looked upon as strangers, by themselves or others.

Marshall declared that these qualifications cannot be attained to the fullest degree in an institution in which secular studies are pursued in the same atmosphere in which theological training is received. A wall of difference is created between those who acquire their secular and religious education in such a school and those who study in solely secular institutions. Those who attend schools with both secular and religious curricula are apt to be one-sided and are deprived of the most valuable part of college or university training: contact with men of varying opinions. Marshall concluded a letter to the *American Israelite*:

The late Dr. Schechter appreciated these tendencies and insisted that the Jewish Theological Seminary of America should be a post-graduate institution and desired that its students should pursue their secular studies in a college or university, which was separate and distinct from the seminary, and which was not conducted on sectarian lines. That, I look upon as the height of wisdom and I have no hesitation in saying that the establishment of a Jewish university, as has at times been mooted, would be most unfortunate.¹

The *American Israelite* then advised its readers “to cut off, as far as possible, all financial support of the movement, until it confines itself to its legitimate sphere. As it stands the movement is unwise, un-American, and, above all, un-Jewish.” Marshall adhered to this advice, and when approached to aid in the Yeshiva campaign by Gustavus Rogers, Marshall responded by writing on May 8, 1926:

I have on frequent occasions expressed my disapproval of the creation of a Jewish College in the sense in which that term is used by you. . . . They would not even have the opportunity of learning how to speak English with accuracy. Such a college would be nothing more than a Ghetto Institution.

Under the circumstances, I would not be willing to do anything which would favor the creation of such a college.

Although Revel was disappointed by these criticisms and by the outlook of an important segment of American Jewry, he was not disheartened. The campaign was progressing, and considerable funds were being raised.

From the outset Revel found that many people did not understand wherein the Yeshiva differed from the Jewish Theological Seminary. In advance of the public announcement of the Yeshiva campaign, Harry Fischel urged the Yeshiva's Board of Directors to start the drive, for the Seminary was then conducting its own drive. Fischel felt that unless the Yeshiva publicly declared that it was also launching a building campaign, it would "be swallowed up by the Seminary. The wrong impression will come out that the Seminary is the only institution in America that is producing rabbis."²

Dr. Nathan Isaacs of Harvard University, an Orthodox Jew, also experienced difficulty in raising funds because people questioned the need for the Yeshiva. On January 6, 1929, he wrote to Revel:

We have a real problem in impressing on American Jewry an answer to the question why the Yeshiva's functions cannot be accomplished by the Seminary. I am strengthening this phase of my memorandum. If I can make this point plausible (not for you and me—but for the *Rosenwalds* as well) I shall feel that something is accomplished.

At Revel's urging, the *Agudat Harabanim* issued a statement in advance of the Yeshiva campaign which was clearly designed to accentuate the differences between the Yeshiva and the Jewish Theological Seminary. The rabbinical organization informed the public that only the Yeshiva was an Orthodox institution:

It has come to the attention of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of America and Canada, the Rabbinical authority in this country,

that organizations and institutions of learning that are not founded upon “Torah and Fear of Heaven” come now before the public through newspapers and public assemblies, some of which are being held in synagogues; speak in the name of our holy Torah and Orthodox Judaism. They claim to train rabbis and teachers and that they seek to fortify and strengthen our holy Torah in the spirit of genuine Judaism in this land and appeal on these grounds to the public for support and endowment funds.

In doing so, they create confusion in the minds of the vast majority of American Jews, most of whom are faithful to the tenets of true Judaism but many of whom are not familiar with the precise facts and are unable to distinguish [between the Seminary and the Yeshiva]. These institutions seek to inculcate in the public mind the views and tendencies that are alien to true Judaism. The Union of Orthodox Rabbis deems it imperative to inform all those who are adhering to Orthodox Judaism that these organizations and educational institutions are not conceived in a spirit of loyalty to the tenets of Judaism, as understood by Israel of all ages and that their leaders have no right to speak in the name of our holy Torah.

The declaration concluded by affirming “that the great center of Torah in America, which also trains Rabbis, teachers, and spiritual leaders in the true spirit of our holy Torah, is the great Yeshiva in New York, known as the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary.”

This press release was signed by fourteen rabbinic leaders, including the *Agudat Harabanim* presidium, consisting of Rabbis Bernard Levinthal, Israel Rosenberg, and Eliezer Silver. Dated November 7, 1923, it was published in Yiddish newspapers across the country. Perhaps it was helpful in enabling some East European immigrant circles to differentiate between the Yeshiva and the Jewish Theological Seminary. However, the columnist Gershon Agronsky accused the Yeshiva of sponsoring the release on the eve of the campaign simply to attract support away from the Seminary endowment drive. On November 30, in his syndicated “New York Letter,” he criticized the

ungenerous attitude of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary in issuing a statement, on the eve of the Seminary’s drive, through the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of America that “all who faithfully adhere to the Torah and regard it as our previous

possession” shall support only the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, the unmistakable implication being that other organizations and institutions of learning do not train rabbis who faithfully adhere to the Torah, and therefore are not deserving of support. . . . But involved in this action of the sponsors of the Isaac Elchanan Seminary is not so much a question of doctrine or creed as the everlasting struggle for control.

Agronsky also made the sarcastic observation that Rabbi Bernard Levinthal, who excluded the Jewish Theological Seminary from the pale of “Torah and fear of heaven,” was the proud father of a prominent graduate of this institution, Dr. Israel Herbert Levinthal. Together with the other graduates of the “Schechter Seminary,” Agronsky claimed that Dr. Levinthal was taking a conspicuous part in the Seminary’s endowment campaign.

Many persons active in the administration and faculty of the Jewish Theological Seminary during this period were Orthodox or close to Orthodoxy in their theology and practice. This fact caused some persons to believe that the Jewish Theological Seminary and the Yeshiva *were* similar, and they did have legitimate difficulty in differentiating between the two institutions. Cyrus Adler, the president of the Seminary, was an observant Jew who worshiped at the Orthodox Mikveh Israel Congregation in Philadelphia. Adler had previously even been accepted in the circles of the *Agudat Harabanim* and delivered a lecture on Sabbath observance at its annual convention in 1909, although he was a member of the Seminary’s directorate at that time.³ At the annual meeting of the fledgling United Synagogue of America in 1916, Dr. Adler urged the United Synagogue to establish “some sort of Rabbinical authority . . . fully basing itself upon the Jewish law and tradition.” At the annual United Synagogue meeting a year later, his proposal was reiterated by Dr. Louis Epstein, then the spiritual leader of a congregation in Toledo, Ohio. Epstein declared that “we want an authoritative body that will be recognized by all Jewry. . . . I, therefore, thought that some form of cooperation might be devised between the United Synagogue and the *Agudat Harabanim*.”⁴

After Adler succeeded the late Solomon Schechter as the

president of the Jewish Theological Seminary's faculty in 1915, he gradually reduced innovation and what he termed "religious development" at the Seminary; he changed the school into "a research institute and a rabbinical training academy." Adler altered the course of the Seminary as conceived by Solomon Schechter by isolating it "from the maelstrom of Jewish life," and guiding it in a more traditional path.⁵ The Seminary faculty for 1925 consisted of Louis Ginzberg, Talmud; Mordecai Kaplan, homiletics; Moses Hyamson, codes; Morris Levine, Hebrew; Alexander Marx, history; Israel Davidson, medieval Hebrew literature; Jacob Hoschander, biblical literature and exegesis; and Louis Finkelstein, Talmud. Most of these scholars were traditionalists. Some, such as Marx and Hyamson, were fully Orthodox.

It can therefore be readily understood how Louis Marshall, who was so distant from East European Orthodoxy, thought the Seminary and its faculty were perpetuating Orthodox Judaism. He felt that the Seminary was "maintained for the Orthodox wing [of American Jewry], or by those who desired to perpetuate the doctrines and learning of traditional Judaism," and that it was a "stronghold of Torah."⁶

While Revel continued to plan for the college and the anti-segregationist cry against a parochial college rang out in the American Jewish press, a plan evolved to merge the Jewish Theological Seminary with the Yeshiva, and to cancel the Yeshiva's plans for a liberal arts college. Back in 1902 a merger had been discussed. At that time the Seminary was virtually bankrupt, and the Yeshiva was also in financial difficulty. Both institutions turned to Jacob H. Schiff for help, and he and Cyrus Adler explored the possibility of a merger. One conference was held, with Rabbi Levinthal and Nathan Lamport representing the Yeshiva, and Schiff, Adler, and Schechter speaking for the Seminary. After this single meeting the merger idea was discarded.⁷

The new attempt at merging was again initiated by laymen. The Jewish Theological Seminary's Cyrus Adler and Louis Marshall probed the possibility with the Yeshiva's Judge Otto Rosalsky and Samuel C. Lamport.⁸ They felt that there was no need for the community to support two major rabbinical seminaries if their

religious viewpoints were so similar; all agreed that a unified school would be financially sound in that it would have a broad base of support. For Marshall there was the added attraction of abrogating the planned Yeshiva College if a merger could be achieved.

Rosalsky and Lamport contacted Samuel Levy, and he too tried to bring about the merger. They agreed that the Yeshiva's laity, with the exception of Joseph H. Cohen and "a few men of his extreme type," would be favorably disposed. They feared that Rabbi Revel and his confidant, Rabbi Bernard Levinthal, would be "the two difficult barriers to overcome." Samuel Lamport discussed the subject with his father, Nathan, and the elder Lamport agreed that the merger merited serious consideration. However, he did raise basic questions: What would be done with the Yeshiva faculty members, and especially with Rabbi Revel? What representation would those connected with the Yeshiva have on a united board of directors? He suggested that the Jewish Theological Seminary might sell its property and build on the Yeshiva site with the combined funds of the two institutions. He raised the problem of immigrant students, who had no secular training and would therefore be ineligible for the Seminary, where a bachelor's degree was a prerequisite for admission. Marshall raised these problems with Adler and advised him to give them further consideration, so they would be "able to make practical suggestions."

On January 15, 1926, Revel received a letter from Levy which declared that "a matter of the greatest importance concerning the future development of the Yeshiva College has come up and I am seeking your advice and the advice of six other gentlemen." To discuss the proposal, Levy called a conference for January 20. He also invited Rabbis Bernard Levinthal and Moses Margolies, the two Lamports, Judge Rosalsky, and Harris Selig. At this meeting Revel and his older rabbinical colleagues voiced strong opposition to the merger. A basic objection was that the Jewish Theological Seminary limited its program to the training of rabbis and teachers, whereas the Yeshiva had as its goal the education of a dedicated laity, in addition to rabbis and teachers.⁹ Another crucial objection was that the Seminary permitted

the non-Orthodox Mordecai M. Kaplan—later the founder of Reconstructionism—to serve on its faculty. Kaplan's father, Rabbi Israel Kaplan, had been a member of Rabbi Jacob Joseph's ecclesiastical court, and Dr. Kaplan had originally been Orthodox. After his father's death, he departed from Orthodoxy and gradually developed his Reconstructionist philosophy.¹⁰

Rosalsky informed Adler of the unpromising results of the initial Yeshiva meeting and of the determined opposition expressed by Revel and his colleagues. Rosalsky urged Adler to see Philadelphia's Rabbi Levinthal personally. Adler was on good terms with Levinthal, and as the president of Dropsie College he also resided in Philadelphia. Rosalsky felt that if Revel's senior colleague and patron, Rabbi Levinthal, could be won over to the merger idea, then Revel would no longer be able to oppose it. Adler turned to Marshall for advice, and on February 8 Adler wrote:

I think that Judge Rosalsky was entirely frank with me and I gather that in his opinion the greatest stumbling block will be Revel to whom they feel bound and who I presume will be satisfied with nothing less than being at the head of a great movement himself. Revel holds that the Yeshiva is not an institution but an idea, that this idea must spread throughout the whole United States, etc., etc., and that any combination would weaken it. Rosalsky's practical advice was that I should next see Levinthal personally. What do you think of this?

Felix Warburg, a prominent director and benefactor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, became interested in the merger attempts at this time, and, together with Louis Marshall, he urged Adler to meet with Rabbi Levinthal. On February 22, 1926, Adler and Levinthal met in Philadelphia and spent several hours discussing the Yeshiva and the Seminary. Adler summarized Levinthal's opinions concerning the main differences between the two schools:

His idea of the Yeshiva is distinctly not that of a Theological Institution. To him it is indifferent whether the student who resides at the Yeshiva becomes a lawyer, or a physician, a banker or a merchant. The main idea is that he shall become imbued with a knowledge of Torah, always with the hope that he will thus become a

center for its observance and propaganda. He says that since Revel has been President, the Yeshiva has become more of a Theological Seminary than heretofore but his main thought is that there shall always be an Institution for the study of the Torah for its own sake and without reference to a future profession. If Rabbis or scholars eventuate, that is part of the work.

Adler also claimed that at no time in the discussion did Levinthal raise the question of greater or lesser Orthodoxy as a difference between the schools. Levinthal did criticize the Jewish Theological Seminary for insisting upon a collegiate degree, for he felt it curtailed the amount of time left for Jewish studies. He felt that a high school education sufficed and seemed “to have no faith in the general Jewish College about which Revel has been talking.” Levinthal, Adler reported, also thought that the Seminary “devoted proportionately too little time to Bible and Talmud and far too much to what he considered non-essential—History, Poetry, etc.”

Levinthal informed Revel of his meeting with Adler, but said that he himself still thought that a merger was not feasible. Nevertheless, the leaders of the Jewish Theological Seminary continued to nurture hope for a merger. The Seminary’s building program was delayed, and Adler, Marshall, Warburg, and Sol Stroock of the Seminary’s directorate looked at the Yeshiva’s site in Washington Heights. They pressed Levy and Rosalsky to bring about the appointment of an official Yeshiva committee to meet with a Seminary committee. Levy and Rosalsky were anxious for the Yeshiva to appoint a committee, but Revel was totally opposed. He and Rabbis Levinthal and Margolies felt that there was no chance for a merger, and they continued to discourage any attempt to meet with the Seminary. Revel was hard pressed as to the best way to answer the Seminary’s request for a meeting; he did not want to create any unnecessary antagonism between the two institutions, nor did he wish to offend those Yeshiva laymen who favored a meeting with the Seminary. The question of the merger continued to hang fire through the summer of 1926.

After consulting with Marshall, Adler once again pressed for a merger conference. On November 15 he wrote to Levy:

Sometime last spring Rabbi B. L. Levinthal and I had a long talk in Philadelphia with regard to the advisability of some steps being taken by which the Seminary and the Yeshiva could work together for the benefit of Judaism. . . . I thought after my conversation with Rabbi Levinthal that I would hear in some formal way from the Yeshiva, but as I did not, I see no point in standing on ceremony and I am therefore writing to you to inquire whether the officers of the Yeshiva desire such a conference and if so, whether you would name a committee so that the conference might take place in the near future.

Levy explained to Adler that the decision to call this conference would have to come from Revel and the Yeshiva's Board of Directors. With the official request from Adler and the continued pressure from some members of the Yeshiva's directorate, Revel realized that the Yeshiva could no longer procrastinate. He felt that the question of a conference with the Jewish Theological Seminary was not within the jurisdiction of the Board of Directors, being basically a religious question. The Yeshiva proper was governed by its Board of Eleven, which had jurisdiction over all religious matters. The bylaws of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary established the Board of Eleven to "safeguard the spirit, ideals and the fundamental purposes" for which the Yeshiva was founded. It was the board's responsibility to see that "all direct and indirect educational forces" of the Yeshiva "tend towards the purpose of strengthening and perpetuating Orthodox Judaism and the advancement of constructive Jewish learning and research" in the United States. The board was to be "the controlling authority on all matters concerning the spirit in which the Yeshiva is to be conducted."

The lay members of the Board of Eleven at this time were Joseph H. Cohen, Harry Altschul, Mendel Gottesman, Nathan Lamport, and Harry Fischel. Revel, Levinthal, Margolies, Sivitz, and Polachek were the rabbinical members. (One rabbinical position was vacant during this period.) Revel referred the merger question to these men on November 29, 1926. In his letter announcing the meeting, Revel wrote: "I cannot disclose in this letter the nature of the question, but I may tell you that it is the most important question ever presented for the con-

sideration” of the Board of Eleven. At the session all agreed with Revel that there was no basis for cooperation between the schools. The main discussion centered around the least offensive response the Yeshiva could give to the Jewish Theological Seminary. Wishing to put an end to the merger talk, Revel now pushed for the designation of a committee to meet with the Seminary. He was apprehensive that some of the Yeshiva’s key people might continue their efforts toward a plan which Revel considered futile. Finally, the Board of Eleven appointed a committee consisting of Rabbis Revel, Margolies, and Levinthal to meet with the Seminary representatives. Those who felt the conference might be successful agitated for an enlarged Yeshiva committee, and Nathan Lampport and Samuel Levy were added to the select group.

Early in 1927 the conference between the representatives of the Yeshiva and the Jewish Theological Seminary finally took place at the home of Rabbi Margolies in New York.¹¹ Representing the Seminary at this meeting were Cyrus Adler, Louis Marshall, and Louis Ginzberg. The Yeshiva was represented by the three designated rabbinical leaders and two laymen. Like its predecessor some twenty-five years earlier, which also had failed to find any area for joint cooperation between the Yeshiva and the Seminary, the conference was unsuccessful. Revel was reported to have told the Seminary’s committee: “You are offering us annihilation and not amalgamation.” This conference ended any further talk of a merger between the two institutions. The Yeshiva campaign continued. The Seminary, realizing that there was no chance for a merger, began its own campaign for a new building which finally resulted in the Seminary campus at Broadway and 122nd Street in New York City.

What was envisioned for the merged institution by its proponents? Why was the merger so totally opposed by Revel? Louis Marshall and Cyrus Adler both felt that the Jewish Theological Seminary and the Yeshiva were basically Orthodox institutions seeking to perpetuate Orthodoxy in the United States. The Yeshiva was conducted in the fashion of the great East European yeshivot, where the main stress was on talmudic study and analysis, while the Seminary resembled the Orthodox Rab-

binical Seminary of Berlin, which had been founded by Rabbi Ezriel Hildesheimer in 1873. At a rabbinical seminary, Talmud was one of the many subjects studied in a Western critical and scientific fashion. It was envisioned that the merged institution would be conducted in the spirit of the Yeshiva for the first eight years of the student's training. During this time, the student would also attend the Talmudical Academy high school of the Yeshiva and would receive his undergraduate education at a college or university in New York City. After graduating from college and meeting the necessary talmudic requirements, he would continue his education at the Yeshiva with a study program that would resemble the curriculum of a graduate school for rabbinical studies. These courses were to be modeled after the course of study at the Seminary.¹²

In addition to the Jewish Theological Seminary's Adler, Marshall, and Warburg, many of the influential Yeshiva laity favored the merger. They could not fully appreciate the nuances of differences between the schools, and they were enticed by the vision of a financially solvent institution. Judge Rosalsky, Samuel Lampion, and Samuel Levy supported the merger. Levy resented the fact that he had no real say in the matter and stated in a December 10, 1926, letter to Selig: "I have no say-so in the matter and recognize fully that I am a little more than a high-class messenger boy between the Yeshiva Board and Dr. Adler."

In contrast, Orthodox rabbinical opposition to the merger seems to have been unanimous. The *Agudat Harabanim* was opposed, as were Revel's two most prominent advisers, Rabbis Levinthal and Margolies. Above all, Dr. Rev. el objected to the merger. His viewpoint can best be understood from the draft of an article he wrote late in 1928 to explain his position and dissipate lingering criticisms of his opposition. Entitled "Seminary and Yeshiva," the article was never published but was circulated in mimeographed form among the Yeshiva's directorate. With the opening of Yeshiva College and the imminent completion of the new building, the board had to be united in purpose, for there was now a substantial increase in the Yeshiva's financial obligations. Revel wanted to illustrate emphatically that the merger had been a definite impossibility. The topics covered in this article were undoubtedly the subjects discussed at the sole meeting between

the Yeshiva and Seminary committees at the home of Rabbi Margolies. Revel wrote:

To the casual observer, the Seminary and the Yeshiva are sister-institutions, serving the same purposes and working toward the same ends, but a consideration of the facts reveals that, in many vital respects in which these two institutions may logically be compared, they are separated by fundamental distinctions.

There were differences between the Seminary and Yeshiva in five major areas: aims, students, curriculum, religious standards, and faculties.

In relation to aims, the article reiterated the idea that the Jewish Theological Seminary was essentially a professional school for the training of rabbis and teachers:

The idea of such professional schools for the training of rabbis is an innovation in Judaism, not more than about 75 years old. The Yeshiva is not a professional school, but a house of learning. It continues the tradition of millennia of Yeshivoth through the Diaspora and the days of our people in Palestine, as a home for the training of men learned in the Torah, which Judaism has ever considered more far-reaching, and fundamentally more important than the training of the rabbi; for if there is to be a healthy Jewish life, if there is to be incentive and fertile soil for the growth of properly equipped spiritual leaders in every generation, a portion at least of our laity must be intensively trained in the knowledge of the Torah. The work of the Yeshiva, then, is not confined to its building; it is, in its aims, not merely a course of study presented to its students; it is a movement, an ideal; the ideal to restore the study and the knowledge of the Torah to American Jewry, to arouse vital interest in such study, and to bring about a higher level of lay and spiritual leadership, and of Jewish education in general. The Yeshiva, in pursuit of this goal, encourages the organization and the expansion of smaller, elementary Yeshivoth in New York and throughout the country, to spread the knowledge of the Torah, as well as to prepare the exceptional student to continue his intensive studies at the Yeshiva Rabbi Isaac Elchanan, and more fully prepare himself to take a fit place as a Torah-informed Jew in the life of his community.

The students of the two institutions differed greatly in regard to their backgrounds. Many Yeshiva students were recent arrivals from the Palestinian and European yeshivot, where they spent

long hours every day in intensive and devoted study of the Talmud. The American students of the Yeshiva received their elementary training in a Yeshiva day school, and they were well prepared for the dual curriculum of the Talmudical Academy high school. The graduates of the Talmudical Academy were able to study the Talmud and its commentaries on an advanced level, and they continued their talmudic studies in the advanced classes of the Yeshiva. Since the Seminary, on the other hand, accepted students only after they had already graduated from high school and college, these students generally were not intensively prepared for talmudic study.

As a result of the different aims of the institutions and the dissimilar background of their students, their curricula were vastly different. The Yeshiva's students devoted approximately ten months yearly, some twenty-three hours weekly, solely to an intensive study of the Talmud and its commentaries. The Jewish Theological Seminary's rabbinic students devoted from five to eight hours a week, about eight months of the year, to their Talmud studies. Revel felt that

this difference in time must show in the nature of the material presented for study, in the method pursued, and in the students' achievements. The best that can be acquired by such study is knowledge *about*, not knowledge *of*, the Talmud and Codes. The Seminary courses are similar to "survey" courses in general subjects in college, "introductory" courses in Talmud and Codes, etc.; they *cannot* give to the stupendous body of our traditional learning the lengthy and direct, intensive study it requires. Their general method of study is by "outline" rather than by detail; through comments of the professor rather than direct consideration of the sources.

Although the Jewish Theological Seminary also gave its students extensive courses in Jewish history and literature, these courses could in no way replace the intensive work in Talmud which was so necessary, according to Revel.

A very important difference existed between the Jewish Theological Seminary and Yeshiva in relation to religious standards. Revel declared:

The Seminary is revealed, through the nature of the work its graduates are doing, and despite the denials (which grow less in-

sistent) of some of its leaders, as an institution that does *not* stand for orthodox, non-compromising Judaism but for that new departure, that new party—"Conservative Judaism." If proof of this is necessary, we need go no further than the list of Seminary graduates now occupying pulpits; approximately *eighty percent* of the rabbis, graduates of the Seminary, have deviated from the sanctioned and sanctified standards of the synagogue and orthodox Jewry. Some have deviated only to the extent of permitting or encouraging mixed pews, a step usually the forerunner of more radical changes in worship and the conduct of the Synagogue. About 15% have gone over completely to the reform camp.

Revel also claimed that some of the Jewish Theological Seminary graduates not merely acceded to changes desired by their congregations, but actually sought to force upon Orthodox synagogues "such changes as mixed pews—the wedge of further reform." Indeed, in 1928 the Anglo-Jewish press prominently cited the Kol Nidre sermon of Rabbi Louis J. Schwefel, a 1922 Seminary graduate. In his sermon Schwefel declared:

I do believe the men and women should be sitting together. I do believe in the children sitting with the parents. The service as it is at present constituted holds nothing. There is no future for the Orthodox synagogue unless we institute progressive reforms. On this, the holiest day of the year, I tell you that we can have no future unless we are willing to sacrifice something for our youth.

These graduates were not reprimanded by the Seminary. The Yeshiva, on the other hand, did not permit its graduates to occupy pulpits which deviated from the standards of Orthodox Judaism. This difference was a most crucial one. Regarding it, Marshall declared:

The leaders of the Yeshiva were so ultra-orthodox that they imposed conditions which we were unwilling to sanction. Thus, they asked us to pledge ourselves to the propositions that if any of our graduates should ever serve in a Congregation which maintained family pews, or a mixed choir, or an organ we would ostracize him. To this and other like conditions we would not assent. We declined to sit in judgment upon the consciences of others, certainly not with respect to matters of custom and ceremony. We were confronted by a series of hurdles which we were unwilling to surmount.¹³

Another important religious difference between the two institutions was reflected by the presence of Dr. Mordecai M. Kaplan on the faculty of the Seminary. Revel stated that

this condition of the general lapse from the standards that through millennia have kept Torah-Judaism intact, is further explained by the fact, which is both symptom and cause, that the most influential member of the Seminary faculty, the one who has most effectively impressed the student body with his personality and views, is one, who publicly in his writings denies Divine Revelation and the Covenant at Mt. Sinai, the basic doctrines of Judaism, next in importance only to the belief in the Unity of God. The Seminary authorities are aware of his publicly taken attitude; the implication drawn from their silence is that such an attitude may consistently be presented and followed in an Orthodox Rabbinical Seminary.

At the Yeshiva, all religious subjects were taught by Orthodox Jews. The talmudic faculty consisted entirely of scholars who were steeped in the traditions of the great European yeshivot.

For these reasons, Revel led the rabbinical leaders of the Yeshiva in opposing the attempt to merge the Yeshiva and the Jewish Theological Seminary. He concluded:

The Seminary, by virtue of the lack of background of its average students, their meager training before entering the institution, the scant hours and the partial nature of their work, leads inevitably toward the new party of "Conservative Judaism," and by that path to further deviations. The Yeshiva in these respects, and every aspect of its aims, leads toward the preservation and the spread of Jewish traditions, and the maintenance of true and Torah-Judaism.

Revel suffered because of his stand, and the Yeshiva lost considerable financial support which could have mitigated its difficulties during the Depression years. In late 1928, as the Yeshiva building neared completion, Morris White, a New York attorney, asked Felix Warburg to aid the Yeshiva campaign. In refusing to contribute, Warburg wrote in a letter of November 22:

As you know, I am deeply interested in the [Jewish] Theological Seminary and have made a number of efforts to bring these de-

servicing institutions into some sort of relationship, so as to avoid the expense of duplicating efforts in neighboring fields. Unfortunately, a few—and, I understand, a *very* few—of the people interested in the Yeshiva have frustrated any friendly cooperation and have stated that they would finish the building free of debt in due course. I hope their prophecy may come true but I have my doubts.

In the summer of 1929, after the opening of the new building, the Yeshiva was in great financial difficulty. Julius Rosenwald, a prominent merchant and philanthropist, was approached for a contribution. Rosenwald discussed the request with Felix Warburg and told Warburg that he was thinking of aiding the Yeshiva. Warburg told Louis Marshall about Rosenwald's intentions, and on August 6, 1929, while on board the S. S. *Majestic* en route to the conference in Zurich which established the Jewish Agency, Marshall wrote a long letter to Rosenwald. It was one of the last long letters that Marshall wrote; he died suddenly in Zurich on September 11, 1929.

Mr. Warburg informs me [Marshall wrote] that you have addressed to him inquiries regarding the Yeshiva College and that you have in mind a possible plan of acting favorably on an appeal made to you, by its projectors, for substantial pecuniary assistance, on the ground that it is your desire to help an Orthodox Institution devoted to the cause of Jewish education.

Marshall then told Rosenwald about the many accomplishments of the Jewish Theological Seminary and described the Yeshiva as “comparatively a late comer. It is conducted on pedagogic lines which are far from modern.” After telling Rosenwald about his objections to the Yeshiva College and his futile attempts to merge the Seminary and the Yeshiva, Marshall concluded his letter with a suggestion:

It occurred to me, when I learned that you were considering the idea of assisting an Orthodox institution of learning, that it would not be amiss were I to direct your attention to the Seminary, which because it shuns the sensational method of publicity is likely to be overlooked and forgotten in its modest efforts to serve, to create a self-respecting body of rabbis and teachers and to perpetuate the everlasting principles of our faith.¹⁴

A few weeks afterward a thwarted Revel read in the Anglo-Jewish press that Julius Rosenwald had given \$500,000 to The Jewish Theological Seminary of America “to set up an endowment to be known as the Louis Marshall Memorial Fund.” Rosenwald declared that the offer “had been inspired by a letter which Mr. Marshall wrote shortly before his death.”

6



A FAR-FAMED YESHIVA

WHILE GUIDING the constantly evolving high school and college, Rabbi Revel also retained a prime interest in the Yeshiva. He was not satisfied simply with reorganizing the Yeshiva; he wanted it to be the equal of its East European prototypes. It troubled him that people spoke so reverently of the European yeshivot such as Mir and Slobodka, while his Yeshiva was considered an inferior American institution. He realized that the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary would become an outstanding yeshiva only if an accomplished European *rosh yeshiva* was engaged to teach its highest class. Revel therefore encouraged the Yeshiva to bring the renowned Rabbi Solomon Polachek to the United States in 1922. While away from the Yeshiva, Revel wired and wrote to its leaders and urged them to call Rabbi Polachek to the Yeshiva. Revel wired to Rabbi Margolies on March 15, 1922: "WILL SEND MONEY FOR RABBI POLACHEK'S TRIP." To Sar, Revel wrote: "I, therefore, beg of you again not to delay the matter of the coming of Rabbi Polachek. I will send you from here \$300 for his coming, and you in the meantime get all the papers ready for him."

Revel rejoiced when Rabbi Polachek finally arrived in the United States on September 1, 1922. As a youngster, Revel had already heard about Solomon Polachek. Born in 1877 in the small hamlet of Sintzenitch, adjacent to Meitshet, in the province of Grodno, Poland, the young Solomon early achieved fame for his

precocious talmudic ability. In his youth Solomon studied in Meitshet, and he became known as “The *Meitsbeter Illui*.” At the age of twelve he was enrolled by his father in the Volozhiner Yeshiva, which had been organized in 1803 by Rabbi Chaim ben Solomon, the leading disciple of Rabbi Elijah, the Vilna Gaon. This yeshiva was considered the outstanding one of its era. The young *illui* became extremely close to Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik, the brilliant Volozhin *rosh yeshiva* who pioneered a new method of critical talmudic examination and study. Rabbi Soloveitchik stressed incisive analysis, exact classification, critical independence, and emphasis on Maimonides’ *Mishneh Torah*.

The czarist government forced the Volozhiner Yeshiva to close in 1892 after it refused to introduce secular study, and “The *Meitsbeter Illui*” continued his studies at the home of Rabbi Soloveitchik. (Rabbi Soloveitchik had just succeeded his father as the rabbi of Brest Litovsk, White Russia.) He became “Reb Chaim’s” most beloved disciple, and the many visitors to the Soloveitchik home spread the fame of the *Meitsbeter* throughout the Jewish world. In addition to his keen mental ability, Solomon Polachek was also acclaimed for his modesty and simplicity.

After leaving Brest Litovsk “The *Meitsbeter Illui*” went to study under Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzenski, the famed rabbi of Vilna, who conducted classes for the more competent graduates of the European yeshivot. While in Vilna, a citadel of Haskalah, Rabbi Polachek mastered secular knowledge and Haskalah literature. When he was twenty-eight he was invited by Rabbi Isaac Reines, the founder of the Mizrachi religious Zionist movement, to become the *rosh yeshiva* of the yeshiva that he had organized in Lida, Russia, in 1905. Among European yeshivot his was unique in that its curriculum included some secular studies. Rabbi Reines knew that the *Meitsbeter’s* erudition would be respected by the many rabbinical scholars who vociferously criticized the school for having introduced secular study and Zionism into the Yeshiva milieu.

Rabbi Polachek eagerly accepted this position and he remained in Lida until World War I. After the war, the *Meitsbeter* accepted a similar position at the Tachkemoni Mizrachi gymnasium in Bialystok, Poland, which he left in 1922 to come to the Yeshiva in New York.

Revel was enraptured with the presence of the *Meitsbeter* at the Yeshiva and completely effaced himself in the company of Rabbi Polachek. He attended the *Meitsbeter's* lectures and clarified his novel talmudic interpretations for those students who did not comprehend the entire lecture. As president, Revel rejoiced at the enhanced status accorded the Yeshiva throughout the Jewish world since Rabbi Polachek's arrival. The *Meitsbeter* was also warmly welcomed by the students of the Yeshiva, and the older advanced students avidly gathered around him during the four days a week that he lectured. Rabbis and scholarly laymen also attended these lectures. America was blessed with a true Torah luminary, and the Yeshiva's spirit of learning intensified. The minutes of an alumni luncheon which was hosted by Revel on November 29, 1923, vividly recapture this atmosphere for us:

It seems that the old traditional saying "if there is no Torah, there is no food" is strictly adhered to when *Talmidim Chachomin* get together. While the table had been set for a luncheon, somehow or other, the center of gravitation seemed to be Rabbi Polachek, who sat at a distance from the covered table. Little by little, the chairs were drawn away from the luncheon table and the group gathered about Rabbi Polachek who gave a discourse on "Chalitzah" [levirate marriage]. It was one of the most inspiring scenes I have ever witnessed in my life. There sat Rabbi Polachek, pouring forth words of wisdom and the younger men moved together in a close circle about him, listening with keen interest and rapt attention to every word uttered by the Patriarch.

The scene was apparently marred only by the presence of a covered table set for the repast, for observing this group of scholars so concentrated on what the Rabbi was saying so that not an iota should escape their ears, one was certain that they were as far away from the luncheon as the North Pole is from the South. Not until the Rabbi ceased to speak, were there any comments or questions. It was an inspiring scene indeed.

To Revel's great sorrow, after a brief illness of two weeks Rabbi Polachek died of osteomyelitis of the jaw, the result of an abscessed tooth on July 8, 1928. His untimely death at the early age of fifty-one, at a time when the Yeshiva campaign was reaching its successful conclusion, cast American Orthodoxy into deep mourning. At the services, which were conducted at the

Yeshiva on East Broadway, tens of thousands of mourners jammed the school and the surrounding streets. The press reported that “speaker after speaker broke off in the midst of his tribute, while Dr. Bernard Revel, head of the Yeshiva, collapsed, after insisting upon completing his farewell to his ‘friend, associate, and teacher.’ ”

Rabbi Revel was deeply grieved at the demise of the *Meitsbeter*. His death meant more than simply the loss of a great scholar, for it also was the death of the first outstanding European *rosh yeshiva* who had come to teach in an American yeshiva. Before the Yeshiva’s Board of Directors, Revel exclaimed: “*Knesseth* Israel has lost one of its noblest sons; Torah scholarship lost one of its truest exponents and interpreters; the Yeshiva lost its bright jewel and glory. . . . We in the Yeshiva will continue to mourn him. He has left a void which cannot be filled.” Months later, after the initial pain of the *Meitsbeter’s* death had abated, as he was standing on the terrace of his apartment on a Saturday night thinking about the late pioneer American *rosh yeshiva*, Revel turned to his wife and said: “Pick a bright constellation in the heavens and name it the ‘*Meitsbeter Illui*!’”

Revel knew that it would not be easy to find an adequate successor for the *Meitsbeter*. Nevertheless, he was determined to once again seek a *rosh yeshiva* who would be esteemed by world Jewry. During May 1928 Rabbi Baruch Bar Leibowitz came to America to raise funds for the yeshiva he headed in Kamenitz, then part of Poland. Rabbi Leibowitz was known throughout the Jewish world as a leading *rosh yeshiva* and disciple of Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik. He recommended that Rabbi Revel engage Rabbi Moses Soloveitchik, the son of his mentor, “Reb Chaim Brisker,” who was then the head of the Talmud Department of the Tachkemoni Rabbinical Seminary in Warsaw.

Rabbi Soloveitchik accepted Revel’s invitation, but he soon encountered obstacles in Warsaw which greatly delayed his departure. During this period an intense feeling of depression and despondency enveloped the Yeshiva. The *Meitsbeter’s* brilliant lectures and inspiring personality were sorely missed by Revel and the Yeshiva students. The delays encountered by Rabbi Soloveitchik added to the sadness, and some questioned whether

“Reb Moshe” would ever succeed in finally getting a United States visa.

About this time Rabbi Shimon Shkop, Revel’s old acquaintance from his brief period of study at the Telshe Yeshiva, came to the United States to raise funds for the Shaarei Torah Yeshiva in Grodno, Poland, which he headed. Rabbi Shkop was born in 1860 and later studied at the Mir and Volozhin yeshivot. In 1884 he became a *rosh yeshiva* in the Telshe Yeshiva, and he remained with this school until 1902. Later he served as the rabbi and *rosh yeshiva* of Maltsh until 1906, and of Bryensk until the end of World War I. Acceding to Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzenski’s request, “Reb Shimon” became head of the Shaarei Torah Yeshiva which had been organized in the midst of the war, in 1916, to accommodate students who could not return to their original yeshivot. He remained in this post until his death on October 22, 1939. Reb Shimon’s analytical method of study was greatly admired, and he was considered the pedagogue par excellence in the yeshiva world.

In accordance with Revel’s custom of inviting the leading rabbinical visitors to America to deliver guest lectures at the Yeshiva, Rabbi Shkop also gave a *shiur* which was highly praised. After this lecture Rabbis Revel and Margolies pleaded with Reb Shimon to remain with the Yeshiva as the senior *rosh yeshiva*. After much hesitancy Rabbi Shkop agreed, and during March 1929, he officially became its *rosh yeshiva*. In his press release announcing Rabbi Shkop’s appointment, Rabbi Revel stated:

The coming of the *Gaon*, Rabbi Shimon Shkop to the Yeshiva is not only a matter of great importance to the Yeshiva . . . but it is an important event for all American Jewry. He will, with the help of God, aid in planting the seeds of Torah in this land, just as he propagated the study of Torah in our old home.

Reb Shimon’s acceptance of the Yeshiva position was greeted with hope and expectation. He was known to be a *rosh yeshiva* whose influence would spread far beyond the confines of the Yeshiva, with which he was now associated. The students warmly welcomed him, for they knew that they were once again privileged to have an accomplished *rosh yeshiva*. In the December 30,

1928, issue of the student publication, *Hedenu*, a student described his emotions and thoughts when Rabbi Shkop entered to lecture:

“Reb Shimon” is walking slowly. An electric current seems to pass through those assembled, and all eyes focus upon Rabbi Shkop. One thought seems to be uppermost in everyone’s mind: this elderly man—who possesses keen eyes that move quickly, and a gentle smile on a delicate face that is surrounded by a clean, white beard—is “Reb Shimon.” This is the same “Reb Shimon” of Telshe, Maltsh, Bryensk, and Grodno—whose deeds and accomplishments in each of these stations in his life, have gained for him the respect and love of all.

Rabbi Shkop was pleased with the students and enjoyed his stay at the Yeshiva. Revel found solace in his presence; and once again he set the example in the love and respect he expressed for Reb Shimon. However, Rabbis Israel Meir Kagan (the Chofetz Chaim) and Chaim Ozer Grodzenski, the acknowledged heads of Orthodox Jewry, requested that he return to his yeshiva in Grodno, which sorely missed his leadership and guidance. Rabbis Revel and Margolies urged Reb Shimon to remain in the United States—they felt the Yeshiva needed him even more. However, on August 22, 1929, Rabbi Shkop wrote to them:

When I arrived here [Miami Beach], I was given your telegram in which you requested that I continue in the Yeshiva. It surprises me that you still ask that I do so. Haven’t I already told you many times that I cannot fulfill this request. It is my fondest wish that God should help me return to my Yeshiva in Grodno before *Rosh Hashanah*. . . . May the good Lord aid you in selecting the proper man to head the Yeshiva.

At the end of the summer of 1929, when the arrival of Rabbi Moses Soloveitchik was imminent, Rabbi Shkop returned to Europe.

After his initial acceptance, Revel had continued to urge Rabbi Moses Soloveitchik to come to the United States, even when Rabbi Shkop already was lecturing at the Yeshiva. This would have made his American institution a truly unequaled world center of Torah study, and it would have continued the



First entering class of Yeshiva College, 1928

First collegiate faculty, 1928; *seated* (1. to r.): Dr. Jacob R. Silverman, instructor in science; Dr. Isaac Husik, professor of philosophy; Dr. Charles F. Home, professor of English; Dr. Bernard Revel, president of Yeshiva College; Dr. Shelley R. Saphire, professor of biology and dean of Yeshiva College; Dr. Nelson P. Mead, professor of history; Dr. Bernard Drachman, instructor in German; Mr. Jekuthiel Ginsburg, assistant professor of mathematics; *standing* (1. to r.): Mr. Abraham B. Hurwitz, instructor in health education; Dr. George Falion, instructor in Latin; Dr. Solomon A. Rhodes, instructor in French; Mr. Gustav A. Schultz, instructor of public speaking; and Dr. Moses L. Isaacs, instructor in chemistry



Volozhiner Yeshiva tradition of having several famed *roshei yeshiva*. Reb Moshe was highly regarded as a fountainhead of Torah scholarship and as a capable adherent of his father's singular method of talmudic exposition. Born in 1876, he received his Torah education from his father. The younger Rabbi Soloveitchik held several rabbinic positions prior to his teaching position at the Tachkemoni Rabbinical Seminary in Warsaw. The Tachkemoni resembled the Lida Yeshiva of Rabbi Reines in that secular studies were also included in its curriculum. After Reb Moshe had responded affirmatively to Rabbi Revel's request, Revel wrote to him on October 21, 1928:

I rejoice that you have accepted our offer. It is my prayer that your departure be in peace and that your coming here be for blessings and the strengthening of our holy Torah. . . .

I urge you to make all the necessary arrangements as quickly as possible, since the work of our Holy Torah awaits you here.

However, in addition to the normal difficulty in obtaining a nonquota visa, the medical examiner for the American Embassy in Warsaw insisted that he undergo surgery to remove an ingrown toenail. It was not until September 18, 1929, that Rabbi Soloveitchik finally departed for America. The students warmly welcomed the new *rosh yeshiva*, and Reb Moshe soon became an integral part of the Yeshiva scene. His initial *shiur* was described by a student in the January 1930 issue of *Hedenu*:

For the first *shiur*, the *Beth Hamedrash* was filled as feelings of expectancy and festivity were felt by all. Our master [Rabbi Moses Soloveitchik] began his lecture. Great was the surprise felt by all those present since our master's lecture didn't seem like a beginning. It didn't appear as if this was the initial time he was speaking in our Yeshiva. It rather seemed like a continuation, as if he had constantly lectured in the Yeshiva. . . . In truth, it was a continuation. A continuation of the long road that the Torah has travelled: from Sura and Pumpeditha in Babylonia, through all the countries of our exile, until it reached Volozhin. Now it is coming from Volozhin to New York.

Reb Moshe was to remain with the Yeshiva until his demise on January 31, 1941. He joined Revel and Rabbi Benjamin Aranowitz

in forming the ordination board of the Yeshiva during this period. His daily talmudic lectures were described as “incredible masterpieces of logical construction,” and students eagerly sought admission to his class. A student later recalled:

Permission to become a regular member of Reb Moshe’s class was the crowning glory of a student’s many years of study, and tacit certification that he was already a *talmid chohom*, an accomplished scholar. To weather Rabbi Moses Soloveitchik’s exacting standards of diligence and achievement, and then to earn his signature on the *semicha* certificate of ordination, was the highest accolade that could come to any student.¹

At the same time that Revel succeeded in bringing Rabbi Soloveitchik to the Yeshiva, he also enhanced the Yeshiva’s biblical faculty with the appointment of Dr. Chaim Heller. Rabbi Heller was a legendary figure in Orthodox circles; in addition to being an accomplished talmudist he was also an outstanding biblical scholar. He published important volumes refuting modern biblical critics and edited various Targumim—Aramaic translations of the Bible. Prior to his arrival at the Yeshiva, Rabbi Heller had organized the Beth Medrash Elyon in Berlin for advanced postgraduate research in Talmud and Bible for select graduates of European yeshivot. After he came here in November 1929 he lectured at the Yeshiva only intermittently during the ensuing years, periodically returning to Berlin. In 1937 he settled permanently in the United States and continued his association with the Yeshiva until his death on April 11, 1960.

In addition to having engaged competent *roshei yeshiva*, Revel also instituted the policy of inviting visiting notable European and Palestinian rabbis to give guest lectures before the Yeshiva students. By so doing he hoped to broaden the knowledge and intellectual perception of the students. These assemblies also inculcated in the student body a feeling of awe and diffidence for the visiting Torah luminaries. The lectures enabled the visiting scholars to acquaint themselves with the high level of study at the Yeshiva. Revel proudly introduced the students to many of the guests by exclaiming: “They are my sons, whom God hath given me here” (Genesis 48:9).

An early guest lecturer was Rabbi Abraham Kahane-Shapiro, the chief rabbi of Kovno, Lithuania, who delivered a *shiur* on December 9, 1920. His visit was described by a Yeshiva student in the December 17 *Yeshiva News*:

The students of the Yeshiva were honored last Thursday by the arrival of Rabbi Shapiro (Kovner Rav) in the Yeshiva. At 11 o'clock, the student body assembled in the synagogue to await the guest. At 11:30, the students rose to formally welcome Rabbi Shapiro as he entered accompanied by Dr. Revel, Rabbis Levinthal, Margolies, Aranowitz and many others. Dr. Revel first mounted the pulpit and introduced the worthy guest. Rabbi Shapiro then spoke about various matters pertaining to Judaism in America. He concluded his address with a learned discourse of the Talmud which was heartily enjoyed by those present. As was expected the *shiur* proved to be very logical in construction and sound in judgment and was classed by all hearers with *Lomdus* [erudition] of the best type.

The great significance of this *shiur*, however, is not only its thoroughness and scholarship. It is supremely significant because it represents the meeting of European scholarship, in the person of Rabbi Shapiro, and the most important Talmudical institution of America.

The year 1924 was a banner one for guest-lecturers at the Yeshiva. That year Rabbi Shapiro returned to the United States, accompanied by Chief Rabbi Abraham Kook of Palestine and Rabbi Moshe Epstein, the dean of the Slobodka Yeshiva. They formed a rabbinical delegation which was sent to aid the American Central Relief Committee's drive for the support of yeshivot in Europe and Palestine. All three scholars lectured at the Yeshiva during their stay in the United States.

Among the other Torah scholars who lectured at the Yeshiva during Revel's incumbency were Rabbi Abraham Bloch, *rosh hayeshiva* of the Telshe Yeshiva; Rabbi Joseph Hurwitz, *rosh hayeshiva* of the Meah Shearim Yeshiva in Jerusalem; Rabbi Joseph Kahaneman, the spiritual leader of Ponevez, Lithuania; Rabbi Aaron Kotler, *rosh hayeshiva* of the Kletzk Yeshiva in Poland; Rabbi Baruch Ber Leibowitz, *rosh hayeshiva* of the Kamenitz Yeshiva in Poland; Rabbi Meir Don Plotski, spiritual

leader of Ostrov, Poland; Rabbi Meir Shapiro, *rosh hayeshiva* of the Chachmei Lublin Yeshiva in Lublin, Poland; Rabbi Isaac Sher, *rosh hayeshiva* of the Slobodka Yeshiva; Rabbi Ben-Zion Meir Chai Uziel, Sephardic chief rabbi of Palestine; and Rabbi Mendel Zaks, *rosh hayeshiva* of the Radin Yeshiva.

Most foreign visitors were impressed with Revel's American accomplishments and the high level of learning in the Yeshiva. They were pleased that the United States now had a yeshiva which compared favorably to the overseas yeshivot. After his lectures Chief Rabbi Kook described the impressions that the Yeshiva made upon him in a statement he wrote for Dr. Revel:

There are about 500 students studying at the Yeshiva, and some of the students are advanced scholars who will soon be ordained. They study the holy Torah by day and by night, under the guidance of learned *Roshei Yeshiva*, some of whom were already well known in Europe. These *Roshei Yeshiva* dedicatedly enhance the atmosphere of Torah at the Yeshiva. Especially influential is the great *Gaon*, a sage among sages, Rabbi Dr. Dov Revel, who is the "heart and soul" of the Holy Yeshiva.

It truly was a great joy for me when I lectured in the Yeshiva, and I was amazed to see that even in this country the Jewish people are not forsaken. Thank God, there is now an institution here in America, from where instruction will go forth to Israel. It will be guidance based upon the true and holy Torah, fear of God, and service of God.

The close relationships that Revel fostered with some of the visiting rabbis was a welcome boon for the Revel family. Many of these world-famous personalities were house guests at the Revel home. Mrs. Revel was afforded an opportunity to discuss music with the Kovner Rav, while young Norman and Hirschel displayed their biblical knowledge to Rabbi Meir Dov of Ostrov. For Dr. Revel it was a precious opportunity to discuss long-standing talmudic problems and contemporary Jewish questions with his visitors.

Revel and the Yeshiva were now far famed, and their achievements were known throughout the Jewish world. When Rabbi Aaron Burack, a *rosh yeshiva* in the Yeshiva, visited the Holy Land in 1926, he wrote to Revel: "All the *Roshei Yeshiva* send

regards to you and to the *Gaon*, Rabbi Solomon Polachek. Yeshivat Rabbi Isaac Elchanan is famous in Palestine as one of the leading Yeshivot in the world.” In 1929 Rabbi Abraham Selmanowitz, a Yeshiva faculty member, visited Palestine. He traveled by way of Paris and Trieste, and described his experiences in a letter to Revel:

Rabbi Herzog [Rabbi Joel Herzog of Paris] told me that he regrets that his son, Rabbi Herzog of Dublin, is not in the Yeshiva. He made me promise that I return by way of Paris, and that I should inform him a few days in advance exactly when I will be in Paris. He will then invite his son to meet me so that his son may know about the great Torah scholars in America. . . . After I arrived in Trieste, they told me that they saw your picture in the Italian newspapers. . . . Saturday morning in the Synagogue, they prayed for the welfare of the Yeshiva, and they explicitly mentioned your name and that of Rabbi Shimon Shkop in the prayer.

Later that summer the Yeshiva was to be sadly united with the other noted Palestinian and European yeshivot. Revel received the tragic news that two of his students, Rabbi William Berman and Benjamin Hurwitz, were among the twenty-five students of the Hebron Yeshiva slain during an Arab massacre on August 24, 1929. Graduates and students from many of the advanced yeshivot went to study in Hebron, Palestine, where the Slobodka Yeshiva conducted a branch under the tutelage of Rabbi Moshe Epstein. After this massacre, the Hebron Yeshiva was transferred to Jerusalem. Rabbi Revel eulogized the loss of the Yeshiva’s students in his October 9 annual report to be Board of Directors:

A new chapter of Jewish martyrdom has recently been written in Palestine. And among those who gave their lives for the glory of God and honor of Israel are two beloved children of the Yeshiva, slain by the hands of the murderous Arabs in August, on the Sabbath day, while studying Torah at the Yeshiva of Hebron, Palestine. The Yeshiva mourns Rabbi William Berman. He came to the Yeshiva from Philadelphia, about twelve years ago, at the age of 12. He graduated from the Yeshiva high school and the College of the City of New York. But his true love was the Torah. He was a devoted child of the Torah, for he learned Torah day by day and night by night, most of the years of his young life. On April 3,

1929, he was ordained by the Yeshiva, and great was his joy and the joy of his parents, whose hope and pride he was. A proud American and an understanding son of his people, with a deep knowledge of the Torah, a charming personality and an eloquent speaker. In his short life he made many sacrifices for the Torah, and it was given to him to make the supreme sacrifice “*al Kiddush Hashem*.” We mourn Benjamin Hurwitz, only son of his parents, a graduate of the Yeshiva high school and the Yeshiva’s Teachers Institute, a noble soul, full of life and sunshine, on leave of absence from the Yeshiva in the Yeshiva of Hebron. He was slain at the age of 19.

Obituaries were published throughout the Jewish world about the martyred students, and graduates of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary were mourned along with graduates of the Telshe, Mir, and Slobodka yeshivot who were also studying in Hebron at the time of the massacre.

Now that Revel and the Yeshiva were so well known, talmudic scholars emigrating to the United States knew that they had an address to turn to when they arrived. In 1929 a young ordained rabbi, Samuel Belkin, arrived in the United States. The young scholar went to visit Rabbi Revel, and as was his custom Revel discussed intricate talmudic problems with his guest. Revel soon discerned that the new arrival was an accomplished talmudic scholar, and he eagerly welcomed him into the Yeshiva. Later that year Rabbi Belkin left to teach Talmud in the recently organized New Haven Rabbinical School, which had been transferred to Cleveland. Subsequently, Belkin pursued secular studies at Harvard and Brown Universities. Revel guided his younger colleague in his new endeavors. In a June 25, 1930, letter, Revel urged the young scholar to continue to devote his main time to an “intensive study of the Talmud and Codes, to which you have given the best years of your life, and in which you have the ability to excel, to become a *Gadol* [leading Torah authority].”

Revel corresponded with Rabbi Belkin during his studies at Brown University, and Belkin appreciated his interest. On August 3, 1934, he wrote to Revel:

I received your letter and the *Horeb* [Yeshiva publication]. I appreciate very much your kindness to remember me and I wish to thank you for it. I realize more and more the great interest you

take in every Yeshiva man and your particular devotion to me. To say the least it is always a great encouragement to hear a word from you.

Belkin informed Revel of his progress. He wrote, "Thank God, I am succeeding in both my secular and sacred studies. . . . I set aside time daily for Talmudic study, and I am writing a considerable amount of *Chidushei Torah* [new interpretations of talmudic and related passages]. Perhaps you have seen the articles I recently published in *HaPardes* [American rabbinical journal]."

After Rabbi Belkin received his Ph.D. from Brown University in 1935, he was appointed instructor of Greek at Yeshiva College. In 1936 Dr. Belkin also became a *rosh yeshiva* in the Yeshiva, and in 1937 he was appointed secretary of the faculty of the newly organized Yeshiva Graduate Department for Semitic Studies. In June 1943 Samuel Belkin was unanimously elected to succeed the late Bernard Revel as the second president of the Yeshiva and Yeshiva College.

In 1932 Revel greeted another young scholar who was destined to become a future leader of American Orthodoxy and the Yeshiva. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, the son of Rabbi Moses Soloveitchik, completed his doctoral studies at the University of Berlin and then came to America to join his father, the Yeshiva's senior *rosh yeshiva*. In his youth the young Soloveitchik had been influenced by his grandfather, Reb Chaim Brisker, and had studied with his father, Reb Moshe. His reputation as a brilliant talmudist spread throughout the Jewish world, and an outstanding future was predicted for him. The well-known Rabbi Kahane-Shapiro of Kovno declared:

The spirit of his illustrious grandfather, the leading rabbi of his time, Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik, rests upon Rabbi Joseph Dov Soloveitchik. Just like his grandfather, he, too, is a master of the entire range of Talmudic literature. . . . Happy is the country that will be privileged to be the home of this great sage. The sages have ordained him to be the true interpreter of all religious problems, and the *Halacha* shall always be in accordance with his rulings.²

While still in Berlin, Soloveitchik wrote to Revel and expressed his wish to aid Orthodoxy in the United States. Revel's achieve-

ments inspired the young Soloveitchik when he wrote on May 12, 1932:

I have heard much praise about you from my father and master, the *Gaon* . . . and everyone knows that you are the leader of the holy work that is being done to raise the banner of Torah and to educate numerous excellent students from all over the western hemisphere. . . . With total self-devotion and self-sacrifice you have built our sanctuary. . . . You have protected it from all difficulties, and you continue to publicly perpetuate the Torah, and to quench the thirst of those who are thirsty for the word of the Lord.

After his arrival in the United States, he informed Revel of his election to a rabbinical position in Boston. Rabbi Soloveitchik wrote: "I have hastened to inform you since I know full well the true friendship you feel towards me and I am confident that this good news will bring you happiness." He remained in close contact with Revel, and in 1936 Revel requested that he deliver a series of lectures on Jewish philosophy at the Yeshiva College. Early in 1940 an agreement was reached between them to conduct the advanced yeshiva which Rabbi Soloveitchik had organized in Boston as a branch of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary. Upon the death of Reb Moshe, Rabbi Soloveitchik succeeded his father as the senior *rosh yeshiva* in 1941.

European scholars who intended to visit the United States also turned to Rabbi Revel for guidance and help. Before Rabbi Baruch Ber Leibowitz left for America in 1928, he wrote to Revel to inform him of his departure and to request his guidance during his stay in America to raise funds for his Yeshiva. When Rabbi Isaac Sher, of the Lithuanian Slobodka Yeshiva, was in America in 1931, he also called upon Revel for advice in organizing an America committee to support the Slobodka Yeshiva. When Rabbi Joseph Kahaneman of Ponevez planned in 1937 to build a dormitory for the yeshiva he headed, he wrote to Revel and requested his aid in designing the dormitory and dining room. Kahaneman stated that he was prepared to send one of his disciples, Yitzchak Schneider, to America to study the Yeshiva's dormitory. However, Kahaneman confessed that he would greatly miss his devoted student, who aided him in discharging his

communal responsibilities. On January 11, 1937, Revel wired Kahaneman: "WILL SUPPLY ALL MATERIAL NECESSARY TO ORGANIZE DORMITORY. IMPERATIVE RABBI SCHNEIDER COME PERSONALLY TO STUDY SAME."

These moments as the *rosh yeshiva* of the Yeshiva he had guided from obscurity on the Lower East Side of New York to worldwide recognition on the heights of upper Manhattan were the happiest of Revel's life. His entire being was devoted to the Yeshiva, and his tasks within it were multitudinous. In addition to delivering his own *shiurim* in *Yoreh Deab* and *Choshen Mishpat* for the advanced students of the Yeshiva, he also examined the students who had completed the course of study for ordination. He orally examined over five hundred students studying in the various Yeshiva classes each semester. He also directed the policies of the Yeshiva College, Talmudical Academy, and the Teachers Institute. Revel counseled his rabbinical graduates and other Jewish leaders and educators. He participated in communal activities, such as the Mizrahi and the Jewish Education Association of New York, when he felt that his participation would strengthen Orthodoxy. During 1929 some of the communal activities he participated in were the installation ceremonies for Rabbi Isaac Siegel of Jersey City, the dedication ceremonies of the new Brooklyn Synagogue of the Young Israel of Flatbush, the convention of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, and the annual banquet for the Rabbi Jacob Joseph School.

He excelled in his love for Torah and its scholars. When Rabbis Margolies or Levinthal entered his office, he instantly rose and embraced them. Revel rejoiced when he was privileged to introduce a visiting Torah scholar who was going to lecture to the student body. He would cite one talmudic saying after another, and would often dramatically conclude his introduction by quoting the biblical sentence "And the priest shall approach and speak unto the people" (Deuteronomy 20:2). He did not hesitate to engage leading scholars for the Yeshiva's faculty, although their presence eclipsed his own Torah image. Instead, he showed the students how to honor these Torah scholars properly.

Upon meeting a new arrival from an overseas yeshiva, Revel would immediately discuss talmudic problems with him. His joy

seemed boundless when he felt that the man was a scholar, and he happily welcomed him to the ranks of Orthodoxy in the United States. Due to his deep respect for Torah scholars, he tried never to offend them. Even when he was at times caustically criticized by some scholars and *roshei yeshiva*, he refused to respond in a similar fashion, and he continued to act toward them with great respect. Two weeks before his death, he completed what was to be his final *shiur*. He suffered another stroke during the *shiur*, but with great willpower managed to complete it. After the *shiur* his son informed him that a rabbi was waiting to see him in the antechamber. His son suggested that the rabbi be asked to return some other time since he wished to take his ailing father home immediately. Rabbi Revel replied: "No, he is a *Talmid Chochem*. Ask him to come in." When the rabbi came in, Revel excused himself for not feeling well and managed to discuss a few concepts of Torah in the subject of *Me'ilah* (trespass on sacred property) with him.

His honesty was a dominant feature of his personality, a trait that let him concede his errors. Rabbi Moshe Reguer, a recent arrival to the United States, applied for a Hebrew teaching position at the Yeshiva. Revel refused to engage him, however, suspecting that the newcomer was not Orthodox. A few years later, when Revel realized that he had been mistaken, he readily hired the teacher and apologized for his past attitude. On another occasion, Rabbi Revel entered a classroom to listen to the *shiur* of Rabbi Samuel Volk, a *rosh yeshiva* he had recently engaged. Volk and Revel entered into debate concerning the exact text of a commentary of the Rashba (Rabbi Solomon ibn Aderet) on a talmudic passage. After he returned to his office, Revel sent for the *rosh yeshiva*. When he entered the office, Revel exclaimed: "You were right in your interpretation, and I was incorrect."

In monetary matters Revel was selfless. Although his contract at the Yeshiva called for a salary of ten thousand dollars a year, he only took four thousand dollars. During the Depression years he accepted only thirty-six hundred dollars and insisted that the remaining four hundred dollars be paid to a *rosh yeshiva* who was, he felt, in greater need of the additional money. After his wife's family lost its wealth, he was content to provide no more than the

barest necessities for his immediate family, since he felt the Yeshiva could not afford to pay him his entire salary. When he did receive unexpected additional money, he immediately used it for a worthwhile Yeshiva project. Upon the death of Meyer Vesell, a member of the Yeshiva's directorate, a sum of money was bequeathed to Revel. He wrote to the late director's son-in-law, Samuel Levy, on January 28, 1936:

When I learned of the kindness of your dear father . . . in remembering me, personally, in his will, there seemed to me no better immediate use for the income than to offer a course in the graduate department of the Yeshiva, in a very vital subject for which there was no provision in the Yeshiva budget. I accordingly appointed Rabbi Samuel Belkin, a graduate of the Yeshiva and Ph.D. of Brown University, a young and thorough scholar, of excellent personality and great promise, as Lecturer in Talmudic and Extra-Rabbinic Halakah, for the current academic year. . . .

I should like very much to link this course, given by a learned and religious scholar, an intensive and devoted student of the Torah, with the name of your dear father, who was a truly understanding and devoted friend of the Torah, its abiding home, the Yeshiva, and a dear friend of my own; and I therefore ask your approval that in his living memory we may call this the Meyer Vesell Lectureship.

When collections were made for worthy charitable causes at the Yeshiva, he would often empty his pockets and contribute all the money he had. He would give needy Yeshiva students weekly stipends from his own funds. On occasion he would greet a student with an outstretched hand and the traditional "Shalom aleichem"; upon taking Revel's hand the student would discover that Revel had pushed a few dollar bills into his hand.

His brilliant mind worked quickly, and at times he was contemptuous of those who did not follow his thinking or did not measure up to his standards. When called to his office, students were apprehensive that Revel might berate them for some academic or religious shortcoming. He once refused to see a father who wished to arrange his son's admission because an older brother had left the Yeshiva to attend the Jewish Theological Seminary.

Revel never developed a sense of sophistication, and he retained

the Yeshiva student's traits of naive honesty and total candor throughout his life. He would often inquire of students whether they possessed a fear of God and whether they were wearing a fringed garment (tzitzith). Although he inspired others with his simple faith and dedication of purpose, he was not a forceful personality. Many times he recoiled from fighting for an idea or innovation because he feared opposition. Owing to his pronounced stutter Revel felt embarrassed when he had to deliver a public address. Nonetheless, once he began, his addresses were successful. They often created a romantic, sentimental, and almost mystical aura. The thoughts expressed in his public addresses were inspiring, and he was a master of the Yiddish phrase. Rabbi Bernard Drachman described his sermons and addresses as "models of exalted and inspiring exhortation."³

He possessed much personal charm and a fine sense of humor. A Brooklyn parent recalled that he went to see Revel to arrange for his son to remain in the dormitory, even though a decision had been made to limit dormitory residence to students outside the New York City area. After refusing the request, Revel inquired about his visitor's occupation. Angrily the father replied that he made a living from the Communists. Immediately, Revel rose and embraced the man, exclaiming: "Our regulations must be waived for a man such as yourself who still chooses to send his son to the Yeshiva to study Torah despite contacts with the Communists."

Revel was an ardent conversationalist, and he would avidly discuss topics ranging from Talmud to some obscure secular subject. Rabbi Leo Jung described how Revel "would join enthusiastically a discussion of the relative merits of Bishop Berkeley and Immanuel Kant," and how he also "had original things to say about the mystic quests of Bradley."⁴ His knowledge of various fields of secular endeavor was the result of his intellectual curiosity and extraordinary memory. Before interviewing an applicant for a secular teaching position at the Yeshiva, he would read up on the teacher's field of specialty. After being interviewed by Revel for a position on the Yeshiva College faculty, Kenneth Damon, a professor of speech, related that Revel had expertly discussed music and literature with him.

Despite these secular interests, Revel remained primarily a diligent Talmud student throughout life, and he utilized spare moments for its study. His desk in his office at the Yeshiva was constantly covered with the talmudic tomes he was studying, and he often contributed scholarly articles to various Torah journals. He never permitted himself to take an extended vacation from the Yeshiva, and while on brief vacations he would devote the greater part of the day to talmudic study. When rebuked by his family for working so hard on vacation, he replied: "This is my vacation."

In appearance, he looked like a typical East European rabbi. In training, he was a modern scholar, the first graduate of Dropsie College. In sentiment, he was a fervent Zionist and Mizrachi member. In principles and standards, he was guided by his vibrant Orthodoxy. Above all, he was a man of singular vision and foresight; he foresaw that it would be possible to build an American yeshiva which would gain the respect of Orthodox Jewry the world over. Although he received his own rabbinical training in the European manner, with no simultaneous secular education, he nevertheless envisioned a "harmonious" course of study, consisting of both sacred and secular subjects, for American yeshiva students. To this vision of an authentic yeshiva in an American context he totally committed his life and destiny.

7



ORTHODOX OPPOSITION

WHEN REVEL FINALLY ACHIEVED his vision of a Yeshiva College, a new era began in the Yeshiva's history. Although organized secular study had existed under the auspices of the Yeshiva since Revel established the Talmudical Academy high school, a bona fide liberal arts college was bound to recast the Yeshiva image. A high school can be conducted in a parochial fashion as an adjunct to a yeshiva, but a college is different; it possesses its own traditional character and outlook. Academic freedom in the pursuit of truth is an essential characteristic of the collegiate environment. A liberal arts curriculum calls for the study of such subjects as Darwin's theory of evolution and Freud's theories of psychoanalysis. These studies did take place at the Yeshiva College, and there was complete academic freedom within its portals. Revel insisted that the college function as a true liberal arts college, and he chose not to institute a controlled academic environment such as existed in Catholic parochial colleges. He was confident that since the Yeshiva students were well grounded in the Jewish classics they would intensify their religious dedication as a result of collegiate challenges.

People of note were given honorary Yeshiva College degrees by Revel. At the second college commencement on June 15, 1933, Governor Herbert Lehman of New York and John Finley, editor of the *New York Times*, were awarded the first honorary doctorates granted by the Yeshiva. On October 8, 1934, at opening ex-

ercises for the academic year, Albert Einstein became an honorary alumnus of the Yeshiva. Before an overflow crowd which filled the Lamport Auditorium, Revel proudly cited the world-famous German emigre for his scientific contributions and human compassion. On conferring the honorary degree of doctor of humane letters on Professor Einstein, Revel declared:

Albert Einstein: Chosen and serene spirit; seer and reinterpreter of the cosmos; lover and beloved of nature and man, voice of the enlightened conscience of striving humanity, and devoted champion of the cause of your people. The cosmos is your sphere of contemplation and your vision penetrates into mankind's higher day. Cosmic understanding, embodied in searching theories, opening new frontiers of knowledge and giving new impetus and direction to man's eternal quest of ultimate unity and reality, cosmic beauty, the majesty and the mighty mystery of measureless space and the music of the myriads of spheres, expressed in art and in the glory of an ideal life; great moral passion and human compassion are harmoniously fused within your being. Humility is the essence of your great spirit. Within your lifetime you have become to all men the symbol of the supremacy and the sanctity of the free human spirit; of man's ever searching, ever unfolding and all embracing mind; of prophetic zeal for justice and peace.

Exiled from your home and the land to which you have brought honor and glory, you have made an abiding place for yourself in the hearts of your fellowmen, and of the generations to come. . . . The generation in which you live is not spiritually orphaned. Infinitely richer are they who have come within the sphere of your comprehending and radiant spirit. Yeshiva College rejoices in welcoming you to its academic fellowship. The Trustees and Faculty of Yeshiva College have delegated to me the deep satisfaction of conferring upon you, master and servant of humanity, the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, and to place upon your shoulders our academic symbol of our deep affection and high regard.

After the ceremonies Einstein whispered to Revel: "You have said about me that which you wish me to be rather than that which I am."

The granting of degrees to famous Jews such as Lehman and Einstein was also an innovation for the Yeshiva because neither

one was Orthodox. Einstein did not practice any form of the Jewish religion, Lehman followed the teachings of New York's Reform Temple Emanu-El. There was some Orthodox opposition to Revel's judgment in this matter. Dr. Nathan Isaacs totally disagreed with the granting of the honorary degree of doctor of humane letters to non-Orthodox Jews. On October 3, 1934, he wrote to Revel:

Once more I regret that I cannot see eye-to-eye with you in this matter of honorary degrees. They don't mean much at best; but at worst they are a declaration to the student body that success in politics, business or science will win the approval of their *alma mater*, even if they disregard the Judaism that she has taught them. The unfortunate implication is made more pointed, rather than less, where the degree is not clearly a scientific one, but rather one that puts your stamp of approval on a man's personal and moral traits.

Another innovation created by the new collegiate atmosphere at the Yeshiva was the introduction of intercollegiate sports. The image of a talmudical student clad in shorts, driving for a basket, was strikingly new for both Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews. An editorial in Boston's *Jewish Advocate* in 1934 greeted the appearance of intercollegiate athletics at Yeshiva College:

"Rabbi Cohen intercepted a pass from Ziffkovich." "Rabbi Greenberg raced 80 yards to a touchdown." "Rabbi Selkowitz kicked three field goals." Headlines such as these may soon be seen on the sporting pages as the result of the decision of Yeshiva College, America's only Jewish College of liberal arts and sciences, to go in for intercollegiate athletics. As a beginning, Yeshiva College has organized a basketball team. . . . Next spring, it is planned to have baseball and track teams, and ultimately a football team.

. . . We look forward eagerly to sitting in the rooting section of the Yankee stadium to cheer on the first Yeshiva College football team. Rah, rah, Yeshiva!

In September 1932 the college published its first scholarly publication, *Scripta Mathematica*, edited by Jekuthiel Ginsburg. This publication, which later appeared quarterly, was devoted to the philosophy, history, and expository treatment of mathematics. Among the articles in the first volume were "Thomas Jefferson

and Mathematics” by David Eugene Smith; “The Ancient Peruvian Abacus” by L. Leland Locks; and “A German-American Algebra of 1837” by Lao Genevra Simons.

These new aspects of Yeshiva’s image were radical changes for many of its supporters. The great majority of American Orthodox Jews did not possess advanced secular training. The Orthodox rabbinate was composed primarily of European-trained men who had not received a secular education. Many of those who had attended European gymnasiums still opposed the Yeshiva’s collegiate atmosphere. They wanted the Yeshiva to be an ideal Torah center, and they resisted changes in the Yeshiva environment which they felt detracted from the centrality of Torah. The Board of Eleven spent many an evening discussing the anticipated innovations in advance of the opening of the college. Two resolutions which the board finally approved as policy for the Yeshiva were drafted by Revel, with the consent of Rabbis Margolies and Levinthal. One resolution declared “that the Yeshiva College shall be administered in the spirit of the Yeshiva proper.” It was also resolved “that all sciences and secular subjects in the High School and College shall not be taught as a deviation from or negation of the Torah viewpoint, except that they may be taught as theories only.”¹

Despite Revel’s good intentions and the plans of the Board of Eleven, the development of the Yeshiva College called forth harsh criticisms of its ideals and its founder. Ever since the formation of the high school, reorganization of the Yeshiva, and the addition of the Teachers Institute, there were lingering criticisms of some of Revel’s actions. A few of the directors were constantly suspicious of Revel and often questioned his commitment to the European Orthodoxy of their youth. They heard rumors about his Bundist involvements, and they knew that his doctoral dissertation concerned Karaite and Sadducean Law. They were anxious to protest whenever they felt that Revel’s actions were contrary to their concepts of Orthodoxy. In 1926 Dr. Revel invited Samuel Krauss of Vienna to lecture on Jewish history. Professor Krauss, who enjoyed a worldwide reputation in the field of Semitic philology and Jewish history, was associated with the Jewish Theological Seminary of Vienna. Although Krauss was

himself completely observant, vehement criticisms were voiced against him by those who questioned his Orthodoxy because his published writings were in the spirit of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (scientific Jewish scholarship). Harry Altschul caused an uproar at a meeting of the directorate with his determined opposition to the invitation to Krauss. Finally, to avoid protracted controversy, Revel canceled his invitation, even though the Yeshiva had already publicized Krauss's coming.

In July 1928, right before the opening of the college, Revel received a letter from an organization called the Union of Jewish Laymen of Greater New York for the Advancement of Jewish Law, which criticized the Yeshiva's library for shelving the books of "nonbelievers":

To our ears has come the bad tidings that in the library of the Holy Yeshiva are to be found books of non-believers, in addition to the holy books. It is difficult for us to hear such reports, and we thought that perhaps the heads of the Yeshiva didn't know about this. Therefore, we are bringing it to their attention. . . . We request that you answer this letter so that we may be able to quiet those who murmur against the Yeshiva.

In October 1932 a statement declaring that the Yeshiva was a "nest of atheism" was distributed in Orthodox congregations throughout the eastern seaboard. Rabbi Judah Forer of Holyoke, Massachusetts, sent Revel a copy of a placard which read:

We Jews of New York discovered that in the Yeshiva Rabbi Isaac Elchanan . . . there is a nest of atheism and Apikursus [denial of God]. Therefore we do warn and announce, that you should not send your children or the children of your acquaintances into this Yeshiva until you will find out what is going on in the Yeshiva, who is responsible for the terrible situation, and how it is to be remedied.

Rabbi Forer also informed Revel that he had validated its accusations, for he "showed the statement to a layman from New York, whom I know to be honest and trustworthy, and who possesses fear of God . . . and he told me that the placard is true. It may be that this isn't actually happening in the Yeshiva proper, but in the Teachers Institute the instructors teach Biblical criticism, with all the atheism that is inherent in this study."

Previously, at a meeting of the executive committee of the Rabbinical Board of Greater New York on January 12, 1932, rabbis and laymen complained that the Yeshiva was constantly shortening the hours of sacred study and increasing the time devoted to collegiate studies. The executive committee wrote to Revel to insist that he “return the crown of Torah to its previous pedestal, and not to take away even a minute from the time that has always been devoted to sacred study. He should also try to influence the students with the spirit of Torah and tradition so that they will always elevate sacred study above secular study.”

Opposition to Revel’s policies was voiced not only outside the Yeshiva, but also within the Yeshiva’s own faculty, where there was also a constant murmur of criticism. With the exception of Rabbi Revel and Gerstenfeld, the *roshei yeshiva* had not attended college, and the collegiate spirit was new to them. In addition, opposition to the Teachers Institute curriculum persisted because it continued to stress Bible and Hebrew and did not allow for the Yeshiva method of analytical talmudic study.

These problems were further compounded by the deplorable financial status of the Yeshiva during the Depression years. There was the constant suspicion that the Teachers Institute and Yeshiva College were financed with money that otherwise would have gone to the Yeshiva proper. The *roshei yeshiva* united to form the *Moetzet Roshei Yeshiva*, and they kept Rabbi Revel informed of their grievances. In response to the complaint of the *roshei yeshiva* that the Yeshiva’s money was being diverted to the Teachers Institute and Yeshiva College, Revel wrote:

Even before we annexed the Teachers Institute, we had Hebrew classes in the Yeshiva. . . . The teachers that now teach in the Teachers Institute are almost all the same teachers who taught at that time and were paid by the Yeshiva. The truth is that only about \$5,000 has been added to the budget since we accepted the Teachers Institute. If we subtract the \$2,000 received in tuition from the students in the Institute, we only have an addition of \$3,000. I wonder if there aren’t people in America who contribute to the Yeshiva solely because they know that we also conduct an institute for the training of teachers. I am sure that we receive at least ten times as much money a year in contributions as we spend on the Institute.

As far as the College is concerned, I have faithfully fulfilled the promise I made to you two years ago to separate the budget of the college from the budget of the Yeshiva. . . .

I want you to know that I am the only one that demands each time that part of the income of the College be diverted to the Yeshiva. For instance, we are now preparing for the banquet from which the entire income should go to the College. Nevertheless, I am arranging that the income should be divided equally between the College and the Yeshiva. I also want you to know that even though the College doesn't add a penny to the Yeshiva's budget, it aids greatly in collecting funds for the Yeshiva. [More people donated to the Yeshiva, knowing that it also administered a secular arts college.]

Revel concluded his letter by sarcastically informing the *roshei yeshiva* that "it would be a lot easier to raise money for the Yeshiva if they wouldn't criticize it so often."²

On another occasion, the twenty-first day of Adar, the anniversary of Rabbi Isaac Elchanan's death, the *Moetzet Roshei Yeshiva* complained to Revel that students were forced to cease their talmudic study in the bet hamidrash so that a secular assembly could be held. They informed him of

the disgrace of Torah that took place today in the *Bet Medrash* Study Hall when students studying the Torah were asked to leave so that a secular assembly could take place. Such an insult to Torah has never been seen in any Yeshiva. . . . Even if we wanted to forget about this event, we can't, as these recurrent happenings ruin the true spirit of Torah that we are trying to inculcate within the student body. Therefore, we have turned to you because you have the power to correct these occurrences.³

On June 20, 1939, the day of college graduation, Revel was already dressed in his collegiate gown when he received a letter signed by the *Moetzet Roshei Yeshiva* castigating articles published in *Horeb* as contrary to the Jewish tradition. *Horeb* had been published by the Teachers Institute since March 1934 and was edited by the institute's principal, Dr. Pinkhos Churgin. The letter was particularly critical of an article by Dr. Solomon Zeitlin, entitled "HaPerushim" (The Pharisees), which appeared in the March 1939 issue. It demanded that Revel stop the circulation of this

copy of *Horeb*. Revel was deeply disturbed by this letter, since Rabbi Moses Soloveitchik had previously informed him of his intense anger at Zeitlin's article. Rabbi Revel feared that Reb Moshe would lead a public protest against *Horeb*, as this letter threatened:

We are surprised that you, as the person responsible for all the activities of the Yeshiva, permit the publication of articles which are completely against traditional Judaism as expounded in the oral tradition by our sages. Whoever possesses the true Jewish spirit is completely appalled by these articles which deny all that is holy. These articles also embarrass the true Torah standard-bearers within the Yeshiva, since people murmur against the *Roshei Yeshiva* who witness their publication and do not protest. These disgraceful articles have already caused a desecration of God's name and have defamed the Yeshiva's reputation. In the latest issue of *Horeb*, there is an article by Dr. Zeitlin which is replete with denials of the oral tradition. Therefore, the *Moetzet Roshei Yeshiva* demands that you recall this volume of *Horeb*, and discontinue its distribution. If not, the *moetzet* will be obligated to undertake a public protest against the *Horeb*.

Some of the criticisms of Revel were justified. These problems were the natural results of the attempt to conduct a liberal arts college in close proximity with the Yeshiva. It was to be expected that time would have to elapse before a proper *modus vivendi* could be established between the college and the Yeshiva. Other criticisms came about because of lack of understanding or purposeful negation of Revel's ideals, goals, and *Weltanschauung*. These criticisms grieved Revel, for they came from the very Orthodox Jews for whom he was toiling so dedicatedly "for the little light the Yeshiva is trying to bring to some corners of Jewish life, to drive away the spiritual darkness of Egypt."⁴

These censures of Yeshiva policy also led to many acrimonious situations between Revel and the leading members of the *Agudat Harabanim*. The Yeshiva had enjoyed the rabbinical organization's support ever since it was formed in 1902. Revel was befriended and guided by its leaders after his arrival in the United States. They were essentially responsible for the merger of the Yeshivat Etz Chaim and the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary,

and they brought Rabbi Revel to the reorganized Yeshiva. Revel was active in the organization and served as a member of its presidium or as honorary president from 1924 on. His closest friends were among the heads of the *Agudat Harabanim*, and he greatly respected the prominent talmudists associated with the group. It pained Revel greatly when the Yeshiva was criticized by his friends and colleagues. It also caused him much financial anguish, since a substantial percentage of the Yeshiva's budget was raised through appeals made by *Agudat Harabanim* members in their synagogues. For this financial support, he needed their goodwill and cheerful consent.

The *Agudat Harabanim* considered itself the "spiritual guardian" of the Yeshiva.⁵ Until the demise of Rabbi Margolies in 1936, rabbinical ordination was given jointly by the Yeshiva and the *Agudat Harabanim*. At first Rabbis Moses Margolies, Hillel Klein, and Shalom Jaffe represented the *Agudat Harabanim* on the joint ordination board. After the death of his colleagues, Rabbi Margolies alone joined with the Yeshiva representatives in ordaining the graduates. The Yeshiva was represented by rabbis who were also members of the *Agudat Harabanim*. Rabbis Revel, Aranowitz, and Polachek were the Yeshiva's members on the board. Later Rabbi Moses Soloveitchik succeeded the deceased Rabbi Polachek.

To safeguard its interests in the Yeshiva, the *Agudat Harabanim* appointed a Rabbinical Advisory Board which was instructed to aid Rabbi Revel in administering the Yeshiva. Prominent European-trained talmudic scholars served on this board, which functioned from the late 1920s until its dissolution during the early 1940s. Its members included Rabbis Chaim Bloch of Jersey City, Chaim Epstein of Saint Louis, Joseph Konvitz of Newark, Bernard Levinthal of Philadelphia, Moses Margolies of New York, Joseph Rosen of Passaic, Israel Rosenberg of New York, Isaac Siegel of Jersey City, Eliezer Silver of Cincinnati, and Moses Sivitz of Pittsburgh. Jointly representing the Yeshiva and the *Agudat Harabanim* on this board were Rabbis Revel, Aranowitz, Polachek, and later Moses Soloveitchik.

These rabbis delineated the course of study for ordination, and their approval was required before a graduate was ordained. In

1929 they refused to permit the ordination of a graduate until his synagogue installed the required partition between men and women. In 1931, when rabbinical graduates of the Yeshiva requested that Revel institute a postgraduate program of study leading to the more advanced *yodin-yodin* rabbinical ordination, he referred the question to the Rabbinical Advisory Board. The customary rabbinical *yoreh-yoreh* ordination was granted for proficiency in the ritual laws of *Shulchan Aruch: Yoreh Deab*. The Rabbinical Advisory Board planned a curriculum for the *yodin-yodin* ordination which stressed the civil and pecuniary laws of the *Shulchan Aruch: Choshen Mishpat*.

The Yeshiva campaign for five million dollars was enthusiastically supported by the rabbinic organization. To most *Agudat Harabanim* members it was primarily a drive to obtain a new location and to construct adequate buildings for the constantly growing school. The collegiate concept did not truly become a reality until the final stages of the drive. As late as 1926 even Rabbi Levinthal, who was Revel's supporter, seemed "to have no faith in the general Jewish College about which Revel has been talking."

As Revel's plans materialized and the opening of the college became imminent, the *Agudat Harabanim* demanded that it be granted official representation on the Yeshiva's Board of Directors so that it could help guide the expansion of the Yeshiva. This request was to be repeated again during the ensuing years, but the Yeshiva's directorate did not acquiesce to these demands. Although there were rabbinic leaders such as Levinthal, Margolies, and Sivitz who understood and devotedly defended Revel's innovations, the prevalent attitude of the *Agudat Harabanim* was that the problems of the Yeshiva multiplied while it expanded. It therefore needed the guidance of the *Agudat Harabanim* as it entered upon new areas of endeavor. Revel was often rebuked for not consulting the rabbinical organization before he made policy decisions for the Yeshiva. On January 17, 1937, Revel received an official letter from the *Agudat Harabanim*. The letter, which was signed by its president, Rabbi Joseph Konvitz, and its secretary, Rabbi Judah Seltzer, and to which the legal seal of the organization was affixed, harshly reprimanded Revel

for making changes in the Yeshiva on your own initiative, although our Sages already admonished us, “Do not judge alone” [Aboth, 4: 10], since an individual can often be mistaken. One error will lead to another, and there will be no second person to correct the initial error. Therefore, we request for the glory of the Torah and the Yeshiva, in which we all have a share, that you be joined by several of the leading rabbis of the Yeshiva and the *Agudat Harabanim* in bearing the sacred responsibilities of the Yeshiva. We all wish to see the Yeshiva take its rightful place on the contemporary scene, and we want it to be conducted in the eternal spirit of Israel and the authentic rabbinate.

We are certain that by doing this, the spiritual and material needs of the Yeshiva will be met, and your own reputation will be enhanced. The Yeshiva will then be a true center of Torah and fear of God, and the joy of the land.

Throughout this period the *Agudat Harabanim* carefully scrutinized Rabbi Revel and the continually expanding Yeshiva. Its members made their feelings known to him when they were not pleased with specific situations. When it was announced in 1929 that Revel would attend the installation of a Yeshiva rabbi in a synagogue which the *Agudat Harabanim* felt did not have a sufficiently large partition separating the men and the women, he was exhorted not to attend. Rabbi Eliezer Silver, then the president of the *Agudat Harabanim*, wrote “that we are certain that you will not enter such a synagogue which is constructed in a fashion which transgresses a basic law of orthodoxy.”⁶ Later that year a vociferous debate broke out at an executive committee meeting of the *Agudat Harabanim* concerning the gentile help engaged by the recently opened Yeshiva cafeteria. Although Jewish Law required only that the actual cooking be done by Jews, many rabbis felt that it was not proper for a yeshiva cafeteria to be staffed almost exclusively by Gentiles.⁷ Some of the *Agudat Harabanim* leaders declared that they would not dine in the cafeteria and voted against holding a luncheon session at the new Yeshiva building. Rabbi Eliezer Silver wrote to Revel and advised him to hire Jewish employees for the cafeteria. “If the *Agudath Harabanim* feels that the cafeteria situation is not proper, then the Yeshiva students may not eat there either.” Silver felt that Revel should correct this relatively simple problem because the Yeshiva

already had ample difficulty in defending itself against those who opposed the nascent Yeshiva College. The letter concluded with the ominous warning that the midyear conference of the organization was rapidly approaching, “and who can guarantee that this issue will not be publicly raised before all the assembled rabbinical leaders?”⁸

The octocentennial of Maimonides’ birth was celebrated in 1935. Much publicity heralded the formation of a national committee to celebrate this anniversary. A large number of educational and religious organizations such as the New York Public Library, the Library of Congress, Harvard University, Dropsie College, and the Jewish Theological Seminary joined this national committee. Revel did not permit the Yeshiva to join the committee, but he did plan for the Yeshiva to celebrate this event on its own. Nevertheless, many misinterpreted the press releases and concluded that the Yeshiva also was joining the national committee. Revel was caustically criticized for joining with the non-Orthodox elements to honor the memory of the sage. Once again Silver informed Revel of the dissatisfaction of many *Agudat Harabanim* members that the press had linked his name together with the heads of the Jewish Theological Seminary and the Hebrew Union College. In response, Revel wrote to Silver on January 2, 1935:

I have been informed that you intend to issue a letter of protest against me because I have permitted the Yeshiva to participate in the Maimonides Anniversary Committee. I am surprised that you did not contact me to ascertain the true facts of this situation. Certainly, as a friend who has known me for 27 years, you should have fulfilled the Biblical charge of privately rebuking your neighbor, before issuing a public protest.

The truth is that no one from the Yeshiva attended the organizational conference, and that the Yeshiva intends, please God, to commemorate the Octocentennial on its own. We hope to inaugurate our celebrations of this anniversary at the forthcoming rabbinical commencement ceremonies on the twenty-first of Adar. We intend to invite you to be the principal speaker at this affair since you are always the leading spokesman for Orthodoxy.

The tensions between Revel and the *Agudat Harabanim* were intensified during the Depression years, when the Yeshiva languished for money. In late 1930 Revel had to partially rescind the

financial support which the Yeshiva granted to needy students, and bitter protests were issued by the *Agudat Harabanim*. Rabbi Silver explained his organization's viewpoint in a November 9, 1930, letter. The European rabbis felt that a basic characteristic of a Yeshiva was that it "provides for the material needs of its students, in addition to paying the salaries of the teachers." A yeshiva is not a secular college, "but the rescinding of financial aid to the students indicates that the Yeshiva is acting like a college in its relationship with its students." On November 20 Revel received a telegram which stated that the *Agudat Harabanim* "CONVENTION PASSED RESOLUTION FOR A CAMPAIGN TO HELP THE YESHIVA, BUT ONLY AFTER THE STUDENTS WILL BE ATTENDED FIRST."

In September 1932, after the Yeshiva College had celebrated its first graduation in June, the *Agudat Harabanim* unsuccessfully advised Revel not to reopen the college for the academic year of 1932–1933. Instead, the school would benefit from the reduction of expenses, and Revel could concentrate all his energies on solving the financial plight of the Yeshiva proper.

Enmity toward the Yeshiva was further increased by the fact that Orthodox ideals vastly different from those of the Yeshiva were starting to germinate in America at this time. The Yeshiva could no longer claim to be the only advanced American yeshiva, although it was the largest and most important. Revel's course of action was no longer the only alternative for American Orthodoxy, and a rabbi who did not comprehend or approve of Revel's innovations could now support another American Torah institution. The elementary yeshiva Torah Vodaath had been organized in 1917 in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. In 1921 Reb Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz became its principal. Characterized as a "gaon in *neshamah*," a genius of the soul and the spirit, he was a dynamic, charismatic leader. Educated in Hungarian yeshivot, he possessed the intense fervor of a Chasid and infused Torah Vodaath with a spirit of total dedication to Torah. Under his guidance an advanced yeshiva, Mesifita Torah Vodaath, was opened in 1926. A secular high school education was provided by the Mesifita in accordance with New York State school regulations, which required formal secular education until the age of fifteen. Nevertheless, the main stress in the Mesifita was placed on the

religious studies. Many high school graduates continued their studies in the Mesifta and did not attend college. American youngsters gathered around “Mr.” Mendlowitz, as he insisted on being addressed, and they formed the nucleus of the Torah Vodaath pioneers. His student Alexander Gross was later to eulogize his *rebbe* (teacher):

Although not all of us were privileged to attend all of your many classes and lectures—where you inspired hundreds of pupils with your brilliant thoughts on Yiddishkeit—we were, nevertheless, greatly influenced by your very presence in the Mesifta. We had looked forward to those classes, because there you shaped the complexion of the Mesifta talmid [student]; and there you imparted to your pupils a clear-cut, uncompromising philosophy of life. . . .

Your behavior and simple attire were things which we always admired. We always looked upon you as our General, even though you were garbed in the tunic of a private. It was somewhat “un-general-like” to address you as “Mr.,” when, by virtue of your scholarship and greatness, you assuredly deserved a higher rank. But it is this unusual humility which lives on; which still characterizes the Mesifta talmid and permeates the very walls of our Mesifta.⁹

Rabbi David Leibowitz, a graduate of the Radin and Slobodka yeshivot, was the first leading *rosh yeshiva* to be engaged by the Mesifta. In 1933 Rabbi Leibowitz left to organize the Rabbinical Seminary of America, later renamed Yeshiva Rabbi Israel Meyer HaCohen in memory of the Radin sage. He planned to conduct his new school in the spirit of the European Slobodka Yeshiva, where *roshei yeshiva* preached on religious, ethical themes in addition to their talmudic lectures. At the Mesifta Torah Vodaath, he was succeeded by Rabbi Shlomo Heiman, a beloved disciple of Rabbi Baruch Ber Leibowitz, as the senior *rosh yeshiva*. Rabbis Leibowitz and Heiman aided Mendlowitz in developing the unique Mesifta Torah spirit. Many members of the *Agudat Harabanim* felt fully at home within the portals of the Mesifta. They therefore felt justified in criticizing Rabbi Revel and the Yeshiva when they did not measure up to their standards or concepts.

The Mesifta continued the tradition of the Lithuanian yeshivot in discouraging college-level secular study. The great yeshiva of



Mendel Gottesman



Rabbi Chaim Heller, 1929



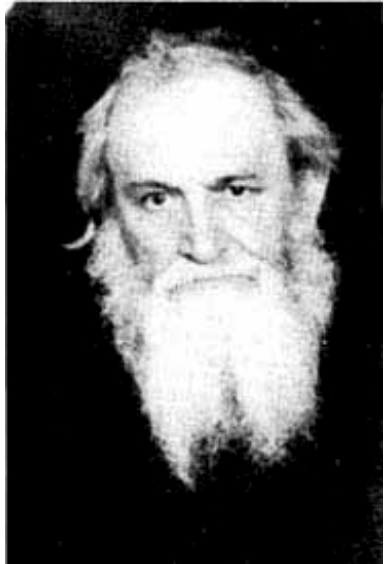
Harry Fischel

Rabbi Moses S. Margolies



Rabbi Bernard Levinthal

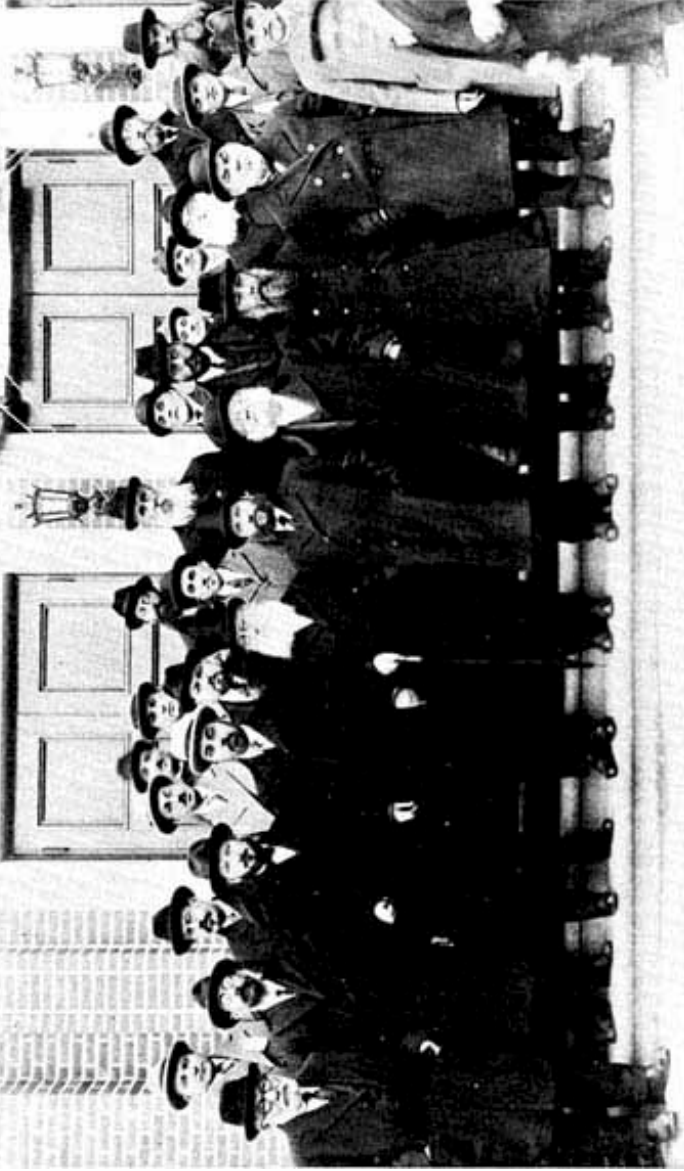
Rabbi Moses Soloveitchik



Rabbi Solomon Polachek



Refugee professors, 1939 (1. to r.): Prof. Heinrich Von Neumann, Rabbi Revel, Prof. Aaron Freimann, Prof. Morris Werner, and Prof. Bruno Kisch



Installation of Rabbi Eliezer Silver in Springfield, Massachusetts, 1925; *front row* (1. to r.): unidentified, Rabbis Moses Poleyeff, Bernard Revel, Israel Rosenberg, Moses Margolies, Eliezer Silver, Bernard Levinthal, Sheftel Kramer, Baruch Epstein; between Rosenberg and Margolies is Rabbi Meyer Berlin; in the back row, at extreme right, is Rabbi Solomon Polachek

Volozhin closed its doors on January 22, 1892, rather than comply with a Russian governmental decree that it institute three hours daily instruction in secular studies. Rabbi Israel Salanter refused to visit the Kelm Yeshiva of his beloved disciple, Rabbi Simcha Zissel Ziff, feeling that this would be interpreted as fully approving its curriculum, which included secular study. The responsum of Rabbi Baruch Ber Leibowitz concerning advanced secular study was well known throughout the yeshiva world. “Reb Baruch Ber” was asked by a German rabbi if it was proper to continue Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch’s traditions of encouraging secular study in addition to sacred study or whether a parent should only teach his child Torah. Reb Baruch Ber responded that it was prohibited to send children to gymnasiums and universities, and that Rabbi Hirsch had only permitted it as an “emergency ruling” for his generation. Rabbi Leibowitz felt that advanced secular education was forbidden, since it generally required the student to study from textbooks written by nonbelievers. In addition, it took excessive time away from the study of Torah.

Rabbi Leibowitz explained that it is not simply incumbent upon a father to teach his son portions of the Torah and Talmud, but that the father is obligated to arrange that his son become acquainted with as much of the written and oral traditions as the son can comprehend. The precept of studying Torah was not commanded solely so that the child would be religious because of his knowledge; the actual study itself is a meritorious deed. This precept requires that the child master as much of the Torah as possible, and Torah study is therefore a full-time task. It does not allow time for attending gymnasiums and universities.¹⁰

Another responsum from this period was written in 1934 by Rabbi Abraham Yitzchak Bloch, chief rabbi and *rosh yeshiva* of Telshe. Although more favorably disposed toward secular study than Rabbi Leibowitz, Rabbi Bloch’s responsum also clearly negated the liberal arts college curriculum:

As regards purely scientific studies . . . they should not be forbidden. . . .

Of course, it is not permissible to detract from Torah study and to designate formal hours for their study. However, it is possible

to learn the fundamentals of these sciences at an early age, before the time when students must completely devote themselves to Talmudic study. Our sages declare that “at fifteen for the study of Talmud,” for then it is necessary to devote all one’s time to Talmud. At that age, scientific studies may only be pursued occasionally, at a time when one must rest from Talmudic studies.

It is inappropriate to waste time on literature and other popular subjects which have no practical value. . . . These subjects are all the more prohibited since secular literature often consists of stories of lust and other forbidden matters.¹¹

A responsum which particularly disturbed Revel was written by Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman, *rosh hayeshiva* of the Yeshiva Ohel Torah in Baranowitz (Baranowicze), then Poland, and a famed disciple of the Chofetz Chaim. For months Revel heard that “Rav Elchanan” had penned a responsum to the Mesiftha’s Mendlowitz, in which he castigated the Yeshiva College and praised the Mesiftha’s outlook. Finally, Revel obtained a copy of it, which read:

There is the mistaken notion in your country that just as Torah must be studied intently for “its own sake” [*Torah lishmah*], so must secular study be studied “for its own sake,” even if these studies are not needed in order to earn a livelihood. The proof that this is true is that they encourage advanced secular study for their rabbis, and it is not the state that requires that each rabbi should possess a Ph.D. degree. According to the Torah viewpoint it is just the opposite. Torah study must be for “its own sake,” but secular study is only permitted when it is required for selfish reasons such as being able to earn a living.

The result of this tragic error in equating secular study to sacred study has been that students for the rabbinate . . . have to attend college. When will they have the time to become proficient in Torah study? . . . The Torah mourns because they have placed its adversary under the same, roof with it, in order that it should decay the Torah.

Today . . . a new spirit seems to be awakening in your land that wishes to see a return to the path that our parents have always walked upon. The first reform you should institute is that regarding rabbis. . . . Instead of insisting that they should attend universities, you should insist that they shouldn’t attend. They should be praised for their proficiency in Torah and their high level of

fear of God, and proficiency in secular knowledge should not be praised. . . .

You are correct in that which you wrote to me that some of the earlier authorities did encourage the study of philosophy so that man will believe in God out of philosophic commitment in addition to his faith. . . . This, however, has no relevancy for us today, as even those who permit it only do so when no lessening of a man's faith will result, and the person is already well-versed in Torah. . . . But for insignificant people such as ourselves, for whom the danger is great that we will be misled . . . they never permitted secular study. They only permitted it for the chosen few, who are not to be found at all in our generation.¹²

The antagonism toward Revel and his American innovations was further intensified by some of the European *roshei yeshiva* during their visits to the United States. Rabbi Aaron Kotler, *rosh bayeshiva* of the Slutzker Yeshiva in Kletzk, Poland, refused the first requests of Rabbi Revel that he deliver a guest *shiur* when he visited America in 1935. Revel finally sent Rabbi Moses Poleyeff of the Yeshiva's faculty, a graduate of the Slutzker Yeshiva, to induce "Rav Aharon" to lecture at the Yeshiva. Rabbi Poleyeff insisted that the Yeshiva's students were truly pious and desirous of listening to his lecture. In the midst of their discussion, Rabbi Joseph Henkin, the executive director of New York's Ezrat Torah Fund, entered the room. Himself a Slutzker graduate, Rabbi Henkin declared that Rabbi Kotler should acquiesce to Revel's request. Only then did Rav Aharon consent, and he later lectured at the Yeshiva.

When Rabbi Wasserman visited America in 1938, he refused to lecture at the Yeshiva and gave all his support to Mesifita Torah Vodaath. Even though Revel sent the Yeshiva's highly respected and competent student Rabbi Chaim Zimmerman to escort Rav Elchanan to the Yeshiva, he refused to come. Sar informed Revel of the negative impressions of the Yeshiva that Rabbi Wasserman imparted to Hirsch Manischewitz, proprietor of the B. Manischewitz Kosher Food Company. Sar wrote:

Mr. Manischewitz related to me that Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman, in the presence of twenty-five people, declared that the Yeshiva is a center of *apikursus* and *shmad* [conversion away from Judaism] since the writings of Leopold Zunz, Abraham Geiger, and Isaac

Hirsch Weiss are studied in the Yeshiva. These men attempted to completely uproot traditional Judaism.

Mr. Manischewitz asked him two questions:

(1) Did Rabbi Wasserman discuss these charges with the heads of the Yeshiva?

To this inquiry, Rabbi Wasserman replied in the negative.

(2) May he inform the Yeshiva of these complaints?

Rabbi Wasserman replied that if the Yeshiva situation could be improved then Mr. Manischewitz was at liberty to quote his criticisms.¹³

A vexing student problem developed in the expanded Yeshiva which greatly contributed to these criticisms of Revel. Because of the fine secular studies program which Revel developed for the Yeshiva, irreligious parents also sent their children to the school. They felt that the religious studies would broaden their children's knowledge and that they would also receive a good secular education. This was especially true of the Teachers Institute, where some parents sent their children solely for the Hebrew education rather than for a religious education. Some of these students did not become completely Orthodox while at the Yeshiva. There were also some students from Orthodox homes who were being sent to the Yeshiva against their will, and these students also did not observe all the traditional laws while at the Yeshiva. This problem troubled Revel, and any student who openly defied the standards of the Yeshiva, and who seemed to Revel unlikely to develop into an Orthodox Jew, was expelled from the Yeshiva. Revel's actions did not, however, lessen the criticisms directed against the Yeshiva's tolerating non-Orthodox students.

Another factor which complicated Revel's relationship with the *Agudat Harabanim* was that with the increasing number of Yeshiva rabbinical graduates entering the rabbinate, there gradually developed a professional rivalry between the older Yiddish-speaking rabbi and the younger American rabbi. Instances of conflict between these rabbis in various sections of the United States added to the demands by *Agudat Harabanim* members for tighter controls on the Yeshiva.

These difficulties with his friends and colleagues deeply pained

Revel, for the Yeshiva represented the fulfillment of his visions and ideals. The strictures of world-famous Torah authorities such as Rabbi Wasserman caused him endless anguish and worry. “If only they understood the American scene,” Revel declared, “they could then properly evaluate our accomplishments.” Throughout his life he strove to attend all conventions of the *Agudat Harabanim*, for he wanted to defend his Yeshiva when it was criticized. He also felt that these public rebukes would be milder if he were present. He was aided by Rabbi Aaron Burack, a *rosh yeshiva* at the Yeshiva and a vice-president of the *Agudat Harabanim*, in constantly justifying and explaining the policies of the Yeshiva at *Agudat Harabanim* sessions.

Even in the final weeks of his life, when he was seriously ill, he insisted on attending the *Agudat Harabanim* convention so that he could protect his beloved Yeshiva. On November 12, 1940, he chaired the third session of the convention, which was devoted to education. When the *Agudat Harabanim* learned of his stroke during the ensuing week, its leaders sent a telegram with “THEIR HEARTFELT WISHES FOR REFUAH SHLEIMAH [complete recovery]. WE HOPE YOU WILL BE WITH US SOON IN OUR SACRED WORK FOR TORAH.”

8

THE QUESTS OF AMERICAN
ORTHODOXY

A RAPIDLY CHANGING American Jewish community greeted the rabbinical graduates of the Yeshiva which Revel had reorganized. The religious outlook and social structure of the communities they were called upon to serve were becoming Americanized. The mass immigration of Orthodox East European Jews came to an end in 1924, as a result of the congressional acts of 1921 and 1924 restricting immigration. Under the Immigration Act of 1924 and presidential proclamations issued thereunder, quotas were distributed on the basis of the national origin of the population of the United States in 1920. This quota system effectively barred any further mass influx from southern and eastern Europe.

The Jews who already were in the United States gradually began leaving what has been termed “the area of first settlement” (slums) and moving into “the areas of second settlement” (middle-class apartment houses or two-family houses) and “third settlement” (expensive apartment-house areas or suburban developments of single-family houses). A new American-born generation was growing up, and its religious needs were not being met by the Yiddish-speaking rabbi, whose secular education was inferior to its own. The classic Reform position, which abrogated almost all the rituals, was waning, and Conservative Judaism was mushrooming.

In accordance with the goals initially set by Revel in revamping the Yeshiva’s curriculum and in introducing advanced secular education, the school began to ordain rabbis who were capable of

meeting the American challenges. The young rabbis faced dilemmas and problems which Revel had never experienced in Philadelphia and Tulsa, where he could worship in strictly Orthodox congregations. Revel experienced vicariously the trying problems of the rabbinate when he read the correspondence he constantly received from his former students. Rabbi Isadore Goodman, a 1921 Yeshiva graduate, gave an incisive description of his experiences in a midwestern city in a November 10, 1925, letter to Revel:

There are moments when I become melancholy, depressed, when I behold not only the meager number of those who can be considered Orthodox, but when I sound the emptiness, the void in their hearts for any sort of Jewishness, I simply go to pieces. It was during the Yom Kippur when I davened [prayed] the Neilah [concluding prayer], that I actually became sick from grief, when, for a moment I recalled my sainted father davening Neilah at the Tachkemoni in Jaffa. That was a Jewish community, and this is a Jewish community—Neither of us were responsible for the congregation we led in prayers, but even that depends upon luck!

What do we find here that goes by the name of Orthodoxy? The physical appearance of the Synagogues have the stamp of the Russian Ghetto and the mark of sorry neglect. The class that attends their sacred precincts are a shabby lot. That is on the South Side. Its Rabbi is helpless. He is a scholarly old Rabbi, who makes an attempt to teach a “blatt” [page of Talmud] to a handful of ancients. He harangues his audience when he gets one about his well being. He is always at logger heads with the Schochtim. He has no sympathy with organized charity. He doesn't know how to keep quiet, nor how to be tactful.

Yes, there is a Mikvah. Rather clean inside, but stuck away in an alley, fit only for the passage of swine. I suppose it was the best house they could afford. The Mikvah is ever on its last legs, ever in debt. No money for coal, none for upkeep. To show my interest and concern, I sent them a donation which I consider but fair. They think I am a Croesus, or perhaps a fanatic. I wouldn't worry if the financial difficulties were the only ones connected with the Mikvah, but I am told from an unimpeachable source that the monthly attendance fluctuates from ten to fifteen. . . . Surely, we have 200 who are supposed to be Orthodox women. What a bleak future to look forward to!

Some have drifted into the Temple, with its church-like atmos-

phere; hatless audiences listen to a sharp tongue and clever wit, who caters most admirably to the type that wants to be considered American Jews. There is an organ and Gentile choristers, and there is such lovely music. Ignorance is made a virtue of, in that the "Rabbi" does the praying, and that in English, that only a college student can understand. —Isn't this flattering to Mrs. Cohen and Mrs. Levi, whose husbands own the South Side Junk Yards?

Then, we reach the North Side, where Providence willed it to send me, where fortunately I found current a fear on the part of many, to attend the Temple and its services. But are these Orthodox? Not by the farthest stretch of the term. In their homes, in their businesses, in their charities, in their very synagogues, they are under the spell of Reform. Important officers of my congregation pay dues to the Temple as well as dues to the congregation. . . . Their wives attend the Temple on the first day of Rosh Hashona, and come to the synagogue on the second day. Need we not a prophet with courage and conviction, with strength and influence to decry these tragic occurrences?

The spirit this year at my Congregation was better than in former years; due of course to many reasons. In the first place, Beth-El is a magnificent structure and it has recently been completed, and there is some novelty in a new voice.

I pleaded with the press for recognition, I began writing regularly, hastily at times, and even sinking to faulty English, due to, not only my own carelessness, but because of the printers rushing it so. This was done all in the hope of gaining leadership, at least, in my own Congregation.

In certain matters, I was headed toward compromise, but quite conscious of what I was about. With my tongue proclaiming the fact and my heart bleeding because of its absolute necessity. It was a question of losing out for all time, or withstanding the glamour of the conquering force of reform that has a way about its maneuvers that make opposition to it look foolish. God gave me strength and I made the grade. Particularly did I win out on two matters that seemed to me as insurmountable stumbling blocks. In the one instance, I accepted the minimum, the most liberal interpretation of what Orthodoxy calls for in the seating of the sexes in the synagogue. The vast majority sat according to the arrangement I demanded; only an insignificant number, a mere handful, yet important "Chatzuphim" [arrogant individuals] had it their way. The other problem that I had to solve, quickly and diplomatically, yet still be within the religious law, was a matter I never dreamed of. This was a problem of Service.

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. . . Just before the Holidays, I was urged to arrange a program of service, something on the style of the Temple Service. I just trembled with fear, but I recognized the opportunity and sensed the responsibility. The opportunity was to strike at Reform in its strongest aspect, namely, its hold upon our people, by its appeal through its Service. Yet, I was in a quandary; for days I was dazed; for nights, I went sleepless; how dare I, not how can I, but how may I innovate? For a brief moment, I was angry, in that our Orthodox Rabbis in America do not cope with problems. Instead, they pass pious resolutions that we should be loyal to the Government, etc. Then I came to, and realized the justice of certain demands in view of certain conditions. I can recite prayers in the Aramic even though I do not fathom their depths; even in Hebrew, though their meanings are, in instances, hazy to me. But how can I inspire a populace, whose sense of religion has been dulled, whose feeling in prayer has become wasted through misuse? How can I expect these people to stay with me, when the [Reform] Temple offers such ease, such comfort, such social distinction? . . . What did it amount to? It was not an incision into our sacred prayers, nor was it adding some irrelevant chapters. I did not lose a syllable, nay, not an iota of our traditional prayers, *piyutim* [liturgical poems], etc. Everything was recited in the Hebrew. I emphasize this fact, that I did not leave out a single word, nor was the order in any respect altered in the Hebrew. Nor did the Cantor make any breaks in the reading of the prayers. It was I who added, at frequent intervals, the translations of some of the paragraphs, and had other paragraphs transliterated, so as to meet the thirst for a word of prayer of those who did not know how to read the Hebrew. The venture was successful; the venture made history in our city. My Congregation was spellbound, they were absolutely riveted to their seats throughout the prayers. Nor did they get up to leave during the reading of the law, for before each *aliyah*, I "told them the story," or explained the meaning and significance of the passage, in a few crisp, succinct sentences. Their attention was phenomenal; they drank in the spirit of the day; they were remarkably quiet throughout the proceedings.

I preached, not revealing the madness that I truly had for the leaders who preceded me, and who misled the innocent. I gave expression to the sympathy that I had for the misled sheep of God's flock. I didn't mince words, nor did I beat about the bush, when I struck at their shortcomings.

The net results were, that aside from a crowded synagogue, the effect of the weight of my efforts was felt throughout the city. The

dailies took notice, the Chronicle fell over itself in a laudatory comment. I stand for Orthodoxy, and Reform met a formidable opponent. The so-called Orthodox Jews of my locality began to realize that Orthodoxy is sublime, something truly beautiful. That was the effect of my first splash.

Revel guided and encouraged the young men while they became acclimated to the American rabbinate in their pulpits across the United States. To Rabbi Leon Stitskin of Warren, Ohio, Revel wrote:

I was glad to hear from you, and to learn of the good work you have begun to do in Warren. Difficulties in the way are to be expected, for the fight of Torah Judaism in this land is an uphill fight.

It is good that you have time you can give to real study. The daily devotion of part of the day to the Torah will strengthen you in self confidence for the battles of the Almighty and recognition of your earnest and devoted work will be bound to come.¹

Revel also encouraged Rabbi Israel Mowshowitz of Durham, North Carolina: "I received your two letters today, and am glad that you are pleased with your work in Durham. I am particularly happy that you do not let a day pass without finding time for Torah; and I am sure that your wife will gradually find occupations and proper interests that will make her think less longingly of New York."²

Another young rabbi joyfully acknowledged that Rabbi Revel's "promise that I will ultimately be honored and appreciated has been fulfilled." Rabbi Philip Greenstein informed Revel that he was experiencing deep spiritual satisfaction in his new position in Burlington, Vermont, where "there are people who truly fear the Lord, and it seems that they are very pleased with me."³

In 1926 sixteen rabbis were graduated by the Yeshiva, and in 1929 twenty-seven men were ordained. Congregations began to turn to the Yeshiva in the expectation of engaging rabbis who were traditional in their religious commitments while simultaneously attuned to American life. A typical 1928 request received at the Yeshiva was from a Chicago congregation which desired "a conservative rabbi, who is well acquainted with the Talmud and

Hebraic literature, and also well versed in English, and one who is familiar with all modern topics, who can keep the young people interested.” At Revel’s request Sar responded to this inquiry, describing the Yeshiva’s rabbis as

mostly American born, college graduates and fully ordained, . . . serving in the capacity of modern orthodox rabbis. Of course, they deliver lectures in English and take part in all the activities at the synagogue, but they do not deviate from the traditional way of service.

If you wish to have a man who was born in America, holding several degrees from colleges, an ordained rabbi who is, of course, well-versed in Hebrew, Talmud, codes and rabbinical literature, and is also an excellent speaker in both English and Yiddish, we shall be glad to recommend you one of our graduates. We wish, however, to emphasize that he is an orthodox rabbi.

In closing, Sar asked to be informed “whether your Congregation has men separate from women at services?”

This last problem of separate seating at services with an acceptable partition, or *mehitza*, between the men and women became a serious impediment to the Yeshiva in placing rabbis in many of the congregations that requested spiritual leaders. The *mehitza* represented a tradition which the rabbinical sages trace to the very dawn of the Israelite community at the initial worship service it conducted after its deliverance from the Egyptians at the Red Sea. The Bible related that Moses first led the men in prayer, and afterward the women joined Miriam in praising the Lord.⁴ The tradition of having a separate “women’s court” was continued in the First and Second Jerusalem Temples. Rabbinical responsa were unanimous in declaring that a synagogue with a mixed seating arrangement forfeits its sanctity and becomes unfit for prayer. It is forbidden to worship in such a congregation. Professor Moses Hyamson of the Jewish Theological Seminary echoed this viewpoint in a 1926 responsum:

The introduction of mixed pews, however, is a distinct departure from the practice of Orthodox Congregations. A Congregation adopting this innovation would not be conforming to Orthodox usage. It is exceedingly regrettable that some American congregations, by this needless and unnecessary departure, should separate

themselves from the body of Orthodox Jewry all over the world and be a lost strength to the cause of traditional Judaism, which they reverence. You might point out that the separation of the sexes during public worship was the universal practice in the past. In the temple, there was a special Woman's court. For the special festivity of "Simchath Beth Hashoeva" [Rejoicing during the Intermediate Days of Succoth] where the exercises were not only sacred, but also partook in a measure of a secular nature, a Ladies Court was especially erected.⁵

In many instances, the removal of the *mehitza* was the first deviation introduced by a congregation, which nonetheless considered itself Orthodox. A Pennsylvania synagogue wrote to the Yeshiva in 1929:

This Congregation has been very strictly Orthodox and finds itself at the present time with only a few of the older members left and insufficient funds to maintain a rabbi. The younger element are not interested in the services as they have been conducted. We have gone out and secured additional memberships on the promise that we will bring a young rabbi who will institute services that will have religious significance and, at the same time, be appreciated by the younger element who are not conversant with the Hebrew language.

Our proposition was that the men and women would not be separated and that part of our services might be in English. We are not well enough informed to tell any rabbi just how this should be done and we hope to obtain a man with some experience who is capable of bringing the Jews of every age together. It was our thought that a somewhat revised Orthodox procedure would be inviting to the younger members and, at the same time, would not offend the older members.

Revel did not permit the Yeshiva to acquiesce to a congregation's introducing mixed pews. He insisted that the *mehitza* tradition be retained in the synagogue if a Yeshiva rabbinical graduate was to occupy its pulpit.

There were instances when Revel did permit graduates to be interviewed by congregations with mixed pews, but only if the house of worship already had mixed pews and he felt that "an able, diplomatic man could bring them back to the fold." The rabbi was only authorized to accept the position if the congregation agreed

to install a *mehitza*, or if the rabbi felt he had a reasonable chance of correcting the deviation. While ministering to the deviating synagogue, the rabbi corresponded with Revel to inform him of his progress. If the rabbi did not succeed within a year, Revel insisted that he leave the congregation.

Revel anxiously attempted to aid the rabbis who were struggling to separate the sexes during worship. In 1929 he wrote to a rabbi in Nashville, Tennessee:

I hope that your sincerity and continuing efforts will prevail upon your congregation to return to the sanctioned and sanctified standards of the Synagogue. It is encouraging to hear that just last week . . . a graduate of the Yeshiva, scored a victory for traditional Judaism by having his synagogue—after many years of mixed pews—changed to separate pews. If you consider that outside cooperation, the coming of Dr. Leo Jung, or Rabbi Herbert S. Goldstein, Rabbi N. H. Ebin, President of the Yeshiva Alumni, or any other rabbi you may suggest, will be of service to you, I shall be glad to help by arranging for him to visit and address your congregation.

When the rabbi did not succeed, Revel informed him that “as matters stand, there is of course no choice left you. The Yeshiva is ready to help you in whatever way it can to secure another post, as rabbi or as principal.”

When a Yeshiva graduate refused Revel’s request to leave a position which had both mixed pews and a mixed choir, his ordination was revoked. Revel wrote to a graduate on September 19, 1933:

It grieves me to inform you that since you refuse to leave Temple . . . where the sacred laws of Traditional Judaism are violated, I urgently request that you return the conditional document of ordination that you received from the Yeshiva. The basic purpose of the Yeshiva is to guard the sanctity of Jewish Law in this land.

If you will not return the document of ordination, I will be obligated to publish newspaper announcements declaring the nullification of your ordination.

This rabbi did not heed Rabbi Revel’s request, and the Yeshiva publicly announced the cancellation of his ordination and pro-

claimed that “one can no longer rely on his answers to inquiries of Jewish Law.”

Another obstacle that hindered the placement of Yeshiva graduates in some congregations was that many of the young rabbis lacked the sophistication that these synagogues wanted in their spiritual leaders. Although an ever-increasing percentage of the Yeshiva’s students were American born, they were the sons of immigrants. Raised in homes that reflected the narrow cultural environment of newcomers to the United States, they lived in predominantly Jewish neighborhoods of the big cities. Their main training was received at the Yeshiva, under the tutelage of *roshei yeshiva* whose mannerisms, personal habits, and speech were reminiscent of East European Orthodoxy. A devoted friend of the Yeshiva, Dr. H. Pereira Mendes, then the minister emeritus of the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation of New York, decried the young rabbis’ lack of acceptable deportment in a December 20, 1932, letter to Revel:

The congregation here, finally decided to take a young man from the Seminary. . . .

They have had two or three young Yeshiva men here on trial, but they have always found that while their scholarship is splendid, in Hebrew (Rabbinics) and while their orthodoxy is solid, and intelligent, there is something wanting in them which must militate against their being successful in any congregation of any culture. It is their want of *derech erez* [proper deportment]. They will enter a room without lifting their hat in respectful salute, especially if a lady happens to be present. Instead of removing their hat and putting on their little cap as they enter the room, they offend the people in the room by sitting even in a parlor, with their street hat on.

Their deportment, their dress, their address, or their *savoir-faire*, too often repels instead of always attracting.

. . . Personally I fully understand the sentiments of the young men, but I think it right to inform you of the impression that these things made upon the committee members here when they listened to the Yeshiva students.

. . . You can hardly expect a young man to be received into the homes and hearts of his congregation under such circumstances, as I indicate.

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. . . Orthodox Judaism must be made dignified and must hold the respect of our young people; I mean especially our young men and young women.

A synagogue lay officer accentuated the Yeshiva graduates' "lack of polish" as the reason for their losing positions to Jewish Theological Seminary rabbis. After interviewing Yeshiva rabbis, the synagogue officer wrote to Sar on March 10, 1931: "We cannot say that we agree with you, in that the Yeshiva graduates measure up to what the people expect. Let me make myself clear: there is no doubt that the Yeshiva man is better versed in the knowledge of the Torah [than the Seminary man] and yet he lacks the polish in order to put himself to the forefront." This problem was mitigated by the ever-increasing Americanization of the Yeshiva's social environment. The homes of the students gradually became Americanized, and this was reflected in their deportment at the Yeshiva. More students from "the areas of second settlement" and "third settlement" began to attend the school, and they aided in updating its surroundings.

Despite these obstacles, Yeshiva graduates gradually began to occupy numerous pulpits throughout the United States. Vexations and grievous problems often developed during the ensuing years when the young rabbis came into contact with Revel's colleagues, the older European-trained rabbis. The Orthodox segments of many communities were ministered to by these European-trained rabbis, who ably met the needs of the older element of their communities. These rabbis, members of the *Agudat Harabanim*, were usually accomplished talmudic scholars, and their deportment was that of the traditional European *rav*. These rabbis were generally not engaged by a single synagogue, but rather by a group of Orthodox synagogues that united to secure their services. The *rav* was given a minimal income by the synagogues, with the understanding that he was to receive fees for supervising the city's kosher provisions facilities and for various rabbinical functions, such as officiating at weddings and funerals. In accordance with European tradition, the members of his community also gave him gifts during the year on occasions such as Chanukkah and Purim.

When the younger American-born generation began to clamor for English-speaking Americanized spiritual leaders, many times the *rav* of the community opposed the bringing of a Yeshiva graduate to his community. This resentment to having an English-speaking rabbi stemmed from the *rav*'s fear of ultimately losing most of his own communal position to the younger man. The *rav*'s objections were further heightened by his feelings that the American-trained rabbi was not a proficient talmudic scholar and therefore not capable of deciding ritual questions. Many times the *rav* even opposed the hiring of an English-speaking assistant solely to preach on the High Holy Days. A layman described what happened in his synagogue:

Rabbi A. was a pious man with a long black beard; deeply religious, scholarly, and non-secular. He delivered sermons in Yiddish and conducted special classes for the scholarly few. Services at the synagogue were "disorganized" in the traditional Orthodox sense. Every member had his own prayer book and prayed at his own pace. . . .

During the early 1930's, a new group began to take over the leadership. These were young business and professional men who were less prosperous than the old guard but zealous in their efforts to modernize the synagogue. They wished to retain the values of Orthodoxy and yet to make the services meet the needs of the younger, American-born element. One such man, Mr. B., was elected to the presidency of the congregation over the bitter opposition of the old guard. . . .

Mr. B. and his group then began to change the regular service themselves. He attempted to institute the use of a uniform prayer book and periodically to announce the page on which the cantor was praying. The synagogue purchased a microphone so that speakers could be heard. All of these innovations widened the breach between the old guard, which included the rabbi, and the new group. While the new leadership was popular with the rank and file, the old guard had more money, and also more prestige as they were the founders of the congregation. The rabbi, if not held in great affection, was nevertheless respected. He evoked a response in every Torah-loving person because of his scholarliness and piety. He reminded people of their fathers and grandfathers—bearded Jews who had shared his love of learning.

The cleavage turned to real conflict. It became clear that Mr.

B. and his group wanted to oust the rabbi, who had nothing to offer the young, and to replace him with an English-speaking spiritual leader. The rabbi thereupon began to refer to Mr. B. as the “shagitz” —the Gentile. Mr. B. would be quick to deny this and then by some deed he would make it clear that the rabbi was being excluded more and more.⁶

Revel established as policy for the reorganized Yeshiva that no graduate be sent to a community unless the *rav* of the community agreed in writing to his coming. Although Revel felt that in many cases the Yeshiva graduate might have been more effective in the community, he nevertheless did not want to thwart the *rav*'s wishes. A 1925 letter from a Pennsylvania community stated that the *rav* “just returned from his vacation and claims that under no consideration would he sign the letter of confirmation for an English speaker for the High Holy Days. The congregation was in favor of an English Speaker, but being the Rabbi is not, they will not go against his wishes. We have decided to let the matter drop for the present.”

In 1929 a Massachusetts town began negotiations with the Yeshiva to obtain a rabbi to deliver lectures in the community. A leader of the community felt that this was the only way that the Orthodox synagogue could retain its influence. The synagogue's lay leader wrote to a New York acquaintance:

I have just written to Mr. Sar of the Yeshiva College suggesting the advisability of having one of their senior students come out . . . for Friday and Saturday services for the purpose of lecturing to us on Friday night and possibly on Saturday morning. I feel that it is the only way that Traditional Judaism can be perpetuated . . . because if we do not get one of the Yeshiva men, I am quite sure that there will be a Seminary man. I am not saying this in the nature of a threat, but I feel that the spirit aroused among the younger men is such that they feel the need for an English speaking Rabbi and they will want it satisfied. They will not go to the Reform Temple, and will therefore take the next best thing and that is the Seminary. There are among us some who would like to avoid that possibility and would prefer a Yeshiva man. With that point in view, I am going to urge on Mr. Sar the advisability and the necessity for him to send one of the Yeshiva men, one who is an able speaker.

At Revel's insistence, Sar requested that the consent of the community's *rav* be obtained. The head of the Committee answered Sar by assuring him that the *rav* would also be able to remain with the community. He wrote:

You speak of first obtaining the consent of the Yiddish speaking Rabbi. In regard to that, I wish to say that we have the consent of the president and the members of the congregation to obtain an English speaking Rabbi, if we so desire. Furthermore, I wish to say again that regardless of the fact whether we do or do not obtain an English speaking Rabbi for the synagogue, the present Rabbi will stay with us as long as he desires. . . . We all honor him and respect him both for his learning and his piety, but the fact, nevertheless, does remain that because of his limitations in regards to the outlook for the future of Judaism in America and because of his inability to speak English fluently, he is unable to get in the synagogue the younger Jewish boys and girls and also the younger men and women with the result that there is now in existence . . . a Reform Temple which is gradually drawing members away from the old synagogue because of their ability to understand the Rabbi, even though they may not always agree with him.

The following is said not in the nature of a threat, but rather expressed as an opinion. I believe . . . I firmly believe that if we do not get a Yeshiva man, we will get a Seminary man within the very next few years with the consequential result that Traditional Judaism as preached by the Yeshiva will become an obsolete book to the younger generation in [this community].

The Yeshiva nevertheless refused to send the English-speaking rabbi until the *rav* agreed. Sar tactfully explained:

In my asking you to get the consent of the Yiddish speaking rabbi, I had in mind the future of the community. I know that your Rabbi is highly cultured Jewishly and is respected by the community. In order to have the young rabbi accomplish something, it is important that the former rabbi agrees to his coming. Otherwise, the new rabbi or the English speaking rabbi will encounter many difficulties.

Finally the *rav* consented. On his stationery the *rav* signed his name in his halting English script to a text that was written by a congregant. It read: "In reply to your letter of February 12, I have

no objection to have a young man address the Brotherhood on March 1st.” The Yeshiva graduate successfully delivered a series of Friday evening lectures in the community. Later that year, the synagogue requested that the Yeshiva send a rabbi to assist in conducting the High Holy Day services. Once again the Yeshiva requested that they obtain the consent of the *rav*. This time the Yeshiva did not send a rabbi, for the *rav* had reportedly stated that if a Yeshiva Rabbi was engaged to assist him, he “would not enter the synagogue during the High Holy Days.”

In instances where the Yeshiva rabbis and *Agudat Harabanim* rabbis did minister in close proximity there were occasions when caustic controversies developed between them. In such cases the *rav* would write to Rabbi Revel and demand that he reprimand the Yeshiva graduate. These demands greatly exasperated Revel, for he feared further antagonizing the *Agudat Harabanim* by supporting his own graduates. In an instance where a prominent Yeshiva graduate permitted shohatim to slaughter cattle for a kosher butcher who had been declared trefa by the local council of *Agudat Harabanim*, the following letter was sent to Revel by the chairman of the Council of Orthodox Rabbis of a New England area on April 24, 1931:

In the name of the rabbis and *gaonim* who comprise the Council of Orthodox Rabbis, I am issuing this vehement protest against the arrogance of the graduate of the Yeshiva . . . who desecrated the name of God and ruined himself when he publicly contradicted with the insolence of a prostitute all the rabbinical members of our Council, and permitted that which we have forbidden . . . and he stated that our rulings are foolish and that he is well acquainted with all the laws. . . . And when asked if he knows the Chairman of our Council, he acted as if the Chairman wasn't worth knowing and he boasted that he has no desire to be a member of an organization such as the *Agudat Harabanim*. . . .

It is understood that the Yeshiva became a laughing stock when he stated that his rulings were correct and the rulings of our Chairman are incorrect. . . . We decided at our meeting that if the Yeshiva doesn't publicly revoke his ordination and bring him up on charges, then we will present the entire case before the next convention of the *Agudat Harabanim* and demand that they publicly disqualify him.

On another occasion, Rabbi Revel received a letter from an *Agudat Harabanim rav* describing a memorial assembly held in his community for a deceased rabbinic leader. A Yeshiva rabbinical student spoke at this event, and in his address he castigated the *Agudat Harabanim* and accused its members of being responsible for the rabbi's death. The 1931 letter stated:

Many of the speakers declared that the members of the *Agudat Harabanim* are murderers and sinners because they are responsible for the death of Rabbi. . . . The speakers claimed that the *Agudat Harabanim* persecuted him because he was a great saint and sage. I simply cannot repeat the blasphemous utterances that I heard. A Yeshiva rabbinical student . . . was also among the speakers who defamed the *Agudat Harabanim*. The Jewish inhabitants of the city are now furious with the Yeshiva since they are appalled that such viewpoints are taught to the students.

Another instance when Revel was once again involved in a bitter conflict between a Yeshiva rabbi and an *Agudat Harabanim rav* began when an independent Orthodox congregation of a midwestern city engaged a Yeshiva graduate. There was also a group of Orthodox congregations in this city that were ministered to by a talmudic sage and member of the *Agudat Harabanim*. The *rav* of these congregations styled himself the "chief rabbi" of the community, and at his installation in 1933, the Yeshiva sent a telegram which read: "HAPPY ARE YOU THAT ARE PRIVILEGED TO HAVE A GREAT SCHOLAR, BELOVED OF THE LORD . . . DWELL IN YOUR MIDST. WE GREET YOU FROM THE HOUSE OF THE LORD. [signed] RABBI M. S. MARGOLIES, RABBI M. SOLOVEITCHIK, RABBI B. REVEL."

In 1935, on the Sabbath before the arrival of the Yeshiva rabbi, it was reported that the *rav* had publicly stated that only European yeshivot could produce great scholars. Despite the fact that he worked hard for American yeshivot, the *rav* considered it a waste of effort. So far, he felt, they had not produced even one graduate who was capable of delivering a talmudic *shiur* to small children. When the Yeshiva rabbi arrived in the community he was greeted by signs in the local butcher shops which exhorted the women not to ask him any ritual questions and to rely solely upon the rulings of the *rav*. The *rav* complained

that the Yeshiva graduate stated that they should only wait for him to finish the *shmoneh esreh* [standing prayer] before beginning the repetition, and there is no need to wait for me when I pray with them. . . . He also is robbing my sources of income as he is now beginning to arrange for the sale of *chometz* [leavened products before Passover].

In a desperate letter to Revel the *rav* exclaimed: “The Reform and Conservative rabbis say look at the difference between us and the Yeshiva rabbi. We honor the *Rav*, but what does the Yeshiva graduate do?” The Yeshiva rabbi assured Revel that he was acting properly toward the *rav*: “From the time of my arrival I displayed the proper respect and appreciation for *Rav*. . . . I gave him every honor, and nevertheless, he belittled me. . . . Despite this, I still humble myself before him, and honor him even more than Jewish law requires.”

Strong pressure was exerted on Revel by his colleagues in the *Agudat Harabanim* to aid the *rav*. Rabbi Levinthal of Philadelphia also wrote to Rabbi Revel:

What will the Conservatives say? In the cities where their young graduates meet the *Agudat Harabanim* rabbis, they respect the *rabanim*. In some places, they are the ones who see to it that the *rabanim* are adequately supported. And what happens when the Yeshiva graduates meet the *rabanim*? Many of the *rabanim* were apprehensive lest this happen and it now seems that their fears about Yeshiva graduates were correct.

Finally Revel summoned the graduate to the Yeshiva so that a decision could be made regarding his future in the congregation he was associated with. By this time the controversy had embroiled many laymen, and Revel realized that peace would not be achieved by the departure of the Yeshiva graduate. Telegram after telegram arrived at the Yeshiva demanding that its graduate remain. A typical wire, dated March 7, 1937, stated: “THE TALMUD SAYS YOU SHOULD PASS THE LEARNING OF THE TORAH TO YOUR CHILDREN AND TO YOUR CHILDREN’S CHILDREN. RABBI . . . IS DOING THIS VERY THING AND OUR ELDER LEARNED RABBI BY HIS CONDUCT IS SETTING A VERY BAD EXAMPLE TO OUR YOUNG ONES, CAUSING THEM TO SHIFT TO CONSERVATIVES.”

Instead of demanding that the Yeshiva rabbi leave, Revel implored his student to do everything possible to establish an amicable relationship with the *rav*. Some years later, during the last year of Revel's life, the *rav* visited with Revel and informed him that he was getting along with the Yeshiva rabbi. Revel wrote a letter to his student and expressed his "thanks and blessings to God that peace had been achieved. Great are the virtues of peace and harmony since all other blessings will not prevail unless peace is among them. . . . Peace is certainly desirable between scholars, the standard-bearers of the Torah whose paths are peace."

Another time Revel was urged to intervene in a local dispute by the *Agudat Harabanim* occurred when a newly organized New England synagogue engaged a Yeshiva graduate in 1938. This city already had four Orthodox synagogues whose rabbis were members of the *Agudat Harabanim*, and they felt that the city could not support a fifth rabbi and synagogue. They feared that the Yeshiva rabbi would detract from the support of their synagogues, and they were also opposed to the newcomer's entering the local kashruth supervision. They wrote to the *Agudat Harabanim*:

The new rabbi is a Yeshiva graduate. When we told him that he was encroaching upon our rights, he responded that the Yeshiva is responsible since it sent him. We then wrote to the *Rosh HaYeshiva* [Revel] and he answered that he would investigate the matter. After the lapse of a substantial period, we wrote a second letter to the *Rosh HaYeshiva* and we received no reply. . . . Since a public dispute will disgrace the Yeshiva and its leaders, and it will desecrate the Torah, we wish to avoid such an occurrence.

Therefore, we urge you to contact the *Rosh HaYeshiva* and to explain to him the troublesome situation in which we find ourselves. We trust that you will persuade him to remove the stumbling block from our path.

The *Agudat Harabanim* immediately wrote to Revel and demanded "that he take the appropriate steps as quickly as possible." Nevertheless, the Yeshiva graduate remained in the position, although he was constantly harassed by his older colleagues.

Membership in mixed boards of rabbis was another problem that ensued when graduates of the Yeshiva and *Agudat Harabanim* rabbis were in the same area. The *rabanim* generally had their own

rabbinical council, which did not accept the Yeshiva graduate, for they felt he was not sufficiently learned. Often the Yeshiva rabbis joined rabbinical boards which also included local Reform and Conservative rabbis. This placed the *rabanim* in a quandary. Previously they could impugn the rabbinic status of the rabbinical board by declaring that the non-Orthodox clergymen did not possess valid rabbinical ordination, but when a Yeshiva rabbi, who was the recipient of semicha, joined the board, they could not challenge his ordination. Pressure was exerted on Revel to instruct his graduates to leave a mixed rabbinical board in the New England area in 1939. The *Agudat Harabanim* informed him that “at an executive committee meeting on June 14, 1939 it was decided to notify him of the great obstacles that are being created by Yeshiva graduates who joined rabbinical boards together with Reform and Conservative rabbis. . . . It is up to you to stop this plague while there is still time.”

Sar was sent by Revel to address a conference of the New England Yeshiva rabbis and it was reported that he explained

the need for the Yeshiva rabbis to demonstrate before the Jewish public the uniqueness of their training and commitment, so they may not be confused with Conservative rabbis. He argued that membership in an organization, such as the Rabbinical Association . . . has the effect of identifying the Yeshiva graduate in the mind of the general public with the Conservative rabbinate.

Revel’s request that the Yeshiva graduates leave the Rabbinical Association was conveyed to his students at this conference, and they complied with his wishes. A Yeshiva rabbi wrote to him:

In accordance with your expressed wish and in deference to your authoritative opinion, I have today resigned as a member of the Rabbinical Association. . . . I have taken this step in the full knowledge of the improbability of an Orthodox rabbinate being organized in our vicinity and despite my realization of the embarrassing and isolated position in which I was thereby placed. I hope and pray that this step may prove helpful in closing the ranks of Orthodox Jewry.

Despite all these difficulties, there were members of the *Agudat Harabanim* who appreciated the capabilities of the Yeshiva gradu-

ates. In 1928 Rabbi Eliezer Silver, then the rabbi of the United Orthodox Congregations of Springfield, Massachusetts, wrote to Revel about the secular colleges in his area and the enmity displayed by many Jewish students toward their religion. He suggested that the Yeshiva “send a young, intelligent student for one week, who will know how to communicate with the collegiate students. He will be able to present Judaism to them and to unite them under the Jewish banner, and perhaps they will improve their ways.”

Another time Silver requested that the Yeshiva send him an assistant for the High Holy Days who was “a young scholarly Rabbi, a capable English speaker, and a gentleman.” Following the High Holy Days of 1939, Revel rejoiced when he received a letter from Silver praising a Yeshiva rabbinical student, Louis Werfel, who had assisted Silver during the Holy Day services. (The young Rabbi Werfel later perished in the service of his country as a chaplain during World War II.) Silver’s letter stated:

I must tell my friends . . . how much pleasure and joy I had from the young man you sent me, Mr. Louis Werfel, who is proficient in both Torah and secular study. He was beloved by the entire congregation during the short time he was with us, and they were totally and completely satisfied with him. I found him to be brilliant and completely dedicated to the ideals of the Yeshiva. He knows how to act and he can be presented to great people and they will respect him. God has also blessed him with capable preaching ability, an understanding heart, and an ear that discerns words of Torah. I only wish that all *rabanim* would recognize the fineness and modesty of the Yeshiva students. . . . Then complete mutual respect and friendship would exist between the older and younger generations.

Revel guided the Yeshiva graduates when they organized the Alumni Organization of Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary. Attempts had been made to form this group as early as 1923. It began functioning on a permanent basis in 1929. Although some of the rabbinical graduates were also members of the *Agudat Harabanim*, they felt that this new organization would serve as a necessary forum for the English-speaking rabbis to discuss their unique problems. The first convention of the organization was held at the new Yeshiva building on April 1 and 2, 1929.

The morning program on April 1 was highlighted by an address by Revel and a *shiur* by Rabbi Shkop. That afternoon papers were read on "The Rabbi and the Talmud Torah," "Winning the Youth," "The Center Movement and the Rabbi," "Friday Night Services," and "Adult Education." On April 2 the rabbis participated in the first *Chag HaSemicha* celebrated in the new building. The members of the new organization did not intend it as competition for the *Agudat Harabanim*. An editorial in the *Jewish Forum* of August 1930 declared:

It is also worth noting the attitude of the younger towards the older Orthodox rabbis. As President Ebin declared, his organization of rabbis regards the Agudath Harabanim as the supreme authority in the interpretation of Jewish law, with which body therefore his is not in competition. The younger rabbis merely get together to discuss vital problems that cannot, as a rule, be taken up at a plenary convention of the rabbis of the country.

However, as the cleavage between the older and younger rabbis increased, the new rabbinical organization became more independent of the *Agudat Harabanim*. Revel sought to avoid this breach by having the *Agudat Harabanim* accept the Yeshiva's more scholarly graduates as members. But his overtures were resisted by the rabbinical organization, and almost none of the later Yeshiva graduates became members.

Finally, Rabbi Israel Rosenberg, then a member of the *Agudat Harabanim* presidium, acceded to Revel's request to participate in the oral ordination examinations of Meyer Karlin and Asher Siev in June 1937. Revel knew that Rosenberg would be impressed with the erudition of these two students, and he was hopeful that they would be welcomed into the *Agudat Harabanim*. At the designated hour Rabbis Moses Soloveitchik and Benjamin Aranowitz arrived in Revel's office for the exam. Rosenberg had not yet come. Soloveitchik suggested that they discuss talmudic problems while they waited. Reb Moshe and Rabbi Revel soon became fervently involved in a debate concerning an obscure talmudic passage. When Rosenberg finally arrived half an hour late, Revel and Soloveitchik were so engrossed in their discussion that they failed to notice his entrance. Thinking that they had

already begun the oral examination without him, Rosenberg angrily turned around and stomped out of the room. The young Rabbis Karlin and Siev did not become members of the *Agudat Harabanim*.

Revel continued his attempts to open the ranks of the *Agudat Harabanim* for his graduates, but his efforts met with little success. In 1940, the final year of his life, this breach was further widened when the *Agudat Harabanim* passed a resolution which required its members to resign from any other rabbinical organizations they were concomitantly affiliated with. This new rule was designed to repudiate the status of the new rabbinical association which had developed from the Yeshiva's Alumni Organization. In 1935 the Yeshiva Alumni Organization merged with the Rabbinical Council of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, and the new association was named the Rabbinical Council of America. Gradually the new rabbinical body gained enhanced stature, as it became the spokesman for the rabbis who were excluded from the *Agudat Harabanim*. Revel addressed the conventions of the new council. In 1939 he delivered the *Hadran* (talmudic discourse) on the completion of a talmudic tractate that was celebrated at the Rabbinical Council convention held at Andron's Mountain House in Haines Falls, New York. On August 19, 1940, Revel gave the opening address at the annual convention which was held in the "Temple of Religion" at New York's World's Fair.

In his attempts to strengthen Orthodoxy in America, Revel also aided in the development of the first elementary Yeshiva day schools. He felt that the Yeshiva-trained rabbis would need the aid of a committed and educated laity. He envisioned the day that there would be a network of elementary yeshivot across the United States rearing knowledgeable American Jews. In 1930 he made a proposal:

Not only in New York, but in every large Jewish community, at least one Talmud Torah should offer, paralleling its own activity, the work of the first four years of the public school, where a small group of chosen pupils, whose parents consider a more adequate Jewish education worthwhile, may have this opportunity of a full Jewish training, may take their general subjects of these first four years in a Jewish atmosphere, and possibly prepare themselves for

the intensive Jewish studies of the *Yeshivoth*. The additional expense involved would be confined to the instructional cost; whereas the shift in emphasis, with the greater attention to Jewish subjects, would result in an improvement in the attitude of the teachers, the quality of the work, and the earnestness and devotion of the pupils, not only in these special groups, but through the entire school, and consequently in similar institutions. The Yeshiva College sets a standard at the top, toward which the existing Yeshivoth, the Jewish secondary schools are striving; in every large Jewish community there is need of a beginning at the bottom, of the organization of elementary Jewish day schools, as part of the work of the Talmud Torah, where the quality and amount of Jewish study, can be such as to ensure the perpetuation of our faith, our learning and our ideals.⁷

Although this vision of elementary Jewish day schools did not become a popular movement until after his death, he nonetheless aided in the organization of some day schools throughout the United States during his lifetime. By 1940 there were day schools in New York, Boston, Chicago, Baltimore, and Los Angeles.

Revel was also concerned with adult Jewish education. He envisioned the utilization of the new Yeshiva building as a night center for adult education. In 1929 he wrote to Samuel Levy:

In New York City and the vicinity, there are thousands of Jewish young men, now in colleges and universities, or already engaged in business and the professions, who are eager for Jewish knowledge. Some of these men had a measure of Jewish training in efficient Talmud Torahs or elementary Yeshivoth but for lack of proper opportunity did not continue their studies along Jewish lines. Others have up to the present had no opportunity at all for such study. The Yeshiva, with its wonderful new buildings, owes it to itself and New York Jewry to respond to this call. It, therefore, proposes to organize Yeshiva Extension Courses for students of the type described above, courses that will increase the student's knowledge of our heritage. While most extension courses have a practical emphasis, the Yeshiva extension courses will continue the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake that has ever been the great Jewish educational ideal.

The inauguration of this plan was delayed until 1935 by the hardships of the Depression. Together with the National Council of Young Israel, an organization composed of Americanized

Orthodox congregations, the Yeshiva College instituted its extension courses. These courses were to be sponsored jointly by the Yeshiva and Young Israel until the outbreak of World War II. Dr. Sidney B. Hoenig of the Yeshiva faculty served as the director of this program. The classes met at centrally located Young Israel synagogue buildings throughout New York City. At the 1935 celebration initiating the program of study held at Manhattan's Hotel Delano, Revel stated:

This new Torah endeavor of Young Israel is a declaration that Young Israel recognizes the vital significance of Torah in the scheme of Jewish life and survival; that essential as the commandments of prayer and charity are, the House of Israel is neither complete nor safe without the study of Torah; that adequate Jewish education, as a continuous, never-ceasing process is the very foundation of Jewish life; that the Torah has ever been the creative force in Jewish life, giving it meaning and unity; that every attempt to place the center of gravity of Jewish life outside of the knowledge and observance of Torah, must end in disaster. . . .

Your new work—small as its beginnings are—will, I trust, help stem the tide of spiritual illiteracy . . . among our young, the fathers of tomorrow; will help strengthen our spiritual defenses and will help underwrite the future of a wholesome and creative Jewish life, of a self-respecting and better understood and respected community, a life drawing its inspiration from, and guided by, the eternal teachings of the Torah and the genius of the Jewish soul, in harmonious union with the progressive and forward-looking forces of the age, a life spiritually aspiring and culturally creative.

For the Yeshiva pledges to you, my dear friends, its wholehearted cooperation. May the Almighty bless your sustained efforts. May they ripen into fulfillment and hasten the day of true joy and of the triumph of Torah in our hearts and lives, the day when "all your children shall be taught of the Lord."

9



THE GREAT DEPRESSION

THE JOYFUL SOUNDS of the December 9, 1928, consecration of the new home of the Yeshiva had hardly faded away before Revel and the school were engulfed by serious financial problems. During the Jewish Theological Seminary and Yeshiva merger negotiations, Louis Marshall had sardonically predicted “that to maintain such an institution as they have planned would end in financial shipwreck.”¹

With the completion of the buildings and the cessation of the Yeshiva campaign, the school found itself under heavy mortgage obligations. In addition to the mortgage payments, the budget also spiraled because of the vast increase in maintenance expenses required by the new buildings. The Board of Directors proposed that the Yeshiva proper, the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, institute tuition fees, which had never been charged by the school. Revel opposed this idea, for the majority of the Yeshiva’s students came from low-income homes. He also felt that such a policy would be a grave departure from the European yeshiva tradition of not charging tuition fees. In a June 6, 1929, letter to Louis Gold, the newly elected chairman of the Yeshiva’s Board of Directors, Revel wrote:

No Jewish theological seminary, and few, if any, seminaries of other denominations, and never any of the true *Yeshivoth* of Europe, charge a tuition fee. Indeed, the old truth still holds, that it is mainly the sons of poor parents who frequent the homes of Torah;

so that far from being able to pay a tuition fee, these families are sacrificing heavily by the very attendance of their sons all day at the Yeshiva, deprived of their labor, and of their contribution to the meager family budget. It is particularly those who devote themselves to the study of the Torah in this land that need and deserve encouragement. Even now the Yeshiva is forced to turn away many worthy applicants because of its financial limitations. The Yeshiva must remain faithful to its ideal and task, to create in this land a saving remnant of *Talmidei Chachomim*, of informed and devoted Talmudic scholars. Knowledge of the Torah acquired in this land comes mainly from the Yeshiva directly, or through its influence in making possible the smaller Yeshivoth that prepare students for it. The Yeshiva raised the banner of Torah in this land, but we have not yet reached the point where we have a surplus of such *Talmidei Chachomim* in this land. Any step, therefore, to limit admissions, or to curtail the activity of the Yeshiva, will affect the spiritual welfare of American Jewry.

While Yeshiva was struggling with its financial plight, the stock market crash that began the Depression came on October 29, 1929. Within a few months all America felt the dismal results of the crash. Even the surface appearance of American cities changed. Former salesmen roamed the sidewalks trying to sell apples. Former clerks wandered around business districts in the hope of eking out a living by shining shoes. Unemployed and homeless men welcomed vagrancy arrests—warmth and food were available in jail. Over a hundred thousand American workers attempted to obtain jobs in the Soviet Union. Shantytowns sprang up around industrial centers, and the inhabitants of these housing projects born of desperation bitterly named them Hoovervilles, after the president of the United States.²

Jewish institutions throughout the country faced serious financial crises. Hospitals and schools administered by Jewish communities were constantly in danger of closing. Synagogues could not meet their budgets. During the 1930 convention of the Yeshiva's rabbinical alumni, their president, Rabbi Nachman Ebin, proposed that no new synagogue structures be constructed by American Jewry:

Since the financial crash, communities have been over-taxed by the building of new and large synagogues. We have forgotten that the Jewish name was not made by towers and pyramids. We there-

fore call upon American Jewish communities to refrain from building enterprises for a period of five years. Let us turn to building Jewish consciousness here and a homeland in Palestine.

In an address to the 1931 convention of the Conservative Rabbinical Assembly, Rabbi Israel Levinthal suggested that the number of rabbis being ordained by the American rabbinical schools be limited. He proposed that this be accomplished by increasing the rabbinical course by one year and by requiring graduates to serve as assistant rabbis for one year.

The results of the crash were particularly grievous for Revel and the Yeshiva; it not only reduced the school's current income but it also caused many contributors to renege on the unpaid portions of their pledges to the Yeshiva campaign. The first to suffer at the Yeshiva were the teachers. Their salaries went unpaid for weeks on end. By the end of 1929 the school desperately appealed to prominent Jewish leaders for financial assistance. A letter sent out under the signature of Rabbi Margolies described conditions at the school: "The great Yeshiva College, the pride of American Jewry, is compelled to close its doors unless immediate action is taken to prevent this great calamity. The teachers and office force have not been paid for several months, 600 students are without food as we are unable to open the restaurant and they are beginning to feel the pangs of hunger."

Many could not believe that the school which had just recently celebrated the completion of its magnificent edifice was now caught up in such dire circumstances. Boston's *Jewish Advocate* investigated the Yeshiva's contentions and found them to be valid. In a January 2, 1930, editorial the *Advocate* commented:

The statement made at the convention of the *Agudat Harabanim* to the effect that the Yeshiva College is in danger of closing due to lack of funds, was found to have a basis in fact.

No Yeshiva instructor has been paid for sixteen weeks. Many of the students who were receiving aid from the Yeshiva have had their help cut off and are now living in dire circumstances. . . .

Rabbi Burack declared that the situation at the Yeshiva is so grave that there is even no money to pay the smallest daily expenses.

The students also felt the problems engendered by the lack of money. An out-of-town student who came to New York to enter

the Yeshiva during this period related the difficulties he encountered in attaining a bed in the dormitory and an allowance for food. He wrote to Revel:

I want to tell you how I have suffered during the three months I have been in New York. When I came to New York from Detroit . . . I was given a test in various Talmudic tractates and accepted into the Yeshiva. I was not given any dormitory room and any allowance for food at that time, since there was no room available. I literally had to sleep on the ground and to live a life of sorrow during this period. When the Yeshiva closed for the summer, my personal status became worse, and I fulfilled the dictate of our Sages “to eat bread with salt, drink water by measure, sleep on the bare ground, and live a life of hardship while you toil in the Torah” [Aboth, 6: 4]. Since I didn’t receive a financial grant while the Yeshiva was open, I certainly didn’t receive it while the Yeshiva was closed. . . . I was forced to look for homes to eat in . . . and even when I succeeded, it was only for two meals a day. You can understand that there were more days during which I fasted than on which I ate.

My father can’t help me as his financial status is completely insolvent. Therefore I appeal to you . . . to give me a bed to sleep on in the dormitory, and an allowance for food for the coming year.

A moving description was given by this student of his experiences in the Yeshiva when he returned during the next week to find out whether his requests would be granted:

When Rabbi [Jechiel Michael] Charlop told Mr. Sar that his synagogue’s Ladies Auxiliary would aid in my support, Mr. Sar exclaimed that the Auxiliary should entirely support me! When I asked Mr. Sar if I could be granted a financial grant for food, he replied in anger that the Yeshiva’s dining room is not reopening. While I was speaking with Mr. Sar, I saw you [Revel] enter the room. My heart filled with hope that now my problems would be favorably resolved. However, to my despair, you left Mr. Sar’s office almost immediately after entering. . . . When I left his office I strove not to cry since I have no place to eat, and no place to sleep. . . . I asked Mr. Sar why the Yeshiva will not aid me, and he replied that while in Detroit I should have asked the Yeshiva’s permission before coming to New York. Is this such a great sin? Does one have to ask permission of a great Yeshiva whose reputation



Yeshiva graduating class, 1929; (1. to r.) Rabbis Benjamin Aranowitz, Bernard Levinthal, Bernard Revel, Shimon Shkop, Moses Margolies, Abraham Selmanowitz, (standing on side) Dr. David Macht



Gov. Herbert H. Lehman receiving an honorary degree, June 15, 1933

Albert Einstein receiving an honorary degree, October 8, 1934



is known from one end of the world to another. Even when I was a youngster in the small hamlet where I was born, we heard about the famous Yeshivat Rabbi Isaac Elchanan of New York. Did I ever doubt for a moment that even though times are bad, nevertheless, the Yeshiva would be able to take care of me.

All my life I have spent in the company of Sages and in the study of the Torah. How can I cease to study the Torah now? . . . Therefore, I appeal to you since I don't want to return home after suffering so much during the vacation period.

Revel finally arranged all the necessary aid for this student. He remained in the Yeshiva and went on to excel in his studies and to become a prominent rabbinic figure.

During the summer of 1930, Revel had to agree to the Yeshiva's Board of Director's decision to tax the parents of the students two hundred dollars for every child studying in the school. Mendel Gottesman, then the Yeshiva's treasurer, informed the parents of this decision. In his letter he echoed Revel's feelings when he wrote: "It indeed hurts us to charge for the learning of our Holy Torah, but we are forced to take this step as otherwise the Yeshiva will, God beware, not be able to exist at all." It was also decided to discontinue granting free dormitory rooms to needy students. The parents were urged "to make arrangements for your son to either stay with relatives or to pay in the dormitory."

In response to a mother who thought her son was being excluded from the dormitory because of poor scholarship, Gottesman wrote: "Your son is a very fine young man and a good student, but our dormitory is closed because we have no money to open it. The financial situation in the Yeshiva is so terrible that we do not know what to do and only God knows what may happen to the Yeshiva." Later five students were expelled from the dormitory because they didn't pay for their rooms. One of the students wrote to Gottesman: "I do not know about the others, Mr. Gottesman, but about myself I know that I have slept last night on 3 chairs. And I intend to do so until I finish my studies here. Nothing can discourage me. But what about the others? Do you feel justified in your action?"

Besides the new dormitory regulations, the financial allowances for food granted to needy students were also reduced. In decrying

these new rules, Rabbi Eliezer Silver wrote to Harry Fischel, then the chairman of the Yeshiva Administration Committee: "Grave injustices are being done to the impoverished students of the Yeshiva whose sustenance was removed and who are truly starving because they have no one to feed them and to give them a place to sleep. What a tragedy it is for this to happen in a land such as this."

Revel urged Fischel to include a sufficient student grant allowance in the Yeshiva's budget. Revel claimed that "the sum formerly expanded by the Yeshiva in scholarship grants to worthy and needy students has been completely stricken from the Yeshiva budget." He described the futile attempts of the Yeshiva College Women's Organization to provide \$115 a week for these students, "to meet a situation for which \$450 a week was formerly provided." Fearful that some students would leave the Yeshiva because of the new restrictions, Revel wrote to Fischel: "Of the four and half million Jews in America, hardly 450 are studying our holy Torah so intensively as these students; and the loss of any of them is a great loss to the cause of the Torah."

A portion of the previous grant allotment was restored to the Yeshiva budget. Nevertheless, the plight of the many needy students at the school remained a critical problem during the ensuing Depression years. Many students walked to school from the Bronx to save the cost of carfare. To obtain pocket money, the boys accepted part-time teaching positions in Hebrew schools and taught bar mitzvah lessons. Some were kashruth supervisors on milk farms before Passover, and a few even served as shomrim (watchmen) for corpses before burial.

In October 1930, the Yeshiva Administrative Committee decided in desperation to reduce the salaries of the Yeshiva and Teachers Institute faculties by 10 percent. The higher-paid faculties of the high school and college were to have their salaries reduced by 15 percent. Revel pleaded with Fischel not to go through with this plan. On October 28, 1930, Revel wrote:

In the pressure of these hard times, responsible men generally have refused to be stampeded into wage cutting, especially when the victims are underpaid scholars, who have, in spite of the constant strain of material worry, been the vital forces for the spir-

itual growth of the institution. To the injury of semi-starvation they have long endured it is proposed to add the insult of a salary scale that, in some cases, would mean actual starvation. The average salary of these men, of the Talmud and Codes and Hebrew departments, is between \$2,000 and \$3,000; usually this has been paid them four to five months behind time; it is now eighteen weeks in arrears, and there is no assurance that future payments—even at the new proposed schedule— will be more prompt.

I cannot conceive that the salvation of Yeshiva depends upon the scraping of a few thousand dollars from the salaries of already underpaid faithful scholars, whose happiness and health, and that of their families would be undermined, and on whose spirit and accomplishment the work of the Yeshiva rests.

In accordance with Revel's wishes the salaries of the faculty members were not cut in 1930. However, as the financial difficulties continued, the plan to decrease salaries was implemented during August 1931.

During the summer of 1930, Revel and Safir seriously considered not introducing the junior year course of study at the Yeshiva College. The students were to be advised to enroll in a neighboring New York college for their third-year collegiate subjects. This proposal would have obviated an increase in the Yeshiva College budget for that year. The plan was not implemented, however, because it was felt that the student body would be demoralized by it.

A year later, during the summer of 1931, the financial plight of the Yeshiva was so bad that it was doubtful whether the Yeshiva College would reopen at all. Revel informed the members of the Yeshiva College Advisory Council of the lasting difficulties that would be encountered by the college if it did not reopen:

Failure to open the Yeshiva College this year however means more than a mere postponement of the College activities. Closing of the College means the forfeiting of the State charter. It will jeopardize the standing of the present student body and cause them to lose their credits for the first three years of college work done at the closed Yeshiva College. It will undermine the faith of the State Department of Education in the Yeshiva, and make it almost impossible to attempt to reorganize the College for many years, till the memory of this failure has passed.

The council succeeded in raising four thousand dollars to pay back salaries, and on September 22, 1931, the college reopened.

On July 19, 1932, Harry Fischel celebrated his sixty-seventh birthday. Sar informed Revel that Fischel wished to do some act of charity in honor of the event. Revel wrote to Fischel and suggested that he aid Rabbi Chaim Shunfenthal, a *rosh yeshiva* at the Yeshiva:

Rabbi Shunfenthal is one of our most devoted and effective *Roshei Yeshiva*. He continues his daily *Shiur* throughout the summer. He and his large family depend entirely upon his meager (\$45 a week) salary from the Yeshiva. The Yeshiva owes him, as it owes all the *Roshei Yeshiva* and teachers, for almost ten months, and he and his family suffer great want. If you care to give or to loan the Yeshiva money for his two weeks salary, your *mitzvah* will indeed be great and I will deeply appreciate it as it breaks my heart to see such a man suffer.

Revel was indeed deeply grieved by the poverty and suffering that encircled the Yeshiva during the Depression years. He was never a robust man, and the constant pressures, fears, and strains introduced by the Depression greatly aggravated his poor health. As early as 1921 Revel suffered from a severe allergy and emphysema. He also was afflicted with chronic bronchitis. During the early 1930s he developed diabetes and high blood pressure. The high blood pressure gradually resulted in hardening of the arteries. Revel vividly described his tribulations in letters written during this period. On June 4, 1933, he wrote to Sam Levy:

Perhaps continuous strain and suffering (and in my case also serious ill health) have obscured our perspective. You will never know the constant agony in our frantic efforts to plan, carry on, and advance the scholastic work with many members of the faculty and their families on the brink of actual starvation and dispossessed from their homes, with practically no one of the Board to really care.

On July 26, 1934, he wrote to Harry Fischel and Rabbi Aaron Burack. To Fischel he wrote: "I can know no rest nor peace of mind when there is actual starvation and acute suffering among the great *Talmidei Chachomim* and teachers of the Yeshiva and no

one seems to care. I see the work for which you and I have made such sacrifices sinking into the sea.” To Rabbi Burack he wrote: “I am back in the city. I find the financial situation in the Yeshiva desperate. Men like Rabbi Poleyeff and others are actually starving. The telephone is disconnected. . . . I am so overcome by the situation that I cannot write.”

In 1935 the Yeshiva finally had to sell the additional parcels of land it was holding for future buildings in order to meet their mortgage payments. As the shovels dug the foundations for the apartment houses that were constructed across the street from the Yeshiva, Revel exclaimed to a group of students: “Each shovel blow is a blow at my heart.”

While he returned to the daily worries of guiding the school, he told a *rosh yeshiva* in the Yeshiva, Rabbi Ephraim Steinberg: “I envy the fact that you don’t have to worry about the Yeshiva’s financial problems, and that you can study the Talmud with your students.” When another *rosh yeshiva*, Rabbi Moses Poleyeff, presented his first published volume of talmudical interpretations, *Machne Yisrael*, to him in 1930, Rabbi Revel burst into tears. Revel stated. “I have not been privileged to publish a volume since the demands of the Yeshiva constantly squander my time, and I have not been able to edit my manuscripts of talmudical interpretations.”

During April 1934 Revel was hospitalized, and he spent two weeks at New York’s Beth Israel Hospital in an attempt to correct his deteriorating heart condition. While he was at the hospital the Yeshiva remained uppermost in his mind, and he wrote to Judge Rosalsky about new plans to raise money for the Yeshiva. His letter began: “I am writing to you from the Beth Israel Hospital, where I am resting for some heart repair.”

His brother-in-law, Solomon R. Travis, left to settle in Palestine at this time. Before his departure he came to the hospital to take leave of Revel. To the suggestion by his brother-in-law that he join him in settling in Palestine, Revel replied: “If I were to leave the Yeshiva, I couldn’t survive.”

It was the selfless example set by Revel that held the secular faculties together during this period. The Yeshiva and Teachers Institute faculties had to remain with the Yeshiva, since they had

little chance of obtaining employment elsewhere. There were no other schools of advanced Hebraic and Jewish studies which would have employed them during this period. The secular teachers, however, especially the college faculty, could have sought appointments at other institutions of higher learning. Many of the professors also taught at other highly rated colleges and could have easily supplemented their incomes by obtaining part-time appointments elsewhere. Nonetheless, the faculty remained with the Yeshiva, feeling that its work at Yeshiva College was unique and pioneering. Many faculty members also felt a deep sense of loyalty to Revel, and they knew full well about the many monetary and physical sacrifices he was making for the advancement of the institution. The faculty even had prepared for the eventuality of foreclosure; they planned to continue classes in the classrooms of various large New York City Orthodox congregations.

Although glimmers of light had broken through the general Depression scene by 1934, circumstances remained difficult at the Yeshiva. Few of the directors displayed interest in the Yeshiva's plight, and Revel's burdens and responsibilities progressively increased. Sar energetically attempted to raise funds, but the Yeshiva was still not meeting its budget. When a substantial sum was raised or bequeathed to the school, it was immediately absorbed by the Yeshiva's creditors. A letter from Sar to Revel aptly described how a creditor succeeded in blocking the Yeshiva from collecting funds from estates:

The indebtedness of the Yeshiva to the Bank of the United States excluding interest is \$37,505.68. On that, the bank had already served third party orders on various estates to the amount of \$2,750.00. They are determined to continue watching and scrutinizing all estates announced in the press and immediately put on a third party order which bars the Yeshiva from collecting the bequests and in time, expect to collect every penny the Yeshiva owes them, plus the interest and expenses.³

Despite the salary cuts and commitments made by the director to pay the reduced salaries on time, the faculty was still not being paid regularly. On October 9, 1934, a joint meeting was held by the united faculties of the Yeshiva, Teachers Institute, and the

high school, and Revel was informed that the faculties intended to strike. The letter to Revel stated:

At this meeting, the faculties have deliberated on their state of sufferings and privations, which have thus far been unrelieved and on the unchanged indifference toward the same, shown by the Yeshiva Directors. They have viewed with deep disappointment the undependability of the solemn pledge made by the directors to pay salaries to the Yeshiva faculties punctually on the first and fifteenth of every month. This pledge has not been kept. It has been broken at its very first test.

Having gone over this situation with most careful consideration, the united faculties resolved to make a determined demand that the directors pay the salaries in accordance with their pledges and that, accordingly, the members of the faculties be given next Monday, October 15th, the full month's salary, due to them. If this demand will not be met before or on October 15th, instruction will be immediately suspended in the Rabbinical, Teachers Institute and High School departments.

Revel immediately sent day letters to Mendel Gottesman and Harry Fischel:

All Roshei Yeshiva and teachers of the other departments just served written notice on me directing me to inform you that their wives and children refuse to go hungry any longer; that the solemn pledge given them by you to pay their reduced salary regularly has not been kept from the very beginning. Unless they will be paid for one month before Monday, October 15th, all instructions will be suspended in all departments of the Yeshiva. I know their privation, humiliation and suffering and I feel and suffer with them. For the sake of decency and humanity, the honor of the Torah and our own honor, please take immediate steps to release available funds and pay faculty before Monday and avoid *chilul hashem* [desecration of God's name] and breaking up of our sacred work.

Funds were made available by the directors and the threatened by strike did not take place. Nevertheless, impending strikes in the high school and Teachers Institute divisions remained on the Yeshiva scene for the next few years, for the directors continued to encounter difficulty in meeting the Yeshiva's payroll. It wasn't until after Revel's death, during the 1940s, that the school finally

succeeded in paying the back salaries it owed the faculty. At the end of 1934 Revel described the Yeshiva's financial situation in a letter he wrote to his wife's brother, Marion Travis:

For the past six years I have been carrying a superhuman burden. Most of the men whose interest and aid helped build the glorious structure of the Yeshiva during the years 1924–1930 fell by the wayside beneath the economic hurricane; and it has been almost impossible to interest new men in any intellectual or spiritual enterprise. It is due only to the loyalty and self-sacrifice of the various faculties of the Yeshiva and Yeshiva College that we have somehow weathered the storm. Suffice it to say that the Yeshiva owes close to \$200,000 in salaries to the teaching staff. They are a band of idealists, who have followed my leadership and example—as I have been sustained and inspired by the encouragement of Sarah [Mrs. Bernard Revel] in forgetting self for the cause. Yet there is a limit beyond which such self-sacrifice cannot go; during last summer the outlook was dark indeed, almost without hope. But the Almighty is still with us. The Yeshiva buildings, upon which there is still a \$700,000 bond issue, are now safe until 1939, having secured a reduction of interest from 5% to 2½%. The budget of the Yeshiva has been drastically reduced, so that the annual expenses of the entire institution, including the College of liberal arts and science are about \$140,000. The Yeshiva appeal to the synagogues during the high holidays netted approximately \$35,000, coming in a large number of small contributions, indicating that the people still want Torah. But we lack plan and program for translating this latent interest in the Yeshiva and its work and ideals into active sympathy and financial security. Men like Judge Rosalsky and others are in full accord with the purposes of the Yeshiva and are anxious to help in its work; but the failure to build their readiness into an active expression and organized effort leaves us still with a Damoclean sword hanging over the head of the Yeshiva.

Although the Yeshiva's financial situation did not become appreciably better until the launching of the Jubilee Redemption Fund in 1937, there was slight improvement during 1935 and 1936 thanks to the help of Albert Einstein. Einstein remained friendly with Revel after his acceptance of the honorary Yeshiva College degree. During those difficult years Einstein constantly issued statements in support of Yeshiva College. On the occasion of the 1935 Yeshiva banquet, Einstein wrote:

I send my hearty greetings to the gathering which takes place this Sunday evening in behalf of Yeshiva College. To my knowledge this is the only institution which offers to our youth not only general culture and modern knowledge, but also a Jewish milieu in the best sense of the term. When our brethren will truly comprehend of what great significance Yeshiva College is destined to be for the continuance of the Jewish spirit and for the spiritual balance of our youth, Yeshiva College will receive a great impetus and will become of central significance in our cultural life.

Before a Yeshiva College commencement, Einstein issued a statement which praised the Jewish training received at the Yeshiva College. He contrasted this with the lack of such education in Germany:

I am convinced that the Yeshiva College is of great importance for the preservation of the Jewish tradition and for the deeper spiritualization of the Jewish youth in general. The Jew who has gone through such a school is inwardly so rich, and so firm, that he is able to face the psychic dangers to which he is exposed in a non-Jewish atmosphere. If the majority of the German Jews had been trained in such a manner, one would have found among them today more dignity, and less of despair and suicide.

In 1936 Einstein aided Revel's campaign for funds by writing letters on his own stationery to wealthy acquaintances requesting support for the school. Among those to whom Einstein appealed were Boris Morros, general manager of Paramount Studios in Hollywood, B. P. Schulberg of Hollywood's Columbia Studios, Samuel Miller of Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Eugene Solow of Dallas, Texas. Revel sent Rabbi Lazar Schonfeld of the Bronx to visit personally with those men, and he received substantial donations for the Yeshiva. Einstein also helped *Scripta Mathematica* gain support so it could continue to meet the costs of publication. On April 15, 1937, he wrote to William Weiss, the president of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations:

While we Jews have never been tardy in our support of great humanitarian and philanthropic causes, we have, I have always felt, been less quick to appreciate the importance of fostering such educational and cultural projects as are represented, for example,

by *Scripta Mathematica*, which at the same time that it is Jewish in its inception has been taken to its heart by the general academic world.

Three hundred colleges in this country and abroad have expressed their approval of the journal by adding it to their library equipment for the use of teachers and students. In several colleges new courses have been introduced based entirely on material published in this magazine.

The *Scripta Mathematica* is unique in that while it bears the imprint of a Jewish University devoted to the arts and sciences, it continually encourages and has always enjoyed the active participation in its contributions and in its editorship of distinguished scholars representing various denominations and drawn from many countries. At the same time, it has been privileged and proud to call the attention of the scientific world to the important contribution of great Jewish scholars.

I am of the deep conviction that the erection of self-sustained Jewish cultural institutions will be, in the not distant future, of greatest importance to American Jewry and to Jews the world over. Our neglect of this duty to ourselves will expose us to the danger of progressive exclusion from professional and cultural pursuits.

It seems to me most important that the journal be properly endowed, that it be enabled to reach an even wider audience, and make more room for the growing number of its contributors.

The difficulties caused by this era left their depressing marks on the entire Yeshiva milieu. Because of Revel's preoccupation with financial problems and his steadily deteriorating health, faculty problems which he could not control developed in the Yeshiva College. The inability of the school to compensate its instructors properly also hindered Revel's efforts to govern the collegiate faculty. During June 1936 these problems reached a peak with Safir's resignation as the dean of the college. A new dean was not appointed during Revel's lifetime, and this left many annoying collegiate problems for him to cope with. Professor Moses Isaacs, a member of the college faculty since its inception, was appointed "assistant to the president" to aid Revel in administering the college. Some of the early faculty members could not adjust to the new order, and Revel was grieved by the resignations of such competent Yeshiva veterans as Professors Solomon Liptzin, David Macht, and Joseph Shipley during 1938.

The new Yeshiva building itself was not properly cared for during these years. Visitors to the Yeshiva in 1932 “criticized very severely the way in which the buildings were kept. They reported cobwebs on the walls, broken panes of glass in the windows and evidences of absence of system.”⁴

The spirit of the student body also suffered during the Depression. The Mishnaic sages listed “cheerfulness” as a prerequisite for acquiring Torah knowledge (Aboth, 6:6). During the hardships of these times, many Yeshiva students did not experience a cheerful attitude toward life. A student described the Yeshiva environment in a 1935 letter to Revel:

Although there could be noticed some progress made in Torah last year, yet a terrible discouraging atmosphere, which is not due to your fault, could easily have been noticed prevailing in the Yeshiva. When one finds himself in a discouraging environment which is full of pessimism and a bitter outlook upon life, it is really difficult, especially for those training for leadership, to progress towards their desired goals. If students would be encouraged instead of discouraged, instilled with a spirit of cheerfulness instead of down-heartedness, then many a student would gain much more than he has been gaining. An institution must not only be a preparation for life but rather a place where life itself is noticed in its fullest meaning. Otherwise it stunts the growth of its students. I wish you would do something towards uplifting the downcast spirit which was prevalent in the Yeshiva last year. Not only should diligence in Torah be noticed in the Yeshiva, but in addition the joy of Torah must be observed. I know you are quite capable of doing that.

During this period there were some moments of joy and achievement for Revel. In advance of the first graduation ceremonies of the Yeshiva College on June 16, 1932, he wrote to Samuel Levy: “The first class of Yeshiva College, if it please the Almighty, will receive their degrees, in June 1932, a ceremony unique in the annals of Jewish educational history.”

The second Yeshiva College graduation on June 15, 1933, had deep personal significance for Revel—his two sons were among the graduates. He wrote to his wife’s family: “We have a brilliant graduating class. But of particular significance is the day to me and Sarah; for among the graduates who will receive at my hand

the degree of B.A. are our two sons—Norman and Hirschel—who as you know are all we have in this world.” He was particularly impressed with Hirschel’s intellectual ability and stated that “Hirschel has a deep, penetrating mind and is already, thank God, a *Talmid Chochem*.”

Revel continued to guide the school in accordance with his principles and ideals. In 1932 he appointed Dr. Leo Jung to the Yeshiva College faculty as the instructor of a course in Jewish ethics. Jung was the spiritual leader of New York’s Jewish Center, where the Yeshiva College had held its initial classes. His lectures were warmly received by the student body and were indicative of the uniqueness of the school.

When the vexations of the Depression eased, Revel sought to broaden the activities of the Yeshiva and Yeshiva College. Despite the continued burdens of the Yeshiva’s finances and his own ill health, he sought new areas in which to involve the Yeshiva. A project which did not ultimately materialize was Revel’s attempt to create a new division in the Yeshiva College for students who did not qualify for the advanced Hebraic studies of the Teachers Institute and the Yeshiva. From the outset Revel had nurtured the vision that some day the Yeshiva College would be able to accommodate such students. In 1926, he wrote to Samuel Levy: “Other students who desire the knowledge of the Torah and Hebrew culture as a part of their general development, who wish to acquire their education in a thoroughly Jewish atmosphere, will be welcome to its influence.”

The 1932–1933 *Yeshiva College Catalogue* stated: “For the present, Yeshiva College is open only to the students of the Yeshiva, who are taking their Jewish studies in the Yeshiva itself.” In 1934 and 1935, however, Revel attempted to interest prospective students who lacked an advanced Hebraic background in attending the Yeshiva College. It was planned to introduce a program of elementary Torah studies to supplement their secular studies at the Yeshiva College. In a 1934 declaration sent to the more traditional rabbinical graduates of The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, Revel stated:

Yeshiva College . . . has now opened its doors to all qualified candidates, whether attending the regular Hebrew departments of the Yeshiva or not. This follows many requests for the broad-

ening of the College rules by Jewish Organizations and by parents who seek for their sons an educational environment in which Jewish faith and culture remain a vital force of their training. To this end, a course in Hebrew studies, with full college credit, has been made part of the curriculum.

The Mizrachi Organization of America also campaigned for students for the Yeshiva. In a 1935 letter it urged its members to send us the names and addresses of five young men in your city (even if they are not advanced in their Hebrew studies) who will be graduates from High School this January, together with the names of their fathers, so that we and the leadership of the Yeshiva College may contact them and interest them in the Yeshiva College. . . .

Our sons will surely be ours if they attend the Yeshiva College.

Despite these efforts, few new students were attracted to the Yeshiva College, and the proposed elementary Jewish studies program was not instituted at that time. It was not until 1955, during the administration of Dr. Samuel Belkin, that Yeshiva College successfully introduced a course of study for students who lacked an intensive Yeshiva background.

The octocentennial of the birth of Moses Maimonides in 1135 was celebrated in 1935. Revel planned for the school to mark this anniversary with a series of lectures that truly reflected the spirit that was evolving at the Yeshiva and Yeshiva College. The halachic and philosophical writings of Maimonides were to be analyzed by rabbinical sages and secular scholars. The Yeshiva College press release regarding these lectures stated:

The lectures, which are planned to embrace all phases of the life, work and influence of this unique sage of Israel, will comprise two groups: a series of general lectures upon Maimonides the man, the harmonizer, his influence upon the generations that followed him . . . and a number of Halakic lectures, considering in fuller detail the work of Maimonides as jurist, Halakist and codifier, his terminology, sources and relation to the Palestinian Talmud and the Geonim.

The opening lecture, entitled "The Life and Works of Maimonides from a New Angle," was given on April 30, 1935, by Dr. Solomon Zeitlin. A high point in the series was when Dr. Harry Wolfson, professor of Semitic philosophy at Harvard University

and a former student of the Yeshiva, delivered the second lecture on various passages in Maimonides' *The Guide to the Perplexed*. The third lecture was given by Dr. Revel; in it he dwelt at length on several of the fundamental principles of the Maimonidean approach to halachah. His *shiur* was well received, and the May 20 edition of the undergraduate newspaper of Yeshiva College, the *Commentator*, declared: "Dr. Revel's complete command of the vast field of Talmudic lore and his familiarity with every detail of Maimonides' Halachic works were brought to bear in masterful manner to support his particular interpretation."

Dr. David Macht of Baltimore's Johns Hopkins University delivered the fourth lecture, entitled "Maimonides as Physician and Scientist." As part of the series, lectures on Maimonides were also given by Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik of Boston. In addition to a purely halachic *shiur*, Dr. Soloveitchik also spoke on "Maimonides and Kant on the Conception of Freedom of the Will and the Problem of Physical Causality in the Modern Theory of Knowledge"; and "Maimonides' Philosophic and Halachic View on Homo Sapiens and the Modern Philosophy of Value."

Revel's fond desire to organize a graduate department in advanced Jewish and cognate studies finally came to fruition in 1937. He had previously postponed opening a graduate department due to the financial pressures of the Depression. The aim of the graduate school was to offer courses of study in the spirit of modern Jewish scholarship, while simultaneously remaining loyal to Orthodox Jewish tradition. A graduate school class in rabbinics did not attempt to cover the textual material of one talmudic volume in the analytical fashion which characterized the Yeshiva classes. Rather, it stressed a comprehensive approach to rabbinic jurisprudence. Various texts from different talmudic tomes were analyzed for their inherent logical and ethical values. It was planned to offer opportunities for intensive study and research in four major fields:

1. Bible versions and literature
2. Rabbinical studies, including the wide field of the history and development of the halachah, responsa, and codes
3. Hebrew and cognate languages, including Arabic, Judaeo-Arabic, Syriac and Ethiopic

4. Jewish history and literature; sources and interpretations; philosophy and theology; institutions and sects

In 1937 the Yeshiva Graduate Department (which in 1941 was renamed the Bernard Revel Graduate School) was inaugurated with Dr. Samuel Belkin as its secretary. Under the guidance of Revel and Belkin, the graduate school began to grow, and by the time of Revel's death it was recognized as a separate school in the Yeshiva complex.

During 1937 Revel succeeded in organizing the Yeshiva College Lecture Bureau, to supply Orthodox speakers for congregations and organizations. An announcement issued upon its formation stated:

The Yeshiva College Lecture Bureau was organized in the Fall of 1937 in response to the urgent demand of many communities and organizations, throughout the land, who have felt the great desirability of being able to call upon lecturers or leaders of forums and discussion groups, masters in their respective fields, who bring the point of view of traditional Judaism to bear upon the urgent problems of our time.

Jacob I. Hartstein, registrar of Yeshiva College, served as the director of the Lecture Bureau, and the Yeshiva faculty members and rabbinical graduates were the lecturers.

During this period Revel continued to attempt to engage outstanding men for the Yeshiva's faculty. When Rabbi Isaac Sher, the Slobodka *rosh hayeshiva* was in America during 1931, Revel attempted to interest him in introducing the study of Mussar in the tradition of the Slobodka Yeshiva in his American Yeshiva. However, Rabbi Sher explained that he felt that Mussar could not be introduced to an entire Yeshiva at once. The proper method would be for selected students to become imbued with the Mussar spirit; gradually this spirit would permeate the Yeshiva through the efforts of these students. Revel also attempted to bring the famous *mashgiach ruchni* (spiritual advisor) of the Mir Yeshiva, Rabbi Jeruchum Levovitz, to serve as the Yeshiva's *mashgiach*. This, too, failed to come to fruition—Rabbi Levovitz chose to remain in Mir, where he died on June 8, 1936.

Revel also vainly tried to bring Dr. Isaac Herzog to the Yeshiva for a series of lectures on Jewish and secular legal systems. Revel

greatly admired Rabbi Herzog, who was both a rabbinical and secular scholar, and felt that Herzog's lecturing at the Yeshiva would greatly enhance its reputation. In 1936, while Herzog was still the chief rabbi of Dublin, Revel wrote to him:

The opportunity of growing acquainted with you is one I have long sought; and especially I have hoped that you might come to know at first hand something of the work of the Yeshiva and Yeshiva College, which from a small beginning has, thank God, grown into a true light of the Torah, in the spirit of the Yeshivoh of all ages.

Its task was not, nor is it now, an easy one. The Yeshiva and its College of liberal arts (which aims in the academic field to complement the work of the Yeshiva) have met with many difficulties. The very groundwork had to be laid while the structure was rising; for the faithful Jews have been despondent here, had given up hope for a Torah-true life in this land, and we have had both to sustain the institution and to hearten those that should have warmed most ardently to its support. I have dedicated the past twenty years to this task; and I am not unmindful of the Divine Grace, which has enabled me and the few, but steadfast friends of Torah, to carry the institution in safety through these last, most precarious, years and even to extend its activities and progress.

I have been eager to have you visit us, to acquaint yourself with our sons of the Torah. It has been my hope that you might say some *shiurim* and also give a course of perhaps ten lectures to an informed outside group, mainly members of the bar, on some phase of general problems of Jewish or comparative law. I am sure that numbers of the Jewish and other attorneys of the greater New York district would gladly avail themselves of the opportunity to hear you—to their own betterment and to the sanctification of God's name.

Because of the additional responsibilities placed upon him by his election to the chief rabbinate of Palestine in late 1936, Rabbi Herzog had to reject Revel's request. On March 2, 1937, Herzog wrote to Revel:

If not for my well known election, I would have joyfully accepted your invitation. I know full well your pure and noble intentions in attempting to raise the banner of our sacred Torah in the United States. A holy obligation rests upon us to help you fulfill

the historic mission which divine guidance has placed upon you. However, this time I cannot acquiesce to your request since I must shortly leave for Palestine to attend to matters of great importance to the Jewish community. . . . It is my fervent wish that in the not too distant future I will be able to visit my American brethren. I will then participate with you in your monumental work for the present and future of true Judaism in the United States.

Revel continued to implore Herzog to come to the United States. He hoped that the Chief Rabbi Herzog would address the 1937 commencement of Yeshiva College, when the honorary degree of doctor of laws was to be bestowed upon the distinguished guest. Revel wrote:

The faculty and trustees have asked me to state that, if you can come to the States by June 15th, our Commencement Day . . . which marks not only the Commencement but the Yeshiva's semi-centennial celebration, the College will be happy to confer upon you the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws. The faculty and student body, as well as representatives of American Jewry, will be happy to hear your words on that occasion.

I need not add how much it is my personal wish that you will find it possible to make this trip, and be with us on this occasion, that marks the jubilee year of Torah in the New World.

His new obligations required Chief Rabbi Herzog once again to refuse the Yeshiva's request.

Rabbi Herzog finally did visit the Yeshiva on March 27, 1941. However, the joy of the Yeshiva in greeting the chief rabbi was mitigated by the sorrow that enveloped the school at that time. There was a deep sense of mourning for Rabbi Moses Soloveitchik, who died on January 31, 1941, as well as for the death of Rabbi Revel.

10

THE FINAL YEARS

THE YESHIVA HAD SURVIVED the Depression, and its dismal financial situation was gradually beginning to improve. Its guiding spirit, Bernard Revel, celebrated his fiftieth birthday on September 17, 1935. In addition, March 15, 1936, marked the fiftieth anniversary of the organization of the Yeshivat Etz Chaim, the forerunner of the present Yeshiva. In honor of these events, a year of jubilee celebrations was proclaimed by the school for 1936. During May of that year, the student organizations of the Yeshiva and Yeshiva College dedicated an enlarged edition of the student publication *Hedenu* to Revel. The English dedication read:

To our beloved teacher and friend, Dr. Bernard Revel—Great Teacher in Israel, High Priest in God’s Sanctuary, Diadem of the House of Torah, Profound Interpreter of Traditional Judaism, Rare Talmudic Genius and Halachah Master, Harmonious Blender of Intellectualism and Faith, Man of Prophetic Insight and Vision, on the occasion of the fiftieth year of his life, and as we celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the Institution in whose progress and development he has been the guiding genius and inspiration, this issue of *Hedenu* is respectfully and sincerely dedicated.

The *Agudat Harabanim* formed a committee of its leading members to aid the Yeshiva in celebrating its jubilee year. In a 1936 pronouncement signed by Rabbi Moses Margolies, Bernard Levinthai, Israel Rosenberg, Joseph Konvitz, Eliezer Silver, and Moses Sivitz, American Jewry was urged “to sanctify the Jubilee Year

since this coming year is the fiftieth anniversary of the first Yeshiva in America, Yeshivat Etz Chaim.” These rabbis declared:

This Yeshiva has developed into the leading American Yeshiva of today—The Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary. Originally, this land seemed to be a desert for Torah, and ancient Jewish traditions were completely uprooted by American life. Despite these adverse conditions, the Yeshiva has today become a center of Torah in accordance with the traditions of our fathers, and in consonance with authentic Judaism.

HaMesilah, the publication of the Rabbinical Board of Greater New York, praised Revel in its editorial on the Yeshiva’s Jubilee:

Forty years ago, the status of Torah in this land was completely different. There were few true rabbinical leaders in America, and the European rabbis viewed America with contempt. Nevertheless, God didn’t want this country to be a spiritual wasteland, and he implanted the vision within a few individuals to organize the Yeshiva. . . . They succeeded in attaining the proper man to head the Yeshiva. Under his guidance, the school has become a “Tree of life to those who take hold of it” [Proverbs 3:18].

The chosen of his people is Rabbi Dr. Bernard Revel. His entire being is devoted to the study and love of Torah. . . . Few of our great sages have been able to excel in both Torah and secular knowledge as he does. He has succeeded in combining Torah, wisdom, and fear of God, and in translating his abilities into deeds and achievements. He is the *Gaon* and pride of Israel.

On November 22, 1936, a gala banquet was held at the Hotel Astor to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary jubilee and the twentieth anniversary of Revel’s presidency. In a letter to Revel, Joseph Kaminetsky, a member of Yeshiva College’s first graduating class, described his emotions as he entered the gaily decorated banquet hall:

Last night, unbidden and uncalled, I came to the Hotel Astor. Together with you all I wanted to pronounce our thanks to the Good Lord, “that He has kept us in life,” to be present at Yeshiva’s Golden Jubilee. Mere words cannot express my feelings as I came into that hall and beheld at once in golden, emblazoned letters the words “Yeshiva and Yeshiva College—1886–1936,” and as I took in with one sweep of vision the hundreds, perhaps thousands

of people who came to pay tribute to Yeshiva's founders and to you, its spiritual godfather.

I came in just as our friend Rabbi Jung was speaking. I was conscious of a prayer and a wish that formed themselves just then, even as he spoke. That prayer and that wish for your continued revitalized and redoubled strength to carry on your noble task, I would convey to you in these very humble lines.

May the good God bless you and give you the health, the strength, the courage to build an ever bigger and better Yeshiva and Yeshiva College.

When Samuel Levy introduced Revel at the banquet, the entire assemblage rose in spontaneous tribute to the school's president. In his address that evening, Revel stressed the need for continued support of the Yeshiva in its attempts to meet the needs of future generations:

This is no ordinary commemorative celebration. We are rejoicing tonight, together with friends of the Torah and the true Jewish spirit everywhere, in the golden Jubilee of Torah on this continent; half of a century of Torah pioneering, service and achievement. Fifty years ago, the Yeshiva Etz Chaim, the first sanctuary of Jewish learning and spirituality, was established in this land, for the glory of God and the perpetuation of His Torah.

The Yeshiva Etz Chaim has become a link in the glorious chain of lighthouses of learning and steadfastness across the stormy sea of our millennial history, uniting Israel throughout the ages in common striving and spiritual aspiration and pointing the way to truth and righteousness, to the immortality of Israel. For the Yeshivoth have ever been the true and abiding homes of the Torah. As our sages tell us, Ben Sira, centuries before the common era, speaks of the Yeshiva as the home of the Torah and as the authoritative voice of the Jewish Conscience.

From a small beginning, without adequate support, the Yeshiva has steadily won its way to public confidence and esteem, overcoming almost insurmountable difficulties, conquering indifference and prejudice. The Yeshiva has become integrated in Jewish life, increasing our spiritual resources and helping the spiritual life and destiny of American Israel. . . .

Anniversaries are unimportant if they serve mainly to commemorate the past, if they do not open new vistas of usefulness and service. For the sake of our faith, for the sake of our glorious

heritage and of our name, for the spiritual future of the community which is bound up with the life and the progress of the community, for the sake of our children, let us on this memorable day resolve to help make Yeshiva and Yeshiva College worthy of its goal and destiny, equal to our opportunities and needs, truly a bulwark of spiritual and moral strength for the generations to come.

On Sunday, April 11, 1937, over twenty-five hundred Hebrew schoolteachers and pupils from the greater New York area participated in a pilgrimage to the Yeshiva to celebrate its semicentennial. In the presence of Revel, Yeshiva and Yeshiva College faculty members and students explained the goals of the Yeshiva to the assembled youngsters. In conjunction with this event, a Hebrew booklet entitled *Bet Chayeinu*, detailing the history and goals of the Yeshiva, was distributed to the students.

The spirit of the semicentennial observances continued through the end of 1937. On December 12, 1937, a Jubilee Redemption Fund of one million dollars for the Yeshiva was launched at a Jubilee Redemption Dinner at the Hotel Astor. Its foremost goal was to liquidate the mortgage indebtedness of the school. During the difficult Depression days, the Yeshiva succeeded in securing a reduction in the interest on the \$700,000 bond issue which was held by creditors against the buildings, a reduction which secured the buildings until 1939. This drive was started in advance of this date to enable the Yeshiva to retain its property. The campaign did not completely succeed, however, and during the final years of Revel's life, mortgage difficulties remained a constant worry and strain. During this period Rabbi Joseph H. Lookstein of New York's Kehilath Jeshurun Congregation aided Revel in his attempts to redeem completely the school's buildings. But it was not until Revel's last months that a committee was formed which finally succeeded in repurchasing all the bonds held against the Yeshiva's structure.

During these trying post-Depression years, the school suffered greatly from the lack of decisive lay leadership. On March 25, 1937, Revel wrote to his son Norman: "I only wish the economic conditions of the Yeshiva were as promising and favorable as its scholastic achievements. Unfortunately, the Yeshiva is passing through a silent crisis. I say silent, because nobody seems to care.

Many do not know enough to care; others don't care enough to know."

Revel pleaded with Sam Levy, the borough president of Manhattan, to become active once again in the Yeshiva's lay administration. Levy's participation in the school had waned during this period. On March 30, 1938, Revel wrote to Levy:

Due to the burden of the mortgages, lack of organization, general economic pressure and mainly lack of a worthy lay leader during the last nine years, the latent sympathy for the Yeshiva throughout the land has not been utilized, and the progress—often the very existence—of the Yeshiva has been in constant jeopardy. While the scholastic work of the five schools, comprising the Yeshiva continues on a high level, I do not know how long it can continue under present conditions. . . .

I dislike the bringing in of a personal consideration, but unfortunately, it is relevant and material. For a score of years, I have not spared myself in the service of the Torah and of its home. Conditions have arisen which force me, for the ultimate good of the Yeshiva, to confine myself for the present, to the direction of the academic work of the five schools of the Yeshiva. Only under your leadership will this be possible. Our national and individual immortality is the Torah, and the home and hope of Torah on this continent is the Yeshiva.

I know I am asking much; but this is the supreme demand of the hour; an hour that must be met now or we fail.

Levy did become more active, and after Revel's death he became chairman of the Yeshiva's Board of Directors.

The ever-increasing difficulties of European Jewry also contributed to Revel's anxieties and worries. While some American Jewish leaders did not comprehend the graveness of the Nazi menace, Revel seemed to perceive intuitively the great dangers inherent in the Nazi rise to power. As early as his 1933 commencement address, he warned:

Dark is humanity's horizon. We stand aghast, bewildered and humiliated witnesses of this moral degeneration of a great people. Germany, once a land of wide culture, is celebrating a black renaissance of ruthless barbarism, cold bigotry and savage arrogance. A fury of racial and religious fanatic hatred, released and spread by a crusade of hate, inspired by a race theory sprung of

the paranoiac illusions of egocentric leaders, has raged across the land, has become its very law, dictating internal policies and endangering the order of neighboring lands.

This theme was to be repeated by Revel in his ensuing commencement addresses. As the Nazi menace grew, he realized that the Yeshiva's responsibilities to European Jewry were increasing. The school now had to be prepared to accept refugee students and faculty. On December 22, 1938, Revel wrote to Abraham Levy:

However hard we have endeavored to keep the light of the Yeshiva burning in these difficult and dark days, we are now faced with one more grave problem, as one after one, in the old European homes, the light of the Torah, of Jewish scholarship and steadfast spirituality is extinguished by the enemies of our people and of our spirit. Most urgently we must come without unnecessary delay to the rescue of the many young men, former students in Germany, Austria and other centers of ruthless persecution, of bloody paganism.

The faculty of the famous and historic Hildesheimer Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin, which the German government closed and disbanded, has turned to us, urging that we take in some members of its faculty, eminent scholars and sages of the Torah, and especially the best of their senior students. . . . The Yeshiva and Yeshiva College is the only hope of these young brethren, torn from the life and training that is essential for the safety, the preservation, and advancement of our people, of true Jewish learning and idealism.

In 1939 he wrote to Rabbi Herbert S. Goldstein:

Great is the tragedy of the sudden homelessness of the Jewish soul in Europe. Our great Yeshivah there, for centuries sources of the living stream of Jewish tradition and idealism, scholarship and steadfast spirituality, were destroyed overnight by "Satan let loose." Many of the students of the Torah are lost there in the wreckage of hate and destruction. Some have reached our happy shores through the efforts of the Yeshiva. Providence has placed upon us the great responsibilities of trusteeship for the future of our priceless heritage.

Revel had constantly received requests from students at overseas yeshivot who wished to study at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary. During the Nazi period these appeals

greatly multiplied. In addition, European rabbinical leaders and professors also sought to gain admittance to the United States as nonquota immigrants. The Immigration Act of 1924 provided for the entry of any person who had been a “minister of any religious denomination, or professor of a college, academy, seminary, or university” for at least two years before his application for admission to the United States and wished “to enter the United States solely for the purpose of continuing this vocation.”¹

By 1939 Revel’s attempts to bring these students, rabbis, and professors to the United States represented a frantic race against time. Among the European yeshiva graduates saved by Revel during this last period were Rabbis Joseph Arnest and Samuel Volk. Rabbi Arnest had previously studied in the yeshivot of Navardok, Kremenchug under Rabbi Baruch Ber Leibowitz, Slobodka, and Telshe. At Telshe he was ordained by its *rosh hayeshiva*, Rabbi Joseph Leib Bloch, and his son and successor, Rabbi Abraham Bloch. In a letter recommending Arnest to Revel, Rabbi Abraham Bloch wrote:

We have witnessed the fulfillment of Rabbi Baruch Ber’s prediction that Rabbi Joseph Arnest would become one of the well-known *Gaonim* of Israel and that many will be guided by the light of his Torah. . . . He propounds brilliant interpretations to difficult Talmudic passages.

Rabbi Arnest became a *rosh yeshiva* at the Yeshiva after his 1939 arrival.

Rabbi Volk was a graduate of the Ponevez, Slobodka, and Telshe yeshivot. At Telshe he became a disciple of its *roshei yeshiva*, Rabbis Chaim Rabinowitz and Joseph Leib Bloch. In a letter to Revel requesting his aid in obtaining a visa for Volk, Rabbi Kahane-Shapiro of Kovno declared: “Rabbi Samuel Volk is on a par with great Torah luminaries. He has written many elucidating commentaries on the Talmud and is especially proficient in the Talmudic sections that discuss the laws of sacrifice and ritual purity.” Rabbi Volk also joined the Yeshiva faculty shortly after arriving in 1939.

Some of the famous rabbinical leaders brought here by Revel during this time were Rabbis Joseph Breuer and Mendel Zaks, Dr.

Breuer, a grandson of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, arrived from Belgium in February 1939. He received his rabbinical training at the Frankfort Yeshiva, headed by his father, Rabbi Solomon Breuer. He later served as rabbi of the Klaus Synagogue of Frankfurt, and in 1926 succeeded his deceased father as dean of the Frankfurt Yeshiva. In America he was to become the spiritual leader of the Orthodox German community that settled in the Washington Heights section of Manhattan.

Rabbi Mendel Zaks was *rosh hayeshiva* of the Radin Yeshiva established by his father-in-law, the Chofetz Chaim. While in the United States in 1938, Rabbi Zaks was given a contract by Revel which would have enabled him to remain here, but he chose to return to his school in Radin. In 1940, while fleeing from Vilna to Japan, Rabbi Zaks appealed to Revel to renew his contract so that he would qualify for a nonquota visa:

Our souls have gone through much, and I am greatly perplexed—may God have mercy on us—and I plead with you to have mercy on me and on my dear family [and to send me the necessary papers]. Many things depend upon this that I cannot write about. . . . I am being brief when I should be lengthy. However, I depend upon your perceptiveness since more than what is actually written here is being said. May the merit of my sainted father-in-law help us and all the House of Israel that currently is undergoing so much trouble and tribulation.

Revel renewed his contract in a lengthy telegram. Later that year Rabbi Zaks succeeded in coming to America. During the ensuing years he devoted himself to attempting to save his former European students. He also raised funds for the Yeshiva students who sought refuge in Siberia and Shanghai during the war. In 1942 Rabbi Zaks founded the Yeshivat Chofetz Chaim in Manhattan, and in 1945 he also joined the faculty of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary.

Among the professors saved by Revel were Doctors Aaron Freimann and Bruno Kisch. Dr. Freimann was a renowned bibliographer who had previously served as the librarian of the city and university libraries in Frankfurt. After arriving in America in 1939 he joined the staff of the New York Public Library as a consultant in bibliography and also lectured at the Yeshiva Graduate School.

Dr. Kisch was previously professor of physiology, biochemistry, and experimental medicine at the University of Cologne. After his 1938 arrival in the United States, he lectured at the Yeshiva College.

Those attempting to save relatives frantically pressured Revel for help. In October 1940 Rabbi Dov Chayet of Boston wrote to Revel: "I am surprised that I didn't receive an answer from you since it is a question of life or death. A Slobodka Yeshiva student, who is my cousin, is pleading for his life. Maybe we can save him by bringing him to America to study at the Yeshiva." Attempting to save his father-in-law, Rabbi Mordecai Gifter wrote: "I again beseech you . . . to have compassion and grant a contract for Rabbi Zalman Bloch. God will reward you for your kindness."

Many times the Yeshiva's intercession didn't help, for the final decision was entirely in the hands of the United States consul in the immigrant's country of origin or transit. Rabbi Eliezer Silver wired the Yeshiva: "HAVE RECEIVED CABLE FROM RABBI RABINOWITZ KIBARTI [a lithuanian city]. WHY NOT PREPARE NECESSARY PAPERS FOR HIS SON CHATZKEL. PROVIDING UPKEEP I AM RESPONSIBLE." Sar wrote back to Rabbi Silver:

I don't know what more I can do. I have already told you many times that we have sent numerous letters to the Consul and we have informed them that we are accepting this student.

The truth is that the Yeshiva can do no more. It is now entirely up to the Consul. If they choose not to accept our letters, then there is no way to overcome their opposition.

Sometimes the Yeshiva did not succeed because the recipients were too preoccupied with European communal problems to act on the school's invitations. Revel fervently attempted to bring Kovno's Rabbi Shapiro to America to head a kollel which he planned to organize at the Yeshiva. In response to an inquiry by Representative Sol Bloom regarding the status of Rabbi Shapiro's visa, the American consul in Kovno wrote:

On July 8, 1940, the Rabbi's son . . . called at the Consular Section of the Legation, and discussed his father's case. . . . He referred to the same contract as the Department of State mentioned in its

telegram of July 5, 1940. The examining officer suggested to Mr. Shapiro that his father call at his convenience to discuss his case and bring the copy of the contract with him. The son said that he would prefer to bring the contract himself and he was told that such procedure was satisfactory to this office but that he must understand that no decision could be made until Rabbi Shapiro himself was examined.

On July 17, 1940, a representative of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid and Sheltering Society called in Rabbi Shapiro's behalf and presented the copy of the contract. He was informed that this office viewed Rabbi Shapiro's case favorably, but that, again, no decision could be made until the Rabbi was examined. . . .

The Consular Section of the Legation is giving Rabbi Shapiro's case its sympathetic consideration, but it is unable to expedite the matter greatly as long as Rabbi Shapiro sends various representatives to this office to discuss his case. As his friends have been informed, this office is prepared to receive him at his convenience.

In response to plans being formulated by former students of the Telshe Yeshiva to transfer that institution to America, Rabbi Abraham Bloch of Telshe urged Revel to attempt to save all European yeshivot, in addition to Telshe:

I rejoiced to hear that you are attempting to transfer our Yeshiva to the United States. This act resembles the deed of Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai at the time of the Temple's destruction. For the sake of the soul of our people and its future survival, I urge you to act as quickly as possible. This is an instance when punctilious individuals rush to do the *mitzvah*.

Nevertheless, I plead with you, dear brethren, to attempt to save all the Yeshivot. The merit of many Yeshivot is greater than the merit of any individual one.

Many European yeshiva students who did manage to come to the United States during this period were already advanced Talmud scholars. To accommodate them, Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik opened a yeshiva called Heihal Rabenu Haym Halevi and Yeshivath Torah Israel in Boston late in 1939; there he delivered advanced talmudic lectures on a postgraduate level. Revel sent a group of the leading arrivals to Boston to study under the tutelage of Rabbi Soloveitchik. Agreement was reached between Revel and Soloveitchik for the Heihal to function as a branch of the

Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, beginning with the school year of 1940–1941. The agreement stated:

The *Heihal* is desirous of affiliating itself with the Yeshiva and to become its branch in New England States and the Yeshiva is desirous of establishing such an affiliation. . . . The scope and courses of study and all the general policies, including appointments of instructors and supervisors of the *Heihal*, are to be decided by the present heads of the Yeshiva and of the *Heihal*, Rabbi Dr. Bernard Revel and Rabbi Dr. Joseph Soloveitchik.

In addition to its present student body and other students that the *Heihal* may admit, it will be the policy of the Yeshiva to encourage certain of its students, to spend part of the time of their intensive study of the Torah and of their preparation for the rabbinic in the *Heihal* under the guidance of Rabbi Dr. Joseph Soloveitchik, who is to be responsible for their academic work and is to deliver at least two Sheurim [talmudic discussions] a week to these students.

In a subsequent letter to Revel, Rabbi Soloveitchik described the schedule followed at the *Heihal*:

At 7.30 a.m. morning prayers are held; between 9 to 10.30 a.m. the English language is studied [since the students were immigrants]; from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. the first Talmud study period is held; and from 3 p.m. until 7 p.m., the second Talmud study session takes place.

My lectures are delivered to the students twice a week, on Mondays and Thursdays.

The *Heihal* might well have developed into a postgraduate Boston branch of the Yeshiva. However, upon the deaths of Rabbi Revel and Moses Soloveitchik, and Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik's subsequent appointment to succeed his father as the Yeshiva's senior *rosh yeshiva*, the Boston branch was soon liquidated.

The problems of the Yeshiva and European Jewry contributed to Revel's rapidly declining health. Against the wishes of his physician, Dr. Arthur Fishberg, who insisted that he take an extended vacation, Revel continued to devote himself entirely to the school. On March 31, 1940, he presided at his last *Chag HaSemicha*. In advance of this event, he wrote to Rabbi Bernard Levinthal: "Among the graduates there are true Torah scholars. The new



Yeshiva College graduates, June 20, 1940—Dr. Revel's last graduation

Rabbinical graduates, March 31, 1940; *seated in middle*: Rabbis Moses Soloveitchik, Bernard Revel, and Benjamin Aranowitz

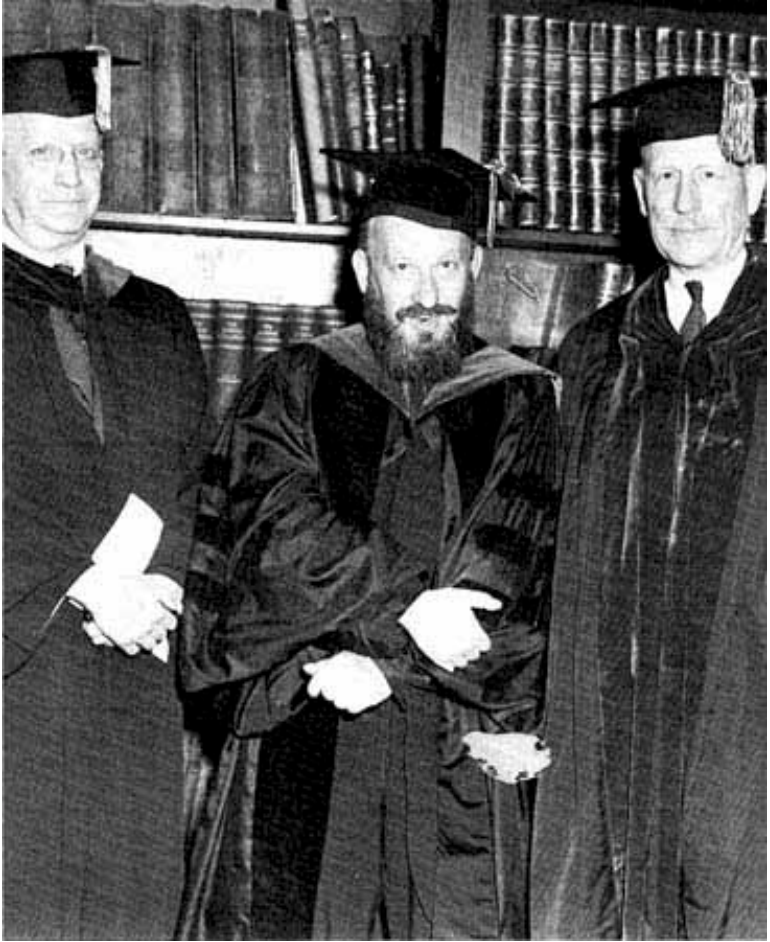




Rabbinic graduating procession; *first row* (1. to r.): Rabbis Bernard Revel, Moses Soloveitchik; *second row* (1. to r.): Rabbis Moses Aaron Poleyeff, Abraham Selmanowitz, Judah Weil; *third row* (1. to r.): Rabbis Aaron David Burack, Abraham Bender

Dr. Frank Pierrepont Graves, president of University of New York, receiving an honorary degree, June 20, 1940; (1. to r.) Revel (obscured), Dr. Samuel Belkin, Graves, Dr. Pinkhos Churgin, Dr. Nelson P. Mead





Dr. Revel with Samuel Levy, chairman of the Board of Directors,
and Dr. Frank Graves, June 20, 1940

rabbis represent an ‘ingathering of the exiled’ since they are from America, Canada, and Europe. Many are already in rabbinic pulpits, and almost all are Yeshiva College graduates.”

At the celebration Revel proudly led the rabbinic procession into the Yeshiva’s auditorium, which was filled beyond its capacity. Afterward he posed with the valedictorians, Rabbis Leonard Rosenfeld and Joseph Weiss, for a picture which was widely circulated in the daily press the next day.

On June 20 he officiated at his last Yeshiva College graduation. At the conclusion of his commencement address, he charged the graduates:

May you ever be among the joyful servitors, the zealous guardians of human liberty. Be your approach to the grave problems of life . . . that of the intellect or that of the heart, or, as I hope, a creative synthesis of the two—that is the essence of Judaism—the dignity and the sanctity of the free spirit of man . . . must remain the cornerstone of any sound creed of life, of any code of conduct, the ideal to live for—if need be—die for, as the supreme and abiding quality of humankind. May this be the inspiration, the high resolve, that you carry with you from your long association in this sanctuary of the spirit, with the sifted wisdom of the ages, with the supreme figures of Israel, his seers, saints and sages, with the abiding word of the Lord.

During the summer of 1940 Revel’s heart condition continued to worsen. The grievous news from Europe, climaxed by the death of Vilna’s Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzenski on August 9, 1940, contributed to a minor heart attack on August 10. Scores of Polish Yeshiva students and rabbis had fled to Vilna to escape the Nazis, and Rav Chaim Ozer had labored feverishly to sustain them. The death of the seventy-seven-year-old spiritual leader contributed to the feelings of hopelessness which were engulfing European Jewry, and he was intensely mourned throughout the Jewish world.

After the new school year began in September 1940, the Yeshiva College faculty proceeded to plan an elaborate anniversary convocation in honor of Revel’s presidency of the school. Twenty-five years had elapsed since Bernard Revel assumed his duties at the Yeshiva on Montgomery Street. The convocation was originally

scheduled for December 15, 1940, but it was postponed until early 1941 so that Chief Rabbi Herzog of Palestine could attend. In honor of this event, the Rabbinical Council of America declared its intention of publishing a special volume dedicated to Revel. The Mizrachi also announced that it would dedicate an issue of its *Weg Weiser* to him.

On October 26, 1940, Revel wrote his final responsum in answer to an inquiry from Rabbi Israel Mowshowitz regarding the removal of the deceased from one grave to another.²

His last article was for the December 1940 issue of the *News Bulletin: Yeshiva College*. In the article, entitled “Our Thought and Hope,” Revel stated: “We behold the guiding hand of the Hashgaha (Divine Providence) in the fact that, before the spiritual sun of Israel has set in Europe, a sanctuary of the eternal soul of Israel has been established on this continent.”

On Tuesday, November 19, 1940, Revel delivered what were to be his last *shiurim*. At ten o’clock he gave a *shiur* in *Choshen Mishpat* for the graduates of the Yeshiva. This was followed by a *Yoreh Deah shiur* for the advanced rabbinical students. An anonymous student gave the following description of these final *shiurim* in the Memorial Issue of the *Commentator* later published by the student organization:

Dr. Revel scarcely noticed us, the rabbis, as we filed sedately into his office for the second “shiur” on “Choshen Mishpat.” We were surprised to see Mrs. Revel there. But after that first moment, Dr. Revel himself commanded the center of our attention.

His face was weak, tired and worn. Pain kept flashing across it as in an electric storm. For the first ten minutes he kept his eyes closed, answering the cross-currents of discussion in painful darkness. When he opened his eyes, he could not read the books before him. He stopped several times during his talk for sheer weariness —apologizing each time for the interruption. The lecture finished, he let his head fall over the table, shading his eyes with his arms.

As Mrs. Revel explained, he had been forbidden by the doctor to say this last “shiur,” yet he had insisted, so as not to disappoint his students. . . . The last grains of his strength, he gave to us.

There was still calm before the storm, when the “Yoreh Deah” group entered Dr. Revel’s office. He greeted the individual salutations with a smile, a nod, or a word. Taking his glasses from his

eyes, he waited in kindly impatience for the men to become sufficiently settled for the delivery of the “shiur.”

As he spoke on the intricacies of “Shavya Anafsha Chaticha D’isura [declaring something forbidden for oneself],³ the perspiration ran in streams over his forehead. Several times he rubbed his eyes irritably. But, we saw nothing extraordinary in these actions. Of late, most of his lectures had been given in troubled affliction.

But there was one thing in that last “shiur” which stands like a cornerstone in the edifice of memory, the last, prophetic words of our teacher to his students. We had attributed his weariness to the gruelling few days he had had with an organization whose friendship to him was suspect. He also felt that his illhealth was due to such causes. He told us as much.

You know, he said, that I never sought material successes. You, my students, know that this institution has cost me much toil. I have hardly enjoyed of this world.

“My life’s work, my life is Yeshiva. And the students are Yeshiva, and Yeshiva, the students. You, and all who came before you, and those who shall come after you, are my life.”

In those last words, he asked us to continue living for him. The lights of Torah were dimmed across the seas. We must, therefore, he said, light our torches all the more brilliantly. He might not—he felt with a curious insight that his days were numbered—have long to remain with us. He asked us, the students, to continue, to cooperate, that Yeshiva might go on as heretofore.

We were to be the leaders in Jewry, he emphasized. We were to take on that leadership even in Yeshiva, to strive to effect those ideals for which he lived and for which he died.

“Even if someone would deter you from the task I have set before you, tell him in my name that you must continue. The Yeshiva is yours to build.” These were his last words to us.

During the *Yoreh Deah shuir*, Revel had suffered a cerebral hemorrhage, as a result of his high blood pressure. Simultaneously he lost his sight because of hardening of the arteries. Only by virtue of his great willpower was he able to complete the lecture. He was taken home under the care of his physician. An editorial in the November 27 issue of the *Commentator* wished him a complete recovery:

It has always been a source of wonderment how much energy and devotion our beloved president, Dr. Bernard Revel, has invested into this institution. Since he first took over the reins of Yeshiva

twenty-five years ago, every step and every advance of the school has been watched over and directed by his tireless supervision. Like a father with solicitous tenderness, he has seen the child of his efforts grow, always checking on its most trivial needs as religiously as on its major requirements.

This indefatigable energy with which Dr. Revel has applied himself to directing the course of Yeshiva has for a long time been sapping his strength and undermining his health. Yet this fact has not deterred him from his labor of love and his pace has not slackened nor has the intensity of his zeal weakened in all these years.

Though our shock upon learning this news was great, we are confident that the wages of such selfish devotion as that of Dr. Revel—long life and health—will be his recompense, and in this spirit we wish him a speedy *refuah shlemah*.

As the news of the gravity of his illness spread throughout the American Jewish community, scores of his former students gathered together to recite prayers and psalms for his well-being.

On Sunday, December 1, 1940, his physician ordered that he be taken to Mount Sinai Hospital. That night shortly after midnight, on December 2, Bernard Revel died at the age of fifty-five, after suffering a stroke. His last words to his wife were “I hope you lived long enough with me not to resent the fact that I shall not live long. You don’t measure life by the yardstick of years, but by accomplishments and achievements. It was my privilege to serve God, the Torah, and the children of the Torah.”

All differences in American Orthodoxy were forgotten the next day; the entire community was united in sorrow. Scores of announcements declared their grief in the Jewish press and the *New York Times*. Thousands of telegrams and letters arrived at the Revel residence and at the Yeshiva. Mesifta Torah Vodaath publicly declared its sorrow in an ad in the *Jewish Morning Journal*:

We wish to make known our deep sorrow for the tragedy that has occurred to the Torah world with the sudden death of the great *Gaon* . . . Rabbi Dov Revel, President and *Rosh HaYeshiva* of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, who has been called to the heavenly Yeshiva in the prime of his life.

It is an irreparable loss for all of us. May his memory be recalled and blessed for ever.

The famed Chasidic leader, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Joseph I. Schneersohn, who had just been rescued from the European inferno and had arrived in the United States on May 19, 1940, wrote to Mrs. Revel: "I was shocked to learn of the great tragedy that has taken place with the death of your husband, the well-known *Gaon*, Rabbi Dov. May God comfort you among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem." Rabbi Jacob Ruderman, *rosh hayeshiva* of Baltimore's Ner Israel Yeshiva, wired the Yeshiva: "SHOCKED. A GREAT LIGHT, THE MIDDLE LAMP OF THE MENORAH OF TORAH HAS JUST BEEN EXTINGUISHED. I MOURN TOGETHER WITH ALL SCHOLARS IN ISRAEL FOR INCOMPARABLE LOSS."

On Monday the coffin was borne by students into the Harry Fischel Study Hall of the Yeshiva. In advance of Tuesday's funeral service, scores of students remained awake the entire night reciting psalms in the presence of the deceased. With daybreak on Tuesday, December 3, hundreds of people began to assemble at the Yeshiva. By 11 A.M., the time designated for the funeral service, the Nathan Lamport Auditorium was filled beyond capacity, and thousands of mourners overflowed into the areas and streets surrounding the Yeshiva. Promptly at 11 A.M. the coffin was carried into the auditorium by student pallbearers, preceded by Cantor Pincus Jassinowsky of the Jewish Center, who chanted a funeral psalm. A stunned silence enveloped the throng when the procession first entered the room. As it slowly moved down the center aisle, cries and shouts of lamentations arose throughout the hall. When the coffin finally was placed on a table at the foot of the platform in front of the auditorium, the entire assemblage was one mass of sobbing persons who could no longer contain their pent-up sorrow and emotion.

When some semblance of order returned, Revel was eulogized by Rabbi Aaron Burack, on behalf of the Yeshiva faculty; Dr. Pinkhos Churgin, representing the Teachers Institute; Rabbi Joseph Lookstein, in the name of the rabbinic alumni; Rabbi Joseph Konvitz, on behalf of the *Agudat Harabanim*; and Samuel Levy, representing the Yeshiva's Board of Directors. The services at the Yeshiva were concluded by Rabbi Revel's younger son, Hirschel Revel, who delivered a moving farewell to his father.

Interment followed at the Mount Carmel Cemetery in Cypress Hills, Brooklyn, where Rabbi Revel was placed at rest facing the

monument of Rabbi Moses Margolies. At the cemetery, eulogies were delivered by Rabbi Samuel K. Mirsky, a member of the Yeshiva College and Teachers Institute faculties; Rabbi Herbert Goldstein, on behalf of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations; Rabbi Simcha Levy, in the name of the Rabbinical Council of America; Nachum Finkel, a student at the Yeshiva and Revel's nephew; and Samuel Fox, the president of the student organization of the Yeshiva.

The graduates and students of the Yeshiva, Teachers Institute, Yeshiva College, and Talmudical Academy sponsored a memorial service at the Yeshiva on December 22, 1940. Memorial meetings were also held for Rabbi Revel throughout the United States and Canada during the period following his death. Wherever his students resided, public assemblies were organized. Time and again the theme was stressed that American Jewry had not been destined to rejoice and celebrate Revel's accomplishments on the twenty-fifth anniversary of his association with the Yeshiva. Instead, it was mourning his untimely demise.

An era ended with his death. Europe was now completely caught up in chaos and destruction. The historic European Jewish community which nurtured Bernard Revel was now ended. Its Torah centers, rabbis, and scholars were soon to be decimated by the Nazi hordes. American Jewry was to face a host of complex problems and responsibilities in the postwar era. American Orthodoxy, in particular, was to undergo rapid challenge and change, rejuvenation and revitalization, at the conclusion of the global conflict.

Nonetheless, it was Bernard Revel who was the first to wrestle with America and successfully establish a beachhead for Orthodoxy in the New World. He pioneered a new system of Jewish education by combining advanced talmudic and secular studies under the aegis of a single institution. This thought was movingly expressed by his son Hirschel in an address he prepared for the citywide Dr. Bernard Revel Memorial Meeting held in Baltimore on January 5, 1941:

He was more than another great *rosh hayeshiva*. In the short space of twenty-five years he created and perfected a new system of Jewish education. He succeeded where all others had failed, for he

was the first to integrate Jewish and secular learning. Yeshiva Rabbi Isaac Elchanan is the only Yeshiva in the history of Judaism in which secular science has been taught together with Torah, and has not detracted . . . one iota from Torah and *Yiras Shamayim* [fear of God]. In fact it has encouraged both Torah and *Yiras Shamayim*, for the student is taught that natural science is but another manifestation of the divine wisdom. . . . Thanks to him what was before barren rocks of American soil, is now a gushing stream of Torah. Thanks to him it is possible for a Jewish child to get his Jewish and secular education side by side in the same building and in the same atmosphere . . . through semicha and postgraduate work.

Starting with the blank canvas of American Jewry, he patiently painted on it a surpassingly beautiful picture of widespread knowledge of God and His Torah. The paint was his own lifeblood, and he framed the finished picture in the golden frame of *Yiras Shamayim*.

11



RESPONSA AND PUBLISHED WRITINGS

DESPITE THE DEMANDS made upon his time *by* his manifold Yeshiva responsibilities, Revel still managed to write numerous monographs, studies, and rabbinic novellas during the entire period of his American activities. These writings reveal his profound scholarship, multiple interests, and strict loyalty to Jewish Law and tradition. The pilpulistic custom of the Telshe Yeshiva and the scientific method of Western scholarship harmoniously blend within his works. At times the dividing lines are blurred, and it is difficult to classify his compositions. In this chapter his writings will be summarized under the following headings:

- I. Rabbinics
 1. Responsa
 2. Pilpulistic Novellas
 3. Philosophical Essays
- II. Scientific Jewish Scholarship
 1. Karaitica
 2. Antirabbinic deviations
 3. Ethics
 4. Popular Articles¹

I. RABBINICS

1. *Responsa*²

Dilemmas encountered by the Yeshiva and its graduates are reflected in his responsa. In planning for the 1926 music festival,

Harris Selig had originally secured the services of female vocalists. Objections were raised that this was not consonant with Jewish Law, for the talmudic sages stated that “the voice of a singing woman is indecent” (Berakhot, 24a). Selig wrote to Revel on March 4, 1926:

If such an undertaking is considered by you and a few others to be undignified and not in strict accordance with the Jewish law . . . I cannot conceive how you sanctioned dinners and other affairs where men and women have mixed freely, a thing that my grandfather and your grandfather would not do and would not allow.

In response, Revel sent a telegram to a committee meeting planning for the festival: “IT IS THE UNANIMOUS OPINION OF THE YESHIVA FACULTY THAT PUBLIC PERFORMANCE BY WOMEN SPONSORED BY THE YESHIVA IS NOT IN KEEPING WITH THE HISTORY AND TRADITION OF . . . THE YESHIVA.” [1]

In deference to this opinion, the music festival was held with only male vocalists participating.

Another problem which evoked heated discussion at Yeshiva board meetings was whether nonobservant Jews were eligible for membership on a proposed National Board of Directors. The by-laws of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary declared that “Members of the Seminary in good standing who adhere to Orthodox Judaism and keep the Sabbath, shall be eligible to membership on the Board of Directors, and the Board of Trustees.” However, since the National Board of Directors was to possess no real authority in governing the Yeshiva, being solely an honorary group, there were Yeshiva board members who favored the selection of some non-Orthodox Jews.

Revel did not oppose the selection of nonobservant Jews for the proposed board, but he did take a stand against electing those who publicly identified with Reform Judaism. On October 17, 1928, Revel wrote to Levy:

When however, it is contemplated to place men who have not merely left traditional Judaism, but have gone over to Reform Judaism, in positions of seeming leadership in the Yeshiva, quite other and more serious considerations must be faced. The fact that the National Board of Directors lacks authority will differentiate

its members from other officers of the Yeshiva only in the eyes of those close to the Yeshiva; the general public will draw no such distinction; membership on such a Board marks an official relationship and definite recognition by the Yeshiva. . . .

There is no denial of the conflict between traditional Judaism and that destruction which proclaims itself Reform, which cuts into the vitals of our faith; to name men active in that camp among Yeshiva leadership, will inevitably alienate many of our old friends who regard the new physical and spiritual expansion of the Yeshiva as the coming of a renewed vitality in our perennial faith—and at the same time will fail to win the respect of some of those we may be seeking, who, without your lofty ideals, will regard such action as admission of our inability to move ahead without them. We might indeed end in assuring maintenance by destroying what we most desire to maintain. [2]

The question of membership on the proposed National Board of Directors was resolved when the Yeshiva board accepted the final ruling of Rabbis Margolies and Revel, which stated: “that as long as a man is wholeheartedly in spirit with the Yeshiva, which is the main factor in question, he is eligible.”³

The *mechitza* problem is the subject of a responsum to a student who justified his accepting a position which “is Orthodox in every way, except that on the holidays men and woman sit together.” Revel responded:

It grieves me that you have misled yourself . . . and you try to justify that which is forbidden by our sages. It is in a case such as this that the Prophet exclaimed, “Behold, I will enter into judgment with thee, because thou sayest: ‘I have not sinned’” [Jeremiah 2:35], What hope is there for one who considers himself pure, and says that that which our great sages forbade through all the generations is permitted and sanctified.

. . . Therefore I hope that you will do everything in your power to influence your congregants . . . to emulate the Holy Temple once again in their synagogue, by separating the men and the women, and not to continue to isolate themselves from all the holy congregations of all generations. [3]

Another responsum pertaining to synagogue structure discussed the removal of the bimah from the middle of the synagogue to the front:

In relation to your question . . . the removal of the *bimah* from the middle of the synagogue is prohibited, and you have already referred to Maimonides on Prayer, chapter 11:3. It seems that Maimonides' reading of the text of the Tosefta on Megillah, chapter 3, required that the *bimah* be in the middle. Also see the *Shulchan Aruch: Orach Chaim*, at the end of chapter 150, and its commentaries.

. . . I am confident that the fine Jews of your city will listen to your advice and will not depart from the path of our holy fathers. [4]

The problem of the removal of the deceased from one grave to another was also encountered by the Yeshiva graduates. The *Shulchan Aruch: Yoreh Deah* explicitly forbade this act (chapter 363). A Yeshiva rabbinical graduate inquired whether he could permit the reinterment in the case of the remains of a suicide, for whom the laws of "respecting the dead" are inapplicable. The rabbi felt that he could not, since after twelve months of burial the remains of a suicide are treated like those of any other person. Revel responded:

You have correctly stated the law in relation to removing the remains of a suicide since it is especially difficult to establish today that a person truly committed suicide in accordance with the definition the latter sages give to suicide. Certainly, is this true when so much time has elapsed and the deceased has been forgiven. There is no reason to be lenient in this case. [5]

A related question was asked by a Yeshiva graduate when a deceased person was mistakenly buried in a grave which was reserved for a different party. The true owner of the grave insisted that it be vacated, and the rabbi questioned the permissibility of fulfilling the request. Revel's answer read:

You know how stringent our Sages were in prohibiting the removal of the dead from one grave to another. However, if it is impossible to reconcile the owner of the grave to this, and the interment in his grave was definitely without his knowledge, then it would be permissible to remove the remains, although it isn't proper. I am sure that you will do everything in your power to avoid this outcome. [6]

Relationships between Jew and Gentile are also reflected in his responsa. In 1928 George Matheson, the dean of Saint John's College School of Law, wrote to Revel:

The traditional diploma of St. John's College has engraved in the scroll work on the top, a cross. Some of our Jewish students seem to be of the opinion that their religion forbids them to accept this diploma. . . . If the Jewish religion prohibits our Jewish graduates from accepting this diploma, I am naturally anxious to know about it immediately.

In response, Revel wrote:

The question as to the acceptance of such a diploma is not free from complications. During the Middle Ages the cross was a specific Christian symbol, often an object of worship; as such, it was, and is, scrupulously to be avoided by Jews who adhere to Jewish law and tradition. Where the cross is without a figure, however, and where—as I suppose in this case—it is not a religious symbol but serves to indicate the origin of the College and the auspices of its inception, the Law does not definitely forbid the acceptance of a diploma so enscrolled. [7]

Inquiry was also made of Revel pertaining to the permissibility of using “the blood of a non-Jew in a blood transfusion.” He responded: “There is nothing in Jewish law on this matter. According to the general principles of Jewish law, however, if a competent physician advises such action, it is not only permitted, but required. [8]”

The Adath Jeshurun Congregation of Ottawa, Canada, submitted the following vexing question:

A Jewish resident of the city of Ottawa, Ont., has been married to a non Jewish (catholic) woman for nigh on to twenty-five years. There are, it is believed, six or seven children of this union. All of the children, male and female, were brought up as strict catholics.

The individual in question, annually for some years attended services in our Synagogue during the High Holydays.

His wife died two or three years ago. He remarried to a Jewish woman, whose family are residents of this city and members of the Adath Jeshurun.

It is needless to say that his children, by his first wife, follow the religion of their late mother, i.e., Catholicism.

The individual under review has recently made application for membership with this congregation.

In view of the above, might I request that you will be good enough to render a decision whether the party concerned may be admitted as a member. . . .

Revel responded:

Nothing, of course, should stand in the way of true repentance, which seeks to atone for, and redeems, any wrongs.

The conscience of the community must speak in such a matter, always making sure that the spirit of Judaism guides, working in the ways of the Almighty, extending generous help to one who sincerely desires to return to true Jewish life. [9]

Revel's mastery of the entire range of rabbinic literature was well known, and scholars turned to him with requests for sources for the topics they were investigating. Two extant such responses are to Dr. F. Schneersohn of New York detailing the Jewish sources that discuss the medical profession [10] and to Rabbi Leopold Greenwald of Columbus, Ohio, listing the sources that debate whether the Jews offered sacrifices after the destruction of the Second Temple. [11]

2. *Pilpulistic Novellas*

Revel continued the pilpulistic traditions of the Telshe Yeshiva, which he had briefly attended. This method of study has been described as follows:

The dialectic method known as *pilpul* flourished in the Talmudic academies. . . . The student was not content with comprehending a given text, but through comparing it with other passages in the Talmud, sought to deduce certain general principles and new formulations. Every student aspired to original creativity.⁴

Many times hypothetical situations were created to test the relevancy of deduced talmudic principles. In many of his published writings Revel revealed his dexterity as a pilpulist. A unique characteristic of his writings was his citing of nonrabbinic sources,

such as Philo and Josephus, even in his pilpulistic and talmudic investigations. Although his studies were entirely in the traditional pilpulistic style, he did not hesitate to enumerate and clarify these nonrabbinic sources as well.

2.1 Autopsies [39]⁵

In the first issue of the *Yagdil Torah* (December 1915) published in the United States, Rabbi Elazar Preil began a discussion of the permissibility of autopsies being performed by Kohanim, who are enjoined from defiling themselves through contact with the dead. Revel continued the discussion of the points delineated by Preil. Revel clearly established that although we cannot be certain of the legitimacy of the claim of Aaronic descent today, nevertheless, Kohanim must act as though they definitely possess total priestly sanctity. Revel, however, did state:

Perhaps it would be permissible for a *Kohen* [studying medicine] to be a present in a room where a non-Jewish corpse is being dissected. By watching the dissection, the *Kohen* could learn about the human body. This may be permissible in accordance with the principle of “double doubt” since perhaps the law is in accordance with the Rabad that a *Kohen* is no longer enjoined from ritual impurity today [when there is no Temple], and perhaps the law also is . . . that a non-Jewish corpse does not transmit impurity through the principle of “tents” [the mere presence of a non-Jewish corpse in a room does not render the *Kohen* ritually impure].⁶

In his *Ozar Dinim Uminbagim* (Digest of Jewish Laws and Customs), Judah Eisenstein distorted this viewpoint and claimed that Revel permitted a *Kohen* to actually perform the dissection.⁷ Eisenstein’s viewpoint was vehemently opposed by subsequent articles in the *Yagdil Torah*. Eisenstein later defended his outlook in his *Ozar Zikbronothai* (Autobiography and Memoirs), although he no longer cited Revel as a source for his ruling.⁸

2.2 Priestly Impurity [40, 41, 43, 44, 46]

In subsequent issues of *Yagdil Torah* Revel discussed priestly impurity after the destruction of the Second Temple. He detailed the viewpoint of those who held that sacrifices, particularly that

of the paschal lamb, were still offered after the Temple's desolation. He also analyzed whether Jews residing in the Diaspora were still obligated to undertake the triennial pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Revel showed that Philo's writings indicate that they did, while Josephus seems to suggest that they did not. Revel held that only those residing near the Holy Land made these pilgrimages.

2.3 Ritual Impurity of the Diaspora [47, 61, 74]

In *Yagdil Torah* Revel also investigated the rabbinic decree of Levitical impurity on all lands outside of Israel. He later summarized his conclusions in articles which appeared in the *Jewish Forum* and *Horeb*. He held that this decree was originally enacted to prevent mass migration from Israel during the bloody Hasmonean wars against the Syrians. Many people, including the Chasidim (pious followers of the Pharisaic tradition) fled the Holy Land during this trying period. Since they were meticulous in their observance of the laws of ritual purity, the decree of impurity abated their emigration. Revel also felt that this new law, enacted during the time of Jose ben Joezer, was also designed to curb the influence of the Onias temple, which was constructed in Lower Egypt around 160 B.C.E. Whether Onias was permitted to construct a local temple is debated by the sages. "There is no doubt, however, that they viewed with great disfavor the attempt to set up a temple where sacrifices were offered, as endangering the unity of Israel and the universal recognition of the Sanctuary in Jerusalem." By declaring the lands of the Diaspora Levitically unclean, they made it impossible to offer sacrifices at the Onias temple, and they "minimized the danger of having additional temples built in other parts of the Diaspora." Once the war ended and the influence of the Onias temple was nullified, the decree lost its *raison d'être*, and it was abrogated by the rabbis.

"Eighty years before the destruction of the Temple it was found necessary to revive this decree and to extend the scope of its operation." At this time Herod celebrated the completion of the city of Caesarea on the Mediterranean coast. It was his intention to turn his new magnificent city, filled with idolatrous temples, into the pagan rival of Jerusalem. To avoid mass migra-

tion of Jews to Caesarea, the original decree of Levitical impurity on lands outside of Israel was reinstated. But this time it was expanded to include a city within the Holy Land, Caesarea, which was truly a “pagan city, a ‘Little Rome’ built by a Jewish King on Jewish soil.” After the death of Herod the decree against Caesarea was removed, but it continued to remain in force in relation to land which was actually outside the geographical boundaries of Israel.

2.4 Certainty and Assumption [48]

In *Yagdil Torah* Revel next discussed the validity of an assumption in determining civil or monetary cases. He stressed that we certainly cannot impose obligations solely on the basis of assumptions. Nevertheless, when the assumption only strengthens or clarifies a fact, then we may utilize its inferences to create a monetary obligation. Revel conclusively showed that this was the viewpoint of the Rabad. Although Maimonides ruled that this is not so and the Rabad failed to state his strictures on this ruling, Revel nevertheless held that his silence is not to be interpreted as acquiescence to Maimonides’ viewpoint (*Nizkei Mamon*, 8:14).

2.5 Material Transformations of Forbidden Substances and Impurities [49]

The next pilpulistic subject probed by Revel was the status accorded forbidden or impure objects after their physical structures are changed or modified. If forbidden substances are only prohibited by the Torah in their original basic forms, then when there is a variation in the form of the substance (such as when a solid is changed into a liquid), is the new object consequently permissible? Or does the forbidden element constantly remain prohibited even in its new form?

Revel illustrated that the rule of “that which comes from the impure is impure” applies only where there is a material issue from the forbidden object, such as in the case of milk from an unclean animal. Such a product is definitely prohibited. But perhaps when a new form of the original object itself appears, it may still be permitted—such as the rule regarding honey produced by bees. Revel showed that under certain circumstances it indeed

loses its previous forbidden status, particularly in accordance with the opinion of an early authority, Rabenu Jonah.

2.6 Property Renunciation on the Sabbath [50]

Revel next analyzed the permissibility of declaring an object *res nullius* (ownerless, *hefker*) on the Sabbath. If declaring an object ownerless is tantamount to giving charity, then it would be permitted—just as it is permissible to pledge charity on the Sabbath. However, if the transaction of *hefker* is considered a business venture, then it is prohibited on the Sabbath. He also explained that this query would be interwoven with the problem of the effectiveness of declaring an object *res nullius* only for poor people (Peah 6:1). According to Bet Shammai, who held that *hefker* is good even when only for impoverished individuals, then *hefker* operates along the principles of charity and is valid on the Sabbath. According to Bet Hillel's viewpoint that *hefker* must be for all persons, then it is solely a transaction of acquisition and it is forbidden on the Sabbath.

2.7 Sacrificial Slaughtering [51, 57]

Revel next discussed the eligibility requirements for a person wishing to slaughter an animal in the Temple. A non-Kohen was permitted to perform the slaughter ritual except in the case of the “red heifer.” Nevertheless, Revel concluded that only the Kohanim were encouraged to carry out this ritual; this was the practice because Kohanim were experts in the slaughter ritual and also because they were definitely in a state of “ritual purity.” Nevertheless, a non-Kohen could slaughter his own sacrifice during the daily Temple service if he so desired. While analyzing this topic, Revel also explained a perplexing passage in which Philo claimed that only on Passover eve were non-Kohanim permitted to slaughter animals in the Temple. Revel explained that Philo made this mistake because during the year non-Kohanim were not encouraged to slaughter. However, on Passover eve, when they were definitely “ritually pure” and there were thousands of sacrifices to be slaughtered, the non-Kohanim did slaughter their own animals. Nevertheless, the non-Kohanim were not enjoined from slaughtering their own sacrifices all year, as Philo had erroneously stated.

2.8 Rabbinic Nullification of Matrimony [54]

Issues raised by a rabbinical colleague in a responsum concerning a vexing problem of adultery were also discussed by Revel. A penitent woman confessed to the rabbi that she had committed adultery, not knowing that by such a misdeed she had prohibited herself to her husband. Afterward she also confessed to her husband, who doubted her story but still remained troubled about the continuation of their marriage. Revel elaborated on his colleagues' analysis of the principle that "the Rabbis annul his betrothal" retroactively to the moment of the marriage ceremony. The application of this regulation here would have averted all penalties, since she would now be considered unwed at the time of her illicit relationship. However, Revel concluded that this principle could not be utilized under these circumstances, since the sole intention of those involved would only be to avoid the penalties for an adulterous relationship.

In discussing the concept of nullification of matrimony, Revel also explained that the previous acts of cohabitation between the now-separated couple are not to be considered promiscuous, since the husband originally had good intentions and did not cohabit in promiscuity. For this reason the blessings recited at the marriage ceremony are also not retroactively considered "blessings in vain," since at that time the woman was permitted to marry the man.

2.9 The Distinction of Prominence [60]

In 1923 the first issue of *Ner Maarovi* was published by the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary. This initial issue was dedicated to Revel, and he contributed a detailed analysis of the Babylonian Talmud's declaration "that an important man is different." This rule generally indicated that such a person must act stringently even when Jewish Law allowed for leniencies. Revel showed that this principle was only applicable when there were traces of stringent opinions concerning the issue in question. However, when the sages were totally lenient, then the regulation was never employed. He also illustrated that the Palestinian Talmud rejected this principle and never decreed any additional stringencies for the "important man." Maimonides ruled in ac-

cordance with the Palestinian Talmud and likewise made no reference to this concept in his code.

2.10 Majority Rule in Civil and Capital Cases [63]

In the second issue of *Ner Maarovi*, Revel published a brief article on the principle that the “majority” is legally equal to an “entirety.” While many previous commentaries discussed this issue on the assumption that we accept the majority as a legal entirety only in capital and not in civil cases, Revel showed that there is no difference in the basic rule in both instances. The distinction is rather in the circumstances of application. In capital cases the witnesses have to testify and establish all the facts that can be delineated by humans. If after their testimony the judges still remain in doubt about certain details, such as whether the victim was critically ill before his murder, then the principle that the majority of people are not critically ill is utilized to supplement the testimony of the witnesses. However, in civil cases the judges can generally require the witnesses to testify to all the aspects of the case in question, and there is no need to rely upon the regulation that the majority is equal to an entirety.

2.11 Retrospective Designation in Annulling an Idolatrous Object [66]

The first issue of the rabbinic journal *HaPardes* appeared in 1927, and it contained an entry by Revel explaining a passage in the *Or Zanua* which permitted the utilization of the Gentile’s share of an idolatrous object after he renounced the idol, although he previously owned the article in partnership with a Jew. This ruling was based on the assumption that “retrospective designation” could establish which part of the object truly belonged to the Gentile. Although idol worship is a Torah prohibition and “retrospective designation” is generally not effective in such cases, Revel showed that in this instance it is operative due to the principle of “double doubt.” It may actually be the Gentile’s true share, and even if it is the Jew’s portion, it may be that he only worshiped in accordance with the non-Jew’s concept of this idol. It therefore was simultaneously abolished for the Jew when the non-Jew nullified the idol.

2.12 Sequence in Tithing [72]

In a later issue of *HaPardes* Revel contributed an article which elucidated a difficult Maimonidean passage in his Mishnah commentary which stated that it is still acceptable when the second tithing is separated before the first tithing. Although this viewpoint seemingly contradicted other Mishnaic texts, Revel illustrated that Maimonides' viewpoint was based upon a paragraph in the *Sifrei* to Deuteronomy.

2.13 Transfer of Tribal Property [73]

In the 1934 Teachers Institute yearbook, *Nir*, Revel discussed the permissibility of a woman marrying outside her tribe. This was forbidden for the woman of the initial generation after the emancipation from Egyptian slavery, since they were commanded to retain their land holdings intact. Subsequent generations were not enjoined from tribal intermarriage. Nevertheless, the sages stated that a deceased woman's family should redeem the fields she left to her husband so her real estate would return to her tribe. Revel illustrated that this was customary, although not demanded by the law. Philo and Josephus therefore mistakenly stated that a woman who had inherited land should only marry within her tribe because this was a widespread custom and they were not acquainted with the original rabbinic tradition.

2.14 Trustworthiness of Witnesses [77]

In honor of the seventieth birthday of Rabbi Bernard Levinthal of Philadelphia, a jubilee volume was published in 1935. Revel contributed an article in which he analyzed the Maimonidean concept of the "two witnesses" required by the Torah in the adjudication of court cases. Revel illustrated that Maimonides held that the two witnesses are not necessarily accepted because the judges feel that their testimony is plausible and reasonable. It is rather a divine decree that the two witnesses must be believed, even if the judges are not intuitively convinced of the veracity of their statements.

Afterward Revel discussed the rule of "one witness." He questioned whether one witness is unacceptable because he is not considered a witness at all; or whether he is disqualified because the

law requires two witnesses, even though he is still considered a witness. Revel showed that this very question was a source of disagreement between the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds.

2.15 An Analysis of Two Laws [78]

In *Horeb* Revel discussed the status of the “Canaanite slave.” He showed that the Palestinian sages held that the Canaanite slave had to observe the Torah’s commandments by virtue of his own inherent obligations after undergoing circumcision and ritual immersion. In contradistinction, the Babylonian sages felt that the Canaanite slave’s religious obligations were only derived from his ownership by a Jew and that the slave himself was not intrinsically obligated. Revel showed that after the destruction of the Second Temple, the secular authorities limited the purchase of slaves by Palestinian Jews. The relatively few Palestinian slaves during this period could only become part of the Jewish household, therefore, if they voluntarily and wholeheartedly converted and accepted the Torah. Such slaves were respectfully treated by their fellow Jews. In Babylon, where the purchase of slaves was unhampered by the secular government, the many slaves possessed by the Jews were generally considered as mere chattel. They did not observe the Torah out of conviction and commitment, but rather because of coercion by their masters.

In the second half of this article, he reviewed the origin of the punishment delineated in the Mishnah that “one who commits murder without witnesses is placed in a cell and fed with ‘bread of adversity and water of affliction’ ” (Sanhedrin, 81B). The Talmud explains that he is fed these baneful foods so that he will perish. Revel showed that this punishment was not one of those imposed by a bet din. Rather, it was one of the emergency measures that the Israeli king could employ to maintain order, and this Mishnah therefore referred solely to monarchical authority. After first enumerating the laws pertaining to the bet din, the Mishnah now recorded the jurisdiction of the king and his mode of punishment.

2.16 Restoration of Semicha (Rabbinical Ordination) [79]

An analysis of the unsuccessful 1538 attempt of R. Jacob Berab to reinstitute “authentic rabbinical ordination” was published by

Revel in the 1939 issue of *Horeb*. He traced the continuity of the “chain of ordination” and illustrated that it was not abolished in Palestine until 1062, upon the death of the gaon, R. Daniel b. Azariah. Until this period there were always sages and Torah scholarship in Palestine, and “fines” were imposed by Palestinian courts, since the judges possessed “authentic ordination.”

Revel then discussed Maimonides’ ruling that this ordination could be reintroduced “if all the sages residing in the Land of Israel would agree to appoint and ordain judges” (Sanhedrin, 4:11). Revel held that this was definitely Maimonides’ viewpoint, and that the concluding phrase of the passage—“that this matter still must be resolved”—was a later emendation to the original Maimonidean text.

Revel also felt that the opposition of R. Levi Ibn Habib to the attempted renewal was not only because the Jerusalem sages were not consulted from the outset, but also due to Ibn Habib’s fears that its reinstatement would renew hopes of an imminent appearance of the Messiah that might result in a false messianic movement. Indeed, only nine years before, Solomon Molcho had begun his perfidious activities in Jerusalem.

2.17 Sacrifice on a Local Altar [82]

In a posthumous article published in *Eidenu*, the Revel memorial volume which was issued by the students of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary in 1942, Revel analyzed the status of the non-Kohen who was permitted to officiate at a “minor altar.” He questioned whether this was allowed because the sacrificial ritual at a minor altar did not require an officiating Kohen or whether it was permitted because every Jew retained some slight status as a Kohen since the entire Jewish nation was originally considered “a kingdom of priests”—Kohanim (Exodus 19:6). Revel showed that there were many authorities who held that all Jews possess some sanctity of the priesthood, and therefore the ritual at the minor altar was specifically designated for the non-Kohen.

The question of whether Kohanim are “divine emissaries” or “our emissaries” also depends upon this inquiry. If only Kohanim possess priestly sanctity, then they are “divine emissaries.” If, however, they are considered “our emissaries” and agents, then

sanctification must also exist in the non-Kohanim, since agency is only the result of delegating one's own power.

3. *Philosophical Essays*

Although these articles are basically pilpulistic in style and content, they also contain many nonrabbinic sources. The method and approach utilized by Revel in these studies are particularly representative of his efforts to achieve a meaningful harmonious balance between the traditional pilpul embellished by disciplined modern scholarship.

3.1 Thought and Deed [53, 55, 58]

In these articles, which appeared in *Yagdil Torah*, Revel discussed the rationale behind the Torah's prohibitions. He probed whether they were only forbidden because of the divine decree or whether they were inherently harmful. On the basis of this query, he explained numerous talmudic disagreements between the sages. Abaye and Rava differ on whether "an act which Divine Law forbids still is legally effective when consummated" (Temurah, 4B). Abaye said it has legal effect since the transgressor is punished. Revel explained that Abaye held that the Torah's prohibitions are inherently harmful, since the sinner is punished for the evil results of his misdeed. Rava, however, said that the act has no legal effect; punishment is nevertheless still imposed because of the violation of God's will. Rava, therefore, held that the mere transgression of the divine command merits penalization even if the act does not have any evil consequence.

At the conclusion of this study, Revel appended a history of attempts to understand and analyze the Torah's precepts. He listed fifty-six instances where the Bible itself specified the reasons for specific commandments. Revel showed that the sages generally regarded this as a worthy study, and only deprecated it when it resulted in negligence of observance of the commandments, such as occurred in Alexandria as a result of the allegorical interpretations of Philo.

3.2 Torah and Tradition [56]

The final new topic examined by Revel in the *Yagdil Torah* concerned the authority and jurisdiction of prophets, prophecy, and

the canonized prophetic volumes. He illustrated that prophets could not determine or introduce phases of Jewish Law solely on the basis of prophecy. Their authority in these areas was the same as that of all Torah sages. Nevertheless, prophecy is utilized to establish facts which otherwise are unclear, even if the clarified details afterwards result in changes in the application of Jewish Law.

Revel also examined many prophetic sources cited by the Talmud to establish points of Jewish Law. He held that these instances only have the status of rabbinic institution and are not considered Pentateuchal, unless the Talmud has specified otherwise. Revel's view differed from that of Rabbi Zevi Chayes, whose viewpoint Revel analyzed before arriving at his own conclusions.

He also analyzed the role of the talmudic "heavenly voice" in deciding questions of ritual. Revel explained that a heavenly voice could not be relied upon to decide the law, but it could be accepted in determining the exact circumstances of the event in question. Nevertheless, he illustrated that Bet Shammai and the "pious men of old" did follow the dicta of "heavenly voices."

II. SCIENTIFIC JEWISH SCHOLARSHIP

As a result of the late eighteenth-century Enlightenment in West European Jewish communities, the study of *chochmat Yisrael* or "scientific Jewish scholarship" gradually developed. This study advocated the application of the Western scientific method to Jewish history and literature. While East European scholars studied rabbinic literature for its intrinsic message and instruction, West European scholars attempted to reconstruct the history and social milieu of the rabbinic tradition. In the West attempts were made to detail the accessories and extraneous elements of the Torah and Talmud. In the East the study of Torah was an internal experience for its students and observers.

Most Orthodox scholars initially opposed the new method of study because it did not place due stress on the traditional method of talmudic textual study and analysis. This attitude was epitomized in the remark traditionally attributed to the famed Rabbi Jacob Ettlinger (1798–1871) of Altona: "If you wish to know what brand of tobacco Rashi [Rabbi Solomon b. Isaac, 1040–1105]

used, ask Leopold Zunz [1794–1886]. If you wish to know the interpretation of Rashi’s writings, ask me.”

There was also objection to the new method of study because many of its leading advocates were non-Orthodox. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, many Orthodox West European scholars adapted the new method to complement the traditional mode of talmudic study. In 1873 Rabbi Ezriel Hildesheimer opened the Orthodox Rabbinical Seminary of Berlin, which was dedicated to blending traditional and Western scholarship. This seminary functioned until it was closed by the Nazi government on November 10, 1938. During the sixty-five years of its existence the “Hildesheimer Seminary” succeeded in training rabbis who were both devoutly Orthodox and masters of Western scholarship.

Revel’s attitude to *chochmat Yisrael* is aptly expressed in a letter he wrote to Rabbi Leopold Greenwald on April 20, 1933: “I am happy to learn that you are also continuing your research in the area of ‘Scientific Jewish Scholarship’ since its current advocates are strangers to the traditional Jewish spirit. If we [Orthodox scholars] keep silent any longer, we shall be judged as sinners.” This attitude guided Revel in his own writings, and he constantly proved the compatibility of “scientific Jewish scholarship” and Orthodox Jewish tradition. His publications in this area are also permeated with discussions of rabbinical sources, and numerous talmudic and related sources are cited.

1. *Karaitica*

1.1 The Karaite Halachah and Its Relation to Sadducean, Samaritan, and Philonian Halachah [33, 36, 37]

Revel’s primary scientific scholarly interest was Karaism. His constant study and research in this area developed from his doctoral dissertation, which was published by Dropsie College in 1913, having previously appeared in the *Jewish Quarterly Review*. In this work Revel refuted Abraham Geiger’s thesis that the Karaite halachah was related to the earlier Samaritan-Sadducean halachah, and that they both represented the original halachic

tradition. Geiger supported his theory by citing passages in the *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, which agreed with the Sadducean and Karaite traditions and contradicted the rabbinic tradition. Revel illustrated that numerous other deviations of the *Targum Jonathan* also disputed the Karaite tradition, in addition to deviating from the Orthodox tradition. He wrote:

If the deviations of Ps.-Jon. from our Halakah go back to ancient tradition related to Sadduceism, then we should expect the Karaites—a later name of Sadduceism, according to this view—to be in agreement with such deviations of Ps.-Jon. The following examination of the main Halakic divergences of Ps.-Jon. from our Halakah and of the view of the Karaites on these points will show how untenable this view is.

Revel next examined the many differences between the Sadducees and the Pharisees, and he proved that Karaite halachah generally agreed with the Pharisean tradition in the disputed issues. However, he did feel that Philo's writings influenced the Karaite traditions. He cited twenty-two instances of agreement between Philonian and Karaite traditions, in contradiction to the rabbinic tradition. For example, the Karaites widely deviated from tradition in the laws of homicide. According to tradition, murder is punishable only when felonious intent to kill has been proven, and there was also antecedent warning immediately before the commission of the crime and its acknowledgment by the offender. The Karaites did not require forewarning before any crime, and they considered murder punishable even in the absence of intent. They also considered accessories, accomplices, and counselors to murder punishable equally with the principal. These Karaite viewpoints approached Philo's statement that mere intent to kill, even when not executed, is punishable by death.

Revel also showed that there was a strong affinity between Philo and the Karaites in marriage laws. One such example was that

Philo and the Karaites also agree in the interpretation of Lev. 21, 14. Philo (II, 229) interprets this law to mean that the highpriest must choose his wife from priestly lineage. That this is also the interpretation of most Karaites was already observed by Azariah de Rossi.

He concluded his doctoral dissertation by illustrating that the writings of Philo were accessible to the early Karaites, and Philo thus influenced “not only the theological views of the first Karaite philosophers (Benjamin Nahawendi and his followers), but also their interpretation of biblical laws and their practices.”

1.2 An Epistle of Saadya Gaon Recently Discovered [45, 59]

A fifteenth-century codex brought to America by Dr. Nahum Slouschz of the Yeshiva faculty served as a source for two Revel articles. Slouschz purchased the codex in Marrakech, Morocco, and among its writings was an epistle which bore the superscription of Rav Saadya Gaon (892–942). The epistle was a homily of guidance for the rabbinic community, and it emphatically opposed the Karaites. In an article in the *Jewish Forum* Revel established the validity of this superscription and proved that the epistle was written by Saadya to early Jewish settlers in Spain to admonish them against the Karaite heresy, which had already infected Spanish Jewry. In the first volume of *Dvir*, Revel published an edited and annotated version of the text of the epistle.

1.3 *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* on the Torah [64]

Revel published his lengthiest article in the *Ner Maarovi* in 1924. In it he continued his study of the *Targum Jonathan* begun in his doctoral dissertation. He illustrated that this Aramaic Palestinian Targum was written at a later date than the Babylonian *Targum Onkelos*, since Hebrew was constantly utilized in Palestine and there was consequently little need for a translation of the Bible. Toward the close of the eighth century, however, when the Karaitic heresy began to spread in Palestine, this new Targum was edited to combat the Karaites. The translation was named *Targum Jonathan* because its explanations were according to the Palestinian teachings and traditions, particularly those of Rabbi Jonathan ben Uziel. This theory accounted for the many rabbinical commandments and traditions which were accorded biblical status by this Targum in order to nullify the abrogations of these laws by the Karaites. Therefore, for example, this Targum did not mention any of the manifold laws concerning the Sabbath except for the command to rejoice on the Sabbath and the prohibition of *Techum*, which limited the distance that one could

walk to two thousand cubits outside of a city. Although most authorities considered these to be rabbinical laws, the Targum seemingly granted them biblical status. This was done because the Karaites were extremely rigorous in their interpretations of the Sabbath laws. Their early authorities forbade the leaving of one's house on the Sabbath, and they did not consider it a day for rejoicing. Instead, many Karaite scholars advised fasting on the Sabbath.

In opposition to these views, this Targum specifically mentioned the rabbinic laws of *Techum* and *Oneg Shabbat* (rejoicing on the Sabbath). Revel also explained that since the Targum was of Palestinian origin it followed Palestinian traditions, and therefore often contradicted Babylonian rulings.

1.4 Philonian Halachah [69]

In the *Jewish Forum* Revel continued his investigation of the similarities between the Philonian and Karaite traditions by citing additional instances of their agreement. Among these was Philo's view that the sole purpose of marriage was for propagation. Anan, the recognized founder of Karaism, also held this opinion, and his followers therefore forbade cohabitation during pregnancy.

1.5 Halachic Difference between Babylon and Palestine, and the Source of the Karaite Law [71]

In the first issue of *Horeb*, Revel analyzed the many instances where Karaite practices agreed with the Palestinian customs in contrast to the Babylonian traditions. Karaite scholars had previously claimed that their stringent deviations influenced the Palestinian Jews to adopt similar strict practices, despite the lenient rulings of Babylonian Jewry in these very same areas. Revel showed that the Palestinian customs were much older than the Karaite schism, and they rather influenced the Karaites who later settled in Palestine. He demonstrated that the Karaite viewpoint that the "laws of purity and impurity" were still applicable was the result of Palestinian influence, for many Palestinians continued to observe these laws even after the destruction of the Temple. Babylonian Jewry, however, did not rigorously observe these laws after the fall of the Temple.⁹

1.6 Differences in Customs [80, 81]

In a posthumous article published in the 1941 *Horeb*, Revel continued his analysis of the differences between the Babylonian and Palestinian traditions. He illustrated that the Babylonian gaonim opposed Palestinian practices such as pouring the blood of circumcision on the earth, standing during the public reading of the Torah and the recitation of blessings, and the audible recital of the *Amidah* prayer. These customs were opposed because they were also practiced by the Karaites, who had copied them from their Palestinian neighbors.

This article concluded with an examination of the customs of the Palestinian pietists, which were also emulated by the Palestinian Karaites. Among these were the attempts of the pious to avoid the Sabbath birth of children and to discourage marriage with one's niece, lest it lead to the abrogation of the levirate law.

2. *Antirabbinic Deviations*

2.1 Some Antitraditional Laws of Josephus [62]

In the *Jewish Quarterly Review* Revel analyzed some of the deviations found in the writings of Josephus. Several of these interpretations agree with the views of Philo, and Josephus was probably influenced by Philo's writings. Many of his deviations were due to Josephus's desire to gain the approval and admiration of his gentile readers. Revel also claimed that these antitraditional laws were also the result of Josephus's ignorance of the oral tradition. Revel wrote:

The only explanation is the fact that at the time Josephus wrote his work, he had been away for almost a quarter of a century from Palestine and his original meager knowledge of Hebrew sources was, as a result of his long stay in Rome and estrangement from his people, more depreciated, the oral law not having been committed to writing as yet.

Due to his unfamiliarity with the oral tradition, Josephus often followed the elementary interpretation (*peshat*) of the Torah. On occasion the Karaites agreed with Josephus's viewpoints,

since they also followed the *pesbat* instead of the rabbinic tradition.

2.2 Idols [67]

In a *Jewish Forum* article, Revel documented the stringent Jewish attitude against all forms of idol worship. However, in contrast to the rabbinic tradition Josephus wrote: “Let no one blaspheme gods which other cities esteem as such; nor may anyone steal what belongs to strange temples; nor take away the gifts that are dedicated to any god.” Revel explained that Josephus promulgated these laws so that Jews would not endanger their lives by destroying the idols of the Roman legions, who occupied Palestine at that time. The dangerous consequences and ultimate futility of such actions prompted Josephus to issue his admonition.

2.3 False Oaths according to Philo and Maimonides [75]

In *Horeb* Revel probed the rulings of Philo and Maimonides regarding the individual who swore falsely through the utilization of the divine name. The rabbinic tradition stated that the punishment for this offense was “lashes,” while Philo decreed death for the transgressor. Revel showed that Philo agreed with the rabbinic tradition in that this sin represented a “desecration of God’s name,” and therefore Philo decreed the severe punishment because of this desecration. Maimonides also discussed the aspect of “desecration” intrinsically involved in swearing falsely, and he stated that even after being flogged, the sinner still had to expiate his desecrating God’s name.

2.4 Priestly Gifts according to Jubilees and Philo [76]

In an article in *Hedenu* Revel investigated the nontraditional statements in *The Book of Jubilees* and Philo that the animal separated for tithe was given to a Kohen. This contradicted the rabbinic tradition, which specified that the owner retained his rights to the animal and he sacrificed the tithe animal in the Temple. Revel showed that *The Book of Jubilees* and Philo followed the prevalent custom when they declared that the animals were given to Kohanim, who afterward sacrificed them in the Jerusalem Temple or raised them until they developed “disqualify-

ing blemishes.” Although tradition did not require that the animals be presented to Kohanim, many people found this method convenient since it relieved them of the responsibility of caring for the tithed animals; it subsequently became a widespread practice.

3. *Ethics*

3.1 Bachya Ibn Pakudah [25]

In 1909 Philadelphia’s *Jewish Exponent* published Revel’s master’s project on the life and philosophy of Bachya Ibn Pakudah (eleventh century), the author of a classic volume on ethics *Chovot Halevavot* (Duties of the Heart). Revel illustrated that although there were Arabic and Greek influences in Bachya’s writings, his basic philosophy was uniquely Jewish and the result of his own original concepts. He refuted the opinion that Bachya was an ascetic and demonstrated that passages in the *Chovot Halevavot* negated asceticism. Revel described Bachya:

An original thinker, a perfect master of the vast field of Rabbinical literature, Jewish Philosophy and thought, thoroughly familiar with the entire philosophical and scientific Arabic literature, as well as the natural sciences, Bachya combined in a rare degree great depth of emotion and piety, a vivid, poetical imagination, noble purpose and a style of stern yet genial simplicity with a penetrating intellect and pure thought. Every line of his book reveals to us his great personality and a soul of the utmost piety, touching humility and catholic sympathy. The simplicity of his work, its eloquent, vivid language, its many beautiful sayings and gems of thought from the works of the greatest non-Jewish thinkers, as well as its deep religious sentiments, loftiest moral principles and its constant quotations from and reference to the Bible, have made the “Duties of the Heart” what it was intended to be—a book for the people. After its translation into Hebrew by Judah ibn Tibbon in 1161, the “Duties of the Heart” became the most popular book among the Jews throughout the world. For nearly eight centuries it was a book of devotion and a source of spiritualization of the Jewish heart and helped to give religion its true setting as a spiritual force.

This article also contained a detailed summary of the *Chovot Halevavot*.

3.2 Jewish Ethics [65]

Years later in the *Jewish Forum* Revel once again published an analysis of Bachya's philosophy. This article included an introduction which discussed the many successful attempts made by the Jews to participate in the cultural milieu of the lands of their dispersion. Revel felt that Jewish thought was enriched and strengthened by this contact with surrounding cultures. Revel particularly analyzed the Golden Age (c. 900–1200 C.E.) of Spain, when the Jews, together with the Arabs, sustained science, literature, and poetry and advanced the study of philosophy and ethics. Revel wrote:

A star in the firmament of that Golden Age was Bachya Ibn Pakuda, known to us through his great ethical work, the "Duties of the Heart," in which he elucidates the religious and moral concepts of Judaism. He was the first to systematise Jewish ethical teachings, as based on reason as well as on the Bible and Tradition.

4. Popular Articles

4.1. *Jewish Exponent* Articles [1–3, 11, 12, 68]

The most widely known of his earliest articles was his entry on Abraham Lincoln [12], which was later reprinted in *Lincoln and the Jewish Spirit* [68]. Revel felt that Lincoln was not only the "first typical American" but also represented "the summation of all the noblest qualities of Judaism." Revel wrote that when the American nation succeeds in becoming "a model of justice, and through justice a pattern of peace to the world," it will be a realization of the Judaic tradition, and a tribute to "its greatest son, Lincoln."

Another non-Jew who was praised by Revel was John Milton [11]. Revel noted that "the public grandeur of his immortal poetry is but the reflection of a great soul." Milton was "strong in the conviction that the Bible is a direct revelation of God. . . . He became convinced that no matter how strange it may seem to the human mind, the word of the Bible must be accepted in a literal sense without sophistication or perversion." Revel attributed Milton's achievements to his departure "from the narrow system

of dogmatic Puritanism” and his interpretation of the Bible in a Hebraic spirit.

The father of Westernized Orthodoxy, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, was the subject of a stirring tribute by Revel [3]. Describing the social, political, economic, and intellectual conditions of the European communities at the start of the early nineteenth century, Revel showed how “Hirsch gave to the Jewish mind a new direction which it should retain for ages.” He concluded that Rabbi Hirsch was also in favor of reform, “but with him it was the reform of the Jews, not of Judaism. He wished to raise life to the exalted standard of the faith, not to reduce the faith to the exigencies of daily life.”

Concerned with the “constantly accelerated rapidity of Christian Science acceptance among Jews in this country,” Revel wrote an article designed to clearly differentiate between it and Judaism [2]. He illustrated that many of the fundamental principles of Christian Science were more akin to Christianity than to Jewish theology. He criticized the leaders of the so-called progressive Judaism for ignoring Jewish Law and its institutions. Revel pleaded for a “return to the pure Jewish dogmas and to the law in which they are embodied . . . inspiring to higher ideas and a stronger and more spiritual hope of redemption than Christian Science or any other religion can ever inspire.”

In his earliest American publication, Revel discussed the need for the new Hebrew encyclopedia, *Ozar Yisrael* [1]. He criticized the earlier *Jewish Encyclopedia*, published by Funk and Wagnalls Company in 1901, for including biblical criticism and conceptions of Jewish theology which were solely representative of Reform Jewish doctrines. Because of these shortcomings, the *Ozar Yisrael* was projected. Revel noted that

the *Ozar Yisrael* seems to have recognized many of the above stated faults of its older and richer sister, the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, and is based upon a new plan. It omits the critical view on the Bible. . . . It gives a minute account of the aspects and branches of Jewish law. An article of the same content is shorter in Hebrew than in English by nearly one third. There are certain things, especially in Jewish law, which cannot have an exact translation and many which lose very much by translation from the original He-

brew, and a Hebrew Encyclopedia has this advantage over one in any other language.

4.2 Encyclopedia Articles [4–10, 13–24, 26–32, 35, 70]

Revel's numerous contributions to the *Ozar Yisrael* reflect his varied interests and eclectic scholarship.¹⁰ His biographical and historical studies covered biblical, talmudic, Karaite, and modern personalities. The most contemporary of these were his entries on Rabbi Naftali Tsvi Berlin and Moses Aaron Dropsie. Revel commented on Rabbi Berlin's published writings and his activity in the Volozhin Yeshiva, which he headed. He demonstrated that among his responsa were six to American rabbis in New York, Baltimore, Cincinnati, and Charleston, reflecting the increase of East European immigration to the United States in the latter part of the nineteenth century. In his article on Dropsie, Revel stressed his devout Orthodoxy and his cherished desire to enhance Jewish and cognate studies in a school not designated exclusively for the training of rabbis.

Revel also contributed descriptive and conceptual articles on talmudic and related literature. In his entry on *lex talionis* ("eye for eye"—Exodus 21:24), Revel refuted the viewpoint that the Sadducees interpreted this verse in its literal sense, for the Talmud would certainly have recorded such a basic dispute between them and the Pharisees.

Revel also contributed an article to *The National Encyclopedia* on the term *am haarez* (ignoramus) as utilized in the Bible and Talmud. He illustrated the changes in its meaning over the centuries and concluded:

Though ignorant of the Law, the *am ha-arez* did not represent a schism or belong to a particular sect. There were *amme ha-arez* among the Sadducees (Niddah 34A) and the Samaritans (Berakhot 47B) as well as among the Pharisees (Horayot 3:8).

4.3 Review Essays [34, 38, 42]

Revel's interest in antitraditional laws is reflected by his comments on a previously published article by Judge Mayer Sulzberger

on “The Polity of the Ancient Hebrews”¹¹ [34]. Revel cited additional sources to validate Sulzberger’s viewpoints, among which this is most striking:

That insulting parents is punished with death is stated by Philo and Josephus. They seem to have derived this anti-traditional law from Deut. 27:16, having interpreted *Arur* [cursed], as suggested by Judge Sulzberger, to mean “death sentence.”

When Rudolf Leszynsky’s German volume on the Sadducees¹² appeared in 1912, Revel wrote a comprehensive review of it [42]. In his work, Leszynsky refuted Geiger’s view that the Sadducees were an aristocratic party of priests, descending from Zaddok, whose family had exercised priestly functions since the time of King Solomon. Leszynsky favored the view that the Sadducees were not a party but rather a religious sect which rejected the Oral Law, and he attributed most of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha to Sadducean authorship. While Revel agreed with some of the author’s points, he illustrated that many of his theories were incorrect. Revel wrote:

In general, anti-rabbinic laws in Jewish works of the Greek and Roman period do not necessarily imply Sadducean authorship. Pharisaic Judaism of that time was not entirely uniform and of one opinion on all minor questions of religious practice. At that time there was Alexandrian Jewry with its Onias Temple and its own ritual, and there were the Essenes.

When the noted American Mizrachi leader Rabbi Jacob Levinson published his commentary to Avot (Ethics of the Fathers) entitled *Mebkerai Avot*, in 1915, Revel’s review of the manuscript was appendixd to the volume [38]. Revel felt that originally Avot was specifically designed for the “disciples of the wise,” to guide them in the proper mode of deportment with their teachers, colleagues, and pupils. With the passage of time additional general ethical and moral teachings were added to this tractate. He also elaborated upon Levinson’s discussion of the relationship of Rabbi Joshua ben Levi to the Aggadah (nonlegal portions of rabbinic literature). Revel suggested that Rabbi Joshua utilized aggadic teachings to offset the teachings of contemporary Essene and Christian sects.

* * *

Although Revel's literary output was substantial, it reflected only a fraction of the many major publications he conceived and planned. His original aims were to compile an index to the responsa literature pertaining to Jewish Law and to write a commentary on the Palestinian Talmud. Later, he envisioned writing volumes on the halachic principles of the Talmud and on the *Targumei Ha-Torah* (Aramaic translations of the Torah).¹³ Owing to the constant pressures and strains engendered by his Yeshiva responsibilities, however, these major plans were not to be realized. An evaluation of his scholarship in *HaDoar* stated:

Few are the scientific articles that the deceased Dr. Revel published. However, from these few it is easily discernible how greatly he could have enriched scientific Jewish Scholarship. However, because he bore the burdens of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, he did not succeed in truly giving expression to the wealth of knowledge he possessed.

Therefore, "for future generations," *HaDoar* declared, he will remain essentially the "man of action and accomplishment" rather than the "man of theory and scholarship."¹⁴

APPENDIX I



*Dr. Revel's Articles and Reports Concerning
Yeshiva and Yeshiva College*

I. THE YESHIVA COLLEGE*

The Responsibility of American Jewry

The attention of American Jewry, concentrated upon the needs and avenues of philanthropy, at home and abroad, has until recently failed to turn to the fields of activity that are essential to the survival of the Jewish life and spirit in this land. Social service is a privilege and a duty to which our Jewish communities will continue to respond generously, but for which the need will, we hope, grow continuously less. The duty of the community toward its youth has meanwhile been neglected. Through our failure to inculcate in them a proper sense of our spiritual values, to acquaint them with the eternal verities of Judaism, with our history and destiny, the substance of Israel's spiritual and moral heritage is being squandered. Much of the genuine Jewish life in this land today persists because this generation was largely nursed at the true source of Judaism or was reared in an atmosphere of Torah-true Jewish life; but what bulwarks of faith and spiritual strength are we building for those who are to follow us? The light of the Torah and Jewish idealism is growing dim even in our sanctuaries.

Whence is to emanate the light that is to illumine the path of the coming generations? American Jewry has hitherto failed in its sacred

* This article was sent to newspapers across the country by the Yeshiva College Building Fund Committee on October 14, 1926.

task of transmitting to its youth, the message and meaning of Israel's Torah and culture, of acquainting them with the vital contributions of Judaism to the spiritual and moral values of mankind and with the ideals and aspirations of Universal Israel. As a result, a continuously increasing body of our youth is becoming estranged from Jewish life and ideals and worships at strange shrines, tending the vineyards of other cultures and causes, and neglecting their own. If we are to instil in our children a loving understanding of the faith and ideals of Judaism, which is our message to the world, we must bring the living message of Judaism, its laws and ideals to the entire Jewish community, through the proper education of our youth. It is knowledge, direct and sympathetic with the teachings and the comprehensive sources of Judaism, with its sanctioned modes of living; a sympathetic understanding of our past and hopes, the spiritual interpretation of the history and the destiny of our people, that will equip and strengthen our youth to meet, and sustain them to overcome, all the forces in their lives and their surroundings that are hostile to the spirit of Judaism, and will inspire them to carry on the life and message of Judaism and to maintain and enhance our spiritual heritage.

The Jewish Ideal of Education

The Yeshiva ideal of education is based upon the conviction that we serve our country and humanity best by training the growing generation of our youth to live in the ways of Israel's Torah, its moral standards and spiritual ideals. According to this conception, the ultimate aim of education is not the mere acquisition of knowledge and skill, the mere training of the intellect, nor the mere preparation of the individual for a particular task in life, but the building of character and the harmonious development of all the faculties of man. Its background is both spiritual and cultural; we cannot be content with the development of spiritual leaders alone, but must aim to equip all our Jewish youth with a deep understanding of the faith that through the ages has been Israel's abiding sustenance and shield. Its goal is to strengthen the Jewish will, to develop appreciation of nature and love and reverence for its Creator, to imbue man with spiritual aspiration and a love for all that lifts man to God, and to inspire love for fellowman, home and country. It stands for a close unification of the forces of education, and endeavors by simultaneous human and religious appeal, to quicken the moral consciousness and to widen the spiritual horizon of our youth.

The Hope of World Jewry

Not merely does the future of American Jewry depend upon this strengthening in our youth of the bonds of love and understanding of the ideals and eternal truths of Israel, but to a great degree world Jewry is coming to look for its spiritual strength to America. Providence has destined us to play a dominant role in the history of world Jewry and Jewish culture. Many European centres of Jewish learning have suffered greatly from the ravages of the war and the disorganized economic life and spiritual upheaval that have followed it. Russian Jewry, for many centuries the stronghold of Jewish life, learning and idealism, has fallen into temporary confusion and disorganization. The mantle of responsibility is descending upon American Jewry, today the largest single group, as well as the most blessed materially, in the Jewish world. The stream of Jewish learning and idealism from abroad, which has been enriching American Jewish life, is drying up. It is our imperative task to create in this land a Jewish life, inspired and guided by the conceptions and teachings, ideas and ideals, that have ensured the continuity of Israel through all ages and climes, that have been the greatest spiritual force in the history of mankind, and the spirit that guided the minds and inspired the hearts of the Fathers of this Republic. Throughout the ages the historic homes of the Jewish soul, the Yeshivoth, have been the centers of intensive Jewish learning, the reservoirs of intellectual energy and spiritual strength, the conscience of Universal Israel, the instruments for the continued transmission of the divine light of Sinai, to the entire household of Israel. They constitute a glorious chapter in the long history of Israel and, next to the Synagogue, form the most vital institution in the preservation of Judaism. In them the knowledge of and love for the Torah has been cultivated and fostered in the hearts of the Jewish youth. Recognizing that in order to maintain Jewish life and culture in this country as a real and living force, the historic home of the Torah must be transplanted to this land, a small and loyal group of pioneers founded the Yeshiva in America, sanctifying through it the name of the Jewish sage and saint of the last century, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan.

The Place of the Yeshiva

In the whirlpool of modern American life, where antagonistic social and economic forces, where swirling temptations or the mere pressure

of the torrent, bear so many of our youth down the gulf of religious and moral disintegration, the Yeshiva stands out as a rock of strength, founded upon the "Torah and the love of God." Situated in the midst of the most crowded section of the world's most tumultuous city, with building equipment most inadequate, in its daily struggle for existence the Yeshiva established itself as the worthy successor of the great Jewish sanctuaries of learning of all the ages, the Yeshivoth. In their spirit, and in loving devotion to the ideals of the Torah which it holds as its standard and guide, the Yeshiva must take a place in American Jewish life commensurate with the responsibilities of American Jewry and the opportunities for the full development of a Jewish life.

Scope of Studies

The course of study in the Yeshiva includes the comprehensive study of the Bible and Targumim, and the reading of important Jewish medieval and modern commentaries on the Bible. The Halachic Medrashim are studied in connection with the Bible. The course in the Talmud and Codes comprises the study of the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds, Codes, early and later Commentaries and the Responsa literature. The course in Jewish history includes the study of historical texts and documents. Particular stress is laid on the historic material contained in the Talmud and Medrashic literature. The vast Responsa literature is also utilized in the study of Jewish history. Research work along these lines is encouraged and provision is made for such work. In the course in Jewish literature, the reading of Jewish philosophical and ethical works is included. Among the subjects taught intensively are: The history and structure of Jewish liturgy; the theory of Hebrew poetry; the main currents in Medieval Jewish Philosophy with readings of philosophical texts; principles of Jewish education; theory and practice, methods of teaching, school management and class discipline; Jewish social institutions in their historic setting; social work and community centers; social agencies as factors in modern Jewish life; methods of social care and community needs.

Not a Professional School

The Yeshiva has sent forth many loyal, spiritually endowed, and mentally equipped rabbis throughout the United States and Canada, who live the life of the Torah, and are constructive forces in their communities for good and for God. From the Teachers Institute, the teachers' training department of the Yeshiva, have gone forth many earnest and equipped teachers, to carry the message and the spirit of the Torah to American Jewry. But the Yeshiva does not exist merely for the

training of rabbis and of teachers. Important as this task is, and carefully as the responsibilities it involves are accepted in its Teachers Institute and in its Rabbinical Department, the Yeshiva looks beyond these fields of service to the general development of Jewish life and culture, to the evolving of a system of Jewish education that will bring harmony into the life of the American Jewish youth and will develop not only his usefulness as a member of his community, but his Jewish consciousness and his will to live as a Jew and advance the cause of Jewry and Judaism; an education through which the human conscience and the Jewish conscience develop harmoniously into the synthesis of a complete Jewish personality, that indicates the guiding laws of life in accordance with the immortal truths of Judaism in harmonious blending with the best thought of the age and the great humanitarian ideals upon which our blessed country is founded.

A New Note in American Education

In the fruitful development of the wide field of Jewish learning, which constitutes an integral and vital phase of human knowledge and experience, in the cultivation of the spiritual elements of our faith, harmoniously blended with the general training of high school and college, the Yeshiva and its college will infuse a new note into American education. With the Jewish perspective brought to bear upon the various fields of learning, the Yeshiva will make a lasting contribution to American education, the rich background and point of view that an harmonious Jewish and general training will represent. Thus, in affording the opportunity for this concordant growth, to those American Jewish youth—whatever their future field of activity—who wish to combine the advantages of secondary and higher education with the acquisition of the knowledge of the ideals and truths of historic and living Israel, the Yeshiva at the same time, presents a new force of unique value in American education, the cultural outlook of the educated and Torah-true Jew.

The Yeshiva High School

In its high school, the Yeshiva offers an opportunity to those who wish to acquire their general training in a truly Jewish atmosphere while growing in familiarity with the comprehensive sources and the ideals of Judaism. Recognized by the State of New York as of full high school grade, this department of the Yeshiva has established itself prominently among the high schools of New York, being among the first in percentage of State scholarships awarded the graduates, and maintaining an excellent record in the State Regents examinations.

During these high school years, while acquiring their general schooling, the students receive, as well, a thorough training in the essentials of Jewish learning, they acquire a living and loving understanding of the tenets and practices of Judaism, and are imbued with love and reverence for knowledge and *idealism* that lead to the formation of character, and are translated into living practice.

In its new home, with adequate facilities and serene academic surroundings, the Yeshiva high school will increase its usefulness, and provide thousands of students with the opportunity of developing their character and preparing themselves in thoroughly Jewish surroundings, for a life of usefulness, bringing them in direct contact with the sources of our faith and culture, deepening their understanding of and loyalty to the Torah and the ideals of Israel—preparing them for their role of true citizens, bringing our children nearer to the faith of our fathers, and helping to insure the continuity of Israel and his incomparable contribution to human progress.

A Standard for the Country

Promising students of the Jewish religious schools throughout this country and Canada come to the Yeshiva to develop under the combined general and spiritual training of the Yeshiva high school, and the Yeshiva proper. By its very existence, then, the Yeshiva helps raise the standard of the work of these schools throughout the land, whose chosen pupils, insofar as present facilities permit, come to continue their study at the Yeshiva. The Yeshiva encourages the establishment of such schools, and of other secondary schools of Jewish learning, and through this development hopes ultimately to systematize and standardize the education of Torah-true American Jewry. At present many tendencies, especially a concentration upon the secular, national and linguistic aspects of Judaism, are shifting the center of gravity of Jewish education, which is essentially spiritual and religious, to the neglect of its high ideals and values. In such an organized system of Jewish education, the Yeshiva College will stand out as the directing and unifying force. Through its requirements for admission and the courses it will offer, the Yeshiva College will help develop a more Jewishly educated and inspired youth.

The Yeshiva College

At present the Jewish perspective in education ceases at the close of the Yeshiva high school work, or severs itself from the general college training. In order to enable young men of Jewish training and love for the Jewish ideals, who wish to dedicate themselves to the

service of Judaism, to continue their complete training in one institution, imbued with the spirit and ideals of true Judaism, the Yeshiva College of Liberal Arts and Science is being organized. Its fundamental purpose is to afford this harmonious union of culture and spirituality, and to bring into the field of American education the contribution of the spiritual values of Judaism, of the Jewish ideals of education, of the Jewish perspective upon the learning and knowledge of our age. It is in no sense a duplicate of the general colleges, a refuge for those who, with real or imagined grievances, consider themselves unwelcome in other institutions. It is dedicated to the service of those Jewish young men of ability and high ideals who have already been imbued with the spirit and sanctity of Judaism and its teachings, to whom the message of Judaism is of deep significance and who wish to equip themselves fully, as Torah-true Jews.

The Yeshiva College will extend its usefulness to Jewish youth who consider Jewish learning part of the mental and moral equipment they wish to obtain through a college education, and who are equipped for such a higher education as the Yeshiva College will offer, with the standard college curricula combined with courses in Bible, Hebrew philology, Jewish history and literature, Jewish philosophy and ethics, the Talmud and Rabbinic literature, Jewish archeology, Semitic philology and cognate subjects, offered by eminent scholars of the Yeshiva College Faculty.

Unique Opportunity for Research

Because it aims at this harmonious education, combining spiritual and cultural values, because it is not limited to the activities of a professional school, the Yeshiva looks forward to promoting the cause of Jewish scholarship, particularly in the largely neglected fields of Talmud and Rabbinical literature. These great fields of Jewish culture, where the Jewish soul for ages found its noblest expression, which have not been cultivated intensively save in the now handicapped Yeshivoth of Europe and Palestine, the Yeshiva aims to develop so as to enrich our lives and to contribute to the new note in American education that a completely harmonious Jewish education will represent. For a full understanding of the Jewish spirit and past, scholarly development and training in the Talmud and Rabbinical literature are essential. In addition to the expanding work of its high school, its teachers training and rabbinical departments, and to the new development of the liberal college of arts and science, the Yeshiva will afford opportunity for and will foster and develop scholarship in these great fields of learning.

The Yeshiva in the Community

In its several departments, the Yeshiva will provide adequate facilities for the education of spiritual leaders, rabbis and teachers who will go forth to continue throughout the Jewish community the work of spreading the spirit and message of Torah, beyond that it will continue the great traditions of scholarship and research that have been a sustaining background to the spiritual and cultural life of Jewry through the ages; and it will bring to ever increasing numbers of American Jewish youth the true perspective of historic Judaism in the complex organization of modern life, combining with the learning of the world today those cultural values and spiritual ideals, the strength of the sustaining faith of our fathers, to the enrichment of the lives of the Jewish community and of America today. The Yeshiva College will in time help span the widening chasm between intellectualism and faith in Jewish life and thought. Throughout the ages the mightiest minds among us have been at the same time our religious guides and our teachers.

It will imbue our Jewish youth with an active and abiding interest in, and a spirit of service to the cause of Israel and help cast the eternal truths of Judaism in the mould of true Americanism upon which our country was founded.

In the pattern and design of American culture, in which are interwoven the finest threads of its varied groups, the Jewish strain of religious and moral fervor and steadfastness shall be firm and distinctive. To perpetuate and advance Israel's spiritual and religious heritage, and the proven idealism of steadfast Israel, that has always valued life *sub specie aeternitatis*, to help make it once more a living force in our daily lives, and to aid in the spiritualization of Jewish life in this land, the Yeshiva and its College are dedicated.

**2. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE YESHIVA AND YESHIVA COLLEGE,
SUBMITTED TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS,
OCTOBER 9, 1929**

In accordance with our By-Laws, I beg to submit to the Board of Directors of the Yeshiva and Yeshiva College, a report of the scholastic standing in the Yeshiva, in its various departments, at the beginning of the academic year 1929-1930.

There are at present, regularly registered 380 students in the Yeshiva high school; 230 students in the Junior department of the Yeshiva;

121 in the Senior department of the Yeshiva; 172 in the Yeshiva Teachers Institute; and 61 in the Yeshiva College; besides students pursuing courses leading to the degree of Hebrew Literature. This term there have been 67 new students admitted to the various departments of the Yeshiva; while 31 of the Yeshiva high school and the Junior department have left or have been asked to leave the institution.

The number of students in the Yeshiva according to countries and states is as follows:

California 6; Connecticut 6; Maine 4; Maryland 13; Massachusetts 15; Michigan 1; New Jersey 24; New York State 5; Ohio 7; Pennsylvania 12; Rhode Island 2; Vermont 1; Virginia 2; Wisconsin 1; Washington 3; Texas 1 and Canada 24.

Poland 4; Lithuania 4; Roumania 1; Russia 1; Palestine 12.

The last graduation exercises of the Yeshiva were held on April 3, 1929, being the first in the new home of the Yeshiva. At these exercises, thirty-four students were awarded the Rabbinical diploma; thirty-nine, the Teachers certificate; and one the degree of Doctor of Hebrew Literature. Of those who then received their ordination 21 have been called to rabbinical positions in the following cities:

Wilmington, Del., Kingston, N.Y., Roxbury, Mass., Erie, Pa., Baltimore, Md., Suffern, N.Y., Mobile, Ala., Brooklyn, N.Y., Uniontown, Pa., Brooklyn, N.Y., New York, N.Y., Brooklyn, N.Y., Maspeth, L.I., Braddock, Pa., Bradford, Pa., Union City, N.J., Miami, Fla., Mahanoy City, Pa., Lorain, Ohio.

Several more are negotiating for positions; and a number are continuing their studies.

Of those who were granted the Teachers certificate at these exercises, thirty-six are now engaged in teaching in Hebrew schools; several are continuing their studies in the Yeshiva. During the last high holidays, thirty-four senior students, largely through the efforts of Mr. Sar and Rabbi Joseph H. Lookstein, representing the Yeshiva Alumni, accepted temporary positions in the various sections of the country.

The last graduation of the Yeshiva high school took place in June 1929. Of the sixty who then received their diplomas, twenty-four are continuing their work in the Yeshiva. Twenty-two have entered the Yeshiva College. Six of the graduates were awarded State scholarships, a percentage that approximates the highest record in New York State, and maintains the excellent scholastic standing of the Yeshiva high school. Of the six recipients of the State scholarships four have entered the Yeshiva College.

The recent exercises of the Yeshiva high school were the tenth since its first graduation. Recognized by the University of the State of New York as of full high school grade this preparatory department of the Yeshiva has, during its first decade established itself permanently among the high schools of New York State, being consistently among the first in percentage of State scholarship awarded to graduates, and maintaining an excellent record in the Regents examinations given throughout the State. During these high school years while receiving their general schooling the students receive as well a thorough training in the essence of our faith and learning and they acquire a loving understanding of the tenets and ideals of the Torah.

Yeshiva Teachers Institute

The Teachers Institute of the Yeshiva has made considerable progress during the past year, offering twenty-eight hours of instruction a week. It is the only Teachers training school in the country that equips its students with a fair knowledge of the Talmud, thus preparing them adequately for the teaching of the upper grades of the elementary Yeshivoth and of the Talmud Torahs where study of the Talmud is part of the curriculum.

The Teachers Institute has an active Alumni Association of 102 members, who meet periodically for discussion of the problems of Jewish education. The Teachers Institute has recently organized a class specializing in the study and methods of teaching Talmud. Unfortunately, the Teachers Institute, because of budgetary limitations, is still without adequate instruction in pedagogics and child psychology, a vital element in the proper equipment of its students.

The Yeshiva College

The work of the first two years of the Yeshiva College is fully organized and recognized by the State University. The student body of the Yeshiva College, sixty-one in number is earnestly carrying on its work, and is of high quality. As shown by the scholastic aptitude test, for which the median of the Yeshiva College student body is above the median for all but the highest colleges throughout the land. The new Freshman class consisting of thirty-one students, is of exceptional promise, a number of its members being holders of State scholarships. The students of the Yeshiva College come from the following states: New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, New Jersey,

Rhode Island, Texas, Massachusetts, Maine, Connecticut and California.

This small but eager body of students is doing the work of the first two years under the guidance of a faculty sympathetic in viewpoint and sound in scholarship—the Associate Faculty consisting of professors of long established neighbor institutions of high repute. Scholars and educators without a direct concern in the fields of Jewish scholarship have been sufficiently interested in the ideals of the institution to serve upon the advisory Yeshiva College Council, of which Mr. Samuel Levy is chairman and Mr. Louis Gold treasurer.

The Yeshiva College aims in no way to be a Jewish University, nor even a general college; in the beginning at least, it is for the few, for Yeshiva students, the exceptional young men to whom Jewish faith and culture form an essential part of education and life. From the outset the Yeshiva has made it clear that the Yeshiva College is in no way an answer to any real or supposed academic anti-Semitism; its cause, its scope, its aims, are positive, that American Jewry may strengthen itself and give more of itself to the furtherance of the Jewish ideals, to the creation in this land of a Jewish life spiritually satisfying and in harmony with the spirit of the time. Non-Jews concerned with the educational development of America have welcomed the Yeshiva College as of valid promise. Dr. Joseph H. Hertz, Chief Rabbi of Great Britain, speaking recently at the conference of ministers in London, England, hailed the Yeshiva College as an omen of a greater future for Judaism in this land, and as one of the achievements of American Jewry.

It is the aim of the Yeshiva, through all the departments of its activity, to restore the study and the knowledge of the Torah to American Jewry, and to establish a higher level of lay and spiritual leadership, and of Jewish education in general. In pursuit of this goal, the Yeshiva encourages the organization and expansion of smaller, elementary Yeshivoth in New York and throughout the land, to further the study of the Torah, as well as to help prepare the exceptional student to enter the Yeshiva. The Young Israel Yeshiva in Montreal, Canada, founded by a graduate of our Yeshiva, has become an important factor in Jewish education in Montreal, and has in the last several years sent many well-prepared students to us. The Baltimore Yeshiva has similarly grown to play a part in Jewish education in Baltimore, and is preparing students to enter our Yeshiva. More recently, the Yeshiva has assisted the Jacob Joseph School, and the Yeshiva Tifereth Jerusalem, of New York, whose graduates come to

the Yeshiva, in the organization of the first years of high school instruction. Our ultimate goal is, by strengthening the work of the smaller Yeshivoth in Greater New York and by helping establish similar institutions in the large Jewish communities in the country, to be able in time, to dispense with the first two years of high school work, and concentrate our energies and resources upon the more advanced studies. Talmud Torahs in New York and through the country have recently raised the standard of their work, and have introduced the study of the Talmud into their curriculum, so as to qualify their graduates for entrance to the Yeshiva and its Teachers Institute, benefitting all their pupils whether they eventually become students of the Yeshiva or not. The work of the Yeshiva tends thus, in these direct and indirect ways, to have a strengthening effect upon the general system of Jewish education in this land, widening its scope and raising its standards.

The entire house of Israel mourned the untimely demise of the great Gaon and unique spiritual personality, Rabbi Solomon Polachek, of blessed memory, Rosh Yeshiva for seven years at the Yeshiva. The Yeshiva has provided for his bereaved family, and his two sons are among its students.

During the past year Rabbi Simon Shkop, dean of the European Roshe Yeshiva, conducted regular courses at the Yeshiva. Rabbi Moses Soloveitchik, a genuine Talmudic scholar of Warsaw, Poland, was invited by the Board to occupy the chair in Talmud at the Yeshiva, and within the past month has taken up his work. Mr. Bernard London, member of the Board of Directors of the Yeshiva, has enabled the Yeshiva to invite the eminent Biblical scholar, Dr. Chaim Heller, of Berlin, Germany to occupy the chair of Bible at the Yeshiva, during the year 1929–30; we trust that this chair will be permanently endowed, and known as “The Bernard London Chair in Bible in Memory of Tobias London.” In addition to his regular courses, Professor Heller intends to offer a series of public lectures, on the Bible and its problems. During the past year, several distinguished scholars from abroad have delivered lectures at the Yeshiva. The Yeshiva will continue its policy of inviting non-resident scholars who visit the United States to lecture before its faculty and student body. It is also inaugurating a comprehensive system of lectures to the College students by distinguished leaders of thought in various Jewish fields. These will be open to interested outsiders, and may ultimately develop into an Extension Department, for which there is a great demand.

Graduate Course and Research Work

A three years graduate course, in the Senior department of the Yeshiva, has been organized, leading to the degree of Doctor of Hebrew Literature. This course is open to students qualified in Jewish learning, preferably graduates of the Yeshiva, who are holders of a baccalaureate degree from a recognized college.

Library

The Yeshiva Library numbers approximately 22,000 volumes and pamphlets. Unfortunately the library is without appropriations for the acquisition of new volumes, and even for the binding and proper care of old books. The Arnstein family has enabled the Yeshiva library to purchase the collection of Rabbi Rosenblatt of Slonim, Poland. This valuable collection of Rabbinics, numbering almost 2800 volumes, is now being catalogued and made available for use. The need of funds for the purchase of books for the Yeshiva library, and especially for at least a working nucleus for the Yeshiva College library, is urgent indeed.

A new chapter of Jewish martyrdom has recently been written in Palestine. And among those who gave their lives for the glory of God and honor of Israel are two beloved children of the Yeshiva, slain by the hands of murderous Arabs in September, on the Sabbath day, while studying Torah at the Yeshiva of Hebron, Palestine. The Yeshiva mourns Rabbi William Berman. He came to the Yeshiva from Philadelphia, about twelve years ago, at the age of 12. He graduated from the Yeshiva high school and the College of the City of New York. But his true love was the Torah. He was a devoted child of the Torah, for he learned Torah day by day and night by night, most of the years of his young life. On April 3, 1929, he was ordained by the Yeshiva, and great was his joy and the joy of his parents, whose hope and pride he was. A proud American and an understanding son of his people, with a deep knowledge of the Torah, a charming personality and an eloquent speaker. In his short life he made many sacrifices for the Torah, and it was given to him to make the supreme sacrifice "al kiddush Hashem." We mourn Benjamin Hurwitz, only son of his parents, a graduate of the Yeshiva high school and the Yeshiva Teachers Institute, a noble soul, full of life and sunshine, on leave of absence from the Yeshiva in the Yeshiva of Hebron. He was slain at the age of 19.

It seems most fitting that the memory of these two faithful and martyred children of the Yeshiva, who died in its spirit, be perpetuated in some fit manner in the Yeshiva, as a source of inspiration to the student body and those who are to follow, as a symbol of Israel's eternal martyrdom for his Torah.

Respectfully submitted,

BERNARD REVEL

President of the Faculty

3. SEMINARY AND YESHIVA*

To the casual observer, the Seminary and the Yeshiva are sister-institutions, serving the same purposes and working toward the same ends, but a consideration of facts reveals that, in many vital respects in which these two institutions may logically be compared, they are separated by fundamental distinctions. The validity of the two institutions, and their results, are not here being considered; but it is necessary that the difference in their aims, their student body, their scope of studies and courses, and their consequent results, should be understood.

In aims, the two institutions are quite dissimilar. The Seminary is a professional school, for the training of rabbis and teachers. The idea of such professional schools for the training of rabbis is an innovation in Judaism, not more than about 75 years old. The Yeshiva is *not* a professional school, but a house of learning. It continues the tradition of millennia of Yeshivoth through the Diaspora and the days of our people in Palestine, as a home for the training of men learned in the Torah, which Judaism has ever considered more far-reaching, and fundamentally more important than the training of the rabbi; for if there is to be a healthy Jewish life, if there is to be incentive and fertile soil for the growth of properly equipped spiritual leaders in every generation, a portion at least of our laity must be intensively trained in the knowledge of the Torah. The work of the Yeshiva, then, is not confined to its building; it is, in its aims, not merely a course of study presented to its students; it is a movement, an ideal; the ideal to restore the study and the knowledge of the Torah to American Jewry, to arouse vital interest in such study, and to bring about a higher level of lay and spiritual leadership, and of

* This essay is not dated. See chapter 5 for a discussion of its significance. The second draft of the essay is reproduced here.

Jewish education in general. The Yeshiva, in pursuit of this goal, encourages the organization and the expansion of smaller, elementary Yeshivoth in New York and throughout the country, to spread the knowledge of the Torah, as well as to prepare the exceptional student to continue his intensive studies at the Yeshiva Rabbi Isaac Elchanan, and more fully prepare himself to take a fit place as a Torah-informed Jew in the life of his community. Many Talmud Torahs in New York and in the country have raised the standards of their work, and have introduced the study of the Talmud into their curriculum, so as to qualify their best graduates for entrance to the Yeshiva and its Teachers Institute, but benefitting all their pupils, whether they eventually continue their studies at the Yeshiva or not. The wide aim of the Yeshiva has, in this manner, a direct effect upon the general quality of and interest in more intensive Jewish education throughout the land, and must have this effect increasingly, in its work for a revival of a true and intensive Jewish education for at least the "saving remnant" of our children in this land.

The two institutions present even greater differences, in the backgrounds of their students. Many of the Yeshiva students come from Palestinian or European Yeshivot, where Torah is the only study; where they have spent years of their lives, long hours every day, in intensive and devoted study of Talmud. There is hardly an important European Yeshiva not represented among the Yeshiva students. Those of the Yeshiva students who are American usually come from orthodox families which have been willing to send their boys to a Jewish day school, to receive their elementary training in a preparatory Yeshiva, giving their morning hours, and till two o'clock every day, to Jewish studies. A few, not attending such schools, have received a similar Jewish training at home. From the elementary Yeshiva the pupil then comes to the Yeshiva high school which has an excellent record of achievement. In results of the uniform State Regents examination, and in the winning of State scholarships, the pupils of the Yeshiva high school—the Talmudical Academy—compare most favorably with the general high schools. The Talmudical Academy of the Yeshiva is the only complete Jewish high school in the country; and it affords the student a general training in an environment harmonious with that of his intensive Jewish studies. In the high school also, there is continued the solid grounding of Jewish studies which through the four years of the Talmudical Academy, occupy the morning hours, 28 a week, and inculcate in the student's mind the knowledge of Torah in general, and in particular of Talmud which is, of

course, essential to the rabbi and spiritual leader as long as the *Shulchan Aruch* is our authoritative code of law. After some eight or ten years of such concentrated training, with the best hours of the day given to Jewish studies, the student is ready for the work of the Yeshiva proper.

The Seminary, on the other hand, accepts such students as apply for entrance, after the completion of the public elementary and high school and part of college work, without intensive Jewish preparation in the wide field of the Talmud.

The work of the students within the two institutions, as it depends upon their backgrounds and the aims of the Yeshiva and the Seminary, also presents a great contrast. The Yeshiva, in accord with its policy of general Torah learning, more inclusive than the work of the more professional school, has about 265 students (not including the Yeshiva's Teachers Institute), who for approximately nine and a half months yearly spend about 23 hours weekly in the study of Talmud. The Seminary, according to its most recent catalogue, has 62 students in its Rabbinic Department, who give from five to eight hours a week, about eight months of the year, to their Talmud studies. This difference in time must show in the nature of the material presented for study, in the method pursued, and in the students' achievements. The best that can be acquired by such study is knowledge *about*, not knowledge *of*, the Talmud and Codes. The Seminary courses are similar to "survey" courses in general subjects in college, "introductory" courses in Talmud and Codes, etc.; they *cannot* give to the stupendous body of our traditional learning the lengthy and direct, intensive study it requires. Their general method of study is by "outline" rather than by detail; through comments of the professor rather than direct consideration of the sources. Courses in Jewish history and literature, sweeping through the ages, are important, but cannot replace, for the future rabbi, intensive work in Rabbinics. Of such graduates, those who have not had intensive training prior to their entering the Seminary, perforce come out of it wholly inequipped to decide religious questions. If its sponsors did not recognize the validity of the Jewish traditional laws of Talmud and the *Shulchan Aruch*, there would be no reason for this discussion. But to recognize the validity and the abiding force of the laws of Israel, such as the dietary, the Sabbath and festival laws, and those of family purity, and to send forth graduates neither taught nor equipped to teach and to decide religious questions, is an anomaly. Many such graduates, having a faint conception of the interpretation of the sources of these laws, are sent forth as religious

authorities in the communities of the land. To what a pass would American traditional Jewry come if there were none but such graduates in charge of the orthodox congregations of the country!

The student of the Yeshiva's Teachers Institute differs similarly from the student in the teachers training department of the Seminary. Jewish education in this country has suffered, in general, so far as the quality of the teacher and the resultant work is concerned, in either of two respects: some of the teachers come from Europe and Palestine, well equipped in spirit and in Jewish knowledge, but ignorant of the ways of the American child, not trained in psychology and in methods of teaching; the others, American born, have usually looked upon teaching as a temporary occupation, convenient during College years until more permanent lines of work are attained, and in Jewish knowledge have kept not very far ahead of the child. The student of the Yeshiva's Teachers Institute comes to it with four to six years intensive Jewish training at an elementary Yeshiva; at the Institute he receives five more years of concentrated training, again in the morning hours, about 27 a week. About 80% of the graduates are engaged in teaching. Though the institution has labored under tremendous handicaps of inadequate faculty and facilities, due to constant strain of financial worry and neglect, three of the graduates are already principals of Talmud Torahs, and one is a member of the Department of Semitics at Columbia University.

From those three main causes, as might be expected, there is an equally strong contrast between the outlook and the activities of the graduates of the two institutions. The Seminary is revealed, through the nature of the work its graduates are doing, and despite the denials (which grow less insistent) of some of its leaders, as an institution that does *not* stand for orthodox, noncompromising Judaism but for that new departure, that new party—"Conservative Judaism." If proof of this is necessary, we need go no further than the list of Seminary graduates now occupying pulpits; approximately *eighty percent* of the rabbis, graduates of the Seminary, have deviated from the sanctioned and sanctified standards of the Synagogue and orthodox Jewry. Some have deviated only to the extent of permitting or encouraging mixed pews, a step usually the forerunner of more radical changes in worship and the conduct of the Synagogue. About 15% have gone over completely to the reform camp.

So great a percentage of deviation, the lapse of a majority from the standards they are supposedly taught, cannot be accidental. It is the inevitable result of the present type of student of the Seminary, of the nature of its courses, of the requirements for admission and gradua-

tion, and the hours and methods of study; it is the outcome of insufficient training in the knowledge and spirit of Torah, especially in Rabbinics: Talmud and Codes. This tendency to turn from the traditions which are supposedly inculcated in them, and which they are to preserve and to advance, grows more manifest when contrasted with the fact that of the Yeshiva graduates there are but two known now serving in a Synagogue with mixed choir.

It is a fact, moreover, that some of the Seminary graduates do not merely accede to changes desired by their congregation, but actually seek to force upon orthodox congregations such changes as mixed pews—the wedge of further reform.

Some of the graduates of the Seminary, moreover, lacking a sound foundation in Rabbinics, ignorant of *Torah shel b'al pe*, advocate a minimum of Jewish education in the religious schools of their congregations or of the community, fewer hours of study and less intensive work. They abolish, for example, the study of Rashi commentary, and for the Bible text substitute “Bible Stories,” to the detriment of true Jewish education. Some of them make a virtue of this practice, and “minimalism” becomes, to them, the ideal of Jewish education in this land.

This condition of the general lapse from the standards that through millennia have kept Torah-Judaism intact, is further explained by the fact, which is both symptom and cause, that the most influential member of the Seminary faculty, the one who has most effectively impressed the student body with his personality and views, is one, who publicly in his writings denies Divine Revelation and the Covenant at Mt. Sinai, the basic doctrine of Judaism, next in importance only to the belief in the Unity of God. The Seminary authorities are aware of his publicly taken attitude; the implication drawn from their silence is that such an attitude may consistently be presented and followed in an Orthodox Rabbinical Seminary.

As to the faculties of the Seminary and the Yeshiva, several points are to be observed. The Yeshiva with hundreds of students carrying on direct, intensive study, does not require a faculty made up entirely of outstanding scholars, but competent teachers for every phase of its work. With the daily struggle for existence, underpaying its teaching staff, the Yeshiva has not always been able to secure the best available men. Yet in its field, especially in Rabbinics, Talmud and Codes, its main work, the Yeshiva has on its faculty a number of eminent scholars.

As to the scholarly output of the Yeshiva faculty, the great number of students, with insufficient funds, has forced the Yeshiva to place a

heavy teaching load upon the members of its faculty; their duties have allowed them little leisure, nor has there existed among them that freedom from material concern which is conducive to scholarly pursuits and research. In spite of all these difficulties, there are now in the hands of the Yeshiva faculty several important works that reflect credit on their authors and on the institution, but for which the Yeshiva has no publication funds.*

The Yeshiva is *the* place on this continent where hundreds of students are taught intensively the use of the first sources. The center of Yeshiva study is in Rabbinics, the Talmud and Codes; all the rest is complementary. At the Seminary, as the program and the hours of courses show, the emphasis is exactly reversed. The Yeshiva students come to the institution with their character, their habits of thought, their point of view already turned, from early childhood, toward the faith and the traditions of Orthodox Judaism, with a satisfactory grounding in the subjects essential to a full understanding of Jewish lore and law. The Seminary students come to it without such intensive preparation; whatever Jewish training they may have had is dependent upon individual opportunity, not upon the early devotion and persevering work and intensive study that prepare the students for the Yeshiva. In this way, too, the Yeshiva is concerned with the thousand who start, as with the one who attains Jewish scholarship or the rabbinical degree; it aims to provide, at the various stages of the spiritual and religious development of a portion of our youth, a Jewish education in accord with his ability, so that he will in a greater measure be informed and imbued with the faith and ideals of Israel. For those who reach the Yeshiva proper, and continue to pursue their intensive studies at the Yeshiva, it now offers, in harmonious atmosphere, to those who desire, the full academic college training, so that they may become equipped with the knowledge of the world today while devoting the major portion of their time and interest to the intensive and whole-hearted study of the Torah; it aims to train not only qualified rabbis to teach the Torah, to decide religious questions and to advance the cause of the Torah in its totality, and competent teachers, but also laymen of sympathetic understanding of Judaism, without which there can be no Jewish life.

* The first draft states: "The Seminary has several outstanding scholars on its staff, but the benefit of specialized scholarship accrue only to those prepared to avail themselves of this specialized knowledge; on many of the students of the Seminary, lacking preparation and proper tools of intensive study, the erudition of these scholars is lost."

Throughout Jewish history the title Rabbi has signified one learned in Jewish law and lore, particularly in Talmudic Jurisprudence and Rabbinics, the title proclaiming years of deep and intensive study in these wide fields, culminating in the recognition of *batoras boroah*. Only the recipients of *Smicha* were entitled to this name. The taking of the name of Rabbi in vain by those who are not thorough students of the Torah, of Talmud and Codes, depreciates the character and the value of this distinctive title, adds to the spiritual and religious chaos in our lives, is unfair and misleading to the community, and discourages genuine Talmudic scholarship.

American Jewry is approaching 5,000,000 persons, almost one third of world Jewry, in the new home of Jewish prosperity and influence. Yet never in the history of Israel has there been a permanent Jewish population of even one-tenth that number, without at least one place dedicated to the intensive study of the vast field of Talmud, to preserve the continuity of Jewish tradition and its traditional learning; a centre, perhaps, from which radiate a spirit and an influence that lead to the further spread of the intensive study of the Torah in the communities. The Seminary, as the other seminaries, does not even claim to devote itself to the development of this intensive Talmudic scholarship. This is the specific function and work of the Yeshiva, and if the Yeshiva required a *raison d'etre*, if it had no sanctified place beside the Synagogue, as one of the two great homes of Jewish spiritual life throughout the ages, this cultivation of intensive study of the Talmud, the Codes, and the wide range of Rabbinic scholarship makes it essential to the spiritual existence of American Jewry.

The average Seminary graduate, untrained in and unconcerned about essential phases of the rabbinate, unable to weigh and decide religious questions—and therefore easily lapsing from orthodoxy—is conscious of his shortcomings; American Jewry suffers most from the “pernicious spiritual anemia” of its rabbis, in whom recognition of imperfect preparation for their vital and holy work leads to hesitancy, to laxity, to deviation. How can a spiritual leader, who knows so ill the subject which he is supposed to expound and represent, maintain the authority of the Torah in a congregation where there are laymen who know more than he? The healthy instinct of the average Jew refuses to recognize such spiritual leadership; this sort of rabbi may be an excellent mixer, a “good fellow” whose social values are appreciated; but he can in no wise be a spiritual influence to be followed, a force for uncompromising Judaism. Only from spiritual leaders deeply devoted and fully informed, and from a nucleus, at

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least, of laymen who are acquainted with the sources of our faith and traditions and culture, can there spring hope for the preservation and advancement of Torah-Judaism. The Seminary, by virtue of the lack of background of its average students, their meager training before entering the institution, the scant hours and the partial nature of their work, leads inevitably toward the new party of “Conservative Judaism,” and by that path to further deviations. The Yeshiva in these respects, and every aspect of its aims, leads toward the preservation and the spread of Jewish traditions, and the maintenance of true and Torah-Judaism.

APPENDIX II



*Dr. Revel's Yeshiva College Commencement
Addresses*

1. FIRST COMMENCEMENT — JUNE 16, 1932

Conceived in the spirit of Israel's steadfastness to the spiritual certainties and supreme moral ideals of Judaism, which, in a world of shifting standards and changing values, in ages of transition, stand torch-like and immutable, there was founded Yeshiva College, the only college of liberal arts and sciences under Jewish auspices in this land, yet a link in the long and glorious chain of lighthouses of learning, uniting mankind in common understanding and spiritual striving.

Yeshiva College is by design a small college. It has set itself the task of training a select group of young men, who combine zeal for knowledge with a large ability for learning, to attain intellectual and spiritual integrity. It endeavors to recognize the aptitude and native capacities of its individual students and to help create the conditions for their growth and development.

It is the conviction of Yeshiva College that Jewish studies, in the widest connotations, are an integral phase of the humanistic disciplines; that the cultural resources, traditions and heritage of Judaism, in its millennial history, its interweaving with and influence upon general history, are essential for the full understanding of the unfoldment of mankind and of man's history. Yeshiva College is dedicated to the transformation of these aspects and values of Judaism, its teachings concerning God, man and nature, fused and harmoniously blent with the knowledge of the ages, with the other currents of creative culture and the humanizing forces of the age, into living

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and creative reality, in the hearts and minds of its children, for the development of the complete Jewish personality, the enrichment of the life of the Jewish community and advancement of our beloved country.

Judaism has always held learning, *Torah lishmo*, study for its own sake, as its great ideal. Study is a mode of worship. Israel's is an unquenchable thirst for knowledge, for understanding.

For almost a millennium, since the university grew to be the home of the inquiring spirit, of unfettered study and research, what the Yeshiva had already been for Jewish studies for more than a millennium, Jewish youth, whenever and wherever permitted, shared enthusiastically in the study and intellectual advancement offered at these sanctuaries of the spirit, ever endeavoring to add their contribution to the sum total of the knowledge of the age. Most of these institutions, in this great land of ours as well, had their origin in religious foundations. It is our hope that through Yeshiva College this great debt of gratitude will come to be in some small measure repaid. Yeshiva College will endeavor to bring to the fulness of American culture and creative education these qualities of faith in the ideal, of steadfastness, of love of learning for its own sake, and the wisdom of Israel's millennial growth.

Moreover, Jewish learning has been studied until now as an isolated field, a sort of "Jewish antiquities," almost as a former culture: in Yeshiva College, the aspect of Jewish culture and the Jewish contributions to the life and thought of the ages assume a living shape and a continuous significance. Jewish contributions to mathematics, for example, are no longer ignored or studied as a special abstruse subject, but become part of the study of the history and development of that science. The influence of the Bible upon English literature and the English language, its diction, its images, its subjects, becomes an integral part of the college work in English. The Greek of the Septuagint is a phase in the field of Greek studies. The judgments and misjudgments, the understandings and misunderstandings, the general interaction of Hellenistic and Jewish thought and history are to be surveyed as a part of Jewish and classical culture, so that the whole becomes, beyond mere archeological interest, subject for the Yeshiva College student with significance applicable to life and thought today—so that in time Yeshiva studies will come to be, not the isolated survey of statically presented activities and attitudes, but the consideration of a spirit and a point of view in the various fields of human understanding. Yeshiva College hopes to bring into American cultural life the best of the Jewish spirit, of its cultural ideals, as

its contribution to the best in the spirit of our country. The College recognized the difficulties in its way and the limitations at present imposed upon it. The full realization of its vision is still in the distant future. We have the opportunity for growth along the hoped for line.

No understanding friend of the true and abiding values of humanity could view with anything but great apprehension the possibility of the submerging of the spiritual Jewish life in this land and the loss of those qualities that have characterized Israel through the ages: steadfastness and devotion to his ideals, and readiness to sacrifice for the things he considers holy. Unendingly the emphasis in true Jewish life has been upon the ethical significances, upon the abiding values of the spirit. And in this age, when the materialistic conceptions of pseudo-science and partial knowledge still flaunt their half formed theories as fundamental laws of universal scope, science itself is tending to reassert those abiding values beyond the physical and temporal. Science and her handmaid philosophy are moving again toward the realm of the spirit. The increased knowledge of the cosmos in the wide reaches of space and time and in the infinitesimal field of the electron and the quantum constitutes a turning point in man's understanding of the universe, causing a shifting in world-attitude back toward the emphasis on spiritual values, to the great truths of Judaism. The understanding is growing that science not only is to be applied to industry, but is mainly to serve humanity in its social, its spiritual aspects and ideals. By its contribution to this point of view, among its students and, through them, ultimately in the Jewish communities of the land, Yeshiva College hopes to play a part in the movement back toward the spirit, as well as in the discovery and interpretation of knowledge, and help toward an increasing understanding of and living in accord with the high and eternal ideals, Israel's steadfastness and spirituality.

Yeshiva College aims at a closer unification of the forces of education, and endeavors, by simultaneous human and religious appeal, to quicken the moral consciousness and to widen the intellectual and spiritual horizon of its students.

Yeshiva College is an integral part of the Yeshiva, where the method of intensive and independent study encourages intellectual initiative among the students, where the atmosphere of research and individual endeavor—properly guided and advised—inspires the student to sustain effort and progress.

The small student body and the spiritual atmosphere of Yeshiva College bring nearer to realization the main goal of its collegiate activity, affording the student opportunity for communion with himself and

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with the great minds and spirits of the past, for development of a recognition of his responsibilities and opportunities in life, while he is engaged in equipping himself to meet them. Before the complex concerns of life rush upon the student and distract him from its true goals, he is brought into intimate contact with great principles of action, with great ideals, with the comprehensive sources of general and Jewish culture, that lead him the way of light and God, toward a true conception of the purpose of living, that brighten in him a vision that is not visionary, but vitally to be transmuted into his daily living. All around Yeshiva College are the opportunities of the many-voiced metropolis of America: its great museums and libraries, its scientific and scholarly associations, its manifold facilities for education, opening before the student the stores of mankind's cultural accumulation, and its problems and complexities; bringing to the student the sense of high duty, the task of considered preparation of body, mind, and will for life's vital concerns.

Yeshiva College, situated in the academic heart of the metropolis, hopes, through the spirit of its faith and its inspiration, through the influence of its faculty and the sound organization of its course of study, to develop in the students that recognition of the fundamental unity of all life's activities, of the spiritual basis of daily conduct in all human endeavor, which will form the nucleus of a truly unified, harmonious life, and equip them to continue to grow, wherever their work may call them, in service to faith and truth. Yeshiva College emphasizes the spiritual values of Judaism, its ideals of life and education, and the Jewish perspective upon learning and culture. An understanding of the backgrounds of Judaism, its contribution to human progress, quickens the student's insight into his liberal studies. It aims to foster this harmonious growth, in which the bases of modern knowledge and culture in the fields of art, science, and service are blended with the bases of Jewish culture, to train young men in the spirit of intelligent and high-minded enthusiasm, of personal integrity, informed and devoted sons in the spirit of Israel, bringing the contribution of Judaism to the scholarship, the culture, and the spirit of mankind.

You, our first graduates, have been reared in an environment, where the distractions of extraneous urges could make little gain, taught and inspired by a faculty of sound scholarship and inspiring personality. You have been given scope to learn that worthwhile knowledge, as all genuine achievement, can be attained only by intellectual industry and honesty, singleness of purpose, open mindedness, and perseverance: yet you have been led to see that education is something more than the acquisition of facts. Education is the power and love of thinking.

The devotion and consecration of learning to spiritual service is the goal of education.

Complementing your general studies of high scholastic order, you have engaged in the intensive study of the Bible, the source and fountain of faith, as well as of Halakah and Agada, the well-springs of Jewish vision and Jewish emotion. The Bible is “the Book of the Generations of men,” a history of mankind and human destiny written in advance. The Bible is the cornerstone upon which the fathers and founders of our country so well built our national life. The political and moral principles of the Pentateuch and Prophets were to the Pilgrims and Puritans a living reality, their inspiration and pattern. In their fervent championship of liberty and humanity they considered themselves the spiritual heirs of the prophets and seers of Israel. To this Book of Life, light, love and loyalty, men and nations must turn whenever the call of the Divine Imperative is felt. Today, when mankind stands once again at crossroads of the spirit, bewildered and despairing, we must heed the life-giving message of the word and saturate our souls with the spirit of the prophets, their passion for peace and justice and idealism, their divine promise and optimism and their insistence that peace, social justice and spiritual harmony, the groundwork of lasting human happiness, shall supersede greed for gain, possession and power.

You, our first graduates, are going forth into a world that is today governed by conflict, fear and distrust. The World War and its aftermath, and now the world-wide economic and social disturbance, distress and despair, make manifest that modern civilization is at spiritual crossroads. We stand upon the brink of an epoch. We grope in the dark and stumble. Whether it is the twilight before a greater darkness, or the twilight before the approaching dawn, many have proclaimed, but none can truly tell. In these days, trying man’s soul and his faith in himself and his vaunted civilization, what the world needs most is a greater discernment of and the return to ultimate values of life, of the worth of spiritual and ethical truth. A spiritual interpretation, a spiritual realization of man’s history and destiny can free us from the mastery of fear, with its consequent bitterness and greeds, endow us with courage and peace, and lead us out of the shadows of dependency and distress into the sunshine of hope and happiness.

In all this it is the hope of Yeshiva College that through its unique training, harmonious union of spirituality and culture, its inculcation of an understanding of the problems and perplexities of the world today through the wisdom of our millennial yesteryear, that its sons will have a part.

With the help of Him, Who is the source of all truth and blessing, this institution shall become the altar of which the Bible tells: "It shall be a witness between us that the Lord is God." Out of the portals of this sanctuary of the spirit shall come a Jewish leadership—lay and spiritual—conscious of its unique heritage, striving to develop in this land a Jewish life culturally creative and spiritually satisfying, based upon the eternal foundations of the Torah, helping our communities to fuller self expression and richer contribution to the cultural and spiritual values of our beloved land.

2. SECOND COMMENCEMENT—JUNE 15, 1933

My dear young friends,

You are going forth into a world that will probably offer no immediate opportunity to you all. Mankind is perplexed, seeking a new way and clearer guidance, groping toward an unknown destiny and yearning for true leadership, peace and brotherhood. Some of us seem to sense the approaching dawn in this dark hour, but if there is soon to come the new day for which the heart of mankind craves, it must be marked not merely by the rising sun and sum of material well-being, but by the golden dawn of a reviving faith, a reaffirmation of trust in God and faith in humanity, a faith in which we attain to the full comprehension of reality, a faith in harmony with the scientific methods applicable to physical phenomena that inspires and guides, heals and strengthens and leads to a life of higher meaning, a life spiritually aspiring and culturally creative, to a destiny of greater spiritual enfoldment, in humble partnership with our creator.

Never has mankind been in greater need of such saving faith in itself, in its vital values, spiritual certainties, and moral verities, in its ultimate destiny. We are coming to recognize that the root of mankind's tragedy is moral. Our lives are spiritually out of joint. Fear and distrust and the sown seed of many conflicts and smoldering hates are spread wide over the world and only by such faith inspired by the divine message of optimism and promise of the Seers of Israel, can we purge and cleanse ourselves of the iniquities of yesterday and the iniquities of today.

Dark is humanity's horizon. We stand aghast, bewildered and humiliated witnesses of this moral degeneration of a great people. Germany, once a land of wide culture, is celebrating a black renaissance of ruthless barbarism, cold bigotry and savage arrogance. A fury of racial and religious fanatic hatred, released and spread by a crusade of hate, inspired by a race theory sprung of the paranoiac illusions of egocen-

tric leaders, has raged across the land, has become its very law, dictating internal policies and endangering the order of neighboring lands.

The great institutions of light and learning, the homes of science and spirituality, the cathedrals of faith and of the progress of the human spirit, by their very being, their essential impetus, will summon and stir the soul, the collective conscience of mankind, will mobilize its spiritual and moral forces in the battle of justice, of human dignity and liberty against the uncontrolled forces of barbarism now in the saddle in unfortunate Germany. The masters and leaders of thought and spirit throughout the world, the great family that abides in the realm of intellectual and spiritual fellowship—the heart of civilized mankind—must feel first and most keenly the sorrow of outraged humanity for freedom of conscience and thought violated and prostrate in the land of “Kultur.” The voice of their brethren in intellectual aspiration and fulfillment, degraded and denied all opportunity, cries out to them from a Germany reverting to medieval darkness, branded by the infamy of its present rulers, a mire of danger, a quicksand to all humane hope.

Mankind, true to itself, to its charted course of progress on the pathway of its ideals, cannot, dares not stand by, and by its silence countenance or condone the abrogation of all human aims, as made manifest in the attempted annihilation of Jewry in a land where for a millennium Jews have found a home, and have given the genius of their race and their individual spirit. Mankind cannot permit the cruelly effective machinery of economic, social, political and spiritual torture to grind to destruction German Jewry. It cannot tolerate, without peril to its entire organism, the collapse of human dignity, human values, the retrogression from human sanity, striking a mortal blow at man’s long patient striving toward tolerance and understanding and brotherhood.

The world can know no rest while the Prince of Darkness, riding the fierce monsters of hatred, blind intolerance, and Swastika sadism sanctifies the bloody dogma of “ill will toward man” in defiance of humanity’s urgent cry for peace on earth. In moral solidarity, in the awakened collective conscience of mankind, we find our hope against the dark forces that threaten to engulf mankind. In the interest of Germany and of humanity alike, the world must cry out against the present German rulers and their warfare against human fellowship, undermining the foundations of civilized progress, in their devastating offensive against the spirit of the Book and against the people that have given the world the Book. We must sound the battle-cry for the one justifiable war, the war of the spirit against the enemies of hu-

man aspiration and human ideals. They shall not pass. Embattled furies at the gates of civilization, they shall not breach the walls, they shall not enter to poison the very well-springs of human fellowship and understanding. Like a black plague out of the dark ages they have swept to the border line of the spiritual kingdom of human ideals. Those who cherish these ideals, the far and ultimate goal of man's upward striving through the centuries, must echo the world's rallying cry: They shall not pass!

In this unprecedented moral and material crisis in human history, when the practical and spiritual fabrics are strained to the breaking point, when mankind is at the crossroads of the spirit, man's greatest need, in the words of the Psalmist, is "a new heart," for a heart of understanding and enduring compassion, begetting love and faith, the strengthening of the spiritual fibre for a greater discernment of the ultimate values of life, the abiding values of the spirit. On the material plane, in this great land at least, we are being cheered by the promise, and the early indications, of "a new deal." But there can be no lasting "new deal" without "a new heart." Man must saturate his soul with the spirit of his Seers, with their passion for humanity, peace and social justice and their insistence that faith, righteousness and spiritual harmony, the groundwork of lasting human welfare, must supersede the self-centered quest of material gain, the greed for power and possession.

My dear young friends, yours has been a unique training. Here at Yeshiva College the reality of the spiritual life and experience has been the integrating principle in your education. Ideals of intellectual integrity and spiritual aspiration have been inculcated by a faculty of sound and creative scholarship, in an environment where the distractions of extraneous urges could make little gain. You have been given scope to learn that worth-while knowledge, as all genuine achievement, can be arrived at only by intellectual industry and honesty, openmindedness and perseverance. You have been led to see that education, which is a continuous, a never ceasing process, is more than the acquisition of factual information, the accumulation of however significant data and details. The goal of true education is power and love of disciplined thought, the ability to envisage life as a great unity, in a binding frame of intellectual and moral truth, and the devotion and consecration of learning to the steadfast service of mankind.

Complementing and deepening your general work, of high scholastic order, you have earnestly engaged in the study of the Bible, the source and fountain of spiritual knowledge and understanding, the God given charter of spiritual life to mankind, as well as the Halacha

and the Agada, the well springs of Jewish reason and Jewish vision. The Bible is the cornerstone upon which the founders and fathers of this great democracy reared the high structure of our national ideals. The spiritual strain of the seers of Israel, has been the golden thread in the continuous fabric of human unfoldment to our day, marking in human history the pattern of progress, often crowded by dark or bloody threads, but ever gleaming with the glorious faith and promise of human betterment. For the Bible is the source of living faith and the light of human love, and loyalty, to which nations, as well as man must turn under the urge of the Divine Imperative.

It is our hope that you, my dear young friends, may ever be among the guardians of the ideals of mankind, that your life and your work may ever tend toward a more discerning restitution of the too often lost, the true and ultimate values of life, and thus help hasten the dawning foreseen by the seers of Israel, the day of a new heart—the day when minds and hearts will work in harmony, when the mighty shall be girded with justice, when all children of men shall be as one brotherhood of humankind beneath the fatherhood of God, with faith and love directing the counsels of all lands, all persons and peoples inspired by the profound and intimate pulsings of a new heart.

3. THIRD COMMENCEMENT—JUNE 21, 1934

Different are the conditions surrounding our commencement this year from those of the last three years. The dark night of economic distress and despair is gradually giving way before the dawn of a brighter day, before the rising sun of economic planning and reconstruction. You are going forth into a world that, in all likelihood, will offer you more immediate opportunity than was offered the graduates of the last several years. Your material prospects, if not assured, are more hopeful.

Would that a similar brightening were to be observed in the realm of the human spirit! Mankind is still groping in darkness, facing an unknown tomorrow, lit by false and fitful gleams of illusory radiance, longing for true and courageous leadership and clearer guidance toward greater social justice, human understanding and idealism; toward the dawn of mankind's high spiritual destiny.

Heavy clouds hang over the horizon of humanity and its hitherto most cherished ideals, over its charted course of progress and aspiration. False prophets have arisen, whose message of salvation to an economically distressed and spiritually perplexed generation is the destruction of the free and aspiring human spirit. Medieval darkness has settled upon a great country that was once a home of culture and

idealism. We stand aghast, bewildered and humiliated witnesses of the moral degradation of a once great nation. Germany is celebrating a bloody renaissance of cold bigotry and savage arrogance. A fury of fanatical hatred, inspired by neo-pagan worship of force, race and blood, spread and maintained by a crusade of slander and hate and appeal to elemental passions, has become the law of the land of Germany, written into its basic statutes, determining internal conditions and dictating international relations, endangering the security and the spiritual life of neighboring lands. The well-springs of peace and good will are being polluted, the foundations of orderly progress are being undermined, for there is no quarantine against the poison of hate, sapping the strength of the free spirit of man.

In the grave moral crisis facing civilization whence is to come salvation? The institutions of light and learning, the cathedrals of faith and vision, the homes of the wisdom and the culture of the ages, are in their very being, in their essential impetus, the keepers of the conscience of mankind, the custodians of the free spirit of man. They are the first line of defence of mankind in the long struggle in behalf of human freedom, of the dignity and sanctity of unfettered personality. The masters and leaders of thought and spirit, the great family that abides in the realm of intellectual and spiritual fellowship, and their disciples—the heart of mankind—must feel first and most keenly the indignity and sorrow of outraged humanity in Germany. The voice of their brethren in intellectual pursuit, in moral aspiration and fulfillment, degraded and denied all opportunity, cries out to them from a Germany reverting to medieval darkness, branded by the infamy of its present rulers, a quicksand to human aspirations and hopes. In the moral solidarity of mankind, in the mobilization of its spiritual forces in the war of the spirit against the enemies of civilization and human aspiration, rests our hope.

The world is not safe for peace, and democracy can know no rest, while the forces of darkness sanctify the bloody creed of racial supremacy and of ill will toward men, in defiance of humanity's urgent cry for understanding among men and nations. The embattled furies at the gates of civilization shall not succeed in their mass offensive against humanity's abiding values. All those who cherish the vital values and ideals of mankind, the ultimate goal of man's upward striving through the centuries, must echo the world's rallying cry: democracy, and the freedom of the spirit of man, shall survive!

The torch that man must lift, his first and greatest need in these dark days, is a fortifying faith in himself, in his ultimate destiny, in the basic validity of his eternal striving for freedom and light, in the

ever fuller unfoldment of the spirit of God within him, in his humble partnership, along the highway of life, with his Maker. Never has mankind been in more anguished need of such saving faith, in its potentiality and spiritual power, in the sanctity of personality and of its free expression, in the principles and ideals that underlie democracy and self-government. In such faith there is strength, inspiration and guidance; the hope for a life of a higher meaning, spiritually aspiring and culturally creative, purged and cleansed of the inequities of today and the inequalities of today.

True democracy, faith in and hope for the freedom of the human spirit, rooted in the supremacy and sacredness of personality, is Israel's most cherished ideal, his unchanged purpose and quenchless aspiration throughout his millennial history. For our passion for peace, righteousness and social justice, we have been hated and persecuted by enemies and misunderstood by friends. This moral passion will forever remain our sacred burden until it becomes the common heritage of all mankind.

We have struck deep roots and implanted our lives and loyalty in the soil of this land "conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal," the nation forever sanctified by this dedication.

The main inspiration of this dedication is the biblical conception of the supreme Fatherhood of God and the essential brotherhood of man, of man created in the image of his Maker. For the Bible is the cornerstone upon which the fathers and the founders of the republic so well built our national life. The political and moral principles of the Pentateuch and Prophets were to the Pilgrims and the Puritans a living reality. In their fervent championship of human dignity and freedom of conscience, they considered themselves the spiritual heirs of the seers of Israel. For the Bible is the eternal Book of life and light, of divine and human love and loyalty, to which men and nations must turn when the urge of the divine imperative is felt.

May you, children of "the people of the Book," students of the Book, as well as of the Halacha and the Agada, the wellsprings of Jewish reason and Jewish vision, twine your growing roots around this rock of human salvation. May you ever be joyful servitors, the zealous guardians of the free spirit of man. May it be given to you to help refill the drying wells of the spirit with living waters drawn from the Torah of truth, the truth of the Torah, of faith in God and in the destiny of His supreme creation—Man.

Whether your approach to the tremendous problems of life, of humanity, that confront you in these significant days will be that of the

heart or that of the cold intellect or, as I fervently hope, the synthesis of both—that is Judaism—the dignity and the sanctity of the free spirit of man must remain the foundation stone of any sound view and way of life, code of conduct; the ideal worth living for and—if need be—worth dying for, as the supreme and abiding quality of humankind. May this at least be the inspiration, the high resolve, that you bear with you, the marrow of your spirit's bone, from your association during these years with the supreme figures of Israel, his seers, saints and sages, with the accumulated culture and sifted wisdom of the ages, with all that is truest and noblest in the thoughts and deeds of man.

4. FOURTH COMMENCEMENT—JUNE 18, 1935

Friends of learning and enlightenment everywhere are celebrating a milestone in the spiritual march of human progress, the octocentennial of the greatest mind of the Middle Ages, a sage and saint of heroic stature, one of the chosen spirits of mankind, Moses Maimonides. Supreme master of two cultures, the Jewish and the Arabic, each then in its golden age, consummate rationalist and God-intoxicated man, Maimonides was the crowning glory of intellectual and spiritual creativeness during the Middle Ages, whose life and work have profoundly influenced philosophic and religious thought. He ascended to the heights of purest monotheism and spiritual reality on the wings of pure reason, supported by faith and purified by deep spiritual insight, and he inspired his fellowmen and succeeding generations with a greater love of truth, a deeper faith in the free, inquiring and aspiring human spirit, the supremacy of reason, the ultimate destiny of man and his greater spiritual unfoldment, in humble partnership with his Maker. His philosophic interpretation of the basic affirmations of Judaism, the absolute unity of God and the essential unity of man, has become the authoritative expression of the collective conscience of Israel, and his epoch-making juristic work of deep insight into the eternal postulates of reason and justice is still the subject of daily study in Jewish academies everywhere. The creative faith and dynamic idealism of Maimonides is based upon the conviction of a spiritual causation behind the laws of nature, of a purposeful universe, ordered and directed by an Infinite Intelligence; of a human soul advancing through its own efforts to immortal destiny and glory, with nobility and wisdom leading to the understanding and love of the Infinite as the very essence of its being, and upon the belief that the immortal mind that thought the cosmos and man into existence revealed to man, a free and responsible agent, the wise and compassionate purpose of his

being and the fundamental laws of the growth of his immortal soul. To succeeding generations Maimonides has become a source of inspiration and sustaining strength, a guide to a philosophy of life and a sound standard of values and conduct in harmony with reason and conducive to human progress and happiness; a symbol of pure motive, of selfless and fearless quest of truth and of universality of spirit.

Maimonides lived in one of the darkest hours of Jewish millennial history. In an age, not unlike our own, of relentless Jewish persecution and vilification of Israel, Maimonides dedicated himself to the cause of discerning tolerance, to the spread of light and learning, of human understanding and fellowship. Today, as we contemplate the life of Maimonides, the glory of his spirit, and the significance of his contributions to the spiritual progress of man, we stand in reverence of man's unlimited capacity for understanding and for growth in likeness to his Maker.

Advancing scientific thought is gradually freeing itself from the tyranny of mechanistic interpretation of life, growing more cognizant of a purposeful universe and of man as a rational and responsible being. Science is restoring to us the vision of a purposeful and spiritually magnificent universe. The more profound the insight of the scientist and scholar into the phenomena of nature, the more intensive and refined his scientific experience and his intuitive understanding, the more attuned his soul to the call of the Infinite, the more harmonious his knowledge and his faith. With the Psalmist and Maimonides, the true scientist stands in awe and reverence before the mighty majesty and mystery of the unmeasured cosmos, constantly unfolding before us, before the ordered harmony of myriads of spheres, and the life of the spirit.

This growing recognition of the need for and validity of genuine spiritual experience, is giving new direction to man's quest of ultimate reality and unity. In this search mankind is coming once more increasingly to rely upon the fundamental concepts and affirmations of historic Judaism, upon the essentially constructive spiritual message of the seers and sages of Israel from Moses the lawgiver, to Moses Maimonides, the interpreter of the eternal laws of spiritual life and human experience.

The celebration of the anniversary of Maimonides, which by the spontaneous impulsion of the people "has been raised to the dignity of a national day of memorial," bears this significance for you, my dear young friends, who are leaving today the portals of Yeshiva College. Yours has been a unique training in the spirit of Maimonides. The reality of spiritual life and experience has been the integrating prin-

ciple of your education, intellectual and moral integrity has been its aim. You have been led to see that the true end of education, which is a continuous, never ending process, is the power and love of disciplined thought, the ability to envisage life as a whole, and its devotion and consecration to the steadfast service of your fellowmen.

You are going out into a world that is perplexed, by the mounting complex problems of a civilization, that is seeking a new way, clearer guidance; the practical and spiritual fibres of society are strained to the breaking point. Mankind is at the crossroads of the spirit. Everywhere false prophets are arising, whose message of salvation to an economically distressed and spiritually bewildered generation is the destruction of the free and aspiring human spirit; a section of civilized humanity is rushing headlong into moral barbarism, into an antiintellectual crusade. The new day, for which the heart of mankind yearns, must be marked not merely by the rising sun of material security, but by the rise of a humane spirit, by the light of a reviving faith, a reaffirmation of trust in God and faith in man. Only by such faith, in the sanctity of personality, the liberty and dignity of thought and its expression, in the principles and ideals that underlie true democracy and self-government, inspired by the message of sober optimism and promise of the seers of Israel and the wise men of humanity, can we purge ourselves of the iniquities of yesterday and the inequities of today. Man's crying need, is to saturate his soul with the spirit of his seers, with their hope and passion for humanity, for peace and social justice, for a "new heart," a heart of understanding and enduring compassion, pulsating to the eternal and ultimate values of the spirit. Only such spiritual realization of life and human destiny will free mankind from the tyranny of fear, bring courage and peace and lift it to high achievement and self-realization.

May you, my dear young friends, who have learned values transcending the physical, the temporal; values not to be measured in terms of practicality and gainful success, but rather in terms of human happiness, of intellectual and spiritual aspiration and fulfillment, twine your growing roots around the rock of human freedom and advancement, in which alone there is hope and salvation. Be your approach to the basic problems that of the intellect, or that of the heart, or, as I ardently hope, a synthesis of the two, the dignity and the sanctity of the spirit of man, and of its free expression must forever remain the cornerstone of any sound philosophy and way of life, the ideal to strive and live for and—if need be—to die for, as the supreme and abiding quality of humankind. May you ever be found among the joyful servitors and zealous guardians of this ideal. May

this be the high resolve you bear with you from your association, in this sanctuary of the spirit, with the supreme figures and thoughts of Israel, with the accumulated culture and sifted wisdom of the ages, with all that is true and noble in the aspirations and deeds of man.

5. FIFTH COMMENCEMENT—JUNE 17, 1936

Heavy are the clouds that hang over the horizon of humanity and its most cherished ideals, over the charted courses of human progress and aspiration. A great portion of humanity is torn by economic and national strife; is governed by envy, fear and suspicion. The tide of intolerance and oppression is advancing. A hurricane of hate is raging over the hearts of Central Europe, poisoning the springs of peace and good will within and between national borders and threatening to engulf mankind. Medieval darkness still holds its sway over a great country that was once a home of culture and idealism, where equality has been replaced by degradation of races and religions; where the sponsors of a new tyranny glory in debasing human dignity and liberty and in exalting brutal force and conquests as the supreme goal of national life.

In the grave moral crisis facing modern civilization, in our tragic days of Mind versus Brutal Force, whence is to come far-visioned and fearless leadership? The institutions of light and learning, the sanctuaries of faith and vision, the homes of the accumulated wisdom and the creative culture of the ages, are, in their very being, in their essential impetus, the keepers of the collective conscience of mankind, the custodians of the free spirit of man. They are the first line of defense of mankind in the long struggle in behalf of human freedom, of the supremacy and sanctity of the free human personality. The great family that abides in the realm of intellectual and spiritual fellowship and their disciples—the heart of mankind—surely feel most keenly the indignity and sorrow of the outraged human spirit. The voice of their brethren in intellectual pursuit, in moral aspiration and fulfillment, degraded and denied all opportunity, cries out to them from a Germany reverting to medieval darkness, branded by the infamy of its present rulers, a quicksand to human aspiration and hope.

It, therefore, behooves us to express our sorrow at the contemplated participation of representatives of some of our great seats of learning in the celebration of the 550th anniversary of the once great home of learning, the University of Heidelberg. The voice of dying academic freedom and independent thought in Germany, of the invaded and prostrated sanctuaries of the free human spirit, which—until the advent of the new German rulers—have been a link in the

chain of lighthouses of human aspiration across the stormy sea of progress and idealism, uniting mankind in common endeavor and service, cry out to us not to give comfort, not to strengthen the hands of their mortal enemies. The forces of vision and enlightenment must assume resolute leadership against the dark force of hate, against rulers who elevate brutal force as the supreme ideal of government.

The enemies of all the values in which humanity sees its hope and its true progress, have purged the once famed German institutions of learning and research of the spirit of liberal education, of the faithful servants of art and science, and of every manifestation of the inquiring human mind and the aspiring heart; and have turned them into strongholds of darkness and propaganda of hatred, where the very materials of liberal education, works of art, books, music, all cultural values that do not serve the cause of hysterical nationalism and of racial hate are mercilessly destroyed. The hand that aims to turn the clock of time back to the darkest ages falls most heavily upon the men and women of light and learning, whose hearts are altars upon which burns the eternal fire of human idealism.

The great historic institutions of learning and research of England, refused to condone even by the presence of their representatives at the Heidelberg Jubilee celebration the degradation of the German seats of learning, now homes of propaganda and of glorification of war and blood. As the eminent Bishop of Durham recently declared: "The learned world of England cannot enter into a public and deliberate condonation of the intolerance which has emptied German universities of many of their most eminent teachers and which is crowding Europe with the victims of cynical and heartless oppression."

Are lovers of truth and freedom to be humiliated witnesses of the fraternization of academic representatives of some of our eminent seats of learning with the enemies of freedom of academic life and thought, of intellectual and moral integrity, of all that is near and dear to the spirit of our country, "conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal," the nation forever sanctified by such dedication?

It has been suggested by some farsighted American educators that our institutions of learning, consecrated to liberal education and to the abiding values of humanity, signalize the days of the celebration of the University that was once free Heidelberg by memorial services for the free spirit banished from its precincts and thereby bring to the attention of all liberty loving men and women the tragedy of the former homes of the human spirit in Germany, demonstrate our solidarity in the cause of the oppressed truth and its true servants, and our un-

qualified condemnation of their oppressors in the mass offensive against the hope of mankind, and to offer fervent prayer for the restoration of sanity. On this occasion let us once again declare that mankind is not safe for peace and democracy, can know no rest, while the forces of darkness sanctify the bloody creed of racial supremacy and of ill-will toward God and men, in defiance of humanity's urgent cry for understanding among men and nations. All who cherish the vital values and ideals of mankind, the ultimate goal of man's striving through millennia, must echo the cry: democracy and the freedom of the spirit of man, shall abide! Hate must be destroyed ere it destroys us!

The torch that man must lift in our dark days, is a fortifying, and creative faith in himself, in his ultimate destiny, in the basic validity of his eternal striving for freedom and light, in the ever greater unfoldment of the spirit of God within him, in his humble partnership, along the highway of history, with his Maker. Never, perhaps, has mankind been in greater need of such saving faith in the potentiality of its spiritual strength, in the sanctity of personality and of its free expression, in the principles and ideals that underlie true democracy and self-government. In such faith there is strength, inspiration and guidance; the hope for a life of a higher meaning, spiritually aspiring and culturally creative, purged and cleansed of the inequities of yesterday and the inequalities of today.

Mankind, once more perplexed and at the crossroads of the spirit, stands in need of the reassertion of the supremacy and sacredness of human personality and reason, of a spiritual approach to and interpretation of life. True democracy, faith in, and hope for the freedom and advance of the human spirit, is the very heart of Israel, his unchanged purpose and quenchless aspiration during his millennial history. For our passion for peace, righteousness and social justice we have been hated and persecuted by enemies and misunderstood by friends. This moral passion will remain our glad and sacred burden until it becomes the common heritage of all mankind.

The main inspiration of this dedication is the Bible, the cornerstone upon which the fathers and the founders of the Republic so well built our national life. For the biblical conception of the essential oneness and solidarity of man created in the image of his Maker, and the political and moral principles of the Pentateuch and Prophets were to the Pilgrims and the Puritans living and creative reality.

May you, my dear young friends, children of "the people of the Book," devoted students of the Bible, ever be the faithful servants, the joyful servitors, and the zealous guardians of the free and ascending spirit of man. Be your approach to the tremendous problems

of life, of humanity, that will confront you, that of the heart or that of the cold intellect, or, as I fervently pray and hope, the synthesis of the two, the synthesis that is historic Judaism, the dignity and sanctity of the free spirit of man must remain the foundation stone of any sound view and way of life, of any code of conduct; the ideal to live for—and if need be—die for, as the supreme and abiding quality of humankind. May this be the inspiration, the high resolve, that you take with you, from your association during these years with the accumulated culture and sifted wisdom of the ages, with the supreme figures of Israel, his seers, saints and sages, with all that is true and noble in the aspirations and deeds of man.

6. SIXTH COMMENCEMENT—JUNE 17, 1937

You, my dear young friends, are beginning your active lives at a time in human history marked by a struggle for survival and supremacy between two concepts of human life and destiny. One of light and vision, rooted in the tested verities of human experience and reason through millennia of sacrifice and aspiration toward God and light; in faith in God and in the essential unity of mankind; in the sacredness of human personality and the cultural and spiritual unfoldment of man: The second, of blind darkness, rooted in the repudiation of civilization, the denial of human freedom and fellowship, in fanatic and militant nationalism, leading to the destruction of the cherished values of mankind, of the very foundations of human cooperation and hope.

The gulf between the forces of light and of darkness is deepening, rendering futile efforts at cultural and spiritual communication across the abyss. The new frontiers of darkness threaten the very existence of what mankind has striven and bled for. The day may not be distant, when the challenge of the aggressive forces of hate, intoxicated with their temporary might, will have to be accepted by all who believe in light and right, by the forces of civilized humanity. Nations true to their cultural and spiritual destiny may have to assert themselves against the recrudescence of medieval darkness, so that the achievements of centuries of civilization, the traditions and ideals of aspiring humanity, may not perish, so that the light of the spirit of God within man may not be extinguished. For in our days, when by the progress of science continents are brought together in intimate contact, only the saving strength of the steadfast spirit is quarantine against the epidemic passion and poison of hate, which threatens to engulf mankind.

It is our boundless faith that in the great struggle for the preservation of human freedom, in the days of solemn significance looming on our horizon, our beloved country, “conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created free and equal,” forever blessed and sanctified by such dedication, will continue to stand as a mighty bulwark for human freedom. The choice of our people, despite the occasional cry of false prophets, whose lure of salvation to the economically and spiritually perplexed is the enslavement of the free human spirit, has been made. It will abide by its heritage, the basic ideals determining the nature and conditions of a culturally creative and a spiritually aspiring national life, conducive to individual and social liberty. The great stronghold of human freedom reared by Washington, Jefferson and their fellow-patriots, men of vision and eternity, and founded upon the eternal truths of the living Bible, stands as a guide and inspiration to mankind today. It is our task to help exemplify democracy as a continually progressive course and practice of living together; to help develop an ever deepening sense of the interdependence and vital interrelationship among nations dedicated to human integrity and freedom; to offer greater understanding and vision, moral encouragement and support, to nations, large and small, that are in the firing line of “the war of the Lord,” the everlasting battle of light against darkness, for the liberty, the dignity, and the happiness, of human life.

Our great ally in the age-old struggle for the ascendancy of the human spirit, is truth, which sets men free and liberates his spirit—especially divine truth and creative faith, for the freedom and essential unity of mankind are rooted in the fundamental affirmation of the absolute unity of God and the brotherhood of humankind. Dynamic democracy as a great social force has its source in true faith in God; the forces of darkness place their faith in frightfulness and the denial of the free spirit of man.

In our days of perplexity and devastating drift, when mankind has come once more to the crossroads of the spirit, our greatest need is a fuller discernment of the ultimate meaning and values of life. To be truly free, man must free himself from selfishness, and self conceit; must saturate his soul with creative faith in a beneficent purpose, with the triumphant spirit of the divine optimism of the prophets of Israel, with a sacred passion for humanity, for justice and spiritual harmony; man must achieve once more, achieve and hold, a spiritual realization of his history and his destiny.

True democracy, faith in man, in personal freedom, divorced of selfishness; personal development enhancing the general good, is the

high affirmation of Judaism, and its most cherished hope. Today the tide of misunderstanding, of hatred and persecution, is again at the flood. Yet human freedom and progress will remain the quenchless aspiration of Israel, until they become the heritage of all mankind.

It is in this light, my young friends, that we have sought to guide you. The reality of spiritual life, the value of the free human spirit, has been the integrating ideal of your education. We have tried to lead you to envisage life as a harmonious unity, in an enshaping frame of intellectual and moral integrity. While pursuing your general education, you have zealously engaged in the study of the Torah, the Bible, and the Oral Law, the source and fountain of spiritual understanding, the God-given charter of life, the cornerstone upon which the founders and fathers of this great democracy reared the enduring structure of our national life, the support and the strength of the ones who settled and the ones who freed our beloved country, to whose inspiration nations as well as men must turn, under the inner urge of the Divine Imperative.

Ours is in a sense a time between times, of formlessness, a time of transition between an age that is dying and an age that is being born. It is nevertheless God's time and part of *His* design, of which it can be said, as in the beginning of creation, "and the spirit of the Lord hovers over it." Yours is the glorious opportunity to add your share, no matter how small, to the life of spiritual and cultural abundance, of deeper significance, that is in the making. Give yourselves, sons of Israel, sons of the Yeshiva, to the most sacred of all causes—the cause of human advancement in the light and in the spirit of the Torah and the seers of Israel.

Convictions and ideals, no matter how exalted, are meaningless without the zeal to live for them and in them; the readiness to undergo privation, if need be, to endure suffering for their realization. Only the union of the ideal and the capacity for self-sacrifice bears lasting fruit and enriches mankind. Spiritual daring, the strength gladly to sacrifice for one's convictions, honesty, painfully arrived at, mark the mature man. In them is fullness of life. They are the essence of the great souls whose lives and enduring influence are mileposts in the highway of human history: the spirit of the Infinite within us. This steadfastness, this readiness for enduring sacrifice and suffering for the ideal has ever been the essential characteristic of martyred Israel, in which we glory.

It is our hope and prayer that you, my dear young friends, may ever stand among the joyful servitors and zealous guardians of the vital ideals of mankind. Be your approach to the tremendous problems this

age has forced upon us that of the heart—the heart that beats for all sufferers, that pulsates with human compassion—or that of the intellect, in sober but detached contemplation, or as I fervently hope, a creative synthesis of the two, there must remain as the cornerstone of your lives an abiding sense of the dignity and the sanctity of the free spirit of man, the core of your creed of life and code of conduct, the principle that gives life deep significance, the supreme and eternal quality of humankind.

May this be the inspiration, the resolve that you carry with you and cherish, from your association through many years with the supreme figures of Israel, his seers, saints, and sages, with the accumulated culture and sifted wisdom of all the ages, with the abiding word of God, with all that is true and noble in the thoughts and the deeds of men.

7. SEVENTH COMMENCEMENT—JUNE 16, 1938

On behalf of the faculties of Yeshiva and Yeshiva College, I greet all of you who grace our exercises with your presence.

This commencement marks a milestone in the history of the Yeshiva and of Jewish cultural endeavor. A decade ago a new lighthouse of learning was established, the first and only college of liberal arts under Jewish auspices. Yeshiva College was conceived in the spirit of steadfastness to the spiritual certainties and the abiding values of Judaism, which in ages of transition, of shifting standards and changing values, stand as guide-posts on the highway of human advancement, pointing the way to the spiritual ascendancy of man. The integration of the forces of general and spiritual education, the union of the knowledge of the ages and the learning and vision of steadfast Israel, is the integrating spirit of Yeshiva College.

By the grace of Him who is the supreme source of all understanding, Yeshiva and Yeshiva College has become a sanctuary of which the Bible says “it shall be a witness between us that the Lord is God.” From Yeshiva and Yeshiva College comes a lay and spiritual leadership which accepts the challenge of its responsibility for the future of our unique heritage and helps build a spiritually aspiring and culturally creative life, drawing its inspiration from and guided by the Torah, in union with the forward looking forces of our age and in the spirit of creative democracy, rooted in the Torah.

For the Bible was the first to proclaim human liberty and equality with all its moral and practical implications. True and enduring democracy, faith in man, in the sanctity and supremacy of human personality and

reason, in the individual as the highest human value, in the higher destiny of man and the essential unity of mankind, has its source in faith in the absolute oneness and fatherhood of a God of justice and mercy, Israel's supreme contribution to the spiritual unfoldment of mankind. American democracy has grown out of the spiritual soil of the Bible. From its very beginning, in the genius of America and its aspirations, faith, democracy and education have stood in vital union, for democracy is rooted in faith and sustained by education. The Bible was the support and the strength of the sturdy and steadfast settlers; the keystone upon which was reared the enduring structure of our national life.

But mankind is once more at the crossroads of the spirit. You, my dear young friends, are beginning your active lives at a time of great upheaval, when the ghosts of the darkest ages are casting their shadows. Mankind, divided against itself—half free and half slave. Everywhere false prophets appear whose message of salvation, whose lure to the economically depressed and spiritually perplexed, is the enslavement of the free, inquiring and aspiring human spirit. A new paganism has arisen to plague mankind, one of blood and race, of soil and state and the blind worship of brute force, repudiating human culture and idealism, denying mankind's solidarity and freedom and destroying the very foundations of humanity's cooperation and hope.

The time may not be distant when mankind, true to its destiny, to the chartered course of man's forward aspiration, will have to meet the challenge of the aggressive forces of hate, who, intoxicated with their temporary might, seek to extend their domain, the frontiers of frightfulness, and engulf mankind in the night of darkness. For there is no adequate quarantine against the passion and poison of prejudice and hate, except in the eternal vigilance of the fortified spirit of man, and in the mobilized collective conscience of the community.

Never before has mankind been in greater need of a saving faith in itself, in its abiding values, in its ultimate destiny; in the great affirmations of Judaism concerning the meaning of life, a sustaining and revitalizing faith in the divine optimism and promise of the seers of Israel; in their exalted passion for humanity, peace and justice and spiritual harmony; in their spiritual interpretation of existence, in their insistence upon a new, a purposeful heart, a heart of compassion and greater discernment.

You, my dear young friends, have learned these values, transcending the physical, the temporal; values to be measured not in terms of practicability, and gainful success, but in terms of human happiness, of spiritual and cultural aspiration and fulfillment. We look to you sons

of Israel, sons of the Torah and its true home—the Yeshiva—loyal children of America, conceived in liberty and forever sanctified by its dedication to the proposition that all men are created free and equal, to hold high the torch of human idealism, in the light and the spirit of our Torah, a Torah of everlasting life and light, of liberty and loyalty.

This is your heritage. The ability gladly to sacrifice for one's convictions, honestly, painfully arrived at, is the measure of the mature man; in it is the full meaning of life; steadfastness unto sacrifice and suffering is the essential characteristic of Israel during our tragic and triumphant history. May you ever be among the joyful servitors, the zealous guardians of the free spirit of man. Whatever your approach to the grave problems of life, be it that of the heart, a heart pulsating with compassion for suffering humanity, be it that of the intellect, detached contemplation, or, as I prayerfully hope, a creative synthesis of the two, which is the essence of Judaism, the dignity and the sanctity of the free spirit of man must ever remain the core of your creed, the code of your conduct.

May this be the inspiration, the cherished resolve you carry with you, from your long association in this sanctuary of the spirit with the supreme figures of Israel, his seers, saints and sages, with the sifted wisdom of the ages, with the abiding Word of God.

8. EIGHTH COMMENCEMENT—JUNE 20, 1939

You are beginning your active lives at a time of tremendous upheaval in human history, a time marked by a struggle for supremacy and survival between two concepts of human life and destiny. One, of light and vision, rooted in human reason and experience, in faith in God and the essential unity of mankind, in the sanctity of human personality, and in the charted course of man's forward aspirations; the second, of blind darkness and hate, rooted in the repudiation of human culture and idealism, in the denial of a universal and eternal God of justice, and mercy, of freedom and fellowship, and deification of brute force and conquest.

Ours is, in a sense, a time between times; a time of transition between an age that is passing and an age that is being born. Despotism is triumphant in many lands. Democracy: the free, inquiring and aspiring spirit of man, is humbled and on the defensive. There is about us a growing sense of futility. A large portion of mankind is "retreating into a kind of bewildered defeatism" unwilling to accept the tasks and the responsibilities of mature, Godlike human personalities.

You, my dear young friends, have dedicated years of study and contemplation to the understanding of man and nature and the spiritual nature of man. You are becoming part of a generation that disdains its immediate past, is disheartened by the present chaos and afraid of the future. Yours, my dear young friends, has been a unique training. The reality of spiritual life and experience has been the major principle of your education; intellectual and moral integrity and faith in the high destiny of man has been its highest aim; you have been led to see that the end of all learning is its steadfast consecration to the service of mankind.

As you enter active life, you are likely to encounter dark forces; mortal, even if subtle enemies of the causes and ideals you have learned to believe in, to cherish. Be eternally vigilant, and not disheartened and let not your vision be impaired by the forces blocking the way to the promised land, not by the failure of former generations, especially that of our own. Victory will be yours, if you but learn to experience the glow of the ideal and the glory of self sacrifice in the selfless quest of truth, of justice and of the greater spiritual unfoldment of mankind. Do not surrender to the darkness that is temporarily closing in about us. If you but will, this is the darkness before the rise of the new day, for which the heart of mankind yearns.

Even if your efforts can be but spade work, remember that many and real are the forces on your side of the struggle, forces deeply rooted in the human soul, its hunger for goodness and justice, for beauty and brotherhood; great forces waiting to cleanse and bless mankind. These allies assure ultimate victory against the dark forces in man and society. All through the ages men and women who beheld great visions and achieved mightily have intuitively depended upon and have drawn strength from them. Work in partnership with these "invisible allies" and in humble cooperation with our Maker. It is of the invisible forces of light, of divine and human love and loyalty that the prophet Elisha spoke to Gehazi, who was overwhelmed by the appearance of mighty physical forces. "Fear not, for they that are with us, are more than they who are with them."

Man integrates himself and discovers his true strength and the meaning of life to the extent to which he gives himself, merges his being, into a cause and ideal vastly greater than himself. Such integrity, such independence and strength of personality, is rooted in an abiding faith in the sanctity and supremacy of human personality, and reason, in the divine origin and high destiny of human life, in the belief that man, his intellectual, moral and spiritual being is vastly more than an accidental product of vital energy, that the integrated

human personality is the highest human value and the deepest reality of creation.

Scientific paganism, pseudo-scientific mechanistic interpretation of life, of history and of human destiny, has for almost a century retarded spiritual life and progress and is increasingly becoming responsible for the loss of human dignity and freedom, for the dwindling of the spirit of democracy in many lands. Materialism, by its very nature, inevitably leads to the destruction of liberty and of the abiding values of mankind, dearer to the mature man than life itself. The dark age, that is upon us, the sense of futility, the ghosts of the darkest ages, which once again cast their sinister shadows over a portion of mankind, have their source in the weakening faith in the high and unique nature and destiny of man. The tragedy of our age, in the words of our American sage, is that "masses of men blindly follow the lead of those who do not believe in man." For if man is but an accident, without purpose and destiny, if he is not a symbol and servant of supreme values, entrusted by his maker with the responsibility for the greater spiritual unfoldment of mankind, why think, plan, and act in terms of tomorrow? In the words of an American contemporary, "if man is nothing more than a part of nature, a complicated animal," why should not despots use men as they are using them today? What right has man to the priceless privilege of intellectual and spiritual liberty? Why not crush freedom and suppress the individual in the interest of some super-race, or some "superman" who aspires to the vestments of the supreme Being?

The answer to the challenge of the forces of darkness and hate can come only from men and women of faith in man and his ultimate destiny, who place the moral and spiritual ascendancy of man above a promised security of slavery. The integrated, mature human personality cannot be enslaved forever. The fully grown man is the chart and compass, as well as the goal of democracy. It is in the cause for new hope that advancing science is gradually freeing itself from the tyranny of mechanistic interpretations and is becoming cognizant of a purposeful universe, ordered and directed by an Infinite Intelligence, of man as a responsible being, advancing through his own efforts to immortal destiny. The more profound the insight of the scholar into the phenomena of nature, the more intensive his scientific experience and intuitive understanding, the more attuned he becomes to the voice of the Infinite within and about him. With the Psalmist the true scientist stands in awe and reverence before the mighty majesty and mystery of the unmeasured cosmos; before the magnificence and ordered harmony of myriads of spheres, and the life of the human spirit.

The growing recognition of the reality of spiritual experience is giving new meaning to human life, new direction to man's quest of ultimate truth and reality, wherever the spirit of man is free. In this search for truth and self discovery mankind is coming to rely upon the fundamental affirmation and abiding concepts of historic Judaism, upon the message of promise and divine optimism of its seers and sages.

Remember that knowledge, idealism, and high aspirations are meaningless without the strength to live for them, without the readiness to endure suffering for their realization. In the union of high aspirations and the capacity for self sacrifice for one's convictions honestly, painfully arrived at, is the fullness of life. Such union is the essence of the great souls whose lives and enduring influence are mileposts in the highway of human progress. Passion for truth, social justice, steadfastness unto death, readiness to gladly endure martyrdom for the eternal truth of the Torah have been the abiding aspect of Israel in his tragic and triumphant millennial history. For his unbending loyalty, and spiritual independence, Israel, mankind's most mature people, has forever been vilified by false leaders of mankind, who aim to enslave the free spirit of man and by multitudes who bear the pain of growth, of the independent, integrated, mature human personality.

It is our hope and prayer that you, my dear young friends, may ever be among the joyful servitors and zealous guardians of the vital ideals of mankind. Be your approach to the tremendous problems this age has forced upon us that of the heart—the heart that beats for all sufferers, that pulsates with human compassion—or that of the intellect, of detached contemplation, or as I fervently hope, a creative synthesis of the two that is Judaism, there must remain, as the corner-stone of your lives, an abiding of the dignity and the sanctity of the free inquiring spirit of man. The core of your creed of life and the code of conduct must be the principle that gives life deep significance—the supreme eternal quality of mankind. May this be the inspiration, the resolve that you carry with you and cherish, from your association through many years with the supreme figures of Israel, his seers, saints, and sages, with the accumulated culture and sifted wisdom of all the ages, with the abiding word of God, with all that is true and noble in the thoughts and the deeds of man.

9. NINTH COMMENCEMENT—JUNE 20, 1940

You, my dear friends, graduates of 1940, are beginning your active lives at a time of supreme trial and sorrow, at a fateful hour in human history. Mankind is in the grasp of a nightmare come true. The

ghosts of the darkest ages are casting their sinister shadows over a mankind dismembered and at war with itself. The free spirit of man is humbled. Every day catastrophe is mounting and the tragedy of human destruction and degradation is reaching new depths. The terrible trap that is now in Europe is ablaze with the passion of hate and destruction and is facing the end of the moral order it has been living by. The fate of Western civilization hangs in the balance.

As we witness the cataclysmic tragedy and behold the gathering momentum of intellectual nihilism and spiritual anarchy, we ask ourselves where is this unprecedented crisis in the history of man and his spirit, this world conflagration, to stop? Are there any fundamental concepts, sanctions, and judgments, any abiding bases of the true human spirit which shall remain inviolate and unshaken? Or do these values and the inspiration of the noble human types, seers and servants of mankind of all ages, belong, as many contend, to a passing age? What are the dikes mankind can erect against the flood of hate and brute force, against the demon in man bent upon the extinction of the light of human reason, upon destruction and eventual self-annihilation? Is this agony of the vast majority of civilized humanity, this deluge of fire that has swept over mankind, all in vain? Mankind is groping in the dark, seeking a new way, clearer guidance, and is yearning for farsighted and fearless leadership, capable of comprehending the causes and the implications of the cataclysm, of dealing comprehensively with the basic forces of this titanic struggle, and of giving new directions to a civilization that has lost its way.

The tragic state of mankind today is largely the disastrous consequence of an attitude of detachment and spiritual isolation; of our long tolerance of evil; of indifference to wrong and suffering born of a static concept of democracy and of human history and destiny; of an interpretation of human liberty in the light of self-interest, as the right to be free from unpleasant responsibilities—from being our brother's keeper—with a resultant indifference to the rise of power-mad men and nations, contemptuous of their fellow-men, who aspire to the vestments of the Supreme Being to order the cause of human history according to their evil will, to mold human society in their image.

A sense of futility is gnawing at the very vitals of humanity. A large portion of mankind is adrift and retreats before despots and brute force, and permits itself to be led by men "who do not believe in man," because of the weakened faith in the high purpose of human life and the unique destiny of man.

The answer to the challenge to the embattled forces of blind hate

can come only from faith in human destiny and men and women, who place the spiritual and cultural ascendancy of man above a promised security of slavery.

The issue we are facing is basically that of the spirit. We are face to face with the cardinal problem of the meaning and purpose of human life and history, of the validity of the values that transcend the physical and temporal, of the moral and spiritual concepts and judgments that are the core of human progress for which mankind has striven and bled during millennia. Do we truly believe that there are basic ideals and causes, views and ways of life worth living for and sacrificing for; that there are ways of life inherently evil, intolerable and degrading, cults of hate and conquest, of worship of force, of supermen and super-races, and the deification of the state, worth fighting against and sacrificing to hold against them the standard of the life of free men?

Only in the light of our answer to these searching questions does the full meaning of the present terrible struggle and the role of everyone of us in it become clear to us. It was said long ago that man does not live by bread alone, and that without vision he will perish. The ultimate fact upon which the outcome of our days depends is the ability of the adherents of the free spirit of man to abandon themselves, with a supreme measure of devotion, to its cause in this hour of trial. Can the belief in the free, inquiring and aspiring spirit of man, in the supremacy and sanctity of human personality and reason, in the divine origin and the high and unique destiny of man, and in the reality of spiritual life and experience, sanctify and summon a death-defying allegiance, man's capacity for self-sacrificial devotion to a supreme cause? Is democracy to fail where the enemies of the free spirit of man have succeeded in capturing and holding, for their gospel of hate, of dark and destructive doctrines, this human capacity for joyous sacrifice? In a new vision of human destiny, in a return to a dynamic, creative democracy, in a reinterpretation of the ideals of human freedom and fellowship, in the spirit of the seers of Israel and mankind and of the sturdy and steadfast settlers of our land, as man's most sacred cause and possession, is our salvation. In this way only can we move toward the glory and the goal of truly free men. Without such re-dedication, all efforts at preparedness against the enemies of human freedom, dignity and happiness, must be of no avail.

Man must return to the great affirmations of Judaism concerning the meaning of life, to the divine optimism and promise of the seers of Israel, to their passion for humanity, peace and justice, to their

spiritual interpretations of human existence and their insistence upon a new, a purified heart, a heart of greater compassion and discernment. American democracy, as a creative way and philosophy of life, must reforge its spiritual and moral weapons. It must regain the courage and vision, imagination and initiative, the heroic qualities which have characterized the founders of our great democracy, the only remaining light in the darkness that is closing in about us.

Man's deepest need to-day, if he is to free himself from the slavery of fear and hate and from the growing sense of futility and frustration, is a revitalizing and fortifying faith in his Creator and in himself, in the reality and basic validity of his cherished aspirations, in the ageless striving of the human soul. Only such renewed faith, expressed in sacrifice will see us through the new dark age—the extent of which no one can tell—with our spiritual, moral, and cultural standards untarnished and held high. Through the heavy clouds which cover the human horizons is discernible the eternal light of human spirit, ever reaching for the Infinite; for truth, justice, love, and spiritual harmony.

If history has any meaning, if it is not a blind alley, the modern transvaluation of all values, child of pagan materialism, which underlies the new crusading politico-economic faiths, and threatens to destroy liberty and democracy, is but a tragic snare and delusion, doomed to destruction on the eternal rock of the true spirit of man.

The true meaning of human destiny, its eternal law and purpose, is even greater human liberty, the ever greater spiritual and cultural unfolding of the individual in the human fellowship, in humble cooperation with his Maker. Real are the forces deeply rooted in the human soul, yearning for truth and justice, for beauty and brotherhood, great forces to be released, to cleanse and bless mankind. They assure ultimate victory against the dark forces in man. These "invisible allies" of light and loyalty have ever been a source of strength to men and women of all ages who beheld great visions and achieved mightily, whose lives and enduring influence are mileposts in the highway of human progress. It is of them that Elisha spoke to a Gehazi who was frightened by the overwhelming physical power of the enemy: "Fear not, for they that are with us are more than they who are with them."

The voice of the deeper nature of man, the spirit of the Infinite within him, and the collective and cumulative conscience of mankind will re-assert themselves in a life purified of the present-day iniquities and unrealities, in a life more free and happy, more creative and purposeful. This is the faith that gives meaning, zest and abiding

value to life, upon which human life must be reconstructed, through which mankind will be saved.

Creative scientific thought is gradually freeing itself from the tyranny of the mechanistic interpretation of life and is growing more cognizant of a purposeful universe guided and directed by an Infinite Intelligence, and of man as a rational and responsible being. Science is restoring to us the vision of a meaningful universe. The more profound the insight of the scientist into the phenomena of nature, the more intensive and refined his scientific experience and his intuitive understanding, the more attuned his soul becomes to the voice of the Infinite, the more harmonious his knowledge and his faith. With the Psalmist, the scientist stands in awe and reverence before the mighty majesty and mystery of the unmeasured cosmos, constantly unfolding before us, before the ordered harmony of myriads of spheres, and life of the spirit.

This growing recognition of the need for and the validity of spiritual experience will give new direction to man's quest of ultimate reality and unity, wherever the spirit of man is free. In this search mankind is coming once more increasingly to rely upon the basic concepts and affirmations of historic Judaism; upon the essentially constructive spiritual message of its seers and sages.

In such an intelligent faith leading to the firm resolve to uphold reason and the free spirit of man, to strengthen human solidarity and brotherhood, and to reintegrate the shattered spiritual and cultural forces, is the hope of man. This is the supreme adventure on which free man will stake his all.

A parting word to you, my dear young friends. You have learned the meaning of values, to be measured not in terms of practicability and gainful success, but in terms of human happiness, of spiritual and cultural aspirations and fulfillment. We look to you, sons of the Torah and its true home—the Yeshiva, loyal children of our blessed land, “conceived in liberty” and forever sanctified by its dedication to the “proposition that all men are created free and equal,” to hold high the torch of human progress and idealism in the spirit of our Torah of life and light. This is your spiritual heritage. The ability gladly to sacrifice for one's convictions, honestly and painfully arrived at, is the measure of the mature man; in it is the full meaning of life. Steadfastness unto death, readiness gladly to endure martyrdom for the idea, is the essential characteristic of Israel during his tragic and triumphant millennial history.

May you ever be among the joyful servitors, the zealous guardians of human liberty. Be your approach to the grave problems of life con-

fronting our perplexed and tortured generation, that of the intellect or that of the heart, or, as I hope, a creative synthesis of the two—that is the essence of Judaism—the dignity and the sanctity of the free spirit of man as the highest human value and the deepest reality of creation, must remain the corner-stone of any sound creed of life, of any code of conduct, the ideal to live for and—if need be—die for, as the supreme and abiding quality of humankind. May this be the inspiration, the high resolve, that you carry with you from your long association in this sanctuary of the spirit, with the sifted wisdom of the ages, with the supreme figures of Israel, his seers, saints and sages; with the abiding word of the Lord.

APPENDIX III

*Dr. Revel's Responsa**

1. *Kol Isba (Woman Vocalist)*

Western Union telegram to Samuel Levy, 950 Park Avenue, New York, N. Y., March 9, 1926

SLIGHT TEMPERATURE PREVENTS ME FROM ATTENDING MEETING TONIGHT. IT IS THE UNANIMOUS OPINION OF THE YESHIVA FACULTY THAT PUBLIC PERFORMANCE BY WOMEN SPONSORED BY THE YESHIVA IS NOT IN KEEPING WITH THE HISTORY AND TRADITION OF A CAUSE AND INSTITUTION AS THE YESHIVA, AND WOULD ULTIMATELY REFLECT UPON THE IDEALS AND WILL WEAKEN THE HOPE OF THE YESHIVA AS THE GREAT INSTITUTION OF TORAH AND HIGHER LEARNING.

B. REVEL

* The responsa are discussed in chapter II.

2. *Reform Jews on Yeshiva's National Board of Directors*

October 17, 1928

Samuel Levy, Esq.,
295 5th Avenue
New York City

Dear Mr. Levy:

As I consider full understanding between us important to the progress of the Yeshiva, and as I learned to value your judgment most highly, and believe the seeming misunderstanding, at the last meeting of the Board was due to my failure to make my viewpoint clear, I should like to trouble you to think over the following reasons that impelled me to my stand.

I have at times been blamed by my colleagues for broad-mindedness, perhaps too tolerant; surely not of narrow-mindedness. It is manifestly the function of the Yeshiva to further its ideals, and it accepts the assistance of any person, who is sufficiently in sympathy with the Yeshiva to contribute, and often makes the donor's acquaintance, and brings to his attention the message and the meaning of the Yeshiva, so that the relationship may remain not only financial, but draws him near to the Yeshiva ideals.

When, however, it is contemplated to place men who have not merely left traditional Judaism, but have gone over to Reform Judaism, in positions of seeming leadership in the Yeshiva, quite other and more serious considerations must be faced. The fact that the National Board of Directors lacks authority will differentiate its members from other officers of the Yeshiva only in the eyes of those close to the Yeshiva; the general public will draw no such distinction; membership on such a Board marks an official relationship and definite recognition by the Yeshiva.

It is one of the misfortunes of American orthodox Jewry, and largely responsible for the chaos in the hearts and minds of the present generation, especially of our youth, that we have taught our children to look upon as leaders in Israel men who have turned against historic Judaism. Failing to recognize the dangers, the difficulty of keeping credit for philanthropy, for relief work or other service apart from spiritual authority, we have accepted, and hailed, as outstanding representatives of American Jewish life, men who have denied the spiritual values of historic Judaism, who have substituted Sunday for the Sabbath, who have even bent, with decided leanings toward a different faith. Never before in Israel has such an incongruous, such an impossible, associa-

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tion existed. The Yeshiva is more than an institution of learning, more than a training school for our future teachers and spiritual leaders, a reservoir of Torah in this land; it is a vision and a light, a symbol of our hopes and faith; shall we not blur that vision, darken that light, weaken that symbol by inviting into its leadership men whose creed is a rejection of those hopes, a denial of that faith? The Yeshiva is the beacon light of Torah — true Judaism in this land, free from the taint of compromise with the fads of the day, from surrender that calls itself Reform Judaism.

American Jewry looks upon the growth of the Yeshiva as the coming of traditional Judaism to its strength, as a re-assertion of the validity and permanence of the true Jewish ideals; shall we in this moment of regained respect proclaim inability to progress, to continue, without the financial and spiritual leadership of those who have abandoned the ideals for which the Yeshiva stands? If our own sense of self-respect were to find ways of accommodating itself to the official naming, among our permanent leaders, of those whose ideology and life undermine our faith, shall we not lose in the respect of thinking men, who will wonder at this mixture, where they can no longer distinguish the compromiser from the man who holds firmly to his faith? Is it not probable that some of the very ones whom we invite would hold us in a higher esteem, were we to maintain some line of demarcation; our inviting them to join with us in the Yeshiva leadership, they may interpret as a weakness.

Still more, our own communities, our Torah-true rabbis and balebatim would find themselves bewildered. For the Reform movement, until recently satisfied to hold its own, has recently begun active proselytizing work; officers of Reform congregations make personal appeals to orthodox Jews; pamphlets are prepared in Yiddish — though they scorn Yiddish — to spread the ideals of Reform, they having the advantages of wealth, of social standing and the general trend of the times. In many communities the orthodox leaders have been placed on the defensive and some — including rabbis who are graduates of the Yeshiva — have a serious conflict on their hands. How much more difficult will be the position of such men — giving the Yeshiva as their authority, if a representative of the ideas, if perhaps the very men they are fighting as destructive of our ideals, is on the Yeshiva National Board! We shall have placed orthodox rabbis in a false light, and setting confusion upon their ways.

There is no denial of the conflict between traditional Judaism and that destruction which proclaims itself Reform, which cuts into the vitals of our faith; to name men active in that camp among Yeshiva leadership, will inevitably alienate many of our old friends who regard the new physical and

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spiritual expansion of the Yeshiva as the coming of a renewed vitality in our perennial faith — and at the same time will fail to win the respect of some of those we may be seeking, who, without your lofty ideals, will regard such action as admission of our inability to move ahead without them. We might indeed end in assuring maintenance by destroying what we most desire to maintain.

I have mentioned only some of the reasons that make me feel, that we have too little to gain, and too much to lose, by such a radical departure from the traditions of our Yeshiva and of the Yeshivoh of all ages. Knowing your vision and your logical mind, I am confident that you will recognize how the evils likely to spring from this action outweigh any possible advantage.

I shall be glad to meet with you some evening so that we can think the matter out to its consequences together.

With all good wishes,

Faithfully yours,
B. REVEL

BR:B

3. *Non-mechitza Synagogue*

בע"ה ה' אדר א' תרצ"ב

רב חביבי שליט"א:—

קבלתי את מכתבך וגם ראיתי את דבריך להרב ראוענבלום הי"ו ויודע אתה כי יקרת בעיני נכבדת ולכן עלי לבי דוי וביחוד צר לי כי שחדת דעתך ואינך מודה על האמת ומרמה אתה את עצמך ובאת בפלפול של הבל להצדיק את הרע ופצ"ג שגדרו חז"ל ועל כגון זה אמר הנביא הנני נשפט אתך אל אמרך לא חטאתי וגו' ומה תקוה לטהור בעיניו אומר מותר וגם קדוש מה שהרחיקו גדולי ישראל בכל הדורות.

ובאשר מכיר אני אותך ואת מסירותך לתוה"ק ולקדשי האומה לבי מלא תקוה כי את כל אשר בכחך תעשה להטות לב אנשי קהלתך— אשר שמעתי כי רובם לבם תמים עם ה'— להחזיר עטרה ליושנה את המקדש מעט כהמקדש בבנינו, אנשים לחוד ונשים לחוד ולא יהיו פורשים עצמם מכלל קהלות קדושות בכל הדורות שמסרו נפשם על כל קדשי האומה ובוה תוכה להיות ממוכי הרבים.

כעתירת דורש שלומך וטובתך

(-) דוב רעוועל

ראש הישיבה.

4. Centrally Located Bimah

ב"ה, ב' ר"ח אדר התרצ"ד

רב חביבי הרב המופלג בתורה וביראת ה' טהורה

נאה דורש ונאה מקיים כ"ש, ר' אריה סטיסקי

רב ק"ק דווארען, אהי"א

ישא ברכה מאת ה'

שמחתי לקראת מכתבך מבשר שלומך הטוב ושלום קהלתך, ויודע ומכיר אני כי הנך מכוון את לבך לאבינו שבשמים לקרב אליו לב אבות ובנים ויפן ה' ותצליח בכל אשר תעשה.

ועל שאלתך בדבר השנים שרוצים לעשות במקום הבימה במקדש מעט שלכם, הנה שאלת חכם חצי תשובה כי פשוט שעקירת הבימה מן אמצע ביהכ"נ היא איסור, וכבר הוכרת את דברי הרמב"ם תפילה פ' י"א וכנראה היתה גירסת הרמב"ם בתוספתא מגילה פ"ג שהבימה באמצע, ושו"ע או"ח ס"ס ק"נ ובמפרשים.

וידוע שביהכ"נ שלנו הם בתבנית המשכן והמקדש כדי שנוכיר את צורת הבית, ובמקדש היו הכלים באמצע והאריך בזה הגאון בעל החתם סופר זצ"ל בחת"ס או"ח סכ"ח ואפילו מנהג ישראל תורה שלמה, ושאל איך ויגדך.

ובטוח אני בבני ישראל כשרים שבעירך כי ישמעו לעצתך שלא לנטות מדרך אבותינו הקדושים.

ואתה וביתך שלום וברכה כעתירת

מחבבך ודורש שלומך

(-) דוב רעוועל

ראש הישיבה

5. *Disinterment of a Suicide*

א. שאלה

... בסוף רוצה אני לשאל מכבודו דבר הלכה. בית הכנסת של רבי שלמה גולדמאן נמצא בשכונתי, ואבות רבים מחסידיו הם קבורים בבית הקברות שלנו. עכשיו קנו הם בית קברות חדש, והם משתדלים להעביר את עצמות אבותיהם לבית הקברות החדש. והנה ידוע שאסור לפנות את עצמות המת מקבר לקבר, כמבואר ב"ד סי' שסג ובפתחי תשובה שם, ואנחנו לא הרשינו לעשות ככה, בהסכם עם הדין. אבל עכשיו נשאלתי אודות אחד, שהאביד את עצמו לדעת, ושנקבר בבית הקברות שלנו לפני תשע שנים. אלמנת המת קנתה מקום לקבורה בבית הקברות החדש של „אנשי אמת“, ושם נקבר כבר אחיה. והנה רציתי לדעת אם אסור ההעברה מקבר לקבר חל גם על מאבד עצמו לדעת, שהרי בקבורתו אין דין כבוד המת. עוד לא נוכחתי אם המת היה מאעל"ד במובן המונח הזה בדיננו, כמובא ב"ד סי' שמ"ה ובתשובות המצוינים שם. אבל מסופק אני אם לאחר זמן, ביחוד לאחר י"ב חדש, אין דין המאבד עצמו לדעת כדין כל שאר המתים. ומחכה אני לתשובתו.

בהאחלה לבבית לאשתו ולבני משפחתו ולכל רבני הישיבה
ובברכת שנה טובה ומוצלחת,
(-) יעקב דוב אייגוס.

ב. תשובה

ב"ה כח אלול ת"ש
1 באקטאבער 1940

רב חביבי

הרה"ג ד"ר יעקב אגוס, נ"י
רב בקהלת אגודת אחים

ישא ברכה מאת ה'

מפני הטרדות הרבות של התחלת הזמן ועיניי הכלל והפרט, אחרו
דברי על מכתבו היקר.

שמחתי כי שלום לו, ויפה הורה בפנוי המאע"ל, שלפי התנאים שנתנו האחרונים במאע"ל, כמעט שאין דין בזמן הוה, וביחוד כאשר עבר זמן רב ונתכפר לו, ואכס"ל.

אודות הומנתו להשתתף בשמחת חג המלואים, כת"ר יודע את רצוני לעשות רצונו, כי שמחתו שמחתי, אך כת"ר גם כן יודע שבזמן האחרון הנני תחת פקודת הרופא ורוב הזמן שאינני עסוק בישיבה הנני אסור אל המטה, ולע"ע לא אדע אם יעלה חפץ זה בידי.

הנני מאחל לו ולביתו שנת חיים ושלום, שנה שיש בה אהבת תורה ויראת שמים, וחפץ ה' יצליח בידו להגדיל תורה ולהאדירה ולקרוב לב אבות ובנים לאבינו שבשמים, להגן על קדשי האומה וקדושת מקדשי מעט, ותכלה שנה שתש בה כוחו של ישראל ונוכה לשנת כי תשא.

כעתירת מוקירו ודו"ש

(-) דוב רעוועל

6. *Disinterment of a Person Buried in the Wrong Grave*

ב"ה כו תשרי תש"א

28 באוקטובר 1940

רב חביבי המופלג בתורה

וביראת ה' טהורה

הרב ר' ישראל מאשאוויץ, שליט"א

ישא ברכה מאת ה'

מפני החג והטרדות אחרו דברי על מכתבו ואתו הסליחה.
 בענין שאלתו אודות האיש שנקבר בקבר שהיה מכור לאחרים,
 כת"ר יודע עד כמה החמירו חז"ל משום כמה טעמים שלא לפנות את
 המת. אך אם אי אפשר להתפשר עם בעל הקבר, והקבורה היתה בודאי
 שלא מדעת בעל הקבר, מותר לפנות, אך אין זה דרך היושר. ובודאי
 ישתדל כת"ר לעשות כל מה שבכוחו בענין זה, ולקצר אני צריך.

והנני ידידו ודו"ש ושלוש ביתו

(-) דוב רעוועל

ראש הישיבה

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7. Accepting a Diploma Embossed with a Cross

QUESTION

St. John's College School of Law, 50 Court Street, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Office of the Dean

April 4th, 1928

Dr. Bernard Revel
 Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theo. Seminary
 301 East Broadway,
 New York City.

Reverend Sir:

May I ask you to be good enough to assist me with your opinion concerning a matter of Jewish Law.

The traditional diploma of St. John's College has engraved in the scroll work on the top, a cross. Some of our Jewish students seem to be of the opinion that their religion forbids them to accept this diploma. Many Jewish students have graduated from St. John's College in the past years and have received diplomas similar to the one we now issue. If the Jewish religion prohibits our Jewish graduates from accepting this diploma, I am naturally anxious to know about it immediately.

Your kind attention to this matter will be appreciated.

Respectfully yours,
 GEORGE W. MATHESON

GWM:LR

RESPONSE

May 1, 1928

Dean Matheson
 St. John's College, School of Law
 50 Court Street
 Brooklyn, N. Y.

Dear Dean Matheson:

I appreciate your being good enough to interest yourself in, and to put before me, the question of the acceptance of the diploma of St. John's College

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of Law, with a cross inscribed in the scroll work at the top, by Jewish students graduating from the College.

The question as to the acceptance of such a diploma is not free from complications. During the Middle Ages the cross was a specific Christian symbol, often an object of worship; as such, it was, and is, scrupulously to be avoided by Jews who adhere to Jewish law and tradition. Where the cross is without a figure, however, and where — as I suppose in this case — it is not a religious symbol but serves to indicate the origin of the College and the auspices of its inception, the Law does not definitely forbid the acceptance of a diploma so enscrolled.

As scholar and Dean of a college of law, you recognize the importance of equity in the law; so also in religious law there is a spirit of equity behind the letter. We can, therefore, appreciate the spirit of the young men who object to receiving the diploma in its present form; for is it not an indication that they have preserved a concern beyond the material aspects of the age?

Very sincerely,
B. REVEL

BR:B

8. *Blood Transfusion with Non-Jewish Blood*

QUESTION

Jewish Daily Bulletin, 125 East 46th Street, New York, N. Y.

December 26, 1930

Dr. Bernard Revel
Yeshiva College
Amsterdam Avenue & 187th St.
New York City

My dear Dr. Revel:

We should like to obtain for reference purposes, an authoritative opinion on the use of the blood of a non-Jew by a Jew in a blood transfusion. . . .

Sincerely yours,
BERNARD POSTAL
Editor

RESPONSE

January 28, 1931

Bernard Postal, Esq.
Editor, Jewish Daily Bulletin
125 East 46th Street
New York, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Postal:

I have your letter in regard to blood transfusion from a non-Jew, which absence has prevented my earlier answering.

There is nothing in Jewish law on this matter. According to the general principles of Jewish law, however, if a competent physician advises such action, it is not only permitted, but required.

With kind greetings,

Sincerely,
B. REVEL

9. *Synagogue Membership for a Man Previously Married to a Non-Jew*

QUESTION

The "Adath Jeshurun" Congregation, 375 King Edward Avenue,
Ottawa, Canada.

November 3rd, 1936

Dr. Bernard Revel,
The Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary
and Yeshiva College,
Amsterdam Avenue and 186th Street
New York, N. Y.

Dear Dr. Revel:

I have on behalf of the Adath Jeshurun congregation, Ottawa, Ont., to submit the following for your kind attention and decision:

A Jewish resident of the city of Ottawa, Ont., has been married to a non-Jewish (catholic) woman for nigh on to twenty-five years. There are, it is believed, six or seven children of this union. All of the children, male and female, were brought up as strict catholics.

The individual in question, annually for some years attended services in our Synagogue during the High Holydays.

His wife died two or three years ago. He remarried to a Jewish woman, whose family are residents of this city and members of the Adath Jeshurun.

It is needless to say that his children, by his first wife, follow the religion of their late mother, i.e., Catholicism.

The individual under review has recently made application for membership with this congregation.

In view of the above, might I request that, you will be good enough as to render a decision whether the party concerned may be admitted as a member of the Adath Jeshurun congregation.

In anticipation of an early reply, I remain,

Yours truly,
B. PEARL
Secretary

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RESPONSE

November 12, 1936

Mr. B. Pearl, Secretary
Adath Jeshurun Congregation
Normandie Apartments, #14,
485 King Edward Ave.
Ottawa, Canada.

Dear Mr. Pearl:

I have been hesitant in replying to your letter, because of the difficulty there must be, in framing a decision, for anyone not acquainted with the individual involved. I have no way of determining his motives, nor the extent of his **תשובה**. Nothing, of course, should stand in the way of true repentance, which seeks to atone for, and redeems, any wrongs.

The conscience of the community must speak in such a matter, always making sure that the spirit of Judaism guides, working in the ways of the Almighty, extending generous help to one who sincerely desires to return to true Jewish life.

Sincerely yours,
B. REVEL

10. Medical References in Torah Literature

Response sent to Dr. F. Schneersohn on January 8, 1932

ד"א ורפא ירפא התורה נתנה רשות לרופא לרפא (מכילתא לשמות כ"א י"ט וראה ברכות ס' א' ובבא קמא פ"ה א').

ורשות לרופא לרפא הכונה מצוה לרפא ולהתרפאות. ראה רמב"ם נדרים פרק ו' הלכה ח' וכן כתב בפירוש המשניות לנדרים פרק ד' משנה ד' „לפי שהוא מצוה רוצה לומר חייב הרופא מן התורה לרפאות חולי ישראל וזה נכלל בפירוש מה שאמר הפסוק (דברים כב) והשבותי לו לרפאות את גופו וגו'” וכן כתב הרמב"ן בספרו תורת האדם סוף שער הסכנה דרשות דרופא לרפאות היא מצוה (אם שבפירושו לויקרא כ"ו י"א לא כתב כן) וכן כתב הרשב"א „ומי שהשיגו החולי אינו סומך על הנס אלא לשאול ברופאים, ולא עוד אלא שאסור להכנס בעניני הסכנות לבטוח על הנס” (שו"ת ס' תי"ג) וכן ההלכה ביורה דעה ס' של"ו „נתנה התורה רשות לרופא לרפאות ומצוה היא ובכלל פקוח נפש הוא” וראה במקומות שהביא בביאור הגר"א שם ובטורי זהב שם סק' א'.

עיר שאין בה רופא אסור לדור בתוכה (ירושלמי סוף קדושין וראה סנהדרין י"ז ע"ב ורש"י שם).

בן סירא אמר: „השם ברא רפואות מארץ יצמחו ואיש חכם מבין מה מעשיהם” (פ' ל"ח) וראה בראשית רבה פרשה ו' וראה זהר דברים רצ"ט „איתימא הואיל וקב"ה יפקוד לתפשא ליה דלא ישתדל בר נש אבתריה, לאו הכי דהא דוד אמר (תהלים מ"א) אשרי משכיל אל דל גו' דל ההוא דשכיב בבי מבעיה, ואי אסיא חכים, קב"ה יהיב ליה ברכאן לההוא דישתדל ביה גו'” וראה ירושלמי תענית פ"ג הוי אוקיר לאסייך עד דלא תצטרך ליה וראה ירושלמי כתובות פ' י"ג ה"ב: שלא מן הכל אדם זוכה להתרפאות.

מעשה בר' ישמעאל ור' עקיבא שהיו מהלכין בחוצות ירושלים והיה עמהם אדם אחד; פגע בהם אדם חולה, אמר להן: רבותי אמרו לי במה

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אתרפא? אמרו לו: קח לך כך עד שתתרפא; אמר להן אותו האיש שהיה עמהן: מי הכה אותו בחול? אמרו הקב"ה. אמר להם ואתם הכנסתם עצמכם בדבר שאינו שלכם. הוא הכה ואתם מרפאים. . . כך הגוף הוא העץ, הובל הוא הסם איש האדמה הוא הרופא (מדרש שמואל ד', א. וראה הוצאת באבער ע' נ"ד אותיות דר' עקיבא אות ד' דר' אמר הקב"ה). אף ראה פסחים פרק ד' משנה ט' שגנו חוקיה ספר רפואות והודו לו ודרשו על זה והטוב בעיניך עשיתי (ברכות י' ב') ועל המלך אסא נאמר: וגם בחליו לא דרש את ה' כי אם ברופאים אף ראה בפירוש המשניות לרמב"ם פסחים שם ובמורה נבוכים ח"ג פ' ל"ז ותשובות הרשב"א ס' תט"ז ורמב"ן בפירושו לויקרא כ"ו י"א. „באמרם ורפא ירפא לא אמרו שנתנה רשות לחולה להתרפאות, אמר הכתוב: וגם בחליו לא דרש את ה' כי אם ברופאים". וראה ר' אברהם אבן עזרא בפירושו לתהלים ל"ב י': „דע כי הכתוב לא התיר להתרפאות רק ממכת בן אדם כי השם לבדו הוא רופא ישראל". וראה עוד אבן עזרא לשמות כ"א „יש שחולי שבפנים הגוף רק ביד ה'" וכן כתב ר' בחיי בן אשר שם ונגד דעה זו כתבו תוס'. בבא קמא פ"ה א. ד"ה שניתנה, וראה חובות הלבבות לרבנו בחיי שער הבטחון פ"ד.

ומשל בפי העם „דכאיב ליה כאיבא אויל לבי אסיא" (בבא קמא מ"ו ב') ורבים מחכמי ישראל היו רופאים וראה „תודוס הרופא וכל הרופאים עמו" (נויר נ"ב א') וחכמי התלמוד שאלו ברופאים לעניני הלכה וסמכו עליהם. ראה נדה כ"ב ב'; חולין ע"ז א' וראה ספרי דברים פסקא רמ"ז „וז מהלכת רופאים" וירושלמי יבמות פ"ח ה"ב וראה בספר צדה לדרך לר' מנחם בן זרח, מאמר א', כלל ג' פרק ב' מה שהאריך בזה.

לפי דברי ההיסטוריון הקראי קירקיסאני בן דורו של ר' סעדי' גאון אסר ענן, מיסד כת הקראים, להשתמש ברופאים ואסר לחלל שבת עבור חולה שיש בו סכנה ושאר הקראים אסרו לחלל שבת על ספק פקוח נפש; ראה אשכל הכפר להקראי יהודה הדסי א"ב קע"ט וא"ב ס"ד (קל"ה ע"א), וגן עדן ע' ל"ד; אדרת אליהו ערך שבת פרק שני, ונגד דעה זו כתב הרמב"ם „ואסור להתמהמה בחילול שבת לחולה שיש בו סכנה. . . ואלו האפיקורסים שאומרים שזה חלול שבת ואסור, עליהם הכתוב אומר: גם אני נתתי לכם חוקים לא טובים ומשפטים לא יחיו בהם" (הל' שבת פרק שני הלכה ג').

11. Sources Discussing Sacrifice after the Destruction of the Temple

בע"ה כ"ד ניסן התרצ"ב

לידיד ה' ואנשים ויד"נ הרב הגאון הנעלה נודע לשם
ולתהלה כש"ת ר' יקותיאל יהודה גרינוואלד
רב ואב"ד דקאלומבוס, אהייא

ישא ברכה מאת ה'

לדבר הזה יסלח לי כת"ר כי מרוב הטרדות וימי החג אחרו דברי על מכתב כת"ר מעש"ק תוריע ושמח אני כי כת"ר ממשיך את חקירותיו החשובות גם בחכמת ישראל אשר בעליה זרים לרוח היהדות המסורה ואם אנו מחשים עוד ימצאנו עון.

ובמה שהעיר כת"ר אם הקריבו קרבנות בירושלים אחר חורבן בית מקדשנו נוכח בבנינו, הזכרתי ענין זה אנב אורחא ביגדיל תורה שנה תשיעית קונטרס י' ואין הקונטרס הזה תחת ידי וכבר הארכו בזה הגאון ר"י עמדין בשאלת יעב"ץ ח"א ס' פ"ט והגאון ר"צ חיות בשו"ת שלו ס' מ' אם הקריבו קרבן פסח שבא בטומאה וא"צ לשקלי צבור אחר החורבן והרבה יש לדון בדבריהם לא עת האסף עתה. ומצינו לר"ג דיבנה שאמר וכו' עבודה בזה"ו מנין (פסחים ע"ב) והתיר גדי מקולס (ביצה כ"ב) ומה מוכח שלא היו מקריבים פסח בימיו ע' ביצה כ"ג ע"א וע' תוספתא פסחים פ"י ה' יב מעשה בר"ג ווקנים כו' ור"ג דפסחים פ"ח ע"ב הוא ר"ג הזקן (וצע' בתוס' נדה ו' ע"ב) וכן ר"ג שעבר השנה מפני הגדיים וכ"כ הראב"ד בספר הקבלה ד"ה הלל ושמאי וע"כ, בתר דעברו' פירושו כדעת ר' פרץ לאחר שעברו השנה. וראה בהגהות הרצ"ח שם ומה שנאמר בסנהדרין שם שגם רשב"ג עיבר את השנה מפני הגדיים והוא בן ר"ג דיבנה אביו של רבנו הקדוש ע' רש"י סנהדרין י"א ע"ב ד"ה תקיפי ע"כ כפירוש הר"ן שם שזה רק משום שמא יבנה בהמ"ק ולא שהיו מקריבין ק"פ וראה תוספתא אהולות פ' י"ח ה' י"ח וטובלין ואוכלין את פסחיהם לערב וע' ר"ש שם מ"ט וכבר העיר הרצ"ח שה"ל מהא דב"ב ס"ו ואם נאמר שהקריבו אחר החורבן ע"כ שלא נחרב המזבח עד לפני חורבן ביתר (תענית כ"ט) שאם נחרב המזבח יחד עם המקדש לא היו יכולים

לבנות אותן מחדש דאין אנו יודעים מקום המזבח וכמבואר בובחים ס"ב ומה שכתב הגאון ר"צ קלישר זצ"ל במאמר העבודה שאפשר לעמוד על מקום המזבח דהר הבית והעזרות תחתיהן חלול והמזבח אסור להיות חלול (וע' מל"מ בית הבחירה פ"א ותפ"י מדות פ"ג ד"ה אינם). דבריו תמוהים מהא דובחים ס"ג הנ"ל וע"כ דהוצרך נביא להראות מקום המזבח משום דשמא המקום שאינו חלול הוא מקום הכבש או יסודי הכתלים.

וכבר הארכתני בתשובה על מה שפסק הרמב"ם כר"י דמעלה קדשים בחוץ בזה"ז חייב (ובחים ק"ז ע"ב) והלא בזה"ז אי אפשר לבנות מזבח כיון שאין אנו יודעים מקומו וגם אי אפשר לבנות מזבח שכולנו ט"מ ובנין מזבח ודאי שאינו דוחה טומאה וכבר כתבו תוס' יומא ס"ג וובחים ס"א דהא דר"י דמחייב במעלה קדשים בזה"ז הוא דוקא כשיש מזבח.

וראה בפירוש המיוחד לרבנו סעדיה גאון ט' כ"ו שאדריינוס קיסר החרیب את המקדש והשבית זבח המנחה והחריב מקום התמיד ונראה דס"ל דעד ימי פולמוס אדריינוס שאז נחרש הבית היו מקריבין קרבנות וע' רש"י שם שפירש כתוב זה על טיטוס ובמ"א הראתי שהיו להם בימי התנאים אפר פרה והיו יכולים להקריב בטהרה וגם הכהנים היו מיוחדים או והיה להם תכלת ואפשר שידעו עוד מקום המזבח והיו יכולים להקריב קרבנות צבור ופסח ור' יהושע שאמר שמעתי שמקריבין אע"פ שאין בית הסכים כנראה לבנין הבית בתחלת מלכות אדריינוס ראה ב"ר פ' ס"ד פ"ח וע' ביוסף אומץ להחיד"א ס"ו, ומרה"ש ל' סוכה מ"א ביצה ה' ועוד מוכח דמיד אחר החורבן בימי ריב"ז לא הקריבו אפילו ק"צ ורק בתחלת מלכות אדריינוס אפשר שהקריבו ק"פ וממחלוקת ר' אליעזר ור' יהושע ושאר תנאים בקדושת הבית אי קלע"ל מוכח שלא הקריבו קרבנות אחר החורבן דאם הקריבו ודאי דקדושה ראשונה קלע"ל (לדעת ר' חיים כהן בתוס' מגילה י' ושאר ראשונים דבמות אסורות בזה"ז ואפילו במקום המקדש אפילו למ"ד לא קדשה לע"ל) ואיך פליגי בזה ור' ישמעאל חברו של ר"ע אמר לכשיבנה בהמ"ק אביא חטאת שמינה משמע דמוזמן שנחרב המקדש אין קרבן וכן אמר ר"ש בובחים ס' בבכור וידועים דברי הגאון חת"ס זצ"ל יו"ד ת' רל"ו.

ועמוקים הדברים וחזון למועד וירום קרן כת"ר בכבוד ויפוצו מעינותיו חוצה כעתירת מחבבו ומוקירו ודורש שלום תורתו

(-) דוב רעועל

Abbreviations

AJYB American Jewish Year Book

JF Jewish Forum

JQR Jewish Quarterly Review

PAJHS Publication of the American Jewish Historical Society

APPENDIX IV

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„בירור דברים בענין טומאת כהנים בזמן הזה“, יגדיל תורה, שנה ראשונה, קונטרס תשיעי, סימן ס, עמודים ריד–רטז. 40

תרע"ז (1916–1917)

„בירור דברים בענין טומאת כהנים“, יגדיל תורה, שנה שנייה, קונטרס שני, סימן יח, עמודים נב–נה. 41

“Leszynsky’s *Sadduzaer*.” *JQR* 7, no. 3 (January 1917): 429–38. 42

תרע"ח (1917–1918)

„משיב דבר“, יגדיל תורה, שנה שנייה, קונטרס עשירי, סימן סח, עמודים רמ–רנא. 43

„בירור דברים בענין טומאת כהנים“, יגדיל תורה, שנה שנייה, קונטרס שנים עשר, סימן עה, עמודים רפד–רצב. 44

“An Epistle of Saadya Gaon Recently Discovered.” *JF* 1, no. 2 (March 1918): 74–77. 45

תרע"ט (1918–1919)

- 46 „בירור דברים בענין טומאת כהנים“, יגדיל תורה, שנה שלישית, קונטרס ראשון, סימן ו, עמודים לג–לט; המשך ממנו בקונטרס שלישי, סימן מב, עמודים קעט–קפב.
- 47 „טומאת ארץ העמים“, יגדיל תורה, שנה שלישית, קונטרס ראשון, סימן ט, עמודים נה–ס, המשך ממנו בקונטרס שני, סימן לב, עמודים קמד–קנא.
- 48 „ברי ואומדנא“, יגדיל תורה, שנה שלישית, קונטרס שני, סימן טו, עמודים צה–צה; המשך ממנו בקונטרס שלישי, סימן לז, עמודים קסז–קעג.
- 49 „שינוי באיסורים ובטומאה“, יגדיל תורה, שנה שלישית, קונטרס רביעי, סימן נ', עמודים רטו–רכה.
- 50 „הפקר בשבת“, יגדיל תורה, שנה שלישית, קונטרס חמישי, סימן סו, עמודים רעו–רעז.
- 51 „שחיטת קדשים“, יגדיל תורה, שנה שלישית, קונטרס חמישי, סימן ע, עמודים רפט–רצג; המשך ממנו בקונטרס ששי, סימן פא, עמודים שמד–שמו.
- 52 “A Foundation for Educational Work in Palestine.” *JF* 2, no. 2 (February 1919): 716–18.

תר"פ (1919–1920)

- 53 „מחשבה ומעשה“, יגדיל תורה, שנה שלישית, קונטרס ששי, סימן פב, עמודים שמו–שנז.
- 54 „אפקעינהו רבנן לקידושין מיניה“, יגדיל תורה, שנה רביעית, קונטרס ראשון, סימן א', עמודים א–יד.
- 55 „מחשבה ומעשה“, יגדיל תורה, שנה רביעית, קונטרס ראשון, סימן יא, עמודים נג–סז (המשך ממספר 53).

תרפ"א (1920–1921)

- 56 „דברי תורה ודברי קבלה“, יגדיל תורה, שנה רביעית, קונטרס שני, סימן יב, עמודים עג–פח; המשך ממנו בקונטרס שלישי, סימן כט, עמודים קפ–קצ.
- 57 „למשיכי דבר“, יגדיל תורה, שנה רביעית, קונטרס שני, סימן יז, עמודים קב–קו.
- 58 „מחשבה ומעשה“, יגדיל תורה, שנה רביעית, קונטרס שני, סימן כג, עמודים קכה–קמו (המשך ממספר 55).

APPENDIX IV

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תרפ"ג (1922–1923)

- 59 „אגרת רב סעדיה גאון”, דביר, ספר ראשון (ניסן–סיון תרפ"ג), עמודים קפ–קפח.

תרפ"ד (1923–1924)

- 60 „אדם חשוב”, נר מערבי (יוצא על ידי תלמידי ישיבת רי"א), כרך ראשון (כסלו תרפ"ד), עמודים ז–כא.

61 “The Historical Background of Levitical Impurity on All Land Outside of Palestine.” *JF* 7, no. 9 (September 1924): 566–69.

62 “Some Anti-Traditional Laws of Josephus.” *JQR* 14, no. 3 (January 1924): 293–301.

תרפ"ה (1924–1925)

- 63 „רוב בממון ובדיני נפשות”, נר מערבי, כרך שני (טבת תרפ"ה), עמודים טו–יז. (נדפס פעם שניה על ידי אהרן דוד בוראק בפרוץ אהרן (ניו-יורק, תשי"ד), חלק ראשון, עמודים רלו–רלט).

- 64 „תרגום יונתן על התורה”, נר מערבי, כרך שני (טבת–תרפ"ה), עמודים עז–קכב.

תרפ"ו (1925–1926)

- 65 “Jewish Ethics.” *JF* 9, no. 3 (May 1926): 119–28.

תרפ"ז (1926–1927)

- 66 „ברירה בביטול עבודה זרה”, הפרוט, שנה ראשונה, חוברת א (ניסן תרפ"ז), סימן חמישי, עמודים ו–ח.

67 “Idols.” *JF* 10, no. 9 (September 1927): 432–36.

68 “Lincoln and the Jewish Spirit.” In *Abraham Lincoln, the Tribute of the Synagogue*, edited by Emanuel Hertz. New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1927 (reprint of no. 12 above), 1:360–364.

תרפ"ח (1927–1928)

- 69 “Philonian Halakah.” *JF* 11, no. 3 (March 1928): 120–22.

תרצ"ב (1931–1932)

- 70 “Am Ha-aretz.” *The National Encyclopedia*. Vol. 1, pp. 199–200.

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APPENDIX IV

תרצ"ד (1933–1934)

- 71 „החלופים בין בני כבל ובין בני ארץ ישראל ומקורות ההלכה של הקראים“, חורב, כרך א', חוברת א (ניסן תרצ"ד), עמודים א–כ.
- 72 „הקדים מעשר שני לראשון“, הפרדס, שנה שביעית, חוברת ט (כסלו תרצ"ד), סימן סא, עמודים לא–לג.
- 73 „נחלה משבט לשבט“, ניר (יוצא על ידי תלמידי בית המדרש למורים שעל ידי ישיבת רי"א), שנת תרצ"ד, עמודים ו–ז, ט.

תרצ"ה (1934–1935)

- 74 „מדור העמים“, חורב, כרך א, חוברת ב (תשרי, תרצ"ה), עמודים קכג–קכו.
- 75 „עונש שבועת שקר לדעת פילון והרמב"ם“, חורב, כרך ב, חוברת א (ניסן תרצ"ה), עמודים א–ה.
- 76 „מתנת כהונה בספר היובלים ובספרי פילון“, הדנו (יוצא על ידי תלמידי ישיבת רי"א), שנה עשירית (סתו, תרצ"ה), עמודים ח–יא.
- 77 „נאמנות עדים לדעת הרמב"ם, ועדות עד אחד להבבלי והירושלמי“, כבוד חכמים (ספר היובל לכבוד הרב דוב אריה הכהן לעווניטהאל: פילאדעלפיא, תרצ"ה), עמודים צח–קט.

תרצ"ז (1936–1937)

- 78 „ביאורי הלכות“, חורב, כרך ד, חוברת ז–ח (ניסן תרצ"ז – תשרי תרצ"ח), עמודים א–יח.

תרצ"ט (1938–1939)

- 79 „חדוש הסמיכה מלפני ארבע מאות שנה“, חורב, כרך חמישי, חוברת ט–י (ניסן תרצ"ט), עמודים א–כו.

תש"ב (1941–1942)

- 80 „פרקים בחלופי מנהגים“, חורב, כרך ו, חוברת יא–יב (חשון, תש"ב), עמודים ט–יט.
- 81 „משנת חסידים“, חורב, כרך ו, חוברת יא–יב (חשון תש"ב), עמודים כ–כו.
- 82 „עבודה בבמה“, אידנו (יוצא על ידי תלמידי ישיבת רי"א לזכר נשמת דוב רבל זצ"ל: ניו-יורק, תש"ב), עמודים ג–יב.

NOTES

CHAPTER 1

1. Hyman B. Grinstein, "The Efforts of East European Jewry to Organize Its Own Community in the United States," *PAJHS* 49, no. 2 (December 1959): 73–74. ⇐
2. Herbert S. Goldstein, ed., *Forty Years of Struggle for a Principle: The Biography of Harry Fischel* (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1928), p. 12. ⇐
3. Zvi Shimon Album, *Sefer Divrei Emet* (Chicago, 1912), 2:69. ⇐
4. Morris Raphael Cohen, *A Dreamer's Journey* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1949), p. 69. ⇐
5. Hutchins Hapgood, *The Spirit of the Ghetto* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1909), pp. 11–12. ⇐
6. *Ibid.*, p. 27. ⇐
7. Cohen, *A Dreamer's Journey*, p. 85. ⇐
8. Abraham Cahan, *The Imported Bridegroom* (Cambridge, Mass.: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1898), p. 79. ⇐
9. B. Feigenbaum, *Passover Haggadah according to a New Version*, p. 14, cited by Israel Davidson, *Parody in Jewish Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1907), p. 83. ⇐
10. Ticket translated in *New York Sun*, 24 September 1890, and cited by Moses Rischin, *The Promised City: New York's Jews, 1810–1914* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 155. ⇐
11. Samuel Ornitz, *Bride of the Sabbath* (New York: Rinehart and Co., 1951), p. 311. ⇐

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12. Bernard Drachman, *The Unfailing Light* (New York: Rabbinical Council of America, 1948), pp. 167–68. ←
13. Ray S. Baker, *The Spiritual Unrest* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1909), p. 115. ←
14. *Ibid.*, p. 121. ←
15. Henry Roth, *Call It Sleep* (New York: Avon Library Books, 1965), p. 212. This passage is also cited by Zvi Scharfstein, *Toldot HaChinuch B'Israel* (Jerusalem: Reuben Mass Publishing Co., 1962), pp. 39–40. ←
16. Alexander Dushkin, *Jewish Education in New York City* (New York: The Bureau of Jewish Education, 1918), p. 68. ←
17. Moshe Weinberger, *Ha-Yehudim Veba-Yahudut Be-New York* (New York, 1887), p. 4. ←
18. Hapgood, *The Spirit of the Ghetto*, pp. 25–26. ←
19. See Willowski's *Nimukei Ridbaz al ha-Torah* (Chicago, 1904), p. 3, and the author's "The American Sojourns of Ridbaz: Religious Problems within the Immigrant Community," *PAJHS* 57, no. 4 (June 1968): 557–72. ←
20. *Jewish Day* (New York), n.d., cited by Robert Park, *The Immigrant Press and Its Control* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1922), p. 141. ←
21. For details of the Rabbi Jacob Joseph venture, see Judah David Eisenstein, *Ozar Zikbronothai* (New York, 1929), pp. 252–71; and Abraham J. Karp, "New York Chooses a Chief Rabbi," *PAJHS* 44, no. 3 (March 1955): 129–98. ←
22. Album, *Sefer Divrei Emet*, 2: 69. ←
23. Hapgood, *The Spirit of the Ghetto*, p. 62. ←
24. Karp, "New York Chooses a Chief Rabbi," p. 165. ←
25. "The Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada," *The Jewish Communal Register: 1911–1918* (New York: Kehillah, 1917), p. 1172. ←
26. David de Sola Pool, "Judaism and the Synagogue," in *The American Jew: A Composite Portrait*, ed. Oscar I. Janowsky (New York: Harper and Bros., 1942), p. 37. ←
27. Judah M. Isaacs, "Abraham Jacob Gershon Lesser," in *Guardians of Our Heritage*, ed. Leo Jung (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1958), p. 352. ←
28. Jacob David Willowski, *She'elot u-Teshubot Bet Ridbaz* (Jerusalem, 1908), p. 11. ←
29. Peter Wiernik, *History of the Jews in America* (New York: The Jewish Press Publishing Co., 1912), p. 282. ←
30. Dr. Cyrus Adler's memorandum on his conference with Rabbi

- Levinthal, 22 February 1926 (Marshall Papers at the American Jewish Archives of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati: MS Box 133-JTS). For additional details see chapter 5. ←
31. *The Jewish Communal Register: 1911–1918*, p. 1171. ←
 32. For further details regarding this topic, see chapter 8. See also Stuart Rosenberg, *The Jewish Community in Rochester, 1843–1925* (New York: American Jewish Historical Society, 1954), p. 169. ←
 33. Herbert Parzen, *Architects of Conservative Judaism* (New York: Jonathan David, 1964), p. 19. ←
 34. *Ha Ibri*, 17 September 1897, p. 1A, and 15 October 1897, p. 1E, cited in Gilbert Klaperman, *The Story of Yeshiva University* (Toronto: The Macmillan Co., 1969), p. 40. ←
 35. *Jüdisches Tageblatt*, 5 February 1903, p. 5C, cited in *ibid.*, p. 40. ←
 36. Norman Bentwich, *Solomon Schechter* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1948), p. 213. ←
 37. *Jüdisches Tageblatt*, 9 March 1908, p. 4B, cited in Klaperman, *The Story of Yeshiva University*, p. 42. ←
 38. Gilbert Klaperman, “Yeshiva University: Seventy-Five Years in Retrospect,” *PAJHS* 54, no. 1 (September 1964): 18–19. ←
 39. *Jüdisches Tageblatt*, 18 January 1906, cited in *ibid.*, p. 30. ←
 40. Lincoln Steffens, *Autobiography* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1931), pp. 244–45. ←
 41. Edward A. Steiner, *The Immigrant Tide: Its Ebb and Flow* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1909), p. 176. ←
 42. M. E. Ravage, *An American in the Making* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1917), p. 79. ←
 43. Isaac Max Rubinow, “The Jewish Question in New York City: 1902–1903,” *PAJHS* 49, no. 2 (December 1959):95. ←
 44. Phillip Cowen, *Memories of an American Jew* (New York: The International Press, 1932), p. 291. ←
 45. Drachman, *The Unfailing Light*, p. 228. ←
 46. *The Spirit of the Ghetto*, pp. 121–22. ←
 47. *Sefer Divrei Emet*, 1:33–34. ←
 48. Baker, *The Spiritual Unrest*, p. 124. ←

CHAPTER 2

1. The details of Dr. Revel’s early life are primarily based upon four sources:
 - (a) Hirschel Revel, “Rabbi Dr. Bernard Revel,” *Eidenu: Memorial Publication in Honor of Rabbi Dr. Bernard Revel*

(New York: Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, 1942), p. 15.

- (b) Hirschel Revel, “Memorial Address in Honor of Dr. Bernard Revel” (prepared for delivery in Baltimore, 5 January 1940).
 - (c) Unsigned MSS of family memoirs written by Dr. Revel’s sisters.
 - (d) Interview with Sarah Revel, widow of Dr. Revel, on 13 April 1964. ←
2. Cf. *Sefer HaYovel Rabbi Shimon Shkop* (Vilna: Kranes Publishing, 1936), pp. 16, 18, 26, 57, and Dov Katz, *Tenuat HaMussar* (Tel Aviv: Abraham Zioni, 1958), 5:29–36. ←
 3. Cf. Abraham Der Tate, *Bletter Fun Mem Yugend* (New York: Farlag Unser Tsait, 1939), pp. 67–80. ←
 4. Two Hebrew letters, dated 8 January 1908 and 6 March 1908, were published in Rackman’s *Kiryat Chana David* (New York, 1967), pp. 244–46.

Rackman, originally an instructor at the Yeshiva, later became a successful businessman. His son, Rabbi Emanuel Rackman, became the assistant to the president of Yeshiva University. ←

5. Jacob Rosenheim, *Zikbronot* (Tel Aviv, 1955), p. 188. ←
6. Letter in Hebrew to Revel from Sivitz, 3 December 1928. ←
7. Letter to the Revel family from Dr. Solomon Muskat of Marietta, 24 December 1940. ←

CHAPTER 3

1. *Jüdisches Tageblatt*, 13 July 1915, p. 7C, cited in Gilbert Klaperman, *The Story of Yeshiva University* (Toronto: The Macmillan Co., 1969), p. 139. ←
2. *Jewish Morning Journal*, 14 December 1915, pp. 4C–E, cited in *ibid.*, chapter 9, n. 31. ←
3. Bernard Revel, “The Beginning and the Goal,” *Souvenir Journal: Fifth Annual Banquet* (Talmudical Academy Alumni Association), 21 February 1927. ←
4. For details of this incident, see Joseph H. Lookstein, “Dr. Revel and Homiletics,” *Hedenu* (New York: Students’ Organization of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary and Yeshiva College, 1936), pp. 61–63. ←
5. *American Jewish News* (New York), 28 March 1919, p. 35. ←

CHAPTER 4

1. “Dr. Revel’s Address at the Tenth Graduation of the Talmudical Academy,” *Elchanite* (Talmudical Academy yearbook), 1929, p. 12. ←
2. December 21, 1923. ←
3. *The Yeshiva College* (brochure, n.d.), p. 10. ←
4. For another dispute between them relating to the music festival, see the discussion of *kol isha* (female vocalists) in chapter 11.

In a letter to Revel on 14 December 1928, Selig wrote: “Now that we have reached our goal and built the finest buildings for a Yeshiva in the world, I feel that my life has not been in vain. We have raised approximately between two and one half and three million dollars, which in itself is a great accomplishment. We have also succeeded in putting the Yeshiva on a high pedestal and gaining for it the recognition, and even the admiration of all classes of Jewry in America and the world over.”

Selig returned to the Yeshiva from 1930 until 1932 as the director of the Yeshiva College Fund, but he was unable to get substantial financial help for the Yeshiva during this trying period of the Great Depression. ←

CHAPTER 5

1. The letter of 30 April 1925 is reprinted in *Louis Marshall: Champion of Liberty*, Charles Reznikoff, ed., 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1957), pp. 887–88. ←
2. Letter to Nathan Lampert, 15 October 1923. ←
3. *Sefer HaYovel Shel Agudat Harabanim: 1902–1927* (New York: Agudat Harabanim, 1928), p. 41. ←
4. For Adler’s and Epstein’s proposals see Abraham Karp, *A History of the United Synagogue of America: 1913–1963* (New York: United Synagogue of America, 1964), pp. 25–26. ←
5. Herbert Parzen, *Architects of Conservative Judaism* (New York: Jonathan David, 1964), pp. 102, 153. ←
6. The first quotation is from a letter to Julius Rosenwald from Louis Marshall, 6 August 1929, in Reznikoff (ed.), *Louis Marshall*, p. 890. The second is from a letter to Harry Fischel from Louis Marshall, 27 April 1918. This letter is in the Marshall Archives of the Blaustein Library of the American Jewish Committee. ←
7. The details of the original merger attempt are contained in a letter to the author from Mordecai Kaplan, 3 July 1964. Letters

from Wiernik to Adler (11 January 1924) and a letter from Adler to Wiernik (23 January 1924) also discuss this attempt. ←

8. The details of the second merger attempt are contained in correspondence located in the archives of Yeshiva University, and in the Marshall Papers at the American Jewish Archives of the Hebrew Union College. ←
9. Dr. Israel Herbert Levinthal had previously stressed this idea at a dinner for the Yeshiva College Building Fund at his synagogue, the Brooklyn Jewish Center, on January 21, 1925. He stated that although he was a graduate of the Seminary, he supported the Yeshiva drive since “the Yeshiva is not only a place to graduate Rabbis, but it is also a place where laymen may come to study the Torah” (minutes of this dinner at Yeshiva Archives). ←
10. On January 23, 1927, after Adler had received Kaplan’s letter of attempted resignation from his positions as professor of homiletics at the Seminary and as principal of the Teachers Institute of the Seminary, Marshall wrote to Adler: “This is a matter which requires much delicacy in handling. It is quite a belated proceeding, which might well have taken place five years ago. It would have saved us from much embarrassment and would have simplified our recent negotiations with the Yeshiva, which I am persuaded were, at least unconsciously, affected by the peculiar attitude of Dr. Kaplan.” ←
11. Since there are no documents or minutes available on the conference proper, the exact date of the meeting could not be established. Mrs. Bernard Revel accompanied Dr. Revel to the home of Rabbi Margolies for the conference, and she remained in another room with Mrs. Margolies during the deliberations. Mrs. Revel revealed the details of the conference in an April 27, 1964 interview. See Parzen, *Architects of Conservative Judaism*, p. 105, and Reznikoff (ed.), *Louis Marshall*, p. 893. ←
12. This view of the proposed merged institution is contained in a letter to Marshall from Adler, 8 February 1926, and in a letter to Adler from Rabbi Max Drob, a 1911 Seminary graduate, 15 March 1926. This viewpoint was also expressed by Dr. Louis Finkelstein, chancellor of The Jewish Theological Seminary of America in a September 23, 1964 interview. ←
13. Reznikoff (ed.), *Louis Marshall*, p. 893. Drob also warned Adler in his letter of 15 March 1926 that this would be a difficult hurdle to overcome. Drob stated: “The Yeshiva group is unalterably opposed to sending Rabbis to any but strictly orthodox congregations. This would mean the breaking of relations with those

synagogues which are today the backbone of the United Synagogue.” ←

14. The full text of the letter is published in Reznikoff (ed.), *Louis Marshall*, pp. 889–94. ←

CHAPTER 6

1. Gilbert Klaperman, *The Story of Yeshiva University: The First Jewish University in America* (New York: Public Relations Department of Yeshiva University), p. 313. ←
2. Cited in *HaPardes*, October 1932, p. 6. Rabbi Shapiro’s Hebrew letter is dated 16 August 1931. ←
3. Bernard Drachman, *The Unfailing Light* (New York: Rabbinical Council of America, 1948), p. 369. ←
4. *Eidenu: Memorial Publication in Honor of Rabbi Dr. Bernard Revel* (New York: Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, 1942), p. 12. ←

CHAPTER 7

1. Copies of these resolutions are located at Yeshiva Archives. They bear no dates. ←
2. The letter, in Hebrew, has no date. ←
3. There is no year on the letter. ←
4. Letter to Nathan Isaacs from Revel, 24 June 1929. ←
5. After Revel’s death this term was used in a discussion between Rabbi Judah Seltzer, executive secretary of the *Agudat Harabanim*, and Mendel Gottesman. See the letter from Gottesman to Samuel Levy, 28 February 1941. ←
6. Letter of 26 August 1929. ←
7. For the details of these laws see the *Shulchan Aruch: Yoreh Deah*, 113. ←
8. Letter of 4 December 1929. ←
9. Alexander Gross, “My-Rebbe,” reprinted from *Mesifita Scroll*, n.d. ←
10. This responsum is reprinted in Baruch Ber Leibowitz, *Birchat Shmuel* (New York: 1947), 1:38–42. ←
11. Published in *Proceedings of the Association of Orthodox Jewish Scientists* (New York, 1966), 1:106–12. ←
12. This responsum is reprinted in Elchanan Wasserman, *Kovetz Heorot* (New York, 1952), pp. 146–48. ←
13. Letter to Revel from Sar, 5 August 1938. ←

CHAPTER 8

1. Letter of 10 November 1931. ←
2. Letter of 29 October 1937. ←
3. Letter of 2 October 1936. ←
4. Exodus 15:1–21. For details on sources relating to a *mechitza*, see *The Sanctity of the Synagogue*, Baruch Litvin, ed. (New York: The Spero Foundation, 1959). ←
5. Responsum to Rabbi Isidor Goodman, 12 April 1926. ←
6. Cited by Marshall Sklare, *Conservative Judaism* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1955), pp. 58–60. ←
7. “Approaching the Half Century of Jewish Intensive Education,” *Elchanite* (Talmudical Academy high school yearbook), 1930, p. 8. ←

CHAPTER 9

1. Letter to Adler from Marshall, 28 January 1926 (Marshall Papers, MS. 1594). ←
2. See David A. Shannon, *The Great Depression* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1960), p. 1. ←
3. Letter of 10 February 1937. ←
4. Letter to Revel from H. Pereira Mendes, 20 December 1932. ←

CHAPTER 10

1. *Laws Applicable to Immigration and Nationality*, Edwina Austin Avery, ed., under direction of Carl B. Hyatt (Washington, D. C., 1953), p. 413. ←
2. See chapter 11 and the responsa reprinted in Appendix III. ←
3. See *Shulchan Aruch: Yoreh Deah*, 1:12. ←

CHAPTER 11

1. For another detailed study and classification of Revel’s writings, see Sidney B. Hoenig, *The Scholarship of Dr. Bernard Revel* (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1968). ←
2. Included in this section are those responsa, penned in response to actual inquiries, which give distinct halachic decisions or detail the rabbinic sources on a delineated topic. These responsa were never published by Revel, and they appear in Appendix III of this volume for the first time. The number in brackets refers to their location in Appendix III. ←

3. Minutes of meetings of the Board of Directors, 19 December 1928 and 27 December 1928.

Owing to the financial problems faced by the Yeshiva board upon the opening of the new building, it did not have the time to organize the National Board of Directors. During the Depression years this proposed project was completely discarded. ←

4. Abraham Menes, “The Yeshivot in Eastern Europe,” *The Jewish People: Past and Present* (New York: Central Yiddish Cultural Ī ganization, 1948), 2:109. ←
5. The numbers set in brackets after each subject title refer to the location of the topic in the bibliography of Revel’s writings published in Appendix IV of this volume. ←
6. A concept similar to this is also expressed by Rabbi Ezekiel Landau of Prague in his commentary to the *Shulchan Aruch: Yoreh Deab* entitled “Dagul Marevovah” (chapter 372:2). ←
7. New York, 1917, p. 453. ←
8. New York, 1929, pp. 376–80. ←
9. The thesis expressed by Revel in this article later served as the basis for a doctoral dissertation by Mordecai Margalioth at the Hebrew University. Entitled “The Differences between Babylonian and Palestinian Customs,” it was published in 1938. ←
10. For additional discussion of Revel’s *Ozar Yisrael* contributions, see above, chapter 2. ←
11. *ĴQR*, n.s. 3, no. 11 (1912): 1–81. ←
12. *Die Sadduzäer* (Berlin: Mayer and Müller, 1912). ←
13. See above, chapter 2. See also *Ner Maarovi* (New York: Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary), 1 (November 1923): 7n.; and 2 (1925): 77. ←
14. *HaDoar* 20, no. 6 (6 December 1940): 1–2. ←

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