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Series I: General Correspondence, 1914-1969, undated.

Sub-series A: Alphabetical, 1914-1965, undated.

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Jewish Education Survey, Cleveland, Ohio, 1925-1935.



October First, 1925

Dr. A. H. Friedland,  
Cleveland Hebrew School and Institute,  
2491 East 55th Street,  
Cleveland, Ohio.

My dear Dr. Friedland,

It has been brought to our attention that the Cleveland Hebrew School and Institute have opened another branch of its School at East 146th Street and Kinsman Road. May I remind you of the decision of our Board, that no agency is to undertake expansion without first submitting its project to the Board. We understand further, that the Talmud Torah is contemplating the purchase of schools in Mt. Pleasant and on the Heights. This matter, too, ought to be discussed by the Board in order to make provision.

With kindest regards, permit me to  
remain

Very sincerely yours



A. SIMON  
634 East 115th St.  
Phone: Eddy 3153-J

*copy*  
Exhibit "A"

Cleveland, O.

Nov. 14, 1928

Rabbi A. H. Silver, Pres.  
Bureau of Jewish Education,  
Cleveland, Ohio

My Dear Rabbi Silver:

Kindly submit, at tomorrow's meeting, my resignation from the Board of Jewish Education. At last week's elections I resigned from the Talmud Torah Board, and I do not believe I have a right to remain on your board because I was originally elected as a Talmud Torah Board Member.

Furthermore, things have come to such a stage at the Talmud Torah, that no Jew, honest with himself and the people, has a right to allow people to think that he is responsible for its management, or rather its mismanagement. *As a result of the whole affair is managed by two or three people, and the Board of Directors has no say at all; contrary to the belief of the entire community. Even the election was conducted by these two people.*

I was compelled not to accept the office of Vice President of the Talmud Torah for the coming year because I do not think I could help in any way under the present management; I mean to change the financial as well as the educational policies.

Dear Rabbi, if you want me to explain to you everything in detail, I will be glad to do it at your request, and submit a memorandum.

Respectfully yours,

(SIGNED BY) A. SIMON



Memorandum

From

Mr. A. Simon

To

Rabbi A. H. Silver, President of Bureau of Jewish Education

Submitted November 21, 1928

Supplementing my previous letter to you about the same subject, I am submitting at your request this memorandum as to the financial, administrative, and educational policies of the Cleveland Hebrew Schools. You will of course realize the difficulties one confronts in attempting to itemize in detail all the important facts that would make up the true and full story about the schools, but I shall try to indicate the high spots where possible.

FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE

During the last few years, the Talmud Torahs were conducted practically without a Board of Directors. About forty or fifty names were listed on paper and used for publicity as constituting the Board, but as a matter of fact, no more than six to ten people ever attended any of the meetings that are called infrequently and irregularly. Even this so called Board is being used only as a rubber stamp to say "yes" to everything that Mr. Krause and Mr. Friedland have already done previous to the meetings. At these meetings, nothing is ever transacted to better the conditions of the Schools or to find new resources for their support. During the entire year just past, the only questions discussed were how to get more money from the Bureau. No reports as to the management of the schools are ever submitted. After a branch is opened or closed, an announcement is made at the Board Meeting, and the few members present shake their heads and applaud. Neither the Finance committee or the educational committee ever has any meetings. Even the reports submitted at the Board Meetings are read off in a prefatory manner, without giving each Board member a real chance to digest it. Copies of a summarized report were never given to Board Members, until I recently made an issue of it at a meeting, and Mr. Krause consented to do it, but even now this is not done regularly.

Since 1921 when Mr. Friedland came to Cleveland, an unwarranted and wild expansion took place without regard to financial provision or even to the quality of the education. Before 1924, when the Talmud Torahs joined the Bureau, they had already eaten up in the two or three years about \$25,000 of building fund money and must have made a deficit in teachers salaries and loans of at least another \$25,000: all this in addition to the special fund of about \$13,000 that was raised during that time with your assistance, and all the additional income that was gotten by the Talmud Torahs directly through the special efforts made by the Board to increase its annual membership. However, instead of using this additional income to pay up debts, it was always used for further expansion in order to be able to show a big front with a great number of children enrolled. By today, practically all the equity of the schools has been sold, mortgaged, and eaten up without looking into the future, besides the present deficit of \$50,000 due teachers and banks.

During the so-called annual election held this month, a nominating committee was appointed without even giving the Board a chance to know who the members of the committee were. This committee was appointed on September 19, but they were not called to any meeting until a week before the election in November. Everybody will admit that this was not enough time to consider the serious matter of selecting officers and responsible Board Members for the Hebrew Schools, which are now in such distress. The names of this committee were given by the chairman to Mr. Krause, and upon inquiry as to who they were Mr. Krause stated, "I have the names already." At the two meetings of this committee, only two members were present. In addition to these two members Mr. Krause and Mr. Friedland were there to dominate the situation and to make it impossible for the members to have a free mind. At the first meeting of this committee, the two members flatly rejected any plans for the re-election of Mr. Aaron Garber to the presidency, for various important reasons. During the second



meeting of the committee, which was held on the same day of the election, in Mr. Efros' office, Mr. Krause again insisted upon the election of Mr. Aaron Garber, while the others would not consent. The meeting was adjourned without any definite decision. At the annual meeting on Wednesday evening, November 7, Mr. Efros refused to submit Mr. Garber's name, but Mr. Jonas Gross on his own accord submitted it, together with a list of eighty-five miscellaneous names as a Board of Directors. This list of nominees was never reported by the nominating committee to the Board of Directors which appointed it. It was stated at the meeting that these people had been requested to serve and had consented. As a matter of fact, most of these people do not even know about it. The meeting was attended by probably 250 persons -- men, women, and children, most of whom would have come to any meeting where there would be something doing, and very few of whom are either interested or able to cope with any of the Talmud Torah problems.

The meeting was occupied with speeches until about 11:30 at night, and at that time this miscellaneous group was asked to select officers and a Board for the Hebrew Schools of Cleveland. In protest against this frivolous and dishonest way of conducting community affairs, Mr. Sam Garber, Mr. J. Bassichis, Mr. J. Galvin, and Mr. F. Dolinsky publicly resigned from the Board at that meeting. As you know, these four people have been among the few most active workers for the Talmud Torahs, during the past years. I personally declined to accept the office of vice-president offered to me, or to remain a member of the Board in view of this terrible situation, and yet they printed my name as vice-president in the Jewish World. When I protested to Mr. Rocker and requested that he print my paid advertisement stating that I did not choose to have my name connected with the Talmud Torahs under the present management, Mr. Rocker refused to have same published, on the ground that it might hurt the Hebrew Schools. I feel, however, that there comes a time when radical operations are necessary, and it seems to me that this is the time when a full housecleaning should be made, and a responsible permanent management or a temporary receivership be established in order to go into the matter thoroughly and without the politics played all the time by Mr. Friedland and Mr. Krause generally, and particularly in forcing Mr. Aaron Garber on the community in order that they may have a free hand.

### EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS

To my mind a great deal of the difficulties encountered in the Hebrew Schools during the last four years lie not only in their financial shortcomings, but even more so in the irresponsible educational policies practiced at the Hebrew Schools at the present time. Permit me to clarify this view point, which I think everybody will agree with.

As I am able to find out, of the 1800 children attending the schools, the average attendance is only 1½ to 2 years. At least one-half of the children enrolling during the year, drop out during the same year. Thus about \$40,000 of the community's and the parents' money is wasted immediately. Every year approximately 3000 to 3500 children are enrolled, but the year ends with about 1700 or 1800 with which it began. Mr. Friedland always boasts of graduating sixty-five children last year. In any normal situation, the number of graduates in a school system with 2000 children and a five year course, ought to be at least three to four hundred. If no more than 300 out of the 2000 graduate in five years, these 300 children cost the community five years of expenses at about \$85,000 to \$90,000 annually, or a total of about \$450,000. Thus you can see that we are spending \$1500 on the education of each one of these graduates. As to the other children who attend a year or two, or even three, one can readily see how little they can learn in that space of time, and that soon after leaving school they forget the little they do learn, and the money spent on their education is a total waste.



Mr. Friedland, who is apparantly a good educator, brought from New York a system of Hebrew Language Education, which ought not to be mistaken for the Jewish education that we need in Cleveland. The community does not have to waste so much money to teach a few children the Hebrew Language alone. Our duty ought to be to make Jews of our children. For that, we must teach them immediately after their enrollment in school and before they have a chance to drop out, not only the Hebrew Language, but the Bible, Jewish history, the Prayer Book in Hebrew, and what is most important, we ought to in some way connect the Jewish child with the Jewish life of this community, and acquaint him with the religion, sentiment, and institutions that are specifically Jewish; especially the synagogue, which is today the most important single force in American Jewish life.

Every open minded person will understand that it ought to take at least five or six years to acquaint a child with a good reading knowledge of the Hebrew language. Even then he will be able to read only easy material. But instead the child drops out after two years in school, or even one year, and in two months he forgets all the fancy Hebrew stories that he memorized in School. During his short stay in our Hebrew Schools, the child gets no Jewish History in the first year. He does not even learn to read the prayer book in Hebrew, so that his father is convinced, and rightly so, that a Hebrew School education is not worth anything, and that is why we cannot get the co-operation of the parents. We are paying \$90,000 a year to graduate sixty-five children. This, in my opinion, is too high a price for the little that is acquired even by these sixty-five who graduate. While public opinion is not organized, nevertheless, the parents of the Hebrew School pupils are not interested in the schools, and public opinion generally is against the schools. Regardless of our personal opinions of the quality of education necessary in the schools, this fact must be admitted: that the parents must be made interested in the education of their children, that their understanding of the present needs in Jewish Education is in the last analysis more important for the existence of the Schools even than the opinions of expert pedagogues.

The parents of these children are not all religious from the standpoint of being pious, but they do go to the synagogue either once a week or several times a year. At that time they take their children with them and are disappointed when, after several years of Hebrew School attendance, at considerable expense and sacrifice, their children are not able to read the prayers with them. These Jews do not look at the prayers totally from the standpoint of piety, but to them the Jewish spirit is brought out through participation in Jewish life in the synagogue on Saturday and on the Festivals. I find that many of the parents are getting disgusted with the Hebrew Schools and are employing private teachers with much better results, according to their convictions. For those few boys who remain in the Talmud Torahs before the age of thirteen, a special Bar-Mitzvah instructor is employed with a special charge to the parents in order to teach the child the Haftorah and a portion of the Bible. I cannot understand why this child should not learn at least that much during the regular course of his study. But the truth is that even whatever little bit of the Bible he is taught at the Hebrew Schools is given to the child through sketches in textbooks, where the story of a cat running away from a dog is treated in an analogous manner as the history and tradition of the Jewish people as found in the Bible. Not even the young teachers, of whose graduation Mr. Friedland is so proud, have a first-hand knowledge of the Bible and the Prophets from the original Books.

I am informed that even administratively the Talmud Torah system is a failure. Classes are not well-managed or supervised. Most of the teachers have not their souls in the work. They look at it only as a job. They are only giving two or three or four hours a day to instruction, four days a week, and they are doing nothing during the rest of the day to build up the school in any way. Contrary to all popular belief, Mr. Friedland does not regularly supervise or visit any of the schools. Instead he wastes a lot of his time with private classes to teach the Hebrew Language to womens groups and in making all kinds of speeches in order that he might become more famous at the expense of the community. There are certain matters in this regard that I do not feel free to touch in this written memorandum. Perhaps we may discuss same some other time.



It seems to me that the situation can be remedied by adopting a policy that would lead to better educational results at a lesser cost. It is not necessary to strive to have a big net of schools with thousands of children enrolled, and dropping out constantly, in order to carry out the ambitions of one individual. We should admit only such children whose parents are interested in the Hebrew Schools and who are anxious to co-operate in the moral and financial support of these schools. We should try to educate not 1700 children at an expense of \$90,000, but perhaps 800 to 1000 children at an expense of \$50,000 to \$60,000. The result would be even better, and we could then perhaps graduate 150 to 200 children every year at an expense of \$50,000 rather than graduate 65 children at an expense of \$90,000. Even with these selected children there would probably be a number of them dropping out after two or three years, and it is necessary to find a way to implant Jewish knowledge with these children immediately after their enrollment so that when they do drop out something be left with them.

It is of no use to begin with a child with a system and curriculum planned for six or ten years of instruction, where looking the facts honestly in the face, the superintendent and his teachers know very well that the child is going to remain a year or two or three at most. We must plan the education of these children on the basis of what Judaism is in this country at the present time. How can we keep our children close to Jewish life? Children learn very little of Judaism at home today, and if the child feels a stranger in the synagogue on the Sabbath or on holidays, and if his Hebrew School is a place where he gets cat and dog stories in Hebrew rather than Jewish knowledge, the child will be very far away from Judaism and from the aspirations of our people.

I suppose I will be accused as an ultra-orthodox by some and by others as an enemy of the Talmud Torahs, but in the interest of the truth and the justice of the situation, I am not afraid to express my opinion. I am only sorry that I am not well enough physically to argue this thing out in public, but I am determined to give all of my strength to the solution of this problem and not to remain quiet until the Cleveland Hebrew Schools will organize Schools for the Jewish education of our children, conducted with the co-operation of the parents and in the interest of the entire community rather than to satisfy the ambitions of one or two men. I realize that radical changes in methods, both financial and educational, would necessitate changes in the professional staff of the schools as well as the volunteer Board, but in my opinion, we should not be afraid to tackle this problem, regardless of the consequences to individuals. No community institution should be allowed to be conducted for individual gain or ambition. There surely must be in this country enough Jewish teachers who are filled with Jewish religious and national inspiration, and who would be willing to teach our children in the proper manner. Jewish education in this age in America is a serious matter, and it should not be left in the hands of people who are handling it as sort of a personal hobby, regardless of what others think or desire.

Respectfully submitted,

A. Simon



TAKEN FROM  
THE JEWISH REVIEW AND OBSERVER  
June 3, 1932

Dr. A. H. Friedland, Educational Director of the Hebrew Schools of Cleveland, spoke of Rabbi Silver's contribution to the educational life of the city. He said:

"You will all agree with me that in his personality and major activities Rabbi Silver represents in our community a force which is pre-eminently education. This contribution is a threefold one. First and foremost comes the general, subtle but very pervasive influence exercised by Rabbi Silver through his weekly lectures. The public discourses, carefully thought out, thoroughly planned and prepared and so masterfully delivered by Rabbi Silver during the last fifteen years before audiences ranging from a thousand to two thousand, represent in themselves an invaluable educational contribution.

"For none has ever listened to Rabbi Silver but has listened profitably. One may have carried away with him a saner and more balanced attitude to life, another a more intelligent orientation in some dominant problem of the day, a third may owe to him many an emulable example of clear thinking and effective expression, a fourth, a spiritual awakening or an esthetic realization, all alike were sure to have been exposed to a bracing and invigorating influence. For there is something very resilient and triumphant in the very circumstance of Rabbi Silver's personality and genius.

✓ "A second contribution to the educational life of our community Rabbi Silver made through his religious school. The religious school of The Temple is not only one of the largest religious schools in the country, but is in many respects a pioneering institution. I shall only mention one fact in connection with the religious school, namely, the introduction of Hebrew into its curriculum. Some years ago it would have been a rather delicate subject to touch upon, but now I hope it can be told with immunity. Rabbi Silver has ever been a Hebrew scholar and a lover of our beautiful old new language. And I know how passionately he had dreamed some day to be able to teach our holy and beautiful tongue to the children of his own Temple. Yet -- and here one reveals the uncanny sense of perspective in place and time, so characteristic of Rabbi Silver, and so often misunderstood or wilfully misrepresented by some of his would-be critics. Some of our friends among the intellectuals cannot forgive Rabbi Silver for the fact that he has never blundered, never drifted through life but has always steered a self-controlled, self-disciplined career, as though there were virtue in plunging recklessly into quixotic ventures or brandishing idle gestures which are certain to end in frustration. And so even on this cherished subject of Hebrew Rabbi Silver refused to plunge prematurely and fanatically, but rather chose to bide his time. He waited wisely and patiently until his congregation grew up to a fuller appreciation of the spiritual and intellectual values imbedded in Hebrew, he waited until he gained the unquestioning confidence of his constituency -- waited seven or eight long years. And today The Temple ~~is~~ enjoys one of the finest Hebrew departments in the country.

✓ "But it is as President of the Bureau of Jewish Education that Rabbi Silver has rendered the most tangible and most impressive service to the Jewish children of Cleveland. Rabbi Silver with the help of a number of Federation leaders brought about the organization of the Bureau of Jewish Education of our city. He became its president, which office he is still holding.

✓ "Who said that Rabbi Silver never championed an unpopular cause. Why, Rabbi Silver has espoused the cause of Jewish education, at the time the most unpopular cause in the city of Cleveland. He has sponsored it irrespective of whether it was popular or unpopular."



*Handwritten scribbles and signatures in the top left corner.*

# SCHOOL

PART I

A PRINCIPAL TAKES HIMSELF TO ACCOUNT

— WHITHER? —

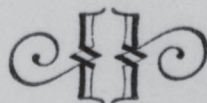
WRHS A

STUDY

by

ISRAEL KONOVITZ

Principal, Downtown Talmud Torah,  
New York City



PUBLISHED BY  
BUREAU OF JEWISH EDUCATION  
NEW YORK CITY  
1934

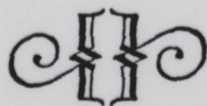


# MY SCHOOL

PART I

A PRINCIPAL TAKES HIMSELF TO ACCOUNT  
—WHITHER?

A STUDY  
by  
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NEW YORK CITY  
1934



## I N T R O D U C T I O N

by

SAMSON BENDERLY

The study presented by Mr. Konowitz is unique.

Mr. Konowitz, who is now a man of about sixty, has devoted his entire life to the problem of Jewish Education. I first met him about twenty-four years ago in July, 1910, when he was principal of the Shaare Shomayim Talmud Torah on the East Side. I was attracted to him then by the fact that amidst the disorder that prevailed in most of the Talmud Torahs at that time, I found his school, though small and in poor quarters, being conducted in orderly fashion and with a zeal worthy of greater encouragement than he was receiving. All the years that I have known Mr. Konowitz, both during the time he was connected with the Bureau of Jewish Education and since, he has shown the happy faculty of combining great interest in details with a larger view encompassing the problem of Jewish education. It is this quality that made it possible for him to produce the following study. Mr. Konowitz has been principal of the Downtown Talmud Torah for more than twenty years and in this study he has attempted to give an intimate picture of the school during his struggles for its betterment for the past ten years. ✓

As stated above, this study is unique. Even a superficial perusal of the contents will convince one of this. I



know of no other Talmud Torah, particularly of the size of the Downtown Talmud Torah, in which records have been so carefully kept for so long a period as to make such a study possible, nor do I know of any other Talmud Torah principal who has the interest, patience, and the capacity for such a study.

A number of the conclusions reached by Mr. Konowitz are by now common knowledge among those interested in the problem of Jewish education. The value of the conclusions therefore lies mainly in the fact that they are based on actual records accumulated in one of the largest Talmud Torahs in the country and one that is located in a neighborhood which is the ideal milieu for a Talmud Torah - the East Side of New York. This study is a contradiction to the prevalent belief that a Talmud Torah cannot be conducted in an orderly and modern way with a planned curriculum, a carefully worked out set of records and a fully developed series of extra-curricular activities. A glance through these statistical tables, the list of extra curricular activities on pages 68 and 69, and the comments made by Mr. Konowitz in introducing the various parts of his study will convince one that a Talmud Torah can also be a modern school.

It is not my desire to reproduce in this introductory note many of the facts brought out in this study. I shall merely call the attention of the reader to those that are most outstanding:



### III

- (1) The study shows that about 70% of the pupils, even in such a well organized school as the Downtown Talmud Torah, are found in the classes of the first three years. ✓
- (2) That the annual turnover is still very great so that the majority of those attending the Talmud Torah do not have the opportunity of remaining for three years. ✓
- (3) That the summer is playing havoc even with a well organized school, with the result that the actual annual attendance of many of the pupils does not cover a period of more than nine months.
- (4) That girls, who up to twenty-five years ago were practically excluded from Jewish schools, not only form today a substantial part of the register but are showing more interest, greater devotion and even better scholarship than the boys.
- (5) In view of these facts, Mr. Konowitz feels that the time has come for a more realistic curriculum for a Talmud Torah. He believes that the ideal set up twenty years ago for a seven-year course is not practical and cannot be attained. It would be better to have a four-year curriculum for the great majority of the children, this curriculum to be of an elementary and functional character, and an additional three-year curriculum of a somewhat more ✓



advanced character for those few who manage to complete the more elementary course.

(6) Mr. Konowitz has come to the conclusion that the main responsibility for the financial support of Jewish education ought to be placed upon the parents. In the section dealing with this phase of the study, the historian of Jewish education will find an interesting picture of the havoc to Jewish education caused by the depression, the general desertion of Jewish education by the layman, and the turmoil in the heart of a sensitive principal who saw his life work threatened by destruction. The student of the economic phase of the Jewish educational problem will find in this section an interesting table (page 79) showing how, when Mr. Konowitz saw his institution threatened, he evolved all kinds of ingenuities and combinations to safeguard its economic stability.

This study should prove a stimulus to the younger men in Jewish education and should prove to them the great value of accurate records and their intelligent interpretation.

To Mr. Konowitz I wish many more years of service and an opportunity to continue his studies along the lines he has so well started.



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DL = Day Letter

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## MINUTES IN TRANSIT

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DAY LETTER

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER=

THE TEMPLE CLEVE=

WOULD YOU CONSENT ADDRESS INTERCOLLEGIATE AVUKAH SOCIETIES  
MEETING UNDER SPONSERSHIP HARVARD CHAPTER STOP THIS

CONSTITUTES ZIONISMS ONLY SPEARHEAD IN ACADEMIC WORLD AND  
MERITS YOUR AID STOP MEETING TIME TO SUIT YOUR CONVENIENCE  
ANY DAY DURING YOUR STAY WEEKEND FEBRUARY TEN WHEN YOU ARE  
HARVARD CHAPPEL STOP PLEASE WIRE COLLECT BY WESTERN UNION  
TO NINETY ONE SALIESBURY ROAD BROOKLINE MASS=

ARTHUR D HOLZMAN PRESIDENT HARVARD AVUKAH.