EDUCATING VANCOUVER'S JEWISH CHILDREN: 
THE VANCOUVER TALMUD TORAH, 1913-1959

by

Rozanne Feldman Kent
B.Ed., University of British Columbia, 1986

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF 
The REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF 
MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Department of Social and Educational Studies

We accept this thesis as conforming 
to the required standard

The University Of British Columbia

February 1994

©Rozanne Feldman Kent
In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

(Signature)

Department of Social & Educational Studies

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date Mar 2/94
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to research the early history of the Vancouver Talmud Torah, from 1913 to 1959, in order to determine how one group of Canadian Jews attempted to retain their separate identity while functioning in Canadian society. Two sources provided the bulk of the material for this study. Twenty-five interviews with former students, teachers, parents and Board members provided first-hand information and back issues of the Jewish Western Bulletin, the Vancouver Jewish community weekly newspaper, from 1925-1959 served as a written primary source. A book of minutes from 1944-1947 was also very useful in verifying facts. All of this information was then integrated with research on Jewish education in other parts of Canada, especially Western Canada, to establish the Vancouver Talmud Torah's connection with similar efforts across Canada.

There are two main divisions to this thesis. The first section covers the period from 1913-1948, during which time a group of Vancouver Jews dedicated themselves to the establishment and continuation of a Jewish afternoon school. The second section examines the first decade of the day school from 1948-1959 where a full program of Jewish and secular studies was offered to Jewish children during the regular school day. This study examines why the day school was set up. Some insights are also offered regarding whether both the afternoon and the day schools were successful in meeting the goals set out by the organizers and the needs of the community which it served.

There is no easy way to determine the success or failure of a school. Many problems are beyond the control and scope of a school's mandate. The findings of this research indicate that the Vancouver Talmud Torah endeavoured to provide the best possible Jewish education for its students under unfavourable conditions. The primary obstacle comes in comparing the quality of
Jewish education in Vancouver with that in other major Jewish centres in Canada, because of the Vancouver Jewish community's relative isolation from other communities and its small population. The shortage of qualified teachers and the lack of adequate teaching materials and professional development programs have made it difficult for the school to provide a Jewish studies program on the same level as its secular studies program (which was excellent). Furthermore, too much responsibility for the children's Jewish education and identity had been placed on the school, with the family and community assuming a lesser role than it historically did. This has not only made the task of the Talmud Torah very difficult, it has also created a chasm between the school and the community, with the teachers and students left to battle it out in the middle. Therefore, under the circumstances, the Talmud Torah has provided the best possible Jewish education for its students. However, if the family and community would have maintained their responsibility in guiding the religious and cultural education of their children, the Talmud Torah would have been in a much better position to fulfill its supplementary role in the education of Jewish children. It is interesting to note that the same comments could be made today, some 35 years later.
# Table of Contents

Abstract .......................................................... ii
Tables ................................................................. vi
Photograph Credits ................................................ vii
Acknowledgements .................................................. ix

**Chapter One: Historical and Methodological Background** .......................................................... 1
  Part I  Historical Background ......................................... 5
           Jewish Education in Canada ................................. 9
  Part II  State of Research in Jewish Education .....................
           United States ............................................. 11
           Canada .................................................. 14
  Part III Sources and Methodology ................................ 18

**Chapter Two: Forces Shaping the Destiny of the Talmud Torah** .............................................. 21
  Settlement of the Jews in Vancouver .............................. 21
  A Changing Jewish Demography .................................. 25
  The Language Debate ............................................ 27

**Chapter Three: The Early Years of the Vancouver Talmud Torah 1913–1948** ...................... 33
  The Vancouver Talmud Torah ..................................... 33
  Curriculum and Teaching ........................................ 37
  The World of Teachers .......................................... 44
  The School and the Community ................................ 52
  Extra-Curricular Activities ..................................... 60
  The World of the Students ...................................... 66

Photographs ....................................................... 70
Chapter Four: The First Decade of the Day School 1948–1959

Founders and Their Vision .......................................................... 80
Implementing the Vision
   Building the Day School ......................................................... 88
   Philosophy of the Day School .................................................. 92
   The Teachers ........................................................................... 93
   The Curriculum ...................................................................... 107
   Student and Parent Perspectives on the Curriculum ............... 109
   School Inspectors .................................................................. 114
   Transition to Public School ..................................................... 117
   Parental and Community Support of the School ..................... 119

Chapter Five: The Social and Religious Orientation of the School 1948–1959

Social ......................................................... 123
   School Atmosphere ............................................................... 124
   Attitudes Towards Israel and the Holocaust ......................... 127
Religious ...................................................... 131
   Holidays, Festivals, and Religious Observances ................. 131
   Junior Congregation ............................................................. 133

Chapter Six: Conclusion ............................................................. 138

Sources Consulted ................................................................. 147

Appendix A 1 Letter requesting participation .................................... 159
Appendix A 2 Consent Form .......................................................... 160
Appendix A 3 Follow-up Letter ...................................................... 161
Appendix B Interview Questions .................................................. 162
Appendix D 1 Excerpts from Student Newsletters, 1930's ............... 164
Appendix D 2 Excerpts from Student Notebooks, 1950's ............... 170
Appendix E Chanukah Concert Program, 1958 ............................. 176
TABLES


TABLE 3. Number and Percentage of Jews with Yiddish as a Mother Tongue, 1931–1981 ................................. 30

TABLE 4. Jewish School Enrolment in Canada with Percentages in 1955. 86

TABLE 5. Comparison of the Number and Percentage of Jewish Children in Jewish Schools in 1933 and 1958 in Canada. . . . 86

TABLE 6. Number of Jewish Children in Vancouver, 1931–1951 . . . . 87

TABLE 7. Enrolment at the Vancouver Talmud Torah, 1925–1957 . . . . 91
PHOTOGRAPH CREDITS

Schara Tzedeck synagogue, circa 1928, Heatley Street, East End of Vancouver.  
   Courtesy of Jewish Historical Society of BC .......................... 70

Jewish Community Centre, ca. 1930.  
   Courtesy of Jewish Historical Society of BC .......................... 70

The first separate building which housed the Talmud Torah, 814 W. 14th Ave.  
   (1944-1948)  
   Photograph by Rozanne Kent ........................................... 71

Kindergarten children at school in the above house, circa 1947.  
   Courtesy of Hannah Milner Smith (Cohen) ............................ 71

The boy standing is practicing the recital of the *Shabbat kiddush* on Friday afternoon, circa 1947.  
   Courtesy of Hannah Milner Smith (Cohen) ............................ 72

Vancouver Talmud Torah school, circa 1950.  
   Courtesy of Jewish Historical Society of BC .......................... 72

Paintings auctioned off during a 1940's fundraising art auction.  
   Photographs by Rozanne Kent ........................................... 73

Early teaching staff, 1949.  
   Courtesy of Jewish Western Bulletin .................................... 74

Secular studies students, taught by Mrs. Esther Gervin, March 1954  
   Courtesy of Jewish Western Bulletin .................................... 74

Kindergarten class October 1950.  
   Courtesy of Vancouver Talmud Torah .................................... 75

Kindergarten student lighting shabbat candles, June 1951.  
   Courtesy of Vancouver Talmud Torah .................................... 75
First graduating class, 1954.
   Courtesy of Jewish Western Bulletin .................. 76

Grade 6 graduation, 1956.
   Courtesy of Jewish Western Bulletin .................. 76

Grade 3 or 4 class, circa 1957.
   Courtesy of Vancouver Talmud Torah .................. 77

Grade 5 or 6 class, circa 1957.
   Courtesy of Vancouver Talmud Torah .................. 77

7th Anniversary of State of Israel, 1955.
   Courtesy of Vancouver Talmud Torah .................. 78

Presentation at 8th anniversary of State of Israel.
   Courtesy of Vancouver Talmud Torah .................. 78

Lighting the Chanukah candles, December 1954.
   Courtesy of Jewish Western Bulletin .................. 79

Mrs. Gita Kron and students in the 1960's.
   Courtesy of Vancouver Talmud Torah .................. 79
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following people for their invaluable assistance during the preparation of this thesis. To my advisor, Dr. J. Donald Wilson, for encouraging me to pursue this topic and for his unswerving guidance over the past two years. To Dr. Richard Menkis for his knowledge and expertise in the field of Jewish history and for pushing me to do my very best. To Dr. Peter Seixas for his contagious enthusiasm and insightful comments on my early attempts at writing this thesis which I finally managed to grasp before the final draft. To Dr. William Bruneau for agreeing to be the external examiner and to Dr. Neil Sutherland for agreeing to chair my defense. To Ms. Elizabeth Nicholls for her monumental efforts at proofreading and editing the entire thesis several times. Her clear and direct suggestions on how to improve the final copy helped me make sense of what was sometimes an overwhelming task. To Mrs. Sheila Aceman for her careful reading of several chapters, her many helpful comments and especially for her encouragement when my enthusiasm waned. To Mr. Sam Kaplan and the staff at the Jewish Western Bulletin newspaper, who opened up their archives and their office to me in a most friendly and welcoming manner. To the 1992 Talmud Torah Board for allowing me to do this research and especially to Mr. Michael Moscovich for facilitating my access to valuable research material. To my father-in-law and friend, Dr. Ian Kent, for his constant guidance and encouragement and to my mother-in-law, Jeanne Kent, for coming to the rescue on many occasions. To my parents, Marilyn and Clive Campbell, for their generous support during the writing of this thesis and for kindly offering to donate bound copies to Jewish organizations of my choice. To Mrs. Reta Wolochow for her assistance and skill in tracing people through her experience working on the Vancouver Talmud Torah Jewish Telephone Directory. A special thanks to all those who allowed me to interview them. All of their testimonies added to this thesis, regardless of whether or not they appeared in print. Most of the names appear throughout the thesis except for two people who wished to remain anonymous and four people from the 1970's and 1980's, whom I interviewed before I realized it was impossible to do a complete history of the Talmud Torah. I thank them all for their invaluable assistance. To Yonatan Wagman and Rahel Aceman, young friends who have been involved in my thesis and life for the past seven months and whose bright presence has helped me keep everything in perspective. And finally, to my husband and loving friend, John, for his genuine interest in my work, unfailing belief in my capabilities, masterful computer skills and shared desire to pursue the truth in order that we may all live a more peaceful existence.
CHAPTER ONE

Historical and Methodological Background

A discussion of Jewish education is much more than a simple reporting of one area of community life. It is a discussion of the community itself which, through its beliefs and desires with respect to religion, language, ideology, politics and Jewish customs determines the education of its children. By studying the history of Jewish education one inevitably discovers the level of importance each Jewish community has placed on the education of its young. But that is not all. The quality of Jewish education also reflects the degree to which the religio-ethnic community desires to preserve its culture and to instruct its children in what it knows and believes. Some Jews place great importance on religious or cultural education almost to the exclusion of all else. Others abandon their particular religion or culture in order to integrate into the society around them. Still others attempt to find a happy medium whereby their beliefs and customs are preserved and transmitted to their young, at the same time teaching skills which will enable them to live in the community at large. This thesis will explore the path taken by those Jews of Vancouver, British Columbia who were involved in the formation of the Vancouver Talmud Torah school, as they attempted to educate their children both as Canadians and as Jews.

This study of the Vancouver Talmud Torah\(^1\) traces its beginnings as an afternoon school in 1913 through to the end of its first decade as a Jewish day school\(^2\) in 1959. One of the main questions concerns how the Talmud Torah (as one of many examples of Jewish education in Canada) and the surrounding Jewish community attempted to convey the Jewish heritage and religion to its students while helping them become full participants in the secular world as well. In other words, how has this group of Vancouver Jews tackled

\(^1\) The Vancouver Talmud Torah is also referred to in this thesis as the Talmud Torah.

\(^2\) A Jewish day school is the equivalent to public school with both secular and Jewish subjects being taught during the day. In contrast, in a supplementary or afternoon school, Jewish students study Jewish subjects after public school hours (usually in the late afternoon and early evening as well as on Sundays). The Jewish day school will be referred to from now on in this thesis as the day school.
the problem of creating a separate identity in a liberal democratic society? I will explore several questions directly related to this topic. First of all, why did the Jews of Vancouver establish a Hebrew school3? I will also discuss the founders and supporters of the school, obstacles they encountered, the teachers, the students and the curriculum and why the learning during the first half of the twentieth century seemed to be so highly valued by the Vancouver Jewish community. What were the educational and philosophical goals of the school? The next major question deals with the circumstances that led to the formation of the day school. Who were the people who were instrumental in the establishment and subsequent operation of this school and how did the school create a balance between the Hebrew and secular studies curricula, including a discussion of the teachers, curriculum, students and social and religious orientation of the school?

The final section of the thesis is a discussion of the school in the periods, 1913-1948 and 1948-1959, including personal observations and conclusions, and suggestions for further research. What changes took place during each period with respect to curriculum, religious observance, student body, teachers and general policy? How successful was the school in meeting its goals and the goals of a changing community? Why did education seem to be more valued in the period before the 1940's than in the period following? What have been the criteria over the years for hiring teachers and administrators? Does one have to choose between modernity (adopting modern ways) and ethnicity (perpetuating longstanding values, customs and practices) or can the two coexist? Does the history of the Talmud Torah add to our understanding of the development of Jewish education in Canada? And finally, how does this study add to our understanding of Canadian education in general?

There has been very little scholarly research on Jewish education in Canada. Moreover I am not aware of a single comprehensive case study of a Jewish school in Canada to date. The Vancouver Talmud Torah has been in existence for almost as long as the Vancouver Jewish community itself. It is, therefore, important to document the history of this school not only for the interest of the community, past and present, but also to help those interested in Jewish education gain insight into how one Jewish community has

3 A Hebrew school is either a supplementary or a day school where Hebrew as well as other Jewish subjects are taught.
attempted to educate its children both as Canadians and as Jews and thus to maintain its own identity within a liberal Canadian society.

There is much similarity among Jewish schools in Canada, especially with respect to their history and development.\(^4\) It is therefore safe to assume that a history of a school such as the Vancouver Talmud Torah would be comparable in many respects to histories of other such schools across Canada. This study is also important for Canadian educational history in general because of the vast number of minority groups in Canada many of whom established their own ethnic or religious schools. This study could presumably be duplicated for other such ethnic or religiously-based schools allowing a basis for worthwhile comparison. Such studies would contribute in their own way to a fuller understanding of the development of multiculturalism in Canada since its official proclamation in 1971.

I chose to study the Talmud Torah because of my interest in Jewish education. Although I did not attend a day school, I did attend an afternoon school for many years. As an adult, my interest in my Jewish heritage (language, religion, customs, history) has been renewed as I have become more observant of the teachings of the Jewish religion and of the cultural aspects of being Jewish. It is a topic that has much meaning for me, both as an educator and a Jew.

I believe that an intensive Jewish education, in combination with living a life in accordance with Jewish values (of which the family and the community are the most important agents), is necessary for a Jew to identify strongly with his or her people.\(^5\) Up until the 1700's, when European Jews still lived in isolated communities, it was much easier to live a Jewish life and to guard one's children from outside influences. However, with the dissolution of these tight-knit communities came a straying from the teachings of Judaism and a dispersion of a once cohesive group of people. Hirschberg, who studied Sephardi and Ashkenazi\(^6\)

---

4. See later in this chapter for a discussion of research in Jewish education in Canada and the United States.

5. Kurt Lewin, a social psychologist whose work on group dynamics is well-known in academic circles, believed that a strong identification with the group to which one belongs is essential for personal well-being. Many members of minority groups find themselves stuck between trying to leave behind their loyalties to their group and trying to become accepted by the majority group. Jews who are no longer sure why they should remain Jewish but find themselves rejected by non-Jews are a prime example of people in a state of confusion and unrest.

6. Ashkenazi is the name given to those Jews who moved from the ancient Middle East (Babylonia, Egypt, Palestine, Persia, Syria, Yemen and India) to the Germanic countries, France and Eastern Europe. Since most settled in the Germanic countries, they were given the name Ashkenazi, the Hebrew word for German (Kolatch 1985). Sephardi is the name given to those Jews
Jewish school children in public and Jewish day schools in Montreal in the 1980's, agrees that the family and community are very important for an ethnic group to survive but believes that education plays a much lesser role than expected. His study revealed that "formal, parochial education does not effect an increase in the level of ethnicity, and that parental and community factors are the primary determinants of a child's ethnic identity." Hirschberg found that the day school students' attitudes towards being Jewish were not as positive as those of the secular school students even though the former had received much more instruction in Jewish subjects. It seemed that the day school students had the knowledge but had not internalized what they had learned to the extent that it became important to them.

Finally, this thesis is not the definitive history of the Vancouver Talmud Torah. It is merely one of many possible histories as seen through the eyes of some of the many people who were associated with the school, interpreted by someone who has no connection whatsoever with the school other than through this research. As Henige put it so succinctly, "The past has happened and cannot change, but the interpretation and understanding of it continues to happen and will never stop changing." I hope that this thesis has done justice to the Vancouver Talmud Torah and to the people who helped it grow and develop into a thriving community school.

The research on Jewish education in Canada to date is extremely scanty and often unreliable. A comprehensive study of the history of Jewish education in Canada, whether on a national, provincial or local level, would add to the existing material about the Jews of this country. The following literature review comprises two sections. The first section includes a brief overview of the history of Jewish education, from its beginnings in biblical times, to Europe and subsequently to Canada. The second section provides a critical

who settled in Spain and Portugal (Sephardi means Spanish in Hebrew). Those Jews who remained in the Middle East were called Oriental Jews; however, today they also are commonly referred to as Sephardic Jews.


review of recent literature on the subject of Jewish education in Canada and in the United States for the period in question (1913-1959).

Part I

Historical Background

According to the Jewish Encyclopedia, "The moral and religious training of the people from childhood up was regarded by the Jews from the very beginning of their history as one of the principal objects of life." The aim was, and still is to varying degrees, to create a people who are strongly attached to the beliefs and teachings of their ancestors. As the Jews were forced to move from country to country following the destruction by the Romans of their second Temple in Jerusalem in 70 A.D. they faced enormous outside pressures to give up their religion and to assimilate into the dominant society. Resisting assimilation has always been one of the greatest struggles for the Jewish people and one which continues just as forcefully to this day. In spite of enormous pressures, a core of Jews has always managed to remain strong and sure in their faith. Until the eighteenth century the European Jewish community was bound together by a common Jewish tradition. Most of the mores, manners, customs and prayers were learned in the family, with the synagogue playing a secondary role. The only formal training occurred in the cheder (one-room school) where young students (usually boys) learned Yiddish, Hebrew and mathematics and in the yeshiva where older students (only boys) studied the Talmud (Jewish law) and its commentaries. Traditional Judaism needs no justification in educating its children other than the divine imperative, "And you shall love the Lord.

9. Since the histories of Jewish education in Canada and the United States are very similar, I have decided to include information on the United States in order to add to the little that is available on Canada.


11. I will be focussing on the Eastern European experiences as the logical context for the developments of the Vancouver Jewish community as it was the Eastern Europeans who not only made up the vast majority of Vancouver Jews during the first half of the twentieth century, but who also had the most influence over the various Jewish institutions in the city during this period.

your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart. And you shall teach them diligently to your children, speaking of them when you sittest in your house and when you walkest by the way, when you liest down and when you risest up..." (Deuteronomy 6:6,7). This instruction recorded in the Torah is known to virtually all Jews regardless of their degree of religious observance or synagogue affiliation.

Since the late 1800's there have been four major events which have greatly affected the Jewish people and have subsequently "influenced the goals, structure and content of Jewish education, as well as the social composition of Jewish schools." They are the Haskalah (the Enlightenment or the Emancipation); the vast emigration of Eastern European Jews (mostly Ashkenazic Jews) beginning in the 1880's and continuing through to the 1920's; the Holocaust of World War II; and the birth of the State of Israel in 1948.

The Haskalah, which originated in Western Europe in the latter part of the eighteenth century, "was a cultural movement that encouraged Jews to adopt national and scientific modes of thinking and the cultural perspectives, wisdom, and behavior of the modern Western world." With the onset of the Haskalah came major changes for European Jewry with regard to education, religion and demography. For the first time, Jews were free to own property, reside where they desired and enter into a more varied occupational and educational market. Most Jews saw this as an opportunity to break away from the isolation and restrictiveness of the traditional Jewish community and to enter into a much wider societal environment. Others feared that this new-found freedom would be detrimental to the cultural and religious richness of Judaism and would weaken Jewish identification.

13. Jewish law instructs Jews not to write or say the name of the Almighty unless it is for the purpose of praising Him. This derives from the third commandment "Do not take the name of the Lord in vain". Therefore the orthodox tradition is to write or say the name of the Almighty in a slightly altered manner when one is not praying.


15. Ibid.


17. Himmelfarb, 5.
The proponents of the Haskalah saw education as the fastest and most effective means of integrating Jews into society. Judaism continued to be taught in most Jewish schools but was now accompanied by the study of foreign languages, general history, philosophy and mathematics. The main focus of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, an organization of young Jews from the social and intellectual elite of late eighteenth century France, was the introduction of modern schooling, modern trades, and agriculture, with the principal means of "regeneration" being the modern school. The Alliance Israélite Universelle wanted to spread the modern ideals of the Haskalah to areas such as the Balkan countries and Moslem lands where Jews would not otherwise have the opportunity to develop education and training in modern skills.18

The proponents of the Haskalah were met with opposition by such great German scholars as Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch and Rabbi Moses Sofer, both of whom believed strongly in the wisdom and importance of the teachings of a religion that had survived for thousands of years. Rabbis Hirsch and Sofer believed that once the influences of secular society were permitted to permeate Jewish life, Jews would cease to be a distinct people and Judaism would eventually be diluted beyond recognition. Therefore, both men founded traditional schools in the early 1800's in response to the rapidly growing Haskalah movement. The schools offered a more demanding curriculum of Torah study than was available in the modern schools of the Haskalah. The argument between those Jews (such as Hirsch and Sofer) who believed that it was imperative to safeguard tradition at the expense of integrating into society and those, such as the proponents of the Haskalah, who believed that tradition could be sacrificed in order to fit into society continues to this day. We will see the relevance of these opposing views and their impact on education at Talmud Torah during the period covered in this thesis.19

The second major event occurred during the five decades around the turn of the 20th century when approximately three million Jews left Eastern Europe. Eighty percent of them emigrated to the United States while the rest migrated to Western Europe, Israel, Canada, Australia, Argentina and South Africa. Thus, the

world Jewish population underwent drastic changes in its lifestyle and literally had to start anew, setting up synagogues, community relief agencies and schools. These institutions reflected the traditions of the Eastern European Jews, who had, to a large extent, rejected the modern changes proposed by the Haskalah, rather than the assimilationist attitudes of their Western European counterparts. The Eastern Europeans exerted a strong influence over Jewish education in North America. It is they who were largely responsible for the emergence of the day school movement as well as many other forms of Jewish education and it is upon their experiences that I will be drawing largely for this history of the Vancouver Talmud Torah.

The third factor was the Holocaust. Two-thirds of European Jewry (over one-third of world Jewry) were destroyed as a result of Nazi hatred during the Holocaust. Whole communities were eradicated along with some of the greatest institutions of Jewish learning. The terror and destruction of the Holocaust greatly affected the Jewish community worldwide. Some people were witnesses to the horrors, others lost family and friends, while those communities who received the war refugees were affected by the huge emotional and financial burden that helping their fellow Jews entailed, often at the expense of their own religious and educational needs. Europe, once the centre of Jewish learning and spirituality, was now left to rebuild itself from the rubble, while Israel and Jews in the United States took over as the leaders in Jewish education and spirituality.

In 1948, just three years after the Holocaust ended, the modern State of Israel was established. At last there was a country to which any persecuted Jew could turn. Jews throughout the world experienced a renewed sense of pride and a long-awaited feeling of unity. Israel has "played an instrumental role in revitalizing Jewish culture through language, art, music and literature" and has also "provided educational material, personnel, and finances to Jewish schools throughout the world." In the years following 1948, Israel would play a vital role in reshaping Jewish education in the Diaspora (lands outside of Israel), especially in terms of language, history and customs.

22. Ibid, 11.
In summary, Jewish identification up until the late 1700's in Eastern Europe was not at risk because most Jews lived in isolated or insulated communities, often forced into ghettos by unfriendly governments. As Jews began to disperse and live in mixed communities, Jewish identification and socialization became a problem. The main goal of Jewish schools then shifted from providing knowledge to providing experiences that would assist the students in developing their Jewish identity. This is the main difference between schools in Israel and schools in the Diaspora. "In Israel, the major goal is to add knowledge to an identification that already exists from the experience of everyday life. In the Diaspora, there is a need to create the experience to which knowledge can be related." Unfortunately, schools are much better at transmitting knowledge than they are at transmitting experience. The latter remains largely the task of the family and community.

Jewish Education in Canada

When the Jews first arrived in Canada in small numbers in the 1760's they began setting up afterschool programs to teach their children the language, customs, history and religion of their ancestors. The schools first operated out of the cheder (one-room school), then over the years moved to a basement classroom in the shul (synagogue), then to a rented or purchased house and finally to a modern school building often attached to a synagogue. At first, the religious training consisted of mechanical reading of prayers in Hebrew, without understanding, and translation of the Pentateuch (The Five Books of Moses) into Yiddish. The instructor was a melamed - an untrained religious teacher. When people realized that this type of education was inadequate, an enriched program of Jewish studies, taught by a qualified professional teacher, was introduced. The day school in Canada has its roots in the small local talmudei torah (Talmud Torah schools), afterschool programs first set up by Eastern European immigrants at the beginning of the 20th century. Although these schools were first established to serve the predominantly Orthodox community,

23. Ibid, 23.
24. See information on Hirschberg's study on pp. 3-4.
they later became community schools with student representation from all the various groups into which Jews are usually divided: Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, Egalitarian and unaffiliated. The first Talmud Torah in Canada was established in Montreal in 1896. The first day school was the secularist Yiddish Peretz School in Winnipeg, founded in 1920.

In 1867, when the British North America Act was passed, there were fewer than 2000 Jews in Canada. The Canadian government, therefore, did not take the Jews' educational needs into consideration when it instructed each province to "guarantee access to the existing Catholic and Protestant [public] schools" which received provincial funding. Since the existing public schools were unacceptable to many Jews, they began negotiating with their provincial governments in the early 1900's to establish funding for Jewish day schools, without success.

Part II

State of Research in Jewish Education

Apart from a few chapters which appear in historical surveys and articles in Jewish or American journals as well as a handful of masters and doctoral theses, little has been written about the education of the Jews in Canada. Schools, which are generally understaffed and underfunded, have neither the time nor the money to collect and interpret their history. They are too busy financing their day-to-day operations, preparing and revising curricula and hiring and overseeing teaching and administrative staff. Consequently, very few statistical or historical documents exist. Those that do exist are not collected centrally, and are spread throughout the country. It is only possible to access these documents through writing to or telephoning each separate school or school board (if one exists). As a result of this shortage of accessible historical

27. Ibid, p. 21.
29. Rabbi I. Witty telephone interview.
material on Jewish education in Canada, literature from the United States is often consulted by researchers and educators. Due to the similarities of the two societies, I consider it appropriate to cite material from the United States in this study.

Harold Himmelfarb reported in 1989 that "the field of Jewish Education [in the U.S.] is still in its infancy. . . . there is an unsettling feeling that we know very little about what Jewish educational efforts look like, how they impact on people, and what directions need to be pursued in the improvement of the field."30 Barry Chazan31 argues that "the problem is not lack of people, issues, or procedures for research, but rather a lack of theory to guide the role of research in affecting Jewish educational practice."32 According to David Resnick, an American researcher in Jewish education, the problems include the absence of a clearly defined philosophy of Jewish education, the lack of an ongoing research enterprise, the unavailability of social science journals in Jewish education, and the frequent exclusion of those most directly involved in education (teachers, principals, parents) from deciding what is researched or how.33 These problems also apply to Canadian Jewish education and further research is needed to fill in the gaps of our knowledge. The following section begins with a discussion of the research available on Jewish education in the United States and concludes with a look at Canadian research on the topic in an attempt to shed some light on what has been done to date in the field of Jewish education and what remains to be explored.

United States

In order for the Jews to survive as a people they must provide their children with the most intensive Jewish education possible, supplemented, of course, by a solid home and community life. This position is:

---


33. Passow, p. 6.
corroborated by the recent research of Efraim Inbar\textsuperscript{34}, a modern researcher in the field of Jewish education in the United States. Inbar reports that since the arrival of Jewish immigrants in the United States in the late eighteenth century, there has been a constant debate over how best to educate one's children in an open society. Some have believed strongly in intensive Jewish education (such as the day school), some have deemed afterschool instruction sufficient, while still others have felt that it is best to integrate totally into the general society and in no way appear different from the mainstream. Inbar, a strong advocate of the day school movement, sees the day school (the most intensive type of Jewish education), as the answer to the problem of Jewish survival. He believes that the day school is a viable solution to the issue of assimilation and loss of Jewish values, especially among American-born Jews.

Inbar continues to discuss the development of Jewish education in the United States through a discussion of some of the people and movements active during this period and their differing beliefs on the topic of how best to educate their children. During the period under study (1913-1959), most immigrant Jews believed that they could reach a happy medium between guarding their traditions and beliefs and fitting into the dominant society by sending their children to public school during the day followed by a supplementary Jewish school in the afternoon.\textsuperscript{35} Educators, such as Isaac B. Berkson, a New York educator and author who helped set up the first system of Jewish education in the United States, believed that this arrangement would allow Jewish children to share experiences with those of other nationalities and religions in the public school during the day and continue their Jewish studies after school. During this period, these beliefs were found among Diaspora Jews throughout the world, including those in Canada. This arrangement, however, created the major problem of Jewish children being exposed daily to religious beliefs and customs which were foreign to Judaism. In some parts of the United States and Canada, Jewish children were exempt from religious activities which were in opposition to their beliefs. The majority of American Jews accepted a distinct

\textsuperscript{34} Efraim Inbar, "The Hebrew Day Schools - The Orthodox Communal Challenge," The Journal of Ethnic Studies 7-1 (Spring 1979): 13-29.

\textsuperscript{35} Inbar refers to this as the "integration-survival dilemma". The "integration-survival dilemma" is not a problem for the Orthodox Jews because, although they participate and contribute to American society, their first allegiance is with the Jewish people. This is usually not the case with other Jews who have great difficulty viewing the Jewish people as a nation and not simply a religious group.
separation of church and state. The Jewish Orthodox minority, on the other hand, rallied for the inclusion of some form of religion (such as silent prayer) in the public school. Although few of their children attended public schools, they believed that this was preferable to a completely secular educational system which might promote atheism and possibly antisemitism. Orthodox Jews were the first group in the United States to suggest that a supplementary Jewish education was "not successful in inculcating the knowledge and values an educated Jew should have." They believed that the only solution was the Jewish day school. The critics, both Jewish and non-Jewish, of the day school claimed that it was "Unamerican" because it was a segregated school. They believed that children who attended Jewish day schools were deprived of important intergroup relations and were limited in their ability to integrate into American society afterwards.

Inbar describes the reasons for the emergence of day schools in the 1900's which taught both Jewish and secular subjects. These schools were founded on the belief that knowledge of the Torah accompanied by secular subjects would serve to enhance both Jewish and American life. Although there was always a struggle for the Jews (as for most minority groups) between the desire to adhere to their faith, language and people and the need to adjust to the host society, it became more and more pronounced after World War II. In this period, the immigrant generation had aged and there was a marked increase in American-born Jews and children of American-born Jews enrolled in intensive Jewish educational programs for two reasons. Firstly, there were simply more American-born Jews as the immigrants settled and had families. Secondly, many Jews realized that they had become assimilated into the American culture and had lost much of their Jewish tradition in the process. They therefore believed that a more intensive Jewish education was necessary to fill the void created by a less traditional Jewish home and community life.

Inbar relates that the struggle for the American-born Jews to remain Jewish was even greater as they were already partially assimilated as a result of the desire of their parents to be successful in American society and to ensure that their children would have the best social, economic and educational opportunities available to them, in other words, they did not want their children to be seen as outsiders. Jewish educators

30. Inbar, 16.
responded to this situation by finding meaningful ways to attract Jews to Judaism. Most educators thought that adherence to the teachings of the Torah and dedication to Israel (as an ideal at first, and then after 1948 as a concrete reality) were the best and truest ways of ensuring that Jews remained loyal to their heritage.

Canada

Probably the most extensive study of Jewish education in Canada is Jerome Kutnick's chapter in Jewish Education Worldwide - Cross-Cultural Perspectives. Kutnick explores Canadian Jewry's struggle with its heritage as reflected in the education of its children. He notes the close ties maintained between American and Canadian Jewry which have had a profound effect on Jewish education in both countries. He reports in detail on the history of the day school movement in Canada as well as the controversy involving day vs. supplementary schools. He includes a section for each of the cities with large Jewish educational programs, including statistics as to the number of schools and school enrolment. Kutnick's chapter also gives explanations as to the varying patterns of Jewish education across Canada, demonstrating that these patterns depend, to a large extent, on the origins of population as well as the extent of the population's commitment to Judaism.

In the late 19th century and early 20th century, Montreal Jews struggled with the pre-existing Protestant and Catholic school boards in an attempt to receive equal treatment for their children as well as for themselves. This controversy, often referred to as the "Montreal School Question" is a well-researched and widely-discussed issue. In order for Jewish children to be admitted to one of the existing public school systems (the Protestant being the system of choice) they were designated as "Protestants" for school purposes and yet their parents were not eligible to stand for election to Protestant school boards and thus have input.


in the operation of these schools. The beginning of the 1900's saw many Jews becoming increasingly frustrated with the situation and as a result they began to set up their own schools.

Two informative histories of the Canadian Jews by Arthur Chiel and Stephen A. Speisman provide much valuable information on the history of Jewish education in Manitoba and Toronto respectively. They incorporate social, political, historical, financial and religious issues into the discussion of education, and include numerous facts, figures, names and dates in the recounting of the educational endeavours of the Jews of these two communities. These two histories also include discussions about philanthropy, various Jewish immigrant groups, community problems, conflicting ideologies, acculturation and the influence of the non-Jewish society on the educational activities of the Jews. A detailed discussion of the types of schools set up, teachers hired and curriculum is also included. These surveys are helpful for those doing preliminary work on Jewish education in Canada.

Yaacov Glickman provides a thorough overview of the history of Jewish education in Canada, from its roots in the tightly-knit communities of Eastern Europe to the wide variation of religious content, language of instruction and organizational features of modern Jewish schools across Canada. His article is one of only a few which not only systematically outlines the origins of Canadian Jewish education but also discusses differences among various schools across the country with respect to ideologies, programs, organizational affiliations and histories. Glickman correctly points out that Jewish "education" does not merely denote Jewish "schooling". There are many other organizations (Canadian Jewish Congress, community centres, synagogues, summer camps, B'hai B'Rith Hillel Houses located on university campuses etc.) which educate and instruct people of all ages in the language, culture, religion and history of the Jewish people. Glickman cites a study in which sixty key figures of the Toronto Jewish population were asked to list the major recent developments in the schools.


40. Gerald Tulchin's 1992 publication entitled Taking Root - The Origins of the Canadian Jewish Community, an excellent account of the history of the Jews in Canada, provides some information on Jewish education in Canada, although nowhere near as extensive as Chiel and Speisman.

disputes in the community. The majority of responses were related to education. These included issues of government aid to Jewish schools, the relative importance of day and supplementary schools, rabbinical authority, control of funds and educational philosophies. Glickman's article shows that Canadian Jews place a high degree of importance on educational issues and as a result have set up many Jewish educational programs and institutions. However, he also points out that many issues remain to be tackled.

Glickman makes a clear distinction between modern North American Jewry's educational system and that of the small towns and ghettos of Eastern Europe prior to the Second World War. For the latter, education was an integral part of everyday life. For the former, education is a means to an end, which usually includes improving one's social or economic status. Glickman concludes that "the profile of Jewish schooling in Canada shows a trend towards the all-day Jewish school"\textsuperscript{42}, supported by a growing number of Canadian Jews who see the importance of preserving Jewish culture while still participating in modern Canadian life.

Glickman reveals that Jews are fairly unified when it comes to the importance of Jewish education. However, despite these findings, Jewish educational institutions have not been very successful in producing more committed or more identified Jews. Why is this? The family, contrary to popular belief, has retained its role as the main influence on the child with respect to its socialization and community identification. As Walter Ackerman declares, to assume "that formal education or any kind or educational programme. . . is an adequate substitute for the impact of a total culture is to stretch the parameters of identity formation beyond reasonable limits."\textsuperscript{43} Jewish schooling coupled with education in the home are both necessary as each reinforces the benefits of the other.

Rabbi David Kogen's thesis\textsuperscript{44} provides a brief history of Jewish religious life from its biblical beginnings to Judaism's split into Reform, neo-Orthodox, Conservative, and Reconstructionist movements beginning in the 1700's. He then discusses the status of Jewish religious life in mid-twentieth century

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid, 125.

\textsuperscript{43} Quoted in ibid, 127.

\textsuperscript{44} David Kogen, "Change in Jewish Religious Life" (Master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 1951).
Vancouver (with respect to observances such as Shabbat, kashrut, religious festivals etc.) through means of a questionnaire which was submitted to a large number of Hebrew school students from the Talmud Torah and synagogue schools. He found that kashrut observance was fairly strong, Sabbath observance was very weak, and there was full attendance for Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur services at the synagogues. Rabbi Kogen's thesis supplies invaluable information on Jewish education in Vancouver during the early 1950's, where very little exists. It also includes statistics and information on the Talmud Torah gathered during this period.

The information presented in this chapter serves not only to provide background information on the study of Jewish education in Canada but also to show what research has been done so far in this area. Clearly, little substantial research has been undertaken regarding the histories of individual schools. Further, most of the literature to date deals with Jewish education in Eastern Canada. It is therefore important to provide research on Jewish education in the West where different issues such as lack of materials due to inadequate funding and limited availability, a shortage of qualified teachers, and geographical isolation, created problems for the Jewish schools.

45. Shabbat is the Jewish Sabbath, the day of rest, which is observed on Saturdays. Kashrut is the collection of Jewish dietary laws outlined in the Bible and later interpreted by various Jewish scholars.

46. The synagogue services for Rosh HaShanah, the Jewish New Year, and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, are the most widely-attended of the Jewish religious festivals.
Part III
Sources and Methodology

The information gathered for this thesis was based largely on oral interviews with former students, teachers, parents and Board members of the Talmud Torah from the 1920's to the 1950's. In total, I interviewed 24 people, many of whom fit into more than one category. I interviewed 14 students, five from the 1920's and 1930's and nine from the 1940's and 1950's. Ten parents from the 1940's and 1950's were interviewed; most of this group were also involved in the school in some other way. Four Board members were interviewed, all of whom served between 1930 and 1959. Although I approached thirteen teachers from the 1940's and 1950's, only four agreed to be interviewed. This rate of cooperation was significantly lower than that of the other three groups. Possibly this was because teachers did not want to discuss problems or unpleasant experiences which might have taken place, not wanting to dredge up old memories or feeling as if it was so long ago that they did not think they had anything worthwhile to say or did not feel some of the issues should be exposed to public view.

I developed a list of questions pertinent to the themes I wished to explore. During the interviews, I used the question list as a guide to directing the course of the conversation. Since I wanted people to talk freely about their experiences I felt that a formal interview would inhibit their responses. After transcribing the interviews I selected those parts that pertained to the issues I had decided to pursue. Throughout the process many selections were deleted as I became more aware of the exactly what shape I wanted the thesis to take. Finally, suggestions from my committee assisted in further refining the information.

I encouraged people to allow me to use their names. In all but two cases (where different reasons were given for not wanting names used) names are used throughout the thesis. Sherry Thomas believes that using real names is part of doing oral history. I mean I changed names when I had to, but I felt like I lost a small piece that matters to me a lot... that absolutely ordinary people

47. I also interviewed three students and two teachers, all from the 1980's, and one student from the 1970's, but later decided to limit my thesis to the period from 1913-1959. The information gathered from these sources provided me, nevertheless, with a more global view of the evolution of the school and thus influenced the writing of this thesis.

48. See Appendix B for a copy of the interview questions.
matter and count and their stories are important and we need all of their stories, and that when you start changing the names you take away some of that basic belief system.49

Thomas also ably expressed her views on accountability.

The big issue for me . . . was that I felt a tremendous question about accountability to the material. Given what I was doing with the transcription, given that I was severely editing the pieces, that I was taking myself out of all the pieces so that it looked like a first person question-and-answer form, was I being faithful -- to the voice, to the content of the material? Could I really take four sentences from here and put them at the end of another whole section and be faithful to the flow and the content and the mood and the tone of the piece? I felt a tremendous seriousness about that, and ended up having to say I had to trust myself, my sense of that person, my sense of the connection out of those long talks, and my sense of the shape of what they were trying to convey about their lives.50

I share Thomas' deep concern about properly representing those I have interviewed. It was very difficult to extract pertinent pieces of information gathered from the interviews and insert them into appropriate sections of the thesis without losing the flow or the meaning. It was for this reason that I sent each interviewee a copy of the parts of their interview that I planned to use in my thesis for careful reading and comment. Approximately half responded with suggestions for minor changes or general approval of the material. The rest, I assume, were satisfied with the material as they were informed that if they did not respond by a certain date then I would assume I had their complete approval. I can only hope that I have done justice to the testimonies and experiences of the interviewees who so generously shared with me their recollections of the Talmud Torah.

The rest of the information was gathered from several other sources, the main one being back issues of the Jewish Western Bulletin51, a weekly Vancouver Jewish community newspaper (known by several other names before 1930) from 1925 to 1959. This proved to be an excellent source. Almost every weekly issue had something on the Talmud Torah as it was one of the few Jewish institutions in the city. I also consulted

---


50. Thomas, quoted in Stephenson, 84.

51. The *Jewish Western Bulletin* is a weekly Vancouver Jewish community newspaper that has been in operation in one form or another since the 1920's and continues to publish to this day. Previous names include *The Vancouver Jewish Bulletin, Centre Bulletin, Weekly News* and *Jewish Centre News.*
photographs stored at the Jewish Western Bulletin, the Talmud Torah and in private collections. Some of these appear on pages 73-83. Many of those interviewed were kind enough to lend me old photographs, report cards, correspondence and notebooks which added to the project as whole. A book of minutes from the 1940's, carefully preserved by Dr. Al Bogoch and brought to my attention by Michael Moscovich, served as the only written primary source (other than the newspaper) regarding the early days of the Talmud Torah. This book is a record of Talmud Torah Executive Board meetings from October 25, 1944 to July 1, 1947. Most of the information deals with the finances, budget, tuition, fundraising, committee reports, elections, staffing and daily operation of the school. I was unable to locate any other minute books. I also consulted a wide-range of secondary material including books, articles, doctoral and master's theses, and Canadian Census reports from 1901 to 1981 to provide background information and to steer me in the right direction with my research.
CHAPTER TWO

Forces Shaping the Destiny of the Talmud Torah

The first section of this chapter gives a brief description of the pioneer Jewish settlement in Vancouver in the late 1800's and early 1900's. The purpose of this background is to place the Vancouver Talmud Torah in its proper historical context. This chapter adds to the information given in the previous chapter, focusing on how these external forces influenced the development and operation of the school. This is followed by a discussion of demographic changes in the Jewish population in Canada for the period discussed and the debate over Yiddish or Hebrew as the language of instruction. There were many forces shaping the destiny of the Talmud Torah. This chapter endeavours to outline the major ones and to provide a brief discussion of each.

The Settlement Of The Jews In Vancouver

There were two distinct waves of Jewish immigration to British Columbia in the latter part of the 19th and early part of the 20th century. The first wave, from 1858-1871, involved several hundred Western European Jews who immigrated because of the gold rush. They came primarily from California and most settled in Victoria.¹ The second and larger of the two waves occurred in 1886-1914, and brought Eastern European Jews, poor immigrants who were fleeing pogroms in their homelands. The majority settled in the low-income East End of Vancouver (often referred to as Strathcona). Arriving with almost nothing, they did, however, bring with them their religion (Orthodox Judaism), their language (Yiddish), their families and a strong determination to give their children a better life. They possessed a strong sense of family and

¹ Christine Wisenthal, "Insiders and Outsiders: Two waves of Jewish Settlement in BC, 1858-1914" (M.A. Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1987), ii.
community, a passion for learning, great respect for democracy, Zionist ideals and the practise of tzedakah (charity and justice).  

However, by the late 1920's they were already exchanging the spiritual values of Judaism for material possessions. Buildings and monuments were becoming more important than the study of Judaism. Furthermore, an immigration policy adopted during the 1930's in Canada basically stopped the influx of Eastern European Jews. This resulted in further isolation of the Jewish community from the vital sources of Judaism in Europe. Once in Vancouver, most of the immigrants became tailors, dressmakers, scrap dealers, shopkeepers, wage earners and petty traders in the East End. Mordecai Jaffe, who arrived in Vancouver in 1926, remembers the early Jewish immigrants. "[T]hey started humbly as peddlers with horse and buggy, second hand shopkeepers, tailors and shoemakers. Their life was hard and it is only the second generation that was able to reach a higher educational level and become the leaders of the community.  

Zebulon Franks was the first religious leader in Vancouver. He arrived in 1887 from a town near Odessa in Russia where his father was the High Rabbi. A brilliant young scholar very dedicated to religious study, he held services in his small rented home on Water Street from 1887 to 1894. In 1907 B'nei Yehudah (Sons of Israel), the first Orthodox congregation in Vancouver, was established with Zebulon Franks as its leader.

---

2. Zionism is a movement whose goal is the return of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel.


4. Komar, 9, 10.

5. Ibid, 10.

6. Wisenthal, ii-iii.

7. Mordecai Jaffe was a writer and educator. His interests lay in promoting Hebrew and Jewish education, preventing assimilation, the propagation of the Zionist ideology and the revival of the Yiddish language and culture. Although he taught briefly at the Talmud Torah and was president in 1933, he was not satisfied with teaching Hebrew exclusively. He felt that Hebrew and Yiddish supplemented each other. As editor and author for the "Yiddische Velt" (The Yiddish World), a Yiddish magazine with some English which was published from 1928 to 1935, Jaffe was able to educate the community as to his beliefs on Judaism in general, and more specifically Jewish education. The magazine dealt with concerns of interest to British Columbia Jews of that time. Education was discussed in every issue as this was Jaffe's main interest. (from Komar, p. 5)


president. Services were held in rented halls until the first synagogue was built at Heatley and Pender in 1911-12. By 1914 the Vancouver Jews had formed their own traditional segregated community, in which the focus of life was the Orthodox congregation. In 1917 the Orthodox synagogue was incorporated and renamed Schara Tzedeck (Gates of Righteousness). The following year Reverend Nathan Mayer Pastinsky became the spiritual leader. Although he was not an ordained rabbi, he was so loved and revered by all that many called him "Rabbi". He was also the shochet (ritual slaughterer), mohel (one who is trained to perform ritual circumcisions) and chazan (cantor or prayer leader) of the community and he was known to welcome all into his house regardless of their religion or status. A man of great wisdom, devotion, talent and a tireless worker, he served the community for almost 30 years, from 1918 until his death in 1946. Both of these men contributed greatly to survival of the Vancouver Jewish community. By sharing their knowledge and wisdom they helped to keep Judaism alive in Vancouver.

As the community grew, the synagogue was no longer large enough to accommodate everyone for the High Holiday services so various halls were rented to accommodate the overflow. The resulting inconvenience spurred the community to acquire its own larger building. In 1921 a new synagogue with seating for 600 was built at the corner of Heatley and East Pender. By the 1930's the Strathcona Jewish neighbourhood was a thriving community complete with synagogue, school, Talmud Torah, Zionist hall, Neighbourhood House, kosher butcher shops, grocery and confectionary stores, doctors' offices and drug stores.

13. Ibid, 11.
16. Leonoff, Centennial of Vancouver Jewish Life, 10.
17. Congregation Schara Tzedeck, "Celebrating 80 Years", 15.
18. Leonoff, Centennial of Vancouver Jewish Life, 11.
Most of the Jewish immigrants lived in the area of Strathcona Elementary School. They attended this school during the day and learned Hebrew and religious studies afterwards, either at the Talmud Torah or with private tutors. In this way they could learn to read and interpret the lessons of the Bible at Hebrew school as well as improve their standard of living and integrate into Canadian society by attending public school. Joseph Youngson, one of the first teachers at the Vancouver Talmud Torah, reflected on the children of the era. He noted especially the diligence in their schoolwork and the ambition placed on them by their families to be successful in this new country.

Most of the children went to [public] school. And [at] that time all the children, the Jewish children, seemed to distinguish themselves in the schools. They all walked away with the highest degrees [marks] because, you know, they knew that their aim is to study and to learn . . . because in Russia, wherever they came from, the parents could never reach the height what the children could reach here and they saw such wonderful opportunities, and learning among Jewish people is always accepted highly.

This East End community endured until the 1940's. "It was a strongly ethnocentric community bound together by the shared religious and cultural inheritance of Orthodox Judaism." They were able to "practise their religion openly and to live fully as Jews, without the constant threat of pogroms." Youngson described the close-knit Jewish community as he knew it in the late 1920's and the 1930's.

It was a very nice [Jewish] community. People were closer, one to another . . . . Today, if you want to see somebody, you have to make an appointment or they have to invite you before and make an appointment ahead of time. There, if you felt like seeing somebody, you just walked in, in the house and . . . . You [would] go to Georgia Street on a summer evening. Everybody would be sitting outside on the veranda and chatting, talking and we were all together.

---

19. Strathcona, Vancouver’s first public school, opened its doors in January of 1887 at the 500 block of East Cordova Street. It was originally called East School.
20. Leonoff, Centennial of Vancouver Jewish Life, 12.
22. Wisenthal, 132.
23. Ibid, 135.
By 1948 many families had already moved uptown to Oak Street. At that time there were three separate congregations. The Beth Hamidrash\textsuperscript{25} synagogue, established in 1941 by a group of Orthodox Jews, opposed the modern changes taking place at the Schara Tzedeck synagogue. The Schara Tzedeck synagogue was moved in 1947 to a new building at 19th and Oak and in 1948 the present-day Talmud Torah Hebrew day school and the Beth Israel\textsuperscript{26} Conservative synagogue were built.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>B.C.</th>
<th>Vancouver</th>
<th>% of BC Jews in Vancouver</th>
<th>Total Pop'n (Vancouver)*</th>
<th>Jews as % of Vancouver</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>36.46%</td>
<td>26,133</td>
<td>0.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>1,384</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>72.25%</td>
<td>100,401</td>
<td>1.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>1,654</td>
<td>1,248</td>
<td>75.45%</td>
<td>117,217</td>
<td>1.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>2,666</td>
<td>2,372</td>
<td>88.97%</td>
<td>246,593</td>
<td>0.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>3,235</td>
<td>2,742</td>
<td>84.76%</td>
<td>275,353</td>
<td>1.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>5,969</td>
<td>5,566</td>
<td>93.25%</td>
<td>344,833</td>
<td>1.61%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Canadian censuses, 1901-1951
The increase in the number of Vancouver Jews from 1921 to 1951 was even more pronounced (over 350%) than the increase in the number of B.C. Jews for this same period. This demonstrates that more and more Jews were moving to the city.

*This information compiled by Vancouver Public Library.

**A Changing Jewish Demography**

By the mid-1940's the majority of Canadian Jews were, for the first time, native-born (see chart below). This was the first of two changes that occurred during this period which had a major effect on Jewish education in Vancouver. The second change was the purchase of a separate building for the Talmud Torah

---

25. Beth Hamidrash, originally an Orthodox Ashkenazi synagogue (today a Sephardi Orthodox synagogue), was established in 1941 in Vancouver on Heather Street near 16th Avenue. The Beth Hamidrash catered to the needs of the "oldtimers" who were uncomfortable with the modern changes that were taking place in the Schara Tzedeck (neo-Orthodox) synagogue (eg. sermons in English and not in Yiddish). (Kogen, pp. 127-128)

26. The Beth Israel Conservative synagogue was incorporated in 1932. It was first housed in the old Jewish Community Centre at Oak and 11th until enough funds were available to purchase a separate building at Oak and 27th in 1948. The main differences between this and the existing Schara Tzedeck were that in the Beth Israel men and women could sit together, some prayers were in English, there was improved decorum, shorter services and a mixed choir. (Kogen, 129-130).
in 1944. Basing his information on the 1931 and 1941 Canadian censuses, Louis Rosenberg reported that the changes (lower rate of increase in Jewish population, increase in Canadian-born Jews) which had taken place in the Canadian Jewish population since 1921 were typical of a primarily urban minority group whose continued immigration had been severely restricted by the Canadian department of immigration, and who, despite a relatively low rate of intermarriage and high degree of determination to retain its religious and cultural identity, had quickly adapted to the social, educational, economic and political conditions of the majority group. By 1951 more than half of the Jews in Canada were Canadian-born and no longer could look to the immigrants to guide them in their Judaism. Now they were the leaders and would have to teach their children the already watered-down Judaism that they had acquired from living in an open society.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total # of Jews in Canada</th>
<th>% of total</th>
<th>BC</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>126,196</td>
<td>50,892</td>
<td>609</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>156,726</td>
<td>68,703</td>
<td>1,150</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>170,241</td>
<td>86,892</td>
<td>955</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>181,670</td>
<td>103,599</td>
<td>3,008</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of Canada, 1921-1951, tables on racial origin of the Canadian-born and population by racial origin.

The above chart includes the information used by Rosenberg for his study as well as additional statistics from before and after the period in question. This chart shows the increase in Canadian and B.C.-born Jews from 1921 to 1951. The greatest increase occurred after the onset of World War II, between 1941 and 1951. The chart clearly demonstrates the shift in the Canadian Jewish population, from a predominantly immigrant population to a native-born one. From 1921 to 1951 the number of Canadian-born Jews had more than doubled (an increase of over 100%) whereas the total number of Jews in Canada had increased by less

27. See Chapter Three, "The School and the Community".

than 50%. However, the total number of Jews in B.C. had increased by more than 150% from 1921 to 1951. This indicates that more and more Jews were leaving the East and moving westward to seek a better life.

What effect did these substantial increases in the numbers of Canadian-born Jews, and especially the phenomenal growth of the Vancouver Jewish community\(^{29}\), have on Jewish education? For the first time, Canadian Jews found themselves without a dominant immigrant population on whom they could depend for the transmission of Jewish knowledge and traditions. The first generation Canadian-born Jews, who had already experienced a tangible loss of their cultural knowledge as a result of trying to integrate into Canadian society, were now faced with a new generation of Jews, their children, who did not have the same advantage of living in a traditional Jewish home as they had had. Thus the need for Jewish education outside of the home was even more important. It is therefore no surprise that Jewish schools became more prevalent and more well-attended around the middle of the century.

### The Language Debate

Hebrew, for the Jewish people, has always been the language of the religious text. It is the language in which Jews all around the world pray. Yiddish, like Ladino, is a combination of Hebrew and the language of the host country, which in the case of Yiddish was Germany and in the case of Ladino was Spain. Both of these languages were used in everyday speech, not in religious services. The Hebrew language became a living language once again with the emergence of the state of Israel in 1948. The renewal of Hebrew encouraged many Jews to devote more time and money to improving Hebrew language programs. This gave rise to an area of great contention, the issue of the language of instruction in the school. The Hebraists\(^{30}\) believed that Jewish studies should be taught in Hebrew while the Yiddishists believed that Yiddish should be the language of instruction. Still others, like Israel Baruch, a principal of the Talmud Torah in the mid-

\(^{29}\) Most of the Jews living in British Columbia after 1880 (the beginning of the wave of Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe) resided in the Vancouver area.

\(^{30}\) Hebraists are advocates of Hebrew just as Yiddishists are advocates of Yiddish.
1930's, advocated a mixture of Yiddish, Hebrew and English. He wrote on this subject in conjunction with his views on the curriculum.

It is insufficient to teach him [the child] to pray or merely to read without understanding. This tends to make him dislike the prayers. He must learn to understand the prayers [through the use of English if the child's Hebrew was not adequate], the Bible, some Hebrew speaking, and the reading of a light book. He must also be able to write, have a general knowledge of our history, a fair knowledge of Yiddish, a general idea of Jewish life, especially of the religious aspect, such as holy days, customs, laws, etc.\(^{31}\)

Baruch believed strongly that "the solution is not a choice of Yiddish or Hebrew but a combination of Yiddish and Hebrew."\(^{32}\) He summarized his position by defining Yiddish as the language for conveying the Jewish people's history, songs, jokes and culture and Hebrew as the language of the people for all times. However, many believed that Yiddish should be the language of every day use while Hebrew should be reserved for prayer. The Yiddishists (the advocates of Yiddish) also feared that a revival of Hebrew as a spoken language would seriously threaten the survival of Yiddish as the language of communication of the Jewish masses. They were often hostile towards the Hebraist-Zionists (advocates of Hebrew being spoken in the land of Israel, the home of the Jewish people) whom they believed wanted to destroy the Yiddish language.\(^{33}\) Most of the Yiddishists immigrated to Canada in the early 1900's. The majority were Jewish intellectuals "who had been part of the Yiddish and socialist-cultural movements in Russia."\(^{34}\) The Labour Zionists and the Socialist-Territorialists or Bundists were the two main groups of Yiddishists. The Labour Zionists believed in the return of the Jews to their homeland in Palestine where they would speak Yiddish and live under the tenets of socialism, that is, collective ownership, self-labour and the non-exploitation of people. The Socialist-Territorialists held the same beliefs about socialism and speaking Yiddish but differed

---

34. Chiel, 102.
from the Labour Zionists in that they "believed in Jewish cultural autonomy within a socialist state wherever such a condition was possible."35

Both of these movements were secular in nature and the members of these movements who immigrated to Canada naturally opposed the Talmud Torah's traditionalist curriculum with its focus on religion. Rather, they wanted a school that would teach the Yiddish language and the socialist mentality using modern pedagogical methods.36 Chiel, who wrote a book on the Jewish Community of Manitoba, provides us with an account of the conflict in Winnipeg as to which language was to be taught in the school. Although there is no similar documentation of the situation in Vancouver, it is possible to use this source to provide insight into what likely also occurred on the West Coast as a similar group of Vancouver Jews formed their own secular Jewish school in 1924, first called the Sholem Aleichem Folk Institute and later in 1945 renamed the Vancouver Peretz Institute.37 The Vancouver Peretz School, as it is commonly called, like others across Canada, had a non-religious (not necessarily anti-religious) and Yiddish (rather than Hebrew) orientation.38 The school was set up by a group of people who were dissatisfied with the Orthodox-run religious schools and wanted a school that would foster the Yiddish language. The school's main aim, as stated in its 1945 charter, was to "advance and teach the cause of progressive and modern Jewish learning, culture, and education, and the Jewish [Yiddish] language."39

In Winnipeg, troubles arose when the Socialist-Territorialists insisted on teaching only Yiddish while the Labour Zionists wanted to teach both Hebrew and Yiddish. Since most parents wanted their sons to learn Hebrew for their Bar Mitzvahs, the Socialist-Territorialists bowed to the wishes of the Labour Zionists.40 Rabbi Aron Horowitz, a leading educator in the Calgary Jewish community41 affirmed that the differences

35. Ibid, 103.
36. Ibid, 104.
37. Leonoff, Pioneers, 152.
38. Josette McGregor is completing a Ph.D. thesis on the subject of the Vancouver Peretz School at the University of BC.
40. Chiel, 104.
41. See further references to Rabbi Horowitz in Chapter Four.
between the Yiddishists and the Hebraists were mainly pedagogical. He was convinced "that we cannot possibly impart to our children both Hebrew and Yiddish under the dire circumstances of Galut [diaspora]. In view of the revival of Hebrew as the spoken language in Eretz Israel, it is through Hebrew that we will be able to preserve and develop some kind of Jewish life in the diaspora."42

As the European-born Jews began to die out and a new generation of Canadian-born Jews was emerging in the 1930's and 1940's43, the Yiddish language began to slowly disappear. English became the language of communication. This had a significant impact on the curriculum of the Talmud Torah. The following chart indicates the rate of disappearance of the Yiddish language and the resulting decrease in its use as a subject in Hebrew schools. It is important to note that by 1961 (following the first decade of the Talmud Torah day school) the percentage of Jews with Yiddish as a mother tongue in Canada had been reduced to one third of its size thirty years earlier. Moreover, Vancouver's use of Yiddish during 1931-1941 decreased more rapidly (51.8%) than the decrease in Canada as a whole (18.8%) for the period. Yiddish was disappearing much faster in the West, probably due to the small number of Jews and the great distance from other larger Jewish populations.

**Table 3. Number and Percentage of Jews with Yiddish as a Mother Tongue, 1931—1981**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>149,520</td>
<td>129,806</td>
<td>103,593</td>
<td>82,448</td>
<td>49,890</td>
<td>31,490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(95%)</td>
<td>(77%)</td>
<td>(51%)</td>
<td>(32%)</td>
<td>(18%)</td>
<td>(11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.C.</td>
<td>2,627</td>
<td>1,323</td>
<td>1,531</td>
<td>1,459</td>
<td>1,090</td>
<td>660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(99%)</td>
<td>(39%)</td>
<td>(n/a)</td>
<td>(n/a)</td>
<td>(n/a)</td>
<td>(n/a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>1,144</td>
<td>1,370</td>
<td>1,269</td>
<td>925</td>
<td>615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(98%)</td>
<td>(48%)</td>
<td>(n/a)</td>
<td>(n/a)</td>
<td>(n/a)</td>
<td>(n/a)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Census of Canada, 1931 to 1981*, tables on population by mother tongue.

---

42. Horowitz, 156.
43. See Table 2, p. 25.
Another major problem of Talmud Torahs across Canada was that they were set up in the tradition of the East European cheder which reflected the needs of life in the shtetl (small Jewish village of Europe). This tradition however was not in harmony with modern life in Canada. According to the cheder mentality Jewish education meant giving the children some knowledge of Yiddish so they would be able to communicate with grandparents and other relatives, teaching them the Hebrew language and grammar so they would be able to pray and study the Torah (although they rarely reached the level of competence needed in order to appreciate and understand the Torah), and teaching them Jewish history (which usually ended with the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem).

With regard to the pronunciation of the Hebrew language, Rabbi Horowitz believed that the Sephardic pronunciation44, "the living pronunciation that is used by those who are reviving our Hebrew language in Eretz Israel"45 should be used. This proposal was accepted with great hesitation, for it departed from the traditional approaches to Jewish education of the Eastern European Jews. Nevertheless, Calgary became the first community in America to begin to teach the Sephardic pronunciation of Hebrew. In Vancouver, this practice was not consistently followed until the influx of Israeli teachers in the 1950's.

There were several forces shaping the destiny of the Talmud Torah in the years leading up to the formation of the day school in 1948. Yiddish, once the everyday language of European Jewry, was disappearing as the Jewish immigrant population was being replaced by a much larger group of Canadian-born Jews. The debate over the whether the language of instruction and learning should be Yiddish or Hebrew caused tensions within the community. Furthermore, the desire of this new generation of Canadian-born Jews to fit into the mainstream meant that they would have to abandon much of the language, religion and culture of their parents and grandparents. It was under these circumstances that the Talmud Torah had to operate in their attempt to educate a new generation of Jews in the religion, culture and values of their

44. Although there is only one Hebrew language there are two distinct pronunciations: sephardic (originating from the Middle East) and ashkenazic (originating from Europe). When the Ashkenazic Jews settled in Israel in the latter part of the nineteenth century and began to revive the Hebrew language, they decided to adopt the sephardic pronunciation because they believed it was the closest to the original Hebrew spoken in ancient Palestine. They also preferred the smoother, more melodious sound of the sephardic pronunciation. North American Jewry first learned Hebrew using the Ashkenazic pronunciation, however, once Israeli Hebrew was established the majority began learning Hebrew using the sephardic pronunciation.

45. Horowitz, 106.
people. The task was formidable as the immigrants who had been such a source of knowledge and inspiration were becoming fewer in number. Thus, the disappearance of the Yiddish language, the changing demography of the Canadian Jews from an immigrant to a native-born population and the increasing desire of the new generations to assimilate into Canadian society all exerted an influence on the Talmud Torah. The school not only had to contend with internal struggles such as lack of teachers, teaching materials and finances, but it also had to deal with external forces out of its control.
CHAPTER THREE

The Early Years of the Vancouver Talmud Torah

1913—1948

This chapter consists of a discussion of the years between 1913 and 1948. The following topics are examined: the origins of the afternoon school; the changes that took place in the curriculum, and factors that influenced those changes; the ways in which the Hebrew teachers assisted the community in maintaining a separate Jewish identity; and the effect of anti-Semitism and pressures towards assimilation on Vancouver Jews. Included are sections on student and parent perceptions of the school, as well as a description of extracurricular activities. This chapter serves as a background for the second part of the thesis which describes the first decade of the school's operation as an all-day dual-track program, 1948-1959.

The Vancouver Talmud Torah

What are the origins of the Vancouver Talmud Torah? Where was it first located? Why did the Vancouver Jewish community deem it necessary to establish such a school? What did they hope to transmit to their children? How much support did the school receive from the community? The following section, in an attempt to address these questions, looks at the early years of the Vancouver Talmud Torah, from its beginnings as an afternoon school in Vancouver's East End, to its new location at the Vancouver Jewish Community Centre at 11th and Oak in the 1930's and early 1940's, and subsequently to its first independent premises on 14th Avenue near Oak Street in 1944.

Although most of the 100 families of Vancouver Jews in the early 1900's were happy that their children were attending public school, they nevertheless wanted them to learn about their Jewish heritage and

---

1. It is highly likely that the Talmud Torah existed in one form or another before 1913 but I have not been able to locate any records that would substantiate this supposition. The earliest written reference that I have found to the Talmud Torah appears in an article from the J.W.B. Centenary issue, June 30 1958, p. 44. The article mentions a Chanukah program put on by children of the Talmud Torah on Dec. 28, 1913.

2. The laying of the cornerstone of the Jewish Community Centre was in April 1926.
language. At first a *melamed* (a private tutor)\(^3\) was used to instruct the children, but as Bernard Reed, a student of the Talmud Torah in the 1920's, explains, it was not as effective as having a class.

There were private teachers, a couple, . . . where they came to the house and they gave lessons. . . . They were not too successful. They did it because they made a dollar or two, and everybody was struggling and starving then. But you were never a good student if you had private lessons. You had to go to Talmud Torah. The class created an impetus in teaching. Being in the class, you learnt better than being alone.\(^4\)

As a result, the idea grew of establishing an afternoon Hebrew school. There were specific religious and cultural needs which were not provided by the regular school system, in particular the need for instruction in the language and history of the Jewish people in a classroom setting. In 1913 afternoon and evening Hebrew classes taught by the Rosengard sisters were offered to children in a house at 514 Heatley Avenue near the old synagogue.\(^5\) It was not until 1918 that a small group of people came together to organize an educational institution for the children of the community. Thus that year the Vancouver Hebrew School was established at the site of the afternoon school. In 1921, when the new Schara Tzedeck synagogue was built at 700 East Pender Street, the school moved into two rooms of the new synagogue.\(^6\) It was not until 1934 that the Vancouver Talmud Torah became officially independent.\(^7\) This move probably made the school more available to a wider range of people since it was no longer officially associated with the Schara Tzedeck synagogue which was Orthodox. Thus, Jews who were not members or did not agree with the ideology of the synagogue could feel comfortable sending their children to the school.

Bernard Reed describes the first permanent location of the school.

In the same building [as the Schara Tzedeck synagogue], [in] an annex building bordering the lane and facing on Heatley was the Talmud Torah at that time. [It was] upstairs. Downstairs was a community hall where they had Junior Congregation meetings, etc. . . . I think . . . [the Talmud Torah building] was built [at] roughly the same time [as the

---

3. A *melamed* was a private Hebrew instructor who would go to immigrant homes in the late afternoons, evenings and weekends to teach the children Hebrew reading and the Bible. He could not support a family as a *melamed* so he usually had another job. Teaching in people's homes was not conducive to study due to overcrowding, noise and other disturbances.

4. Bernard Reed interview.


synagogue], which would be around 1920. . . . [I know because] in 1920 I was one year old [when] the cornerstone, the foundation, was laid and they commenced building it. How do I know? They had a big thing, with a lot of drapes and flags and everything, and a table. And my dad plunked me up on the table [and] took a picture of it.8

The Talmud Torah, in the 1920's, strove to provide "a place where the Jewish child is taught that he or she has a language, a literature and a history. It is where they are taught to read and write the language of their own people and where national observances, sorrows and festivals are first revealed to them."9 The classes took place after school from 4:00-8:30 p.m. Monday to Thursday (with the junior classes before dinner and the senior after) and Sunday mornings.10 Bernard Reed talks in detail of the early Talmud Torah classes.

There was no parochial school in those days. It was unheard of [because people were too poor]. So you went, starting 4 o'clock for an hour, an hour and a half, depending on what grade you were in [older grades were in the evening] . . . . And I went there for many years . . . .11

The classes were small.12 The Talmud Torah likely held close to 20 students in all.13 Gertrude Zack (née Fouks), a contemporary of Bernard Reed's, recalls that there were approximately three girls and five boys in her class. Most of these students came from the East End. At that time most people felt that girls did not need a Hebrew education14, which meant that the enrolment of the school was lower than it might otherwise have been.

Stories in the Jewish Western Bulletin indicate that the school seemed to be forever on the verge of closing down because of financial difficulties as the community was unable to properly support the school.15

8. Bernard Reed interview.
10. Gertrude Zack and David Youngson interviews.
11. Bernard Reed interview.
12. Bernard Reed, Gertrude Zack and David Youngson interviews.
13. This conflicts with the information provided by the J.W.B. (See chart on enrolment in Chapter Four) revealing a probable error in one of the sources.
The years that followed were characterized by continuous re-organization as the school went from the control of one group of people to another in an effort to deal with the financial difficulties. In 1928, a meeting was called to decide whether or not to amalgamate the Schara Tzedeck and the Talmud Torah. Although amalgamation would interfere with the school's independence with respect to planning, curriculum, staff and policies, it would also alleviate some of the financial burdens of the school. After much discussion followed by a secret ballot a resolution was passed: "That this meeting of the members of Congregation Schara Tzedeck go on record as being in favour of the amalgamation of the Synagogue with the Talmud Torah."16 Although the school was closely associated with the synagogue, a 1932 article nevertheless describes it as an "independent organization controlled by members of the community".17 Yet in 1932, the Schara Tzedeck felt that it could no longer bear the financial burden of the school and believed that support for the school should be the responsibility of the whole community, that is, members of Schara Tzedeck, Beth Israel and unaffiliated Jews.

Nonetheless, it was decided that the Talmud Torah should stay under the auspices of the Schara Tzedeck synagogue, as an independent Talmud Torah could not survive financially. Even so, the members of the Schara Tzedeck congregation insisted that "great reductions should and could be made in view of the present depression. . . . [and] Greater economy must be pursued, and the Talmud Torah, like every other institution, must budget its expenses in accordance with its receipts."18 In December of 1934, the school officially became the Vancouver Talmud Torah Association, an independent organization under the "Societies Act" of B.C.19

Curriculum and Teaching

The curriculum changed very little during the 1920's and 1930's. Since the school was primarily a religious one, the basic subjects taught included Hebrew language, Bible, Jewish history, prayers, customs and laws. Minor variations in these subjects occurred from time to time depending on the pedagogical approach of the person in charge and the teaching styles of the individual teachers. For example, if a teacher was a Zionist, then this ideology was reflected in his or her teaching. However, for the most part, the curriculum followed the guidelines set out by the school.

The Jewish Western Bulletin kept the community informed of the changes to the Talmud Torah curriculum. As mentioned above, the curriculum changed only slightly during the early period as new subjects were introduced while old ones were deleted. Sometimes, as was the case in the 1930's with Yiddish, a once-deleted subject was revived. The Talmud Torah also assumed "full responsibility to instruct the Bar Mitzvah [Jewish boy who reaches the age of 13 and is ready to assume full religious responsibilities] in everything concerning this event in tradition, Laws, ma'aser [a reading that is done following the reading of the Torah] and speeches in every language required according to the ability of the pupils."20 The September curriculum for 1935 consisted of Hebrew, Yiddish, Jewish history, Bible study, religious customs and traditions.21 In October of 1935 a post graduate school was established for Talmud Torah graduates and adults. Lectures and courses were being offered in Judaic subjects such as Hebrew literature and language, Prophets and the poetry of Chaim Bialik.22 In November 1937 all children were studying Hebrew and Yiddish three times a week. Classes took place from 4:15-5:30 p.m. for the younger students, 5:30-6:00 p.m. for those studying for their Bar Mitzvah, 6:00-7:30 p.m. for beginners in Yiddish and 7:30-8:00 p.m. for advanced classes in Gemorrah (part of the Talmud) and poetic parts of the Bible.23

At the same time, the principal of the school, Israel Baruch, organized a class for children from 14-16 years of age consisting of lectures in Yiddish on Jewish history.24 In September of 1938 special classes consisting of Yiddish, Siddur (Hebrew prayer book), History and Jewish holidays were being offered for children aged 10-13.25 A few months later the first Jewish kindergarten in Vancouver for children from the ages of three to six was formed at the Talmud Torah. Similar programs already existed in other Jewish communities across Canada.26 The kindergarten was still functioning in March 1939. At this time, the subjects offered in the other classes included Hebrew, Yiddish, Siddur, Chumash (The Five Books of Moses, also pronounced Chumish), Songs, Religious Customs and Traditions.27 By September 1939 the curriculum was basically the same except for the public announcement that a "thorough modern Hebrew28 education is provided".29 This was most likely intended to show the parents that the Talmud Torah was keeping up with the changes in the Jewish world and the world at large. Yiddish classes and Jewish History classes taught in English were offered. Sunday was designated as the day when a general assembly for the whole Talmud Torah was held, including a sing-along of Hebrew and Yiddish songs.30

In the years preceding 1930 the Talmud Torah ran periodic exams to test its students' knowledge. These exams were first conducted orally. In May 1930 a new method of examining was introduced which incorporated both oral and written questions. The Board of Examiners (a group of rabbis, Board members and lay people chosen to test the knowledge of the Talmud Torah students31) reported that "This system [of examination] enables us to declare that the Talmud Torah of our community deserves to be considered as one of the outstanding educational institutions in our country and that the children are receiving there, instruction

28. Hebrew not only refers to the language but also to the other Jewish subjects in general. For example, a child will say that he or she goes to Hebrew school, meaning a Jewish school where the Hebrew language is just one of many components.
in all subjects of Jewish religion, culture and literature.\textsuperscript{32} Almost 90% of the children passed and it was declared that "the institution has made splendid progress during the last term".\textsuperscript{33} The exams were conducted at both the Heatley Branch and the Community Centre Branch.\textsuperscript{34} Kiva Katznelson, then Chairman of the Board of Education, reported that "the children were so proficient in their subjects ... that the exams served as a splendid demonstration of the knowledge gained by our pupils in all the studies taught at our school".\textsuperscript{35}

Although most of the Vancouver Talmud Torah students understood Yiddish from listening to their parents and other members of the community and could speak it to some extent, Bernard Reed recalls that "we didn't know how to write it and we were picking it up improperly. So they decided, about the sixth or seventh grade [in the late 1920's], to start teaching us Yiddish properly. So our grammar and everything would be positive and correct. So they did. It was our class only, I think. ... Basically, they taught us grammar, how to write it."\textsuperscript{36} Yiddish was still being taught several years later in the late 1930's and early 1940's when David Youngson attended the Talmud Torah.\textsuperscript{37} Joseph Youngson talks about his son, David, learning Yiddish. "Yiddish, he [David] learned by himself. He used to take the paper, the Jewish [Yiddish] paper upstairs when he went to bed. In the morning he would come down and he would ask me, underline all the words that he didn't know and I would tell him the meaning of the words. He speaks and writes Yiddish and he speaks and writes Hebrew."\textsuperscript{38} However, there were those who were opposed to the teaching of Yiddish as they saw it as being in opposition to the religious national (Zionist) nature of the Talmud Torah. The battle was between the defenders of Orthodoxy and tradition who opposed the teaching of Yiddish and the left-wing Socialists who advocated it as the language of the working class people.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{34} "Report of the Talmud Torah Board of Examiners," \textit{Jewish Centre News}, 1 May 1930, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{35} K. Katznelson (Chairman, Board of Education), "Vancouver Community Talmud Torah," \textit{J.W.B.}, 27 April 1933, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{36} Bernard Reed interview.
\textsuperscript{37} An article in the \textit{J.W.B.} (16 February 1945, p. 1) mentions plays being put on in English and in Jewish (Yiddish) at the Talmud Torah.
\textsuperscript{38} Joseph Youngson interview.
\textsuperscript{39} "Talmud Torah Meet Interesting," \textit{J.W.B.}, 20 September 1934, p. 1. See discussions of language debate in Canada in Chapter Two.
From time to time, the students would be examined by community and visiting educators as well as lay people. The examiners would also comment on the general state of the school. In 1933 the examiners were basically pleased with the school's success. There was a general consensus among them "that every class is in excellent shape and doing good work", and that a new more suitable building should be found which will be more "congenial to good teaching". It was also suggested that the branches of the school should be combined into one Central Talmud Torah so as to increase the number of students by centralizing them. Rabbi M. A. Jaffe (the father of Mordecai Jaffe) reported that "in all classes questions were answered promptly and the pupils had a thorough acquaintance with the work. A greater enrollment is needed." Rabbi N.M. Pastinsky "examined all the classes of the main branch of the school and found a high standard of teaching. . . . The teachers possess the highest qualifications and compare very favorably with the teaching of our other Talmud Torahs in Western Canada.

Bernard Reed remembers the visits of the examiners. "We had visitors come. I remember, I still visualize we had two, three people — one was a rabbi — sitting while we were reading and translating and they were listening to us . . . on Heatley Avenue. I can still remember it. And they'd ask questions . . ." At that time he recalls that "it was a verbal matter. Look, if you could speak and they knew and you answered them in Hebrew and they asked a question and you get a right answer, they could judge you. You didn't have to write it." Gertrude Zack explains that they "used to have oral exams. Most of them were not written. And a rabbi would come from New York to exam all the students, . . ."
Bernard remembers learning history, *Tanach* (Bible, Prophets, Writings), and *Chumash*, and in later years studying the *Talmud*. History, he recalls,

really emanated from the Bible, *Breishis* [Genesis], and then it ran up into *Tanach*, and then after that, the fall of the Roman Empire... And we learned it all in Hebrew... We had... Hebrew history books... We went right through and studied the Middle Ages, which was the persecution of the Jews, the Inquisition and the Crusades... I think we ended, maybe just before the First World War.48

David Youngson recalls learning how to read and write in Hebrew, learning *Chumash* and Rashi49 and learning how to *daven* (pray). He recalls

that there was a pro-Zionist50 philosophy that carried all the way through, as far as I can see, plus a traditional approach to things. My kids learned the *tefillot* [prayers], learned how to *daven*, when they went to Talmud Torah [in the 1960's and 1970's]. As far as I can see, things were done in a traditional way... observed the laws of *kashrut* [dietary laws] and things of that nature. So I think that's just the same continuation, right? From Heatley right through to the Talmud Torah where my kids went.51

Charles Davis, a student in the 1920's, remembers a very basic type of education which consisted of learning the *aleph-bet* (*aleph-beis*), how to read, a few of the prayer books and the contents. Although the students (mostly boys as girls did not usually attend the school in those days) also studied their Bar Mitzvah at the Talmud Torah, Charles' father pulled him out to study with a private tutor who lived next door.52

Gertrude Zack remembers learning *Tanach* and *dikduk* (grammar). Although Hebrew was used in class it was not the language of instruction nor was it used in conversation.53

Unlike, Gertrude, Bernard Reed remembers Hebrew as the language of instruction and conversation.

In those days the Talmud Torah was *Ivris b'Ivris*.54 The teacher spoke Hebrew and we spoke Hebrew to the teacher. I mean, if we struggled, we struggled, but it wasn't acceptable to have a conversation in English except to rescue the conversation so to speak. In that way

48. Bernard Reed interview.

49. Rashi is the acronym for Rabbi Shlomo ben Yitzhak (Ra-sh-y), a leading commentator on the Bible and *Talmud* in eleventh century France.

50. Pro-Zionist means believing that the Jewish people are destined to return to live in their homeland of Israel.

51. David Youngson interview.

52. Charles Davis interview.

53. Gertrude Zack interview.

54. *Ivris b'Ivris* (*Ivrit b'Ivrit* in the sephardic pronunciation) literally translates as "Hebrew in Hebrew". It refers to the teaching of Hebrew using Hebrew as the language of instruction.
we became somewhat fluent. . . Mind you, our Hebrew, you understand, was not the Hebrew of Israel. . . . Israel was Sephardic and we took Ashkenazic. 55

This discrepancy arose because there were two branches of the Talmud Torah for a while, one at Heatley Street and the other at the Community Centre. Bernard attended classes at the Community Centre branch with Joseph Youngson, who was the only teacher at the time who could teach in Hebrew, while Gertrude was taught by Mr. Walcov at the Heatley branch, who did not emphasize Hebrew-speaking in the class, because he himself may not have been fluent in Hebrew.

David Youngson compares the Jewish studies teachers when he attended the Talmud Torah in the late 1930's and early 1940's with those who were there in the late 1960's and early 1970's when his children attended.

The teachers were more educated at Heatley Street and at the Centre and at 14th Avenue than they [were] when my kids went there. . . . I think the teachers that graduated from seminaries in Europe probably had a more thorough and demanding education than the people that became teachers and were educated in North America. 56

When David left the Talmud Torah in the early 1940's he had a fairly good knowledge of Hebrew.

"I could read and write. I wouldn't say fluently, but I could read and I could write and I could understand basics, because they taught us modern Hebrew too. Somewhere along the line we switched over from the . . . from the Ashkenazi pronunciation to the Sephardi pronunciation." 57 This was probably a result of the renewal of the Hebrew language, using the sephardi pronunciation, in Israel in the 1940's.

In general, those students who attended Talmud Torah received a fairly good Jewish education. They learned to read and write Hebrew and speak a little bit, to recite the prayers, to become familiar with the history of their people, to observe the laws and customs and to become somewhat conversant in Yiddish. They came from families to whom Jewish education was very important and from a community which was still united by common religious and cultural beliefs, financial situations and ethnic origins. These factors all contributed to the students' successes at the Talmud Torah as their individual desires to learn were

55. Bernard Reed interview.
56. David Youngson interview.
57. Ibid.
enhanced by the home and community atmosphere in which they lived. However, as the Vancouver Jews became more assimilated into Canadian society by the 1940's and as their financial situations improved many drifted away from the traditional ways of their parents. This was the beginning of the break-up of a once unified community.

During 1944-48 the curriculum remained much the same as it had in previous years. Three classes ran daily from 4:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. and three from 5:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. with a kindergarten being held between 10:00 a.m. and noon. There was also a class, largely for high school students, which met two evenings a week. Separate branches were in operation, one in the Dunbar area and the other in New Westminster. Weekly Tanach and Gemorrah classes were also being offered. In 1946 a Bar Mitzvah class for children over the age of 11 was added. This was an intensive course in Jewish history, customs, laws, prayers, Bible study, Yiddish, Elementary Hebrew and MafTer. A class for 16 to 20 year olds was being organized to meet twice a week. They would study the Hebrew language, Jewish history, Zionism and modern Israel. This was taught by Mr. Isaac Horowitz. Both of these were relatively small classes.

On Sundays, morning assemblies took place. The program included the singing of Hatikvah (a Jewish song whose title means 'hope', later adopted as the national anthem of Israel), the reading of minutes, guest talks on Palestine or Jewish education, a question box available for children's questions, the singing of "G-d Save the King". Parents were welcome to attend these assemblies.

As kindergarten classes were becoming more and more popular in Canada, the Talmud Torah kindergarten class matured and developed. In 1947 it was open to children between the ages of four and six and ran from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.. The children learned Hebrew and some customs and short prayers in an atmosphere of play. The elementary school classes studied Hebrew (reading of prayers, study of Bible and commentaries, modern literature, speaking), Yiddish (modern prose and poetry), Jewish history and current events, Jewish holidays (importance, customs and traditions), singing (liturgical, folk songs in Hebrew and

60. Ethel Slobin, "Vancouver Talmud Torah," J.W.B., 13 April 1945, p. 3.
Yiddish), Talmud and cognate subjects in the advanced classes. Thus the curriculum had changed very little since the school moved to its new quarters. Yiddish was still being taught and actually seemed to be more emphasized than it was in previous years (possibly due to the rapid dissolution of Yiddish in Canada and the fear among the older generation that Yiddish would one day disappear altogether). The basic subjects (Hebrew, prayers, Bible) continued to shape the nature of the school and provide the framework for other activities. The only significant change was in teaching methodology, as Talmud Torah always tried to keep up with the materials and practices of the times, although not always successfully.

The World of the Teachers

Many teachers walked through the doors of the Talmud Torah during the first half of the 20th century. Some only stayed for a short time while others spent many years teaching, often under difficult conditions. Money was scarce as were materials and sometimes students. Because of the great distance between Hebrew schools in Western Canada, teachers, students and administrators felt all alone with nowhere to turn to for guidance and help. In 1939 Rabbi Aron Horowitz of Calgary instituted the Western Educational Conference where Jewish educators in the Western Provinces could convene to discuss problems, suggest solutions and try to standardize Jewish education in Western Canada. Shortly after the 1939 conference Rabbi Horowitz formed the Hebrew Educators' Council (of which Vancouver was a member) whose mandate it was "To insure the effectiveness and continuity of a coordinated educational program for the West". Yehoshua Giladi Gelfarb (who later became principal of the Vancouver Talmud Torah) was the first president. Some important decisions made by the council were that guidelines for standardizing the curriculum should be presented for discussion at the next conference, the study of Zionism and Erez (the land of) Israel should be an integral part of the program, and a conference should be held annually. These


62. Horowitz, 03-04.
endeavours helped to lighten the load of the Hebrew teachers, but they were still very much on their own with limited resources, materials and low wages.

Bernard Reed remembers that a lot of Hebrew teachers in the early days were not properly trained. Because they knew a little bit of Hebrew they were hired to teach. There were, however, some teachers who were efficient and properly trained. They left an indelible mark on the students and the institution because of their quality of teaching and their dedication and hard work. What were the factors that contributed to a positive student/teacher relationship? Was it because of their teaching style or their manner of interacting with people? Was it due to their level of knowledge of the subject area? Did it make a difference if they were immigrants or born in North America? In short, what were the qualities of a good Hebrew school teacher in the years between the 1920's and 1940's, and how did these attributes assist the school in fulfilling its mandate of instilling in its students Jewish values and learning? The following section discusses some of those teachers who bear mentioning, the reasons for which they were remembered by their students and by others and how they contributed to the success of the school.

Kiva Katzenelson, one of the first teachers at the Heatley and Pender branch, taught only for a short while before going into business. However, he remained involved with the Talmud Torah for many years as an active community member serving on the Board of Education and the Executive. Like many of the early teachers in the immigrant Jewish communities of Canada, Katzenelson had no formal teacher training. He was hired simply because of his knowledge of Judaism and his willingness to share that knowledge with the children of his community. 63 David Rome, 64 who lived in the East End in the 1930's, remembers Katzenelson as a "very devoted man and [a] very active Zionist." 65

Gertrude Zack, a schoolmate of Bernard Reed, speaks fondly of Mr. Herschel Walcov (pronounced Volkov). "Mr. Walcov was a young teacher and he was great. He was very communicative with the students.

---

63. Bernard Reed interview.
64. After leaving Vancouver in the 1930's, David Rome settled in Montreal with his family where he later became a well-known and accomplished Jewish scholar and writer. He has published several books on the history of Canadian Jews.
65. David Rome interview.
We enjoyed him. Walcov, a native of Lithuania, received his training there and at pedagogical institutions elsewhere in Europe. He also attended the University of British Columbia. An ardent Zionist, he taught at the Talmud Torah for six years from 1928-1934 before leaving to take up a similar post in Seattle.67

Israel Baruch, "an expert and experienced pedagogue... characterized by experts as the best Hebrew pedagogue in Canada"68, was brought to Vancouver from Eastern Canada in November 1934 to reopen the Talmud Torah after a closure of several months due to financial and administrative difficulties. Aged 45 at the time, Baruch had an impressive resume, both academically and pedagogically. He was also very learned in Judaic studies.69 As David Rome remembers "[He] was really a great pedagogue. [He] had been a teacher in Poland and before coming to Vancouver he taught in Timmins, Ontario, then he came to Vancouver... Later after 1947, ... [he] left Vancouver and went to Israel and settled there..."70 Also an accomplished writer, he used his talents to write and direct a Purim play (holiday celebrating the saving of the Jews of Persia from complete destruction) for the Talmud Torah students just five months after his arrival in Vancouver.71 The play, which was written in Hebrew, was a great success. The Jewish Western Bulletin reported: "Those familiar with the progress of the Talmud Torah during the last fifteen years voted it easily the most successful production in its history. It reflected great credit on the principal."72 Baruch wrote two more Purim plays in 1939, one in Hebrew and the other in Yiddish.73

Of all the early teachers of the Talmud Torah, none is remembered more by his students or the community because of his teaching abilities or lengthy service than Joseph Youngson. Youngson was born in Lithuania in 1904, studied at the Yeshiva in Vilna (now Vilnius), then entered the Teachers' College in...

66. Gertrude Zack interview.
69. Ibid.
70. David Rome interview.
Kovno, graduating from there as a qualified Hebrew teacher. He left Kovno in 1922, at the age of 18, and made his way to Montreal where he had cousins. There he gave private lessons before moving on to teach in small schools in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Youngson wanted to better himself so he entered the Rabbi Yitchak Elkanan Yeshiva in New York (today known as Yeshiva University).74 "My intentions were to go for the rabbinate," he reported.75 His plans changed while visiting relatives in Montreal when he happened to meet on the street Rabbi Zlotnik76, who offered him a teaching position in Calgary. He took the position because he was struggling in New York going to school during the day and working afterwards in order to support himself.

In 1927, a position for a head teacher opened at the Vancouver Talmud Torah so he moved once again. He taught at the school for 7 1/2 years, teaching at both the Heatley Street Branch and the Community Centre Branch. He left the Talmud Torah during the middle of the Depression when the school closed due to insufficient funds.77 Teachers' salaries had already been cut substantially and now they were owed five months back wages.78 The Talmud Torah, like the rest of North America, was feeling the impact of the Great Depression. Joseph Youngson's son, David Youngson, reflects on his father's forced departure from the Talmud Torah. "That's what I recall from my dad telling me, that they owed him something like $200 and they couldn't pay him, so he had to go out and eke out a living by some other means."79 Other Jewish schools were experiencing the same financial difficulties. For example, Brunswick Talmud Torah, the largest Talmud Torah in Toronto, was forced to close its doors in 1935. It had not paid its teachers their wages for 10 months.80

74. Joseph Youngson interview.
75. Ibid.
76. See references to Rabbi Zlotnik on pp. 55-56.
78. Joseph Youngson interview.
79. David Youngson interview.
Bernard Reed, a student of Joseph Youngson's for many years, also received his Bar Mitzvah training from him.

I think Youngson went to a yeshiva, yeah, because he was quite advanced. That's why they let him teach us Talmud [Oral Law], because he had that advanced training. . . . I went with . . . [Youngson] all the way up to the final year and in the final year we were taking Talmud. We were very advanced. Strictly fluent. [I was] 15. . . . My classmates were two – three years older than I was. . . . He was good and the class was good.

Joseph Youngson was able to teach Ivrit b'ivrit (Hebrew immersion) because he himself was fluent in Hebrew. Bernard describes the effect this had on his ability and desire to speak Hebrew.

For many years, when we were at the Talmud Torah, I spoke only Hebrew to him. If I met him on the street I spoke Hebrew to him. And after I quit school whenever I met him socially we spoke in Hebrew. He didn't say it, but I couldn't break myself of the habit of speaking Hebrew to him. We carried on through the years. . . . I felt that if I talked in English I was demeaning both of us. It was unique, very rare.

By the same token, Joseph Youngson also remembers his students fondly.

Now there were many many students in Vancouver that I had the privilege to teach them. There were some very outstanding people. I can mention a few, Arthur Fouks, his sister Gertie Zack, Bernard Reed, Mitchell Snider. This group of children left because the Talmud Torah closed down. They were already at the university age and they were still coming to study, to carry on with their Hebrew education.

On a lighter side, Bernard recalls

the great romance of Mr. Youngson. . . . Mrs. Youngson was called Rose Goldberg. She was a very pretty girl. And she was teaching in the same room where we had [Junior Congregation] . . . Upstairs was the two classrooms. Down below was the room I'm talking about, where they had Junior Congregation. . . . She was a trained teacher. . . . In the evenings she would come and teach a class of immigrants English, because there was a lot of immigrants in those days. So, she would come upstairs to borrow chalk, whatever, and that's how the romance started. He had the discipline, the old-fashioned discipline. And if he didn't like it, you got walloped with a ruler [very common in those days]. There was no messing around. So, I remember once, I was reading or whatever, and I was full of mischief. I was always leading in the class. What happened was, you got bored because, the other kids, you've got to wait for them to learn, so you start to get mischievous. So he walloped me and he's hollering and then there's a knock at the door and he goes to the door and opens

81. This was also mentioned in an article in the J.W.B. ("Bar Mitzvah, 3 November 1932, pp. 1, 2."). The class is referred to as the Senior Class at the Community Centre Branch.

82. Bernard Reed interview.

83. Ibid.

84. Joseph Youngson interview.
it, and there she is! "Oh, come in, come in!", all sweetness and light. The romance got under way.

Bernard and the other students watched as Joseph Youngson went from disciplining his students to courting his wife-to-be.

He was a teacher. She was a teacher and it was a logical romance. [S]he came up frequently to borrow a piece of chalk or whatever, I guess on purpose, and it was a nice — but I mean, no matter what, there's "Oh, come in, come in!"85

The few teachers mentioned in this section were remembered because of their contribution to Jewish education in Vancouver. They possessed a desire and a commitment to Judaism that extended far beyond the walls of the classroom. They not only taught the children the required Judaic subjects but also enriched their teaching by becoming actively involved in the community. In these ways they contributed to keeping the Jewish culture and religion alive in Vancouver. In what other ways were these teachers similar? For the most part, they used a strict but sensitive approach to teaching. They were knowledgeable in their subject area and possessed a love for Judaism that they endeavoured to pass on to their students. They, like the children they taught, were either immigrants or came from immigrant families so they shared many of the same experiences and were able to understand more readily the experiences of their students. Yiddish was the language spoken in the streets and in most of the children's homes (although many of the Canadian-born children did not speak Yiddish fluently). Thus, these Yiddish-speaking immigrant teachers who spoke English with a thick European accent were very familiar to the children. The children liked these teachers because they were able to relate to them and respect them because of their knowledge of yiddishkeit (Judaism) and their dedication and love for the teachings of their ancestors.

It was very difficult to get qualified Hebrew teachers to come to Vancouver. First of all, there was a general shortage of Hebrew teachers in North America. The demand was great as Jewish education was expanding everywhere. However, there simply were not enough teachers to fill the need. Moreover, Vancouver was seen as an outpost and was therefore unattractive to most Hebrew teachers who desired to live in a thriving Jewish community. Being in the West it was also very far away from Israel (where some

85. Bernard Reed interview.
teachers came from) and the Eastern United States and Canada (where many Jews lived). Many of the teachers who did come were young and fairly inexperienced and only stayed for a short while.

The need for more qualified Hebrew teachers was briefly answered when the Jewish Teachers' Seminary of Canada opened in Montreal in September 1946. Its mandate was "to reduce the menace to the very existence of the entire Jewish educational system in Canada by offering opportunities to teacher candidates to train." The Seminary closed after approximately 10 years for reasons that are not clear. Very few of the graduates made their way to Vancouver for the reasons mentioned above. Nevertheless, the Talmud Torah was able to attract some qualified teachers. Who were these people and what qualified them to teach at the Talmud Torah? How did they compare with the teachers of the 1920's and 1930's and how did they assist the community in maintaining a separate Jewish identity?

Yehoshua (Joshua) Giladi Gelfarb was hired as principal in 1944. He had already been involved with Jewish education in Western Canada, serving as the first president of the Hebrew Educators' Council as previously mentioned. David Youngson remembers him fondly.

He came here from Cuba, which he had escaped to with his family from Poland, and he was not here for a long time. He left here and went to Montreal and shortly after that he passed away. But he was a real erudite person — scholarly, knowledgeable — and he knew how to teach and he had a passion for teaching. And he certainly impressed me!

While in Vancouver, Gelfarb wrote a children's Hebrew self-reader entitled "Sippurei Hadod" (The Uncle's Stories), published in 1947. This was the first Hebrew book ever to be published in Vancouver. Gelfarb left Vancouver in 1947 to become principal of Hertzlia Hebrew High School in Montreal.

Mrs. Hannah Milner Cohen was hired to teach kindergarten in 1946. She possessed a teaching diploma from the Edmonton Normal School and had several years of teaching experience in Canada and the United States. She had also taken extra courses in nursery school work, child psychology, welfare work and

87. David Youngson interview
89. J.W.B., 11 July 1947, p. 3.
specialized education (probably another term for "special education"). Chana and Isaac Horowitz were also hired in 1946. They were both graduates of the University of Manitoba and had been active in *Yehuda Hatzair* (Young Judea) for several years. Isaac, the son of a rabbi, introduced a new class in the history, aims and principles of Zionism at the Talmud Torah. David Youngson remembers him well. He "was a staunch, ardent, fiery Zionist, at a very important time in the history of Palestine and the Jewish people there. . . . He really impressed me as well." In 1947, the Liftman family were all hired to teach at the Talmud Torah. Mr. I. Liftman, hired as principal, was a graduate of an Odessa gymnasium and had attended universities in Belgium and the USA where he trained as a Hebrew teacher. He had over ten years' experience as a principal in the USA and Canada. His wife, Rose, had also studied in a Russian gymnasium and later at Brown University, specializing in psychological and educational subjects. She had also taught in the USA and Canada. Their daughter, Avivah, had studied Hebrew and Yiddish in elementary and high school. She had degrees in music both from the University of Saskatchewan and the Toronto Conservatory of Music.

This period (1944-1948) in the history of the Talmud Torah was marked by the infusion of a new breed of North American-born and educated teachers as well as Eastern Europeans who differed from their predecessors in that they carried with them the huge emotional burden of the Holocaust. The North American-born teachers had more in common with their students, who were almost all Canadian-born; however, the Jewish education they had received was not up to the standard of that of their European contemporaries, many of whom had also fled the Holocaust or survived the concentration camps and cruel treatment of the Nazis. These teachers brought with them not only the pain and suffering they had experienced under the reign of Nazi terror but also a strong desire and determination to keep Judaism alive and to pass it on to their students. This they conveyed to their students, sometimes in a gentle manner and

---

92. David Youngson interview.
at other times in a harsh, pedantic fashion which was difficult for the children to tolerate or understand, as
the youngsters were unaware of the atrocities their teachers had witnessed in Europe during World War II.
Thus this period was a time of maintenance for the school, after most of the early European-trained educators
had retired or moved on and before the North American Jewish institutions of learning were well established.

The School and the Community

How was the school viewed by the community? Who were the people who supported the Talmud
Torah and what were some of the ways in which they did this? The Talmud Torah was viewed by the Jewish
community with some ambivalence as the differing views of Bernard Reed, whose family sent him to the
Talmud Torah, and David Rome, whose family did not, demonstrate. The Jews who arrived in Vancouver
in the early part of the twentieth century no doubt felt enormous pressure to assimilate into Canadian society.
Some, like Bernard Reed's family, probably believed it was very important to keep their culture and religion
alive even if it meant standing out from the rest of Canadian society. Others, like David Rome's family,
probably felt that becoming part of Canadian society was more important than guarding their religious and
cultural roots. In the same way, some Jews responded to anti-semitism by strengthening their religious and
cultural beliefs while others decided it was best to yield to the outside forces and not parade their Jewishness.
Thus the Jews of Vancouver responded to the pressures of assimilation and anti-semitism in different ways.

Bernard remembers the Talmud Torah was viewed with respect. Attendance at the school was not
dependent upon the ability to pay the tuition fees, rather those who wanted to send their children did. "It was
a struggle in those days. I remember my dad was the Chairman . . . He would go around on a Sunday and
pick up . . . $2, $3 from this father and that father towards the tuition fees." However, Bernard states that
most people did not send their children to the Talmud Torah. It was a matter of "convenience, inconvenience.
Some were interested, some were not. You had different attitudes . . . Most of the children that I knew, that
our parents mixed socially with, did [attend the Talmud Torah]."94

94. Bernard Reed interview.
Over half the families, like that of David Rome, chose not to send their children to the Talmud Torah. Some viewed it as a second-rate institution not worthy of educating their children while others did not want their children to go to a non-universal school which would make them different from the rest of their public schoolmates. Others viewed the school as too religious and therefore unresponsive to the needs of secular Jews. David Rome came from a well-established European Jewish family. He talks about his family's attitude to the Talmud Torah.

For whatever reason, I never did find out, my father decided not to send me to the Talmud Torah . . . I'm not saying that nobody went to Talmud Torah but we didn't . . . It was considered, shall we say, beneath the dignity of some newcomers and more certainly all the more or less established ones that you don't go to Talmud Torah. I never did find out why. I never heard of anything bad about it . . . It [Talmud Torah] wasn't a very highly-regarded institution and therefore I remember never talking at home about the school or about the teachers . . . Whenever we talked about anything Jewish it was not Talmud Torah . . . Nobody seemed to care very much in the community about it. I'm surprised that it continued.95

The Talmud Torah struggled continuously to convince parents to give their children a Jewish education. Once again, the Jewish Western Bulletin was used as the vehicle for transmitting these pleas for support to the public.96 The following statements outline the editor's perception of the rocky history of the school. He, like Rome, was surprised that the school endured.

What is wrong with our community, that they can't support the Talmud Torah? For years the Talmud Torah has been kicked around like a football, buffeted from pillar to post. Several times it has closed its doors. Time and again it has been reorganized! It is a miracle that it has been able to carry on at all.97

These impassioned comments paint the picture of a community that was either unable or unwilling to support one of its only educational institutions. It would seem that not enough parents considered the Talmud Torah an important place to send their children while those that did were too few or too poor to provide the school with the financial support it needed.

95. David Rome interview.
Some parents, however, not only sent their children to the school but were also very involved by either sitting on the Talmud Torah Board or joining the Talmud Torah Ladies' Auxiliary. One of the early activists of the Talmud Torah was John Reed, Bernard's father, who arrived in Vancouver in 1914 from Russia. John Reed was involved with the Talmud Torah for much of the 1920's and part of the 1930's, during ten years of which he served as Chairman of the Board of Education. A 1932 article stated, "It is due to his [John Reed's] untiring efforts that the Talmud Torah has attained its present position, and has accomplished the excellent work in the past years."\(^98\) Bernard remembers his father working together with the Board of the Schara Tzedek Congregation as they struggled "hiring teachers, and hiring better teachers and trying to improve the school from — it started on a poverty level. And again, I repeat that we achieved a reputation in Canada as the top quality [school]."\(^99\)

Rose Youngson (née Goldberg), Joseph Youngson's wife and David Youngson's mother, remembers the contributions of the women. "If there was a Yontif [Jewish festival] . . . we would bake, we would do things that we thought would be helpful. If we were asked to do anything we always did it."\(^100\) Even as early as 1928 the Talmud Torah had an active and well-organized Ladies' Auxiliary.\(^101\) They would raise funds for the school, the synagogue and the cemetery and provide refreshments, prizes and presents for the children at various celebrations as well as providing a kiddush (refreshments for the Sabbath) at the weekly Junior Congregation services.\(^102\)

Another way that money was raised for the Talmud Torah was through a well-organized Art Auction which took place for several years during the 1940's. The idea was conceived and organized by Jack Aceman, a generous and fair, hard-working community-minded person, who, along with a group of people, set up the

---

99. Bernard Reed interview.
100. Rose Youngson Interview.
auction at the Hotel Vancouver. The auction, where paintings and pictures imported from New York (on both secular and Jewish themes) were shown, raised a lot of money for the school.103

The rabbis of the community, whether Orthodox or Conservative, were always involved to some extent with the Talmud Torah. Although they never actually taught in the school, they gave talks at the Saturday morning services (Junior Congregation) or at special events. The rabbis were also of great assistance to the school by encouraging the public to get involved, to send their children, or to support the school financially by buying matzot (specially baked unleavened bread used for the holiday of Pesach, when G-d freed the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt)104. They also served as examiners for the children and often were members of the Board of Education or the Executive Board. Bernard Reed describes the involvement of the rabbis as he saw it.

They [rabbis] all were encouraging . . . . At examination time, they'd come and poke their nose in and sit and listen to you when you read the Chumish, because it was verbal exams, you see . . . Yeah, they encouraged it . . . They were not part of the teaching staff or anything like that.105

Rabbi Judah Leib Zlotnik, an educator and world-renowned Jewish scholar and writer, was a "powerful educative and intellectual force" in Vancouver from 1934 to 1938. A leading figure in Judaism in Europe, he was also one of the founders of the Mizrachi group (religious wing of the Zionist organization) in Poland before emigrating to Canada in 1920.106 David Rome remembers the impact of Rabbi Zlotnik's arrival in Eastern Canada and subsequently in Vancouver.

[He managed to get into Canada from Poland where he was a world figure. And he was a very adventurous kind of a person . . . And this was one of the great great great figures in Canadian Jewish affairs, in Canadian Jewish history. So that was a big thing when he came [to Vancouver].107

103. Saul Shaffer telephone and in-person conversations.
105. Bernard Reed interview.
106. Leonoff, Pioneers, 151-152.
107. David Rome interview.
Rabbi Zlotnik left Vancouver in August of 1938 to become the Education Director of the entire Jewish community of South Africa.\textsuperscript{108}

To Vancouver Jewry, the departure of Rabbi Zlotnik and other dedicated Jewish educators must have been perceived as a major loss to the community. However, there was within the community itself an impetus to build upon the foundation which had been laid. Until 1944, the Talmud Torah had been obliged to share its quarters with other institutions. Many people had worked hard over many years in order to secure a building for the school. During a meeting in 1933 people were already pushing for a separate building for the Talmud Torah because they believed that "the failure of the present Talmud Torah and the small number of children attending was due to the fact that the present building was not suitable for educational purpose[s]."\textsuperscript{109} Abe Rothstein, a long-time community worker for the Talmud Torah,\textsuperscript{110} was reported in the \textit{Jewish Western Bulletin} as agreeing that "a total separate building was required with playgrounds, assembly rooms, etc."\textsuperscript{111} However, it was not until May 1944 that an 11-room house was purchased at 814 West 14th Avenue to provide the long needed schoolroom accommodation.\textsuperscript{112}

Two students from the late 1940's shared their very different impressions of going to kindergarten in the new school. Michael Levy recalls, "I have fond memories of it. I remember having a nap every day... And it was in an old brown house."\textsuperscript{113} Gary Averbach's experience was not so positive. "It just seemed to me a dark old house and I hated it and I take it I wasn't a very good boy or something because I have this image of being expelled from Talmud Torah kindergarten. That's why I went to another kindergarten the next year."\textsuperscript{114} Nevertheless, the new building served to house classes and to continue the Jewish teaching that had begun over 30 years earlier.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{108} "Rabbi Zlotnik Leaving For South Africa," \textit{J.W.B.}, 5 August 1938, p. 1.
\item \textsuperscript{109} "Vancouver Community Talmud Torah," \textit{J.W.B.}, 14 December 1933, p. 1.
\item \textsuperscript{110} Abe Rothstein was president of the Talmud Torah first in 1921 then from 1934 to 1937 and finally in 1947. "President Vancouver Talmud Torah," \textit{J.W.B.}, 2 September 1948, p. 3.
\item \textsuperscript{111} "Vancouver Community Talmud Torah," \textit{J.W.B.}, 14 December 1933, p. 1.
\item \textsuperscript{112} "Talmud Torah To Purchase New Building," \textit{J.W.B.}, May 28, 1944, p. 1.
\item \textsuperscript{113} Michael Levy interview.
\item \textsuperscript{114} Gary Averbach interview.
\end{itemize}
How was the new building supported financially? In 1944 it cost approximately $6.50 per month to educate each child.\textsuperscript{115} The Board intended to charge $1 per week per child ($4 per month) for tuition which was to be collected in advance. The remaining $2.50 per child was to be made up by community allocations and fundraising. In keeping with the policy of the school, past and present, this applied only to those who were able to pay. No child was turned away because of inability to pay.

Although the school had experienced a very important breakthrough with the move to the new building, the same difficulties prevailed as in the 1920's and 1930's: lack of finances, community support and students. Once again, the school was being supported both financially and physically by a small number of people. In 1945 an appeal went out to the community for help with running the school. It was suggested that each congregation (Schara Tzedeck, Beth Israel, Beth Hamidrash) send 2 or 3 members to sit on the executive.\textsuperscript{116} However, it was not easy to convince people to send their children to the school, even before it became a day school. Saul Shaffer, a long-time Vancouver resident and ardent worker for the Talmud Torah, explains.

We went from door to door... to get the children, not the money... It was difficult to get the children because they weren't used to it, to send the children... I'm talking about the day school, too, and after-school. But we got them. And we didn't ask for money. Money came a different way... There was a need for children in a big way.\textsuperscript{117}

The lack of community support also showed in the fact that there were only 26 children in the kindergarten program (established in 1938) whereas the school could handle 50. "It was too bad" the minute book reported, "that so many parents could not see fit to send their children to T.T. instead of kindergartens run privately and not in the interest of Jewish children."\textsuperscript{118} Mr. Yehoshua Giladi Gelfarb, the principal at the time, appealed to those parents with students in the school to avoid the "embarrassing situations that arise between parents, children and teachers due to improper environment at homes and lack of understanding of

\textsuperscript{115} "Talmud Torah Book of Minutes" [unpublished book of minutes], 1944-1947, Vancouver, B.C., 31 October 1944.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid, 7 June 1945.

\textsuperscript{117} Saul Shaffer interview.

T.T. and Jewish life and school in general by learning more Judaism and getting more involved with the school. It was difficult to enlist the aid of community members because they chose to devote their extra time to other endeavours. Those present at general meetings were "mostly those who have children attending and also those few dependable people who have T.T. at heart."  

The majority of Vancouver Jews in the 1940's had a casual attitude to Jewish education. Mr. Liftman, the principal of the Talmud Torah in 1947, wrote an impassioned article on this subject.

Most of the children who receive some kind of a Jewish education see that their parents consider the instruction in Judaism not as something of vital importance in their life when they grow up. Whenever the instruction in Jewish subjects interferes with other activities as homework for public school, practising of a musical instrument, dancing and skating lessons, fishing and even watching or playing baseball, the Hebrew instruction is sacrificed.

Of the parents who were most dedicated to Jewish education and showed their support by sending their children to the Talmud Torah, there still existed many who were more concerned about assimilating into Canadian society than on providing a Jewish atmosphere for their children. This is typical of immigrant patterns whereby the first and second generations dedicate most of their energies into assimilating into the host society.

Jewish education has always been important in order to assure the survival of the Jewish people. Once Jews begin to neglect the teachings of their religion and culture and assimilate into the mainstream, they become indistinguishable from the rest of society, thus ceasing to be a distinct people. In order to remain Jewish, one must not only study the Jewish religion and culture but also put into practice what one has learned. It used to be that many Jews were learned in Torah. In the 1940's, as is very often the case today, many parents believed that their child does not have to devote much of his valuable time to the study of the Torah, as they do not expect their offspring to become a Rabbi or G-d forbid, a Hebrew teacher...

119. Ibid.
120. Ibid.
In the Jewish home there is very little left of the positive traditional cultural values fostered by our people in the course of thousands of years. Our Jewishness is principally a negative one. We are Jews only because we are not gentiles.  

Therefore, there was little to deter the child from assimilation, intermarriage or apostasy.

The inconvenience and hardship of attending an afternoon school also had a major impact on attendance at the Talmud Torah. Even though the Talmud Torah at 14th near Oak was more centrally located, the students nevertheless continued to endure hardships to travel from public school to the afternoon Hebrew school. Rose Youngson, a parent in the 1940’s, recalls the difficulties.

You'd send [them] out by the streetcar ... and it was very difficult for the children to go. And then when the days were short and the nights were long, they had to come home at night. ... But they didn't come home until about 6:30, sometimes 7:00 o'clock. ... They would go straight from [public] school [to the Talmud Torah]. They didn't come home and have anything to eat or anything.

Her son, David, remembers the experience,

I didn't like going to the Talmud Torah because I'd just finished a whole day of regular school, [and] I wanted to stay after school and play baseball ... or what the other kids were doing. But I couldn't — I had to get on the streetcar and transfer twice and go and sit from 4:00 to 6:00 and I wasn't happy about doing that.

In order to alleviate the transportation problem a large car was purchased in December 1944 to serve as a "bus" for 10-15 children.

After the Depression and World War II had both come to an end, a fresh start began for the Talmud Torah when a new group of officers, all men, was elected, all of whom were 35 years of age or younger.

Saul Shaffer remembers some of those men.

Sam [Rothstein] was a hard worker. ... Sam was dedicated so much ... and I appreciated what he did to the Talmud Torah and I wanted him to be recognized as such. ... Jack Aceman was President when I was Vice President. Jack Aceman was a very dedicated person. ... He too did a lot of work. ...
These were the young men who would play a key role in assisting with the establishment of the day school three years later.

The Talmud Torah continued to struggle throughout the early 1940's to attract more students and to raise more funds. By the end of the 1940's their numbers had grown so much, partly due to the increase in the Vancouver Jewish population, that it was necessary to move into larger quarters. The task ahead was a large one. The community would have to pull together to raise an enormous amount of money in order to accommodate the growing enrolment. Experience had proven that this was not a group of people who gave up easily.

**Extra-curricular Activities**

Apart from the regular curriculum, other activities took place. Some were initiated by the students while most of the others were under the direction of the school. Nevertheless, all were part and parcel of the education that the students received at Talmud Torah. These activities were very important as they served as an arena for the practical application of what was learned in the classroom. The children were also given more freedom of expression and creativity in these endeavours. It is no wonder that these are the events that the students remember most fondly from their experiences at the Talmud Torah.

In 1928 the Talmud Torah students, with help from their teachers, produced the first of a series of Hebrew and Yiddish newsletters that they then distributed to parents and patrons of the school. The newsletter\(^{129}\), called *Nitzonim* (Buds), showed "that both languages [Yiddish and Hebrew] are efficiently taught, and that the students are able to convey clearly their thoughts in both tongues."\(^{130}\) It was produced yearly with contributions from present and former Talmud Torah pupils.\(^{131}\) Through the newsletter the students were able to practise their written Hebrew and Yiddish and show their parents and community that the Talmud Torah was teaching them both languages.

---

129. See Appendix D for samples of the newsletter.
Joseph Youngson was the driving force behind the newsletter. Bernard Reed remembers the talents of his teacher upon recently seeing copies of the newsletter, "Yeah. . . . He was very artistically inclined". See the drawings and all that, the little boy with the Torah? That would be him. . . . He was pretty good. His [pictures] would be semi-professional." 

In July 1930 a group of Talmud Torah students formed a Hebrew-speaking club where all activities were conducted in Hebrew called the Ivriah Club, open to past and present students of the Talmud Torah. The club met once a month during which time everyone was obliged to speak Hebrew. The penalty for speaking English was a fine of one cent per word. Gertrude Zack, a one-time president of the Ivriah Club remembers, "After Grade 8 or 9 . . . we formed what we called an Ivriah club. . . . We didn't have television. We didn't sit. We did." This group of enterprising young people took the initiative to form a club of their own and therefore entertain themselves.

Although the club was basically run by the students there was some assistance by Talmud Torah teachers for special events such as hikes to Stanley Park. Joseph Youngson, nevertheless, was very involved with the club on a regular basis. Bernard Reed refers to him as "our coach. . . . He would . . . oversee us and assist us, or do whatever it was." The club, complete with president and secretary, ran their own meetings, fined the kids who spoke English and kept the money in the treasury. Bernard recalls, "In those days you wanted to have a club — and this was Hebrew-speaking." Later on, this industrious group of young people started to publish their own little Hebrew magazine. Since they wanted to do it on their own they went to see Reverend Pastinsky, who had the only Jewish typewriter with Hebrew letters in Western Canada. Bernard describes going to ask to borrow the typewriter. "We went out there and I remember asking him still,

132. See the cover of the Nitzonim student newsletter for an example of Mr. Youngson's artwork, found in Appendix D 1.
133. Bernard Reed interview.
135. Gertrude Zack interview.
'Could we borrow your typewriter?' Well, he was thrilled! And we would go and punch on the typewriter and put out our little magazine, so we didn't have any more of this hand-written stuff by the teachers.\(^{137}\)

The club and the newsletter provided an impetus for other Hebrew activities such as writing letters to friends or family or speaking Hebrew to others. Gertrude used to write to her grandfather in Hebrew when he moved to Toronto from Europe and he would write back correcting all her mistakes for her.

Bernard speaks proudly of the club and the accomplishments with the Hebrew language.

We were the only Hebrew-speaking Young Judea club in Canada\(^{138}\).... That was, in those days, the big association of Jewish students. They [Young Judea] used to have conventions, and this and that... we wrote letters to children in Israel [Palestine], and they wrote back, all in Hebrew. My grandfather in Russia, I wrote to him regularly. And the only way we could correspond was in Hebrew, because I didn't know Russian and he didn't know English... We were the only [class]... that had the capability to speak Hebrew in that degree. There was about a half-dozen of us.\(^{139}\)

Throughout the year many special events took place that reinforced as well as provided a change from the daily schoolwork. One of the most loved by all was the annual Lag B'Omer (Jewish holiday) picnic. Bernard Reed recalls,

I remember we were all in the Eastern part of the city and we would all meet at the Talmud Torah on Sunday morning, 20–30–40 cars... and go out to Maple Grove Park... So that was an adventure... It was a parade of cars... and we'd have races and games and they'd give prizes... and they played baseball and all that, and they gave out refreshments. It was the big event of the year.\(^{140}\)

In 1930 over 200 children from the Jewish community (as well as numerous parents and friends) attended the Lag B'Omer picnic at Maple Grove Park. For many years the picnic was sponsored by B'nai Brith. This was also the time when prizes were given out to those students who had excelled on the end of the year exams.\(^{141}\)

---

137. Bernard Reed Interview.
139. Bernard Reed Interview.
140. Ibid.
Another well-liked event was the annual Chanukah concert. In the early years of the school and as late as 1938 the songs, recitations, speeches and plays were performed either in Hebrew, Yiddish or English although Hebrew was the language most often used as that was what the children were studying at the Talmud Torah.142 The Chanukah concert was also a time for parents and friends to come and see the children perform on stage. It was a fun-filled and enjoyable time for all.

However, without a doubt the most influential, most talked about and most educational activity was the Saturday morning Junior Congregation service for children between the ages of eight and fifteen. It was here that the children learned the Hebrew prayers, the order of the service and the traditional tunes. They were not only given a chance to participate but also to lead. Bernard Reed remembers the early days of the Junior Congregation in the 1920's.

We had a Junior Congregation for a number of years at the old annex in Heatley Avenue and the students carried on the entire congregation themselves, without the assistance of the teachers. In other words, we *davened*, there was a *chazzan*, we read [the Torah], we said *maftir* [mafter]. I said *maftir* at the age of ten, because we knew everything.143

Although girls did not participate in the early days due to the strict rules of Orthodoxy, they did not appear to feel left out. Bernard explains,

They would come, Gertie Zack, Gertie Fouks she was in those days. They would come because they were classmates. But no, it was all Orthodox . . . . Now remember, that was not negative and that was not considered a put-down. You're looking at it from today's system, where everything is considered a hostile move. It was accepted. The woman wanted to be a wife and a mother and that was the highest thing she could hope to. She wanted to be a mother and get married, and that was it. It was after the War [World War II], when this women's liberation started. I'm only trying to give you the viewpoint . . . . It was not a put-down at all. The mother was given great respect in the house. She ran the house. She ran the husband. Oh, yeah!144

In 1930 the Junior Congregation ran every Friday evening and Saturday morning at the Schara Tzedeck synagogue at Heatley and Pender. Services were compulsory for Talmud Torah students and parents


143. Bernard Reed interview.

144. Ibid.
were urged to send their children, even those who had already graduated from Talmud Torah. Later on that year services began to be held at the Community Centre every Saturday morning at 10 a.m. for the convenience of those who lived in the Fairview district. Regular services continued at the Heatley Branch for those who lived in the East End at least until 1939. They were always supervised by either the principal or one of the teachers of the Talmud Torah. In 1940 it was reported that usually 30 children under the age of 15 regularly attended Junior Congregation. In May of 1940 a Junior Congregation club was formed complete with president, vice-president, treasurer, secretary and gabbaim (those who help with the running of the services). At that time there were 65 members. The Junior Congregation decided to present a gift to any member who became a Bar Mitzvah (a Jewish boy who reaches the age of 13) or any girl who reached the age of 13 while still a member. The Junior Congregation club planned to buy prayer shawls and prayer books for the services. Meetings were held every second Sunday with services continuing at the Community Centre on Saturdays.

The Talmud Torah worked hard to encourage parents to get involved and get their children involved in the activities of the school. The following plea appeared in a 1946 article urging parents to send their children to Junior Congregation. "If you want your children to know how to "Dawven", read fluently, and to know the Jewish customs and laws; and in general spend a few hours in a Jewish atmosphere, especially on a "Shabbos", it is your Holy duty to see that your child attends the Congregation normally every Saturday." A few months later 40 to 50 children were regularly attending Junior Congregation. David Youngson

remembers visits to the Junior Congregation by one of the local rabbis whose congregation was nearby the Talmud Torah when it was at 14th and Oak.

[W]hen on 14th Ave, we used to have Saturday morning services . . . And after services Rabbi Ginsberg [the rabbi of Beit HaMidrash at 16th and Heather, then an Eastern Orthodox synagogue] . . . would come in because he wasn't far away . . . He would come after services . . . do the Kiddush [blessing over the wine]. [He would speak] Yiddish [although most of the children did not understand Yiddish].

In the late 1940's, Isaac and Chana Horowitz formed a Hebrew-speaking club (similar to the Ivriah Club mentioned earlier). The club met once a week in the evening for an hour. The purpose was "to spread the Hebrew language among the youth." Activities included discussions, games, debates and occasional socials and outings. It was reported that the members of the club are very enthusiastic and "feel that this will bring them closer to the Jewish culture and spirit and especially to Eretz [Land] Israel."

Junior Congregation, celebrating the various holidays, picnics, parties, newsletters, Hebrew-speaking clubs: these are what stand out in the minds of the students who attended Talmud Torah in the 1920's and 1930's for it was here that they were given a chance to put into action what they had learned in the classroom. Moreover, they were given a fair amount of responsibility and autonomy and as a result felt pride in their accomplishments; something which is too often missing in the regular classroom. What better way to practise speaking Hebrew than to form a club? What better way to learn the prayers than to take part in your own service? What better way to learn the history of the Jews from the Bible to the present day than to perform plays, songs and stories? And what better way to fully understand the laws and customs of Judaism than to actually live them? Thus the Talmud Torah students were able to learn what had been outlined in the curriculum through playful and pleasant activities. Informal learning complemented the formal curriculum of the classroom.

153. David Youngson interview.
155. Ibid.
The World of the Students

The students interviewed did not volunteer much information about assimilation, anti-semitism or the effect of going to the Talmud Torah on their identities as Jews. Instead they focussed more on what was important to them as children. They spoke a lot about how they felt about attending the Talmud Torah, or in cases like that of Rose Youngson, about not being able to attend the school due to distance. Rose Youngson did not live in the downtown area and as a result did not attend the school because of the distance. However, around 1918, as a young girl of 8 or 9, she wanted to see what the school was like.

At one time I went to shul [synagogue] and I saw the children gathered together at the synagogue and they were singing songs and things; and I felt left out, so I said, 'I want to go to the Talmud Torah,' so my parents said 'Yes'. So to go to the Talmud Torah ...; I had to go downtown and I had to transfer at Main and Hastings, which wasn't the best place for a child to be alone to transfer. So I went a little bit; and then the nights got longer and it was dark coming home, and rain, and I had to wait for the buses. And I saw that I couldn't do it so I didn't go .... I remember when I came there, he [Katzenelson] went out in the hall and spoke to another teacher, and they were speaking in Hebrew. I didn't understand a word of what they said, but I know he said something about alef–beis [the Hebrew alphabet], meaning 'She doesn't even know the alef–beis,' so they didn't know where to put me .... So I didn't last there very long .... I had to stop because I couldn't go down there at night. I got scared to come home at night, and all the strange men passing that corner, and having to wait for the bus .... It wasn't months — it might have been a few weeks.156

Of those who attended Talmud Torah on a regular basis, some liked going to the school while others did not. The hours were long after all day in public school and the Talmud Torah students had to attend classes while other children were playing with friends or participating on sports teams. Gertrude Zack would have to take two or three street cars to get from Cecil Rhodes Elementary School at 14th and Spruce to the Talmud Torah at Heatley and Pender.

I enjoyed Hebrew or I wouldn't have continued. I would have fought against it because it did limit what I was able to do in the [public] school to participate although I did participate in the drama but that was during school hours .... We used to have a lot of fun [at the Talmud Torah] .... [W]e did just what all kids do in Talmud Torah ... play .... We played baseball during our intermission, during our recess ....157

156. Rose Youngson interview.
Bernard Reed was around 13 years old when his class of older students moved to the new location at the Community Centre at 11th and Oak in the early 1930's. Joseph Youngson was the teacher.

We improvised. We were the first ones to become Grade Six . . . Grade Seven . . . Grade Eight. We pioneered the Talmud Torah, if you know what I mean. So we kept going up and we created the new classes and the others followed behind us . . . . When we went to university, well, we had to quit because there was no way we could work in the time and we were busy at university.\textsuperscript{158}

Classes continued to be held at the Heatley Street branch as well for the younger students. Bernard remembers doing "a lot of things that other Talmud Toras didn't do. We put out a paper [the newsletter mentioned earlier], the Hebrew paper. We had debates and speeches, and things like that, in Hebrew. It was good."\textsuperscript{159}

David Youngson attended the school in the late 1930's and 1940's. Although his father, Joseph Youngson, was the main teacher at the school, David's memory of attending Talmud Torah is not so positive, mostly because he would rather have been playing with his friends after public school. "I remember going to the school . . . before the Second World War . . . I went, unwillingly, from the age of 6."\textsuperscript{160} He first attended the school on Heatley Street and switched over somewhere around 1939 to the Community Centre Branch. He remembers that all the Jewish institutions were based out of there, including the Jewish Western Bulletin. The B'nai B'rith was there, Beth Israel synagogue was there, of course the Talmud Torah was there, and I think some organization of Jewish soldiers . . . . That was the whole of the Jewish community . . . . And I attended classes at the Talmud Torah during that period of time, from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Monday to Thursday and, I think, a couple of hours on Sunday. And I hated every minute of it.\textsuperscript{161}

Bernard Reed discusses the various attitudes children had with respect to going to the Talmud Torah in the 1920's and 1930's. "It was part of your training. It was part of being a Jew. I mean, it was accepted. There was no resentment. Oh, there were some children who rebelled, yeah." He recalls a boy who would get kicked out of the class regularly so he could go and play tennis at King Edward High School with his non-

---

\textsuperscript{158} Bernard Reed interview.
\textsuperscript{159} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{160} David Youngson interview.
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid.
Jewish friend. "He didn't have the right attitude. . . . [There were] quite a few like that. Not everybody was a sincere student. They went because their father said they had to go." They also went because they knew they had to study for their Bar Mitzvah. "After Bar Mitzvah they got into other pursuits. See, don't forget, a teenager, at that time, you wanna play ball, . . . whatever it is, maybe in the extra-curricular, the drama in the school or whatever it is — so that things started to interfere."162

A child's attitude to going to school, especially to a noncompulsory one such as Talmud Torah, is affected greatly by the parents' reasons for sending the child. If the parents believe strongly in the education their child is receiving then the child's experience will stand a better chance of being a positive one. If the parents are only sending the child out of compulsion or feelings of guilt or pressure from outside forces then the child will have less of a chance to flourish in the school. This supports Hirschberg's findings that the family and the community play a major role in the education of the children. Some children enjoyed their Talmud Torah experience, largely because they realized that their parents believed it to be a worthwhile and important part of their education163. Others went only because they had to and never really understood why they were there. Still others, like Rose Youngson, wanted to go to the school but were unable to attend for practical reasons.

The 1940's saw the culmination of an era in the history of the Talmud Torah. The Vancouver Jewish community had struggled not only to integrate into Canadian society but also to preserve their Jewish roots. They had made sure that their children were well-educated in the public school and in the afternoon Hebrew school. The community had worked hard to keep the Talmud Torah alive both financially and educationally and had succeeded. Now began a period of new challenges as the Vancouver Jewish community took on the responsibility of supporting and nourishing a day school, similar in format to the public school with the exception of the addition of a half-day program of Judaic studies. The years ahead would prove whether or

162. Bernard Reed interview.

163. Some children, whose parents either taught at the school or were involved in its operation, may not have enjoyed going to the school because their parents were too involved in the politics or because the children were treated differently by their schoolmates because they were the child of one of the teachers.
not this community was capable of maintaining the equilibrium between guarding their heritage and fitting into the mainstream society.

Over the course of three decades, Vancouver Jews had succeeded in building and maintaining a Jewish afternoon school for their children. As the Jewish population grew in the city and as the Talmud Torah became more accepted in the Jewish community, more people began to send their children to the school. However, the growth was slow and sometimes disappointing to the organizers of the Talmud Torah. They had hoped that more people would have realized the benefit to their children of having a Jewish education as well as a secular one. The curriculum changed very little except for the constant struggle between those who wanted Yiddish included in the curriculum and those who thought that more time should be spent on Hebrew instruction. The dwindling Yiddish-speaking population in addition to the renewal of the Hebrew language in Israel strengthened the cause of the Hebraists. By the end of this period, there were also fewer European-born, Yiddish-speaking teachers at the school. They had been replaced by North American-born and educated Jews. The Talmud Torah had met and overcome many obstacles during this period. Financial problems and lack of community support often made it difficult for the school to continue. Nevertheless, there was a core of dedicated Vancouver Jews, who saw and understood the need for formal Jewish education for their children, and therefore worked hard to keep the institution alive despite the strain of the Depression, World War II and the Holocaust.

164. See Table 4 on Talmud Torah Enrolment, p. 88.
Schara Tzedeck synagogue, circa 1928, Heatley Street, East End of Vancouver.

"In the same building [as the Schara Tzedeck synagogue], [in] an annex building bordering the lane and facing on Heatley was the Talmud Torah at that time. [It was] upstairs. Downstairs was a community hall where they had Junior Congregation meetings, etc."

Jewish Community Centre, circa 1930.

"[A]ll the Jewish institutions were based out of there, including the Jewish Western Bulletin. The B'nai B'rith was there, Beth Israel synagogue was there, of course the Talmud Torah was there, and I think some organization of Jewish soldiers... That was the whole of the Jewish community."

"The reason they built this one was because they were told it was too dangerous for the children in a house with an upstairs... in case there was [a] fire."

Kindergarten children at school in the above house, circa 1947.
The teacher standing at left is Miss Lil Moscovitch (now Shafran); at right is Mrs. Hannah Milner Cohen (now Smith).
The boy standing is practicing the recital of the *Shabbat kiddush* on Friday afternoon at the Talmud Torah school, circa 1947.

Talmud Torah school, circa 1950.
At the time, "one of the most modern schools in B.C."
Two of the paintings auctioned off during a 1940's fundraising art auction. The auction, showing paintings and pictures imported from New York on both secular and Jewish themes, raised a lot of money for the school. These paintings belong to Saul Shaffer who bought them at that time.
Early teaching staff, 1949, left to right: Mr. Al Gelmon, Mrs. Reva Goldberg, Dr. J. Kowarsky, Mrs. Anne Keel, Mr. Felixe Rosenschein

Secular studies students, taught by Mrs. Esther Gervin, using standard teaching methods. March 1954.

"I think we have certain skills that will always stay with us. The basics were drilled into us."
Kindergarten class October 1950, beading. Mrs. Anne Keel, front table (l. to r.) Ruth Weinstein, unknown, Tammy Kagna, Marsha White, Les Blond.

“They were much more creative. They didn't have the materials.”

Kindergarten student lighting Shabbat candles, June 1951.
Teachers: Left – Mrs. Mildred Nesbitt. Right – Mrs. Anne Keel
First graduating class, 1954: seated (l. to r.) Reesa Gelman, Michael Levy, Sharon Flax, Gerald Lipsky, Elaine Wall, Gary Averbach, standing: Mr. Reznik, Sydney Erlichman, Leon Bogner, Mrs. Trunkfield, Malcolm Weinstein, Kenny Glasner, Mr. Sherman, acting principal.

"They [the children] felt this [Talmud Torah] is part of their home, part of their atmosphere, part of their culture."

Grade 6 graduation, 1956.
(l. to r.): Jennie Puterman, Judith Moscovitch, Terry Kagna, Rosalind Zack (Karby), Nadine Sinclair, Sherrie Poplack, Mr. Harry Sherman, Herschel (Aaron) Rosenthal, Mrs. Joy Trunkfield, Melvin Belogus, Susan Lauer, Mark Waldman, Barrie Turner.

Missing from the picture: graduates Joel Altman and Yehuda Assaf.
Grade 3 or 4 class, circa 1957.
Teachers: Mrs. Lydia Holmgren, Mr. Abraham Assaf, Mrs. Eva Gelmon, Miss Ruth Chess
Back row: Mark Sherman, Alexene Dozar, Valerie Hurov, Sharyn Herman, Carole Wine, Trudy Kolberg,
Miriam Wolochow, Elliot Roadburg, Jack Gechman
Front row: Rowena Shaffer (Kleinman), Sandy Waterman, Judy Panar, Carol Naimark (Oreck), Shari
Altman, Norman Gold, Joe Gold, Jerry Adler, Stephen Rome, Richard Zack
"We wanted our kids to feel comfortable with their Jewishness and from looking around, we felt that
Talmud Torah offered the best of what was available."

Grade 5 class, circa 1957.
Teachers: Mr. Abraham Assaf, unknown, Mrs. Lydia Holmgren, Mr. Harry Sherman.
Middle row: Fred Curtis, George Weiss, Jerry Apfelbaum, David Goldenberg (Rabbi Goldenberg's son), Leo
Kron (Mrs. Kron's son), Milton Yacht, Harold Yacowar, Danny Goodman.
Front row: Valerie Blumes, Pearl Grunfeld, Beth Sharon Kagna, Diane Mann (Averbach), Corrine Solman,
Sidney Nesbitt, Eileen Buchwald, Marjorie Goodman, Audrey Rosenthal
7th Anniversary of State of Israel, 1955.
"... because it was so early in its [Israel's] establishment and every year [Yom Ha'Atzma'ut] was a big major celebration."

Presentation at 8th anniversary of State of Israel, 1956.
"We were always taught about Israel, ... and I mean, every room had a map of Israel."

"To Gita, teaching was more than a profession - it was a passion, and to it gave heart and soul . . . [S]he made each child feel unique."

Lighting the Chanukah candles, dressed in Junior Congregation choir gowns. Boy lighting Chanukah candle is Andrew Gold, on his left is Malcolm Weinstein; right is Howard Shachter. December 1954.

"We had a choir and so . . . we all sang at each other's Bar Mitzvahs . . . I think it was great."
CHAPTER FOUR

The First Decade of the Day School

1948-1959

Founders and their Vision

The majority of Canadian Jews, like other immigrant populations, possessed a strong desire to fit into Canadian society. They were afraid of being ghettoized and they wanted their children to learn the ways of their new country. As a result, many were against any institution they felt would separate them from society's mainstream. Consequently, there were those who did not want their children to be associated with schools such as the Talmud Torah at all (even the afternoon school) as they felt it would segregate them and associate them too closely with the other Jewish immigrants. But they still wanted their children to have some form of Jewish education, and so some sent them to private tutors. However, many soon realized it was much better for children to be learning in a group setting rather than individually.

In spite of the strong pressure to assimilate, a number of Jews throughout Canada, as we have seen, were committed to establishing afternoon schools. But some wanted to provide a more intensive program of Jewish studies than the afternoon and Sunday schools or through private tutors. Why did they feel this need so strongly when many others were opposed to the idea? One argument, which was presented later at a meeting of American rabbis, educators and community members, explained the need for an intensive program of Jewish studies.

Jewish education is indispensable to Jewish survival, but survival as such should not be made a goal of Jewish education. Jewishness is not inherited in the genes. A Jew becomes as [sic] Jew as a result of a long process of living and learning. If Jewish life is to have continuity and meaning, the transmission of the Jewish heritage cannot be left to chance contacts and learnings in the home, in the street and in the community. We have to rely on the Jewish school for the more formal transmission of the Jewish heritage.

There was also substantial agreement that a varied curriculum was needed. It would include Jewish tradition, literature, culture, language, history, religion and Torah. Disagreements were mainly with regard to how the Torah was to be interpreted and what would be taught. Learning Hebrew and identifying with Israel were seen by most as vital to Jewish education. There was also a general recognition of the need to integrate the Jewish child into the society at large while guarding the integrity of the Jews as a distinct minority group. Although afternoon schools could provide all of the above, they could not do so in as intensive a manner as the day school. Furthermore, many parents wanted their children to be able to play after school with friends or attend music lessons or sports programs, none of which was possible if they were attending Hebrew school after public school. Thus the day school was seen as the answer to both of these problems. It would not only provide an intensive program of Jewish studies but it would also enable the children to pursue other activities after school as they would finish their Jewish and secular studies during the regular school day. A day school would therefore provide the milieu in which to acquire knowledge and skills of the Jewish culture and religion, while after-school activity time would permit integration with the surrounding secular Canadian community.

Why was there not a day school in Vancouver before 1948? Apart from the heavy pressure to assimilate, Bernard Reed offers the following explanation. "Well, first of all, nobody could afford [the fees] to go to a day school. We all went to a regular [public] school and then we went for an hour and a half [to Hebrew school] — that was all through North America." Dr. Moses Steinberg, a professor of English and active member of the Vancouver Jewish community since the 1950’s, believes that the day school movement began to establish itself because those Jews who favoured strengthening the Jewish people through education, religion and culture over assimilating into the status quo wanted a better level of Jewish education for their children than was being offered in the afternoon school. There were already day schools in Montreal and a

2. Ibid.
3. Bernard Reed interview.
day school in Winnipeg and according to Dr. Steinberg, the results were much better than those of the afternoon schools.4

A study on Jewish education in Quebec by Stanley Yetnikoff made a strong case in support of day schools by outlining the disadvantages of afternoon schools. Yetnikoff found that in afternoon schools, time is taken away from leisure activities such as sports and music lessons, the child is often tired after a full day at public school and less capable of learning new material, there is a shortage of qualified teachers in the afternoon school as most prefer to work during the day, less than half of the Jewish instruction available in the day school is possible after school, travel from the public to the afternoon school is often difficult in winter or for those of frail health, and the attendance rate is low and the drop-out rate high as these schools are not compulsory.5 The day school eliminated all of these problems.

Dr. Sidney Zbarsky, a parent and Board6 member in the 1950's, decided to send his children to the day school because he "just figured that it was a better Jewish education, Hebrew education, ... and it also had a big advantage that the student would learn secular studies and Hebrew all day, not at night and he'd have the evenings free. He'd be able to play after school like other kids and still get a good education." His wife Lamie, active on the Talmud Torah Parent Teachers Association (PTA) for many years, added that "We wanted our kids to feel comfortable with their Jewishness and from looking around, we felt that Talmud Torah offered the best of what was available."8

Other factors influenced the growth of the day school movement in Canada. The recent establishment of Israel incited a need amongst Jews to build up strong Jewish communities elsewhere and to maintain and strengthen the ties between Israel and the Diaspora. Dr. Steinberg is certain that "the Holocaust must have

4. Dr. Moses Steinberg Interview. Contrast this view with the discussions of Hirschberg's study on pp. 3-4. The results of this empirical study imply that Jewish students from day schools do not identify any more strongly with the Jewish people than those from afternoon schools. The main factors influencing affiliation with the Jewish people are family and community.


6. In the 1940's and 1950's there were two separate Boards comprised mostly of Talmud Torah parents to oversee the school; the Board of Directors (the Executive) and the Board of Education. The Board of Directors was in charge of daily operations and finances while the Board of Education looked after issues of curriculum, teachers and students that were educational in nature.

7. Dr. Sidney Zbarsky Interview.

8. Lamie Zbarsky interview.
made a great impact, that we have to strengthen ourselves because we're in danger of being annihilated physically and culturally. The events of the Holocaust may have also made Jews more aware of the danger that through assimilation the Jews would cease to be a distinct people. Another factor contributing to the resurgence of Jewish education was the arrival of European Jews (among them rabbis and teachers) who had either survived or escaped from the Holocaust. They were accustomed to Jewish day schools in Europe so they naturally supported them in North America.

Many articles advocating a day school education appeared in the Jewish Western Bulletin in the late forties. Felix Rosenchein, a Hebrew teacher during the first few years of the Talmud Torah day school, in an article entitled "The Role of Vancouver Talmud Torah: an Interpretation," discussed his views on the importance of intensive Jewish education.

Deny a Jewish education to one generation and the Jewish people is liable to deteriorate culturally and spiritually. The deep concern for our fellow Jews in Soviet Russia emanates from the very fact that Marxian dialectics deny the Jewish minority an education which identifies itself with the Jewish people, its religious traditions, and its rational aspirations. . . . An education . . . that would teach the Jewish youngster his national tongue and thus give him the key to his Hebrew-Jewish culture -- is the set purpose of the Vancouver Talmud Torah.

Even after the Talmud Torah day school was up and running the controversy over the need for intensive Jewish education continued. A Vancouver Jewish organization sponsored a debate, held in 1949, to discuss the issue of parochial schools. One side argued that intensified Jewish education was needed and that the parochial school was the best way of giving this education, while the other side insisted that not only was it bad to segregate Jewish children but that "the key to the problem of training children was in the home, and that the parents needed education."

9. Dr. Moses Steinberg interview.
10. Ibid.
The opponents of the day school questioned whether both a Jewish and a general education could be given during the school day. In 1954, after the Talmud Torah day school had already been in operation for several years, a similar discussion took place at a luncheon meeting of the Schara Tzedeck Ladies Auxiliary. Speaking in favour of the day school were Mrs. V. Joy Trunkfield, a secular studies teacher at the Talmud Torah, and Irving Lipsky, president of the school. They argued that in the day school the children were not deprived of normal after school play time, a high standard of secular education was received, there were small classes, and lots of individual attention. However, Mr. Abraham J. Arnold, the editor of the *Jewish Western Bulletin*, felt that the day school movement was harming the public school's struggle for separation of church and state (possibly by demonstrating that religion was important in a school) and was promoting segregation. This view was held by the less religious assimilationist sector of the Vancouver Jews.

Dr. Steinberg became the Chairman of the Talmud Torah Board of Education in 1950 and continued in that capacity for the next 8 or 9 years. Dr. Sidney Zbarsky, who served with Dr. Steinberg for several years, describes him as "an expert on Jewish education. The rest of us were more concerned with maintaining the standards of secular studies education." Dr. Steinberg recalls that there was considerable resistance to the day school movement from a section of the Zionist organization. He explains that although most Zionists favoured the school "there was an element there that did not particularly care about [favour] diverting funds [from Israel]." The secular Zionists were also opposed to the Talmud Torah because of its religious orientation.

The other resistance, according to Dr. Steinberg, came from left-wing assimilationists who felt that they had fought so long to be integrated and to be accepted into the non-Jewish society that they did not want to hamper what they believed was progress, by segregating their children into a Jewish school. Because antisemitism had decreased substantially since the Second World War, this group of Jews felt that now was

15. Dr. Sidney Zbarsky interview.
16. Dr. Moses Steinberg interview.
their opportunity to integrate into the general community. The Peretz School was not actively opposed to the day school. However, the concepts espoused by the Talmud Torah (religious, Hebrew, traditional) were in opposition to the left-wing politics of this group of secular Yiddishists. Nevertheless, the supporters of the Peretz School were not really a significant force in the Vancouver Jewish community because of their small numbers, their lack of involvement in leadership roles in the major community organizations (Canadian Jewish Congress, Zionist Organization, Hadassah, synagogues), and their lack of material resources.

Another group, opposed to any form of private education, believed that there should be one public system of education for all.

Those who were actively opposed to the day school were fairly small in number, as were those who were solidly in support of it. The majority of the Vancouver Jewish community were indifferent. Most members of the group in favour of the day school were either very Orthodox or European survivors of the Holocaust. Their attitude toward the non-Jewish community was not all that friendly because of their experiences, and so they did not oppose segregation. Nevertheless, there were disagreements, even among those who were in favour of setting up a day school, with regard to curriculum and hiring practices. Dr. Steinberg explains.

The less religious element or the secularist element . . . , because some of them were very fairly secularist, were for the most part pro-Zionist [as were many of the religious]. [They] wanted Ivrit b’ivrit [Hebrew immersion], which was important to all of us but they put much more stress on that . . . [T]hey wanted to reduce the amount of Judaic studies, and more on language and it didn’t matter to them whether the teachers were religious or weren’t religious as long as they were good competent teachers of language and history and so on. . . . There were certain stresses at times, especially when it came to appointing teachers but it never erupted in any serious confrontation.

---

17. A Yiddishist is an advocate of the Yiddish language.
18. The Peretz School had very good leadership within their organization.
19. Dr. Moses Steinberg telephone interview.
20. See charts on next page for the number of Jewish children attending day schools in Canada as compared to the number attending afternoon schools and also for a comparison of the situation in 1933 with that of 1958.
21. Dr. Moses Steinberg interview.