

Maintaining Orthodoxy in the New World

Lecture 4: Young Israel of Ave J – 3/7/08

Lecture 4 (Fri. 3/7/08): 1880 to 1940: Russian and East European Immigration; Rabbi Dr. Henry P. Schneeberger; Rabbi Dr. Bernard Drachman; Rabbi Dr. Schepschel Schaffer; JTS, Harry Fischel, Yeshiva Etz Chaim; Rabbi Jacob Joseph; the RJJ School; TA, RIETS and Yeshiva College; Baltimore Hebrew Parochial School, Rabbi David Miller

I. Influx of Jews from 1881 to 1923

The years 1881-1923 constitute one of the most fascinating eras in American history in general, and in the American Jewish experience in particular. It was an era during which approximately twenty-five million immigrants, primarily from Eastern and Southern Europe, arrived in this country. Of the many groups that came, Jews were second only to the Italians in number. In 1880 the Jewish population in the United States was approximately 250,000 individuals, most of whom were immigrants or descendants of immigrants from Central Europe (Glazer, 1972, p. 60). Before 1869, very few Jewish immigrants arrived from Russia, but between 1869 and 1880, when significant numbers of Jews began emigrating from there, an estimated 30,000 of them came to the United States (Wischnitzer, 1948, p. 289, n. 1). The major stimuli for the increased emigration from Russia at this time were the cholera that plagued the northwest part of that country in 1868 and the famine in the same area a year later (*ibid.* p. 29). In March 1881 Czar Alexander II was assassinated, an event that sparked anti-Jewish riots and massacres in scores of Jewish communities. Following these, laws that restricted the lives of Jews were passed. The combination of economic, political, and physical persecution generated a massive move of Jews out of Eastern Europe, the overwhelming majority of them came to the United States (*ibid.*, pp. 37-130). Table 1 indicates the frantic pace of Jewish immigration into the United States between the years 1881 and 1923, a pace that almost certainly would have persisted had the various forces favoring restriction not succeeded in the passage of Johnson Immigration Act of 1921 and 1924.

This dramatic influx of an estimated 2,787,754 immigrant Jews from Eastern Europe transformed American Jewry and the nature of its communal structure in fundamental ways. From a quarter of a million

individuals in 1880, the American Jewish population grew to almost three and one-half million by 1917, and to more than four and one-quarter million by 1927. Whereas in 1877, Jews were 0.52 percent of the total United States population, in 1927 they had grown to become 3.58 percent (Gutman, 1966, p. 354). While in 1880 most American Jews were of Central European background, in 1927, 80 percent or more were estimated to have been of Eastern European origin (Glazer, 1972, p. 83). While the important contributions of the earlier Sephardi and German Jewish immigrations should not be minimized, it was the Eastern Europeans, as Leventman says, "whose culture became virtually synonymous with that of American Jewry and that eventually formed the Jewish community in the United States" (Leventman, 1969, p. 35).

Table 1. Jewish Immigration into the United States from 1881 to 1923

1881	8,193	1896	73,255	1910	84,260
1882	31,807	1897	43,434	1911	91,223
1883	6,907	1898	54,630	1912	80,595
1884	15,122	1899	37,415	1913	101,330
1885	36,214	1900	60,764	1914	138,051
1886	46,967	1901	58,098	1915	26,497
1887	56,412	1902	57,688	1916	15,108
1888	62,619	1903	76,203	1917	17,342
1889	55,851	1904	106,236	1918	3,672
1890	67,450	1905	129,910	1919	3,055
1891	111,284	1906	153,748	1920	14,292
1892	136,742	1907	149,182	1921	119,036
1893	68,569	1908	103,387	1922	53,524
1894	58,833	1909	57,551	1923	49,989
1895	65,309				

SOURCE: Mark Wischnitzer, *To Dwell in Safety: The Story of Jewish Migration since 1800* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1948), p. 289. © The Jewish Publication Society of America.

Rabbi Dr. Henry W. (Pinchas HaLevi) Schneeberger (1848 – 1916)

**The First American Born, University Educated, Orthodox Ordained
Rabbi in America**

Henry Schneeberger was born on August 29, 1848. His parents, Sigmund and Regina (Cohen) had been married in Hanover, Germany in 1846 and then immigrated to America that year. Young Henry received his early secular education while attending public school. “Then he went to the Columbia Preparatory School and finally to Columbia College where he earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1866 at the early age of eighteen, and his Master of Arts degree in the following year. Along with his secular studies, he engaged in programs of Jewish studies in Mishna and Talmud under two private tutors.”

During his teens he showed an interest in rabbinics.

At this time there was no institution in America at which Henry could pursue rabbinical studies. Therefore, in 1867, shortly after his graduation from Columbia College, Henry left for Europe. He went to Mainz (Mayence) in Germany to study with Rabbi Samuel Bondi (1794-1877), a scholar of considerable repute, to whom he was related.

After spending some time studying with Rabbi Bondi, Henry then continued his studies with Rabbi Bondi’s son-in-law, Rabbi Dr. Marcus Lehmann (1831-1890), the well-known 19th century writer and the rabbi of Mainz. “After nearly two years of study in Mayence, Henry Schneeberger was advised by Dr. Lehmann to continue his studies under the most famous Jewish scholar in Western Europe at that time, Dr. Israel [Azriel] Hildesheimer (1820-1899), who had also been the teacher of Dr. Lehmann. He was at that time the Rabbi of Eisenstadt in Hungary and had established a rabbinical school there. In addition to his vast Jewish learning he was a university graduate and very erudite in many fields modern culture.” Henry was the only American in Rav Hildesheimer’s yeshiva.

In 1869 Rav Hildesheimer relocated to Berlin and Henry accompanied him. Dr. Hildesheimer established his famous Rabbiner – Seminar in 1873. While studying at the Seminary, Henry earned a Doctorate from

the University of Jena in 1870. On February 22, 1871 Dr. Schneeberger received his formal rabbinical ordination from Dr. Hildesheimer.

Returned to America and became the rabbi of Baltimore's Congregation Chizuk Amuno in 1876.

Rabbi Dr. Henry W. Schneeberger was involved in a myriad of activities during his forty year career as rabbi of Congregation Chizuk Amuno. His contract with the congregation required him to give sermons each week – in English and German alternately. He was also required to open a school and give daily instruction to the congregation's children.

When it came to the education of the youth, Rabbi Schneeberger was apparently quite forward thinking. He wanted Judaic studies given in Hebrew or English. However, some of his baalei batim wanted twice weekly German instruction, because this was the first language of many members. Dr. Schneeberger disagreed vehemently, and German language instruction was postponed until 1878. Ironically, interest in German soon waned, and in 1886 instruction in this language was dropped as a religious school requirement. It was totally abandoned two years later.

He was much in demand by other synagogues as an occasional speaker. Indeed, shortly after he became the rabbi of Chizuk Amuno, Shearith Israel, another German Orthodox shul in Baltimore, sent a letter to the officers of Chizuk Amuno asking if Dr. Schneeberger could speak at their shul from time to time.

Involved in much charitable work and with Russian immigrants.

Founder of JTS - You may not be aware that the Jewish Theological Seminary was originally founded as an Orthodox institution. While it was true that a certain proportion of the organizing delegates and participating rabbis belonged to the Conservative wing of Judaism, the principles of the seminary, as declared in its charter of incorporation, granted by the Legislature of the State of New York on May 9, 1886, uncompromisingly adhered to the tenets of Orthodox Judaism. (See The Unfailing Light, by Rabbi Dr. Bernard Drachman, the Rabbinical Council of America, New York, 1948, page 181.)

Dr. Schneeberger was in the forefront of the battle to combat the Reform movement. He and other leaders of JTS thought that this could best be done by uniting the religious forces of Eastern and Western European Jewry in the US. As a result, they formed the Orthodox Jewish Congregational Union of America which later became known as the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations. Rabbi Schneeberger was one of the original trustees of this organization and attended its first and second conventions in 1898 and in 1900, respectively.

Rabbi Dr. Schepschel Schaffer (1862 – 1933)

The First Rov of Baltimore's Congregation Shearith Israel

I. Youth and Early Education

Schepschel Schaffer was born on May 4, 1862 in Bausk, in the Province of Courland, Russia. Courland had been subject to Russian rule 1737. Nonetheless, it still had most of the characteristics of a German province. German was the official language used in the courts and schools and was spoken by most of the population, regardless of nationality. As a result, Schepschel grew up speaking German.

A. Studied with father until age 11. Since his father was busy teaching other children throughout the day, he and young Schepschel were forced to study together from 4 AM to 7 AM in the summer and until 8 AM in the winter! The family could not afford to heat their home at night, so one can easily appreciate the determination that it took for father and son to rise at 4 AM on a subzero Russian winter morning to study together.

B. Gifted student - At the age of eleven the assiduous student was already known in the community as the boy who had absorbed the twenty-four books of the Bible so thoroughly that he could recite whole chapters by heart and who, in addition, knew the first half of 'Seder Nezikin' so well that he could point out without fail the exact page in the tractate of any utterance, statement or controversy one might quote.

C. At the tender age of 11 he was sent to study with the rabbi of Shalat, a neighboring town. "In a year and a half he was able to

finish and then to repeat the entire ‘Seder Nezikin,’ which he now knew almost by heart.

D. After a year and half of study with the rabbi of Shalat, his teacher sent him to study in Shavel in the yeshiva of Rabbi Eliezer Lunz, known as the “Charif,” because of his especially keen mental acumen.

Dr. Schaffer in later years often tersely characterized the difference in the methods of the two Yeshiboth he had thus far attended by the fact that while in Shalat he had learned in one year about three hundred pages of Gemara; all he accomplished with Lunz in the same period of time was fourteen pages of the tractate “Kidushin.” But these fourteen pages were conned thoroughly, with all the commentaries, with, in addition, the comparison of all similar and corresponding controversies in other tractates and with the practice of deducting new cases which might occur in contemporary every-day life.

E. Had also found time to study secular subjects. Russian government required rabbis to have secular degrees.

F. Went to Rabbi Dr. Hillel (Phillip) Klein, official rabbi in Libau. While teaching Gemara in local yeshiva, earned gymnasium diploma in 3 years.

II. In 1883 he went to Berlin – The *Rabbiner – Seminar*, Only place where one could get secular and Torah education. Enrolled in Hildesheimer Seminary in 1885. Earned PhD from University of Leipzig in 1889. Received semicha in 1890

III. He obtained semicha from Rav Avraham Diamant of Yurburg, from Rav Zev Lehrman of Erzvilok, and from the world famous Kovno Rov, Rabbi Yitzchok Elchonon Spector.

He was also given semicha by Rav Alexander Moshe Lapidus (Lapidoth) of Rossieny (a friend of Rav Yisroel Salanter). While visiting Rav Lapidus, he met the Rov’s youngest daughter, Anna, who was a very accomplished Hebraist and a student of language and literature. He soon asked Rav Lapidus for permission to marry Anna, and the Rov gave the couple his blessing.

IV. Could not get rabbinical position in Russia.

- A. Went to America with hope of getting a rabbinical position. Kallah was to follow him later, once he was settled. Arrived in NY in October, 1892.**
- B. Dr. Schaffer quickly became acclimated to his new surroundings, despite the fact that he had to learn a new language and adjust to the customs of a new country. He soon sent for his *kallah*, Anna Lapidus, and, shortly after she arrived in March, they were married in the shul in the presence of almost the entire congregation.**
- C. Realizing that it was important for him to learn to speak English well, Rabbi Schaffer engaged a student from Johns Hopkins University to tutor him.**
- D. In 1913 Rabbi Schaffer attempted to establish an institution for advanced Talmudic studies modeled after the Hildesheimer Rabbiner Seminar he had attended in Germany. The goal of the Rabbinical Seminary of Baltimore, of which Dr. Schaffer became the dean, was to train rabbis who were strictly Orthodox and possessed an excellent secular education. Six young men attended Johns Hopkins University during the day and studied *Tanach*, *Gemara* and *Halacha* in the afternoon and evening in the *Bais Medrash* of Shearith Israel.**

Alas, this institution lasted for only one year. One should keep in mind that Rabbi Schaffer's effort to found such a school preceded the 1915 merger of the Rabbi Yitzchok Elchonon Theological Seminary (RIETS) with Yeshiva Etz Chaim to form the short-lived Rabbinical College of America. The Rabbinical College of America led to the founding of Yeshiva College and its association with RIETS. Dr. Schaffer's concept of a rabbinical seminary that combined religious and secular studies was sound. However, in 1913 the Jewish community of Baltimore was simply not ready for such an institution.

- E. Early Zionist - When in 1896 Theodor Herzl issued a call for an International Jewish Congress, Dr. Schaffer was chosen to**

be the representative of the Zionists of America. Thus, in the summer of 1897, he traveled to Basel, Switzerland, where he was the sole American representative at this assembly. While there he took an active part in the deliberations of the Congress.

F. Died in 1933 – Succeeded in 1936 by Rav Shimon Schwab

Rabbi Dr. Bernard Drachman (1861 – 1945)

A Forgotten Champion of American Orthodoxy

I. Main source – The Unfailing Light – autobiography

Today it is not uncommon to meet people from nonreligious homes who have become observant Jews. Some even attain distinction as well-known Jewish leaders. However, in the nineteenth century such an accomplishment was virtually unheard of. Yet, Bernard Drachman was such a person. Raised in a non-Shomer Shabbos home, he went to public school in Jersey City, NJ and then Columbia College. While in high school and college, Rabbi Drachman also attended the (Reform) Temple Emanuel Hebrew Preparatory School of New York City for six years. In 1882 he graduated Columbia with honors and decided to study for the rabbinate. Temple Emanuel granted him a scholarship to pursue rabbinical studies with the idea that he would prepare for the Reform rabbinate. He went to Germany, studied at the University of Breslau and the Jewish Theological Seminary of Breslau, and earned his rabbinical degree. In addition, he matriculated at the University of Heidelberg and obtained the degree of Ph.D. Magna Cum Laude in 1885.

II. Difficult Choice – become completely observant – cannot serve reform congregation, less money

Orthodoxy thus gained a well-educated, articulate spokesman, who devoted his life promoting what he termed “American Orthodoxy.”

III. Pulpit – 1887 congregation votes for mixed seating – resigns

A. Father-in law – Jonas Weil, wealthy man

B. Congregation Zichron Ephraim – 1890 to 1945 Park East Synagogue

IV. Jewish Causes

A. JTS – originally Orthodox, dean 1889 to 1909

B. Then taught at RIETS – until 1940, taught “most of the Hebrew subjects, with the exception of the Talmud and related branches,” as well as the German language.

C. *The Jewish Welfare Board* - formed during World War I to serve the needs of Jewish servicemen. Siddur

D. *The OU and The Jewish Sabbath Alliance of America* – 1913 became second president of OU. Sabbath Alliance: In 1907 Dr. Drachman reported that “within the preceding years jobs had been obtained for 1,500 Sabbath observers.”

V. Candidate for Chief Rabbi of the United Synagogue of London – 1912

A. Dinner

B. Yiddish

Almost all of Dr. Drachman’s speeches in England were delivered in English. However, on one occasion he was asked to address a group of immigrants from Eastern Europe in Yiddish. To the astonishment of those who had made this request, he replied, “I should not care to use the Yiddish as the language of my sermons.” To the question, “Why not?” he replied, “I do not consider Yiddish a language, in the true sense of the term. It is, at best, a dialect of the German. It is an incorrect and ungrammatical German. Since I can speak a correct German, I

see no reason why I should myself corrupt and spoil the language I speak” (UL pages 301-02). The result was that he addressed the group in a simple yet correct German and was perfectly understood by all present!

C. Not selected for position

VI. Scholarly Works

In 1899 he published the first English translation of Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch’s *The Nineteen Letters of Ben Uziel*. His book [From the Heart of Israel or Jewish Tales and Types](#) first appeared in 1905. *Dibre Ha-Riboth* (Matters of Controversy, a rabbinical disputation between Zerahiah Ha-Levi and Abraham ben David) was published from a manuscript (Unicum) in 1907. In addition, he contributed countless articles to the English and Yiddish press that furthered the cause of Orthodox Judaism.

VII. Houdini - knew Harry Houdini (Ehrich Weiss) when Houdini was a pupil in the Talmud Torah of his synagogue

A. Father: Dr. Mayer S. Weiss, Hungarian born rabbi

B. Rambam - \$500

C. Spoke at Houdini’s funeral

VIII. Rabbi Dr. Bernard Drachman was a man who devoted his life to furthering the cause of Orthodox Judaism at a time when many were abandoning a Torah way of life. These people mistakenly felt that an Orthodox lifestyle was incompatible with American society. Dr. Drachman’s life’s work focused on showing that one could be an observant Jew and a full-fledged American. In this he was a pioneer who stood against the tide of religious abandonment that swept the Jewish world in America during the latter part of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries.

Harry Fischel (1865 – 1948)

The Millionaire Who Remained True to Orthodoxy

I. In 1924 Harry Fischel had occasion to visit the town of Eishishok in Lithuania. Eishishok is located a few miles from Radin, where Rabbi Yisroel Meyer Hakohen Kagan, ZT”L, known as the Chofetz Chaim, lived. When the Chofetz Chaim learned that Mr. Fischel was nearby, he immediately sent an “automobile bus used for the purpose of conveying students from the station at Radin to the Yeshiva, to take Mr. Fischel to Radin. Accompanying the bus was a committee of students. Mr. Fischel was met at a considerable distance from the Yeshiva by the Rabbi, then 86 years of age, who personally escorted him to his home and then through the Talmudical college.” (B page 318)

Who was this man whom the Chofetz Chaim went to so much trouble to see, spent so much time with, and honored so? He was obviously a remarkable man whose deeds impressed even the great Chofetz Chaim.

II. Born in small town in Russia, Meretz.

A. Parents poor, but very religious

B. Showed interest in architecture – model of Mishkan @ 10

C. Left home at 20 to avoid having to serve in Russian army

D. “When you reach the golden land, do not exchange your religion for gold.” He never forgot these words as long as he lived.

III. Arrived in US in 1865 – penniless

A. Hard to find job where he did not have to work on Shabbos – carpenter. Employer went bankrupt

B. Found job in architectural firm.

The job turned out to be all that Harry had hoped for and more. The week flew by as he applied himself in his new position. The

working conditions were excellent, and he found the work interesting and stimulating. However, when, on Friday afternoon, he approached his employer and asked if he could have Saturday off, he was told, “If you don’t come tomorrow, you need not come on Monday.”

He was now faced with a most difficult test of his religious principles. This job was precisely what he had been looking for, and it held the potential of him realizing his dream to become an architect. It appeared to be the road that would lead him from poverty to financial success. He spent a sleepless night agonizing over what to do. He finally decided that he would get up early *Shabbos* morning, *daven*, and then go to work. After *davening* he headed home to change from his *Shabbos* suit to weekday clothes and go to work.

Arriving at the corner of Hester and Essex Streets on the Lower East Side, he saw that not a single store was open. The streets were filled with people dressed in their *Shabbos* finery. The atmosphere of *Shabbos* was everywhere. Harry was truly torn by his predicament. He thought of how shocked and disappointed his parents would be if they knew what he was thinking of doing. Finally, with great difficulty, he made his decision. “He knew that neither then nor later would it ever be possible for him to desecrate the Sabbath.”

On Monday he returned to his place of employment. He pleaded with his employers to let him work a five day week, saying he would accept half of the salary that had been agreed upon when he was hired. Not only was his plea rejected, but he was not even paid for the week that he had worked.

IV. Found job as foreman for a builder, married in 1887, vacation of 2 weeks, again unemployed. Sold everything to live.

A. Job of raising roof in 1888.

“The story of the next few years [of his life] reads like a fairy tale.” (B page 31). His acumen as a businessman and his expertise in construction and architecture led him to financial success after

financial success. By 1900 he was the owner of a number of tenements and, eventually, entire buildings on Park Avenue in the most affluent neighborhood in New York City that brought him a large annual income. In short, in a little more than thirteen years he went from a condition of dire poverty to one of affluence, becoming a multimillionaire at a time when even being a millionaire was no where near as common as today.

Harry Fischel's story is not the only rags to riches story that occurred in the *goldene medina* in those times. However, what makes his story unique is what he did with his success. "He regarded the prosperity which had come to him as a direct answer to his prayers and considered that it imposed a definite obligation upon him to express his gratitude in good deeds. While he continued to strive to increase his holdings and to make more secure his fortune, it was mainly with the desire to place himself in a position where he might devote himself with greater zeal to his religion and might have more time to be of service to others."

V. Involved in a myriad of educational and Chesed activities

A. *Etz Chaim*, director of *Machzikay* Talmud Torah, the oldest Talmud Torah in New York, Uptown Talmud Torah

B. Pioneered education for girls

C. HIAS and Beth Israel Hospital

D. *Eretz Yisroel* and the Harry Fischel Institute for Research in Talmud

VI. Founding of YU and uptown campus

Those involved differed on how much money would be required to build the infrastructure needed to establish an institution that would combine a Talmudic and secular education in a single homogeneous environment. Some said \$1,000,000 would be sufficient; others \$2,000,000. When Harry Fischel suggested that \$5,000,000 would be needed, "some of the directors took the view that he had gone out of his mind. Mr. Fischel, however, insisted

that five million dollars was none too large an amount to accomplish the purpose in view, and, in order to start the ball rolling, he subscribed at once \$10,000 with the pledge of an additional subscription of \$5,000 for each million dollars collected, making his total pledge \$30,000, if the full amount was secured.”

This substantial contribution (the reader should keep in mind that we are talking about 1924 dollars) was just the beginning of Harry Fischel’s support of the campaign to establish Yeshiva College. At a fundraising dinner held on December 18, 1924, he proposed the following to Nathan Lamport, president of the Yeshiva, and Lamport’s well-to-do family. Harry said he would match any amount the Lamport family would pledge. After some deliberation, the Lamport family replied that they were willing to give \$100,000. Without hesitation, Harry Fischel committed to matching this amount. To understand the magnitude of that contribution, the value of \$100,000 in 1924 was \$1,107,470.89 in 2004.

VII. The First Succah on Park Avenue

Harry Fischel, from the time that he first owned a home of his own, made sure that it had a *Succah*. One should keep in mind that most people were negligent in fulfilling the *Mitzvah* of *Succah* during the nineteenth and first part of the twentieth centuries. Very few had their own *Succah*. In 1925 Mr. Fischel demonstrated how far his commitment to this *Mitzvah* went when he built a 14 story apartment building on the southwest corner of Park Avenue and 80th Street. In order to be able to have a *Succah*, he “omitted one room on each floor of the twelve floors of the structure above his own apartment on the second floor, entailing a loss in rentals of about \$12,000 a year.” Clearly, for Mr. Fischel, Judaism took precedence over financial gain.

Rabbi Jacob Joseph (1840 – 1902)

I. Came to America in 1888 to serve as Chief Rabbi of NYC

A. Encountered opposition when tried to bring order to the chaos in kashrus at this time

II. Funeral

A. Spent last few years of his life bedridden and forgotten.

B. Passed away at 59 on July 28, 1902

C. Word of the Rabbi's death spread rapidly throughout the Lower East Side, and the very people who ignored him while he lived felt obligated to honor him in death. There was an unprecedented outpouring of grief from all segments of the Jewish community. A funeral procession through the streets of the Lower East Side was planned, with stops at the main Orthodox synagogues, where the Chief Rabbi was to be memorialized.

D. The morning of July 30, 1902 witnessed a huge funeral procession following the casket of the Chief Rabbi.

Behind it stretched a line of 200 carriages bearing family members, local officials, wealthy merchants, and dozens of prominent rabbis from around the country. Standing before them on both sides of the street stretched a crowd of 50,000 to 100,000 mourners.

Weeping, wailing, and the chanting of Psalms filled the air as the massive entourage made its way to each of the main Orthodox synagogues. The crowds struggled and occasionally surged as particularly zealous mourners sought to touch the casket, but remarkably no serious incident occurred. Two hours later, after recitation of the final prayers, the last leg of the march to the ferry at the end of Grand Street (the cemetery was in Brooklyn) commenced. Turning east on Grand Street, the procession soon came upon a massive brick factory that housed the famed printing press manufacturing firm of R. H. Hoe and Co.

There, unbelievably, a riot began! The chronology of the events that led to this riot is given below. The events are presented in stages.

Stage One: As the procession began to pass the Hoe factory, some workers who had climbed onto the roof or gone to upper-story windows to get a better view of the procession, started throwing a variety of items including food, water, oily rags, and pieces of wood and metal at the mourners.

Stage Two: The mourners were outraged at such disrespect for so solemn an occasion. Some of them began throwing the missiles back at those who had tossed them; others burst into the factory in an effort to stop the assault.

Stage Three: The first floor office workers were unaware at what was transpiring outside. Therefore, when the irate mourners, many of them screaming in Yiddish, burst into the first floor of the factory, they panicked. The police were called. In addition, in an attempt to “protect” themselves from what appeared to be an unruly mob, they turned on the fire hose and doused the “invaders.” Some anti-Semitic remarks were shouted at the mourners, who were quickly expelled from the factory building.

Stage Four: Meanwhile, out in the street, a general melee ensued. The fire hose was aimed indiscriminately at those outside the building, whether they had been in the building or not. The mourners responded by hurling bricks, rocks and other items at the Hoe Building. Most of the building’s windows were shattered. However, this situation did not persist for very long. Indeed, the scene outside the factory began to calm down by the time the head of the funeral procession began boarding the ferry to Brooklyn, located a half mile past the factory.

Stage Five: “A few minutes later, at 1:20 p.m., a squad of 200 policemen, summoned at the outbreak of hostilities by the Hoe employees, arrived on the scene under the leadership of Inspector Adam A. Cross. ‘Without a word of warning or any request to disburse,’ stated the report on the incident commissioned by the mayor, the police ‘rushed upon the remnant of the gathering, some of them with great roughness of language and violence of manner.’”

In the end hundreds of people were injured, primarily by the clubs and fists of the policemen. Eleven Jews were arrested. Nine were fined between five and ten dollars each and then released. The other two were held for \$1000 bail for inciting a riot. Eventually, four employees of the Hoe Company were also arrested.

The entire Jewish community of New York was outraged by what had happened. Charges of anti-Semitism were leveled at the workers of the Hoe Company as well as at the police. In addition, the police were accused of treating as criminals people whose only “crime” was that they had peacefully participated in the Chief Rabbi’s funeral procession.

Protest meetings were organized demanding that Mayor Seth Low, who had been elected a year earlier on a pledge to reform the police department, form an investigative committee to look into this incident. Such a committee, consisting of notable reformers, including two prominent Jews, was indeed formed. It took testimony from many witnesses and issued a comprehensive report. This report condemned the brutal actions of the police in no uncertain terms. The police commissioner, Colonel Partridge, eventually resigned. Two officers who had been in charge of the police when the riot occurred also resigned, and a number of others were transferred to precincts that did not include the Lower East Side.

Etz Chaim, RJJ School

- A. Public school: Parents were very concerned about their children becoming integrated into American society**
- B. Un-American not to send children to public schools – stigma lasted into the 60s**
- C. Etz Chaim, intermediate school in 1886, RJJ School – 1902**
- D. RJJ School took most of public school curriculum and added it onto yeshiva studies – hours 4 to 7 for 5 days a week – 15 hours per week!**
- E. Big success- by 1913, 600 boys enrolled**

- F. Rabbi Abraham Nachman Schwartz (1871 – 1937) established Yeshiva Torah ve-Emunah Hebrew Parochial School in Baltimore in 1917. Now TA – Chofetz Chaim**

RIETS, Yeshiva College

- I. Rabbi Moshe Meir Matlin (1855 – 1927) - came to America in 1891 to assist RJJ. Supervised kosher meat and wine.**

Rabbi Matlin's family accompanied him to America. In about 1892 he enrolled his son Akiva in Yeshiva Etz Chaim. Yeshiva Etz Chaim, founded in 1886, was an intermediate school that enrolled boys at least nine years old who already were somewhat proficient in Chumash and Rashi. Yeshiva Etz Chaim's goal was to give its students a thorough grounding in Gemara and Shulchan Aruch. In addition, it provided some limited secular studies in the late afternoon.

In 1895 or 1896, Akiva [Matlin] was about sixteen and had absorbed as much as could be offered to him at the elementary school. His father, pious and anxious to see his son continue his religious studies, assembled several lads of the same age and taught them personally in his own apartment on the top floor of 172 Clinton Street. In addition to Akiva Matlin, were Hillel Rogoff and Aaron Abramowitz. The news of this advanced class spread, and soon the group grew to about twelve students. Rabbi Matlin could not accommodate them in his home any longer and began to seek larger quarters. The father of one of the students who was a member of the Mariampol Synagogue persuaded his congregation to house the incipient yeshiva. (Page 55)

Rav Yitzchok Elchanan Spektor passed away in 1896. In 1897 Rabbi Matlin joined a group of fellow rabbonim and communal leaders, most of whom were from Lithuania, in establishing a yeshiva named in honor of Rav Spektor. Thus the group of young men that Rabbi Matlin had been teaching became the nucleus for the founding of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS).

- II. Etz Chaim and Rabbinical College merged to form RIETS.**

- A. Rabbi Dr. Bernard Revel visionary**

B. Yeshiva College in 1928

Rabbi David Miller (1869 – 1939)

A Forgotten Fighter for Orthodoxy

I. Traditional yeshiva education in Lithuania – Slabodka, came to America in 1890

A. Served for short time as rabbi in New York and Providence, RI.

B. Moved to Oakland, CA became wealthy there, supported REITS and yeshivas in Europe

C. Worked to spread Torah Judaism - books about Shabbos and Taharas Ha Mishpacha, gave them away for free

D. Home Mikveh

II. R. Miller understood that a good religious Jewish education was key to ensuring the future of Yiddishkeit. At his own expense, he supported a Talmud Torah for the children of Oakland. Not only did he support this school financially, but he also devoted much of his time to running it. The school did not last, because some in the community were opposed to it. In 1935 Rabbi Miller wrote,

For lack of obtaining other room, I conducted my school at this congregation [Beth Jacob Congregation, one of the two large Orthodox shuls mentioned above] which I helped to found in 1907 and maintain thereafter. For having the privilege of educating Jewish children at my own expense in that Synagogue, I had to go through the humiliation of obtaining a permit from that President. I encountered much resistance in maintaining the school there. My permit was cancelled by the President [in 1921]. This was the greatest blow I ever received in my spiritual life, and the hardest struck on the innocent Jewish children.

In vain did the children gather outside the Synagogue, rapping at the closed doors with their little hands that some one might open to them, that they might come to my classes and joyfully compete for scholarship prizes; that they might participate every Friday in the theatrical show which I instituted to portray scenes from religious Jewish life and of the sacred Sabbath, for the purpose of instilling the Jewish spirit and ideals in their little hearts, by example. They missed, too, the cafeteria with refreshments and food at one penny (cash or credit) a dish – which included a pint of pasteurized, fresh milk.

In vain did these little ones tramp around the corner looking for their friend, their playmate, their teacher, who gave them such good times along with, and as an inducement to, the serious work; taking them out frequently for picnics and recreation, treating them gorgeously with refreshments. But no use. Their true friend, Rabbi David Miller, did not appear. He suddenly fell ill, from strain, over-exhaustion, and particularly from the most terrible blow of all received at the hands of the President when he cancelled the permit to conduct the school at the Synagogue. This separated me from my beloved and loving children.

These children have now grown to manhood and womanhood. Some of them have children of their own. Most of them still remember the lessons I taught them in an interesting, attractive, understandable way. I feel that I am completely rewarded. But just imagine my deep sorrow; the irreparable loss! Had they not broken me, my school, what accomplishment there would have been by this time - in all probability a Jewishly inspired generation would have been raised.

For a long time after this humiliating defeat I was heart-broken; ill. That is the reason why I stood apart and concentrated my philanthropic educational efforts outside of my own city of Oakland.

III. 1938 B'nai Brith held picnic on Tisha B' AV

Rabbi Miller passed away on January 7, 1939. His last will and testament dated February 23, 1938 left money to “Yeshiva Etz Hayim,

Jerusalem, Palestine; the Hebrew Theological College, Chicago, Illinois; Yeshiva Isaac Elchanan and Yeshiva College; Yeshiva Torah Vodaath; Yeshiva Mir, Poland; the Slabodka Yeshiva, Poland; the Council of Young Israel; the Rabbinical College Ner Israel, Baltimore, MD; the Rabbinical Seminary of America, Brooklyn, New York; and the Rabbinical College Ohel Torah, Baranowicz, Poland.” This list makes it clear that Rabbi Miller, Z”L, understood the value of Torah education, and the crucial role it plays in perpetuating Judaism.