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THE ORIGINS AND EARLY YEARS OF CHICAGO'S HEBREW THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE¹

I. INTRODUCTION

As masses of Eastern European Jews settled in Chicago in the last decades of the nineteenth century, Jewish education took a number of forms. Many children received their education at after-school Talmud Torahs, some of which were run by a single synagogue, while others were community-based, and shared by several congregations. Most notable among the latter was the Moses Montefiore Talmud Torah, founded in the late 1870s.

Many other Chicago Jewish children, however, received their religious education from private *melamdim*. These entrepreneurs were often men who had failed at most other occupations, and, knowing a little Hebrew, declared themselves qualified to teach children.

These schools, called *heders*, sometimes advertised themselves in Yiddish, *Du lernt men Aleph Beis biz Bar Mitzva*. The sign was intended to convey that the heder's curriculum covered all subjects starting with the Hebrew alphabet and continuing through Bar Mitzva training. However, it was usually translated as "Here one studies the *Aleph-Bet* until he is a Bar Mitzva." The second meaning was closer to the reality of these private heders.²

II. YESHIVAT ETZ CHAIM OF CHICAGO

In 1890, a 45-year-old newcomer from Lithuania, Abraham Leo Simon, arrived in Chicago. Simon had been the head of a Hebrew high school in Europe, and, observing the deplorable state of local Jewish education, became determined to establish a similar institution of quality in Chicago. The goal of such a school would be to teach students Talmud in addition to Hebrew and Bible.³

While the study and teaching of Gemara is not a controversial topic today, it certainly was in the 1800s. The lay leaders of the Talmud Torahs thought that Gemara was too difficult for American children to learn and was irrelevant as well. One unnamed teacher taught his class Talmud secretly, hiding his copy of the lesson in his desk. One day, the school's presi-

dent dropped in unexpectedly, and upon discovering the forbidden subject being taught, physically beat the teacher. Not surprisingly, Talmud was no longer taught at that school.⁴

Simon's quest to establish a quality Jewish high school program occupied much of his first nine years in Chicago. He went door-to-door seeking pledges for his school. He had been promised aid if the community would support him with five hundred pledges of one dollar a year. In 1899, the required number of subscribers was reached. Simon and his supporters personally built the benches and chairs for the school, obtained the needed books, and hired the first two teachers. The school was given the name Yeshivath Etz Chaim, and was launched with 34 students.⁵

Three years later, on April 15, 1902, Etz Chaim was officially incorporated by the State of Illinois.⁶ The official "object" of the school was "to maintain a private Hebrew Free School for the purpose of teaching the Talmud and other Hebrew classics, and also to financially assist students whose circumstances may otherwise not permit [them] to undertake these studies."⁷

The year 1905 marked an educational milestone for the yeshiva: The arrival of Rabbi Jacob Greenberg as a teacher in the school. For the first six years of its existence, Etz Chaim's curriculum had been limited to Humash. Neither Talmud nor Hebrew language were taught, despite the presence on the faculty in those early years of Jacob Dolnitzky, one of greatest scholars among Chicago's rabbis.⁸ It was Greenberg who added the study of Talmud to the curriculum, thus achieving Abraham Simon's goal.⁹

Etz Chaim was relatively secure financially, supported by the pledges obtained by Simon and his friends. Unfortunately, that financial security was wiped out by the Depression of 1907. The school issued "An Appeal to the Jewish Public," stating bluntly that "the financial condition of our Yeshivah is very poor." The school was behind in salary payments to teachers and had no coal for heat. The crisis was not short-lived, for the following year a similar appeal was issued.¹⁰

By 1910 the crisis was over, and Etz Chaim was again flourishing.¹¹ The 80 or so pupils of the yeshiva had a long day. Following their public school studies, they had classes at Etz Chaim from 4-8, and from 9-1 Sunday mornings. Although Etz Chaim was considered a high school, many of the students were younger than high school age, starting their studies at the yeshiva at the age of nine or ten. The course of study in those days was mostly Gemara, with a bit of Humash. The Gemara study was not on a high level, the text itself being augmented with only Rashi's commentary.

Rabbi Greenberg remembers the Etz Chaim building as having small classrooms, which were poorly equipped and poorly ventilated. Former student Rabbi Harry Epstein, however, has memories of games being played in the basement, and does not recall the problems of the building.¹²

World War I led to the next crisis of Etz Chaim. The war halted the

flow of immigrants to Chicago. Deprived of its main source of new students, the yeshiva suffered. At that time, the local Talmud Torahs were not preparing their graduates for any advanced Jewish education, and were not a source of Etz Chaim students.

In the long run, however, the war led to a strengthening of Etz Chaim. The student shortage crisis caused Rabbi Greenberg to leave the yeshiva to become principal of the Moses Montefiore Talmud Torah. In that capacity, and with a change in attitude of the Talmud Torah lay leaders, Greenberg overhauled the current system. Montefiore became a "prep school" for Etz Chaim. In one year alone, fifty Montefiore students entered the yeshiva.¹³

Etz Chaim had survived its crisis with the realization that future growth could come from American, not only immigrant, children. By the end of the war, however, it was no longer the only yeshiva in Chicago. How the new school would interact with the older one would mark the next stage in the development of Etz Chaim.

III. BETH HA-MEDRASH LE-RABONIM

Rabbi Greenberg had taught the highest class at Etz Chaim. His departure forced the parents of some of the students to consider what kind of advanced Jewish education they wanted for their children. Some of the older, more advanced students, went to Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary in New York. The younger ones were not ready to live 800 miles from home. Chaim Zvi Rubinstein, rabbi of Congregation Bikur Cholim in South Chicago, decided that he would personally tutor his two sons, Zadok and Samuel. Three other classmates joined the Rubinstein boys: Harry Epstein, Louis Lehrfield, and Shepard Z. Baum (then named Switzkenbaum).

During the school year 1916-17, the three West Side boys lived in a house next door to the Rubinsteins. They would leave their homes every Sunday morning for South Chicago and return on Friday. In the mornings, Harry Epstein (and, perhaps, the others) attended the local public high school. The afternoons were devoted to Gemara study with Rabbi Rubinstein.¹⁴

The next level in the school's development took place during *Hol ha-Mo'ed Sukkot* 1917. In a meeting held in Ephraim Epstein's *sukka*, a group of rabbis led by Rabbis Epstein, Rubinstein, Greenberg, and Cardon, decided to expand the South Chicago study circle into a formalized advanced yeshiva.¹⁵

The first step in the transformation was to relocate the yeshiva to the new center of Chicago Jewry, the Lawndale neighborhood on the West Side.¹⁶ By the Spring of 1918, the school had moved to the top floor of the new Grenshaw Street Talmud Torah. The *Jewish Courier* published a long, very complimentary article about the yeshiva, entitled "The Chicago Col-

lege for Rabbis." The new school expected its students to attend college and study secular subjects. This modern approach enabled the Chicago yeshiva to avoid the problems of New York's Isaac Elchanan Seminary, where student strikes over the issue of secular education almost destroyed the school ten years earlier.¹⁷

The Chicago yeshiva quickly grew to 40 students.¹⁸ On August 19, 1918, its existence was made official when it was incorporated under the misspelled name, "Yashiva Beth Hamedrash La Rabonim."¹⁹ The officially stated object for the yeshiva was "to conduct a College of Divinity, wherein a course of study will be given in the Hebrew and Talmud and all advanced subjects pertaining to the rituals and ceremonies of the Jewish Religion for the purpose of preparing students to become Jewish Rabbis, Teachers and Preachers of the Jewish Religion."²⁰

While the students spent their time learning, storm clouds were gathering over their school. The young Beth Hamedrash le-Rabonim needed to raise funds, and fears were expressed that there might not be room in Chicago for two yeshivas. Rabbi Album, a prominent force in enlisting support for Etz Chaim, was no friend of either the new school or those rabbis associated with it. For their part, the younger rabbis felt that Album was a lone wolf who cooperated with no one else because, after all, he was the self-proclaimed chief rabbi of Chicago.²¹

Leading the anti-Beth Hamedrash le-Rabonim attacks was the *Jewish Courier*, under its publisher, M. Ph. Ginzburg and its new editor, Samuel M. Melamed. As befits the Chicago journalism tradition of the 1920s, Melamed did not hesitate to print untrue stories about the Beth Hamedrash supporters.²²

On February 2, 1921, the *Courier* attacked Saul Silber, one of the "political rabbis" behind the new yeshiva. It said that Silber was not even a rabbi, having never been ordained. The same article urged support of "the real and learned rabbis in Chicago," such as Rabbi Album.

It is uncertain why the *Courier* took such a strident tone. Did it really perceive a threat to Etz Chaim? Did it really feel that funds for the new yeshiva should be spent on Talmud Torahs instead? One possibility was revenge. Both Rabbis Leonard Mishkin and Oscar Fasman have stated that Melamed wanted to be named a professor of philosophy at the new yeshiva. His beliefs, however, disqualified him for that Orthodox institution. His anger at rejection led to the vicious articles.²³ In 1921, however, a number of events turned the *Courier* from foe to friend.

The most important new development was the merger between Etz Chaim and Beth Hamedrash le-Rabonim. The exact date of the merger is not known; neither are the specifics of the negotiations, or the identity of the negotiators. However, looking back 70 years later, the merger seems inevitable. Despite any battles over turf, honor or ego, many of the same people were leaders of both schools.

Rabbis Cardon, Goldenson, Muskin and Silber of the advanced yeshiva were also directors of Etz Chaim. In addition, community leaders such as Ben Zion Leiserovich and Shlomo Levin, president of Etz Chaim, were determined to make a merger work.²⁴

A second reason for the merger was financial. The Jews had moved away from the near West Side neighborhood where Etz Chaim was located. The school had opened a Lawndale branch, but it needed more space. Beth Hamedrash le-Rabonim had outgrown the Grenshaw building and also needed greater space. A single Orthodox educational institution could better afford the cost of a new building.

Etz Chaim had already made plans for a Lawndale expansion. On July 1, 1920, Shlomo Levin purchased the property at the northwest corner of Douglas Boulevard and St. Louis Avenue in the heart of the Lawndale neighborhood.²⁵ Over a year later, on August 16, 1921, after the two schools had agreed to merge, Levin transferred the property to Beth Hamedrash le-Rabonim.²⁶ The latter school, in turn, sold the lot to Hebrew Theological College for \$16,500 on December 21, 1921.²⁷

IV. HEBREW THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

Ben Zion Laser was named president of the merged institution, which was called Bet Hamidrash LeTorah in Hebrew and Hebrew Theological College in English.²⁸

Under the merger agreement, Etz Chaim was to become the preparatory department of HTC. The old Beth Hamedrash le-Rabonim would become the rabbinical department. A new division, a teacher's institute for women, would also be established.²⁹

With Ben Zion Laser handling the fundraising and board member Alex Eisenstein overseeing the construction, ground was broken for the HTC building during *Hol ha-Mo'ed Sukkot* 1921, four years after the organizational meeting in Rabbi Epstein's *sukka*. At the same time, on October 15, 1921, the new school was officially incorporated, with Laser, Benjamin Hindsill and N.H. Bolotin as the founding directors.

On April 16, 1922, in a festive ceremony, the building's cornerstone was laid. Half a year later, once again during *Hol ha-Mo'ed Sukkot*, the new building was dedicated.³⁰ There were 145 students in Etz Chaim and 90 in the rabbinical department,³¹ ninety per cent of whom were American-born.³²

Prior to the building dedication, Laser was replaced as president by Saul Silber, rabbi of Anshe Shalom. Silber stamped the school with his personality for 24 years, leading it as president until his death on September 1, 1946 at the age of 65.

Silber was born in Lithuania on March 15, 1881, and attended yeshiva

in his hometown of Dvinsk.³³ At age 16, he began three years of study under Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines in Lida. Reines was unique among Eastern European rabbinic leaders in that he believed in including Bible, Hebrew, and secular studies in the usual Talmud-only yeshiva curriculum. Reines, who was one of the early leaders of religious Zionism, believed that Jewish and secular learning were compatible and complemented each other. Reines' beliefs strongly influenced Silber, and, years later, influenced Silber's school.³⁴

In 1900, Silber moved to the United States, married Sarah Kaplan three years later, and accepted pulpits in Columbus and Youngstown, Ohio, before accepting the position at Anshe Shalom in 1910.³⁵

Among the Orthodox rabbis of Chicago, Silber stood out as being the most diplomatic, tactful, and Americanized. The HTC board felt that he was the perfect choice to represent their school to the world at large, as well as the best person to raise funds for that school. His loveable and approachable personality attracted followers and supporters. Despite his endless hours devoted to HTC, he never accepted a salary; it was only a few years prior to his death that Rabbi Silber even received an expense account (of \$5,000 a year).³⁶

Rabbi Silber's diplomatic skills were in full force as he turned the *Courier* from an enemy into a friend. The *Courier* had already been weakening in its attacks following a 1921 meeting between Melamed and a large group of Chicago rabbis. The rabbis, some with tears in their eyes, asked Melamed what they had done to deserve such unfair treatment from him?

Silber completed the courtship of the *Courier* by naming both Ginzburg and Melamed to the HTC board. The latter was allowed to lecture occasionally at HTC. In addition, Ginzburg was from Mariampol, and Anshe Shalom was the "Mariampoler shul." Silber used that connection to help cement the relationship between the school and the paper.³⁸

There was much mutual respect between the new leader of HTC, Saul Silber, and the founder of the old Beth Hamedrash le-Rabonim, Ephraim Epstein—but there was little love between them. Epstein had been shunted aside after the merger, being named honorary president of HTC. Epstein felt that Silber was giving the impression that HTC was his own creation, and that Epstein's contribution was minimized and overlooked.

Epstein and Silber were educated in very different atmospheres. In Slobodka, where Epstein studied and received *semikha*, secular studies were discouraged, and in the all-Talmud environment, there was no formal instruction in Bible (it being assumed that this subject was mastered long before entry into Slobodka). Exposure to the American scene following his acceptance of the pulpit of Anshe Knesses Israel in 1911 led to a change in Epstein's views of secular education. He became an exponent of the combination of Jewish and secular studies, believing that Orthodox American Jews, and especially their rabbinic leaders, needed to be on the same educational level as the rest of American Jewry.

In that respect, Epstein's views mirrored Silber's. They differed, however, in their attitudes towards *Hokhmat Yisrael*, non-Talmud Jewish subjects, such as Bible, philosophy, history, etc. Silber, influenced by Reines, was in favor of making those subjects an important part of the HTC curriculum. Epstein felt that the keystone of Jewish learning was Gemara, and that all the other subjects were secondary. For these reasons, Epstein played a relatively minor role in the development of HTC following the merger, devoting his considerable abilities to the cause of Jewish education in general. A man of aristocratic bearing and demeanor, Epstein remained a leader of Chicago Jewry until his death in 1960 at the age of 84.³⁹

The first *Rosh ha-Yeshiva* was Nisson Yablonsky, formerly the *dayan* of the town of Slobodka. Rabbi Yablonsky was the person instrumental in reopening the yeshiva in Slobodka during the German occupation in World War I. Along with the occupying forces, Rabbi Joseph Carlebach arrived in Slobodka to aid in the revival of the Jewish community there. Yablonsky was influenced by Carlebach's German Orthodoxy, which, unlike that of Eastern Europe, was not opposed to secular studies.⁴⁰

In 1922, Yablonsky came to Chicago to collect money for his yeshiva. His brilliance was apparent to the HTC administration, and they offered him the position of *Rosh ha-Yeshiva*, which he accepted. Rabbi Yablonsky was a popular rebbe with a good sense of humor. His belief that the students should get a college education echoed Silber's approach.⁴¹

The most beloved and popular faculty member was the original "father of the yeshiva," Chaim Zvi Rubinstein. Rubinstein had been named rabbi of Congregation Bnei Reuven in Lawndale in 1919, ending his long commute to Beth Hamedrash le-Rabonim.⁴² Jacob Greenberg returned to the yeshiva with the merger and was named its principal and dean. As such, Greenberg supervised all educational activities and was in charge of both students and faculty.⁴³ Other early faculty members were Rabbi Chaim David Regensberg, Rabbi Selig Starr, and, most prominent of all, Dr. Meyer Waxman.⁴⁴

The classes were taught in Yiddish, with the exception of the Hebrew language courses (which were taught in Hebrew) and Jewish philosophy (which was taught in English). To prepare the students for the rabbinate, Silber hired a public speaking teacher, and had the students give sermons at the local synagogues. Many of the neighborhood rabbis, feeling threatened by the young, English-speaking students, refused to allow them to speak. Eventually, however, their resistance was overcome, though in some cases the students were allowed to speak only in Yiddish.⁴⁵

HTC was unique among yeshivot in the world in that it required its students to receive a B.A. degree at the same time they were studying for ordination. Many students attended the closest college, the Lewis Institute.⁴⁶ Others attended University of Chicago, with a smaller number studying at Northwestern.⁴⁷

In those days, HTC had the distinction of being the only advanced yeshiva which had its Jewish studies in the afternoon. Students were thus able to attend the same classes as the general college population, and not have to be shunted off to night school. Students would trickle into HTC at 2:00 or 3:00 in the afternoon. From 3:00 to 4:00 would be self-study and preparation for the afternoon classes. At four o'clock were the non Talmud classes such as history, Bible, or Hebrew. The entire school had Gemara class from 6:30-8:00.⁴⁸

As in the Beth Hamedrash le-Rabonim, the HTC students (at least those in the smaller rabbinical department) were close companions. Most of them lived near each other in Lawndale. There were no dormitories, so the out-of-town students lived in rented rooms in the neighborhood. The first out-of-town student, Paul Bender, had established this pattern in 1918 when he arrived from Elgin, Illinois, to attend Beth Hamedrash le-Rabonim.⁴⁹

The early HTC administration would be considered liberal by the standards of many of today's yeshivot. It placed no restrictions on any student's course of study at college. It was also tolerant of the students' social lives. Students often frequented the nearby Blue Inn Cafe, where they could go dancing.⁵⁰

The students formed a Student Organization and, in December, 1924, began publishing their own newspaper, the *Hebrew Theologian*. It contained school news, humor, editorials, and serious articles on such people and subjects as Kant, Josephus, Saadia Gaon, prominent rabbis, and questions confronting contemporary American rabbis. The *Theologian* also had a Hebrew section, with contributions from both students and faculty.⁵¹

No students worked at part-time jobs to supplement their tuition, because there was no tuition. Except for those few from well-to-do families, HTC students received stipends from the school ranging \$15 to \$40 a week. The stipend checks, given out by Rabbi Greenberg, were to ensure that a student devoted himself to his studies without worrying about earning a living.⁵²

The efforts of Rabbi Silber and his colleagues reached fruition on March 29, 1925 when HTC's first class of ten was ordained.⁵³ In addition to the *semikha* given by the yeshiva, the ten new rabbis were given a separate ordination by Rabbi Judah L. Gordon, known as the Gaon of Lomza. Rabbi Gordon was considered by much of Chicago's Orthodox community to be the city's greatest scholar. A separate ordination from him gave HTC added respect and honor.³⁴

The school continued to grow, but Rabbi Silber's Zionist inclinations could not be stilled. In June, 1926, he and his family went on aliya. Silber had wanted to grow oranges, but a grove would cost him \$50,000 (in 1926 dollars), and would not yield fruit for some years. Unable to find a way to support his family, he returned to Chicago alone, hoping to be reunited with his wife and children in Palestine. It was not to be. Instead, the family

remained separated for eleven months, and Rabbi Silber never saw the land of Israel again.⁵⁵

It was a happier time for Silber on August 29, 1927, as he presided over his second graduation, a class of nine students. Even the *Reform Advocate* contained coverage of that event. In only a few years, HTC had emerged as an established institution.⁵⁶

V. EPILOGUE

Unfortunately, Rabbi Silber's joy was short-lived. Less than a year after the second graduation, Rabbi Yablonsky died, only in his 50s. He was replaced by Chaim Korb, who lacked Yablonsky's charisma and strong affinity for secular learning. Rabbi Korb remained *Rosh ha-Yeshiva* until 1950.

In the summer of 1929, personal tragedy hit the school, when three HTC students were murdered in the Hebron massacre: Jacob Wexler, Harry Frauman, and Ephraim Epstein's son, David. Just a few months later, HTC suffered a financial tragedy, as the Great Depression threatened its survival. The HTC library addition was delayed for a decade.⁵⁷

Despite these setbacks and tragedies, Rabbi Silber remained fully dedicated to his school, fulfilling his vision of developing an American Orthodox rabbinate that could and would meet the challenges of twentieth-century America.

Over the course of seven decades, almost all Chicago Orthodox rabbis called the Hebrew Theological College their alma mater. HTC's influence, however, was not that narrowly located. Its graduates made their mark in not only the American Jewish community, but in Israel as well.⁵⁸

NOTES

1. I would like to thank Mrs. Esther Kopstein and Rabbis Harry Epstein, Leonard Mishkin, and Oscar Z. Fasman for graciously granting their time for interviews. I also acknowledge the contribution of Roslyn Berlat who has spent much time exploring the early history of HTC for her doctoral thesis.
2. See Morris A. Gutstein, *A Priceless Heritage* (1953), 246-47; Harold Korey, *The History of Jewish Education in Chicago* (unpublished M.A. dissertation, 1942), pp. 53-69; Korey, "The Story of Jewish Education in Chicago Prior to 1923," *Jewish Education*, (January/March 1934), pp. 42-47.
3. On Simon, see H.L. Meites, *History of the Jews of Chicago* (c. 1924), p. 213. Meites' *History* has recently been reprinted with a new introduction.
4. Z. Abrams, *The Book of Memories* (Vol. III c. 1934), pp. 5-7. "Z. Abrams" was the pseudonym of Abraham J. Zhitnik, who wrote a multi-volume work on the history of various Chicago and St. Louis Jewish institutions. This work, written in Yiddish and English side-by-side, is, for many details, the primary, if not only, source of the early history of HTC. The accuracy of what is found there is not always certain. Zhitnik was a colorful character: a

former Russian communist, he became an Orthodox old-age-home owner, and moved to Arizona in his later years. He was, however, not a historian. For this reason, if other sources contradict "Abrams," I usually accept the other sources.

5. Meites, p. 550; Abrams, pp. 7-8. Abrams puts the date of the founding at 1895.
6. 108 Corp. 297, in the Office of Cook County Recorder of Deeds. Besides Simon, the other incorporators were Abraham Lewinthal, Wolf Finkelstein, Henry Rubinstein, Benj. Leiserovitz, Isreal (sic) Schaunhaus, and Isaac Goodstein. Leiserovitz later played an important role in the development of HTC. See below.
7. Most of the early leaders of Etz Chaim belonged to Congregation Mishna Ugmoro, regarded as the most Orthodox synagogue in Chicago. Unlike other synagogues in those days, no one could be an officer of Mishna Ugmoro unless he was a Sabbath observer. The members were loyal to their rabbi, Simon H. Album, who viewed himself as Chicago's chief rabbi. Meites, p. 534; *Sentinel*, April 3, 1914, p. 22.
8. For a short biography of Dolnitzky. see Morris Casriel Katz., *The Jacob Dolnitzky Memorial Volume* 1982), pp 13-19.
9. Abrams, pp. 11-12; Jacob Greenberg, "Twenty Five Years of Talmud in Chicago," *HTC Eighth Anniversary Journal* (January 12, 1930), p. 10.
10. *Jewish Courier*, December 31, 1907; *Courier*, December 4, 1908.
11. In general, Orthodox leadership in Chicago was rejuvenated in the early 1910s by the arrival of young rabbis Saul Silber, Ephraim Epstein, Abraham Cardon, Chaim Zvi Rubinstein, and Eliezer Muskin. It was the children of new immigrants who made up the student body of Etz Chaim, there being virtually no native born students in those days.
12. Despite the long hours spent in study, the students of Etz Chaim considered themselves "regular kids." They played and fought with each other like children everywhere. They even played dice outside the school, with one student serving as the lookout for the local police. Interview with Rabbi Harry Epstein, June 13, 1990. On Harry Epstein, see Pamela S. Nadell, *Conservative Judaism in America: A Biographical Dictionary and Sourcebook* 1988), pp. 78-79. Greenberg's remarks about the yeshiva's building are in his article, cited above.
13. Abrams, pp. 12-14; Greenberg, op. cit.
14. Interview with Harry Epstein, June 6, 1990. Rabbi Epstein's first-hand account contradicts several points in Abrams, pp. 14-16: Certain students listed by Abrams did not join the school until it moved out of South Chicago; also, the West Siders did not live in Rabbi Rubinstein's home.
15. Abrams, p. 17, puts the date of the Succot meeting in 1916. Rabbi Leonard Mishkin. in "History of the Hebrew Theological College/Bet Hamidrash LaTorah," *1982 HTC Dinner Journal*, p. 27, puts the date at 1918 (the journal article itself says 1919, but that is a typographical error). Although the 1918 date was told to Rabbi Mishkin by Rabbi Epstein himself, the meeting must have been a year earlier, because the corporate charter for the school would then antedate by two months the very decision to establish the school. See below for details of the charter.
16. The school moved into Rabbi Epstein's synagogue, Anshe Knesses Israel, at 3411-19 Douglas Boulevard, for the 1917-18 school year. Despite Rabbi Epstein's involvement, however, the fledgling yeshiva did not survive the year there. Some *shtenders* (personal podiums, found in some synagogues) were discovered broken. The congregation officers blamed the students, stating that "*shtenders* don't break by themselves."

Harry Epstein recalls that the young teenage students were sometimes a bit wild, but he does not recall any *shtenders* being broken. He feels that the synagogue officers were more concerned about the extra cost of electricity used by the school than by any broken items. Harry Epstein interview (6/6/90); The *shtender* story is from Abrams, p. 18.
17. *Jewish Courier*, April 10, 1918. On the New York student strikes, see Gilbert Klaperman, *The Story of Yeshiva University* (1969), pp. 83-115.
18. The students in the new yeshiva were all very close with one another. Many of them went

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- to high school together, played baseball together, and spent much of their free time together. Over 70 years later, Harry Epstein, the last of the original students, could not only recall his classmates with fondness, but could list the yeshiva baseball team, with the positions each student played.
19. The listed directors were Rabbis Ephraim Epstein, Ezriel Epstein, Chaim Zvi Rubinstein, A.B. Goldenson, Abraham I. Cardon, Eliezer Muskin, and S. Winograd.
 20. 254 Corp. 239-41, in the Office of Cook County Recorder of Deeds. "Yashiva" should have been spelled "Yeshiva."
 21. Harry Epstein interview (6/6/90); Abrams, p. 20; Mishkin, "Orthodoxy." *Sentinel's 50-Year History 1911-61*, p. 127.
 22. The most egregious example occurred in the November 18, 1920 issue, when the *Courier* accused Ephraim Epstein of collecting money for Slobodka, a yeshiva which no longer existed. The article stopped just short of accusing Epstein of outright theft and fraud. In reality, while Slobodka was closed for a while during the war, it had since been reopened. Its head was none other than the renowned scholar. Mordechai M. Epstein, older brother of the vilified Ephraim.
 23. Interview with Leonard Mishkin, June 14, 1990; Interview with Oscar Fasman, May 24, 1990.
 24. Leiserovich's last name is spelled various ways in different accounts. He later changed his name to Laser, which was sometimes spelled Lazar or Lazer. Laser made his money in the feather business, but spent much of his time involved in Jewish education. For more on Laser, see Meites, p. 563, and Abrams, p. 46. Levin was the founder of Sinai Kosher Sausage Co., one of the major American kosher meat companies. On Levin, see Meites, p. 551.
 25. Cook County Recorder of Deeds Document No. 6874149 (new No. 16162/31).
 26. Cook County Recorder of Deeds Document No. 7250677 (new No. 16994/271).
 27. Cook County Recorder of Deeds Document No. 7365752-3 (new No. 17259/509-510). The property could not have been deeded directly to HTC in August, because HTC did not legally exist until it was incorporated on October 15, 1921. Abrams, at 25, incorrectly states that the new school purchased the property on March 1, 1921.
 28. Abrams, p. 22.
 29. The preparatory department stopped using the Etz Chaim name rather quickly. The entire department was discontinued when the Chicago Jewish Academy opened in 1942. The Teacher's Institute was always the smallest division. It lasted less than 20 years before closing due to lack of students. It was later reopened, and exists today under the name Anne Blitstein Teacher's Institute, offering a half dozen courses per semester.
 30. Alex Eisenstein's contacts as a contractor had saved the school \$25,000 in construction costs, leaving HTC with a relatively small mortgage of \$30,000 out of a total building cost of \$120,000. The building, at 3448 Douglas Boulevard, was fully completed on December 27, 1922. Abrams, at p. 24, Abrams states that Shlomo Levin personally guaranteed the mortgage, but there is no record of this in the mortgage document dated July 29, 1922, signed by Ben Laser, president, and Moses Perlstein, secretary, as recorded in the Office of Cook County Recorder of Deeds,
 31. Saul Silber, "The Purposes and Objectives of the Hebrew Theological College," *Sunday Jewish Courier*, January 21, 1923. Meyer Perlstein, "The Hebrew Theological College of Chicago," *Chicago Chronicle*, March 20, 1923, p. 48, lists a similar number of students: 180 in Etz Chaim and 85 in the rabbinical department.
 32. Greenberg, op. cit. The board of directors, consisting of older men, remained primarily foreign-born for several years. In Meites' article about HTC, William Lavin is the only native-born director profiled. Meites notes, at p. 552, that "Mr. Lavin is a strictly observant Orthodox Jew, though Chicago born" (emphasis added).
 33. Virtually all the early leaders of HTC and its predecessor institutions came from Lithuania. The presence in that region of many great yeshivot undoubtedly influenced the former inhabitants to establish similar schools in America.

34. Most Silber profiles claim incorrectly that he studied in Reines' yeshiva in Lida. Reines, however, founded his yeshiva in 1905, after Silber had immigrated to America. Silber was apparently part of a more informal study group centered around Reines. If anything, the less formal setting would have brought Silber closer to Reines and more deeply under his influence. Leonard Mishkin interview, September 11, 1990. On Reines' yeshiva, see Yosef Salmon, "The Yeshivah of Lida: A Unique Institution of Higher Learning," *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science*, XV (1974), pp. 106-25.
35. Meites, p. 491; Abrams, p. 31; Oscar Z. Fasman, "From Birth to Immortality," in *Selected Essays of Rabbi Saul Silber* (1950), pp. 9-13; Alex Goldman, *Giants of Faith* (1964), pp. 207-15. Never addressed in any of these biographies is the *Courier's* earlier charge that Silber had never been ordained. A comparison of the numerous biographies in both Meites and Abrams reveals that the source of ordination of all the rabbis is listed—except for Saul Silber. Esther Kopstein, his daughter, is certain that her father received semicha while in yeshiva in Dvinsk. In any event, the point was rendered moot in 1921 when Chicago's leading Orthodox scholar, Rabbi Judah L. Gordon, personally ordained Silber. None of this, of course, detracts from Silber's role as the greatest Orthodox rabbinic leader in Chicago's history.
36. Leonard Mishkin interview; Oscar Fasman interview; interview with Esther Kopstein, May 10, 1990.
37. Harry Epstein interview; Leonard Mishkin interview.
38. Leonard Mishkin interview.
39. Meites, p. 487; Abrams, p. 33; Harry Epstein interview; Leonard Mishkin interview; Oscar Fasman interview; Esther Kopstein interview. The mutual respect between Silber and Epstein is illustrated by the fact that the latter gave one of the eulogies at Mrs. Silber's funeral in September, 1949. He recalled the kindness shown to his family by Mrs. Silber when the Epsteins first arrived in Chicago.
40. Carlebach later became rabbi in Hamburg. He was killed in the Holocaust in 1942. His nephew Shlomo became famous as the "singing rabbi."
41. Leonard Mishkin interview. Although Rabbi Mishkin is married to Yablonsky's daughter, Leah, and would be expected to praise his father-in-law, his comments were seconded by Oscar Fasman in the interview.
42. Oscar Fasman interview; Abrams, p. 35.
43. Mishkin, "History," loc. cit.; Leonard Mishkin interview; Abrams, p. 32.
44. See Abrams, pp. 36-38 for profiles of Regensberg, Starr and Waxman respectively. Waxman had been one of the founders in 1917 of New York's Teacher's Institute, now Yeshiva University's Isaac Breuer College of Hebraic Studies. His multi-volume *History of Jewish Literature* is still the standard work in the field.
45. Leonard Mishkin interview; Esther Kopstein interview.
46. That school later merged with Armour Institute of Technology, and is now known as Illinois Institute of Technology.
47. In those pre-pluralism days, no HTC students wore yarmulkes while attending college. When lunchtime arrived, the HTC student would go off in a corner, put on a yarmulke, eat his meal quickly, say Grace, and put his yarmulke back in his pocket. It was not that these men were less religious than their counterparts of today; it was simply a known fact of the 1920s that one did not wear a yarmulke in all places at all times. Transcript of Leonard Mishkin interview, March 4, 1978, pp. 9-10 (located at Chicago Jewish Historical Society).
48. Mishkin interview transcript (3/4/78), pp. 8-9. Rabbi Mishkin feels that the old arrangement enabled HTC students to mingle and interact with all different types of students, and to more fully participate in a university life. He also lamented the fact that *Ilokhnmat Yisrael* subjects have been minimized at HTC, which has become very heavily weighted in favor of Gemara. Rabbi Fasman disagrees, having been the one to abandon the afternoon Jewish studies program when he became HTC president in 1946. He saw no reason for HTC to be different from all other yeshivot in the world. Oscar Fasman interview.

49. Full disclosure requires me to state that Paul Bender was the grandfather of my wife, Ruth Gleicher.
50. Mishkin transcript, p. 15; Leonard Mishkin interview. Interestingly, women attended their Teacher's Institute classes in the same building as the men. That was considered acceptable by the HTC rabbis. Thirty years later, when a proposal was made to establish a women's college on HTC's new Skokie campus, almost two blocks from the men's buildings, right-wing forces at HTC succeeded in blocking it. See, Fasman, "Historical Reminiscence: After Fifty Years, An Optimist," *American Jewish History*, (December, 1979), pp. 167-68.
51. Issues of the *Hebrew Theologian* are kept at HTC's Saul Silber Library, under the care of Mr. Joseph Bachrach.
52. Rabbi Mishkin still has a list of which students were to receive what amounts as their stipends. This official stipend system replaced a more informal one that had existed at Etz Chaim, whereby individuals would give promising students some money as an incentive. See Morris Casriel Katz, *A Priestly Kingdom* (1989), pp. 20-22.
53. The first ten were Peretz Dissen, Mordecai Doppelt, Simon G. Kramer (HTC's president 1964-70), Joseph Krikstein, Louis J. Lehrfield, Charles (Zadok) Rubinstein, Israel Rubinstein (both sons of Rabbi Chaim Zvi Rubinstein), Mordecai Schultz, E. Siegel, and Norman Silverstein.
54. Meites, pp. 554-55; Fasman interview. Rabbi Gordon died shortly after the first graduation. His son-in-law, Rabbi Regensberg, was a member of the HTC faculty for over 40 years.
55. Esther Kopstein interview.
56. *Reform Advocate*, August 27, 1927. The second HTC class consisted of Paul J. Bender, Israel Gerstein, Irving Metset, Harry (Uri) Miller, Israel Notiss, Myron Rissman, Harry Shapiro, Hyman Shambam, and David Winchester.
57. At this juncture, the histories of HTC and Yeshiva University, which had many similarities, begin to diverge. Like HTC, Yeshiva began as a lower level school called Etz Chaim, which later merged with a younger, though higher-level, yeshiva (Isaac Elchanan). Like HTC, Yeshiva was led by a visionary leader, Bernard Revel, who believed that secular studies had intrinsic value. Like HTC. Yeshiva lost its beloved *Rosh ha-Yeshiva* (Solomon Polachek) at a young age; had lost students in the Hebron massacre; and had suffered greatly during the Depression.
 Unlike HTC, Yeshiva replaced its Rosh ha-Yeshiva with the even more prominent R. Moshe Soloveitchik, followed by his son, R. Joseph, who became the leader of American Orthodoxy for four decades. After Revel's untimely death, his successor, Samuel Belkin, was powerful enough to keep the right-wing of Orthodoxy from adversely affecting Revel's vision. That was not the case at HTC, as seen by the fate of the proposed women's college. Finally, the growth of Yeshiva into a full-fledged college and university allowed its students to participate in both the secular and Jewish worlds, an option which no longer existed at HTC following the shift of Jewish studies to the morning.
58. Harold P. Smith, "1972-Hebrew Theological College," *1972 HTC Dinner Journal*, pp. 69-73.