

LC

749.3

M48J55

JEWISH EDUCATION  
QUESTION IN MELBOURNE

A  
A  
0  
0  
1  
2  
8  
1  
5  
2  
6  
2



UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



THE LIBRARY  
OF  
THE UNIVERSITY  
OF CALIFORNIA  
LOS ANGELES



*On the*

*Jewish Education Question*

*In Melbourne.*



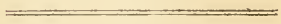


THE  
JEWISH EDUCATION QUESTION  
IN MELBOURNE.

WITH THE VIEWS THEREON OF

THE REV. JOSEPH ABRAHAMS, M.A., PH.D.,  
AND  
THE REV. JOSEPH FRIEDLANDER.

EDITED BY JACOB GOLDSTEIN.



MELBOURNE:  
A. H. MASSINA & CO., PRINTERS & PUBLISHERS,  
26 LITTLE COLLINS STREET EAST.  
1888.

TO

ALDERMAN B. BENJAMIN, J.P.,

THE RIGHT WORSHIPFUL

THE MAYOR OF MELBOURNE,

CHAIRMAN OF THE JEWISH EDUCATION CONFERENCE,

*This Pamphlet is respectfully inscribed  
in recognition of his  
unvarying interest in all matters affecting the  
welfare of Judaism in this Colony.*

BY HIS OBEDIENT SERVANT,

THE EDITOR.

EAST MELBOURNE HEBREW SCHOOL,

*Albert Street, August, 1888.*

38.3  
197.55

VIEWS OF THE REV. JOSEPH ABRAHAMS,  
M.A., PH.D.

MELBOURNE HEBREW CONGREGATION,

14th August, 1888.

**D**EAR MR. GOLDSTEIN,—I have much pleasure in complying with your request, in which you ask me to express my views on the Jewish Education question. As I understand your wish, you desire me to state my opinion on two points.—1. As to the best means of diffusing religious and Hebrew instruction to a large number of children in Melbourne and the suburbs who are at present receiving no such tuition. 2. How to impart Jewish education in such a manner as will arouse and sustain the interest of the pupils during their school-days, and prove beneficial to them in after life.

I do not claim much originality for the suggestions I am about to offer. They are the results of my own observation, and of conversations on the subject I have held with my colleagues, the Revs. Mr. Blaubaum and Mr. Myers, with yourself, with the delegates of the Educational Conference, and with others interested in the movement.

With regard to the first point, I hold two views—an ideal and a practical view. It is very unlikely that my ideal view will be realised, but, as you are anxious to sift the question in all its phases, it may interest you to hear it. You will allow me, then, to indulge in a wild fancy. Suppose one of our wealthy co-religionists, fired with the spirit of a Montefiore, a Rothschild, or a Hirsch, were to place into my hands the sum of twenty thousand pounds, to be devoted to improving our Jewish education, I would then be in a position to carry out my ideal view—*i.e.*, that the best means of inducing a larger number of children to attend a Hebrew school than are now pupils of our educational establishments is to *combine Hebrew with secular instruction*.

I would select a site in a central part of the town, say Lonsdale-street, and establish a school, to be carried on in a manner similar to that in which the Melbourne Hebrew school was conducted up till recently—the Board of Management to be distinct from any congregation. What would be the result? A large number of children whose parents reside in West Melbourne and East Melbourne would, of

course, attend. Children living at a much greater distance would be induced to undergo the inconvenience of the long journey in view of the enormous advantages gained—the Hebrew and religious training taking place in the course of, not after, the ordinary school hours. Such a school would be to the Melbourne community what the Jews' Free School and the Stepney Schools are to the Hebrew residents of the East of London. As the latter schools are supplemented by classes in Board schools under the auspices of the Society for the Diffusion of Religious Knowledge, so the Melbourne Jewish schools could be supplemented by classes held, as you suggest, in districts far removed from town, or even in nearer localities for very young children. The advantages of this plan must be apparent. A large number of children, possibly 300, would be enrolled upon the books of the central school, and the outlying districts could be provided for in the manner suggested. Much as I would advocate the foregoing system, I would strenuously discountenance any step in this direction unless the necessary funds were guaranteed before commencing. I have had some experience in the difficulties that are likely to arise from inaugurating institutions in too costly a manner, thereby incurring liabilities involving embarrassing consequences.

Descending from the regions of fancy to the exigencies of actual facts, I think that the scheme you propose in your thoughtful pamphlet is about the best that could be devised under the circumstances. Your idea is to establish classes for Hebrew instruction after school hours in every locality, sufficiently convenient to such a number of children as would warrant the holding of such classes. I would merely add one reservation. I do not think it advisable to hold too many classes, but would rather concentrate all the energy available upon a few large classes than distribute it over many small ones. It would involve some inconvenience on the part of the pupils, but the general gain would, I think, counterbalance this. With reference to the expenses, I think they could be defrayed by fees, subscriptions, and, if necessary, subsidies from the synagogues.

With reference to the manner in which Hebrew instruction is to be made both attractive and lasting, I will premise my remarks by quoting Professor Huxley's observations on the method of teaching classes ("A Liberal Education, and Where to Find It," 1868). He considers that "classics would be taught as they might be taught if boys and girls were instructed in Greek and Latin, not merely as languages, but as illustrations of philological science, if a vivid picture of life on the shores of the Mediterranean, two



thousand years ago, were imprinted on the minds of the scholars; if ancient history were taught, not as a weary series of feuds and fights, but traced to its causes in such men placed under such conditions; if, lastly, the study of the classical books were followed in such a manner as to impress boys with their beauties, and with the grand simplicity of their statement of the everlasting problems of human life, instead of with their verbal and grammatical peculiarities."

We might substitute "Hebrew" for "Greek and Latin," and "the Scriptures" for "the classical books," and then, with scarcely any further alteration, the above quotation would express the aim of the zealous teacher of Jewish morals and religion. Has he not an opportunity of imprinting on the minds of his scholars a vivid picture of the wandering Hebrews of the Desert more than three thousand years ago?—of tracing the different epochs in Jewish history to its causes in such men placed under such conditions?—to impress his pupils with the beauties of the Hebrew Scriptures, and with the grand simplicity of their statement of the everlasting problems of human life? Fortunately this aim is greatly facilitated for the Hebrew tutor by the fact that Jewish history and religion go hand in hand with the Hebrew language. Much of the tediousness of the study of the sacred tongue can be removed by this means. Of course, the preliminary lessons in Hebrew must be mastered before this advantage is felt. The letters must be learnt, and the vowels taught, and grammar commenced. All this involves study, more or less tedious to the pupil. It is, however, in the power of the teacher to remove some of the weariness by his mode of giving the lessons, nor should he neglect to exercise this power.

Much stress is laid in our national literature—the Bible, Mishna, and Gemara—upon the qualifications necessary for a teacher. Among them are "calmness and tranquillity, which forbid all exercise of temper: a patience, resigning itself entirely to the child, so as to cause the teacher to place himself in the child's manner of thinking." (See "School System of the Talmud," by Rev. B. Spiers.) Truthfulness and conscientiousness are necessary for the teacher's vocation, which is, according to the sages, "Divine work," besides the possession of accomplishments. "The teacher must be truly religious, and not only able and fluent in the reading of the sacred books, but also versed in the correct interpretation thereof." And the following advice as to the method of instruction is given by Rabbi Akiba:—"The master should *strive to make the lesson agreeable to*

*the pupils*, by clear reasons, as well as by frequent repetitions, until they thoroughly understand the matter, and are enabled to recite it with great fluency." In order to excite in the pupils at the very commencement of their studies a lively interest in their work, the Talmud considered it necessary that there should exist a certain *friendliness and mutual affection between master and pupil*, and that this should be effected by the teacher entering into the feelings of his pupils, adapting himself to their cheerfulness, and taking this as the basis of intercourse maintained by them during instruction. It recommended that teachers should cultivate a spirit of cheerfulness, which should by degrees pass into a seriousness of behaviour befitting the importance of the subjects in which they might be engaged. "Rabba awoke the interest of his pupils from the fact that he would relate to them at the beginning of the lesson humorous anecdotes, at which they laughed; he would then enter upon the subject of his discourse, and both teachers and pupils observed the strictest seriousness. Such cheerful seriousness should prevail throughout the entire intercourse between master and pupil. For it is only when the teacher encourages the pupils by kindness of manner and cheerfulness the latter will, on their part, be induced to lay aside the shyness and false shame which keeps them from enquiring, and through which they are apt to become prejudiced against instruction."

I have quoted at some length, because these maxims are wholesome even now, and have been acted upon, to my knowledge, by our local teachers in their endeavours to make their lessons interesting as well as instructive. As mnemonics were used by the Talmudist, so might similar aids to memory, or other resources that the ingeniousness of the teacher can devise as a means of infusing interest into the early work, be resorted to, and similar devices have been adopted by our local school teachers.

Let but a good understanding and mutual affection exist between master and pupil, and both will enter upon their task with cheerfulness and earnestness. After translating a passage in the Prayer Book, the moral it conveys might be illustrated and dwelt upon. The scene depicted in a passage of the Bible that is to be rendered into English might be amplified, and the full meaning of the everlasting laws of God expounded after they have been studied in the Hebrew original. Although religion and Biblical history must of necessity be taught apart from translation, still, I think that, if every passage selected for translation were at the same time dwelt upon by the teacher, and developed into the widest extent of its moral or historical meaning, not

only would the weariness be greatly lightened, but the English version itself would be more thoroughly impressed on the minds of the scholars.

I fully sympathise with the difficulties with which our Hebrew teachers have to contend. Their classes assemble often when the children have finished their day's work, and are fatigued from their previous exertions. Although this drawback would be obviated in my "ideal" school, still, as the case now stands, and will probably continue, this difficulty exists in all its force. It is no easy task to inspire and maintain the "cheerful earnestness" so necessary for success. All the more honour to those who undertake it. Huxley asserts that the middle-class schoolboy (of the time he wrote on "Liberal Education") in the great majority of cases, when he leaves school, "has ideas on the subject of theology of the most shadowy and vague description, and associated with painful impressions of the weary hours spent in learning collects and catechism by heart." The advice of the Talmud tends to enable religious instruction to merit the very reverse of this criticism, so that the pupil, when he leaves the Hebrew school, may carry away with him ideas of a clear and healthy kind as to the fundamental doctrines of his Faith, and may look back to the pleasant hours he spent so advantageously with his teacher, to whom he is affectionately attached, as hours of instruction that prove useful to him throughout life by sowing in his heart the seeds of morality, that continue to develop throughout his later career, and that taught him the Hebrew language—the language of our Scripture—the language of Prayer.

Assuring you that my best wishes are accorded to you and to those ladies and gentlemen engaged in the arduous but noble task of the Hebrew teacher,

I remain, dear Mr. Goldstein,

Yours sincerely,

JOSEPH ABRAHAMS.

## VIEWS OF THE REV. JOSEPH FRIEDLANDER.

THE present movement in favour of extending the benefits of Jewish education, and bringing it within the reach of every Jewish child, is a gratifying evidence of a timely awakening of the conscience of the Jewish community to the vast importance of Hebrew education. The difficulties in the way of imparting to the rising generation a deeper and more thorough knowledge of the Hebrew tongue than has hitherto been given are, as every practical teacher knows, of too real and substantial a character to admit of any ready solution. These difficulties are more inherent than administrative, and apply to other countries as well as to this. The Jewish child feels that an additional task is imposed upon him when he is required to attend for Hebrew and religious instruction *after school hours*. I lay special stress upon this point, because children, after spending the day at school, are wearied both physically and mentally, and cannot apply themselves with that alertness of faculty and freshness of spirit which are so essential for the acquisition of knowledge. Again, the time allowed for such instruction is necessarily limited, and as a teacher, in the short time he has at his disposal, is required to teach a curriculum embracing five or six subjects—reading, translation, Bible, grammar, religion, etc.—to pupils who, however carefully classified, are in different stages of advancement, it will be apparent that the conditions under which Hebrew and religion are taught are not by any means of a favourable character.

The central fact prominently brought out in Mr. Goldstein's able and exhaustive pamphlet on this subject is that the system now in vogue is a failure—first, in regard to the number of children receiving instruction; and, secondly, in the unsatisfactory results produced by the present methods of tuition. Both of these conclusions, I fear, are incontrovertible. The statistics given by Mr. Goldstein are sufficient evidence of the former, and, of the latter, the facts on which it is based are too well known to admit of being disputed. The knowledge acquired by the great majority of the children is nothing more than the art of reading Hebrew indifferently well, and the ability to translate a few prayers; but Hebrew literature proper, both Biblical and post Biblical—its spirit, character, and genius—that is altogether a *terra incognita*. Mr. Goldstein has, therefore, done well to call attention to the present method of teaching and its unsatisfactory results. His remarks on that point are pregnant with meaning and suggestion, and deserve every consideration. It resolves itself into the question whether the time has not arrived for a new departure in Hebrew education. To my mind such a necessity clearly manifests itself, and I will briefly outline the direction which it should take, and the lines on which it should proceed. Its main principle would be to separate Hebrew from the branch of Bible and religious instruction to which it is

linked, and to teach the former *as a language only*. The present method involves conditions and limitations militating greatly against the acquirement of any thorough comprehensive knowledge of the Hebrew language. The prayers prescribed for translation are such as, from a purely educational point of view, can hardly be recommended. They are neither distinguished by beauty of diction or simplicity of construction, but, on the contrary, are couched in a hyperbolical vein, and are crude and laboured in style.

The case would be entirely different were the pupil, after passing the first elementary stage, at once to enter on the translation of one of the easier books of the Bible, such as the Books of Judges, Samuel, Jonah, etc., which, besides being examples of pure classical Hebrew, present a continuity of narrative and are sustained by a living historical interest. *Pari passu* the pupil could be initiated into the intricacies of its syntax by a series of graduated exercises in translation from Hebrew into English and *vice versa*, a method entirely absent from Hebrew schools. These, however, are matters of detail on which it is unnecessary to enlarge. The broad feature of this change would be to place the knowledge and study of Hebrew and its literature on a scientific basis. This plan, if adopted, would necessarily require a much larger amount of time and attention than could be consistently given should Bible and religious instruction be retained in the curriculum of the Hebrew schools. The question now follows—Is such a policy, such a radical change as the severance of Hebrew from religion justifiable and expedient? In view of the admitted failure of the present system I unhesitatingly answer—Yes! Not that its adoption by any means involves neglect or sacrifice of Bible and religious instruction, for I hold that the proper spheres for the teaching of those subjects are the home, the synagogue, and the Sabbath school. If parents and ministers would combine to render those institutions more efficient than they are at present all objection to the above scheme would be removed. Indeed, a wider acquaintance with Hebrew and Hebrew literature must prove a not unimportant factor in maintaining the Jewish religion. Few can have failed to notice how strongly non-Jewish Hebrew scholars have their sympathies quickened and their interest deepened in the history and literature of the Jews by their intelligent study of the same. And a sure measure of the vitality of the Jewish religion in any country is the status of Hebrew education prevailing amongst its professors. If the latter is high, the former responds in correlating sympathy. And, unless we are to drop out of contact with the main current of Jewish national life, every endeavour must be used to strengthen a bond which forms a large and significant element in the Jewish religion.

## ON THE JEWISH EDUCATION QUESTION IN MELBOURNE.

By JACOB GOLDSTEIN,

HEAD MASTER EAST MELBOURNE HEBREW SCHOOL.

**I**N a pamphlet published in May of this year I entered upon an examination of the present state of education of the Jewish children in Melbourne in Hebrew and Jewish religion. Tabulated returns of the various Jewish schools, and a comparison of the Melbourne and Sydney systems, were furnished; and the whole question was treated as exhaustively as was possible in the limits of a small *brochure*, and as accurately as the somewhat inadequate means at the command of the inquirer permitted. That pamphlet was issued to the members of the executive boards of the Synagogues, and to a number of other gentlemen who might reasonably be supposed to take an active and intelligent interest in the question.

At the time of its issue an Education Conference, composed of representatives of the three Metropolitan congregations, was on the point of holding its first session. The results of its preliminary labours will now be before the Jewish public, and it is in the hope of attracting the widest attention, and of creating a strong and healthy public opinion on the matter, that the present pamphlet is issued. I must here express my warm gratitude to those gentlemen whose generosity furnished the necessary "sinews of war" for its distribution to every member of our community.

As the figures and statements in the May pamphlet have not been questioned, but have apparently been accepted on all sides as being fairly reliable, I conceive that it will be unnecessary to trouble the present reader with particularised returns and detailed lists of figures, but that a general statement of broad results will be more acceptable. An examination of the last "Report of the Education Department of Victoria," and of the "Victorian Year Book," showed that practically every child—and therefore necessarily every Jewish child—in this colony was being instructed in secular subjects in our State and private schools, but that the state of the education in Hebrew and Jewish religion was by no means so satisfactory.

*It is estimated that there are over 600 Jewish children between the ages of 6 and 13 years in Melbourne and its suburbs of whom about 300 (100 boys and 200 girls) are not, so far as can be ascertained, receiving the least instruction in the important subjects named. A moment's consideration will show the gravity of such a condition, and the deep menace to the welfare of our race and religion in the future it contains. It means that, "while every Jewish child in this city is gaining some knowledge of English and foreign history, customs, and modes of thought . . . one-half of the number know nothing, and may never know anything, of the religion, customs, traditions, and language of their race."*

The comparison of the Melbourne and Sydney systems comprised the statements that, in the former city, there were three Jewish schools, with seven teachers, instructing about 250 children, at an annual cost to the congregations of £200; and, in the latter, there were two schools, three teachers, about 300 children, with a cost to the congregation of £150. The following quotation epitomises the more remarkable divergencies in the two systems:—

“The above comparison presents four notable points—

“1. There are seven teachers in Melbourne to three in Sydney, and yet in Sydney there is more teaching power available at each meeting than in Melbourne. This arises from the fact that the New South Wales Education Act sanctions the teaching of religion in public schools at any hour convenient, for a defined period, *during school hours*. The Victorian Education Act does not grant this privilege.

“2. In Melbourne each school is independent, managed by its own board; in Sydney both schools are under the one management.

“3. One-half the cost of the Sydney system is defrayed by private contributions, mostly guinea or half-guinea subscriptions; no portion of the cost is so defrayed here.

“4. The total income from fees here is £300; in Sydney £50.”

It is well to note that dissatisfaction has found expression in the sister city. At the annual general meeting of the subscribers to the Jewish Education Board, held on 2nd August. Mr. M. Gotthelf, according to the *Jewish Herald*, said:—

“He was gratified to find the change in the system had given such satisfactory results, *but still the number of children not reached was great. He would like the board to be in a position to increase the number of teachers, so that they might not only send teachers to all outlying districts, but to establish a higher class of education for our Jewish children.*”

If our Sydney friends are dissatisfied with their efforts, how much more reason have we to be so with ours?

Besides the regrettable fact that one-half of our youth are not receiving religious and Hebrew instruction at all, it is well to steadily bear in mind that those who are under instruction do not acquire any satisfactory knowledge of the subjects which our schools purport to teach. I cannot do better than quote the remarks on these points made in the May pamphlet:—

“Our Jewish schools are too few in number and too far from the homes of the children. It is really asking too much of young children to require them to walk long distances to and from their Hebrew classes after a weary day's work at their ordinary studies. Children living in Albert Park cannot be fairly asked to walk or ride to St. Kilda; those living at Hotham Hill, or North Carlton or Collingwood Flat, cannot be expected to walk to East or West Melbourne after the secular schools have closed for the day, receive instruction for an hour or more, and then walk home again in time for an evening meal.

“I fear there is a further reason for the comparative unpopularity of our Jewish schools, and that is, that there is very little faith in the efficiency of their methods of imparting a knowledge of Hebrew, etc. And I am afraid that, with a practical experience of many years, I must declare myself of the number of those who are of this

way of thinking. Giving my opinion only as my opinion, I should be inclined to pronounce our present methods to be unintelligent, unattractive, and, consequently, unsuccessful. I do not, however, consider that the teachers are necessarily to blame for this state. On the contrary, I have very vivid recollections of attempts by teachers to introduce improved systems and methods, and a very keen sympathy with their feelings when, after a very harassing struggle, they have been forced to accept defeat.

"Any educationalist at all conversant with the art of teaching would at once pronounce the very best methods obtaining in our schools to be unscientific. Perhaps, if not of our race, he might be astonished at the apparent want of intelligent methods displayed by our teachers. He could not know that these objectionable methods are forced on the teacher because under other circumstances, with essentially different conditions, and an absolutely diverse civilisation, they occasionally—and only occasionally—succeeded in producing students who might, without exciting derision, claim some mastery of Hebrew. These methods have now become traditional, and the teacher who shall eventually succeed in divesting the study of Hebrew of their tyranny will most certainly deserve well of his generation. Again, the present methods are especially marred by the fatal defect of being entirely wanting in attractiveness to the child student. The terms "Hebrew" and "Jewish religious instruction" have grown to be considered synonymous and identical. Consequently Hebrew is not taught *as a language*, but merely as a collocation of sounds used by Jews in their devotional utterances.

"The child is taught its ordinary subjects of study by methods which are carefully selected for their power of attracting and fixing its youthful attention. Its curiosity is aroused, its imagination is gratified, its budding intelligence is in every way stimulated. Music and controlled gaiety give light and life to its studies. Now compare the conditions under which the same child pursues its studies in Hebrew. For many dreary years it has to undergo a monotonous training of ear and eye; for years its faculties of memory, imagination, and inquisitiveness are untouched; it is constrained, sorely against its will, to stumble daily, as fast as disgusted Nature will permit, through pages of strange, minute, and confused characters. For an hour or more the wearied child undergoes this torture (while the much-to-be-pitied teacher has to enforce the sternest discipline in order to effect the least progress), and then the pupil is dismissed, heartily glad to have ended the detested 'Hebrew Lesson.'

"That, therefore, Hebrew is not successfully taught is to be readily assumed, and the assumption is verified by the fact that not one of the pupils of our Hebrew schools has ever been able to claim that he or she has obtained any mastery of the Hebrew language."

These remarks, I think, fairly state the present condition and some of its causes. There is one other factor which cannot be overlooked, and which not only is partly the cause of this deplorable state, but is greatly intensified by it. There is a party in our midst, respectable both in numbers and intellectual power, who go to the length of questioning the *necessity for the existence of Hebrew schools*.

The contention has often been urged (in every instance by *natives of these colonies*) that if it be so difficult to maintain efficient schools for the special religious instruction of our youth, it would be wise not



to make the attempt at all. This remark has always been to me the more painful because it has been made by young men who have proved themselves to possess more than average capacity. Their success in the learned professions and in commerce proves them to have fully inherited the peculiar talents of their race—its spirituality and national feeling are either dormant in malignant witch-trance or dead from disuse. This peculiarity I trace to the want of intelligent and stimulating education in former years. It behoves us of to-day to remedy these deficiencies all the more stoutly and determinedly because they have produced their inevitable results. I am no advocate for maintaining a *dead* level of thought and feeling on religious matters. I hold those who would persistently retain the customs of Central Europe and the spiritual tone of the Iron Ages to be as wrong-headed and as hurtful to the cause as those other extremists who would abolish all customs, and forget all national and religious instincts. The *via media* is, in this matter, the only safe way of thought and action, and this points to the instruction of our young in an intelligent, moderate, and attractive manner, stimulating their instincts and arousing a feeling of national and religious enthusiasm—*above all things reaching every child.*

The fact that there are twice as many girls whose education in Hebrew, etc., is being neglected as there are boys indicates a defect pregnant with as much mischief as any other that has been named. "There is," I wrote on a former occasion, "an unreasonable, indefensible notion prevalent that it is not necessary for girls to know as much as boys, even where it is admitted that they should know something. There could be no more fatal error than this. The devotional feelings, if not even the spiritual nature of the gentler sex, are more easily and lastingly aroused than those of the other sex. It is simply destruction to Judaism to nourish the idea that the future *wives and mothers of Jews* should not even be more imbued with the spirit and ideals of their race than the future men. From their earnestness and steadfastness the husband should learn to remember his duties in the struggle for existence; at their knees, and from their lips the future infant should first learn to lisp its prayers, to exercise its young, ardent imagination with the annals of its race.

"We must also remember that the faults of the present system bear more hardly on the feminine organisations than on those of their sturdier brothers. Many parents find it well-nigh impossible to induce their little girls to learn Hebrew, so great is their repugnance to it as at present taught."

Here, then, is a fair summary of the present condition. One-half of our children are not receiving necessary instruction; the other half are not being satisfactorily taught. HOW IS THIS STATE OF THINGS TO BE REMEDIED?

Clearly, the first improvement aimed at must be in the establishment of more schools. This I believe to be so self-evident a necessity that it hardly needs to be more than pointed to. I hope the time will come when every Jewish child will as readily reach his Hebrew class as his State school. For the present, I believe that there are two localities whose wants require immediate attention. They are Albert Park and North Melbourne. Schools should at once be opened at Albert Park, and somewhere mid-way between North Carlton and Hotham Hill. It will be learned, I am sure, with

pleasure that the question of the cost of establishing new schools may be at once dismissed as presenting no difficulties. If we bear in mind that the classes for Hebrew already existent are so timed that they do not interfere with secular studies, we at once turn to the State schools for the locality of our new classes. Furnished by Mr. E. L. Zox, M.P., with a recommendatory letter to Mr. Pearson, M.P., I learned that no difficulty need be anticipated in obtaining the use of class-rooms for our purposes. The secretary of the Education Department writes that the Honorable the Minister for Public Instruction "will be happy to afford every facility to the Jewish community for the use of State school buildings for religious purposes," under certain easy and very fair conditions. These are:—That the sanction of the local School Boards be first obtained; that a guarantee be given for the repair of all damages; that a fee of one shilling be paid for each room (such fees not to exceed an aggregate of half-a-crown, whatever the number of rooms so used) when said room is used on other than ordinary school-days; that the work of the school be not interfered with; and that the giving of the special religious instruction be not objected to in writing by one-third of the parents of the children at the State school used.

There would thus, we see, be no difficulty in finding a situation for any additional classes it might be deemed necessary to establish—that is, if it be decided to continue the present system of teaching only Hebrew and religion in our schools at an hour when the children have finished their studies in the ordinary schools. It will, perhaps, be advisable to state the advantages and disadvantages of the alternative systems, for, as we are on the point of recasting the existing one, the opportunity should be seized of discussing the subject in all its bearings. We have then, first of all, the suggestion of the Rev. Dr. Abrahams that a school, or schools, where Jewish children might include the study of Hebrew, etc., in the curriculum of their daily school work, should be established. The enormous advantages of surrounding Jewish children *with a Jewish atmosphere*, and of their studying Hebrew daily when their minds are still fresh for work, are so patent as to need no advocacy. But we all see that the primary difficulty of the excessive costliness is fatal to the attempt. Even if it might be found practicable to maintain one school of this class (and this is very doubtful), the great evil of educating only a small portion of our youth would remain unabated.

Dr. Abrahams sees as clearly as anyone that the idea must for the present be relegated to the region of fancy, and classed with those other noble and ideal projects which *are not, but might have been*. But if it be not possible to educate all our educable youth in such a school, the question might reasonably be asked—Is it not possible to establish a *high school, or college, for the children of our wealthier co-religionists?* Is it absolutely unavoidable that those who will most probably in the next generation be in the position of leaders of the community should receive their education in grammar schools founded by the various Christian sects, and thus grow up without any intimacy with their national religion and language—without even pleasant recollections of childhood to keep alive that spirit of brotherhood which is the essence of our religion?

Returning to that part of our inquiry which comes more within the scope of this pamphlet, the discussion narrows itself down to the

question whether the existing system of teaching Hebrew *daily* for an hour or more to each child be preferable to one which has been tried here, in which the children are taught on *alternate days* for two hours or more.

The advantages of the daily teaching are that the instruction can be made more even; that, provided anything like regularity of attendance be attained, the students need not be required to risk exhaustion by a too lengthy lesson *after their day's school work*, and that an occasional absence will neither entail much loss on the individual child nor cause the teacher much embarrassment. Its disadvantages are that it necessitates a full staff of teachers to each school, and that a number of parents would prefer that the children should devote some hours weekly to the study of music and other accomplishments.

On the other hand, while the method of alternate-day lessons has the advantages of enabling one staff of teachers to instruct a double set of classes, and, moreover, of meeting the wishes of the class of parents referred to, it is open to the serious objections that a child, by missing one lesson, might be four or five days without instruction, that there is a tendency to keep the children away from their secular schools on "Hebrew days" (*a most unnecessary and injurious custom*), and, besides, it would render impracticable the employment of State school buildings for our classes.

Let us suppose, however, that this part of the question were finally settled, that we had succeeded in opening a sufficient number of schools, and that we had enrolled every possible child. We should even then have only done one-half our work, and that the less difficult one. There would still remain the task of placing our Hebrew teaching on a scientific and successful basis. To the statement of this fact in the May pamphlet I was, in reply, taunted with the assertion that I had cast an undeserved slur on the teachers of Hebrew; that, even if the statement were true, it only implied that the teachers were incompetent. The statement *is* true, so obviously undeniably true that it must be emphasized in every discussion of the question; but it by no means implies any reflection on the Hebrew teachers. I am far from pretending that the standard of knowledge among our teachers is unimpeachable. The Rev. J. Friedlander shrewdly remarks that "a sure measure of the vitality of the Jewish religion in any country is the status of Hebrew education prevailing amongst its professors."

Similarly the assertion "that a sure gauge of the desire on the part of parents for the proper training of their children is to be found in the attainments of the teachers" would be discovered to contain its grain of truth. The matter generally resolves itself into a question of supply and demand. If a teacher can meet with ready employment without devoting the hours of close application necessary to master the subject taught, the implication is not that the teacher is incompetent, but that the employer is culpably indifferent.

But the true implication of my assertion is, that nathless the existence of enthusiastic and accomplished teachers, the causes of the failure to teach Hebrew scientifically and successfully lie in the existence of foolish prejudice, the absence of practical standards of instruction, the dependence of our schools on irrational popularity, the absence of uniform and frequent examination, and of necessary class books.

The *foolish prejudice* insists that the child should be able to gabble its prayers rapidly long before it has the faintest idea of their meaning. Would it not be as well, both in the interests of the child's knowledge and spiritual growth, that this order be reversed, and that the *shame* be that the child should be permitted, under any circumstances, to utter a prayer of which it does not know the full meaning?

The *foolish prejudice* insists that the meagre and unsatisfactory ability to read fluently should be made as difficult of acquirement as possible by the retention of obsolete methods of tuition which have long been discarded in the study of all other languages.

The *absence of practical standards of instruction* I have asserted to exist may surprise those who have the idea that we use in our schools the standards arranged by the Rev. the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Adler. But these standards were never intended for use in schools such as ours, nor for children under the home influences and other conditions of ours. Whether in London the children are taught successfully to these standards I am unable to say, but I should be surprised to ascertain that they are. If we proceed on the broad principle that children should be promoted to a higher class annually (which is the accepted principle in most secular schools), how would the *teacher*, in the absence of text books specially prepared, proceed to instruct children of eight years of age on such topics as the *Divine Revelation, Love and Reverence of God*, etc., and what tests should examiners apply? As a guide to teachers such a standard is surely unpractical. If any parent will open his Bible at the 25th chapter of Genesis, and read from the 19th verse onwards, will he be inclined to quarrel with the opinion that pronounces the scheme to be unpractical which provides for teaching boys and girls of nine or ten years the translation of the Hebrew of this "Sedrah?" Again, the quantity of ground to be covered in the junior classes in subjects marked *Scripture History* and *Religion* is far too great to allow time for teaching *Translation* and "Grammar," while the relative amounts of the two last subjects are in great disproportion. I think that every teacher will agree that these standards are impracticable in our schools, and would never have been attempted had not the venerable and famous Chief Rabbi given them his sanction. Mr. Friedlander's remarks upon the advisableness of separating the instruction in Hebrew, Scripture History, and what is included in Dr. Adler's standards under the term *Religion*, and referring the two latter to Sabbath schools and ministers of religion, are very pertinent, and will have to be adopted to some extent if we aim at increasing the efficiency of our Hebrew schools.

In fact, the moral and theological lessons included under the term *Religion* can only be properly and successfully taught by ministers in Sabbath schools, as there would always be danger to the spiritual side of the child's nature if these lessons were submitted to the ordinary teacher's methods, or if they came to be associated in the pupil's mind with the irksome discipline and dry cram usually found necessary in preparation for examination.

If we bear in mind the comparative values of the subjects prescribed in Dr. Adler's standards, and their relation to the time at our disposal, every experienced teacher, I think, will admit the wisdom of recasting these standards so as to make them more suitable to our conditions.

A great defect, which at every turn hampers the teacher's efforts, is the want of proper *class books*. If those interested in the question of Hebrew education could be induced to form an association and resolutely set to work in the direction of obtaining the publication of cheap and efficient Hebrew class books, I think that a surprising amount of good might be effected by very little effort, and, also, I anticipate that all outlay would soon be recouped by the large sale of these books throughout the colonies if they are intelligently arranged.

An attempt *should be made to teach Hebrew as a language in a thoroughly efficient manner at the very beginning of the child's studies*. It is mortifying to reflect on the ill-applied time and energy which both teachers and pupils waste in the attempt to pursue their studies by the old-fashioned methods. There have been children of average and higher intelligence in this city who have devoted six or seven hours weekly for ten years to the study of Hebrew—apart from the time spent in the Synagogue and at home at prayers—and who yet can do no more than read the characters without retaining any recollection of their meaning. If we remember that the Hebrew vocabulary contains only about 3000 words, then if such children could have been taught only *ONE word per hour*, they should have mastered the language. Must there not be something radically wrong in a system which could make possible so wretched a result for such comparatively protracted studies? Will any parent believe that the same time spent in the study of Greek or German or any other difficult language would not in an ordinary school have produced better results?

Our schools, I remarked, are dependent on *irrational popularity*; and it is this dependence which has been the main factor of their failure. Parents frequently make the most unreasonable demands from the teacher, and their interference with the teacher's aims has led to the most disastrous results. As the very existence of our schools depends on the good opinion of parents, there is but one possible remedy, and that is—that school managers, ministers, and teachers, having arrived at a clear understanding of their requirements and an agreement as to the best methods, should steadily and persistently aim at educating the public mind to a perception of the inefficacy of existent methods, and the advantage of more scientific ones. The first requirement to this end is that our schools should cease to be rival institutions financially, and that all should be placed under the *ONE GOVERNING BODY*.

Next, there should be a *uniform method of examination regularly applied*. Each school should be examined twice yearly by the same examiners testing on the same lines, and the percentages obtained would then have a proper absolute value. At present the examinations are really of no value as a test of comparative or absolute merit. I do not mean that our examiners are not conscientious and able, but it has happened that in an examination different examiners will apply different tests, and neither teacher nor pupil can tell what kind of ordeal they have to face, nor what standard of merit exists in the minds of the examiner. As an extreme instance of this I may mention that on one occasion the examiner, being dissatisfied with the amount of work done as compared with some inscrutable measure in his own mind, declared that he would not grant any percentage at all to the children. On another occasion the examiner "failed" a

boy, not because he had not answered promptly and correctly, but because he thought that the boy had too much "chutpah," *i.e.*, had been pert in manner.

Our *present examiners* are the last men in the world to act in the extreme manner related, yet it must be confessed that even with them—and they are all cultured men and experienced teachers—there have been such discrepancies of test and manner that teachers mainly trust to the chance that their classes might be tested by the more indulgent examiner if they are to obtain a high percentage. Such a feeling has, of course, a fatal tendency to prevent intelligent and industrious teaching.

I repeat that the remedies for these defects are, *in the first place, the placing of all our Hebrew schools under the one board of management; and, in the next place, the establishment of an independent board of examiners.*

Another defect in our present system is that our teachers are not required themselves to undergo *any test as to their fitness to occupy their positions.*

In the former pamphlet I wrote:—"That teachers should be trained and classified requires little argument in support. All teachers who have not attained the highest certificate of competency to pursue their profession should be required to present themselves annually for examinations, gently graduated, before a competent examining board. The importance of this provision cannot be overestimated. There can be no possibility of uniform excellence of teaching unless the teachers themselves reach some uniformity of attainments. There can be no hope of creating any intellectual or spiritual enthusiasm for their studies among the pupils unless the teachers cease to confine themselves to a knowledge of the work of their particular classes, and cease to remain content with such a pitiful modicum of attainment."

The following suggestions are those I formerly made, and I quote them here because I have seen no reason to doubt their reasonableness:—

"An Education Board should be created as an executive body, representing the whole Jewish community. I would suggest that it consist of ten members, composed as follows:—The three Ministers (defining the term 'Minister' to mean the permanent Spiritual Head and Pastor of a Synagogue), one nominee from each Synagogue Executive, and four members to be chosen by subscribers of not less than one shilling monthly to the general educational fund; the seven lay members to be selected annually." I may remark that *ladies* might very reasonably be members of this board. Their presence, I believe, would ensure an active public interest on the education question. The duties of the new board would be to administer such schemes as may be fixed upon, to appoint and dismiss teachers, and to act as a final court of appeal between officers, honorary or paid, engaged in the actual work of the schools.

"There should be appointed an Honorary Visiting Inspecting and Examining Board, to consist of, say, the three ministers and three laymen, the latter not to be members of the Education Board, and to be selected by that board as occasion should arise. Their duties should be to supervise, examine, and report on the working of the schools, and to examine, classify, and grant certificates to teachers."

“Supposing the suggestions here made to be adopted, the new board would control from its start five Hebrew schools—at Melbourne, East Melbourne, St. Kilda, Albert Park, and North Melbourne. For these five schools there would be required, at least, the following number of teachers:—One *head master*, who should control, under the advice of the Inspecting Board, the whole system, who should prepare the returns for the Education Board, act as secretary for that board, and conduct a class for the training of teachers. His salary should be £250 per annum. As the East Melbourne school has the largest roll sheet, he should be specially attached to that school. One *head teacher* at St. Kilda, whose salary should be £150 per annum. At these two schools only, it is suggested, should the highest classes be taught; at the other three schools no class higher than the fourth should be formed. For each of these there should be an *assistant teacher in charge*, whose salary should be £60 per annum; and at each school there should be a pupil teacher, whose salary according to classification should range from £15 to £30. There should also be a qualified assistant teacher at the East Melbourne School, with a salary of, say, £45. Allowing £50 for maintenance (*i.e.*, cost of stationery and appliances), this scheme would annually cost about £800, as the following table shows:—

1 Head Master, with a salary of	...	...	£250
1 Head Teacher,	„	...	£150
3 Assistants in Charge	„	£60 each	£180
1 Assistant Teacher	„	...	£45
1 Pupil Teacher	„	...	£30
1 Pupil Teacher	„	...	£25
1 Pupil Teacher	„	...	£20
2 Pupil Teachers	„	£15 each	£30
Cost of Maintenance	...	...	£50
			£780

I propose that the income of the Education Board should be derived from the three following sources:—1, from fees; 2, from private contributions; 3, from synagogue subsidies.

“A uniform charge should be made in all the schools. As the charges of the East Melbourne School have been paid willingly, it would be well to adopt its scale, *i.e.*, one shilling each child in fourth and higher classes, and ninepence each in third and lower classes, paid weekly in advance. Free children should be paid for, after due enquiry and with proper supervision by the Congregations, or more properly from a charitable fund established for that purpose. No teacher in the employ of the Education Board should be allowed to instruct Jewish children of the legal school age privately for pay, unless that board is satisfied that from physical weakness, or owing to the distance of their homes, such children cannot be fairly expected to attend the established schools.”

“At present the income from fees is about £300 per annum. If the new schools are successfully established, a considerable increase may be looked for in this direction, and if the provisions about free pupils and private tuition are enforced this increase is certain. The future income from fees should not be less than £400 per annum.”

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

Los Angeles

This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

41584

drink inspiration from the same sources as the mightiest souls our  
race has produced—that is to say, that they should KNOW THE  
HEBREW LANGUAGE THOROUGHLY.



UCLA-Young Research Library  
LC749.3.M48 J55  
yr



**L 009 544 947 6**

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



**AA 001 281 526 2**



