

# A Tale of Two Languages: Hebrew and Yiddish Language Education in Ontario, 1948-1970

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Scholars have generally overlooked debates among Jews about Jewish language education in Canadian Jewish history. The subject, however, is fascinating – and central to Canadian Jewish culture. In fact, the vast significance led the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC), Canadian Jewry's preeminent organization on most matters of principle concern for the nations' Jewish communities, to involve itself in Jewish education for its entire existence, from its inception in 1919, until its disbandment and reorganization as the Council for Israel and Jewish Advocacy (CIJA) in 2011. The CJC and its subsidiaries - primarily the Educational and Cultural Committee and the National Jewish Education Committee - made decisions that formed the basis of Jewish language education that is employed today. While Hebrew and Yiddish language education had been debated by these groups and individuals for many different reasons, the CJC, its subcommittees, and the influential Jewish educators of the day throughout the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, favoured Hebrew, and displaced Yiddish in formal Jewish education.

During the years following World War II, the Holocaust and the Independence of Israel, Hebrew had become the "primary" language of the Jewish people, though clearly not the vernacular for Jews in Canada. Hebrew education proponents based their view on the important role Hebrew plays in Judaism as it is the language in which it is practiced and spoken in Israel. Whereas eastern European Jews generally spoke Yiddish for over a thousand years, and continued to speak it when they immigrated to Canada, but had not been used for religious purposes. Opinions on Yiddish language instruction suffered as well, particularly with graduate students whom had emigrated from Israel and were becoming Jewish educators in Canada. As Jews assimilated into Canadian culture, generational factors played a big part. The children of the established Yiddish speaking Jews learned more English and attended religious schools teaching Hebrew and Yiddish began to be only used conversationally. Problems arose when smaller communities did not have the money or attendance for both secular and parochial education thus practices for small and large communities were based on the neighbours to the south and their

established curricula. Finally the lack of qualified educators in Jewish education posed an issue to both languages and continued to be a struggle.

Until various private Jewish day schools opened, Sunday schools and after school programs offered formal Jewish education for children that attended supplementary to their regular public day schools. Public and private Hebrew schools were first available in larger cities then later in smaller communities. They catered to elementary students and high school students alike. Students who wanted to become Hebrew teachers generally attended post-secondary education in the Jewish Hebrew Teachers School at the United Jewish Teachers Seminary in Montreal. This remained the only schooling of this type available until the inception of the Midrasha L'Morim in Toronto in 1953, modeled after its Montreal counterpart. Other forms of Jewish language post-secondary education took place in courses at universities such as University of Toronto, York University, University of McGill and others; support for these had been established after the choice to find a chair of Judaic studies at University of Toronto in 1950.<sup>1</sup> These classes were first taught by rabbis or parents within the community congregations that had knowledge of cultural history and Yiddish, some with only little knowledge of the Hebrew language.<sup>2</sup>

Informal education came in many different forms: youth and adult schooling institutions, history or language classes offered by congregations usually in synagogues, programming in summer schools, summer camps, community lectures, scholar lectures and other cultural events.<sup>3</sup> Many of Canada's Jewish education institutions, not including Yeshivot and synagogue schools, had been supervised or established by one of the subcommittees within the CJC with the help of other provincial

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<sup>1</sup> Rabbi Elie CH. Borowski. "A brief concerning the establishment of a Chair of Judaic Studies at the University of Toronto." brief report. Toronto, Ontario: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1950. RG 260, File 2. Ontario Jewish Archives.

<sup>2</sup> Rabbi Elie CH. Borowski. "A brief concerning the establishment of a Chair of Judaic Studies at the University of Toronto." brief report. Toronto, Ontario: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1950. RG 260, File 2. Ontario Jewish Archives.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Klinghofer. "Informal education and cultural events on the Toronto scene." memorandum. Toronto, Ontario: Canadian Jewish Congress, December 26, 1957. RG 260, File 182. Ontario Jewish Archives.

Jewish organizations such as the Igud , a word in Hebrew meaning organization, a provincial community organization in Montreal. The Igud worked alongside the CJC to establish proper curricula for Jewish education in Canada. Especially in smaller communities, they had based their curricula on reports coming from cities in the USA such as Chicago, New York, Detroit and other cities that had larger Jewish communities. The CJC had to deal with many shortcomings in education primarily the lack of qualified teachers.

For many years, the teacher's seminary in Montreal produced educators for Ontario Jewish communities and Jewish institutions suffered from an inadequate or short supply of teachers.<sup>4</sup> During the Jewish Sunday school teacher's seminar in Toronto, Rabbi Dr. Fischel reported that there were approximately 700 Jewish students attending Sunday schools in Toronto in 1945-46. The following year, 1000 children attended, and by 1948 there would be approximately 1300 students. Fischel also reported demand for trained teachers or other community members would rise, due to the influx of children enrolling in Sunday schools. He expected that the financial and supervisory burden would fall on the CJC to establish curricula with courses such as Jewish history, Jewish literature and reading of Hebrew and Yiddish only teaching some elementary Hebrew, classes would be taught by a rabbi, teacher or scholar.<sup>5</sup>

But the CJC fell short in their attempts to rectify the situation. It delegated its subcommittees to take representatives from all communities, particularly smaller communities in which Jewish children were not getting any Jewish education, and packaged them into the Educational & Cultural Committee

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<sup>4</sup> Dr. Joseph Klinghofer. "Regional Conference on Jewish Education Co-Sponsored by Educational and Cultural Committee, Canadian Jewish Congress Central Region, Bureau of Jewish Education Toronto, and Canadian Association of Hebrew Schools (Igud) Montreal." Abstract of proceedings. Regional Conference on Jewish Education. Toronto, Ontario: Educational and Cultural Committee, Canadian Jewish Congress Central Region, Bureau of Jewish Education Toronto, Canadian Association of Hebrew Schools (IGUD) Montreal, February 24, 1952. RG 260, File 38. Ontario Jewish Archives.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. H. A. Fischel, Rabbi. "A Jewish Sunday school teachers' Seminary in Toronto." Canadian Jewish Congress, 1947. RG 207, file 2. Ontario Jewish Archives.

(ECC). The functions of the committee were to act as a general policy-making body and provide direction and supervision to subcommittees such as Adult-Youth Education, Teacher Training, Curriculum and others.<sup>6</sup> Their goals were to bring schools to smaller communities where students could not travel weekly to larger cities due to geographical distance and financial issues.

Throughout the next few years the CJC would train rabbis and laymen to teach courses in Jewish education, including the study of both Yiddish and Hebrew language. Until the inception of the Midrasha L'Morim, Hebrew Teachers training institute, in 1953, the CJC also tried to encourage graduating students from the seminary in Montreal to move to smaller communities to become teachers. The Midrasha changed the picture. The new training institute developed a curriculum that covered the wide range of formal and informal education then in Canada, including secular Yiddish schools, Talmud Torahs, Sunday schools, Youth & Adult education institutes, Yeshivot, summer camps and Hebrew elementary and high schools.<sup>7</sup> Decisions were also made by the CJC to attract students to the Hebrew teaching profession.

The CJC as a resolution of the 10<sup>th</sup> plenary conference on Jewish education, indicated the importance of having adequate salary standards to increase adequate Jewish education and teaching professionals for the future of Jewish children's education.<sup>3</sup> This trend of increased salary standards to attract students to become educators continued until the late 1960's. During these times they created bursaries, scholarships, retirement/ pension, and benefit plans. Although the issues of available teachers for smaller communities were not the only problem they also needed not only schools, but standardized curriculum.

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<sup>6</sup> Canadian Jewish Congress Central Division. "Educational & Cultural Committee." Canadian Jewish Congress, March 26, 1947. RG 207, file 2. Ontario Jewish Archives.

<sup>7</sup> Dr. Joseph Klinghofer. "Minutes of a meeting of the Educational and Cultural Committee." Meeting minutes. 150 Beverley St.: Canadian Jewish Congress, September 30, 1953. RG 207, file 6. Ontario Jewish Archives.

The CJC, its subcommittees and fellow organizations across North America wanted to create a provincial - and later national - curriculum for both parochial and secular education. Canadian Jewish educators often looked to their southern counterparts, the United States, for curriculum evaluation, particularly in regards to issues of Jewish education in smaller communities and formal education in the Jewish education entry point, Sunday schools. A 1952 report conducted on Jewish education in Sunday schools for smaller communities operated by the Jewish Federation of Southern Illinois, for example, proposed curriculum developed by the Board of Jewish Education of Chicago and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. The curriculum included Jewish history, music, Hebrew and other subjects, but not Yiddish. The conclusion of the report questioned if the curricula could be administered to meet the needs of communities in Ontario. However, a problem arose, that communities with no established Jewish schools had a significant distance from larger cities and the travel would be too challenging on families. The report concluded with a proposal to establish small schools if a few people devoted time and effort to familiarize themselves with Jewish educational techniques. The report emphasised that knowledge of Hebrew stood inconsequential to setting up the schools themselves.<sup>8</sup> The smaller communities wanted more education for children but did not have the necessary schools. A 1954 report from the New York's National Conference of the American Association showed that 10% of formal Sunday schools added an additional day for the study of Hebrew, and another 10% of the schools added two days for the study of Hebrew. The report additionally noted that the conflict between religious and secular Jewish education had become less relevant in New York. Conservative synagogues were closer to Jewish tradition and interested in an intensive Hebrew education but other synagogues were not far behind. Reform synagogues were clearly moving towards more tradition such as Bar Mitzvahs and the study of Hebrew. Religious study continued to be important to all sects of Judaism. Furthermore,

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<sup>8</sup> Member of CJC. "A Report Based on the System Operated by the Jewish Federation of Southern Illinois." Report on Education System. Jewish Education in the smaller community. Southern Illinois: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1946. RG 207, file 2. Ontario Jewish Archives.

Hebrew language instruction would be prioritized for young children. Elementary Hebrew day schools were limited to Hebrew and other classes with no mention of Yiddish in the curriculum.<sup>9</sup> The reports on Jewish education in the US suggested a lack of Yiddish education in the curricula and the curriculum would map to Jewish education in Canada well if Canadian Jews were not more secular than the US. This required a little more flexibility and adjustment on the CJC's part, for implementation in Canadian Jewish schools.

A similar situation arose in Hamilton showing the divide amongst secular and conservative Jews. A 1950 report conducted by the CJC in Hamilton, Ontario requested that in order to attain a common purpose of Jewish life and community that a school should be opened, which they would call the Hamilton Jewish Center School. The initiative would merge the Talmud Torah and Yiddish Shule that were in place at the time into one Hebrew day school. One thing the report emphasised was to improve Hebrew and Yiddish reading and understanding skills so that Jewish children could access Jewish texts. Another persisted cultivating a love for both languages. The school would be dedicated mostly to the pedagogical education and the study of the Hebrew language. Those that wanted to study subjects such as History and Yiddish would have had to convene on Fridays and Sundays. The Talmud Torah had not opposed the merger, but the Yiddish Shule stood unhappy with leaving Yiddish to only Fridays or Sundays. The report also showed that the Talmud Torah had a higher enrolment than the classes provided at the Yiddish Shule, though neither had enough to continue on their own. The Talmud Torah had sixty-nine pupils and grades one through seven and the Yiddish Shule had only thirty-four pupils and two grades. The Yiddish Shule had no ideological or political backing except the attachment to the Yiddish language and Yiddish culture. The Reform congregation that attended the Talmud Torah even went so far as to say "that they were not interested in the Yiddish Shule at all and even considered

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<sup>9</sup> Dr. Joseph Klinghofer. "Minutes of a meeting of the Educational and Cultural Committee." Meeting minutes. 150 Beverley St.: Canadian Jewish Congress, April 9, 1954. RG 207, file 7. Ontario Jewish Archives.

Yiddish as a dying language.” The Yiddish Shule ended up agreeing to the merger and completed it the following year. They recognized that the lack of enrolment meant they had little choice if they wanted Yiddish to be taught at all. Dr. Diamond, a representative of the Education and Culture Committee (ECC), a subcommittee of the CJC, stressed that smaller communities should have the right to determine the ideological education and that all forms of Jewish education were acceptable as long as they did not prove “destructive” to Jewish life. Diamond showed an appreciation for Jewish language education, especially Yiddish. The above curricula included Yiddish available to secular students on Fridays and, optionally on Sunday, while Hebrew remained a mandatory course. All congregations needed Hebrew educational training for pedagogical reasons.<sup>10</sup>

A similar compromise, with Yiddish advocates backing down, played out in St. Catharines. A 1950 survey on Jewish education in St. Catharines showed that formal education given to children existed mostly in Talmud Torahs, being they had Hebrew and pedagogical education four days a week with two grades, and for a small older group of children had one day a week for Yiddish attended by only five children. Considering that 15-20% of the community were orthodox Jews, interested in religious instruction only, and a small group advocating for Yiddish language instruction, suggested that the majority of the community were in between secular and conservative and learning mostly Hebrew.<sup>11</sup> Several communities agreed on this, like Hamilton and St. Catharines, with larger Reform and Conservative congregations and small secular groups. The trend seemed to be toward more religious ideologies.

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<sup>10</sup> Dr. Joseph Klinghofer, and Dr. Joseph Diamond. “Relative to Jewish education in Hamilton, Ontario.” Survey on Jewish Education Conducted in Hamilton. Statement of principles. Hamilton, Ontario: Canadian Jewish Congress, April 27, 1950. RG 260, File 2. Ontario Jewish Archives.

<sup>11</sup> Member of CJC. “Report of the survey on Jewish Education conducted in St. Catharines.” Report on survey. St. Catharines, Ontario: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1950. RG 260, File 2. Ontario Jewish Archives.

In the 1951-52 educational year, the CJC wrote a report on the number of Jewish children in thirty-five communities in Ontario receiving any Jewish education. It showed the communities and their different formal schools indicating the status of Hebrew and Yiddish language instruction in Ontario. Only three schools out of thirty-five communities, some with more than one school, had formal Yiddish language education, otherwise Yiddish continued to be taught through conversation with the rest of the schools teaching Hebrew.<sup>12</sup> At the Teachers conference in 1951 the ECC and CJC attempted to make some recommendations for the future of Jewish education in the province of Ontario, reiterating the aim that had been emphasised in Hamilton, namely, the importance of reading and understanding Jewish texts in Hebrew and in Yiddish, and a love for both languages. They recognized that the teaching of Yiddish should have some place in the curriculum, but argued that it would complicate children's learning to start teaching two languages, Hebrew and Yiddish, in the same grade. The report argued that a child's education should start with a general knowledge of Hebrew for reading so that pedagogical education in subjects like the Chumash (the Torah in printed form), reading Siddurs (Jewish prayer books), and later focus on the teaching of conversational Hebrew could progress quickly. The result pushed Yiddish language education into later grades. Yiddish training would not be started in the earlier years, the argument ran, since it remained unnecessary for pedagogical reasons. Early Yiddish instruction, claimed the CJC, would only confuse children when beginning to read religious material. Eventually the Yiddish course would be displaced as an optional extra-curricular subject altogether.<sup>13</sup>

This initiated a problem for the CJC because the secular community now had fewer schools and less adequate teaching for Yiddish and other subjects. In fact, a member of the CJC stressed that some

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<sup>12</sup> Ben L. "Number of Jewish Children in 35 Communities of Ontario Receiving Any Jewish Education in the School Year 1951-52 (through an Organized Educational Setup)." Table of communities. Ontario: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1952. RG 260, File 26B. Ontario Jewish Archives.

<sup>13</sup> Dr. Joseph Klinghofer. "Teachers' Conference sponsored by Educational and Cultural Committee, Canadian Jewish Congress Central Region." Abstract of proceedings. Teachers' conference. Toronto, Ontario: Canadian Jewish Congress, February 18, 1951. RG 260, File 25. Ontario Jewish Archives.

organizations, particularly the Igud of Montreal were integral to curriculum changes for Talmud Torahs, which are elementary schools for students studying to go to Jewish High schools or Yeshiva where they are taught Hebrew, Scripture and the Talmud for rabbinic study, but not always Yiddish, until later grades.

At a meeting of the ECC in 1952, a conflict erupted between the CJC representatives and the Igud over the influence the Igud had on curriculum, authority, and the degree to which centralized control could or should be exercised. Mr. Gelber of the ECC suggested that the Igud wanted supervision of all formal education in the country. He argued that the Igud claimed to defend a special ideology of intensive religious and national Hebrew education in the Talmud Torahs, which were the majority of schools in the country at the time. Dr. Diamond of the ECC replied that they had no official authority over the curriculum and that the CJC would make decisions with recommendations by the Igud. The result, the Igud continued to closely operate with the CJC but specifically mentioned that they would not have any policy-making decisions.<sup>14</sup> A report in 1955 showed that formal curriculum of pedagogical material continued to be influenced by the Igud as the CJC distributed the curricula to communities, that had been prepared by the ECC, the national office, the Igud and by educational agencies of the United States. The report also showed that the ECC remained active in teacher training in the Midrasha L'Morim organized by the Bureau of Jewish Education developing policy and programs.<sup>15</sup>

The Midrasha's curriculum is important in identifying the changes in Jewish language education in communities due to the fact that the graduates would be implementing their teachings towards Jewish schools in Ontario. A report from the Midrasha L'Morim for the 1955-56 showed the curricula of

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<sup>14</sup> Dr. Joseph Klinghofer. "Minutes of a meeting of the Educational and Cultural Committee." Meeting minutes. 179 Beverly Street, Toronto: Canadian Jewish Congress, May 14, 1952. RG 207, File 5. Ontario Jewish Archives.

<sup>15</sup> Dr. Joseph Klinghofer. "Report on activities for the Period Jan. 1, 1955 - June 30, 1956." Report on activities. Toronto, Ontario: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1956. RG 207, file 9. Ontario Jewish Archives.

their four year program established since its inception in 1953, including the newly established Mechina, preparatory grade. Mechina had four hours dedicated to Hebrew language and more for other pedagogical classes. Grades one and two offered two hours for Hebrew and the rest for pedagogical and history classes. Grades three and four had two hours for Hebrew, one hour for Yiddish, and the remaining hours devoted to pedagogy and other classes.<sup>16</sup> It was suggested that the students probably had some knowledge of Yiddish and did not need it. More importantly for the vast amount of formal education not teaching Yiddish, focusing on religious and Hebrew language instruction, would need to be dedicated to Hebrew language and education.

The curriculum reoccurred with some minor adjustments to other classes for at least a decade until the late 1960s when the Midrasha had come to an impasse between continuing to offer both Yiddish and Hebrew language courses. With more and more students emigrating from Israel with knowledge of Hebrew but no Yiddish language education, the students' grades at the Midrasha declined due to their lack of Yiddish language instruction. The Midrasha had to re-evaluate their curriculum as it related to Hebrew and Yiddish language education. The students were asked by their teacher Menachovsky to write a letter for the CJC and Bureau of Jewish Education on their thoughts of Yiddish in the Midrasha, of which all of the letters were written in Hebrew. One girl in particular mentioned, "I understand that Yiddish is a part of being Jewish but I am not interested in learning Yiddish." The consensus persisted amongst all the individuals that had written letters to the Midrasha. They wanted to be Hebrew teachers but Yiddish classes were holding them back. A few went so far to say that they believe "Yiddish is a dying language and due to the Holocaust should be avoided barring further grief" and more generally they were not interested in teaching Yiddish at the university level or even at the

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<sup>16</sup> Dr. Joseph Klinghofer. "Minutes of a meeting of the Educational and Cultural Committee." Meeting minutes. 150 Beverly Street, Toronto: Canadian Jewish Congress, June 29, 1956. RG 207, file 9. Ontario Jewish Archives.

now dwindling Yiddish schools.<sup>17</sup> Although it conflicted the Midrasha, by 1970 the CJC and other members of the Jewish community involved in Jewish education had to strongly consider removing Yiddish from the Midrasha. Ultimately the CJC decided that Yiddish in Jewish culture and Jewish education remained too important to be taken out, but could be made optional.<sup>18</sup>

This situation occurred before, that not only Yiddish but Hebrew be removed from formal curricula as well. A report in 1952 by F. Eckstein, a member of the ECC, entitled “How to plan Jewish adult and youth education,” concluded that “the study of a language is an impractical aim because it seems impossible to get anywhere with the study of a language, especially Hebrew unless the entire time available is taken up by it.” Eckstein argued that “languages should be ruled out from the main plan of studies but could be taught in a supplementary course taking place at other hours.”<sup>19</sup> In the same year a decision made by the CJC stated that “Hebrew is essential to religious education and should be taught formally.” At the regional conference on Jewish education in 1952, the recommendations and resolutions from the teachers’ conference in 1951 of Hebrew language education in early years, from grades one to seven for Hebrew and optional Yiddish after grade four, were approved. The results reported from 1951 stood as a success in that children were doing well in reading, writing and even speaking in Hebrew. They mentioned that it had been wrong to say that they taught Hebrew for the purpose of reading prayers or studying the bible. They continued to argue for Hebrew as the living language of the Jewish people, a language that had recently regained the fullness of its possibilities of expression in Israel. The curricula proposed in the 1951 conference happened to be adopted by all

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<sup>17</sup> Students of the Midrasha. Correspondents. “Letters directed to Mr. Menachovsky and the board of the Midrasha.” Correspondents, 1969 1966. Fonds 48, series 8, file 1, 2. Ontario Jewish Archives.

<sup>18</sup> David E. Newman. “Midrasha board meeting.” Board meeting minutes. Jewish teachers’ seminary. 22 Glen Park ave, Toronto, Ontario: Midrash L’Morim (Jewish Teachers’ Seminary), September 27, 1968. Fonds 48, series 8, file 1. Ontario Jewish Archives.

<sup>19</sup> F. Eckstein. “How to plan Jewish adult and youth education.” Report on Jewish education. Ontario: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1952. RG 260, File 13. Ontario Jewish Archives.

Talmud Torahs and small schools in Ontario, showing that Yiddish language education had all but gone in the formal educational setting.<sup>20</sup>

The fight for Yiddish in formal education survived. At the third regional conference of Jewish education in 1953, the participants namely from the Farband of Yiddish Schools, stressed that the educational department of congress and local boards intensify the teaching of Yiddish and to see that at least the minimum requirements as recommended in the approved curriculum outline be fully covered. Menachovsky thought that the conference should instruct Congress to see that Yiddish is taught in school so that children may acquire some knowledge of the language and literature. The CJC resolved that Yiddish would be recommended to children in grades five and six and some cases even in grade four. While recommended as an additional language, it remained to be not mandatory and those parents whom might want stronger emphasis on religious studies or studies of Israel may have chosen to opt out of Yiddish.<sup>21</sup>

The continuing advancement of Hebrew in formal education in the face of Israel happened to be represented at the fourth regional conference on Jewish education in 1954. They continued to strengthen the curriculum in Hebrew schools “recognizing Hebrew as the linguistic, traditional and educational gateway to any subject of Jewish education with a priority aim to acquaint the child without national living tongue within a vocabulary that can be acquired under local condition of the school and

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<sup>20</sup> Dr. Joseph Klinghofer. “Regional Conference on Jewish Education Co-Sponsored by Educational and Cultural Committee, Canadian Jewish Congress Central Region, Bureau of Jewish Education Toronto, and Canadian Association of Hebrew Schools (IGUD) Montreal.” Abstract of proceedings. Regional conference on Jewish Education. Toronto, Ontario: Educational and Cultural Committee, Canadian Jewish Congress Central Region, Bureau of Jewish Education Toronto, Canadian Association of Hebrew Schools (IGUD) Montreal, February 24, 1952. RG 260, File 38. Ontario Jewish Archives.

<sup>21</sup> Dr. Joseph Klinghofer. “Regional Conference on Jewish Education Co-Sponsored by Educational and Cultural Committee, Canadian Jewish Congress Central Region, Bureau of Jewish Education Toronto, Canadian Association of Hebrew Schools (IGUD) Montreal, Farband of Yiddish Schools.” Abstract of proceedings. Regional conference on Jewish education. Hamilton, Ontario: Educational and Cultural Committee, Canadian Jewish Congress Central Region, Bureau of Jewish Education Toronto, Canadian Association of Hebrew Schools (IGUD) Montreal, Farband of Yiddish Schools, April 26, 1953. RG 260, File 66A. Ontario Jewish Archives.

the environment,” and suggested that “classes should be in most part taught in Hebrew with substitutions in English for some of the more difficult terms or at younger ages.” This showed that schools wanted to have classes taught in Hebrew to help the students with speech and vernacular.

Pertaining to language education, Ogden of the National Jewish Education Committee posed a problem. “The question of Hebrew versus Yiddish seemed unrealistic to answer. It was not a question of one or the other; rather it was a basic principle of firsthand contact, as can best be incorporated within the limits of the time schedule for Jewish education. Both languages are the root sources of Jewish life as we know it in America today.”<sup>22</sup> This showed that it was not one language or the other to be taught in Jewish education but a matter of time that constrained the CJC to make choices between the two.

In 1959, the CJC conducted questionnaires and a summary of the views that dealt with the teacher shortage, Israel, Hebrew, Yiddish and others. Some respondents felt that there should be two departments training teachers for Talmud Torahs and for schools with a more secular ideology and an emphasis on Yiddish. Due to the majority increase in Hebrew schools not teaching Yiddish, it seemed that more emphasis on teacher education was towards Hebrew as shown in the curricula of the Midrasha L’Morim. For Hebrew there was unanimity as to the inclusion of Hebrew in the school curriculum but a divergence of opinion on the intensity with more time being spent on vocabulary and speech than religious education. For Yiddish, some of the respondents point out the lack of time in schools or the decreased interest in Yiddish as good reasons for removing the subject. In the opposing opinions for the advocating of Yiddish in schools is that both Hebrew and Yiddish are Jews national tongues; two cultural forces sustaining and supporting each other and not rivals in Jewish culture. Hebrew had not been able to completely replace Yiddish in schools and in Jewish homes, but English

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<sup>22</sup> Dr. Joseph Klinghofer. “Fourth regional conference on Jewish education.” Abstract of proceedings. Regional conference on Jewish education. London, Ontario: Canadian Jewish Congress, May 2, 1954. RG 260, File 66A. Ontario Jewish Archives.

was taking over which led to the direct contact to be either lost or loosened. Within public high schools, representatives of the CJC wished to support Hebrew as a language credit, although some stressed that both Hebrew and Yiddish should be suggested, only Hebrew was put forward for a closer identification to Jewish education through religion.<sup>23</sup>

The battle for language in formal Jewish education in Ontario had been going on long before World War II and the Independence of Israel. Although during the years after the Independence of Israel through the late 1960's, groups and individuals consistently made decisions favouring Hebrew and displacing Yiddish in formal Jewish education. Through the years, the ideology was that both languages were important and integral to the Jewish identity, both within Canada and globally. The situations that led to the displacement of Yiddish were due to the inadequacy and lack of teachers throughout the years that struggled with religious and secular education. The slow downward slope of interest in the education and teaching of the Yiddish language was due to the Holocaust, the memories of the European Jews that spoke the language and indirectly associating the language with the atrocities of the past, according to the students at the Midrasha in the late 1960's; Israel's revival of the Hebrew language and the connection world Jewry would have to Israel in the future. The result of this is that the Yiddish language has not disappeared as some scholars have suggested through surveys and reports of Jews identifying their language as Yiddish.<sup>24</sup> But that it still exists for students and adults that wish to educate themselves in their culture and heritage. All Jewish life should have the common purpose for Jewish culture, community and heritage through Jewish language education in both Hebrew and Yiddish, fostering a love for both languages.

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<sup>23</sup> Dr. Joseph Klinghofer. "Jewish education in Canada." Summary of proceedings. Jewish education in Canada. Ontario: National Education Committee of the Canadian Jewish Congress, 1959. RG 260, File 174B. Ontario Jewish Archives.

<sup>24</sup> Jack Thiessen. *Yiddish in Canada - The Death of a Language*. Printed in Germany: Verlag SCHUSTER Leer, n.d.