

Rabbi Dr. Natan Ophir

Rav Kook and Dr. Revel: A Shared Vision for a Central Universal Yeshiva?

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NATAN OPHIR (OFFENBACHER) directs Meorot, a center in Jerusalem for Jewish Meditation & Neuro-Psychology. An alumnus of Yeshiva College, he received ordination from Yeshivat Mercaz Harav and a Ph.D in Jewish Philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where he served as rabbi of the campus for sixteen years. He has published articles in *Daat*, *Tehumin*, and other scholarly journals.

This article examines a little known episode in the history of two famous schools, *Yeshivat Mercaz Harav* - Central Universal Yeshiva (CUY)¹ and the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS). Specifically, it examines several exchanges between R. Abraham Isaac Kook and R. Dr. Bernard Revel. Their discussion began in 1918, continued when R. Kook visited New York in 1924, and culminated in a written proposal by Dr. Revel on May 17, 1927. The proposal would have meant uniting what we now call the *Torah u-Madda*² ideology developed in New York with *Torat Erez Yisrael* of Jerusalem. There are lacunae in this story that leave room for speculation. Nevertheless, the main plot will, I believe, be of special interest to readers of this journal, and may give rise to interesting observations about the protagonists. Besides adding a chapter to the history of *Torah u-Madda* in the 20th century, this story provides a glimpse into a relatively unknown phase in the early development of both Yeshiva College and CUY.

R. Kook's Vision for CUY, 1904-1917

R. Kook began articulating his goal for a Central Universal Yeshiva soon after he immigrated to *Erez Yisrael* on May 13, 1904 to serve as rabbi of Jaffa and the surrounding agricultural communities. His vision was to reshape the intellectual and religious landscape not only in *Erez Yisrael* but all over the world. R. Kook's considerations in planning an innovative and diversified curriculum for the new yeshiva are reflected in letters to Dr. Joseph Seliger,³ R. Shmuel Alexandrov,⁴ R. Yoel Zelkind,⁵ the Mizrachi,⁶ R. Yitzchak Yaacov Reines,⁷ and R. Yitzhak Isaac Halevi⁸ in the years 1906-1907. By March 6, 1908, R. Kook was able to inform his brother, R. Dov Baer Ha-Kohen Kook of Russia, that favorable responses had been received and the Yeshiva would be set up in grandeur as befitting the

honor of *Erez Yisrael*.⁹ Subjects proposed to be taught included not only Talmud and Halakhah, but also Jewish thought and languages such as French or German.¹⁰ By June 1912, R. Kook had prepared a “programme” describing the Central Yeshiva and had sent it to several donors.¹¹

During the years of World War I, R. Kook was in St. Gallen, Switzerland¹² and in London.¹³ As the war ended with the British conquest of Palestine, R. Kook viewed the historic events via the prism of messianic redemption. His public activity focused on promoting a new movement he founded, *Degel Yerushalayim* (Banner of Jerusalem).¹⁴ Branches were established in Switzerland, Holland, and England.¹⁵ The Central Universal Yeshiva in Jerusalem was to be the crowning jewel of the movement’s global Jewish renaissance.¹⁶ R. Kook called for the creation of a unique yeshiva to lead the revival of Israel in its Holy Land.¹⁷ He emphasized the need for a yeshiva in Jerusalem to counter the attraction of the new secular university being built there.¹⁸ R. Kook also began discussions with counterparts in America. Here is where our story of a joint venture with Dr. Revel begins.

Joint Vision with Dr. Revel, 1918-1919

In 1915, RIETS and Yeshivat Etz Chaim merged into a new institution called the Rabbinical College of America. The Board of Directors invited R. Dr. Bernard Revel¹⁹ to serve as “Rosh HaYeshiva and President of the Faculty”.²⁰ His first major undertaking was to establish the Talmudical Academy as the first religious high school in America where secular subjects were also studied.²¹ R. Revel also began reorganizing the Rabbinical College.²² In the fall of 1917, he hired Dr. Moshe (Moses) Seidel (1886-1970) as instructor of Bible and librarian.²³ Seidel was a close disciple of R. Kook.²⁴ In the wake of the excitement generated by the Balfour Declaration,²⁵ Seidel wrote to R. Kook and asked about its messianic import. R. Kook responded on February 1, 1918 with an unequivocal forecast - the beginning of Redemption is certainly unfolding before us, and it has already begun with the “Revealed End of Time.”²⁶ He sent Seidel his booklet describing *Degel Yerushalayim*. On October 16, 1918, Seidel, on behalf of R. Revel and the Agudas Harabonim,²⁷ invited R. Kook to New York to promote *Degel Yerushalayim*.²⁸

Two weeks later, on November 5, 1918, R. Kook wrote apologetically to Dr. Seidel, explaining that he was unable to travel to America until the war completely ended.²⁹ But in this same letter, R. Kook asked that Seidel have R. Revel set in motion “a fund” for the construction of the “Universal Yeshiva.” He explained the urgent necessity for a religious institution in Jerusalem to counter the secular wave of culture and education. His concern reflected the fact that in 1918 the foundation stones had been ceremoniously laid on Mount Scopus for the Hebrew University. R. Kook envisioned R. Revel’s help in attracting to CUY the multitude of students then emigrating from Europe.³⁰ He

mentioned reading R. Revel's article in the *Yiddische Gazette*, and noted how similar its vision was to *Degel Yerushalayim*. It thus seemed worthwhile to coordinate their efforts. He requested that Seidel convey his "faithful love" to Revel and establish a direct verbal connection with practical implications.

A second key figure in developing the connection and trust between Dr. Revel and R. Kook was R. Dov Levinthal.³¹ He was active in both RIETS and Agudas Harabonim³² and instrumental in helping the young Revel develop his career.³³ In 1919, R. Levinthal visited R. Kook in London³⁴ and they discussed *Degel Yerushalayim*.³⁵ Later, R. Levinthal was to facilitate R. Kook's visit to America and serve as chairman of the American Building Committee for the CUY.

Soon, Seidel sent word that all travel expenses were covered³⁶ and he arranged an entry permit, which R. Kook received on August 5, 1919. R. Kook responded that he must first return to *Erez Yisrael*.³⁷ Soon after arriving, he received word from R. Levinthal that R. Revel had secured the funds to establish CUY. On December 3, 1919, R. Kook wrote to R. Revel asking for clarification regarding "the generous offer" to establish CUY:

Our mutual friend, R. Levinthal, has informed me about the pledge of your wealthy brothers-in-law. Please tell me more details. What is the amount they wish to dedicate to establish the yeshiva? What are their conditions? Please speed them up as much as possible - we have an option to buy a plot of land with a building already on it.

R. Kook elaborated upon the importance of *Degel Yerushalayim* and requested that R. Revel carry its banner proudly. He reiterated his concern that the Hebrew University in Jerusalem would attract the youth coming to Palestine, while those seeking Torah would remain scattered.³⁸ To R. Levinthal, he wrote asking about the exact amount allocated for purchase of the site and the building. He added that "additional support can be expected" because "we are not interfering with the secular plans," apparently a reference to an agreement not to lead religious opposition to the new University.

The promised money was meant to come from Dr. Revel's brothers-in-law, Sam and Marion Travis, in Tulsa, Oklahoma¹. However, in late 1919, the Travis family lost a large contract with Standard Oil and their business came under heavy mortgage obligations because they contracted high interest loans for purchasing railroad tank cars. Bernard Revel moved back to Tulsa and spent his time visiting the oil plants and dealing with banks.³⁹ He worked with Sam Travis in the Oklahoma Petroleum &

¹ Dr. Revel had run the office of Sam Travis in Tulsa after he married Sarah Travis in November 1908 until September 1915 when he was invited to RIETS.

Gasoline Company. In an interesting letter that Revel wrote on July 25, 1921² to Emile Offenbacher³ in Frankfurt⁴, he stated that "conditions seem to be improving". Emile was a close friend and business partner of Sam Travis⁵. Revel asked that Emile arrange for the purchase of a "very formidable collection of Hebraica and Judaica" which was for sale in Leipzig for "about \$1,000", and arrange for its donation to the "Palestine Library Committee of Jerusalem" and given "to the University of Jerusalem". This in order to fulfill the pledge of Sam Travis to a Mr. Rosenbloom of Pittsburgh to help create the Judaic library for the new University of Jerusalem. This letter indicates not only that Sam Travis in 1921 was able to resume his philanthropic endeavors, but also that Travis and Revel were involved in supporting the new venture of the fledgling Hebrew University⁶.

In mid 1923 R. Revel returned to Manhattan and resumed his ambitious programming. A new idea was now proposed – to establish YERIEL College (acronym for “Yeshivath Rabbi Isaac Elchanan”) with branches around the world - including Palestine.⁴⁰

The Establishment of Mercaz Harav, 1921-1923

In Palestine, Herbert Louis Samuel, the British High Commissioner, established the Chief Rabbinate of Palestine, to which R. Kook was elected on February 24, 1921. Samuel spoke to Harry Fischel, perhaps the richest Orthodox Jew in New York,⁴¹ who was visiting Palestine in July, and impressed upon him the importance of erecting an honorable residence for the new Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi. Fischel agreed and generously added an adjoining synagogue and *beit midrash*, thus providing a location for the beginnings of Yeshivat Mercaz Harav, the first Hebrew language yeshiva of higher learning in Palestine. The name “*Mercaz*” referred to “the circle” of students learning in the *beit midrash* adjacent to the Chief Rabbi’s residence. “*Mercaz*” was meant to be a temporary designation, a precursor for CUY.⁴²

R. Kook invited the *Nazir*, R. David Cohen, from abroad⁴³ to design a curriculum and help set up

² My thanks to my father Prof. Elmer Offenbacher for finding this letter to Emile Offenbacher signed by B. Revel on official stationery of the Oklahoma Petroleum Gasoline Company.

³ Emile Offenbacher, my grandfather, dictated his autobiography to his daughter Carolyn Kuten in the 1950's, and the transcript is preserved in the Offenbacher family archives. Emile was born on Aug. 24, 1881 in Saint Maude Paris, and he started the Offenbacher Petroleum Company in 1916 in Tulsa, Oklahoma, investing about \$150,000.

⁴ In his memoirs, Emile notes that there were no eligible religious women in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and therefore he had taken Sam to Paris in April 1913 where he introduced him to the Tedesco family. Sam married their daughter Julie in Paris on July 8, 1913. Now, in 1921, after World War I had ended, Emile was staying with his brother Joseph Offenbacher in Frankfurt am Main, also with the intention of getting married.

⁵ Sam had convinced Emile to join him in Tulsa as the vice president and treasurer in his gasoline company.

⁶ The cornerstone for the Hebrew University was laid on July 24, 1918, however, the Mount Scopus campus was actually opened only on April 1, 1925

CUY. The *Nazir* immigrated to Palestine on October 11, 1921, and at the end of December, 1921 he submitted his proposal with an unusually broad spectrum of subjects, including Jewish History, philosophy, and ethics, as well as Hebrew grammar and Bible.⁴⁴ This is not very surprising considering his academic background.⁴⁵ Due to a lack of funding, the plan remained theoretical. R. Kook sent out a clarion call from Jerusalem in September, 1922 asking to help launch CUY, of which “*ha-merkaz*” (the center) “with a small number of scholars,” was merely a modest beginning.⁴⁶ However, funds were not forthcoming. His colleagues tried to convince him to raise funds in America. Thus, for example, in November, 1922, R. Zalman Pines admonished R. Kook that he must travel to America; the competition, the University in Jerusalem, was assuming shape and form, while “our holy idea of a Higher Yeshiva in the Holy Land is relegated to the realm of *azilut*” (i.e. the highest of the four mystical worlds and the furthest from earth).⁴⁷

R. Kook’s Visit to America, 1924

Desperate financial straits of various Torah institutions eventually led to mounting pressures.⁴⁸ On February 28, 1924, R. Kook set sail to join a delegation coordinated by R. Aharon Teitelbaum⁴⁹ of the Central Relief Committee (CRC)⁵⁰ to save Torah institutions in Europe and Palestine.⁵¹ He arrived in New York on the eve of March 18.⁵² Interviewed upon his arrival in New York at Hotel Pennsylvania, R. Kook announced his “universal vision”- “to organize a yeshiva in Jerusalem for the Jewry of the entire world.” It would be similar to the existing *yeshivot*, but would “have a broader program, including Jewish Philosophy, Jewish Ethics, and Jewish History.” In addition, “an opportunity will be given to those desiring secular training to study outside the yeshiva.”⁵³

This broad program was reflected in an official pamphlet published and distributed in New York in the summer of 1924 in both English and Hebrew. The pamphlet was prepared by Dr. Benjamin Menashe Lewin, R. Kook’s trusted disciple,⁵⁴ who was in New York at the time.⁵⁵ The six year study program for CUY was intended for ages 16-22 and included eight areas of study: *Halakhah*-Talmud, *Aggadah*, *Tanakh*, Jewish History, Land of Israel studies, *Hokhmat Yisrael* (Jewish Philosophy and Ethics), literary writing style, and the art of rhetoric.⁵⁶ Thus, it was Lewin who translated R. Kook’s universal messianic vision into a concrete proposal in English for training rabbinical leaders in Jerusalem, who would then return to their home countries.

The Torah Fund campaign was launched at Hotel Astor on April 2, 1924.⁵⁷ The next day, R. Kook began a series of lectures at RIETS and met with R. Revel, whom he later described as the “heart and soul of the Holy Yeshiva.”⁵⁸ On May 12-14, 1924, at the convention of Agudas Harabbonim, he delineated his plans for the CUY⁵⁹ and spoke of establishing a world organization of

Orthodox Rabbis with a Jerusalem center to pave the way for a *Sanhedrin*.⁶⁰ In his address, R. Kook distinguished between two archetypical concepts, “Zion” and “Jerusalem.” Zion symbolizes political and material existence, while Jerusalem represents the spiritual. The Zionist movement takes care of the first, while it is up to the “faithful” to raise the “Banner of Jerusalem” and revive “Great Ideals” heralding redemption. Resolutions were passed recognizing the vital necessity to establish the CUY and proposing to erect a center for the Chief Rabbinate in Jerusalem.⁶¹

R. Kook toured throughout New York, met with President Calvin Coolidge, and visited ten major cities. Towards the end of his visit, R. Kook declared his admiration for American Jewry,⁶² comparing it to Babylonia of ancient times - implying thereby that this Torah center would complement that of *Erez Yisrael*.⁶³ The delegation left on November 12, 1924, having raised about \$320,000. From aboard ship, R. Kook wrote to the Young Israel movement in New York and to its President, Hyman Goldstein, praising them for being pioneers in raising “the Banner of Jerusalem” to purchase the plot of land for “the Central Yeshiva for Israel in Jerusalem.”⁶⁴

R. Kook’s “discovery” of America in 1924 came at a time of dramatic demographic alteration. From merely 280,000 prior to 1880, the number of Jews in America had grown to about 3.5 million. The overwhelming majority came from Eastern European Orthodox families. Striving for social and economic success, vast numbers were forgoing religious observance.⁶⁵ During his eight months in America, R. Kook encountered this phenomenon first hand, and presumably returned home with a renewed vision of the importance of educating a new and innovative type of Orthodox leader.

Growth and Optimistic Planning, 1925-1927

Before his visit to America, only some twenty students would gather in R. Kook’s house. By June, 1925, fifty-two students were enrolled in Mercaz Harav, and dozens more were expected from Europe.⁶⁶ R. Kook purchased twenty dunam in West Jerusalem (now Kiryat Moshe) at about \$20,000, and appealed to the Presidium of Agudas Harabonim to raise another \$250,000 for the construction of the new campus.⁶⁷ The Hebrew University opened officially on April 1, 1925 on Mount Scopus, and in a fund raising letter for CUY, an explanation was offered to justify establishing a second major institution in Jerusalem: Indeed, there is “a thrill of joy at the dedication of the Hebrew University and the triumphs attending that event,” but “there is room in this world” for a “post graduate school” in Jewish studies to train “our future leaders, scholars and creators.” This “Academy” would be for outstanding students just as a “Graduate School is to the College.”⁶⁸ It seems that R. Kook actually intended for CUY to provide a competitive alternative to the new Hebrew University.⁶⁹ He wrote to R. Teitelbaum asking for a massive publicity and fundraising campaign in New York.⁷⁰ Given the

optimistic prosperity, it is understandable how Dr. Revel could write to R. Kook in 1925 describing the rapid development of RIETS and promising that he would soon be able to join “in the holy work” of R. Kook’s yeshivah.⁷¹

By 1927, Mercaz Harav had about seventy-five students.⁷² A newspaper article in New York on April 1, 1927 praised R. Kook’s “Universal Yeshiva” as the first yeshiva with “no *golus* spirit” and with Hebrew as the language of instruction. The yeshiva was characterized as “thoroughly alive to modern methods in study, in scholarship and research,” and when “numerous” prospective students will join, the yeshiva will turn into a “truly Universal home of Higher Jewish learning.”⁷³

Dr. Revel’s International Plan for RIETS and Mercaz

I turn now to the RIETS-YC role in the story. On March 27, 1924, the charter of RIETS was amended by the Regents of the University of the State of New York to include “Yeshiva College,” and permission was granted to award the degrees of Doctor of divinity and Doctor of Hebrew literature.⁷⁴ On March 28, 1928, the charter was again emended, allowing Yeshiva College to offer courses leading to the degrees of Bachelor of Arts and of Science. The first class of thirty-five students began studying at Yeshiva College in the fall of 1928.⁷⁵ It is with these ambitious developments brewing in the background that we can read the proposal written by R. Revel on May 17, 1927. This letter was hand delivered to R. Kook in Jerusalem by RaMaZ and Fischel.⁷⁶ Below is my translation:

His Lofty Honor, friend of *Hashem* and of people, my soul friend, the true *ga'on*, Chief Rabbi of the Land of Israel, Rav Avraham Yizhak ha-Kohen Kook: Shalom and Blessing for ever. After sending regards to His Greatness, with love and boundless respect. For some time now, I have been seeking practical ways to establish an ongoing and continuous relationship between the Torah Center here, Yeshivat Rabbeinu Yizhak Elhanan, may its merit protect us, and the Torah Center in *Erez Yisrael* under his authority. I believe that I had a chance to discuss this question during his visit to America [1924]. Since that time, there has been, thank God, great and important advancement in the activities of the yeshiva here, and now [1927] a correct foundation has been established to execute this idea with God’s help.

I do not see any real need to accentuate to his esteemed honor the practical reasons for a reciprocal and continuous relationship between the two centers of Torah. I envision in this attempt an important trend in the expansion of the Torah and its buttressing. This will certainly widen the sphere of influence of the *yeshivot*. We look towards the day that our Holy Land shall become a center of Torah also for the lands of exile. Should we succeed with God’s Help in creating relations that will spread Torah and friendship between the big yeshiva here and his esteemed honor’s yeshiva (for which we are praying for its embellishment), it will be a major step towards fulfillment of this great hope. This attempt to join the work of the *yeshivot* in *Erez Yisrael* and abroad, to heighten Torah and to enhance it, will be unique in our times, in a way

that has not taken place in today's era of Torah's dispersion. The value of this hour is great, with profound consequences for the future.

I would like to ask his esteemed honor that with his vigilant eye he should investigate the possibility of establishing a relationship between the two *yeshivot* along these lines. One of our *Roshei Yeshivah* will go to his honor's yeshiva and teach classes, and a member of his honor's faculty will visit our yeshiva. Thus we will become acquainted with the style of learning in *Erez Yisrael* and of His Honor, while in *Erez Yisrael* they will become acquainted with the needs here. Similarly, we can establish a student exchange from here to there and there to here. As for those of His Honor's yeshiva who might serve in the Rabbinat in countries where English is the spoken language, they could benefit from RIETS, become fluent, and need not feel ashamed, for they shall be able to rebut their opponents. Furthermore, there is a blessing in publishing collections and books dedicated to Torah and *madda*, built upon the ideas of faculty and students in the two *yeshivot*.

I am taking this opportunity, as two of our most important leaders are visiting the Holy Land, R. Moshe Margolies and Harry Fischel, both of whom are supporters of the yeshiva, to ask his honor, if indeed this request is acceptable, to speak with them about this matter.

I esteem, love, and pursue his welfare with all my heart.

Dov Revel
Rosh ha-Yeshivah

When R. Revel sent his letter to R. Kook, it was the height of the "Golden Twenties," the post-World War decade characterized by optimism and prosperity. The United States was emerging as the richest country in the world. Thus, it was not unreasonable for R. Revel to envision a cross Atlantic renaissance bridging the CUY and RIETS.

When R. Kook received the proposal from R. Revel, he was indeed planning to integrate various studies in the CUY curriculum. Thus, for example, in 1927 he explained to R. Dr. Isaac Halevi Herzog, at the time still in Dublin, Ireland, that once the right instructors would be found and the new campus built, there would be a special department for Jewish History and Land of Israel studies. In addition, "outstanding students" who wished to study languages and sciences for the purpose of influencing their home communities would be able to do so outside the yeshiva after eight hours of yeshiva study.⁷⁷

The involvement of RaMaZ and Fischel in Dr. Revel's proposal is significant. RaMaZ was a longtime friend and supporter of both Dr. Revel and R. Kook.⁷⁸ Together with Fischel, he had been instrumental in bringing R. Revel to lead RIETS.⁷⁹ It was Fischel who chaired the building committee of RIETS in 1915 and of Yeshiva College in 1920, and at a crucial fundraising event, he spearheaded the \$5 million building campaign for Yeshiva College and pledged an incredible sum of \$100,000.⁸⁰ The total amount that he gave to RIETS/YC was \$160,000.⁸¹ Fischel also was R. Kook's major donor.

In his autobiography, Fischel described the purpose of his May 1927 visit as to enable “graduates of the Yeshiva College in America” to have “the opportunity to go to Palestine and take a post graduate course in higher Talmudic learning in R. Kook’s institution.”⁸² Upon arriving at Mercaz Harav and seeing the dire financial straits, he organized a Free Loan Society to enable the students to subsist.⁸³ It is clear, therefore, that Fischel’s presentation of Revel’s plan to R. Kook meant significant financial backing.

But, there is more to this story. Shortly before R. Revel sent his proposal to R. Kook, he was successful, together with R. Levinthal and RaMaZ, in preventing the merger of their institution with the Jewish Theological Seminary.⁸⁴ It was at the home of RaMaZ in early 1927 that the merger plans were halted.⁸⁵ Therefore, it may be that the exchange program with R. Kook’s yeshiva was the ideological alternative offered by RaMaZ and R. Revel.

The Aftermath, 1927-1935

R. Kook responded to R. Revel’s proposal on July 6, 1927. After praising Revel as a “treasure of Torah” and “epitome of the sciences,” R. Kook affirmed his agreement to establish the “necessary connection” between RIETS and the CUY. He apologized, however, that the project would need to be delayed. His yeshiva was experiencing financial difficulty and had not yet structured a proper staff.⁸⁶ Indeed, in 1927, there were only two teachers in the yeshiva besides R. Kook and his son R. Zvi Yehudah.⁸⁷

The financial crisis of R. Kook’s yeshiva was far worse than admitted in his letter to R. Revel. The economic situation in Palestine was deteriorating; in March, 1927, there were mass demonstrations due to unemployment and the closure of factories. Some 5,000 Jews were leaving Palestine annually, while only about 2,700 were arriving.⁸⁸ Mercaz Harav was also affected, and letters warning of the yeshiva’s necessary closure were soon sent out.⁸⁹

What happened during 1928-1929? According to a document of Yeshiva College listing the “Tentative Faculty of the Department of Jewish Studies” for the academic year beginning Sept. 1928, there were to be two visiting lecturers in Jewish Philosophy. One was Prof. J. Wogemuth, rector of the Rabbiner Seminar in Berlin slated to teach in 1929/30. The other was Chief Rabbi. A. Cook (sic), of Palestine listed as visiting lecturer 1928-9. What does this mean? Ostensibly, it would seem that Dr. Revel was in contact with R. Kook and **actually planning to bring him to New York to teach at**

Yeshiva College in Sept. 1928.⁷ Pending further details, we can only speculate how this was to have been achieved. What do we know however, is that in 1929, Harry Fischel offered \$100,000 to Hebrew University President, Judah Leib Magnes if he would agree to build R. Kook's Yeshiva on Mount Scopus. Fischel explained to Magnes that the purpose was "to broaden the horizon of the Yeshiva student, and spiritually enrich the Hebrew University student".⁹⁰ The discussion of how R. Kook's Yeshiva might be incorporated on the Hebrew University campus was reflected in discussion recorded in the Protocols of the Institute of Jewish Studies Faculty.⁹¹ Magnes corresponded with Fischel on Nov. 24, 1931 and reported that Saul Lieberman would head the preparatory Talmud division at Hebrew University. He stipulated however, that R. Kook would not be appointed a faculty member of the Institute of Jewish Studies although he could serve on the governing board.⁹²

Harry Fischel was intent on erecting a bold new "institution of higher learning" that would perpetuate his name.⁹³ He consulted R. Revel and other scholars and came up with a grand proposal to establish a research institute that could grant MA and Ph.D degrees in Talmud. On Sept. 15, 1929, Fischel met with Franklin D. Roosevelt, then Governor of New York State, and explained to him that the "Talmud contains a great deal of science in every field of knowledge," and advanced degrees could be awarded for talmudic research. Roosevelt provided Fischel with letters to the New York Board of Regents, and promised that if the Regents would not grant the charter, he would personally send a "message to the legislature to grant such a charter."⁹⁴

The institute that did eventually perpetuate Fischel's name was the "Harry Fischel Institute for Research in Talmud" which opened officially on November 1, 1931 under the direction of R. Kook's brother, R. Dov. Eighteen students were to participate, each to receive a \$25 monthly allowance.⁹⁵ In February-March 1932, Fischel decided to allocate an anticipated annual New York rental income of \$50,000 to support three teams of thirteen scholars in each of the major centers of world Jewry – Jerusalem, Vilna and Kovno. Each student was to receive a monthly stipend of \$20.⁹⁶ Thus, even during the Depression years, Fischel succeeded in initiating new Talmudic studies programs.

Now back to R. Revel's proposal. Why did it not materialize? A major obstacle was the stock market crash of Oct. 29, 1929. Already in 1928, \$1,275,000 was outstanding in unpaid pledges⁹⁷ and the crash worsened the financial crisis. R. Revel sent out a communication cosigned with RaMaZ warning that "The great Yeshiva College, the pride of America Jewry is compelled to close its doors. The teachers and office force have not been paid for several months, 600 students are without food as we are unable to open the restaurant"⁹⁸. During the summer of 1931, it was doubtful that YC would

⁷ My thanks to Zev Eleff who discovered this document in the YU archives, Revel Papers, box 36, folders 1-20 and sent me a copy on June 16, 2010.

reopen and there was a danger that the College would forfeit its state charter

Recovery began only around 1935 with the impact of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. At this juncture, it is interesting to note an enigmatic report of an American attempt at establishing a version of Yeshiva College-RIETS in Palestine. In February, 1935, R. Hayyim Ozer Grodzinski told R. Kook that he had heard the "news" from America about "some person or people planning to travel to the Holy Land to prepare a Yeshiva with a college on the model of RIETS in New York." He asked R. Kook to join him in thwarting the idea.⁹⁹

What was this 1935 "news" based on?¹⁰⁰ One possibility is that it is related to the indefatigable Harry Fischel and his plans.¹⁰¹ On May 23, 1935, Harry Fischel arrived in Palestine, and with R. Kook's blessings, convinced R. Saul Lieberman to serve as Dean of the Fischel Institute for Talmudic Research. Lieberman was teaching Talmud at The Hebrew University, having completed his MA there in Talmudic Studies. He told Fischel "that it is advisable to change the entire method of study and put it on a more scientific basis in order to do real research work and publish the results."¹⁰² It is intriguing that in the summer of 1935, R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik visited Palestine and lectured at both Mercaz Harav and the Harry Fischel Institute.¹⁰³ He was one of three candidates for the position of Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv-Yaffo after the death of R. Solomon Aronson on March 25, 1935. The 32 year old R. Soloveitchik had completed his PhD in Berlin in 1932, and had also studied at the Berlin Rabbinical seminary. His father, R. Moses Soloveitchik had been teaching Talmud since 1929 at RIETS, and in the early 1930's was inquiring into similar positions for his son, even asking the JTS Professor of Talmud, Louis Ginzberg about an academic position at JTS.¹⁰⁴ Given Fischel's programming ideas for Jerusalem, one might speculate as to whether Fischel's intentions went beyond having R. Soloveitchik visit the Fischel Institute as a guest lecturer.

Conclusion

R. Revel and R. Kook did not succeed in setting up a joint program of RIETS and CUY, nor did Fischel build R. Kook's Yeshiva on the Hebrew University campus. Thus, the preceding narrative is merely a historical footnote. However, the story indicates a willingness of R. Kook to incorporate R. Revel's *Torah u-madda* pedagogical ideas in Mercaz Harav¹⁰⁵ and thus adds to the broader question of R. Kook's "openness" to modernity.¹⁰⁶ True, R. Kook did not agree with the *Torah im Derech Erez* approach of R. Hirsch,¹⁰⁷ nor did he wish to imitate the Hildesheimer Berlin Seminary, where *Wissenschaft des Judentums* was a central element and rabbinical students were to earn doctorates at the University of Berlin.¹⁰⁸ But the story reconstructed above would seem to reveal a pedagogical flexibility towards training rabbinical leaders to meet modern cultural and religious challenges.

Why was this type of pedagogical openness not reflected in Mercaz Harav? The answer seems to be that, contrary to the broad interests of R. Kook's disciples Seidel, Lewin, Lieberman, and the Nazir, the actual direction of Mercaz was shaped after his death by his son R. Zvi Yehuda and the Rosh Yeshiva, R. Charlop. Their emphasis was on the uniqueness of *Am Yisrael*, *Torat Yisrael* and *Erez Yisrael*, not on academic approaches to Judaic studies. They steered the yeshiva clear of the "impure air of the exile" and the consequent "alien cultures."¹⁰⁹ This might at least partially explain why Mercaz Harav had a much more restricted impact on modern Orthodoxy in Western countries than what R. Kook had envisioned.¹¹⁰

Similarly, Yeshiva University did not establish an exchange program with Mercaz Harav and the influence of R. Kook's *Torat Erez Yisrael* was far more limited than Dr. Revel had hoped for. It may be that Yeshiva College was engrossed in self development after 1935, but it could also be that after R. Kook, there was no real partner in *Erez Yisrael*.

In conclusion, the questions remains how "open" R. Kook was to academic study.¹¹¹ To what extent was R. Kook truly amenable to the teaching of academics to Rabbinical students? How should we explain what seems to be a readiness to join with Dr. Revel in an exchange program? The historical details gathered in this article suggest several possible motivating factors. One of them is R. Kook's kabbalistic-messianic-utopian vision of "elevating sparks of holiness,"¹¹² but an analysis of this approach is beyond the scope of this paper.

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¹ Descriptions of the early history of the "Central Universal Yeshiva" (CUY) can be found in Yochai Rudik, *Life of Creativity: Yeshivat Mercaz Harav Through Its Generations* (Heb.) (Jerusalem, 1998) and in R. Yaakov Filber, *Kokhevei Or* (Jerusalem, 1993). Cf. Zvi Yaron, *Mishnato shel Ha-Rav Kook* (Jerusalem, 1974), chap. 9 (on education). See also Aryeh Frankel, "Kook, Avraham Yitzhak Hacohen," in *The Encyclopedia of Religious Zionism* (Heb.), ed. Isaac Rafael (Jerusalem, 1983), V: 89-422.

² R. Revel's use of the expression "*Torah u-madda*," recorded as early as June 1915, eventually was to become the motto of Yeshiva University. "*Madda*" was used by R. Revel as a generic term for knowledge and wisdom and not just natural sciences. See Norman Lamm, *Torah Umadda: The Encounter of Religious Learning and Worldly Knowledge in the Jewish Tradition* (Northvale, New Jersey, 1990), 11-12, citing a letter by R. Revel to R. Avraham Eliezer Alperstein. See also Jacob J. Schachter, "*Torah U-Madda* Revisited: The Editor's Introduction," *The Torah U-Madda Journal* 1 (1989): 1-22.

³ *Iggerot ha-Ra'ayah* I: #41 (Nov. 15, 1906), pp. 38-39; #98 (Oct. 21, 1907), p. 116. The Hebrew dates of Rav Kook's letters have been translated here into Gregorian equivalents to facilitate a comparative historical perspective.

⁴ On November 30, 1906, Rav Kook responded to Alexandrov with concern that the proposal to create a "beit midrash" for higher learning would engender dangerous errors, as happened to similar institutions in Russia and Germany. Instead, he stipulated his rationale for a yeshiva that would educate towards a healthy body and spirit and promote an accurate usage of "madda'im" (the term may refer to a general acquaintance with universal knowledge, and not merely scientific subjects) in all its branches and complexities. *Iggerot ha-Ra'ayah* I: #44, pp. 43-52.

⁵ *Iggerot ha-Ra'ayah* I: #97 (October 20, 1907), pp. 114-15.

⁶ *Ibid.*, #98 (October 21, 1907), pp. 115-19. R. Kook asked the Mizrahi to help establish the new yeshiva with instruction in Hebrew, languages, Jewish thought, and general sciences, in a course of six or eight years of study, so as to produce well-rounded, educated men who will glorify Israel and *Erez Yisrael*.

⁷ *Iggerot ha-Ra'ayah* I: #100, (Dec. 6, 1907), p. 120; # 118 (Feb. 27, 1908), pp. 147-49.

⁸ *Iggerot ha-Ra'ayah* I: #99 (Dec. 1, 1907), pp. 119-120; #103 (Dec. 26, 1907), pp. 122-28; #111 (Feb. 4, 1908), pp. 136-41. On June 16, 1908, #146, pp. 184-90, R. Kook confronted the concerns that Halevi had raised about his plan to create a new yeshiva in Jaffa.

⁹ *Iggerot ha-Ra'ayah* I: #125, pp. 154-56. On July 18, 1909, R. Kook updated his brother by saying that the "Central Yeshiva for the new Yishuv" has a modest beginning. See *Iggerot ha-Ra'ayah* I: #208, pp. 260-62.

¹⁰ Rudik, *Life of Creativity*, 52-53. A letter, given to Shem Tov Gefen for fund-raising purposes, indicated plans to add math, sciences, Arabic and Turkish to the general curriculum.

¹¹ *Iggerot ha-Ra'ayah* II: #437-40 (June 6-9, 1912), pp. 85-88.

¹² In July, 1914, R. Kook traveled to Berlin, Germany to participate in the convention of Agudas Yisroel. He was vacationing at the German spa resort in Bad Kissingen when Germany declared war against Russia on August 1. Russian citizens were rounded up and interred, but at the intervention of his host, R. Dr. Isaac Bamberger, he was allowed to depart for neutral Switzerland.

¹³ On January 27, 1916, he was invited to London by Congregation Machzike Hadath in Brick Lane, Whitechapel. See Bernard Homa, *A Fortress in Anglo-Jewry: The Story of the Machzike Hadath* (London, 1953).

¹⁴ *Degel Yerushalayim* was intended to unite the religiously observant community to work alongside the Zionist movement. A lengthy description in Yiddish and Hebrew is printed in *Iggerot ha-Ra'ayah* III: #886-888, pp. 178-200.

¹⁵ The topic discussed most frequently in R. Kook's letters during his last year in England, including during his summer vacation at the spa in Harrogate, North Yorkshire, was the progress of *Degel Yerushalayim*. See seventeen letters from Harrogate, *Iggerot ha-Ra'ayah* III: #893-909 (June 30, 1918 until Aug. 28, 1918), pp. 205-22.

¹⁶ *Iggerot ha-Ra'ayah* III: #886 (April, 1918), pp. 178-180; #888, pp. 196-97, 200.

¹⁷ *Ma'amarei ha-Ra'ayah* II, "Central Universal Yeshiva in Jerusalem," "Great Calls," 344-49.

¹⁸ *Iggerot ha-Ra'ayah* III: # 913 (Sept. 18, 1918), pp. 225-27. R. Yaakov Moshe Charlop wrote to R. Kook on Nov. 25, 1918 urging him to travel through Europe and ask each city to provide expenses for their local students who would come on *aliyah* together with R. Kook to the new Yeshiva in Jerusalem. R. Charlop anticipated that "at least 600 students" could be recruited. This grand plan is not as far-fetched as it might sound given the thousands of displaced Yeshiva students in the wake of the anti-Semitic pogroms and the war's upheavals. The letter to R. Kook was printed in *Hed Harim* 42 (XXXX): 93-95 and reprinted recently in a publication by Yeshiva University students, *Kol Hamevaser* 1:8 (May 8, 2008). R. Kook describes this suggestion in *Iggerot ha-Ra'ayah* III: #932 (December 30, 1918), pp. 243-45.

¹⁹ See Aaron Rothkoff, *Vision and Realization: Bernard Revel and his Era*, Ph.D thesis submitted in the Bernard Revel Graduate School, Yeshiva University, New York, January, 1967. A popular version was published as Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff, *Bernard Revel: Builder of American Jewish Orthodoxy* (Philadelphia, 1972, reprinted Jerusalem, New York, 1981). For a biographical summary about Dr. Revel, see Harvey Horowitz and William M. Kramer, "Stamp of Approval: Oklahoma Oilman and *Rosh Ha-Yeshiva* Bernard Revel," *Western States Jewish History* 18 (April 1986): 256-261. Cf. Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven & London, 2004), 231-33. More recently, see Jeffrey S. Gurock, *Orthodox Jews in America* (Bloomington & Indianapolis, 2009), 143-45.

²⁰ He assumed his responsibilities on Sept. 1, 1915. See Rothkoff, *Vision*, 51-53. Cf. Moses Mescheloff, "As I Knew Him: Memories of Rabbi Dr. Bernard Revel," in *My Yeshiva College: 75 Years of Memories*, ed. Menachem Butler and Zev Nagel (Yashar Books, 2006), 76-80, originally printed in *The Commentator* (August 3, 2005), available at <http://www.yucommentator.com/2.2843/as-i-knew-him-memories-of-rabbi-dr-bernard-revel-1.299143>

²¹ The first class of the Talmudical Academy began Sept. 3, 1916 (Rothkoff, *Vision*, 54).

²² The name Rabbinical College of America was later dropped because the Board of Regents of New York State required that an institution must have \$500,000 worth of property before using the name "College." See Rothkoff, *Vision*, 50, note 8.

²³ On Revel's choice of Seidel to teach Bible, see Jeffrey Gurock, *The Men and Women of Yeshiva: Higher Education, Orthodoxy and American Judaism* (New York, 1988), 48-49. For the Register of the Rabbinical College of America, New

York, 1917, see Gilbert Klaperman, *The Story of Yeshiva University* (London, 1969), appendix VII, p. 260, and p. 254, where the Register lists eleven faculty members. Cf. Rothkoff, *Vision*, 56-58.

²⁴ In 1908, with the encouragement of R. Kook, Seidel began studying Semitic studies, eventually completing his Ph.D at the University of Bern in 1913 and then moving to America to teach Bible in Baltimore and New York.

²⁵ The Balfour declaration on November 2, 1917 viewed “with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.”

²⁶ *Iggerot ha-Ra'ayah* III: # 871, pp. 155-59.

²⁷ The Agudas Harabonim was the “Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada” founded in 1902 by sixty European, mostly Lithuanian educated, rabbis. They spoke in Yiddish, wrote in Hebrew, and promoted RIETS. Their organization is not to be confused with the Rabbinical Council of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations. See Sarna, *Orthodox Judaism*, 191-93. Cf. Moshe D. Sherman, *Orthodox Judaism in America: A Biographical Dictionary and Sourcebook* (Westport, Connecticut, 1996), 225 ff.

²⁸ *Iggerot ha-Ra'ayah* III: #921, p. 231.

²⁹ Although the war was winding down in October and November 1918, it was not until November 11 that an armistice with Germany was signed and the Treaty of Versailles was actually completed only on June 28, 1919.

³⁰ *Iggerot ha-Ra'ayah* III, #924 (November 5, 1918), pp. 233-35.

³¹ Lithuanian born R. Bernard Dov Arie Ha-Kohen Levinthal (1862-1952) came in 1891 to Philadelphia's B'nai Abraham Synagogue. For archival documents on R. Levinthal, see Dianne Ashton, “The Philadelphia Group: A Guide to Archival and Bibliographic Collections,” Center For American Jewish History, Temple University (www.temple.edu/feinsteinctr/d.Philadelphia). For a description of R. Levinthal's connection to R. Kook, see my essay “R. Dov Levintahl as a Key Figure in the Establishment of Yeshivat Mercaz Harav,” *Megged Yerahim* 120 (Heb.) (Tishrei, 5710).

³² In 1902, he helped found the Agudas Harabonim and served for many years as its President. See Murray Friedman, “Introduction” *Philadelphia Jewish Life 1830-1940* (CITY, 1983), 5. Robert Tabak, “Orthodox Judaism in Transition” in *Philadelphia Jewish Life 1830-1940*, ed. Murray Friedman CITY, (1983), 50.

³³ When he was twenty-two or twenty-three (1907-1908), Revel resided in R. Levinthal's home at 716 Pine St. in Philadelphia and served as his secretary and assistant. Cf. Rothkoff, *Vision*, 36-37

³⁴ R. Levinthal visited Europe as part of the nine member American Jewish Congress delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, which began January 18, 1919 and ended January 21, 1920. Earlier, in December 15-16, 1918, some 400 American Jewish delegates had convened in R. Levinthal's home town, Philadelphia, and adopted resolutions to ensure recognition of Jewish claims to Palestine.

³⁵ The congenial meeting in London is described by R. Kook in *Iggerot ha-Ra'ayah* IV #993, p. 22.

³⁶ *Ibid.* #25 (November 5, 1918), pp. 235-36; #926 (November 14, 1918), pp. 236-38.

³⁷ *Ibid.* #968, pp. 278-79. R. Kook officially assumed the position of Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem only on December 30, 1919.

³⁸ *Iggerot ha-Ra'ayah* IV #992 (December 3, 1919), pp. 21-22.

³⁹ See Rothkoff, *Vision*, 63. According to financial statements of July 31, 1919, the Travis family oil business, the Oklahoma Petroleum and Gasoline Company, was worth close to five million dollars. The Travis brothers were generous supporters of R. Revel's enterprise. Thus for example, at a dinner for Revel's institution, March 1, 1917, Sam Travis pledged an annual commitment of \$5,000. See Klaperman, *The Story of Yeshiva University*, appendix VII, p. 260.

⁴⁰ According to the minutes of the sixth meeting of the “Yeshiva College Building Fund Executive Committee,” Dec. 13, 1923, the name “YERIEL College” was proposed by Mr. Manson. The YERIEL building committee was located at 1133 Broadway in Manhattan. I thank Leah Adler, librarian, Yeshiva University, and Shulamith Z. Berger, Curator of Special Collections, for sending me the “RIETS minutes, Yeshiva Campaign Committee,” Yeshiva University Records, 4/2-1.

⁴¹ Fischel owned entire buildings on Fifth Avenue and Park Avenue in New York City. See Goldstein, *Forty Years*. Fischel's activities are discussed in Aaron I. Reichel, *The Maverick Rabbi: Rabbi Herbert S. Goldstein and the Institutional Synagogue: A New Organizational Form* (1984; 2nd edition, 1986). See Aaron I. Reichel, “Pioneers of American Orthodoxy: Mr. Harry Fischel and Rabbi Herbert S. Goldstein,” in *My Yeshiva College: 75 Years of Memories*, ed. Menachem Butler and Zev Nagel (Yashar Books, 2006), 114-17, originally printed in *The Commentator* (April 18, 2005), available at www.yucommentator.com. I thank R. Reichel for sending me the original unabridged version of his article.

⁴² In a letter postmarked February 1, 1921, R. Zvi Yehuda Kook told R. Dovid Cohen, the *Nazir*, that the students attending his father's lectures are the “*Merkaz*”, “the kernel of the yeshiva.” See Harel Cohen (ed.), *Dodi Li-Zevi – 100 Letters Exchanged Between R. David Cohen and R. Tzvi Yehuda ha-Kohen Kook* (Heb.) (Jerusalem, 2005), letter 93, pp. 122-23.

⁴³ The *Nazir* had met R. Kook in St. Gallen on Aug. 10, 1915 and thereafter became a close disciple/colleague.

⁴⁴ See Dov Schwartz, *Religious Zionism Between Logic and Messianism* (Heb.) (Tel Aviv, 1999), 141-45. Cf. R. David

Cohen, *Mishnat Ha-Nazir* (Jerusalem, 2005), 48-52.

⁴⁵ The *Nazir* spent six years at the Academy for Jewish Studies established by Baron David Guenzburg in St. Petersburg. In 1913, he studied philosophy at the University of Freiburg in Germany. For the next six years he studied philosophy, classical literature, and Roman law at Basel University in Switzerland. On his approach to academic study, see Ari Yizhak Shvat, “‘We Need Not Fear Critical Study’: The *Nazir*’s ‘Scientific’ Study and His Relationship with Rav Kook” (Hebrew), *Tzohar* 31 (December, 2008): 99-114.

⁴⁶ “The Holy Call,” *Ma’amarei ha-Ra’ayah* II, 344-49; *Iggerot ha-Ra’ayah* IV (September, 1922), 134-38. Similarly, in February, 1925, R. Kook proclaimed that Mercaz Harav was merely the germination for “the Central Yeshiva in Jerusalem”. See *Iggerot ha-Ra’ayah* IV #294, pp. 131-32.

⁴⁷ The typed letter of Zalman Pines was sent from Zurich, dated 16 Heshvan, 5623 (November 7, 1922), and is preserved in the archives of *Beit Harav* in the folder of *Degel Yerushalayim*. In an earlier letter in this archive, R. Pines admonishes R. Kook that Hebrew University has successfully raised 23 million francs in America with the aid of Prof. Albert Einstein.

⁴⁸ For a description of the financial and political pressures to travel see Frankel, *Kook*, 308.

⁴⁹ Born 1891 in Jerusalem, R. Teitelbaum received ordination from R. Kook. At age 21, he set out for America and soon became known as “the father of the *yeshivot*” in recognition of his aid to religious institutions. At the outbreak of World War I, he joined with the Agudas Harabonim and other Orthodox Jews to create the Central Committee for the Relief of Jews Suffering Through the War, known as the CRC (Central Relief Committee).

⁵⁰ The CRC archives can be found in the Yeshiva University library. Boxes 124, 125 and 140 include documents relating to R. Kook’s visit to America.

⁵¹ R. Avraham Dov Baer Kahana Shapiro (1870-1943), the rabbi of Kovno and president of the Agudas Harabonim of Lithuania, joined R. Kook in Cherbourg, France. R. Moshe Mordechai Epstein (1866-1934), Rosh Yeshiva of Knesseth Yisrael in Slabodka, Lithuania, joined the delegation in New York.

⁵² R. Kook’s visit to America was documented in Joshua Hoffman’s groundbreaking article, “Rav Kook’s Mission to America,” in a journal published by R. Bezalel Naor, *Orot: A Multidisciplinary Journal of Judaism* 1 (1991): 78-99. For an updated Internet version, see <http://www.tzemachdovid.org/gedolim/ravkook.html>.

⁵³ “Palestine Today and Tomorrow – An Interview with Chief Rabbi Kook,” *The Jewish Forum* (March, 1924): 177-78.

⁵⁴ Lewin had been encouraged by R. Kook to complete his doctoral studies at the University of Bern. See *Iggerot ha-Ra’ayah* I: #80 (June 24, 1907), 86-87. Lewin had met R. Kook in 1899 and studied with him in Boisk. See Yehudah Mirsky, *An Intellectual and Spiritual Biography of Rabbi Avraham Yitzhaq Ha-Cohen Kook from 1865 to 1904* (Ph.D dissertation, Harvard University, 2007), 207-10.

⁵⁵ R. Lewin was in America in 1924 for research on Gaonic literature at RIETS and at JTS. See *Iggerot ha-Ra’ayah* IV #1141 (August 28, 1922), p. 133. Cf. *Ma’amarei ha-Ra’ayah* I, p. 63; II, p. 347.

⁵⁶ CRC Box 125, folder 15. The pamphlet was reprinted in *Ma’amarei ha-Ra’ayah* I, 62-65. Cf. Ari Yizhak Shvat, “Wisdom of Israel in its Holiness: The Vision of R. Kook For True Critical Scientific Study,” (Heb.) *Talelei Orot* 13 (2007): 309-40 (www.orot.ac.il/orot) note 74, cites documents that he found in the archives of B.M. Lewin, indicating that R. Kook entrusted Lewin to prepare both Hebrew and English versions of this booklet.

⁵⁷ Aaron Rothkoff (Rakeffet), “The 1924 Rabbinical Delegation Visit,” in *Rakkafot Aharon* I (Jerusalem, 1997), 1-6.

⁵⁸ *Morgen Journal* (April 4, 1924); Rothkoff, *Vision*, 142; Rakeffet, *Bernard Revel*, 125.

⁵⁹ See *Ha-Tor* 36-37, 21 and *Ha-Tor* 38 for reports of the convention.

⁶⁰ See Frankel, *Kook*, 313, based on *Ha-Olam*, the journal of the World Zionist Federation (June 12, 1924).

⁶¹ See Frankel, *Kook*, 313-14. Cf. the report in *Ha-Tor* 38 (June 6, 1924).

⁶² *Iggerot ha-Ra’ayah* IV: #1249 (Sept. 12, 1924), p. 201.

⁶³ Hoffman, “Rav Kook’s Mission,” based on *Das Yiddische Licht* (May 30, 1924), English section, 12.

⁶⁴ *Iggerot ha-Ra’ayah* IV: #1260 (November 12, 1924), p. 207.

⁶⁵ See Sarna, *American Judaism*, 159-65. Cf. Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven & London, 1972), 969-84. Gurock, *Orthodox Jews*, 153, estimates that as of the mid-1930s, “only 15 percent of America’s Jews strictly followed kosher laws.” My thanks to Menachem Butler for showing me the latter reference.

⁶⁶ CRC box 124, folder 5. A letter from June 30, 1925 states that the number of students was fifty-two. Two letters from October 10, 1925 indicate the number had increased to sixty-two students.

⁶⁷ *Iggerot ha-Ra’ayah* IV: #1332 (June 22, 1925), pp. 252-53.

⁶⁸ The letter is preserved in CRC, box 124, folder 1. See Ari Yizhak Shvat, “New Documents about Rav Kook’s Approach to the Establishment of the Hebrew University,” (Heb.), *Ha-Ma’ayan* 47: 4 (2007): 13-24.

⁶⁹ See, for example, in a letter to R. Teitelbaum preserved in the CRC archives box 124, folder 5 (Dec. 20, 1925) that it is imperative to immediately strengthen the Central Yeshiva, as the secular college is growing and developing rapidly. Similarly, box 124, folder 12, letter to R. A. Silver and R. Rosenberg (January 1, 1926) : CYU was to be a counterforce to the secular University in our Holy City, for “we cannot stand aside when our youth have only the secular option to choose from or to engage in Judaic studies where the holy has become secular” (my translations from the Hebrew original). The

letters were published by Shvat, "New Documents."

⁷⁰ *Iggerot ha-Ra'ayah*: IV #1337 (July 18, 1925), p. 258.

⁷¹ Revel's letter dated 1925 was published in Filber, *Kochavei Ohr*, 258-59.

⁷² "More than seventy" is the number cited by R. Kook in his response to R. Revel on July 6, 1927.

⁷³ Harold Berman, "The Universal Yeshiva at Jerusalem," *The Jewish Tribune*, CRC box 125, folder 16.

⁷⁴ Klaperman, *The Story of Yeshiva University*, 153.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁷⁶ The letter was published in *Iggerot la-Ra'ayah* (Jerusalem, 1986), #138, p.156, and reprinted in the second enlarged edition, edited by R. Ben-Zion Shapira (Jerusalem, 1990), #215, pp. 325-26.

⁷⁷ The letter to R. Herzog (October 24, 1927) is in the archives of *Beit Harav*, and was published in an edited form by Filber, *Kochavei Ohr*, 226, 242-49.

⁷⁸ In *Iggerot ha-Ra'ayah*: IV #999 (December 17, 1920), pp. 30-31, R. Kook asks RaMaZ for his support of *Degel Yerushalyim*. RaMaZ hosted the reception dinner at his home when R. Kook arrived in New York. RaMaZ served as president of RIETS from 1908-10.

⁷⁹ See Mescheloff, *As I Knew Him*.

⁸⁰ See Rothkoff, *Vision*, 86-87; Rakefet, *Bernard Revel*, 77; Klaperman, *The Story of Yeshiva University*, 156, 230-31; Reichel, *Pioneers*.

⁸¹ Fischel recorded that he donated a total of \$160,000 to RIETS and Yeshiva College - Harry Fischel, *Continuation of My Biography "Forty Years of Struggle for A Principle, 1928-1941,"* preface, 76.

⁸² Goldstein, *Forty Years*, 388.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 390.

⁸⁴ See Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff, "The Attempt to Merge the Jewish Theological Seminary and Yeshiva College, 1926-27," *Michael III* (Tel Aviv, 1975), reprinted in Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff, *Rakafot Aharon II* (Jerusalem, 1997), 172-98. Cf. Klaperman, *The Story of Yeshiva University*, 159-61.

⁸⁵ See Rakeffet, "The Attempt," 197. Cf. Rothkoff, *Bernard Revel*, 106-7. See also Jeffrey Gurock, "Another Look at the Proposed Merger: Lay Perspectives on Yeshiva- Jewish Theological Seminary Relations in the 1920s," in *Hazon Nahum: Studies in Jewish Law, Thought and History Presented to Dr. Norman Lamm* (New York, 1997), 729-42.

⁸⁶ The letter was printed in Filber, *Kochavei Ohr*, 270-71.

⁸⁷ Yeshayahu Shapira, "The Universal Yeshiva, 'Mercaz Harav,' in Jerusalem," (Heb.) *Ha-Hed* (Tammuz – Av, 1927): 9-11, preserved in CRC box 125, folder 15. The classes listed are: R. Kook -- *Halakhah, Shemonah Perakim*; R. Tzvi Yehudah – *Tanakh* and Prophecy; R. Cohen - *Midreshet Halakhah* and Logic; R. Charlop -- Talmudic Pilpul. This list is similar to the record of classes from October 10, 1925, CRC box 124, folder 5, letter of YaShar to Basel, Switzerland, although there were a few more classes, e.g. R. Tzvi Yehuda's "*Hokhmat Yisrael*" and the *Nazir's* survey course on systematic methods in *Hokhmat Yisrael*.

⁸⁸ The problems worsened with the Arab riots of August 23-29, 1929.

⁸⁹ These letters were sent all over the world, from Johannesburg to Los Angeles. See Yosi Avneri, *R. A.I.H Kook as Chief Rabbi of Erez Yisrael (1921-1935), The Man and His Activity* (Hebrew) (Ph.D Dissertation, Bar-Ilan University, 1989), 257-58 for unpublished letters dated May 3, 1928, Jan. 1, 1928, March 5, 1929, and additional letters in 1931-1932.

⁹⁰ See David N. Myers, *Re-inventing the Jewish Past: European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History*, New York and Oxford, 1995, 81-82.

⁹¹ See Myers, *Re-inventing*, 82, n. 45 – protocols from May 1, 1931 where Prof. Samuel Klein asked what harm would come if Institute students received better training in Talmud.

⁹² See *ibid.*, 214, n. 42-46 for the correspondence of Fischel and Magnes. See in particular the letters of Fischel dated April 1, and August 8, 1929. I thank Shuli Berger for drawing my attention to these discussions.

⁹³ See Fischel, *Continuation*, 1; Fischel, having only daughters, wished to have an institution perpetuate his name.

⁹⁴ Fischel, *Continuation*, 2, 13-15.

⁹⁵ The total annual budget was a little over \$10,000; see Fischel, *Continuation*, 7-9, 16.

⁹⁶ See Fischel, *Continuation*, 4-5. Cf. *Iggerot la-Ra'ayah* #180, pp. 193-94.

⁹⁷ Klaperman, *The Story of Yeshiva University*, 234, n. 73, citing *Times*, January 31 and March 9 and 10, 1928.

⁹⁸ Rakefet, *Revel*, 183; Rothkoff, *Vision*, 205 ff.

⁹⁹ *Iggerot la-Ra'ayah*, second edition, #353 (Feb. 8, 1935), p. 494. Also printed in *Ahiezer*, compendium of letters, ed. Aharon Suraski (Bnai Brak, 1970), vol. 1, #294, pp. 447-48. Cf. Avneri, 262, n. 178.

¹⁰⁰ From September 1933 until January 1934, R. Hayyim Ozer had also opposed the transfer of the Hildesheimer Seminary from Berlin to Palestine. See Christhard Hoffmann and Daniel R. Schwartz, "Early but Opposed - Supported but Late: Two Berlin Seminaries which Attempted to Move Abroad," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 36 (1991): 267-304, especially 279-82.

¹⁰¹ I thank the many respondents to my query on the Lookjed internet forum as to the enigma of R. Hayyim Ozer's

concern about a YC-RIETS in Jerusalem, in particular Moshe Faienstein, Y.C. Grunstein, R. Simcha Krauss, and R. David Miller. Most assumed that R. Hayyim was referring to the Hildesheimer seminary. However, the dates are earlier, and it seems to me more probable that the "news" was connected to Fischel's attempts to establish a YC-RIETS in Jerusalem.

¹⁰² Fischel, *Continuation*, 34-36. See Ari Shvat, "The Relationship Between Rav Kook and Prof. Saul Lieberman: An Expression of Rav Kook's View of Critical Torah Study," *Tzohar* 35 (December 2009): 59-66.

¹⁰³ See Jeffrey Saks, "Rabbi Soloveitchik Meets Rav Kook," *Tradition* 39:3 (Fall 2006): 90-96.

¹⁰⁴ See Elijah J. Schochet and Solomon Spiro, *Saul Lieberman: The Man and His Work* (New York, 2005), 17. This is based on Mel Scult, "Schechter's Seminary," in *Tradition Renewed: A History of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America*, ed. Jack Wertenteil (New York, 1997), 1, 85. Cf. Samuel Dresner, *Heschel, Hasidism, and Halakha* (New York, 2002), 119, n. 25 that the three candidates for Louis Ginzberg's position in teaching Talmud at JTS were J. Soloveitchik, Samuel Belkin, and Saul Lieberman.

¹⁰⁵ For a recent analysis of R. Kook's curriculum and his attitude to secular studies, see Avinoam Rosenak, *The Prophetic Halakhah: Rabbi A.I.H. Kook's Philosophy of Halakhah* (Heb.) (Jerusalem, 2007), 377-79, 389-91.

¹⁰⁶ See, for example, David Shatz, "Rav Kook and Modern Orthodoxy: The Ambiguities of 'Openness'," in *Engaging Modernity: Rabbinic Leaders and the Challenge of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Moshe Z. Sokol (Northvale, New Jersey, 1997), 91-115 and his "The Integration of Torah and Culture: Its Scope and Limits in the Thought of Rav Kook," in *Hazon Nahum: Studies in Jewish Law, Thought and History Presented to Dr. Norman Lamm*, ed. Yaakov Elman and Jeffrey Gurock (New York, 1997), 529-56.

¹⁰⁷ For R. Kook's general but critical comments about the "system" of R. S. R. Hirsch see *Shemonah Kevatzim*, vol. 6, #28, pp. 199-200. Cf. Jonathan Garb, "'Alien' Culture in the Circle of Rabbi Kook" in *Study and Knowledge in Jewish Thought*, ed. Howard Kreisel (Beer Sheva, 2006), 253-64.

¹⁰⁸ Marc B. Shapiro, "Rabbi Erieh Hildesheimer's Program of *Torah u-Madda*," *The Torah u-Madda Journal* 9 (2000): 76-86 and his *Between the Yeshiva World and Modern Orthodoxy: The Life and Works of Rabbi Jehiel Jacob Weinberg, 1884-1966* (Oxford, 1999); Shnayer Z. Leiman, "Rabbinic Openness to General Culture in the Early Modern Period in Western and Central Europe," in David Berger, Gerald J. Blidstein, Shnayer Z. Leiman, and Aharon Lichtenstein, *Judaism's Encounter With Other Cultures: Rejection or Integration?* ed. Jacob J. Shachter (Northvale, New Jersey, 1997), 201-211.

¹⁰⁹ See Garb, "Alien Culture," 253-64. Garb musters evidence to show how the opposition to secular culture and academic studies by R. Zvi Yehuda and R. Charlop could be "valid" interpretations of R. Kook's positions.

¹¹⁰ For a sociological explanation of why the outlook of Mercaz Harav did not penetrate Orthodox Jewry in Western countries, especially in America, see Eliezer Don-Yehiya, "Orthodox Jewry in Israel and in North America," *Israel Studies* 10,1 (Spring 2005): 157-87. For the fascinating story of Yavneh, the National Jewish Religious Students Association, in setting up a program at Mercaz Harav for American students in the late 1960s see Benny Kraut, *The Greening of American Orthodox Judaism: Yavneh in the 1960's*, Cincinnati, 2010. It seems that the main reason for the program not continuing was the opposition at Mercaz Harav to allowing the integration of an academic approach.

¹¹¹ Cf. David Singer, "Rav Kook's Contested Legacy," *Tradition* 30:3 (Spring 1996): 6-20: "A fierce struggle is currently being waged for control of the religious and intellectual legacy of that giant of Orthodoxy...Rav Kook. On one side is a small liberal Orthodox element made up almost exclusively of academics, which holds up Rav Kook as a paradigmatic modern Orthodox Jew – open, tolerant and deeply engaged with currents of secular thought". "... On the other side is a much larger Orthodox contingent... which sets aside Rav Kook's cultural concerns and instead hails him as the messianic Zionist supreme – dreamer of a reborn Jewish state, believer in the imminence of the final redemption." Cf., however, Lawrence Kaplan, "Rav Kook," letter to the editor, *Tradition* 31,4 (Summer 1997): 84-88.

¹¹² About R. Kook's elevating and sanctifying the profane as part of his "harmonism," see Norman Lamm, "Harmonism, Novelty, and the Sacred in the Teachings of Rav Kook," in *Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook and Jewish Spirituality*, ed. Lawrence J. Kaplan and David Shatz (New York and London, 1995), 159-77. On the "grounding" of R. Kook's "openness" in Kabbalah cf. Shatz, "Ambiguities of Openness," 97-98.