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Replenishing the "Fountain of Judaism": Traditionalist Jewish Education in Interwar Poland

GLENN DYNNER
Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, NY, USA
E-mail: gdynner@sarahlawrence.edu

Abstract The unexpected revitalization of Polish Jewish traditionalism—Hasidic and non-Hasidic—is particularly visible in the realm of education. During the interwar period, a combined influx of pious refugees from the Soviet Union and generous American Jewish philanthropy bolstered traditionalist Jewish elementary schools (*hadarim*) and yeshivot. At the same time, traditionalists reformed those hitherto sacrosanct institutions in hopes of competing with emergent secularist Jewish movements while preserving an ostensibly authentic cultural core. Polish Jewish traditionalism was subtly transformed in the process, presenting a striking contrast with its more rigid "ultra-Orthodox" counterpart in neighboring Hungary and offering a viable alternative to secularist Jewish subcultures within Poland. This article highlights the surprising durability and flexibility of Poland's traditionalist Jewish communities during a period usually conceived as one of secularist Jewish growth and traditionalist decline.

Keywords Jews · Poland · Orthodoxy · Traditionalism · Education · Hasidim · Acculturation · Yeshivah · *Heder*

One of the major achievements of the modern Jewish historiography has been its reconception of the early twentieth century as a period of increased acculturation for the Jews of Poland. Attention to developments like modern Jewish politics (e.g., Zionism, Socialism, Diaspora Nationalism), journalism, literature, linguistic assimilation, and other indicators of increasing openness to external influences has provided a crucial corrective to popular images of Polish Jewish insularity and "mimetic" piety. What I wish to question here, however, is a concomitant tendency among historians to magnify secularist movements within that acculturation process to the point of conflation, a reading that risks transfiguring a spiritually divided Polish Jewry into a largely secularist construct.[1] Secularism—conceived not as the binary opposite of religiosity but rather as the increased privatization of religious belief,

[1] See, e.g., Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the Wars* (Bloomington, IN, 1983), 48–49, 60, 68. According to Mendelsohn, economic challenges and increased manifestations of antisemitism "had the effect of lessening the traditional authority of the parents and of religion in the Jewish household," helping to ensure the "triumph of the new Jewish politics. … It is safe to assume that, had independent Poland survived for another twenty years, Yiddish and Hebrew culture and schools would have inevitably declined to be replaced by Jewish cultural creativity in the Polish language" (68).

its subordination to reason and evidence-based analysis, and, in the Jewish case, the search for human-made solutions to the Jewish predicament—was undoubtedly reaching a crescendo by the interwar period. But potent expressions of traditionalism (Hasidism, *musar* [pietism], religious Zionism, non-Hasidic Orthodoxy), which underwent a much more restrained and defensive acculturation process, formed a dynamic, insistent counterpoint throughout the same period.[2]

Theorists of modernity have begun to question historians' assumptions about the inexorable weakening of custom, tradition, and religious belief and the inevitable triumph of individualism and rationalism. Many now characterize modernity as a "radically heterogeneous" condition in which some individuals strive for Western-style freedom and autonomy while others opt instead for movements that privilege piety, humility, and self-denial. Secularist movements have had to vie continually with consciously traditionalist ones, they argue, and the encounter has proven mutually transformative.[3] Building on these "postsecular" reassessments, as well as on foundational research on interwar yeshivot by scholars like Ben-Tsion Klibansky, this essay seeks to re-envisage interwar Polish Jewish culture as a more contested arena.[4] Prominent rabbinical leaders may have periodically evinced panic

[2]Studies of this "other" Polish Jewish acculturation process have been largely confined to descriptions of Orthodox experiments in party politics. See, e.g., Gershon Bacon's pioneering monograph *The Politics of Tradition: Agudat Yisrael in Poland, 1916–1939* (Jerusalem, 1996); Rafał Żebrowski, *Żydowska gmina wyznaniowa w Warszawie 1918–1939* (Warsaw, 2012); and Antony Polonsky, *The Jews in Poland and Russia* (Oxford, 2012), vol. 3.

[3]Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity* (Chicago, 2002), 26; Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ, 2000), 46; Saba Mahmood, "Can Secularism Be Other-wise? A Critique of Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*," in *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, ed. Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig J. Calhoun (Cambridge, MA, 2010), 282–99; Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, NJ, 2005), 5, 17, 45, 51; José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago, 1994); Shmuel Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities," *Daedalus* 129, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 1–29; Jürgen Habermas, "Notes on Post-Secular Society," *New Perspectives Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (2008): 17–29, esp. 20; Peter L. Berger, introduction to *The Many Altars of Modernity: Toward a Paradigm for Religion in a Pluralist Age* (Boston, 2014); Lara Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon* (Princeton, NJ, 2006), 3–41; Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold*: *Conversion, Modernity, and Belief* (Princeton, NJ, 1998), 50. For the Jewish case, see Moshe Samet, *He-hadash asur min ha-torah: Perakim be-toledot ha-ortodoksiyah* (Jerusalem, 2005), 15, 23; Eliyahu Stern, introduction and conclusion to *The Genius: Elijah of Vilna and the Making of Modern Judaism* (New Haven, CT, 2013).

[4]Ben-Tsion Klibansky, *Ketzur halamish: Tor ha-zahav shel ha-yeshivot ha-litaiyot be-mizrah eyropa* (Jerusalem, 2014). See also Mark Wischnitzer, "Homer le-toldot ha-yeshivot be-eyropa ha-mizrahit," *Talpiyot* 6, nos. 1–2 (1953): 359–69; David Fishman, "The Musar Movement in Interwar Poland," in *The Jews of Poland between Two World Wars*, ed. Yisrael Gutman et al.

over youth defections and the "emptying out" of study halls, as some historians have observed.[5] But their anxiety was tempered by an abiding faith in the restorative power of devotional ("Torah") study, and their optimism began to seem justified as traditionalist schools were revamped across Poland and yeshivah enrollments swelled beyond capacity.[6] While it would be premature to speak of a religious revival during the interwar period, Polish Jewish traditionalists did manage to adapt to the changing historical circumstances and, quite unexpectedly, revitalize their cherished educational networks. In the process, they were themselves subtly transformed.

Polish Jewish Traditionalism

Notwithstanding their espousal of seemingly retrograde values like anti-integrationism, rigorous piety, patriarchal clan-based structures, and ethnocentricism, Jewish traditionalists represented a historical novelty. In contrast to Jews of prior centuries who abided by inherited cultural norms more or less reflexively, Jacob Katz has observed, "their loyalty to tradition was the result of a conscious decision, or was at the very least a stance assumed in defiance of a possible alternative suggested by the life style of [secularist] Jews." Traditionalists, according to this understanding, were both more deliberate and more self-aware.[7]

(Hanover, NH, 1989), 261–65; Shaul Stampfer, "Hasidic Yeshivas in Interwar Poland," in *Families, Rabbis, and Education: Traditional Jewish Society in Nineteenth-Century Eastern Europe* (Oxford, 2010), 252–76; and Moriah Herman, "Ha-yahas livnei ha-no'ar be-hasidut be-tekufah she-bein milhamot ha-olam" (PhD diss., Bar Ilan University, 2014).

[5]For expressions of panic, see Herman, "Ha-yahas livnei ha-no'ar," 177–91; Bacon, *Politics of Tradition*, 44; Gershon Bacon, "Prolonged Erosion, Organization and Reinforcement: Reflections on Orthodox Jewry in Congress Poland (up to 1914)," in *Major Changes within the Jewish People*, ed. Yisrael Gutman (Jerusalem, 1996), 71–91; Mordechai Breuer, "Orthodox German Jewry and the Political Changes of the Early Twentieth Century," in Gutman, *Major Changes*, 59–69. For one of the first such observations about youth defections (in 1907), see Yerahmiel Yisrael Yitzhak, *Yismah Yisrael* (Lodz, 1911; repr., Brooklyn, NY, 1991), 1:223–24. Bacon's claim (*Politics of Tradition*, 44) that the abandonment of Hasidic dress, customs, and basic Jewish observances by Jewish youth occurred earlier than the twentieth century—i.e., that these changes were "more and more common by the end of the [nineteenth] century"—seems based on poorly substantiated assertions in Jacob Shatzky's *Geshikhte fun yidn in Varshe* (New York, 1953), 3:369–71.

[6]On the curative potential of devotional education, see Israel Meir Kagan, *Homat ha-daat* (Piotrokow, 1905), 17–18, 38–40; Kagan, *Mikhtavei ha-rav hafetz hayyim zatz"l*, ed. Aryeh Leib Hakohen, 2 vols. (1937; repr., Brooklyn, NY, 2015), letters 2, 48, 58, 60, 64; Yitzhak Yaakov Reines, *Shnei ha-meorot* (Piotrokow, 1913), 5–8, 13; and Kalonymous Kalman Shapira, *Hovat ha-talmidim* (Warsaw, 1932), 59–60. See also Herman, "Ha-yahas livnei ha-no'ar," 173–77.

[7]Jacob Katz, "Orthodoxy in Historical Perspective," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 2 (1986): 3–4. See also Stern, introduction to *The Genius*.

Despite its underlying claim of authenticity, traditionalism assumed several regionally distinctive, contradictory guises. In mid-nineteenth-century Germany and Hungary it crystallized into a pointedly anti-Reform ideology within a political framework called "Orthodoxy" and a secessionist "Ultra-Orthodoxy."[8] In eastern and east central Europe, where the process of institutionalization was slower and more piecemeal, it emerged through movements as varied as Hasidism, Musarism, and religious Zionism.[9] Many traditionalists there actually resisted the designation "Orthodox," which they regarded as a concession to German denominationalism and modern politics.[10]

The first mindful traditionalism in eastern and east central Europe may be said to have emerged during the mid-nineteenth century as Hasidic leaders, in response to government social engineering initiatives like imposed reforms of elementary schools (*hadarim*), military conscription, and clothing decrees, began mobilizing popular Jewish discontent, forging coalitions with non-Hasidic leaders, and interceding with government officials to neutralize perceived assaults on their way of life.[11] A higher degree of ideological cohesion and assertiveness is found in the anti-Zionist polemics of the newly emergent traditionalist press toward the end of the nineteenth century. Some historians have gone so far as to reduce the entire phenomenon to a spiteful reaction to Zionism.[12]

[8]Mordechai Breuer, *Modernity within Tradition: The Social History of Orthodox Jewry in Imperial Germany*, trans. E. Petuchowski (New York, 1992); Adam Ferziger, *Exclusion and Hierarchy: Orthodoxy, Nonobservance, and the Emergence of Modern Jewish Identity* (Philadelphia, 2005); Michael Silber, "The Emergence of Ultra-Orthodoxy," in *The Uses of Tradition: Jewish Continuity in the Modern Era*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (New York, 1992).

[9]Breuer, "Orthodox German Jewry," 59–69, esp. 65.

[10]For a narrative of decline, see Simon Dubnow, *Toldot he-hasidut* (Tel Aviv, 1975), 37; Shaul Stampfer, *Lithuanian Yeshivas of the Nineteenth Century: Creating a Tradition of Learning*, trans. Lindsey Taylor-Guthartz (Oxford, 2012). On interwar revival, see Mark Wischnitzer, "Di banayung fun yeshivos in mizrah-eyropeh nokh der ershter velt-milhome," *YIVO Bleter* 31–32 (1948): 9–36; Stampfer, "Hasidic Yeshivas," 252–76.

[11]I. Bartal and D. Assaf, "Shtadlanut ve-ortodoksiyah: Tzaddikei polin be-mifgash im hazmanim ha-hadashim," in *Tzaddikim ve-anshe ma'aseh: Mehkarim be-hasidut Polin*, ed. R. Elior, Y. Bartal, and C. Shmeruk (Jerusalem, 1994), 65–90; Marcin Wodzinski, *Hasidism and Politics in the Kingdom of Poland* (Oxford, 2013), 165–217; Glenn Dynner, "The Garment of Torah: Clothing Decrees and the Warsaw Career of the First Gerer Rebbe," in *Warsaw: The Jewish Metropolis; Essays in Honor of the 75th Birthday of Professor Antony Polonsky*, ed. Glenn Dynner and François Guesnet (Leiden, 2015), 91–127.

[12]See Yosef Salmon, *Do Not Provoke Providence: Orthodoxy in the Grip of Nationalism* (Boston, 2014), 24, 45; Salmon, "Ha-ortodoksiya ha-yehudit be-mizrah eyropa: Kavim le-aliyata," in *Ortodoksiya yehudit: Hebetim hadashim*, ed. Aviezer Ravitzky and Adam S. Ferziger (Jerusalem, 2006), 365–79; Ehud Luz, *Parallels Meet: Religion and Nationalism in the Early Zionist Movement* (1882–1904), trans. Lenn J. Schramm (Philadelphia, 1988), 3, 9, 16, 48, 116–17, 226.

Yet Jewish traditionalism stood for more than anti-Zionism. At its root was a kind of cosmic essentialism—an assertion of divinely endowed collective uniqueness that must be maintained through Yiddish vernacular speech, elite Hebrew and Aramaic devotional literature, and sartorial markers that symbolically defied state-sponsored acculturation projects. The rather lofty traditionalist collective self-image was, however, tempered by an emphasis on personal humility, comradery, spiritual inwardness, and other values seen as countering the celebration of individual autonomy that permeated secularist Jewish literatures of the day.[13] Those Polish Jews who did attempt to integrate into Polish society, it should be conceded, often found themselves in a state of cultural limbo: pressured to "Polonize," yet repelled by discriminatory legislation and taxation, boycotts, and, increasingly, collective violence. Traditionalists could construe these negative manifestations of Polish ethnic nationalism as vindication, for they would surely force Jewish integrationists to admit their folly and repent.[14]

Jewish traditionalist communities—particularly Hasidic ones—crystallized into communities of resistance, with distinctive symbolic systems, rituals, elite literatures, autonomous spaces, educational networks, and, in some cases, political parties.[15] The most successful traditionalist political party was Agudat Yisrael; its Polish branch was conceived in 1912 under the sponsorship of the Gerer Rebbe and became active by 1916.[16] The Piłsudski government (1926–35) implicitly supported Agudat Yisrael, which was occa-

[13]On Hasidic traditionalism, see Mendel Piekarz, *Hasidut Polin: Megamot ra'yoniyot ben shete ha-milhamot uvi-gezerot tav-shin-tav-shin-he* (*"ha-sho'ah"*) (Jerusalem, 1990); Benjamin Brown, "Ke-herevot le-guf ha-uma: Hitnagdutam shel rabanei mizrah eyropah le-rayon ha-kehilot ha-nifradot," in *Yosef da'at: Mehkarim ba-historyah yehudit modernit mogashim le-profesor Yosef Salmon le-hag yovlo*, ed. Yosi Goldshteyn (Jerusalem, 2010), 215–44. In late Polish Hasidic literature, I have found a striking de-emphasis of the spiritually perfect *tzadik* in favor of the everyday Jew's cultivation of piety. See, e.g., Yitzhak, *Yismah Yisrael*, parshat Pikudei, 1:105–7, and parshat Terumah (Rosh Hodesh), 1:64–65; Yehuda Leib Alter, *The Language of Truth: The Torah Commentary of the Sefat Emet*, trans. Arthur Green (Philadelphia, 2012), 390; Shmuel Borenshtein of Sochaczew, *Shem mi-Shmuel* (repr., Jerusalem, 1950), parshat Toldot, 201. See also Shaul Magid, *Hasidism Incarnate: Hasidism, Christianity, and the Construction of Modern Judaism* (Stanford, CA, 2015); Nehemiah Polen, *The Holy Fire: The Teachings of Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira, the Rebbe of the Warsaw Ghetto* (Northvale, NJ, 1999), 60; Elliot Wolfson, *Open Secret: Postmessianic Messianism and the Mystical Revision of Menahem Mendel Schneersohn* (New York, 2012), 34–35.

[14]Mendel Piekarz, *Hasidut Polin*, chap. 4, esp. 98–99, 103, 107.

[15]On communities of resistance, see John Clarke et al., "Subcultures, Cultures and Class: A Theoretical Overview," in *Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*, ed. Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson (London, 1993), 12, 47–48; Lawrence Levine, "Slave Songs and Slave Consciousness," in *Cultural Resistance Reader*, ed. Stephen Duncombe (London, 2002), 229.

[16]Bacon, *Politics of Tradition*, esp. 72, 79–80, 84, 87; Robert Moses Shapiro, "Jewish Self-Government in Poland: Lodz, 1914–1939" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1987), esp. 108–

sionally referred to as "the Piłsudski Jewish party." The government's passage of the "infamous" Article 20 enabled Agudists to disqualify purportedly antireligious political rivals during communal elections, and their sometimes unscrupulous use of this provision helped ensure repeated electoral successes at the communal level.[17]

Orthodox electoral results at the national level were somewhat less impressive—in the general Sejm election of 1922, Agudat Yisrael and Mizrahi (religious Zionist) candidates together accounted for eleven out of the thirty-five Jewish mandates.[18] Yet to deduce from these results that traditionalists comprised only one-third of the adult population is to overlook the large numbers of traditionalists who refused to join those particular parties

227. On earlier Orthodox party politics in Galicia, which preceded secularist Jewish politics there, see Rachel Manekin, *Yehude Galitsyah veha-hukah ha-Ostrit: Reshitah shel politikah Yehudit modernit* (Jerusalem, 2015); Manekin, "Orthodox Jewry in Kraków at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," in "Jews in Kraków," ed. Michał Galas and Antony Polonsky, special issue, *Polin* 23 (2011): 165–98. See also Hayim Gertner, *Ha-rav veha-`ir ha-gedolah: Harabanut be-Galitsyah u-mifgashah `im ha-modernah, 1815–1867* (Jerusalem, 2013). On the founding of Agudat Yisrael (often referred to as Aguda) in 1909, see Alan L. Mittleman, *The Politics of Torah: The Jewish Political Tradition and the Founding of Agudat Israel* (Albany, NY, 1996), 117–40.

[17]Bernhard Kahn to Felix Warburg, memorandum, December 11, 1930, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Archives (hereafter JDC Archives), Records of the New York Office, 1921–32 (hereafter NY21–32), folder 346. Neville Laski similarly observed that "the [Polish] government supports the Agudah [Agudat Yisrael]." Laski, "Report on a Journey to Austria, Poland, and Danzig," August 15–31, 1934, JDC Archives, Records of the New York Office, 1933–44 (hereafter NY33–44), folder 788. Aguda won 276 communal seats in 1931, compared with 224 seats won by Zionists. In 1936, the results were more even, but the "non-party Orthodox" picked up an additional 113 seats. On these elections and Aguda's alliance with Piłsudski's Sanacja, see Bacon, *Politics of Tradition*, 197, 219, 265–72. On Aguda's uses of Article 20, see Jerzy Tomaszewski, "Walka polityczna wewnątrz gmin Żydowskich w latach trzydziestych w świetle interpelacji posłów," *Biuletyn ŻIH* 85 (1973): 89–91; Samuel Kassow, "Community and Identity in the Interwar *Shtetl*," in Gutman, *Jews of Poland*, 208; Peretz Granatshtein, *Mayn khorev gevorene shtetl Sokolov* (Buenos Aires, 1946), 65–67.

[18]On this and other Sejm electoral results, see Szymon Rudnicki, *Żydzi w parlamencie ii rzeczypospolitej* (Warsaw, 2004), esp. 136. Mizrahi, despite accusations that it had "left the camp of traditional Judaism" by embracing Zionism, claimed major "*admorim* and *rabeyim*" among its supporters and solicited aid on their behalf. Hasidic leaders who were inclined toward the Mizrahi included R. Judah Menahem Landau of Botosani, R. Judah Leib Kovalsky of Włocławek, and R. Yehiel Meir Blumfeld, disciple of R. Abraham Bornstein of Sochaczew. See YIVO Archives, Ezras Torah Fund, RG 237, Radom folder. See also Asaf Kaniel, *Yomrah u-ma'as: Ha-Mizrahi be-Polin bein shtei milhamot ha-olam* (Ramat Gan, 2011); Daniel Mahla, "No Trinity: The Tripartite Relations between Agudat Yisrael, the Mizrahi Movement, and the Zionist Organization," *Journal of Israeli History* 34, no. 2 (2015): 117–40. For the claim that Mizrahi had "left the camp" of traditional Judaism, see Central Bureau of Agudas Israel in Poland to Mr. M. Jung, March 21, 192[3], JDC Archives, NY21-32, folder 354, item no. 2000672.

or abstained from party politics altogether.[19] Orthodox political organizations like Agudat Yisrael never spoke for all, or even most, traditionalists in Poland—detractors included members of major Hasidic courts like Belz, Czortków, and Lubavitch (whose court was relocated to Poland in 1933), as well as many other traditionalist inhabitants of the formerly Galician and Lithuanian regions.[20] By 1930, even certain Agudist leaders had begun to doubt the wisdom of party politics at the national level, which seemed to only irritate the Polish majority.[21]

As a result, while Polish Jewish party politics might accurately reflect the relative influence of various Jewish secularist groups, for whom they were primary modes of expression, such endeavors significantly underrepresented traditionalists, for whom politics was principally a means to safeguard higher priorities like devotional education and ritual observance. Surveys of Polish Jewish politics, moreover, effectively render invisible the numerous pious abstentionists who avoided politics and party newspapers on principle. An appreciation of traditionalist priorities—the primacy of the traditional elementary school (*heder*), yeshivah, study house (*bet midrash*), and prayer house (*shtibl*) and the secondary (at best) importance of political parties—reveals the need for a cultural gauge that is less susceptible to data bias.

Education as a Cultural Gauge

Education remained a priority for a much broader spectrum of Polish Jews and, as such, provides a sounder basis for comparison.[22] Nevertheless,

[19] See, e.g., Celia Heller, *On the Edge of Destruction: Jews of Poland between the Two World Wars* (New York, 1980), 324 n. 1. On experiments of the Alexander Hasidic court and other courts in party politics, see, e.g., Żebrowski, *Żydowska gmina wyznaniowa w Warszawie*, 462, 485–86, 499; Polonsky, *Jews in Poland and Russia*, 3:126–28.

[20] Bacon, *Politics of Tradition*, 91. On traditionalist opposition to party politics, see Moshe Goldstein, ed., *Tikkun olam* (Munkacz, 1958/59). On the ambivalence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Joseph Isaac Schneersohn, toward Agudat Yisrael, see Schneersohn to Abraham Mordecai Alter, 1931, in Alter, *Osef mikhtavim u-devarim ve-k"k admor shelita mi-gur* (Augsburg, 1947), 28. See also Yosef Yitzhak Schneersohn, *Iggrot kodesh* (Brooklyn, NY, 1983), 2:275, no. 500; and the January 1924 letter to R. Yosef Rozen of Dvinsk questionably attributed to Schneersohn in Goldstein, *Tikkun olam*, no. 69, pp. 89–90. The prior Lubavitcher Rebbe, R. Shalom Dov Ber, had declared Agudat Yisrael "dangerous" in a 1913 letter to Shmuel Mikhal. See Shalom Dov Ber Schneersohn, *Iggrot kodesh* (Brooklyn, NY, 1987), 4:699, no. 361.

[21] In 1928, Yitzhak Meyer Lewin argued that the position of the Jews was in actuality "much better" in those countries where Jews did not engage in separate politics. See Heller, *Edge of Destruction*, 178; Tobias Grill, "The Politicisation of Traditional Polish Jewry: Orthodox German Rabbis and the Founding of *Agudas Ho-ortodoksim* and *Dos yidishe vort* in Gouvernement-General Warsaw, 1916–18," *East European Jewish Affairs* 39, no. 2 (2009): 227–47, esp. 230–31, 233–34.

[22] Yehuda Leib Graubart argues that devotional study, unlike secular education, is an end in and of itself. See Graubart, "Sermon on Education," in *Sefer zikharon: Reshimot miyemei*

sources on education present significant challenges of their own. First, there is the vexed state of the data, particularly in the case of an informal, often underground institution like the *heder*. Second is the problem of interpretation: can we really assume, as many historians have, that the choice to send one's children to a certain school entailed a "sociopolitical expression"? This would seem to be the case with more secularist Jewish private schools like Tarbut (Hebraist) and CYSHO (Yiddishist), but it is much less clear in the case of the many traditionally clad Jewish children who attended compulsory public schools, as we will see.[23] Thus, a reassessment of Polish Jewish education requires a reassessment of the data in light of personal testimonials, which frequently capture what official surveys miss.

One need only consult the available demographic data to realize that something is amiss. According to the Polish census of 1931, there were 436,557 Jews of elementary school age (seven through thirteen).[24] Yet Aryeh Tartakower's undocumented assertion that in 1931 about 250,000 Polish Jewish children (71 percent) attended public elementary schools and another 100,000 (29 percent) attended private Jewish ones yields a total of only 350,000 Jewish students.[25] Similarly, a study by Samuel Chmielewski suggesting that 296,417 Jewish children (about 81 percent) attended public elementary schools and only 69,530 (19 percent) attended private Jewish ones

ha-milhamah ha-ahronah (Lodz, 1925), 108. Yet Haskell Nordon claims his family "pursued secular learning with something of the same deeply rooted belief of orthodox Jews in the study of sacred books, that is, that it would somehow stand them in good stead." Nordon, *The Education of a Polish Jew: A Physician's War Memoirs* (New York, 1982), 54.

[23]Di Centrale Yidishe Shul-Organizatsye (Central Yiddish School Organization), known as CYSHO or TSYSHO, was established in Warsaw in June 1921. See Shimon Frost, *Schooling as a Socio-Political Expression* (Jerusalem, 1998). For cases of traditionalist children in public schools, see, e.g., Norman Salsitz, *A Jewish Boyhood in Poland: Remembering Kolbuszowa* (Syracuse, NY, 1992), 55.

[24]Main Bureau of Statistics, Second General Census of the Polish Population, 1931 (Warsaw, 1938), 20–21, table 13, http://web.archive.org/web/20140317212240/http://statlibr.stat.gov.pl/exlibris/aleph/a18_1/apache_media/VUNVGMLANSCQQFGYHCN3VDLK12A9U5.pdf. On elementary school ages, see Hillel Seidman, ed., *Żydowskie szkolnictwo religijne w ramach ustawodawstwa Polskiego* (Warsaw, 1937), no. 4, p. 57.

[25]Aryeh Tartakower, "Batei ha-sefer shel ha-tzibur ha-yehudi be-Polin," *Sefer ha-yovel likevod Dr. Modekhai Ze'ev Braude* (Warsaw, 1931), 141; Tartakower, "Das jüdische Schulwesen in Polen," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 75 (n.s., 39) (July/August 1931): 292–306. Studies that rely on Tartakower's figures include Bacon, *Politics of Tradition*, 163; Gershon Bacon, "National Revival, Ongoing Acculturation: Jewish Education in Interwar Poland," *Jahrbuch des Simon Dubnow Instituts* 1 (2002): 73; Miriam Eisenstein, *Jewish Schools in Poland, 1919–39: Their Philosophy and Development* (New York, 1950), 96–97 n. 3.

yields 365,947 Jewish students.[26] Both studies miss numerous eligible Jewish children: 86,557 in Tartakower's case and 70,610 in Chmielewski's.[27]

How do we account for so many missing children of elementary school age in 1931? Some of the poorest were compelled to work instead of attending school.[28] But most were likely attending informal institutions like private *hadarim* and communally funded Talmud Torahs for impoverished children, both of which Tartakower felt "did not deserve to be called schools" and which Chmielewski counted only inconsistently.[29] A report by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) in 1930 describes "hundreds of private *hadarim* in which tens of thousands of Jewish children obtain a religious education (8,000 in Warsaw alone)."[30] In addition, Jewish girls' classes were often held in private homes, and some children from affluent homes studied exclusively with private tutors.[31] In light of so many statisti-

[26] Samuel Chmielewski, "Stan szkolnictwa wśród Żydów w Polsce," *Sprawy narodowościowe* 11, nos. 1–2 (1937): 40–41. I arrived at these figures by averaging the two percentages supplied in table 2 for 1925/26 and 1934/35 and applying them to the real figures supplied in table 4 for 1930/31. Strangely, the data in table 2 suggest an increase in private Jewish education and a decrease in Jewish public school education between 1925 and 1934—another reason to favor the alternate figures that appear later in the same study (discussed below).

[27] A Centralna Kasa Bezprocentowa (CEKABE) inquiry among 210 Polish towns in 1935 found that 29 percent of the boys in *hadarim* were younger than seven years old. L.H., "'Chedery' w Polsce," *Sprawy Narodowościowe* 9, no. 5 (1935): 554, reprinted in Rafał Zebrowski, *Wybór tekstów źródłowych, 1918–1939* (Warsaw, 1993), 111. However, these underage children are not among the approximately eighty thousand school-aged children missing from the official data.

[28] According to Chmielewski, 372,034 Polish children were not in school in 1934–35, which could amount to as many as 33,483 Jewish children total (based on his finding that 9 percent of school-aged children were Jewish); but Jewish truancy was likely much lower given the community's religious values and predominately urban profile. In the town of Radun in the mid-1930s, according to one report, only 25 out of 90 "boys" of unspecified ages and only 42 out of 112 "girls" attended school; the rest worked in stores and workshops, as peddlers, or remained idle. How many were of elementary school age is unclear. Chmielewski, "Stan szkolnictwa," 40. See also "Radun: Powiat of Lida, Voevodstvo of Novogorod," YIVO Archives, Territorial Collection, Poland 1, RG 116, folder 6.25.

[29] See Chaim Solomon Kazdan, *Di geschichte fun yidishe shulvesen in umophenigikn Poyln* (Mexico City, 1947), 468; Chmielewski, "Stan szkolnictwa," 73. Chmielewski omits *hadarim* from his initial calculations but later (65–74) estimates 40,000 unregistered *heder* students in addition to 61,328 official Horev *heder* students, plus 20,000 Bes Yaakov girls, in the school year 1934/35. It should be noted that the terms *heder* and Talmud Torah are sometimes used interchangeably in the literature.

[30] Joint Distribution Committee report, "Ortodoksisher shul-vezen," January 8, 1930, JDC Archives, NY21–32, folder 345, p. 11.

[31] On the typical education offered to traditionalist girls, see Shaul Stampfer, "Gender Differentiation and the Education of Jewish Women," in *Families, Rabbis, and Education*, esp. 169. On the introduction of formal religious education for girls in Galicia, see Manekin, "Ortho-

cally invisible students, we would do well to revise the proportion of Jewish youth in Polish public schools significantly downward.

State licensing and regulation of *hadarim* was instituted in 1932 as a result of the Jędzejewicz legislation.[32] Its immediate impact remains uncertain, however. According to Norman Salsitz, son of a Dzikiver Hasid in Kolbuszowa, "many a time word passed that a government inspector was on the way to investigate *ḥaderim* in our town. That sent everyone scurrying off. We were ordered home, and an attempt was made to conceal the use to which the room had been put. Even when shut down by government order, these schools quickly reopened and life continued as before."[33] According to Moyshe Zonszain, a certain unlicensed *heder* on Pawia Street in Warsaw had been concealed from every ruler, from the tsar, kaiser, and president down to each successive police chief; yet "every Jewish resident of Pawia Street knew of it. … Almost the entire street sent their young children there."[34] The Joint Distribution Committee in Poland conceded that the proportion of undocumented *hadarim* was substantial but unknown. "It is impossible to obtain data with regard to these [orthodox elementary] schools," one report explained, because *heder* administrators "do not comprehend the task of centralization" and derived most of their financial support from local communities rather than organizations like the JDC.[35] These testimonials remind us how elusive a threatened "symbol of authenticity" like the *heder* could be.[36]

Still, the official data for the years 1934–35 seem much improved, since by then many *heder* administrators, enticed by the promise of state subsidies,

dox Jewry in Kraków." On modern girls' schools in tsarist Russia, see Eliyana Adler, *In Her Hands: The Education of Jewish Girls in Tsarist Russia* (Detroit, 2011), esp. 13–61.

[32]See Frost, *Schooling as a Socio-Political Expression*, 85.

[33]Salsitz, *Jewish Boyhood in Poland*, 53. For earlier *heder* testimony, see Immanuel Etkes, David Assaf, and Uriel Gellman, eds., *Ha-heder: Mehkarim, te'udot, pirke sifrut ve-zikhronot* (Tel Aviv, 2010), 269–524; Yekhiel Shtern, "Kheyder and Beys-Medresh," *YIVO Bleter* 31–32 (1948): 37–130.

[34]Moyshe Zonszain, *Yidish-varshe* (Buenos Aires, 1954), 107. See also Aharon Sorski, *Toldot ha-hinukh ha-torati* (Bnei Brak, 1967), 75.

[35]L. Neustadt, "Report on Schools: Poland," 1937, JDC Archives, NY33–44, folder 354, pp. 15–16.

[36]On symbols of authenticity, see Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism* (London, 1998), 46. A 1935 study of 210 Polish towns found an average of about four *haderim* per town, most consisting of around seventeen students (a total of 14,280 children). Talmud Torahs averaged fifty-eight students (12,180 children, assuming one Talmud Torah per town). L.H., "'Chedery' w Polsce." See also Nathan Eck, "The Educational Institutions of Polish Jewry (1921–1939)," *Jewish Social Studies* 9, no. 1 (1947): 21. On attempts at *heder* reform in imperial Russia, see Steven Zipperstein, "Transforming the Heder: Maskilic Politics in Imperial Russia," in *Jewish History: Essays in Honor of Chimen Abramsky*, ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert (London, 1988), 87–109.

had registered with the Agudat Yisrael–sponsored "Horev" school system. Horev schools, founded at the urging of German Agudat Yisrael representatives in Poland during the First World War and officially recognized by the Polish government in 1923, restricted secular instruction to two hours daily in "dark," "confined," and "dirty" conditions, according to government inspectors; nonetheless, they were legal. Taken together, the Horev, Bes Yaakov, and Yavneh schools formed a majority (64 percent) of all Jewish private schools in 1934–35.[37] By this time, a majority of registered Jewish elementary school children (about 65 percent) studied in Polish public schools.[38] At higher educational levels, however, the proportions were practically inverted: only 45,537 Jews (about 43 percent) attended public high schools, vocational schools, special needs schools, and universities, while around 60,000 (over

[37] Horev (Agudat Yisrael), Bes Yaakov (Orthodox girls), and Yavneh (religious Zionist) institutions accounted for 156,009 of the 244,452 enrollments in Jewish private schools in 1934–35 (64 percent); Lucjan Dobroszycki and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Image before My Eyes: A Photographic History of Jewish Life in Poland before the Holocaust* (New York, 1977), 261–62, table 5. The figures on JDC-funded Orthodox schools are proportionally similar (61 percent were Orthodox schools), according to an Interior Ministry report in Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw (hereafter AAN), Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych (hereafter MSW), folder 963, pp. 400–402. On poor conditions in Horev schools, see Andzrej Jerzy Papierowski, "Żydowskie szkolnictwo religijne na przykładzie działalności prywatnej ortodoksyjnej szkoły isoda tora (podstawy tory) w Płocku (1921–1939)," *Notatki Płockie* 233, no. 4 (2012): 27–37; cf. Bacon, *Politics of Tradition*, 156. Mizrahi schools attracted the majority of "Lithuanian"-oriented Orthodox, according to Kamil Kijek, "Nowoczesność w cieniu orła białego: Edukacja żydowska w II Rzeczypospolitej," *Cwiszn* 3 (2013): 8.

[38] The estimate of 65 percent is a rough average of the results of several different studies. Bacon cites Chmielewski's initial claims for 1934/35 of 343,671 Jews in Polish public elementary schools (80.8 percent) versus 81,895 in Jewish private elementary schools (19.2 percent), but this yields a total of only 425,566 Jewish elementary school students. He seems to have overlooked Chmielewski's more precise data on Jewish private elementary schools (65–74): Chmielewski estimates 101,328 *heder* and Talmud Torah students, 15,000 Yavneh students, and 34,242 Tarbut, 9,936 Ciszo, and 1,818 Szul Kult elementary school students, for a total of 162,324 students in private Jewish elementary schools—38 percent of the total. Based on these figures, only about 62 percent (rather than 80.8 percent) of all Jewish elementary school children attended public Polish schools. In addition, fourteen Bes Yaakov schools functioned as full-time elementary schools. H. Kazdan counts 355,091 Jews in Polish public elementary schools, 61 percent of his higher total of 581,497 Jewish elementary school students. Joshua Fishman claims 355,199 Jewish students in Polish public schools and another 6,098 Jews in Polish private schools, amounting to 60.8 percent of his total figure, 594,566 (the correct total of Fishman's figures; his published total, 596,172, reflects an arithmetic error). Dobroszycki and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's figures yield 425,566 total Jewish children in Polish elementary schools (including Polish private schools), which amounts to 72 percent of their total figure of 587,940 Jewish elementary school children. Bacon, "National Revival," 84; Chmielewski, "Stan szkolnictwa," 40–41; Kazdan, *Di geschichte fun yidishe shulvesen*, 549; Joshua Fishman, *Social and Political History of the Jews of Poland, 1919–1939* (Berlin, 1983), 149, table 1.5; Dobroszycki and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Image before My Eyes*, 261–62, table 5.

56 percent) attended officially registered yeshivot, Hebraist and Yiddishist secondary schools and evening classes, and Jewish vocational schools.[39]

By the end of the interwar period, owing to a combination of financial and governmental pressures, many more Jews had entered Polish schools. Available figures for the year 1937/38 suggest a full 19 percent drop in total private Jewish school enrollment, from 244,452 in 1934–35 down to 196,632.[40] Among Jewish private schools, Orthodox institutions continued to predominate slightly (61 percent).[41] But assuming that all 47,820 of the students previously enrolled in private Jewish schools went over to Polish schools, and

[39]Dobroszycki and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Image before My Eyes*, 261–62. Over half of private Jewish schools incorporated some Polish as the language of instruction. See Stanisław Mauersberg, *Szkolnictwo powszechne dla mniejszości narodowych w Polsce w latach 1918–1939* (Wrocław, 1968), 169–70.

[40]Bacon claims there were only 180,182 students at all levels of Jewish schools in 1937, but he seems to have overlooked Eisenstein's and Rosenak's figures on Jewish bilingual and vocational school attendance. Eisenstein adds 5,000 students from bilingual Hebrew-Polish schools, yielding a total of 185,182. Eisenstein notes as well that there were "more than" 7,000 students in Jewish vocational schools, which would bring the total to at least 192,182. Rosenak, in contrast, adds "another 16,000–17,000" Jewish students in vocational schools; his total estimate is 196,181–197,181. The Polish Ministry of Education registered 11,450 Jewish vocational school students, yielding a total of 196,632 when the students at bilingual schools identified by Eisenstein are included. See Eck, "Educational Institutions," 30, table 6; Bacon, *Politics of Tradition*, 163; Bacon, "National Revival," 73; Eisenstein, *Jewish Schools in Poland*, 96, table 23 and accompanying notes; Shmuel Rosenak, "Al ma'arekhet ha-hinukh ha-yehudi be Polin bein shtei milhamot ha-olam," in *Bet yisrael be-Polin*, ed. Yisrael Halperin (Jerusalem, 1954), 2:154. On government-mandated renovations, relocations, and closures of Zionist and Yiddishist schools in particular, see appeals to the JDC by various school system leaders: S. Rivnik [?], Tarbut, to JDC, March 1, 1936; S. Rivnik [?] and Z. Gayer, Tarbut, to JDC, October 12, 1937; Tarbut Warsaw to JDC, n.d.; A. Levinson and Dr. Z. Sohar, Tarbut, to JDC, December 18, 1934, all in JDC Archives, NY33–44, folder 830, pp. 921, 938, 995, 1019; Chaim Honig to JDC, February 23, 1936, JDC Archives, NY33–44, folder 828, pp. 605–6. For an earlier letter on closures of Yiddishist schools by the government, see Judah Magnes to Cyrus Adler, October 19, 1922, JDC Archives, NY21–32, folder 344. In 1937, traditionalist Horev Warsaw elementary schools ran a deficit of 548,268 zlotys, while Horev yeshivot ran a deficit of 391,010 zlotys. In comparison, the CYSHO system's deficit reached 1,020,934 zlotys, and Tarbut's deficit reached 1,690,805 zlotys. See JDC, European Executive Office, Paris, "Report on Jewish Schools in Poland, 1935," JDC Archives, NY33–44, folder 827, pp. 16–42.

[41]There were between 100,650 and 109,000 students in Orthodox institutions in 1937–38; the number increases to roughly 120,000 if we include religious Zionist (Yavneh) schools. Jacob Zineman's calculations yield 102,200 students in Orthodox institutions; see Zineman, *Almanach szkolnictwa żydowskiego w Polsce* (Warsaw, 1938), 1:299, 301, 313, and 319. (However, certain calculations are slightly off: e.g., on p. 301, 344 Horev schools should be 348; 44,200 students should be 44,000 students.) In Alexander Zusha Frydman's introduction to Hillel Seidman, *Dos yidishe religieze shulvezen in di ramen fun der Polisher gezetsgebung* (Warsaw, 1937), 8, a typo adds another 500 Orthodox students; the correct calculation is

that any natural increase was offset by emigration,[42] we may conclude that approximately 70 percent of Jewish students (nearly 519,000) now attended Polish schools, most of them public.[43]

If 70 percent (as opposed to the older estimate of 80 percent) of Poland's officially registered Jewish students now attended Polish schools, did the phenomenon constitute what has been called an educational "revolution" and "victory"?[44] To be sure, a clear majority of Jewish parents had surmounted a major psychological barrier—public school attendance was no longer considered deviant. Most parents in fact preferred the Polish schools to Hebraist-Zionist and Yiddishist-Socialist alternatives, which they regarded as dangerously heretical, and seemed to want their children to obtain Polish literacy for the sake of their professional futures, including the rabbinate (which required a language exam).[45] Many children of traditionalists themselves felt

109,000. Eisenstein estimates 100,650 Orthodox plus 15,923 religious Zionist students; *Jewish Schools in Poland*, 96–97.

[42]Between 1931 and 1937, 109,716 Jews emigrated from Poland. See Jacob Leszczynski, "National Groups in Polish Emigration," *Jewish Social Studies* 5, no. 2 (1943): 8, table 8. Over 37,000 were school-aged. See also Aryeh Tartakower, *The Migrations of Polish Jews in Recent Times* (New York, 1964), 18–19; going back to 1921, the number approaches 400,000.

[43]A total of 518,923 Jews in Polish schools in 1937–38 is reached by adding 47,820 new Jewish students to Dobroszycki and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's 1934–35 figure of 471,103. When calculating the number of students in private Jewish schools, Rosenak apparently omits Jewish bilingual and vocational schools but adds 40,000 unregistered *heder* students to the JDC's base figure of 180,000 (rounded down by Rosenak; the precise JDC figure cited there is 180,181), arriving at 220,000 students in private Jewish schools. This would mean that Jewish attendance of Polish schools was just over 70 percent of the approximate total of 739,000 students. Frost cites the JDC's base figure of 180,681 (*sic*; the actual JDC figure is 180,181), meaning that only 64 percent of his estimate of 500,000 Jewish children of school age attended Polish schools. But he seems to raise the estimate arbitrarily to 80 percent in light of unidentified "official Polish statistics (as well as data from other sources)." See Dobroszycki and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Image before My Eyes*, 261–62; Rosenak, "Al ma'arekhet ha-hinukh ha-yehudi," 2:153; Frost, *Schooling as a Socio-Political Expression*, 50.

[44]Bacon, "National Revival," 88–89.

[45]Haya Huberman recalls that in 1900 "barely three Jewish families dared to send their children to the *goyishe* school. . . . Most of the shtetl boycotted them. In the study house (*bet midrash*) they placed their fathers under a ban (*herem*)." When Helen Londinski asked for permission to study in a *shkole* in 1904, her Hasidic father cried, "They'll make you a *shikse* [gentile girl]!" Haya Huberman, *Tsurikgemiste bletlekh: Zikhrones* (Paris, 1966), 6; Helen Londinski, *In shpigl fun nekhtn: Zikhroynes* (New York, 1972), 11–13. Cf. the interwar autobiography of Dawid Młynarski, MD (b. Sulejów, 1918), YIVO Archives, Autobiographies of Jewish Youth in Poland, RG 4, no. 3782, p. 1; Mel Klapper (b. Ulanów, 1928), interview with the author, July 22, 2015. Hillel Seidman bemoans the Sabbath violations that public school attendance sometimes entailed (*Dos yidishe religieze shulvezen*, 44). On the Yiddishist schools' approach to religion, see David Fishman, *The Rise of Modern Yiddish Culture* (Pittsburgh, 2005), 98–113.

the allure of the Polish *gymnasium*, with its blue uniforms, shiny silver buttons, peaked caps, and promise of future university and medical or law school admissions.[46]

Yet one reason to avoid designations like "revolution" or "victory," even leaving aside the continued problem of unregistered *hadarim*, is the compulsory aspect of public school education. Traditionalist parents in towns that lacked Horev schools felt they had little choice in the matter. Some initially chose *szabasówka* schools—Polish public schools that remained closed on Saturdays and holidays—but these were largely phased out during the mid-thirties.[47] Most eventually settled on sending their children to regular public schools, getting them excused on Saturdays and holidays, and encouraging them to inwardly resist the schools' cultural influences. "Many of the orthodox families in town were not at all comfortable with the public schools," recalls Salsitz. "They resented the schools' secular emphasis and the complete absence of Jewish teachers. But attendance was compulsory, and those who tried keeping their children home were fined and forced to obey the law. Still, it was obvious that the orthodox children cared little for school; their commitments were elsewhere."[48]

Adding to the sense of compulsion was the fact that, in the midst of a severe economic crisis, public schools were free and provided free lunches. *Heder* students, meanwhile, were "fainting from hunger … and we worry that the students will leave our institutions, God forbid, and go to other schools that are filled with heresy, as is known, but which provide their students with meals every day because they receive support from the government officials," reads one letter preserved in the Horev archives.[49] Joining the

[46] See Meir Jacob Fried, *Yamim ve-shanim* (Tel Aviv, 1938), 37; Nordon, *Education of a Polish Jew*, 54; S. Etonis [pseud.], in *Awakening Lives: Autobiographies of Jewish Youth in Poland before the Holocaust*, ed. Jeffrey Shandler (New Haven, CT, 2002), 14.

[47] See Frost, *Schooling as a Socio-Political Expression*, 30–32; Seidman, *Dos yidishe religieze shulvezen*, 42–43; Bacon, "National Revival," 85–88.

[48] Salsitz, *Jewish Boyhood in Poland*, 55. See also Eisenstein, *Jewish Schools in Poland*, 97.

[49] Letter from the village of Dzielna to Chojrev, 1929, YIVO Archives, Records of the CHOJREV (Centrala Organizacji Zydowsko-Religijnego Szkolnictwa), Vilna (hereafter Chojrev collection), RG 49, folder 8, no. 2890. See also Eisenstein, *Jewish Schools in Poland*, 96; Kalman Weiser, *Jewish People, Yiddish Nation: Noah Prylucki and the Folkists in Poland* (Toronto, 2011), 216–17. Another letter bemoaned a tempting nearby Polish public school, where "they don't teach any sacred studies at all, and violate the Sabbath as well." Letter from Drujsk to Chojrev, 1929, YIVO Archives, Chojrev collection, RG 49, folder 8, no. 1886. Kamil Kijek notes the paradoxical situation of public schools being attended mainly by Jewish children from the "poorest traditional homes"; Kijek, *Dzieci modernizmu: Świadomość kultura i socjalizacja polityczna młodzieży żydowskiej w II RP Świadomość kultura i socjalizacja polityczna młodzieży żydowskiej w II Rzeczypospolitej* (Wrocław, 2017), 137.

Horev system meant that a school gained public school status and state subsidies in exchange for an agreement to provide around two hours of secular education per day. Certain administrators actually welcomed this compromise because secular offerings attracted wealthier, tuition-paying parents as well as less affluent parents seeking better economic opportunities for their children.[50] But many balked at it, fearing that secular teachers might "lead our children to the Left."[51] Even when administrators consoled themselves that at least the Horev schools taught secular subjects "in a better fashion," the economic benefits were not always clear, since secular subjects required new, certified teachers. One administrator complained that "there is not enough money for the rent and for paying a Polish teacher and a Hebrew teacher." He implored Horev administrators for assistance so that "we will not have to cease our work, God forbid," adding ominously that "the Tarbut [Hebraist] and Polish schools are proceeding and growing."[52]

Traditionalist parents who lacked a Horev option sought to neutralize the effects of public school and linguistic assimilation by implementing an even lengthier supplementary Jewish education program each day, which they treated as their children's "real" education. Salsitz's father, for instance, "had no quarrel with the secular world; indeed, for a man of his intense religious convictions, he moved comfortably within it. But there was never any question about his priorities or what he expected from me. So while the years at the public school passed, I was at the same time attending Talmud Torah. Actually, I spent more hours there each day than I did at the public school."[53] Similarly, around 35,000 Jewish girls proceeded to Agudat-sponsored Bes Yaakov afternoon schools.[54] Public school instruction typically occurred from 8:00 a.m. to noon. Many Jewish boys would then proceed to the local *bet midrash* and remain there until as late as 9:00 at night.[55] For most traditionalist children, the primary school day was therefore extended and divided

[50] Asst. Rabbi A. B. Baraz, Berezno, to Chojrev, 1930, YIVO Archives, Chojrev collection, RG 49, folder 8, no. 3763; Bacon, *Politics of Tradition*, 143.

[51] Letter from Drujsk to Chojrev, 1929, YIVO Archives, Chojrev collection, RG 49, folder 8, no. 2464.

[52] M. L. Kliwaner, spiritual rabbi of Beresteczko, Wolyn, to Chojrev, n.d., YIVO Archives, Chojrev collection, RG 49, folder 8, no. 1736. See also Drujsk to Chojrev, n.d., YIVO Archives, Chojrev collection, RG 49, folder 8, no. 3697. On the Tarbut system and its own struggles with acculturation, see Kamil Kijek, "Was It Possible to Avoid 'Hebrew Assimilation'? Hebraism, Polonization, and Tarbut Schools in the Last Decade of Interwar Poland," *Jewish Social Studies* 21, no. 2 (2016): 105–41.

[53] Salsitz, *Jewish Boyhood in Poland*, 62.

[54] L. Neustadt, "Report on Schools: Poland," 1937, JDC Archives, NY33–44, folder 354, p. 43.

[55] Neustadt, "Report on Schools: Poland," JDC Archives, NY33–44, folder 354, p. 43; The Stormer [pseud.] (b. 1917), in Shandler, *Awakening Lives*, 234; Klapper, interview, July 22, 2015. For hours by grade level, see Frost, *Schooling as a Socio-Political Expression*, 73.

between the sacred and the profane, producing a hierarchical mental compartmentalization. This routine was even continued by certain Jewish *gymnasium* students, who proceeded to local yeshivot in afternoons and evenings.[56] But most were absorbed into the yeshivah structure after their bar mitzvahs.[57]

An additional brake on the transformative effects of public schools was the alienating nature of the experience, which involved both symbolic and actual violence. Salsitz's fellow Polish students "took great delight in assaulting us," he recalls. His teacher forcibly cut the *peyes* off of some fifty Jewish children, posting another teacher at the door to keep them from escaping.[58] Those Jews who made it all the way to the university level faced quotas, refusals of financial aid, "ghetto benches," anti-Jewish demonstrations, and physical assaults. The resulting decline in Jewish enrollments during this period is stunning: in 1921–22, Jews had comprised 24.6 percent of Polish university students (8,426 Jewish students); by 1938–39, they accounted for only 8.2 percent (4,113). In addition, there was a sharp decline in Jewish attendance of postgraduate medical, law, and pedagogical institutions.[59] By 1937, violence against Jewish students had become a daily occurrence. By 1939, the "numerus clausus" policy for Jewish students was, in effect, "numerus nullus." Fewer and fewer Jewish graduates of public schools went on

[56]Leon Weliczker Wells, *The Janowska Road* (Washington, DC, 1999), 30. This would have occurred around 1938–39.

[57]According to documents preserved in the YIVO Archives, Autobiographies of Jewish Youth in Poland, RG 4, upon graduating from public school Dawid Młynarski of Sulejów entered the Mesivta Yeshivah (no. 3782); Rózia Szpajzer of Grójec entered a Bes Yaakov school (no. 3559); Simcha Dagowicz of Drujsk went on to study in several yeshivot and then joined the religious Zionist (Mizrahi) movement (no. 3568); Yitzhak Twersky of Tomaszow-Lubelski attended the local yeshivah at the same time as public school (no. 3668); and Chaim Zabłodawer of Czyżew went on to the Etz Hayyim Yeshivah in Kleck (no. 3680). On parental attitudes toward post–elementary school education, see Kijek, *Dzieci modernizmu*, 146–47.

[58]Salsitz, *Jewish Boyhood in Poland*, 59. Cf. Bacon, "National Revival," 85. Mel Klapper recalls teachers pulling his *peyos* and students beating him up. On dark winter evenings, "the Poles would try to ambush us so we ran back to the *rebbe* [teacher] and asked him to escort us, but he was afraid, too!" Klapper, interview, July 22, 2015. See also The Stormer [pseud.], *Awakening Lives*, 236; Ido Bassok, *Tehiyat ha-ne`urim: Mishpahah ve-hinukh be-Yahadut Polin ben milhamot ha-`olam* (Jerusalem, 2015), 147–53. Kamil Kijek emphasizes symbolic violence, such as the "ethnocentric and religious character of national symbols" in textbooks; Kijek, "Between a Love of Poland, Symbolic Violence, and Antisemitism: The Idiosyncratic Effects of the State Education System on Young Jews in Interwar Poland," *Polin* 30 (2018): 253; Kijek, *Dzieci modernizmu*, 59–61.

[59]Raphael Mahler, *Yehudei Polin bein shtei milhamot ha-olam* (Tel Aviv, 1968), 172, table 38; Interior Ministry report, AAN, MSW, folder 963, pp. 572–75. See also Emanuel Melzer, *No Way Out: The Politics of Polish Jewry, 1935–1939* (Cincinnati, 1997), 71–80; Natalia Aleksiun, "Together but Apart: University Experience of Jewish Students in the Second Polish Republic," *Acta Poloniae Historica* 109 (2014): 109–37.

to study in Polish universities; and German universities were, of course, no longer an option.[60]

The Creation of a "Yeshivah Metropolis"

The hostile university atmosphere formed a stark contrast to the nurturing environment of the yeshivah, which offered advanced training in talmudic scholasticism and Jewish esotericism supplemented, increasingly, by vocational and secular instruction. There was a surge of yeshivah construction and reconstruction in the wake of the First World War, with enrollments doubling, tripling, and sometimes more than quadrupling. The flagship Mir Yeshivah grew from 80 students in 1920 to at least 403 students by 1938.[61] This is not to say that yeshivot drew very much from the pool of aspiring university students, who were usually committed to professional tracks. But their physical and mental safety was quite attractive to those who were less decided; and, in contrast to universities, yeshivot covered the tuition, room, board, and medical expenses of the vast majority (96 percent) of their students.[62] This entailed a serious burden in the midst of a worldwide depression, yet yeshivah deficits actually remained smaller than those of secularist Yiddishist and Hebraist secondary schools, which were more often subjected to government-mandated renovations, relocations, and closures.[63]

The mainly male enrollments in Jewish traditionalist institutions of higher education amounted to 30,758 by the end of the interwar period, compared

[60] Melzer, *No Way Out*, 78–79; Szymon Rudnicki, "From 'Numerus Clausus' to 'Numerus Nullus,'" *Polin* 2 (1987): 246–68. For a harrowing daily accounting of attacks on Jews on university campuses during the first half of 1937, see "The Situation of the Jews in Eastern Europe: Memorandum Presented by the Palestinian League of Nations Society," YIVO Archives, Territorial Collection, Poland 1, RG 116, folder 13.10, pp. 4–6.

[61] On attempts to revive traditionalist educational institutions during the First World War, see Andrew Koss, "War Within, War Without: Russian Refugee Rabbis during World War I," *AJS Review* 34, no. 2 (2010): 231–63; Graubart, *Sefer zikharon*. On enrollments, see Klibansky, *Ketzur halamish*, 432, table 8. For higher enrollment estimates for Mir, see Haffkine Foundation questionnaire for Mir Yeshivah, YIVO Archives, Mark Wischnitzer Papers, RG 767, folder 1.

[62] According to the Haffkine Foundation questionnaires sent to individual yeshivot, the yeshivot that provided full support to students included Or Torah of Korzec (founded in Bereznica, moved to Zvihil [Zwiahel], then Korzec, Poland), Etz Hayyim of Slutzk (relocated to Kleck, Poland), and Ohel Torah of Baranowicze. Haffkine Foundation questionnaires, YIVO Archives, Mark Wischnitzer Papers, RG 767, folder 1. See also Klibansky, *Ketzur halamish*, 419.

[63] S. Rivnik [?], Tarbut, to JDC, March 1, 1936; S. Rivnik [?] and Z. Gayer, Tarbut, to JDC, October 12, 1937; Tarbut Warsaw to JDC, n.d.; A. Levinson and Dr. Z. Sohar, Tarbut, to JDC, December 18, 1934, all in JDC Archives, NY33–44, folder 830, pp. 921, 938, 995, 1019; Chaim Honig to JDC, February 23, 1936, JDC Archives, NY33–44, folder 828, pp. 605–6.

with around 34,000 Jewish men and women in *gymnasia* and universities (29,822 in the former and about 4,200 in the latter).[64] Full-time advanced devotional study occurred not only in yeshivot but also in prayer houses (*shtiblekh*), where "youngsters aspire and strive mightily to surpass Hasidic elders in fervor," according to one memoirist.[65] Warsaw was home to no less than 442 *shtiblekh*, and it was here rather than in yeshivot that young Warsavian traditionalists tended to study.[66]

But it was the yeshivot, ranging between 167 and 208 in number, that enjoyed worldwide renown, some even becoming tourist attractions.[67] Poland's Bes Yosef *musar* yeshivah network comprised seventy self-funding yeshivot with around three thousand students.[68] Among the country's increasing numbers of Hasidic yeshivot, which had been relatively rare before the First World War, was the elite Yeshivat Hakhmei Lublin, opened in 1930 with much fanfare.[69] The Piaseczner Rebbe proclaimed in 1932 that the Hasidic

[64] Avraham Zemba, "Shtiblakh be-varshe," in *Mosdot torah be-eyropa be-vinyanam uvehurbanam*, ed. Shmuel K. Mirsky (New York, 1956), 356–61; Joseph Marcus, *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland, 1919–1939* (Berlin, 1983), 154–55; Stampfer, "Hasidic Yeshivas," 252–76. Stampfer's estimate of 20,000 yeshivah students does not, of course, include higher education within *shtiblekh*.

[65] Zonszain, *Yidish-varshe*, 127. Zemba estimates the numbers of youth studying in these informal institutions in Warsaw alone as in the "hundreds"; see "Shtiblakh be-varshe," 356–61. On the geographical aspect of *shtiblekh* networks, see Marcin Wodzinski, "Space and Spirit: On Boundaries, Hierarchies, and Leadership in Hasidism," *Journal of Historical Geography* 53 (2016): 63–74.

[66] Interior Ministry report, 1926, AAN, MSW, folder 1460, pp. 27–30. Herman notices a conscious trend toward yeshivah study as a barrier against the new ideologies; see "Ha-yahas livnei ha-no'ar," 183–85. However, Abraham Joshua Heschel studied in the Mesivta Yeshivah in his native Warsaw. See Edward Kaplan and Samuel Dresner, *Abraham Joshua Heschel: Prophetic Witness* (New Haven, CT, 1998), 47–49, 60, 68. Ben-Zion Gold suggests that *shtiblekh* in large cities like Warsaw and Lodz were exceptional in their high level of study; see Ben-Zion Gold, "Religious Education in Poland: A Personal Perspective," in Gutman, *Jews of Poland*, 277–78.

[67] Tourism to the Hafetz Hayyim Yeshivah in Radun brought the town 20,000 zlotys per month during its namesake's lifetime, according to the "Radun Report" issued by the economic-statistical bureau of the Centralna Kasa Bezprocentowa, Warsaw,YIVO Archives, Territorial Collection, Poland 1, RG 116, folder 6.25, p. 14.

[68] See Frydman's introduction to Seidman, *Dos yidishe religieze shulvezen*, 7–8; Eisenstein, *Jewish Schools in Poland*, 96; Bacon, *Politics of Tradition*, 163. Marcus offers a suspiciously high estimate of one thousand yeshivot; *Social and Political History*, 154. On Bes Yosef, see Fishman, "Musar Movement," 261–65.

[69] According to a police report, the opening ceremony was attended by ten thousand people, half of whom marched in procession with the Chortkover Rebbe (R. Israel Friedman) and R. Meir Shapira, rector of the yeshivah. R. Shapira then delivered a rousing speech that ended with a cry in favor of Piłsudski and Sławka, followed by an "Orthodox" choir singing Psalm 30, an orchestra playing Polish national hymns, and speeches by the governor of the

camp now possessed as many Torah scholars as the non-Hasidic camp and would soon surpass it.[70] The historian Mark Wischnitzer, who was preparing a monograph on yeshivot before his untimely death, was moved to declare interwar Poland a "Yeshivah Metropolis."[71]

Poland's yeshivah network was inadvertently bolstered by a major geopolitical development: the Bolshevik Revolution and the ascendance of an aggressively antireligious regime in the neighboring Soviet Union. Russian Hasidic and non-Hasidic traditionalism was being effectively pushed into Poland and, to a lesser extent, Lithuania. Several of Poland's major yeshivot had been moved from future Soviet towns during the war or after the revolution.[72] Stalin's intensified antireligious campaigns after 1926 drove many more students, religious functionaries, and their families across the border, producing a veritable traditionalist brain drain. One religious functionary in the Soviet Union admitted that "rabbis and preachers are completely superfluous" there.[73] Another reported that in his Soviet-ruled town, which had already been "devastated from the days of the enormous, horrible pogroms of Petliura, may his name be blotted out," Communist youths had taken it

Lublin District and other politicians and rabbis. Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie (hereafter APL), Urząd Wojewódzki Lubelski, Wydział Społeczno-Polityczny, no. 1893, p. 85. On Yeshivat Hakhme Lublin, see Hillel Seidman, *Szlakiem nauki talmudycznej: Wiedza judaistyczna a wyższa uczelnia talmudyczna w Lublinie* (Warsaw, 1934); Konrad Zieliński and Nina Zieliński, *Jeszywas chachmej Lublin: Uczelnia mędrców Lublina* (Lublin, 2003); Tadeusz Radzik, *Uczelnia mędrców Lublina* (Lublin, 1994); Gold, "Religious Education in Poland," 272–73.

[70] Shapira, *Hovat ha-talmidim*, 59. See also Stampfer, "Hasidic Yeshivas"; Herman, "Ha-yahas livnei ha-no'ar," 183–85. For a list of thirty major Polish yeshivot funded by the JDC, see Carol Kuhn, Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, Inc., to Abraham Horowitz, Central Relief Committee, March 3, 1939, Yeshiva University Archives, New York, Central Relief Committee Collection (hereafter CRC Collection), box 215, folder 9. On international students in Polish yeshivot, see Klibansky, *Ketzur halamish*, 407.

[71] Mark Wischnitzer, "Homer le-toldot ha-yeshivot," 359. A fragmentary manuscript of his planned monograph is held in the YIVO Archives, Mark Wischnitzer Papers, RG 767, folder 1.

[72] Etz Hayyim originated in Slutzk but moved to Kleck; Bes Yosef originated in Novogorodok but moved during World War I to Homel and Kiev; Or Torah originated in Bereznica but moved to Zvihil, then to Koretz; and Kenesset Bet Yitzhak originated in Slobodka but moved to Kramenchug. See Haffkine Foundation questionnaires for Etz Hayyim, Bes Yosef, Or Torah, and Kenesset Bet Yitzhak, YIVO Archives, Mark Wischnitzer Papers, RG 767, folder 1; Bureau of Jewish Social Research, "Register of Yeshivahs in Poland," January 1932, JDC Archives, NY21–32, folder 353, pp. 293–312. On yeshivah migrations during the First World War, see Klibansky, *Ketzur halamish*, 76–118, 396–400. On Hasidic court relocations, see most recently Marcin Wodzinski, "War and Religion; or, How the First World War Changed Hasidism," trans. Jarek Garlinski, *Jewish Quarterly Review* 106, no. 3 (2016): 285–312.

[73] Ben Tsiyon ben Gershon, letter, 1928 [?], YIVO Archives, Ezras Torah Fund, RG 237, Snigirevka (Ukraine) folder. For earlier years, see Ezras Torah, ed., *Sefer zikharon be-sefer me-ha-mosad ezrat torah* (New York, 1922).

upon themselves "to destroy, God forbid, the whole foundation of the Torah and religion, and extinguish the remaining sparks of Judaism of the generation."[74] A third reported that "Judaism is coarsened in our land, and life is hard for every God-fearer [*haredi*], and for us youth in particular. The young person suffers most of all from the embitterment of Jewish life, from the strong drink [Communism] that poisons them. And we have only one escape: to travel abroad!"[75] Neighboring Poland was the most natural destination, as it was also for pious Christians (although Ukrainian Christians would enjoy less freedom of religious observance in Poland by the 1930s).[76] But Jews proved to be the most frequent and persistent border crossers, and young men with talmudic proficiency had a range of yeshivot ready to take them in.

Financial assistance for these religious refugees flowed in from—of all places—America, the "unkosher land." A transnational system emerged, consisting of human capital from the Soviet Union, actual capital from America, and a burgeoning network of Polish yeshivot. In 1928 alone, around six hundred young men left the Soviet Union illegally and entered Polish yeshivot. They were joined by smaller influxes of pious young men from Germany and Austria following the Nazi assumption of power. Yeshivot began to double as absorption centers, providing refugees with food, shelter, medicine, summer vacations, and in some cases vocational training. These "martyr refugees from the Soviet Union," as they were sometimes called, came to constitute up to 60 percent of student bodies of Polish yeshivot situated near the Soviet border.[77]

[74] Appeal from Pesah Haksinhut, 1929, YIVO Archives, Ezras Torah Fund, RG 237, Proskurov folder. This petitioner believed that the youth were acting contrary to the will of the regime. On the responsibility of Symon Petliura's army for around 40 percent of the Ukrainian pogroms of 1919–21, see Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government: Ukrainians and Jews in Revolutionary Times, 1917–1920* (Cambridge, MA, 1999).

[75] Moshe Tzvi Menkin, letter, 1929, YIVO Archives, Ezras Torah Fund, RG 237, Szklow folder.

[76] According to Timothy Snyder, attempted border crossings "often took the form of church processions," though opposition to collectivization was also a major motivation. See Snyder, *Sketches from a Secret War: A Polish Artist's Mission to Liberate Soviet Ukraine* (New Haven, CT, 2005), 94.

[77] S. Ehrman of Agudat Yisrael to Cyrus Adler, January 20, 1926, JDC Archives, NY21–32, folder 346; Vilna Vaad Ha-yeshivot, memo, Heshvan 29, 1928 (the exact number of student refugees cited there is 597). A figure of "approximately six hundred pure and innocent souls" is asserted in the introduction to Yosef Yoizel Horowitz, *Madregat ha-adam* (New York, 1947), 5. On Mir, see "Bureau of Jewish Social Research, Grand Rabbinical College of Mir," Yeshiva University Archives, box 215, folder 9; JDC Archives, NY33–44, folder 836, pp. 871–1022. On the absorption of German Jewish refugees, see L. J. Finkel to Joseph Hyman, January 11, 1936, JDC Archives, NY33–44, folder 832. On border yeshivot as absorption centers, see Wischnitzer, "Di banayung fun yeshivos." There was also an appeal for aid to build additional yeshivot in Bialystok, Mezheritch, and Pinsk in order to shelter "several hundred young people

The Polish government admitted these refugees on the condition that they would not become public charges. An American organization known as Ezras Torah, created in the wake of the First World War to aid yeshivah students, religious functionaries, and their wives and dependents, gave some assistance. An official of the Bes Yosef Yeshivah of Bialystok, for example, informed Ezras Torah that a total of thirty-seven "*talmidei hakhamim* [talmudic experts] have arrived at our holy yeshivah" from the Soviet Union. He could cover expenses for thirty of them but required assistance for the remaining seven. He noted how important it was to prevent the "negation of the worldview of a Torah student and the complete ruin of his future in a generation that possesses so few *talmidei hakhamim*," and he warned that as these young men were "natives of Russia and Ukraine," they required immediate support lest they be "permanently expelled from here back to their enemies, the *Evsektsim*, who will ambush their souls, heaven forfend."[78] The rabbi of Zdzięcioł (Zhetl), Poland, appealed to Ezras Torah on behalf of Basha Kvitkin, an orphan from a distinguished rabbinical family who had been raised in Minsk under the care of the renowned Rabbi Yehoshua Tsimbalist Horodner, head of the underground yeshivah Shoavei Mayim, and who had been sent over the Polish border to Zdzięcioł. The community had found a "pure, honest man" willing to betroth Basha, but the dowry had to be "at least several hundred dollars, for the groom is only a scribe."[79] Ezras Torah was also asked to assist rabbis who had fled the Soviet territories and who, in Poland, lacked a livelihood.[80]

who fled from Russia on account of religious persecution"; see unsigned letter to Bernard Kahn, February 1, 1931, JDC Archives, NY21–32, folder 353.

[78]Bes Yosef Yeshivah to Ezras Torah, May–June 1929, YIVO Archives, Ezras Torah Fund, RG 237, Bialystok folder. One student, Moshe Daitch, was not from Russia or Ukraine but an orphan from Kovel, Poland. The *Evsektsim* refers to members of the Jewish sector of the Soviet Communist party.

[79]Rabbi Z. Soroczkin, Zdzięcioł to Ezras Torah, May–June 1929, YIVO Archives, Ezras Torah Fund, RG 237, Zdzięcioł folder. Horodner is described here as "famous from all ends of the earth in his self-sacrifice for the Torah; and his fulfillment is especially great now, in the days of the Communists, may their names be blotted out, for he has established a yeshivah like one of the servants of the hour and is a martyr for the Torah." On Yeshivat Shoavei Mayim in Minsk, see Elissa Bemporad, *Becoming Soviet Jews: The Bolshevik Experiment in Minsk* (Bloomington, IN, 2013), 122.

[80]L. Cochan, Warsaw, to JDC, Paris, July 24, 1921, JDC Archives, NY21–33, folder 344. For appeals on behalf of rabbis, see R. Abram Elimelech Perłow's undated letter to Ezras Torah on behalf of R. Aharon Lamdan, "among the refugees from the land of Russia, town of Turov," in YIVO Archives, Ezras Torah Fund, RG 237, Pinsk-Karlin folder; and L. J. Finkel, dean of Mir Yeshivah, to Ezras Torah, date illegible, YIVO Archives, Ezras Torah Fund, RG 237, Mir folder. On Rabbi Soloveitchik's acquisition of a Polish rabbinical post and on his family's border crossing using falsified passports, see Shulamith Soloveitchik Meiselman, *The Soloveitchik Heritage: A Daughter's Memoir* (Hoboken, NJ, 1995), 188–98.

Polish Jewish traditionalists also approached Ezras Torah on their own behalf. Unlike appeals on behalf of their Soviet brethren, their own appeals tended to downplay ideological challenges and focus instead on economic woes.[81] "Polish Jewry is generally faithful to God and his holy Torah," a conference of Polish rabbis assured Ezras Torah. "Notwithstanding the fact that many of the younger generation have been caught in the net of freethinking, the voice of Torah has not ceased in our study halls, and delightful young men who devote all of their time to the study of Torah are still to be found. . . . The bearers of the flag of Torah and Judaism in Poland are still, essentially, the Rabbis of Israel." It was merely the current economic crisis that imperiled religious life in Poland, they insisted, which was where the Americans could help.[82] R. Majer Rajnerman's poignant appeal took a similarly practical line:

> Gentlemen, know that I reconsidered and reconsidered before I began to take pen in hand . . . for it is not my manner to request help from anyone. But what can I do in such times as these, when the condition of the children of Israel dwelling in our lands is one of a very diminished livelihood? And because of this, every cup of poison has spilt, Heaven forfend, on the servants of holy work. For "a handful cannot satisfy the lion" [BT Berakhot 3b]. If the homeowners do not have enough merchandise, how can they worry about us, God have mercy?[83]

Another petitioner, Salmon Teitelbaum, confirmed that "all the merchants have declined from their prior status, and the homeowners are not able to support [*lahzik*] God."[84] Most petitioners received at least modest support.

Widows and children of Hasidic rebbes who appealed to Ezras Torah took on the air of an impoverished aristocracy. Sarah Halperin, the destitute widow

[81]Only two Polish petitioners blamed secularism. According to R. London of Luboml, "the new generation increased and accepted upon them another rabbi who was also from the new generation and goes in its spirit, and my entire livelihood was ruined." R. London to Ezras Torah, 1929, YIVO Archives, Ezras Torah Fund, RG 237, Luboml folder. According to R. Yosef Dov Roski, "leftist people from the Bundists and Bnei Noah [from the sect of Noah Prylucki], whose only thoughts are to uproot religious institutions of the town," had taken over the community and canceled rabbinic salaries for seven months. R. Yosef Dov Roski to Ezras Torah, 1929, YIVO Archives, Ezras Torah Fund, RG 237, Międzyrzecz folder. On Prylucki's Yiddishist and Diaspora Nationalist "Folkist" activities, see Weiser, *Jewish People, Yiddish Nation*, esp. chaps. 4 and 5.

[82]Conference of Rabbis in Kazimierz Dolny to Ezras Torah, 1920, in Ezras Torah, *Sefer zikharon be-sefer*, 219–22.

[83]R. Majer Rajnerman to Ezras Torah, date illegible, YIVO Archives, Ezras Torah Fund, RG 237, Zakrzowek (Lubelska) folder.

[84]Salmon Teitelbaum to Ezras Torah, date illegible, YIVO Archives, Ezras Torah Fund, RG 237, Gorlice folder.

of the Brezhany Rebbe, reminded the Americans that she was the "daughter of great ones and the granddaughter of holy *tzaddikim* whose voices are heard to the ends of the earth . . . including the Maggid of Zloczów and the Ropshitzer and the Belzer and the Przemyslaner," adding that it was "no small thing to be a helper of a daughter of holy ones such as these." The attendant of the Vurke Hasidic court appealed year after year for funding for his court's Passover celebrations, explaining that "the livelihood of the members of the community of our master, the Admor Shelita, is so critically grave it is impossible to express."[85]

Yeshivah administrators, thanks to the premium placed on devotional education, possessed an array of philanthropic options, not all of them American. Waldemar M. Haffkine (1860–1930), a French Jewish bacteriologist originally from Odessa, established an annual yeshivah subsidy of over $4,000 that was administered in the United States after his death. British Jews collected and dispensed philanthropy through the Joint Distribution Committee. The native Polish organization Vaad Ha-Yeshivot dispatched emissaries to three hundred Jewish communities throughout pogrom-scarred eastern Poland to collect money for yeshivah students and raised the equivalent of $5,000 in certain years. Finally, wealthy Polish Jewish traditionalists (*g'virim*), defying the presumed correlation between wealth and embourgeoisement, dutifully set aside "tithes" for yeshivot and Hasidic courts, intending to ensure their own continued prosperity.[86]

But most yeshivah funding derived from American Jews. Some were so inspired by their visits to Polish yeshivot that they established societies back home for their upkeep.[87] The JDC's per-student funding policy inadver-

[85]Sarah Halperin to Ezras Torah, n.d., YIVO Archives, Ezras Torah Fund, RG 237, Lwów folder; attendant of the Vurke Hasidic court to Ezras Torah, 1929 and n.d., YIVO Archives, Ezras Torah Fund, RG 237, Warka folder; Ezras Torah, *Sefer zikharon be-sefer*, 221. The seven children of R. Mordecai Menahem Kalish of Vurke/Otwock were dependent on charity after his death. See also petitions by members of the Halberstam family throughout the Ezras Torah collection, RG 237, in, e.g., the Wieliczka, Tarnów, Nowy Sącz, and Nisko Mało Polska folders.

[86]Haffkine Foundation questionnaires, YIVO Archives, Mark Wischnitzer Papers, RG 767, folder 1; YIVO Archives, Vaad Hayeshivot, RG 25, folder 1100 (decision to send a delegation to the "*g'vir* Shifrin"), folder 1106. The equivalent of $500 was raised for the summer sessions. The breakdown of institutions in 1936 was: seventeen "Large Yeshivot," thirty-five "Small Yeshivot," and eight "Volhyn Yeshivot." See Vaad Hayeshivot, RG 25, folder 1104. The number of subsidized yeshivot rose to seventy-eight by 1937. On British funds, see two memoranda from the British United Appeal to the JDC, "Status of the British United Appeal," January 1936, and "Distribution of Relief," November 1936, both in JDC Archives, NY33–44, folder 789. For a description of a Gerer *g'vir* setting aside "tithes" for his rebbe, see Zonszain, *Yidish-varshe*, 152.

[87]Isaac Blau established a society for the upkeep of the Etz Hayyim Yeshivah in Bobowa after his visit there, collecting $6,200 in 1927. The Bobowa Educational and Benevolent Relief

tently favored Poland's larger and more numerous traditionalist institutions, yeshivot included. The JDC had agreed to give the Orthodox-founded Central Relief Committee (CRC), the oldest of its three original constituent organizations, 55 percent of all monies allocated to schooling, with only 17.5 percent going to Yiddishist/labor-founded schools and 27.5 to the rest, through the mid-1930s. In order to justify this "rather lopsided arrangement," as critics called it, the CRC argued that "the Yeshivah still reigns supreme in Jewish life in Eastern and Central European countries and in Palestine. . . . Over there many thousands of students devote for a number of years all their time for diligent study in the Yeshivoth. They are our future spiritual leaders and teachers and they are the carriers of our culture to the generations to come." Support for yeshivot, they argued, was necessary for "the very perpetuation of the Jewish religion and culture."[88]

Yeshivah administrators, like other Polish Jewish petitioners, insisted that the problem was not a lack of demand for devotional study but merely a lack of money.[89] Administrators of the Bes Yosef Yeshivah in Bialystok, which enrolled 320 students in 1938 (according to other sources, between 210 and 230), said they had received "scores of requests from students eager to enter our yeshivah" but warned that they would have to turn most of them away due to insufficient funds for their full support.[90] Mir Yeshivah administrators claimed that they had cut their prior enrollment of five hundred students in half because of "serious financial difficulties"—though enrollments actually

Society, Inc., included between two hundred and three hundred members and employed three regional traveling solicitors. See "Memorandum on the General Etz Chaim, Bobowa, Poland," May 18, 1927, Yeshiva University Archives, CRC Collection, box 215, folder 9. The Mir society's six solicitors collected dues from around two hundred members. Societies were also established for the Chofetz Chaim Yeshivah, the Lomzha Yeshivah, the Volozhin Yeshivah, Yeshivah Beth Israel (in Viseul, Romania), and the Slobodka Yeshivah and Kollel (Lithuania). See Wischnitzer, "Homer le-toldot ha-yeshivot," 360; Haffkine Foundation questionnaires, YIVO Archives, Mark Wischnitzer Papers, RG 767, folder 1.

[88]Central Relief Committee to Cyrus Adler, memorandum, January 18, 1937, Yeshiva University Archives, CRC Collection, box 209, folder 1, p. 2. See also Yehuda Bauer, *My Brother's Keeper: A History of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee 1929–1939* (Philadelphia, 1974), 35.

[89]In contrast to secularist Jewish leaders like the Zionist Yitzhak Gruenbaum, who demanded that the Polish state live up to the Minorities Treaty and support private Jewish schools, traditionalists turned to foreign philanthropy. See Frost, *Schooling as a Socio-Political Expression*, 146–47. In the most extreme case, 83 percent of the budget of Mir depended on foreign philanthropy; the proportion for Yeshivat Hakhme Lublin was only 13 percent. See Wischnitzer, "Di banayung fun yeshivos," 33–34.

[90]Haffkine Foundation questionnaire for Bialystok Bes Yosef, YIVO Archives, Mark Wischnitzer Papers, RG 767, folder 1. See also Fishman, "Musar Movement." For enrollment figures, see Wischnitzer, "Homer le-toldot ha-yeshivot," 359; report on yeshivahs, JDC Archives, NY33–44, folder 827, p. 1040.

remained between 403 and 500 students that year.[91] The problem of unappeasable student demand in these cases may have been due to the disproportionate role of the yeshivot in absorbing Soviet refugees.[92]

In contrast, the Lubavitcher (Habad) yeshivah Tomkhei Temimim was founded and staffed by Soviet Jewish refugees and catered mainly to native Polish Hasidic students affiliated with other dynasties. R. Shraga Feibush Zalmanov and R. Shneur Zalman Shmotkin reestablished the yeshivah's main branch in Warsaw in 1921 after the Soviet government closed its main branch in Rostov-on-Don, and another eight branches were subsequently opened throughout Poland. This remarkable expansion was helped by the emergence of Lubavitcher Hasidism as a transnational movement with a growing American philanthropic base, as well as by the arrival of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Joseph Isaac Schneersohn, in 1933.[93] Settling first in Warsaw, the rebbe moved his court and the yeshivah's upper two classes to the nearby spa town of Otwock two years later.[94] The yeshivah was soon turning applicants away:

> During the current summer, the first since our holy yeshivah was established [in Otwock], we posted an announcement in the newspapers that we are not accepting any new students. Nevertheless, tens upon tens of students from all over the country, as well as some from abroad, beseeched and begged us to enroll them in our holy yeshivah, and despite our strong desire it was impossible to accept them. For even without them, the numbers of students have grown due to those students who already finished their studies in our [yeshivah's] branches, and we are required to accept them.

[91] L. J. Finkel to Haffkine Foundation, telegram, 1940, YIVO Archives, Mark Wischnitzer Papers, RG 767, folder 1; Wischnitzer, "Homer le-toldot ha-yeshivot," 360; Klibansky, *Ketzur halamish*, 432, table 8; list of yeshivah enrollments for 1938, YIVO Archives, Vaad Hayeshivot, RG 25, folder 1104.

[92] Bureau of Jewish Social Research memo, October 1930, Yeshiva University Archives, CRC Collection, box 215, folder 9.

[93] According to Schneersohn, the court was established in Warsaw in August 1933. Joseph Isaac Schneersohn to Menachem Mendel Schneersohn, 1933, and Joseph Isaac Schneersohn to M.M., August/September 1933, in *Iggrot Kodesh Rayatz* (Brooklyn, NY, 1983) 15:169–70 (thanks to Levi Greisman for pointing these out). Lubavitcher Hasidim in Poland had long argued that Poland was a "more safe and fitting place for the *mishkan* [tabernacle]," but the rebbe had been preoccupied with his Soviet followers, who were being "hounded out of spite by the perverters of the justice and freedom of all citizens of all religions." See Shalom Dov Ber Levin, *Toldot habad be-Polin, Lita, ve-Latviya* (Brooklyn, NY, 2011), 74, 77. For the Schneersohn's appeals to the JDC on behalf of his yeshivah, see letter from December 23, 1936, JDC Archives, NY33–44, folder 837, p. 1180. On the yeshivah's origins, see Naftali Brawer, "Yisuda shel yeshivat tomkhe temimim ve-hashpa'atah al tenuat habad," in *Yeshivot u-vatei midrashoth*, ed. Immanuel Etkes (Jerusalem, 2006), 357–68.

[94] Levin, *Toldot habad be-Polin*, 85–165.

> . . . I am not exaggerating in the least [in observing] that, at the very moment when many larger yeshivot have recently suffered a gradual decline and register only a few tens of students [!], our yeshivah rises and triumphs, and it is difficult to halt the stream of new students trying to enter our yeshivah.[95]

By 1938, Tomkhei Temimim's main branch enrolled 334 students, while its satellites enrolled a total of 343 students. Rising costs had to be checked by "reluctantly having to refuse accepting new students, opening new branches, etc."[96]

Yeshivat Hakhmei Lublin, founded on the promise of providing elite Hasidic students with comfortable and dignified living and working conditions, was bedeviled by financial crises. The appeal of Rabbi Meir Shapira, its rector, took on a tone of exasperation:

> Students of great talent are knocking on the doors of the holy Torah day and night and are hungry for bread, and you are calm? Students who are great in Torah are lying in their cold rooms in wintertime without pillows, and you are quiet? The Torah declines and retreats to the margins for lack of material means, and you have still not said a word? Students in the "free" [public?] schools are seated row after row in honor, while our students remain without support, walking and expiring from need, and you sit there with folded hands, unmoved? Schools that are like poison to a beleaguered Judaism are being built upon our very destruction, and you feel nothing? I beseech you in the name of thousands and tens of thousands of Godfearers in Poland to take heed of our needs.[97]

R. Meir demanded "exactly" $300 a month for his students, as well as $1,000 to cover the yeshivah's accumulated debts.[98]

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[95] Y. Ever, Otwock, to Y. L. Hurwitz, Boston, Iyar 18, 1936, reproduced in Levin, *Toldot habad be-Polin*, 163–64.

[96] "Warszawa-Otwock, Poland: Yeshiva Tomche Tmimim, Lubavitz," 1937–38, YIVO Archives, Mark Wischnitzer Papers, RG 767, folder 1. Only 17,712 zlotys of the main branch's income came from within Poland in 1937–38; the remaining 98,043.25 zlotys came from abroad! However, Ada Rapoport-Albert and Gadi Sagiv argue for the movement's relative weakness in interwar Poland. See Rapoport-Albert and Sagiv, "Habad ke-neged hasidut polin: Le-toldotav shel dimui," in *Habad: Historiyah, hagut ve-dimui*, ed. Yonatan Meir and Gadi Sagiv (Jerusalem, 2016), 223–65.

[97] R. Meir Shapira to Ezras Torah, 1933, APL, Gmina Wyznaniowa Żydowska w Lublinie 1, p. 13; copy in Central Archives of the Jewish People, Jerusalem, HM2 6448–50. The letter is transcribed, albeit with errors, in David A. Mandelboim, *Iggrot ve-toldot rabeinu maharam Shapira mi-Lublin z'tzl* (Bnei Brak, 2010), 238. The "free" schools referred to in this letter were probably public *gymnasia*.

[98] Shapira to Ezras Torah, APL, Gmina Wyznaniowa Żydowska w Lublinie 1, p. 13.

What was in it for the Americans? Some Orthodox American Jews sent their sons to train in Polish yeshivot and hired Polish rabbis for their pulpits.[99] But as America's Orthodox community was still modest in size, its need for rabbis remained modest as well. Poland thus had to be represented as a place where "religious leaders for the world Jewry are being trained" and where most instruction in "the real Jewish Science" occurred. "If the American Jews will not give them a helping hand to maintain their schools and Talmud Torahs," warned Leon Kamaiky, chairman of the Central Relief Committee, "Judaism will disappear in Europe that always was the fountain of Judaism the world over, including America."[100] These claims, invoked repeatedly, contained enough mythical power to move American Jews who, though perhaps not personally committed to the rigors of a traditionalist lifestyle, regarded Polish Jews as pious proxies and were therefore anxious to preserve that lifestyle for them. Perhaps such dependence on American Jewish nostalgia makes the revitalization of traditionalism in Poland seem artificial. But traditionalists were making momentous internal adjustments as well.

Defensive Acculturation

In remarkable contrast to Hungarian Ultra-Orthodox Jews, who resorted to political secession, self-segregation, and vocal bans against all innovation, Polish Jewish traditionalists not only cooperated politically with Jewish secularists but adopted their tools and tactics as well.[101] The reverse was also true

[99] See Klibansky, *Ketzur halamish*, 407. American enrollment in the Mir Yeshivah doubled, from twenty to forty students, between 1932 and 1938.

[100] Leon Kamaiky to Felix Warburg, memorandum, May 5 [?], 1929, JDC Archives, NY21–32, folder 353; Kamaiky, *Report of the Central Committee for the Relief of the Jews Suffering through the War* (New York, 1923), quoted in Yeshiva University Archives, "An Inventory to the Records of the Central Relief Committee, Volume II, 1919–1958," 1999, http://libfindaids.yu.edu:8082/xtf/view?query=yeshivas&docId=ead%2Fcrc19%2Fcrc19.xml&chunk.id.

[101] On Hungary, see Silber, "Emergence of Ultra-Orthodoxy," 23–84; Akiva Schlesinger, *Lev ha-ivri* (Lemberg, 1869), esp. 67–68. On Hungarian Hasidic theology, see Allan Nadler, "The War on Modernity of R. Hayyim Elazar Shapira of Munkacz," *Modern Judaism* 4, no. 3 (1994): 233–64; Benjamin Brown, "The Two Faces of Religious Radicalism: Orthodox Zealotry and 'Holy Sinning' in Nineteenth-Century Hasidism in Hungary and Galicia," *Journal of Religion* 93, no. 3 (2013): 341–74. For preliminary comparisons between Hungarian and Polish Orthodoxy, see Moshe Samet, "The Beginnings of Orthodoxy," *Modern Judaism* 8, no. 3 (1988): 249–69. On political cooperation, see Bacon, "Imitation, Rejection, Cooperation: Agudat Yisrael and the Zionist Movement in Interwar Poland," in *The Emergence of Modern Jewish Politics: Bundism and Zionism in Eastern Europe*, ed. Zvi Gitelman (Pittsburgh, 2003), 85–94; Żebrowski, *Żydowska Gmina Wyznaniowa w Warszawie*; Polonsky, *Jews in Poland and Russia*, 122–31.

to a certain extent: secularist movements appropriated aspects of traditionalism that furthered their own agendas. Notwithstanding interwar Poland's atmosphere of defiant, competing subcultures, Jewish secularists and traditionalists grudgingly learned and borrowed from each another.[102]

For secularists it was above all Hasidism—minus its legal and ritual demands—that captivated the imagination. I. L. Perets's literary renditions of Hasidic tales celebrated the simple piety and comradery of Jewish workers, while Hillel Zeitlin endowed Hasidic homiletic literature with a modern, Western form. Secularist activists who had been raised in Hasidic households tended to reproduce Hasidic leadership patterns and preaching styles at their meetings and rallies. Some secularist youth even became "penitents" (*ba'alei teshuvah*) and joined Hasidic and other traditionalist communities in earnest. However, the Piaseczner Rebbe's wistful claim during the Nazi occupation that children of secularist parents used to "fill the gap" left by defectors was probably exaggerated. The number of defectors was significantly higher, generating a rich corpus of memoirs and exposés.[103]

Jewish traditionalists, for their part, could not remain inured to the multiple converging influences of Jewish secularists, whose clubs, cafés, libraries, and schools were now interspersed amid their *shtiblekh* and yeshivot. The traditionalism that emerged in interwar Poland was an interactive dynamic, one that not only resisted outside forces but also appropriated those seen as helping to preserve and promote an ostensibly authentic Jewish way of life. The most visible manifestations were political: Agudat Yisrael brought party politics into the *shtiblekh* before elections, published newspapers that reported on world affairs, synchronized worldwide daily talmudic study, and sponsored an array of summer camps, worker and youth groups, libraries,

[102] On the "total" counterculture of the Jewish Socialist "Bund," see Jack Jacobs, *Bundist Counterculture in Interwar Poland* (New York, 2009). On cultural hybridity, see Marwan M. Kraidy, "Hybridity in Cultural Globalization," *Communication Theory* 12, no. 3 (2002): 316–39.

[103] Kalonymous Kalman Shapira, "Parshat Zakhor," February 28, 1942, in *Sacred Fire: Torah from the Years of Fury, 1939–1942* (Northvale, NJ, 2002), 293; I. L. Perets, *Hsidish* (Vilna, 1925), a collection of Perets's Hasidic stories first published in *Der Yud*; Arthur Green, "Three Warsaw Jewish Mystics," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 13 (1996): 1–58; "*The Book of Visions*: Hillel Zeitlin's Mystical Diary in Light of Unpublished Correspondence" [in Hebrew], *Alei Sefer* 21 (2010): 149–71; and Moshe Waldoks, "Hillel Zeitlin: The Early Years (1894–1919)" (PhD diss., Brandeis University, 1994). On defectors, see David Assaf, *Untold Tales of the Hasidim: Crisis and Discontent in the History of Hasidism*, trans. Dena Ordan (Waltham, MA, 2010), esp. 154–235; Herman, "Ha-yahas livnei ha-no'ar." On Hasidic influences on the Zionist youth group Hashomer Hatzair, see Elkanah Margalit, "Social and Intellectual Origins of the Hashomer Hatzair Youth Movement, 1913–20," *Journal of Contemporary History* 4, no. 2 (1969): 32–33, 38.

choirs, orchestras, drama groups, schools, and a women's cultural organization. The Mizrahi movement, a traditionalist-Zionist hybrid, created similar institutions.[104] Even the most apolitical traditionalist scholars could not resist frequenting the new Jewish public libraries, which offered both rare rabbinical works and glittering specimens of the new literature.[105] Several publicists attempted to compete with the new literature by producing colorful anthologies of Hasidic and other rabbinic wonder tales for a mass readership.[106]

Most importantly, secularist influences began to penetrate the sanctum of traditionalist education. The Piaseczner Rebbe urged his colleagues to look beyond the "four cubits of their yeshivot" and acknowledge that many youths felt estranged. If teachers continued to rely on compulsion, corporal punishment, and the old "dry" methods, he warned, students would be easily drawn into "foolishness and cheap, worldly beauty." Teachers must adopt new methods that made each student into an ally and caused Torah wisdom to "penetrate the spirit and arouse and inflame it."[107] Some of his colleagues took more concrete measures. Their yeshivot, which were now filled with students who had received at least a modicum of secular instruction, began to sponsor quasi-academic journals, offer dormitories and cafeterias, and implement methods of supervision, testing, and curricular planning that resembled those of modern *gymnasia*.[108]

[104]Bnot Agudat Yisrael consisted of 279 branches by 1936. See Bacon, *Politics of Tradition*, 128, 172. On the Orthodox press, see Moshe Prager, "When Hasidim of Ger became Newsmen," in *The Golden Tradition: Jewish Life and Thought in Eastern Europe*, ed. Lucy Dawidowicz (New York, 1996), 211; Asaf Kaniel, "Orthodox Zionist Youth Movements in Interwar Poland," *Gal-Ed* 21 (2007): 77–99; Kijek, *Dzieci modernizmu*, 70–90, esp. 84.

[105]See Lucy Dawidowicz, *From That Place and Time* (New York, 1991), 119; Hirsch Abramowicz, *Profiles of a Lost World*, ed. Dina Abramowicz and Jeffrey Shandler, trans. Eva Zeitlin Dobkin (Detroit, 1999), 260–63; Moyshe Zonszain, "Breslers Bibliotek," in *Yidishvarshe*, 89–92. See also Jeffrey Veidlinger, *Jewish Public Culture in the Late Russian Empire* (Bloomington, IN, 2009), 24–66.

[106]Justin Jarod Lewis, *Imagining Holiness: Classic Hasidic Tales in Modern Times* (Montreal, 2009); Jonatan Meir, *Literary Hasidism: The Life and Works of Michael Levi Rodkinson* (Syracuse, NY, 2016).

[107]Shapira, *Hovat ha-talmidim*, 7, 12–13. The Piaseczner Rebbe also encouraged his younger followers to form secret spiritual societies to rekindle Hasidism among the youth. See Zvi Leshem (Blobstein), "Hasidism Confronts Modernity: Spiritual Societies of the Piaseczner Rebbe" (working paper, n.d.), https://www.academia.edu/8916424/Hasidism_Confronts_Modernity_Spiritual_Societies_of_the_Piaseczner_Rebbe, last consulted March 1, 2018; Daniel Reiser, "Historicism and/or Phenomenology in the Study of Jewish Mysticism: Imagery Techniques in the Teachings of Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira as a Case Study," *Modern Judaism* 36, no. 1 (2016): 1–16. On other rebbes' attempts to organize the youth, see Herman, "Ha-yahas livnei ha-no'ar," 179–833.

[108]On new pedagogical techniques, see Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira, *A Student's Obligation: Advice from the Rebbe of the Warsaw Ghetto*, trans. Micha Odenheimer (Northvale,

Gendered educational proscriptions began to soften as well. The Bes Yaakov school system for Orthodox girls, founded in order to "rescue for Judaism the new generation" of women, offered full-day and supplementary schools, secular instruction, teachers' seminaries, summer camps, and retreats and published its own journal. Rabbinic supporters of Bes Yaakov schools took great pains to demonstrate the halakhic permissibility of a traditionalist school system for girls, arguing that the mishnaic prohibition of female Torah study really applied only to the "oral" Torah (e.g., Talmud) and that educating future mothers was the only way to ensure that their sons would be raised to be learned and pious.[109]

Several flagship yeshivot began to incorporate secular subjects and vocational training into their curricula. Agudists touted their Mesivta Yeshivah as having "turned out a number of well trained Rabbis as well as laymen" while also requiring history, Polish language, geography, science, mathematics, art, music, and physical education.[110] Mizrahi leaders boasted that their Tachkemoni Seminary compared favorably with "any of the great Yeshivoth, while our secular program is receiving the official recognition of our government as equal to a *gymnasium*, and also stands under its supervision."[111] Admittedly,

NJ, 1991). On other innovations, see Stampfer, "Hasidic Yeshivas"; Shaul Stampfer, "Dormitory and Yeshiva in Eastern Europe," in *Families, Rabbis and Education*, 210–22, 263; Herman, "Ha-yahas livnei ha-no'ar," 187–88. W. M. Haffkine favored "some instruction in natural science" and felt that students "ought to be instructed in some handwork, as were our sages of old," but he refused to impose this on the yeshivot he aided. See Haffkine's Foundation for the Benefit of Yeshivoth," *Report of Activities 1930–1938* (Lausanne, 1938), quoted in Eck, "Educational Institutions," 22.

[109] Aharon Walkin, *Zikan Aharon* (New York, 1952), 183–86, responsum no. 66. See also Sarah Schenirer, "Mother of the Beth Jacob Schools," in Dawidowicz, *Golden Tradition*, 208; Yosef Fridenzon, "Bate ha-sefer le-banot 'Bet Ya'akov' be-Polin," in *Ha-hinukh veha-tarbut ha-'ivrit be-eropah ben shete milḥamot ha-'olam*, ed. Zevi Scharfstein (New York, 1957), 61–82; Naomi Seidman, *Sarah Schenirer and the Bais Yaakov Movement: A Revolution in the Name of Tradition* (Liverpool, 2018). American supporters argued that Bes Yaakov schools would prevent prostitution among poor Jewish young women. See "Bureau of Jewish Social Research, Bajs Jakob, American Bajs Jakob Committee," March 19, 1929, Yeshiva University Archives, CRC Collection, box 215, folder 9. On Mizrahi-affiliated girls' schools, see Shnayer Z. Leiman, "Rabbi Yehiel Yaakov Weinberg: In Praise of Esther Rubinstein," *Tradition* 40, no. 3 (2007): 42–48. On Aguda youth groups, libraries, and cultural activities, see Bacon, *Politics of Tradition*, 128–30.

[110] Central Bureau of Agudas Israel, Poland, to M. Jung, Philadelphia, March 21, 192[3], JDC Archives, NY21–32, folder 354, item no. 2000672.

[111] H. Farbstein to Cyrus Adler, September 2, 1924, JDC Archives, NY21–32, folder 353, item no. 200728. The Tachkemoni Seminary talmudic department was headed by Rabbi Moses Soloveitchik until his departure for America, and its secular department was led by Professor Mayer Balaban. R. Soloveitchik resigned over purportedly lax requirements for rabbinic ordination. See Meiselman, *The Soloveitchik Heritage*, 232–35; Y. Meishal, "Bet ha-midrash

it is hard to tell how seriously certain yeshivah administrators treated secular instruction. In his private correspondence, the Gerer Rebbe reassured his scandalized colleagues in Hungary and elsewhere that the Mesivta Yeshivah merely incorporated such instruction for the purpose of state rabbinic exams and legal compliance.[112] A similar ambivalence permeates Agudists' accounts of their lobbying exploits, which, despite having failed to eliminate "non-essential" subjects like the arts and physical education, did minimize impingements on devotional studies by delaying secular studies until noon, compressing them into about two hours per day, and adding further hours of devotional study by cleverly labeling them "club activities."[113]

Still, one has to wonder why the Agudists tolerated secular instruction in yeshivot at all. There was little real compulsion since, as their Hungarian critics were quick to point out, many other Polish yeshivot evaded state requirements, while training for state rabbinical exams could be done privately. Nor was the promise of government subsidies an acceptable rationale, at least not at the yeshivah level.[114] Daily secular instruction meant exposure not only to nonreligious subject matter but also to inspiring non-Jewish teachers ("better a real Goy" for a secular teacher than a "Jewish heretic," the memoirist Zonszain explains ironically, conjuring scenes of Polish poets with ponytails declaiming verse before pious Mesivta youths).[115] More

le-rabanim tahkemoni be-varsheh," in Mirsky, *Mosdot torah*, 600–602. For individual examples, see Kijek, *Dzieci modernizmu*, 159–63.

[112]Gerer Rebbe to R. Asher Lemil Shpitzer of Kirkendorf, 1922, in Alter, *Osef mikhtavim*, 34. Concerning the Mesivta and Bes Yaakov schools, see also Hayyim Eleazar Shapira to his followers, 1920, in Goldstein, *Tikkun olam*, no. 6, p. 8; "Ha-vikuah ha-gadol," n.d., in Goldstein, *Tikkun olam*, no. 11, p. 14; Hayyim Eleazar Shapira to Tal Talpiyot, 1922, in Goldstein, *Tikkun olam*, no. 24, p. 28; decisions of the rabbinic conference, June 3, 1922, in Goldstein, *Tikkun olam*, no. 26, pp. 31–41; "Pahad Ones Limudei Hol," n.d., in Goldstein, *Tikkun olam*, no. 37, p. 47; Schneersohn [?] to Rozen, January 1924, in Goldstein, *Tikkun olam*, no. 69, p. 89; Shimon Yisrael Posen to *Yidishe Tzeitung*, 1936, in Goldstein, *Tikkun olam*, no. 73, p. 94; missive from Simha Natan Grinborg, 1936, in Goldstein, *Tikkun olam*, no. 81, pp. 107–10; Shalom Mordecai Hakohen, "Al derekh ha-gimnaziyum ha-ivri," n.d., in Goldstein, *Tikkun olam*, no. 83, p. 11; Yissachar Dov of Belz, "Azhara kefulah u-mikhpelet," n.d., in Goldstein, *Tikkun olam*, no. 86, p. 114; Hayyim Eleazar Shapira to Avraham Hayim David Schreiber, 1931, in Goldstein, *Tikkun olam*, no. 95, pp. 142–48; Shelomo Tzvi Hakohen Strasser to Hayyim Eleazar Shapira, 1935, in Goldstein, *Tikkun olam*, no. 103, pp. 163–64.

[113]Seidman, *Dos yidishe religieze shulvezen*, 16–17, 22–23; Avraham Zemba, "Mesivtah be-varsheh," in Mirsky, *Mosdot torah*, 364–80, esp. 375; Zonszain, *Yidish-varshe*, 122–24. See also Bacon, *Politics of Tradition*, 142–54.

[114]"Ha-vikuah ha-gadol," n.d., in Goldstein, *Tikkun olam*, no. 11, p. 14; Shapira to Schreiber, 1931, in Goldstein, *Tikkun olam*, no. 95, pp. 140–48.

[115]Zonszain, *Yidish-varshe*, 122–24. The Munkaczer Rebbe, R. Hayyim Eleazar Shapira, complained that a Horev textbook for nine-year-olds contained "songs and poetry" about the Land of Israel that resembled "all the Zionist poetry"; Shapira to Avraham Hayim David Schreiber, 1931, in Goldstein, *Tikkun olam*, no. 85, pt. 4, p. 145.

threateningly still, Zonszain recalls, a Jewish girls' *gymnasium* composed of "Liliths with great cohorts of demons disguised as girls with round hats and green and red numbers on their sleeves" shared the yeshivah's courtyard. Of course, he reassures us with a wink, Mesivta students overcame all temptation by studying Torah "for its own sake and for the sake of the *shtetl*, the small Jewish *shtetl*, where each would serve as Rabbi."[116] But it does begin to seem as if Agudists were intentionally providing controlled exposure to worldliness.

Conclusion

On Sabbaths in Warsaw's Jewish Quarter during the immediate aftermath of the 1905 Revolution, tram stops were filled, certain cafés remained open, and Jews were even seen brazenly smoking out in the open. Smoldering political cells appeared on every street, while a "cult of the printed word" took hold thanks to the newly legalized, mainly secularist Jewish press, according to the memoirist Bernard Singer.[117] But after two years, one saw a fairly widespread "return to the old customs."[118] During the First World War, according to German and Austrian Jewish observers, most of Warsaw's Jews were "God-fearers" (*haredim*)—a term that was more capacious at the time—and "Orthodox" representation approached 75–80 percent of Polish Jewry.[119]

Although similar estimates are lacking for the late 1930s, Jewish secularism had undoubtedly made considerable inroads by then, particularly in larger urban centers. It is suggestive, for example, that when discriminatory legislation rendered kosher meat prohibitively expensive the result was widespread dietary laxity among Warsaw Jews, who preferred not to ask too many questions of their butchers.[120] But secularism never became

[116]Zonszain, *Yidish-varshe*, 124.

[117]Bernard Singer, *Moje Nalewki* (Warsaw, 1959), 88, 152. See also Scott Ury, *Banners and Barricades: The Revolution of 1905 and the Transformation of Warsaw Jewry* (Stanford, CA, 2012); Ury, "In Kotik's Corner: Urban Culture, Bourgeois Politics and the Struggle for Jewish Civility in Turn of the Century Eastern Europe," in Dynner and Guesnet, *Warsaw: The Jewish Metropolis*, 206–27.

[118]Singer, *Moje Nalewki*, 103–5.

[119]P. Roth estimates 80 percent (*Die politische Entwicklung in Kongresspolen wahrend der deutschen Okkupation* [Leipzig, 1919], 145), while Nathan Birnbaum estimates 75 percent (*Gottes Volk* [Vienna, 1918], 22); both cited in Mordechai Breuer, "Rabanim-doktorim bepolin-lita biymei ha-kibush ha-germani (1914–1918)," 125, 129. A similar claim was made by Premier Ignacy Paderewski; see Bacon, *Politics of Tradition*, 248.

[120]See Asaf Kaniel, "Ben hilonim, mesoratiyim ve-ortodoksim: Sh'mirat mitzvot bere'i ha-hitmodedut im 'Gezeyrat Hakashrut'; 1937–1939," *Gal Ed* 22 (2010): 75–106. The proportion of traditionalists in the city of Radom, which was only 37.5 percent Jewish, was allegedly

hegemonic in interwar Poland. Traditionalist institutions continued to flourish in small towns and city enclaves, thanks in great part to the initiatives described here: the neutralization of public schooling effects, the absorption of pious refugees, persistent appeals for American Jewish financial support, and a willingness to experiment with defensive modes of acculturation. This extraordinary adaptability may well have enabled a large traditionalist plurality to endure had events taken a less catastrophic turn, particularly if that community were to employ the assertive reproductive strategies witnessed in Ultra-Orthodox communities today.

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less than a third in the 1930s. Yet in nearby Przytyk, a small town that was 80–90 percent Jewish, "most of the Jews" were "very Orthodox." See Ben-Zion Gold, *The Life of Jews in Poland before the Holocaust: A Memoir* (Lincoln, NE, 2007), 1; Chancha Friedman-Honig, "Religious Values in the Life of the Jews of Przytyk," in *Sefer Przytyk*, ed. David Shtokfish (Tel Aviv, 1973), 35. Based on the data and testimonies I have seen, I would estimate the traditionalist Jewish population in Poland at around 45–50 percent on the eve of the Holocaust, with the heaviest concentration in small to mid-sized towns.