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Haskalah, Secular Studies and the Close of the Yeshiva in Volozhin in 1892

In May, 1988, Mesorah Publications, Ltd. printed a book as part of its ArtScroll History Series, edited by Rabbis Nosson Scherman and Meir Zlotowitz, entitled *My Uncle the Netziv*. This volume is an English rendition by Moshe Dombey of parts of *Mekor Barukh* by Rabbi Barukh Halevi Epstein, well known as the author of the *Torah Temimah* commentary on the Torah, which contains a great deal of information about the renowned nineteenth-century rabbinic scholar and *rosh yeshiva*, Rabbi Naftali Zevi Yehudah Berlin (Neziv).

This new English version of R. Epstein's work was published with an approbation by Rabbi Nachman Bulman of Kiryat Nachliel in Israel who wrote:

An English rendition of Rav Boruch Epstein's *Mekor Boruch* is long overdue. . . .

The experience of Torah life derives first and foremost from Torah learning. But the impact of Torah learning is immeasurably richer when the lives of living *Sifrei Torah*, of Torah Sages, become educative models for our people. Further, such lives are vital links in the chain of Jewish historical knowledge.

Mekor Boruch is a matchless compendium of biography, memoirs and lore. It was authored by a celebrated son of the greatest yeshiva in modern time—Volozhin. . . . In it, the quality of life and the love of Torah and Israel of Lithuanian Jewry come alive. A glowing portrayal of Volozhin and its last central figure, the venerable Netziv, is a major part of the work.

Rabbi Moshe Dombey merits unstinting commendation for his adaptation of *Mekor Boruch* for an English reading public, which could find much edification from reading the fruit of his efforts.

Soon after its publication, the book was mailed by the Lakewood Cheder School in Lakewood, New Jersey, to a number of potential donors as part of a fund-raising effort by that institution, which had in the past also included other books belonging to the ArtScroll History Series. However, a few months later, the administration of the school had a change of heart and in a letter dated July 7, 1988, its Executive Director, Rabbi Baruch Manes, wrote the following to all those who had originally received the book:

Dear Friend:

The Lakewood Cheder School takes pride in the high standard of education it affords its students. In keeping with this tradition the Cheder has made available to its many friends and supporters, books of interest on a broad range of Jewish subjects, books that serve to promote the lofty ideals of the great Torah luminaries of past generations. Your generous support, in turn, has made it possible for us not only to continue sending such books, but to continue the vital work of providing a level of Chinuch in keeping with the standards Klal Yisroel expects from the children of the Beth Medrash Govoha community. We remain grateful for your help and look forward to your support in the future.

Regretfully, the book you recently received, entitled "My Uncle the Netziv," does not meet these standards. It does not correctly portray the Netziv, his hashkofos, kedusha, and yiras shamayim as related to us by his revered talmidim, the ones who knew him best.

As an example of the *true* Netziv, his son HaGaon Harav Chaim Berlin zt"l quotes his father regarding his decision to close the doors of the famed Volozhiner Yeshiva rather than introducing secular studies into its program:

Do not be anguished that this matter brings about my departure from this world . . . for it is well worth the sacrifice of my life.

Such a statement from the heart illustrates the depth of the Netziv's saintliness, and his uncompromising principles regarding the primacy of Torah, whatever sacrifices it might entail.

True appreciation of the Netziv can only be attained from the study of his monumental writings on all areas of Torah.

Upon consultation with Gedolei Torah, we recommend that the book not be read. If you wish, the Cheder will reimburse you for any donation you may have sent.

Mesorah Publications joins us in sincerely apologizing for this error. We assure you that בעודיִית in the future you may continue to look to the Cheder for books of exceptional quality and educational value, and we look forward to earning your continued confidence and support.

The anonymous “Gedolei Torah” who were consulted clearly did not share Rabbi Bulman’s positive assessment of the content and value of this work and “recommended” that it be recalled.

What was it in this work by the author of the *Torah Temimah* that was found to be so objectionable? Which aspects of it do not “correctly portray the . . . hashkofos, kedusha, and yiras shamayim” of the Neziv to the extent that it was deemed inappropriate to be read? Was it his description of “my uncle’s habit of reading the weekly newspapers even on Shabbat and discussing current events at the Shabbat table?”¹ Was it his noting that the Neziv had secular books in his library?² Some have suggested that the opposition to the work was based on R. Epstein’s statement in the name of his uncle that had the Rambam studied Torah with a group of scholars, instead of by himself, he would have avoided any number of errors he made in the *Mishneh Torah*.³ Perhaps it was this acknowledgement that the Rambam simply erred in his *pesak halakhah* that made some people uncomfortable. In all probability, as the context of the Lakewood Cheder School letter indicates, their reconsideration was related to Rabbi Epstein’s assertion that at one point the Neziv *did* permit secular studies in Volozhin and allowed the yeshiva to be closed only in 1892 when submitting to the escalating demands of the Russian authorities would have resulted in changing its entire character.⁴ This apparently ran contrary to the tradition accepted by the Gedolei Torah referred to in the letter that the Neziv had made “his decision to close the doors of the famed Volozhiner Yeshiva rather than introducing secular studies into its program.”⁵

Before proceeding to determine the historical facts, it is important to trace the history of this tradition. There seem to be two sources on which it is based. The first, as mentioned in the Lakewood Cheder letter, is a statement by the Neziv’s eldest son, R. Hayyim Berlin. As part of his own will (*zava’ah*), R. Hayyim wrote:

ציוה עלי אבא הגאון וצלה”ה הכ”מ (הנצי”ב) קודם פטירתו, על דבר שמסר נפשו על ענין ישיבה דוואלוזין, שלא להכניס לתוכה שום לימוד חול, ולסיבה זו נסגרה הישיבה, ומה נחלה בחליו אשר לא עמד ממנו, וציוה עלי באזהרה שלא להסכים לענין זה בשום אופן בלא שום הוראת היתר בעולם, ואמר שהקדוש ברוך הוא רמו כל זה בתורה שנאמר בה “להבדיל בין הקודש ובין החול,” היינו שכל עניני חול המתערבים בקודש בלא הבדל, לא די שאין עניני למודי חול מקבלים קדושה אלא אף זו שעניני למודי קודש מתקלקלים מהם, על כן לא ירע לך בני מזה שהענין הזה גרם לי לצאת מן העולם ולסגור את הישיבה, כי כדאי הוא הענין הגדול הזה למסור נפשו עליו. כל זה דיבר אלי ביום ג’ כ”ו מנחם אב תרנ”ג, בוורשא.⁶

The following night, at 4 a.m. Thursday morning, 28 Av 5653 (= August 10, 1893), the Neziv died.

This tradition about the reason for Volozhin's closing is also attributed to the Ḥafez Ḥayyim. He is alleged to have told his students that a gathering of rabbis was called to determine the fate of the yeshiva after the Russian government insisted on it setting aside two hours every day for secular studies, primarily the study of Russian language and literature. While most of those present felt that these studies should be reluctantly allowed under the circumstances, R. Yosef Dov Halevi Soloveitchik insisted that better the yeshiva be closed than to allow it to continue in this new fashion. The Ḥafez Ḥayyim reported that R. Soloveitchik said:

אמנם מחוייבים אנו להחזיק במעוז התורה, להעמיד תלמידים ולמסור התורה לדור יבוא, אבל רק על-פי הדרך שהתוו לנו אבותינו מאורי הדורות, ואילו בדרכים ובאופנים חדשים אין האחריות מוטלת עלינו. יבוא נותן התורה ויעשה את שלו-ואנו את נפשנו הצלנו.

Concluded the Ḥafez Ḥayyim:

בוא וראה עד היכן הגיעה דעת תורה של גאוני הדור העבר. לוא הסכימו אז להנהיג לימודי חול בישיבת וואלוז'ין, היתה חס־ושלום התורה משתכחת מדורנו, כי הלא כך דרכו של יצר־הרע, פותח בשתי שעות ביום בלימודי חול, עד אשר משאיר לבסוף רק שתי שעות ביום ללימודי קודש. . . אבל מכיון שהחליטו לעמוד כעמוד ברזל, ולא להתפשר כלל, אז מצאה לה התורה נתיבים ושבילים במקומות אחרים, ונפתחו ישיבות בכמה מערי ליטא ופולין, בלא לימודי חול, ונעשו לבסוף מבצרי התורה בדורנו. כי כן דרך המעיין, אם אתה סותמו מכאן, פורץ לו דרך ממקום אחר ומפכה את מימיו דרך שם, ובכגון זה אמרו חז"ל (שבת ע"ט) אשר שברת, יישר כחך ששברת, וביטולה זהו קיומה.⁷

The letter signed by the Executive Director of the Lakewood Cheder School raises a number of important and interesting questions. Firstly, it clearly assumes that Rabbi Barukh Halevi Epstein is not to be considered as one of the Neẓiv's "revered talmidim . . . who knew him best." This is curious in light of R. Epstein's very close familial and personal ties to the Neẓiv. The Neẓiv was his mother's brother (hence, "my uncle") and, after the death of the Neẓiv's first wife in 1871, also became his brother-in-law when he (i.e., the Neẓiv) married his own niece and Rabbi Epstein's sister, Batya Miriam (Mirel).⁸ There is even a tradition, reported in the names of Rabbi Epstein and Batya Miriam themselves, that Rabbi Epstein was responsible for this *shiddukh*, urging his father, the famed Rabbi Yeḥiel Mikhel Epstein, the author of the *Arukh ha-Shulḥan*, to consider it in spite of the fact that there was a thirty-year age difference between the two parties.⁹

Furthermore, during the years he spent as a student in Volozhin (1873–1878), Rabbi Epstein was personally very close to the Neẓiv. At the very beginning of his *Mekor Barukh* he wrote:

ותחת צלו של דודי זה סוככתי, את נפשו הכרתי ודרכיו למדתי . . . וזכיתי לראות את השמש בגבורתה ולהתחמם לנגה ברק יפעתה; ומעל שלחנו הטחור . . . כמעט יום יום זכיתי ללקט פרוזי פרפראות ופרי מגדים. . .¹⁰

He ate with the Neẓiv in his home during the week and on Shabbat and Yom Tov,¹¹ spent time in his study in the afternoons observing him answer letters and receive visitors¹² and, on occasion, travelled alone together with him.¹³ Even after leaving the yeshiva, R. Epstein continued his close association with the Neẓiv, returning to visit him in Volozhin and, less than a year after the yeshiva was closed in 1892, hosted the Neẓiv at his home in Pinsk.¹⁴ Later on, R. Epstein acknowledged his great debt to the Neẓiv for all he had done for him:

ויהא חלקו ומנוחתו בגן עדן מקומו כי זכני ואלפני ללכת בדרך ישרה ורצויה זאת, ובתכונתה ובמדתה אאחזו ואוציא ואכונן כל עניני בחיים בחפצי שמים ובדברי חול, בכתיבי ובספרי, ותפארתם עלי.¹⁵

Given the obvious closeness between R. Epstein and the Neẓiv, one wonders which of his other “revered talmidim” would be in a *better* position to faithfully and accurately portray the lifestyle and values of this great teacher. If Rabbi Epstein did not “know him best,” who knew him better? Even with all of the hesitations that are obviously appropriate in attempting to utilize personal reminiscences for determining historical fact, what reason is there to question the essence of Rabbi Epstein’s presentation and to assume that “it does not correctly portray the Neẓiv?”¹⁶

Secondly, and more importantly, what about the basic issue itself? What are the facts about the closing of the Volozhin yeshiva as evident in all of the available literature on the subject? Which tradition is historically accurate: that of Rabbi Epstein or that of Rabbi Ḥayyim Berlin and the Ḥafeẓ Ḥayyim? Indeed, must they be considered contradictory? In a word, is Rabbi Epstein’s presentation factually correct or is it indeed a distortion of “the *true* Neẓiv” as the Lakewood Cheder letter insists?

The Volozhin yeshiva was founded by R. Ḥayyim of Volozhin (1749–1821) in 1802–03.¹⁷ He began with a small number of students but, under his leadership, the number increased until it reached over a hundred. R. Yosef of Krynki (Krinek) was one of R. Ḥayyim’s earliest students and, in a letter written many years later to raise funds for the yeshiva, he observed that already during the first year after its founding:

ראיתי שהרבה סוחרים הקיפו את דרכם להיות בוולוז'ין לראות מהו הענין ישיבה ומה עושים שמה וכראותם שכמה מנינים מופלגיתורה יושבים ולומדים כל היום וכל הלילה בשקידה נפלאה, נשתוממו והתפלאו מאד על זה.

I saw that many merchants would go out of their way to be in Volozhin to see what a yeshiva is all about and what one does there. And when they

saw that several *minyanim* of great Torah scholars were sitting and learning all day and all night with great assiduousness, they wondered and marvelled at this very much.¹⁸

Lest one attribute this encomium either to the exaggerations of a fundraiser or to a later retrospective idealization (R. Yosef himself noted in the letter that he wrote it some sixty-three years after the yeshiva was founded), other evidence as to R. Ḥayyim's early success is forthcoming as well. In a letter of support dated 15 Iyyar 5664 (= Spring, 1804), leaders of the Vilna community, including a son of the Gaon of Vilna, wrote:

ראינו כי רבים וכן שלמים נתקבצו אל מלאכת הקדש, ללמוד תורה יומם ולילה ולחסות בצל אילנא רבא ה"ה הרב הגאון . . . מוהר"ר חיים נ"ו אב"ד דק"ק וואלאוין י"צ"י.¹⁹

The yeshiva achieved great fame throughout Russia and Lithuania and its students became known for their high level of Torah learning and scholarship. Among those who became leaders of nineteenth-century East European Jewry were R. Ya'akov of Karlin, the author of the *Mishkenot Ya'akov*; R. David Tevele, the author of the *Naḥlat David* and R. Yosef Zundel Salant.²⁰ After R. Ḥayyim died, R. David Tevele was able to eulogize him by asserting that:

הדבר ידוע ומפורס' כי הפליג בזה למאוד להעמיד תלמידים למאות ולאלפים אשר לא זכו אל זה במקומינו בכמה דורות שלפנינו עד שראוי לומר על רבינו ברם זכור לטוב שאלמלא הוא נשתכחה תורה מישראל.²¹

Upon the death of R. Ḥayyim in 1821, the leadership of the yeshiva passed to his eldest son R. Yiḏḥak (1780–1849), known affectionately as R. Izeleh. R. Izeleh related how he was commanded by his father on the day he died to devote himself fully to the strengthening of the yeshiva.²² Although the total number of its students decreased somewhat by the end of his tenure, he faithfully followed in his famous father's footsteps and led the yeshiva with dignity and devotion. Among his students were R. Shmuel Salant; his own son-in-law, R. Naftali Zevi Yehudah Berlin (*Neziv*); R. Yosef Dov Halevi Soloveitchik, author of the *Bet ha-Levi*; R. Eliyahu Ḥayyim Meisel, rabbi of Lodz and two young scholars who later became well known Zionist leaders, R. Shmuel Mohliver and R. Mordecai Eliasberg.²³

R. Izeleh was followed as *rosh yeshiva* by his eldest son-in-law, R. Eliezer Yiḏḥak (1809–1853), after his death in 1849²⁴ and upon the latter's death in 1853, the mantle of leadership passed to his younger son-in-law, the *Neziv*, who bore it with great devotion and distinction for almost four decades. It was under his distinguished leadership that the yeshiva in Volozhin came into its own as the premier institution of Torah learning in the world in the nineteenth century.

The Neziv was born in the city of Mir in 1817. He came to Volozhin at the age of eleven and two years later married Reyna Batya, the second daughter of R. Izeleh. He began delivering shiurim in the yeshiva while his father-in-law was still alive and, after his death, served as assistant to his brother-in-law R. Eliezer Yizhak. During the years of his tenure as rosh yeshiva (1853–1892), the number of students grew to five hundred, according to some accounts. They included R. Avraham Yizhak ha-Kohen Kook, later the first Chief Rabbi of Palestine; R. Moshe Mordekhai Epstein, author of the *Levush Mordekhai* and *rosh yeshiva* of the Slabodka yeshiva; R. Isser Zalman Melzer, author of the *Even ha-Azel* commentary on the Rambam's *Mishneh Torah* and head of Yeshivat Ez Hayyim in Jerusalem; R. Avraham Dov Ber Shapiro, the last rabbi of Kovno and author of the *Devar Avraham*; R. Shimon Shkop, author of the *Sha'arei Yosher*; R. Menahem Krakowsky, author of the *'Avodat ha-Melekh* on the *Mishneh Torah*; and R. Shlomoh Polachek, the Iluy of Meitshet. The influence of the yeshiva and its thousands of students over the years was great and was felt throughout Europe and even in America.²⁵

The beginning of the Neziv's tenure as *rosh yeshiva* of Volozhin coincided with the beginning of the spread of Haskalah in Russia. Although it has been suggested that the first inklings of the transition towards Haskalah there can be dated back to the Gaon of Vilna and some of his contemporaries,²⁶ it did not take root in that country until the second quarter of the nineteenth century. In 1828, Yizhak Ber Levinsohn published his *Teudah bi-Yisra'el* in which he utilized traditional Jewish sources to forcefully argue for the legitimacy and even necessity of secular studies. The appearance of this book, coupled with the knowledge that its author was awarded a 1,000 ruble grant from the government for it, gave strength to those few maskilim who had been living in Russia during that time and emboldened them to take a more aggressive and public role in support of their objectives. They began to call publicly for a "normalization" of Jewish economic activity as well as the establishment of a new educational system which would provide students on the elementary and secondary school levels with a knowledge of both Judaism and secular studies, including some kind of professional training as well. By 1848, eight such enlightenment schools were founded and, by the middle of the century, maskilim in various cities in Russia had coalesced into a well organized active movement.

While even during this period there were some maskilim who went beyond a desire for moderate changes in the educational and social structures of the community and called for more radical steps which included rejecting many aspects of rabbinic tradition, this tendency

towards a more militant Haskalah increased with the ascension of Alexander II to the throne of Russia in 1855. Attempts by maskilim to fuse faith with enlightenment became fewer as Haskalah more and more led to a complete break with traditional society. The late 1850's and early 1860's witnessed a veritable explosion of Haskalah literature in Hebrew, Russian and Yiddish, including journals, periodicals, books, poems, plays, pamphlets, novels and scholarly works of different kinds. In December 1863, the Society for the Promotion of Culture Among the Jews of Russia (*Hevrat Mefize'i ha-Haskalah*) was founded in St. Petersburg under the aegis of the richest Jewish families in that city. For over five decades, this group was involved in publishing and disseminating Haskalah literature in various languages and in supporting young students seeking Russian acculturation. A new modern Hebrew literature was created and there was a strong push for reforms in religious life and practice as well. The relatively liberal policies of Alexander II and a progressively better economic situation brought about an influx of Jewish students into Russian gymnasia and universities which, in turn, created a new Jewish intelligensia steeped in Russian culture to the exclusion of Jewish tradition.

Although frustrated by the lack of progress in the area of political and civic emancipation and set back by the reaction and repression which characterized Russian policy vis-a-vis the Jews in the wake of Alexander II's assassination in 1881 and the pogroms that followed, Haskalah continued to develop, either in the direction of joining ranks with the Russian revolutionary movements and championing full integration into Russian society or, on the contrary, in the direction of continuing to maintain ties with the traditional society and, for some, strengthening Jewish nationalism. Men like Avraham Mapu (1808–1867), Avraham Ber Gottlober (1811–1899), Shmuel Yosef Fuenn (1818–1890), Kalman Schulman (1819–1899), Leo Pinsker (1821–1891), Yehudah Leib Gordon (1830–1892), Perez Smolenskin (1842–1885), Moshe Leib Lilienblum (1843–1910), Asher Ginsberg (Ahad Ha'am, 1856–1927), and Michah Yosef Berdyczewski (1865–1921) played major roles in this powerful movement and, although espousing very different ideologies and emphases, represented the strength of the Russian Haskalah until the end of the century.²⁷

Both proponents and opponents of Haskalah recognized early on that none of its goals could be achieved without the direct support of the Russian government. Maskilim reasoned correctly, much to the chagrin of their opponents, that their goal of enlightening what they considered to be their backward and benighted coreligionists would strike a receptive chord with a government interested in the modernization and

“russification” of its inhabitants. This identity of interests gave proponents of Haskalah much power and prestige throughout the 1800’s.

Indeed, official Russian interest in Jewish affairs began very early in the century. In 1804, the government promulgated a comprehensive series of laws including permitting Jewish students to study at Russian schools on all levels while retaining their Jewish identity; allowing the Jewish community to establish its own schools, at its own expense, provided that they offer instruction in either Russian, Polish or German; and requiring that all lay or rabbinic leaders appointed from 1812 and on be able to read and write one of these languages.²⁸ This was followed by a Statute on the Jews in 1835 which restated most of the 1804 legislation with some additions and innovations.²⁹

In the course of the first half of the century, the Russian authorities abolished the *kahal* which had been the executive agency in charge of the taxing, policing and administering of the community (1844);³⁰ established the position of a “*rav mi-ta’am*” who was a government official responsible to the authorities for the technical administrative affairs of the community and who served alongside the traditional *rav* who continued to meet the spiritual and ritual needs of his flock;³¹ regulated the growth of *hedarim* and required that *melamdim* have some knowledge of secular subjects (1844); created a network of state-sponsored Jewish elementary schools and founded two rabbinical seminaries (1847). These last two educational initiatives were most important to the maskilim for they were exactly in accordance with their own program and they gained a great deal of strength and support from these government efforts.

In 1840, Sergius S. Uvarov, Russia’s Minister of National Enlightenment, set out to initiate a new country-wide educational system for the Jews. Aware of the opposition he was likely to arouse in the community, he instructed Dr. Max Lilienthal, then head of a German-style Jewish school in Riga, to travel across Russia seeking support for his effort. In spite of the difficulties he encountered, which will be discussed below, his mission was ultimately successful. The first such school was founded in 1847, and by 1855 close to one hundred existed throughout the Pale of Settlement. These schools were staffed by prominent maskilim, and their graduates were to become the leaders of Russian Haskalah in the second half of the century.³²

A major target of criticism of both the maskilim as well as the Russian government was the yeshiva. In their shared desire to modernize Jewish education and to incorporate secular studies into the curriculum of Jewish schools, both realized that the *heder* and even more so the yeshiva represented a formidable barrier to achieving their goal. As long as those bastions of traditional education continued to flourish with their vir-

tually exclusive emphasis on the Talmud to the total exclusion of any kind of secular study, both Jew and non-Jew interested in enlightening the Jewish population in Russia knew their efforts could not be possibly be successful. In some cases, maskilim were totally opposed to the notion of a yeshiva and often exaggerated its problems as part of their effort to abolish them entirely; other, more moderate, maskilim appreciated the general importance of the yeshiva for Jewish life but argued in favor of expanding its curriculum to include some secular studies as well. And if this negative assessment was true of all *hadarim* and yeshivot, how much more so was it true of the yeshiva in Volozhin, the largest and most influential of them all. If all yeshivot aroused the ire of the Russian government and their Jewish cohorts, a special criticism and even venom was reserved for Volozhin.

Haskalah literature, in its various genres, consistently attacked the institution of the yeshiva throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. Claiming that enlightenment would naturally lead to emancipation, the founders of modern Hebrew literature mercilessly and repeatedly castigated what they considered to be the rigid orthodoxy represented by the yeshiva and everything for which it stood. Highlighting the shortcomings of the traditional yeshiva education was a common motif in the prose and poetry of men like Perez Smolenskin (“*ha-To’eh bi-Darkei ha-Hayyim*”), Reuven Asher Braudes (“*ha-Dat ve-ha-Hayyim*” Vol. II), Yehudah Leib Gordon, Moshe Leib Lilienblum, Shalom Yaakov Abramowitch (Mendele Mokher Sforim) and others. Every aspect of yeshiva life and its values was grist for the mill of their sharp criticism—its exclusive emphasis on Talmud study, its conceptual methodology (they strongly opposed *pilpul*), its seeming lack of pedagogical sophistication (all students attended the same shiur, without regard for their different levels of intelligence and expertise), and even the practical difficulties of daily living faced by the yeshiva *bakhur* (long hours, his estrangement from family, cramped living quarters, poverty, interpersonal tensions, etc.). Together with the criticism came concrete suggestions, e.g., studies should be geared to the age and intellectual level of the student; general studies featuring Russian language and literature, Hebrew language and grammar, and a practical trade should be included in the curriculum; teachers should be trained in principles of pedagogy, and more.³³

This pejorative view of the yeshiva described above is generally forthcoming in novels and poetry which describe the yeshiva in general, without identifying any specific institution. While some of it was, in all likelihood, levelled against Volozhin as well, the largest and most influential of all the yeshivot, it is not singled out by name as the specific object of criticism. This is not so in the case of periodicals and newspapers published by maskilim in the last third of the nineteenth century where

the yeshiva of Volozhin, in particular, is explicitly identified as the object of their displeasure. This genre of Haskalah literature is replete with public attacks—some militant and some moderate—against the Neẓiv and his yeshiva.

One of the more popular publicistic publications of the Haskalah in Hebrew was *ha-Shaḥar*. Founded by Perez Smolenskin in 1868, it was devoted to spreading Haskalah in Russia by attacking both the Orthodox traditionalists to its right and the assimilationists and religious reformers to its left.³⁴ In its January 1876 issue, Smolenskin published an article about Volozhin by Avraham Zukerman, entitled “*Androlomusya*.” Already the title indicated the orientation of its author. An asterisk after the word refers the reader to a note at the bottom of the page which defines it as a kind of contagious disease. The article was written with particular disrespect for the Neẓiv. Under the leadership of R. Ḥayyim and R. Yizḥak, wrote the author, the yeshiva students were allowed to pursue extra-Talmudic knowledge. Now, however, under the present rosh yeshiva (the Neẓiv) whom he does not mention by name, “strong-armed guardians” have been appointed to carefully monitor the students’ behavior and “to suddenly fall upon yeshiva students” if there is even only a suspicion that they are involved in secular studies. He actually went as far as to parallel these sudden nocturnal searches, which he described as wreaking havoc in the rooms of the yeshiva *bakhurim*, to the frightening spectacle of government authorities barging into Jewish homes in the middle of the night to snatch children for the Czar’s army! This forced conscription of the Jews by these *khappers* (from the Yiddish word, to catch) continued to evoke horror and outrage in the Jewish community even though it was no longer taking place and strikingly indicated the aversion that the author of this article must have had for the yeshiva. He went on to describe the scene where the unfortunate student caught with the objectionable material was expelled from the institution, with the *rosh yeshiva* sitting on his chair and conducting the proceedings with haughtiness, “like the pope.”³⁵

A few months later another article appeared in two installments in *ha-Shaḥar*. Here too the author severely castigated the Neẓiv, who is again not mentioned by name, for recently instituting regular organized searches of his students’ rooms—like a dog searches for food—to see if they were hiding what he considered to be unacceptable secular literature. But in addition to attacking what he characterized as the Neẓiv’s narrowmindedness, he also even went so far as to accuse him of illegally appropriating the yeshiva’s money for his own personal use!³⁶

A much less extreme position is found in *ha-Meliz*, another Haskalah journal. Founded in Odessa in 1860 by Alexander Zederbaum (1816–1893), it was the first Hebrew newspaper in Russia. It too was devoted to the dissemination of Haskalah but in a more moderate manner, arguing

also for the continuation of traditional religious values.³⁷ Zederbaum consistently expressed a great deal of respect for the *Neziv* but repeatedly wondered why he refused to include even a minimal amount of secular studies in Volozhin's curriculum. He devoted his lead editorial in the July 15, 1879 issue to expressing outrage against those former students of the yeshiva who had recently tried to frame the *Neziv* by forging a document in his handwriting which showed him to be disloyal to the Russian government. Nevertheless he concluded:

בנוגע להשיבה עצתנו אמונה להרב הגאון הג', אשר נוקרהו מאד מאו ידענוהו פנים על פנים, כי ישית לבו לתקן בו את הדרוש לחפץ הזמן ועפ"י דתי המלכות, ואו יחדלו המתאוננים מר ממילא והשיבה תעלה מעלה מעלה והרביץ תורה ומוסר ור"א בישראל וממנו יצאו רבנים הגונים, מופלגי תורה ויודעים להלך נגד החיים, כחפץ כל דובר עמו ומוקיר תורת מורשה.³⁸

About a month later, Zederbaum published a letter he received from Moshe Leib Lilienblum which claimed that the *Neziv* brought this action upon himself by personally slapping two students as a punishment for various infractions, one for showing disrespect and the other for reading secular literature:

וממילא מובן שבמקום שנהגת שטות ואינקוויזיציא יחד בזמן הזה אין לקוות על דרכי שלום, אם גם יהיה השוטר ואינקוויזיטאר בעצמו גדול בתורה... וגם לבר זה יודע אני איזה מעשי אינקוויזיציא בוואלאזין.

Zederbaum added an editor's note in which he said first that he printed this letter to publicly indicate that he did not favor such behavior. He then wrote that if, in fact, this report is true, the *Neziv* made a mistake and should placate those whom he wronged; if it is false, he has an obligation to set the record straight by publicly denying it. Nevertheless, he concluded, even if it were true, it was inexcusable for the students to act the way they did.³⁹

Zederbaum turned his attention to Volozhin once again a year and a half later. In a lead editorial in the December 21, 1880 issue, he acknowledged receiving a letter from the *Neziv* informing him that the Russian government officially recognized the yeshiva as authorized to train rabbis. After hailing this news as a great achievement, he called for expanding the yeshiva's curriculum to include those subjects whose knowledge would make these rabbis more effective in serving their communities. Although every minute is precious and it would pain the *rashei yeshiva* to officially allow anything that would take away time from Torah study, times have changed and such study is absolutely critical for the success of any rabbi. If the daily schedule could be properly structured, such studies would not be considered a waste of time and the student would be able to be successful in both his religious and secular pursuits. He concluded with the hope that his suggestion would

be accepted by the *rosh yeshiva* and his supporters, and expressed his confidence that the financial pressure facing the yeshiva would be alleviated as a result.⁴⁰ Some two months later, in the February 23, 1881 issue, A. Kupernik suggested a compromise: let the future rabbis at least be given the opportunity to study the Russian language one-two hours daily in order to be in a position to effectively communicate with the secular authorities and also not be held in disgrace by the youth of the communities within which they will minister.⁴¹

Four years later, in the February 13, 1885 issue, Zederbaum repeated his call for secular studies in Volozhin. The context there is interesting. On November 14, 1884, Zederbaum had printed a report attacking the *Neziv* for being so harsh and strict with his students that one of them actually attempted suicide. Although Zederbaum added an editorial note that he found it hard to believe this story, the *Neziv* was upset that it was printed and had one of his associates suggest to Zederbaum that, in the future, he check with him first before doing so. In his lead editorial in the February 13, 1885 issue, Zederbaum defended his action and even suggested that it was to the *Neziv*'s benefit that he publish such a report. Were he to refuse, he wrote, the scoundrel who fabricated it would send it to a much less sympathetic Russian journal which would not doubt its truth and which would even refuse to print a denial! Just as the *Neziv* considers himself expert in administering a yeshiva so do I, wrote Zederbaum, consider myself an authority when it comes to managing a journal. This led Zederbaum to note that while he does defer to the *Neziv* in matters of Talmud study, there is one matter with which he disagrees with him, i.e., the issue of secular studies in the yeshiva. This time he argued that the students in the yeshiva will, in any case, be exposed to secular literature and it is better that it take place under the supervision of the yeshiva than behind its back. Once again he argued that only a rabbi exposed to secular studies one-two hours a day (when he is resting his mind from the far more taxing and involved Talmudic studies) could be successful. Were he not to gain this knowledge while in the yeshiva, Zederbaum concluded, he could not be expected to do so afterwards when he would have to devote all his energies to earning a livelihood.⁴²

In spite of these respectful attacks on his leadership of the yeshiva that appeared periodically in the pages of *ha-Meliz*, the *Neziv* himself turned to that journal for various important announcements and requests. The February 16, 1885 issue contained a letter from him to American Jewry seeking their financial assistance in support of his yeshiva; the May 7, 1886 issue carried an announcement submitted by R. Shlomoh David Dinkin, the *mashgiah* of the yeshiva, that only young men who could study the Talmud and its major commentaries on their own would henceforth be admitted as students there; the June 4, 1886 issue contained a detailed list of the income and expenses of the yeshiva for the

period of Spring and Winter 1885 submitted by the Neziv; in the wake of the fire which ravaged more than half of Volozhin at the end of June 1886, the Neziv used the pages of *ha-Meliz* to publicly appeal for donations to rebuild his destroyed yeshiva and submitted a list of donors who responded to his request for the September 14, 1886 issue; in the issue of October 11, 1886, R. Dinkin announced the formation of the special *kollel* that was established in Volozhin with the financial support of the prominent Yisrael Brodsky of Kiev.⁴³

Michah Yosef Berdyczewski, at the time a Haskalah writer, made his first appearance in *ha-Meliz* in the beginning of 1888 with a series of articles about Volozhin. Born in 1865, he began to read Haskalah literature in his adolescence. After his first marriage (1883–1885) ended in divorce because his father-in-law could not tolerate his interest in modern Hebrew literature, he travelled to the yeshiva in Volozhin where he felt he could continue its study, albeit clandestinely. Although his involvement with Haskalah was a source of tension between him and the yeshiva's administration and he left the yeshiva only a little over a year later, he maintained warm feelings for the yeshiva and its leaders for many years.⁴⁴ By the time these articles appeared, Berdyczewski had already printed two articles in other journals about his former alma-mater. His very first publication, entitled "*Toledot Yeshivat 'Ez Hayyim*," was published in the 1886 volume of *ha-Asif*. There he briefly traced the history of the institution from the days of R. Hayyim through R. Izeleh and then devoted most of the rest of his presentation to a description of the yeshiva under the leadership of the Neziv, whom he described with respect. He also reproduced a copy of the text of R. Hayyim's and R. Eliezer Yizhak's tombstones which the Neziv personally made available to him.⁴⁵ One year later he published another two-part article about Volozhin in the journal *ha-Kerem*. In the course of describing the yeshiva, he first called for the introduction of some secular subjects into its curriculum and then presented a brief five-part short story about different types of yeshiva *bakburim*.⁴⁶ Finally, his short publication in *ha-Meliz*, which was printed anonymously in 1888, took the form of letters written from a student in Volozhin to a friend in which he described life in the yeshiva, suggested broadening the yeshiva's curriculum to include Jewish history, Hebrew grammar and linguistics, and also took the editor of *ha-Kerem* to task for rejecting his suggestions printed earlier in that journal.⁴⁷

A different type of criticism of Volozhin was penned by Moshe Reines and printed in *Ozar ha-Sifrut* in 1889–1890. Reines first rejected the arguments of Zederbaum (in *he-Meliz*, 1880) and Berdyczewski (in *ha-Kerem*, 1887) in favor of introducing secular studies into the yeshiva. This is impractical, he argued, for three reasons: firstly, it is impossible

for anyone to become so proficient in general knowledge while developing himself as a Torah scholar:

היוכל התלמיד לזכות לשני כתרים, כתר רב מובהק בתורה ובהוראה וכתר חכם, בזמן קצר? אם יבלה עתותיו בלמוד שפות ומדעים רבים, תורתו אימתי נעשית?

Secondly, those who support the yeshiva would withdraw their donations as soon as they would realize that Volozhin is no longer an institution devoted solely to Torah:

הלא יאמרו: לא ישיבת "עץ החיים" היא ישיבת וואלאזין כי אם סעמינאריום הברעסלאוי, לא הגאון ר' נפתלי צבי יהודה הוא הר"מ, כי אם החכם פראנקל!

To suggest that Volozhin could institute secular studies and still remain as pre-eminent a yeshiva as it was is similar to suggesting to Samson that he cut off his hair and still retain his same level of strength! Thirdly, Reines suggested that secular studies are only possible in a school where the student body is divided into different grade levels and a student must pass one to reach the next. Since Volozhin is simply a "gathering place for study" without following any organized pedagogic method, such a pursuit is impossible.

What did concern Reines, however, was the procedure of determining stipends for each student which he claimed was not fair; the practice of accepting all students, in contradistinction to the earlier years of the yeshiva when the administration was much more selective in determining which student could enter the yeshiva; the presence of married scholars in the yeshiva who drained its resources and should be eliminated; the fact that students study a different tractate than the one serving as the text for *shiurim* by the *rashei yeshiva* (students in Volozhin could study any tractate they wanted, while the *shiurim* followed the order of Talmud); and the lack of a public fiscal accounting on the part of the yeshiva. Finally, Reines wrote that while the Neẓiv should not introduce wide-ranging secular study into the yeshiva's curriculum, at the same time he should not be so unalterably opposed, as many claim he was, to even the slightest bit of secular involvement on the part of his students in their own free time.⁴⁸

The Neẓiv and his style of managing the yeshiva were constantly harassed and attacked not only by his more "enlightened" coreligionists but by the Russian authorities as well. They too saw the existence of this ever-flourishing and influential institution as hindering their efforts at modernizing and assimilating their Jewish population. Beginning with the tenure of R. Iẓeleh and continuing until the last decade of the century, the government periodically sent inspectors to the yeshiva to see if it was conforming to the law regulating the number of registered students and

requiring the inclusion of secular studies, and threatened to close the yeshiva if such studies were not introduced.⁴⁹ But somehow, in each case, the yeshiva leadership managed to see to it that these decrees were never carried out and the yeshiva's doors remained open without interruption.⁵⁰

Although successful at keeping the government out of the affairs of the yeshiva, the Neziv was totally unsuccessful at keeping Haskalah literature away from his students. There is an enormous amount of evidence which indicates that from the time the Neziv assumed the position of *rosh yeshiva* in 1853, there were always students in Volozhin who were involved with Haskalah literature and defied all the concerted efforts on the part of the yeshiva's administration to ban it from their possession. This was, indeed, one of the goals of the maskilim. Not content with just attacking the yeshiva from afar, they consciously and deliberately aimed to penetrate into the yeshiva itself and appeal directly to the individual yeshiva *bakbur* studying there for support for their ideas. All indications are that, in this regard, they were eminently successful.⁵¹

The earliest evidence for an interest in Haskalah on the part of students in Volozhin under the Neziv's tenure comes from shortly after he assumed the position of *rosh yeshiva*, during the mid-1850's. At that time Abraham Harkavy (1835–1919), who was to become a famous Jewish scholar, arrived in the yeshiva, already married and the father of a child, to study for ordination with the intention of assuming a rabbinical position. He came to Volozhin from a totally traditional background and it was only in the yeshiva where he became exposed to Haskalah for the very first time. This exposure to an entirely new culture caused such an upheaval for him that after only a half year there he left with the intention of enrolling in Vilna's rabbinical seminary and pursuing an entirely different life's path.⁵²

There is also some evidence from the 1860's as well. During that time, Naḥum Meyer Shaikevich ("Shomer"; 1849–1905), who was later to become a well-known Yiddish novelist and dramatist, studied in the yeshiva. In his autobiography, he presented a very negative portrait of his fellow students who, he claimed, came to Volozhin either to escape from wives and fathers-in-law whom they hated or to find a wife with a large dowry. (He cited the words of someone who said that students come to Volozhin to learn "*Torah lishmah*," Torah for her [i.e., a bride's] sake.) He himself spent his entire stay in the yeshiva pining for a girl he left behind. He also recorded that there was someone in the administration by the name of Rabbi Shlomoh who was responsible for assuring that students did not read any Haskalah works, clearly an indication that such study, indeed, was taking place.⁵³

R. Barukh Halevi Epstein, the point of departure of this article, studied in Volozhin from 1873–1878. In his *Mekor Barukh*, he recorded how, together with an intense Torah learning, he also pursued other, extra-Talmudic, studies as well. He read secular literature, studied foreign languages and even found the time to author a full-length manuscript entitled *Torat ha-Mishar* on various aspects of banking, industry and commerce, based on Russian and German sources. He appealed to Dr. Abraham Harkavy, the old Volozhin yeshiva *bakhur* and close friend of his father's, to intercede in his behalf with the Society for the Promotion of Culture Among the Jews of Russia in St. Petersburg to help him publish that work. He recorded how the well-known *maskil*, Yehudah Leib Gordon, who sat on the committee which decided the fate of his book, was very impressed with its Hebrew style. His request for funds was rejected, he wrote, only because the Society was interested in supporting books written in Russian and not in Hebrew. Furthermore, R. Epstein noted that he had also published several articles in the literary section of some newspapers which also made a favorable impression on Gordon—all this while yet a student in Volozhin.⁵⁴ As a result of the reputation he gained from his manuscript, R. Epstein was offered a prestigious post in a bank in St. Petersburg. Even after having studied in Volozhin for five years, he was desperately anxious to accept this position outside “the world of the yeshiva,” but his parents and grandfather did not allow him to do so out of fear that life in the capital city would tempt him to lessen his commitment to Torah and *mizvot*. Although very upset and disappointed, he submitted to their will.⁵⁵

The evidence of widespread study of secular literature among students in Volozhin mounts greatly for the last fifteen years of the yeshiva's existence under the Neziv. Because the yeshiva attracted a large number of students with different kinds of backgrounds, many came there already having been exposed to Haskalah and were committed to pursuing its study. While obviously interested in Talmud Torah in a serious way, they were also devoted to continuing their exposure to secular literature, albeit on their own, in a haphazard and informal manner. In fact, by this time, the yeshiva had the reputation for being a place where it was possible to do both simultaneously (serious Talmud Torah and secular studies) and, as we shall see clearly in the case of Ḥayyim Nahman Bialik, students were drawn to it precisely for that reason. An example of this was Michah Yosef Berdyczewski and his report about the widespread nature of Haskalah in Volozhin is most illuminating:

ימצאו בה הרבה חכמים ונבונים הבקיאים בתולדות ישראל. התלמידים מפלך קורלאגר יפוצו בה ידיעת שפת אשכנז וספרותה, והוילנאים ירחיבו בה השכלת רש"י פיין והר"ק שולמאן.⁵⁶ המכ"ע הרבים אשר יבואו לבני הישיבה, בפרט בשפות שונות, יפתחו מושגיהם ועשו אותם לאנשים שלמים. ולפיכך אם כי נחפש בנרות היפים

לבדיקה, לא ימצא בהישיבה אף שמץ למוד מדעי והגיוני, בכל זאת נוצצים בה בכל עת נבוני דבר ומשכילים אמתים, היודעים תורת עולם ההויה, תורת החברה בכלל, ותורת ישראל הגשמי והמוסרי בפרט. גם נמצאים בה הרבה נערים יודעים מדעים שלמים ושפות חיות, ככל אלה הלומדים בבתי הספר הגבוהים; ורוב פעמים יקרה כי כל אשר למדו בתוכה שנים או שלש שנים השתלמו במדעים ובשפות, עד כי בצאתם ממנה יבואו תיכף בהמחלקה החמישית או הששית בהגימנוזים. ולא מבעי שימצאו בה הרבה בקיאים בספרות ישראל העתיקה והחדשה, הרבה חוקרים, סופרים, משוררים ומספרים. . . לפני נקראו הרבה שירים מלאים רגש והתפעלות, כתובים ברוח השירה האמתית. הרבה מאמרים קראתי שעוסקים בשאלות החיים ובהספרות החדשה; וכאשר בקרתי לפעמים את מכירי ומיודעי, מצאתי בידי רבים, ספרים שלמים, זה עוסק בעטהיקא התלמודית, וזה-מעריך דיני ממונות התלמודיים ביחוסם למשפטי העמים; זה עוסק בתולדה, וזה-במחקר ובבקרת; זה כותב לנו שיטות תנאים ואמוראים בכל מקצוע ומקצוע, וזה עוד מנקר באשפת התקונים ומאסף לכל ההיתרים והקולות הנמצאות בתלמוד; זה הולך וחורז את כל כללי המדעים הנמצאים בספרות התלמודית, ואלה עוסקים בלאומיות. . . וגם אחרי פסקו מלמודו, איננו הולך לישון, לתת מרגוע לנפשו הנהלאה, ותדד שנתו מעיניו, לקרוא את השחר והמליץ, את הס' דור דור ודורשיו, או בדברי הימים לבני ישראל, ולפעמים גם את ספענסר ובאקל-או יושב וכותב.⁵⁷

Describing his own "limited" extra-Talmudic involvements, Berdy-czewski wrote:

ולפי שבכל זאת ראשי ורובי שקוע בדי' אמות של הלכה, לכן הוכרחתי לצמצם העיון והעסק בלשונות ובמדעים. מן הספרים החיצונים שבאו לידי לא הספקתי לקרוא לפי שעה בלה"ק רק את הספרים "דור דור ודורשיו", "חקר אלוה", ו"קורות הפילוסופיא החדשה", ובלשונות העמים קראתי את ספרי באקל וספענסער, גם חזרתי על ספרי הקלאסטיקער האשכנזים והאנגלים, וביחוד נמשך לבי מאד אחרי המלט, יציר דמיונו של שעקספיר, כי לרגלי מצבי הרע הנני עצבן גדול ובעל מרה שחורה מאד כמה.⁵⁸

He even noted that, for a short period of time, the yeshiva students founded a society for the study of Jewish history and literature which met late at night in their rooms but that it was outlawed by the Neziv.⁵⁹

The most popular secular works read by the students in Volozhin were the historical novels written by Avraham Mapu (1808–1867), the first modern Hebrew novelist. *Ahavat Zion* (1853) and *Ashmat Shomron* (2 parts, 1865–1866) were historical romances set in the ancient land of Israel during the time of the prophet Isaiah, while *'Ayit ha-Zavua'* (5 vols., 1858–64, 1869) was a story about contemporary East European Jewish life. They each became very popular and were reprinted a number of times before the end of the nineteenth century.⁶⁰ These works were considered "treif pasul" in the yeshiva and were confiscated if discovered by a member of the administration. Eliyahu Ze'ev Lewin-Epstein (1863–1932), a student in Volozhin and later a prominent Zionist leader, recounted a cute story in connection with this:

ולראש הישיבה שמש, שהיה עובר על מעונות התלמידים וחוקר ודורש, עד כמה שידו מגעת, אם אין ביניהם קוראים ספרי מינות. פעם אחת בא לאחד מבני הישיבה, וימצא אותו הוגה בספר שאלות ותשובות "אהבת ציון". השמש, אדם פשוט, ידע כי הספר

“אהבת ציון” הוא בגדר טרפה ופסול. ויחטוף את הספר מידי הבחור, וישליך אותו ארצה. אחרי כן הרימו מן הארץ, וישא אותו אל ראש הישיבה, כמופת חותך שהתלמיד ההוא נכשל באפיקורסות, רחמנא לצלן. ראש הישיבה לקח את הספר מיד השמש, וישקדו, ויבקש מחילה מאת התלמיד על הבזיון אשר הסבו לו. השמש עמד נדהם: מה הגיע לראש הישיבה? באר לו ראש הישיבה, כי הספר הזה קודש הוא, אלא ששמו כשם אותה “הטרפה” של מאפו. אז נתנו סימנים לשמש: כל הספרים, שדפיהם מסומנים באותיות עבריות ספרי קודש הם ואשר דפיהם מסומנים במספרים, בגדר “טרפה ופסול” המה.⁶¹

Other Hebrew novels read (and banned) in Volozhin were *Hazrot ha-Shir* by Feivel Schiffer (1840), *ha-'Avot ve-ha-Banim* by Shalom Yaakov Abramowitch (Mendele Mokher Sforim; 1868), *Kahal Rega'im* by Moses Leib Lilienblum (1870), and *ha-To'eh bi-Darkei ha-Hayyim* by Perez Smolenskin.⁶²

The administration also banned Haskalah newspapers and journals and the Neziv even personally forbade the students from going to the post office lest they be tempted to read them.⁶³ Yet, they too were widespread in the yeshiva. Michah Yosef Berdyczewski presented a list of those read by the students:

המכ"ע הנקראים המה: “הצפירה”, “המליץ”, “המגיד”, “היהודי”, “היהדות”, “המצפה”, “האסף”, “מחויקי הדת”, “הבוקר אור”, “הצבי”, “נאוואסטי”, “נעווא”, “סוועט”, “וואסחאד”. ובשפת אשכנזי “וואכענ־שריפט”, “די יודישע פרעססע”, “זעלבסט־עמאנציפאציאן”, ושני מכ"ע בשפת אנגלית.⁶⁴

It was this double reputation of Volozhin—as a strong *makom Torah* as well as a place with an openness to secular culture—which attracted Hayyim Nahman Bialik (1873–1934) there in the Spring of 1890. After the death of his father when he was seven years of age, he was raised by his grandfather, in whose house he developed a strong interest in religious as well as secular literature. Already harboring some anti-traditional ideas, his interest in Talmud study waned and he decided to pursue a higher level of study at the Hildesheimer Seminary in Berlin. He thought that the yeshiva in Volozhin would serve for him as an appropriate waystation where he could develop both his Jewish and secular knowledge prior to his graduate studies. He wrote:

תחלה לוואלאזין ואח"כ לברלין. ולמה וואלאזין? מפני שכפי השמועה לומדים שם בוואלאזין יחד עם התלמוד גם שבע חכמות ושבעים לשון בגלוי או בסתר.⁶⁵

He read and believed the articles in the Haskalah press by Berdyczewski and others describing the high level of secular study in Volozhin and thought he would be comfortable in that environment.

However, shortly after his arrival there, Bialik was disappointed with what he found:

תקותי לא באה, בוואלאזין אין זכר לשבע חכמות ולשבעים לשון אבל יש שם בחורים כמוני, וטובים או רעים ממני, שיושבים ולומדים גמרא גמרא גמרא.⁶⁶

In a letter written while in Volozhin, in the summer of 1890, Bialik noted:

לבד למודי קודש לא ילמדו פה מאומה וכל מה שכתב ברדיטשבסקי ל"האסיף" – לא מניה ולא מקצתיה.⁶⁷

At first, he was very much taken by the learning and devoted himself to it with great enthusiasm. He described his state of mind as follows:

גם אני אלמד גמרא, גמרא, גמרא. . . וכך עשיתי בחדשים הראשונים . . . במשך שלשה חרשים למדתי כמעט על פה כל מסכת כתובות עם כל התוספות שעליה. כבשתי את כל תאוותי, חנקתי את כל רגשותי ואלמד בלי הרף ובלי חשק. וכל פעם שהיה יצרי משיאני להפסיק ממשנתי ומעורר בי הרהורים אחרים צבטתי לי בידי עצמי וגערתי בי בנייפה: "למד, גולן! למד עד שתקבע כרסך!"⁶⁸

At this time he wrote a poem, entitled "*bi-'Ohel ha-Torah*," in which he described his yearning to study "in the tents of Torah," a precursor to his much more developed and famous poem of the same theme, *ha-Matmid*.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, this period of intensive learning did not last too long. He continued to study but his mind was elsewhere.

אבל היצר הרע תקיף הוא והתמדה והתלהבות זו לגמרא. . . רפתה לאט לאט ואני חזרתי לטבעי הראשון. . . מיום ליום נתמעטה התמדותי . . . עומד הייתי אצל שלחן תורת שעות שלמות . . . ואני פי דובב אמר אביי ולבי בעולמות אחרים.⁷⁰

He began to concentrate more on writing poetry, spent time walking outdoors, became involved in a clandestine Zionist group of yeshiva students, learned Russian, and in the late summer of 1891, left Volozhin.⁷¹

A contemporary of Bialik's described the atmosphere in yeshiva at that time in the following way:

ישיבת ולוז'ין, אף-על-פי שלא היתה בה השכלה ממש, רוח של השכלה וריח של השכלה היו מורגשים בה במקצת. דברים שהקפידו עליהם בשאר ישיבות, לא הקפידו עליהם הרבה בולוז'ין, ועבירות שהיו גוזרים עליהן עונשים וקנסים בכל הישיבות כולן, העשו בולוז'ין כהיתר. להגות בכתבי הקודש ובלשון הקודש. . . כיוצא בזה, ההתעסקות בספרי כותבי תולדותינו ובספרי הפילוסופים שלנו. דבר זה, שהיו מוציאים עליו מבית-המדרש בכל הישיבות, לא חל עליו אסור גמור בולוז'ין, אלא היה שייך לטוג של דברים שהם אסורים מפני מראית העין, ובחודרי חדרים הם מותרים. ובכל "זמן" ו"זמן" היו בה בחורים שעסקו בהם בשעות הפנויות מלימוד של חובה. . .

ובשביל מעלות טובות אלו שהיו בישיבה של ולוז'ין ולא היו בישיבות אחרות, יצא לה שם טוב בעולם. ואבות היו שולחים אליה את בניהם לא רק ללמוד בה תורה, אלא גם לקנות להם בה מידות טובות, דרך ארץ, ובחורי ישראל שחשקה נפשם בתורה, ובהשכלה שיש עמה חכמת ישראל, ושרצו לעשות את תורתם עיקר וקבע, הלכו לולוז'ין. אלו מהם שבאו לכאן וקצת ידיעות חיצוניות אתם מבייתם – היו מוסיפים בה עליהם. וגם אלו שבאו ריקם, לא נשאר בריקנותם, אלא קנו להם בישיבה ידיעה כל שהיא באיזו חכמה ובאיזו לשון, שהיתה משמשת להם הקדמה ופתיחה לשערי חכמה. ואפילו בחורים שלא הסיחו את דעתם מהגמרא אפילו לשעה קלה, ולא הפנו את לבם כלל להשכלה, קלטו בה מאליהם ושלא בידיעתם מרוח של השכלה שבה.⁷²

This information was not an in-house yeshiva secret but was known to the world at large. R. Barukh Halevi Epstein wrote:

הי' לפתגם שגור בפי הבריות, כי בישיבה דוואלאוין תלכנה תורה ודרך ארץ (לומר: השכלה) שלובי יד, ולא רק כי לא תצורונה אשה אחותה, אך עוד יתאימו לשבת יחד כשבת אחים, ומקבילות זו לזו כתאמי צביה; וכאשר נדברו אבות ומפקחים על שאלת חנוך הבנים הי' אחד אומר לחבירו: "רצונך לראות את בנך בתור אדם המעלה, בן תורה ובן דרך ארץ, מעורב עם הבריות והליכות עולם לו—שלח אותו וואלאוינה."⁷³

Such an openness in Volozhin to a wide range of extra-Talmudic learning could only be possible if its *rashei yeshiva* acknowledged that, in principle, these disciplines had some value, even if they may have considered them inappropriate for their students. Were they to have considered such study as being absolutely heretical or even only totally worthless, it is hard to imagine that their yeshiva could ever have attracted so many students who devoted so much time and intellectual energy to it during their stay within its walls. How open, indeed, were these *gedolei Yisrael* to extra-Talmudic knowledge and interests and how does this relate to their valiant, albeit unsuccessful, attempts to ban them from their beloved yeshiva?

Evidence for any such interest on the part of R. Ḥayyim, the yeshiva's first *rosh yeshiva*, is very sparse. There is a tradition that as a young boy he taught himself mathematics and was allowed to do so only because that knowledge could also be useful in understanding rabbinic statements in Tractates *Kil'ayim* and *Rosh Hashanah*.⁷⁴ In 1784, he wrote his first approbation on Shlomo Dubno's commentary on the Torah and included an enthusiastic encomium about this devoted disciple of Moses Mendelssohn:

כבוד הרב המופלג המדקדק הגדול כבוד מהור"ר שלמה מדובנא אשר כבר יצא לו שם ביפיו והדרו... כל מבקש הי' יבוא אל אהלו... וכבר החל רוח נדיבתו להאציל מרוח מבינתו בשני ספריו הראשונים... ד"ה המיחל ומשתוקק לזכות ללוקחו ולראותו ביפיו והודו.⁷⁵

Furthermore, his nephew reports in the name of R. Ḥayyim that the Gaon of Vilna told his son Avraham, מחמת החכמות, "שהוא משתוקק להעתקת אחרות ללשון הקדש ולהעתקת היוסיפון לרומיים" for the sake of better being able to understand various rabbinic statements about the land of Israel and the *Bet ha-Mikdash*. Presumably, R. Ḥayyim shared this desire as well.⁷⁶

Ben Zion Katz seems to suggest that R. Ḥayyim would have wanted to introduce secular studies in Volozhin but he lacked the "courage" ("omez ru'ah") to do so. After all, he argued, as a devoted student of the Gaon of Vilna he was aware of the latter's statement to R. Barukh of Shklov that a lack of general knowledge (*yedi'ot bi-sha'ar ha-hokhmot*)

will result in a hundred-fold lack in Torah knowledge (*hokhmat ha-Torah*).⁷⁷ This, however, is an unfounded assertion which lacks any evidence whatsoever. First of all, even if R. Ḥayyim would have acknowledged the intrinsic value of secular studies, there is no basis for any assumption that he would have wanted to formally include it in his yeshiva's curriculum. As will be demonstrated below, one need not follow the other at all. Secondly, that famous statement of the Gaon has been misunderstood by many others besides Ben Zion Katz and does not reflect the kind of openness to secular studies that many have assumed it to do.⁷⁸

Much more definitive and widespread is the evidence about R. Ḥayyim's son and successor, R. Izeleh. Many of the sources indicate that here we have someone who was indeed genuinely interested in secular learning. After visiting R. Izeleh in the fall of 1842 to seek his support for his effort on behalf of the Russian government to institute a network of state-sponsored, Haskalah-oriented Jewish schools, Max Lilienthal reported: "He spoke the German, Russian and Polish languages very fluently."⁷⁹ R. Meir Berlin (Bar-Ilan), the son of the Neziv, actually equated the level of R. Izeleh's secular knowledge with his Torah knowledge: כחכמתו בתורה כן ידיעותיו גם בלימודי חול. בוולוז'ין היו מספרים כי רבי יצחק היה קורא בוולוז'ין אמרו שרבי . . . פולנית.⁸⁰ וגם ידע עניני רפואה איצילי ידע יפה פולנית. . . היו מספרים שאחרי פטירתו הפתאומית מצאו אצלו הוא היה חכם גדול ובקי בהרבה שפות, וידו רב לו, ספרים פולניים.⁸¹ In one of Michah Yosef Berdyczewski's histories of Volozhin he noted that, בהנדסה ובחכמת הרפואה.⁸² Yizhak Rivkind reported a tradition handed down by old-timers in Volozhin that at the time R. Ḥayyim laid the foundation of the yeshiva, he told the bystanders that "I am building a wall for (i.e., to insure the future of) my son (איין מיינ) (איצלען)" because R. Izeleh had wanted to accept a rabbinic post in a German city known as a bastion of Reform Judaism, a move which R. Ḥayyim bitterly opposed.⁸³

Most interesting is the claim that R. Izeleh actually gave a *haskamah* to a new (1852) edition of Moses Mendelssohn's commentary on the Bible prepared by Leon Mandelstamm, the successor of Max Lilienthal. In fact, his name merely appears as part of a list of Jews (in both Hebrew and German) who participated in a government sponsored conference held in 1843 to spread Haskalah among Russian Jewry, under whose auspices this work was printed. There is no evidence that R. Izeleh (or R. Menahem Mendel of Lubavitch who also attended that conference and whose name appears together with R. Izeleh's in this new edition of Mendelssohn's *Bi'ur*) willingly participated in this conference nor that he was in favor of its results, including the printing of this work. Indeed, he

could not possibly have given a *haskamah* to it because he died three years before it was published.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, there is other evidence that he held this commentary in high esteem. Lilienthal reported that during that same meeting with R. Izeleh mentioned above, the latter told him that he actually incorporated some of Mendelssohn's comments into his daily *Humash shiur* in the yeshiva: "After the service, I explain to them some chapters of the *Sidrah* of the week, and the *Haphtarah* with the commentary of Rashi, adding some free explanations of my own, into which I interweave some remarks from the commentary of *Mosheh Dessau* (Mendelssohn)."⁸⁵

R. Izeleh also played a very important role in Lilienthal's effort to establish a state-sponsored Jewish school network in Russia. This story is a very interesting one and merits a full discussion. One of the decisions that had been made by the authorities on June 22, 1842, after Lilienthal's first attempt to interest the Jewish community in this project had met in failure, was to convene a rabbinical conference, based on the model of Napoleon's Sanhedrin, to gain the approval of Russia's respected rabbinic leaders for their plan. R. Izeleh was chosen by the Jewish community as one of the four delegates to the conference.⁸⁶ Lilienthal reported that he was thrilled when he heard of their choice:

Since my arrival in Russia I had heard a good deal of Rabbi Itzele. He was one of the Talmudical authorities in Russia, a man of great worldly tact and experience; a man of rare penetration, who many years before had foreseen the intended reforms and always advocated the necessity of sending a number of Jewish boys to the imperial public schools. I therefore rejoiced at the selection they had made, and assured them that if the rabbi was willing to go his appointment should be ratified by the minister without delay.⁸⁷

This report is curious in light of the fact that in early 1841 R. Izeleh strongly opposed the work of committees convened by the Russian authorities which had recently been formed in various cities to effect changes in the Jewish educational system.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, Lilienthal was optimistic that R. Izeleh would support his efforts and, a few days before Yom Kippur 1842, set out for Volozhin to personally discuss the matter with him.

There are two different extant versions as to what was R. Izeleh's basic reaction to Lilienthal's proposal during the few days they spent together—one reported by Lilienthal and the other current in traditional circles. According to Lilienthal, R. Izeleh was sympathetic to his cause: "He understood very well that the reform of the schools could be delayed no longer, and though feeling somewhat uneasy about the fate that might befall his *Jeshibah*, when these reforms would be carried out, he never hesitated to recommend an alteration of the educational system." Lilien-

thal reported that R. Izeleh told him, “I consider you a truly good Jew, having the welfare of his people at heart, and making every effort to promote their prosperity,” and gave him a blessing: “May the Lord, the faithful Guardian of Israel, send His angels on your way, and may you return into our midst healthy and of good courage!”⁸⁹

A much less favorable impression is forthcoming in sources stemming from the traditional community. They report that on Kol Nidre night, R. Izeleh brought Lilienthal to the synagogue and, in his presence, delivered his customary sermon. That year R. Izeleh cited the rabbinic passage (Yoma 18b) which recorded that before performing the Temple service on Yom Kippur, the High Priest was asked by his older colleagues to swear that he was not a heretic (Saducee) and would not deviate one iota from the traditionally accepted format of the service. The Talmud concludes that he cried because they could possibly accuse him of such a charge, and they cried as well. Asked R. Izeleh: Is it not true that our rabbis sharply enjoin us from ever having any evil thoughts about another person? After all, rabbinic literature is full of passages which condemn such activity in the harshest terms! How could it therefore be possible that the priestly elders could entertain precisely such suspicions about the holiest person (the High Priest) in the holiest place (the Holy of Holies in the Temple) on the eve of the holiest day of the year (Yom Kippur)? He answered: True, when it comes to a private individual, we are prohibited from ever entertaining such thoughts or suspicions but it is much different in the case of a public personality who has accepted upon himself the responsibility to work on behalf of the community. In such a case, not only is it permitted to question his piety but we are even required to examine carefully his intentions to insure that they are purely for the sake of Heaven. After this homily, R. Izeleh descended from the *bimah* leaving the congregation perplexed as to the reason why he departed from his standard Kol Nidre *derashah* style. Lilienthal, however, understood very well that the words were directed towards him.⁹⁰

Lilienthal’s reaction is different in various versions of the story. According to one, Lilienthal himself ascended the *bimah* at that point and publicly acknowledged that he was the object of the rabbi’s words but went on to say that everyone indeed had a perfect right to question his intention and his behavior. He then opened the ark, took out a Torah scroll and swore by all that is holy in Judaism that his intentions as well as those of the Russian government, are only for the sake of the betterment of the Jews, without any ulterior motives. Furthermore, he went on to swear that if at any time he was to sense that the government did have a hidden anti-Jewish agenda, he would immediately cease any involvement with them.⁹¹ According to another version of the story, Lilienthal covered his head with his *talit* and was heard crying softly after R. Izeleh completed his *derashah*.⁹² Yet a third version suggests that after the

sermon Lilienthal knew that his mission was in jeopardy and returned to St. Petersburg.⁹³

Yet, in spite of his thinly veiled hesitations and suspicions, R. Izeleh did join the rabbinical conference convened by the government to implement its plans for establishing a nationwide network of Haskalah-type Jewish schools. Traditional sources explained his participation not as an expression of his sympathy for their efforts, as Lilienthal did, but rather as an opportunity to try to make the best of what was clearly a difficult and dangerous situation. They considered it a purely pragmatic, as opposed to ideological, decision. R. Barukh Epstein records that his uncle, the Neziḅ, who was present during the discussions between R. Izeleh and Lilienthal, told him that Lilienthal had informed R. Izeleh that the Tsar already had received the approval of a majority of his advisors to punish the Jews harshly for their refusal to accept his educational proposals. However, two of his ministers, Uvarov and Kiselev, had argued for leniency on the grounds that the Jews might be peacefully convinced to accept the Tsar's proposal, and dispatched Lilienthal for this purpose. If the Jews were to reject him, said Lilienthal to R. Izeleh, he was afraid of the terrible consequences that would result. Faced with such pressure, R. Izeleh was forced to agree to help him and galvanized support in other communities for his efforts.⁹⁴

Based on all the evidence available, it seems fair to conclude that although R. Izeleh did have an openness to secular studies, it is highly unlikely that he or any *rosh yeshiva* in the first half of the nineteenth century would have advocated the kinds of educational reforms proposed by Lilienthal. He may have personally expressed an interest in extra-Talmudic matters, but it is almost inconceivable to believe that he would have had any part in compromising the traditional mode of learning in public Torah institutions. I see no evidence to support the conclusion that R. Izeleh “was much more positively inclined to some of their (i.e., Haskalah's) suggestions on educational reform.”⁹⁵ As we shall see in the case of the Neziḅ, and as I argued earlier in the case of R. Ḥayyim, personal openness on the part of a *rosh yeshiva* to some sort of secular culture is very far removed from formally introducing this openness into the curriculum of his school. Although quite striking in its own right, citing Mendelssohn's *Bi'ur* in a *Ḥumash shiur* is very different than devoting parts of the school day to studying Russian language or literature. In all likelihood, R. Izeleh decided to support Lilienthal and joined the government-sponsored rabbinical conference out of fear that a refusal to do so would result in even greater calamities for Russian Jews and a hope that through his participation he could influence its outcome.⁹⁶

Yet, although his own interest in secular culture seems to have been developed very privately (for it was only after he died that Polish books were discovered in his library⁹⁷), R. Izeleh did have a reputation for being more “open” in his lifetime. There is no reason to deny that Lilienthal was telling the truth when he reported that R. Izeleh told him, “You must not suppose, doctor, that all the Jews are putting implicit confidence in my views. They suspect me of leaning towards some reform, of favoring the schemes of the government. I have a great many enemies, though they do not dare to avow their animosity openly.”⁹⁸ Although he went on to attribute this to the fact that, “they envy my position as chief of this *Jeshibah*,” perhaps it was also due to a more fundamental opposition to his open and moderate world-view. This could, perhaps, also explain why enrollment in Volozhin decreased during his tenure as *rosh yeshiva*. The standard explanation given is that his communal involvements forced him to spend too much time away from it.⁹⁹ Perhaps a more basic consideration was operative here as well. Traditional yeshiva boys may have expressed their disagreement with R. Izeleh’s overall *hashkafah* and, although they knew he would never formally tamper with the yeshiva’s traditional curriculum, decided they would feel more religiously comfortable elsewhere.¹⁰⁰

This kind of extra-Talmudic openness found in R. Izeleh is even more pronounced in the case of his son-in-law, the Neziv. First of all, in his younger years he was interested in the kinds of rabbinic texts not normally studied in traditional yeshiva circles and he wrote book-length commentaries on the Bible (entitled *Ha’amek Davar*), the *She’iltot de-R. Aḥai Gaon* (entitled *Ha’amek She’elah*) and on the *Sifri* (published posthumously as *Emek ha-Neziv*).¹⁰¹ Following in the footsteps of his two great predecessors, R. Ḥayyim and R. Izeleh, he delivered a *Ḥumash shiur* after services every morning.¹⁰² Even more significant was his methodology, which included textual criticism of the Talmud and *rishonim*, use of manuscripts to determine the correct text and, in general, reflected a keen historical sensitivity.¹⁰³

His nephew, R. Barukh Epstein, called special attention to his unusual knowledge of the Hebrew language.

לבר גדלו בתורה הי' קופל בו את השלמות הישראליות בכל הודם ויפיו: בקי מצוין
במקרא, מדקדק גדול, מעמיק ומבקר בחקרי ושימוש הלשון וסופר מהיר בצחות
ונעימות לשון הקודש, הוצק חן בשפתותיו ודבש וחלב יולו מעטו.¹⁰⁴

His son, R. Meir Berlin (Bar-Ilan), recorded how he avidly read newspapers:

לשונות לועזיות לא ידע, אבל בעברית קרא הרבה, כל מה שבא לידו. כשהתחילו
“הצפירה” ו”המליץ” לצאת בכל יום והדואר בוולוז'ין היה מתקבל פעמיים בשבוע, וכל
פעם באה חבילה שלימה של עתונים, היה אבא ז"ל מקפיד על כך, שאיש לא יקח ממנו
גליון עתון, קודם שעבר על הכל. הוא גם פסק, שמותר לקרוא עתון בשבת, מה

שאחרים פסקו לאיסור (בענין זה יש ממנו תשובה במאסף "עיטור סופרים" שהוציא הרב קוק ז"ל). קריאת העתונים היתה לו לא בילוי זמן, אלא, כפי הנראה, צורך פנימי להיות קרוב לכל מה שמתרחש בעולם הגדול. מטבעו לא היה זר לעולם, לכל דבר שאירע, כל עוד לא מצא בוה סתירה לאהבת התורה.¹⁰⁵

The Neziv also felt that it was very important to know Russian. His son continued:

ולא עוד אלא שהביע צער על שאינו יודע לשון המדינה, אף חשב כי אילו ידע לדבר במישרין עם הפקידים הגבוהים, היה מצב הישיבה איתן יותר. פעם אחת נכנס אבא ז"ל לחדרי ואותה שעה למדתי רוסית מפי מורה, ביישיבה מעיר מינסק. שאל אבא ז"ל את המורה על לימודי, וכנהוג התאונן המורה, שאין אני מכין את השיעורים כראוי. אמר אלי אבא ז"ל: "למד, בני, הלוואי שהייתי אני יודע רוסית, כי אז היו הרבה ענינים נראים אחרת."¹⁰⁶

This openness on the part of the Neziv to Haskalah was also clearly acknowledged by his son. He wrote:

מה שהיה ידוע בימים ההם בשם "השכלה" ובחוגים מסויימים של חרדים, כמעט בכלום, היה שנוא ומגונה, נראה בעיני אבא ז"ל אחרת. לא בולוז'ין, ולא בשנותיו האחרונות, לא דיבר אבא ז"ל בגנותה של ה"השכלה" כשהיא לעצמה. השקפתו על זה, כמו על כל יתר הדברים שבאו לידו, היתה ישרה, אובייקטיבית, בלי כל כוונה צדדית.¹⁰⁷

In a brief biography of the Neziv by R. Abraham Isaac ha-Kohen Kook, he wrote:

הגאון הנצי"ב הוא באמת דורש השכלה נאמנה וחפץ בכבודה של תורה שהרב הרועה עדר ה' יהיה איש בעל מדות תרומיות ובעל נימוס וידיעת התבל במדה נחוצה לתנאי החיים, ביחוד שידע שפת המדינה.¹⁰⁸

In one of his histories of Volozhin, M. Y. Berdyczewski noted that:

הוא מוקיר יראים ושלמים, גם דורש השכלה באמת שלא נהפכה להם לסם מות. . . . ושקר בפי הסופרים אשר שמוהו למקנא אדוק ושונא השכלה ודורשיה.¹⁰⁹

In defense of the Neziv who was attacked for his narrowmindedness, Alexander Zederbaum, the editor of *ha-Meliz*, wrote:

הלא ידענו פא"פ את ראש הישיבה ה' נצי"ב, וכל אשר יכולנו להוציא מפיו ומפי כתביו ומכתביו אלינו הוא מלבד רוחב בינתו בפוסקים ובתלמוד ויראתו הקודמת לחכמתו אודה הוא להגות ולהעמיק חקר ביושר והגיון, ואינו מן הקנאים המתעבים כל למוד חול ולשון המדינה.¹¹⁰

In fact, it is very interesting that the Neziv had high regard for Max Lilienthal, and felt that his father-in-law and others unfairly suspected him of being simply a front for the Russian government's effort to assimilate and even convert the Jews. The Neziv met Lilienthal personally during the latter's trip to Volozhin in 1842 and was the only other person present when Lilienthal and R. Izeleh met privately to discuss the government's plan.¹¹¹ His nephew, R. Barukh Epstein, wrote:

פעם אחת סיפר דודי כי בזמנו נצטער הרבה על אשר חותנו הגאון רבי יצחק (רבי איצעלע) מוואלאוין פגע, אם כי ברמז דק וקל, בכבודו או יותר נכון—באמונת לבו של החכם ליליענטהאל.

After telling the story of R. Izeleh's Kol Nidre sermon cited above, R. Epstein concluded in his uncle's name:

כי לפי שהכיר הוא היטב את ליליענטהאל ולמד לדעותיו וירד לסוף דעתו באמונה ודת, בטוח הוא, כי באמת ובתמים הי' נקי מכל חשד זה, ולא הי' בלבו כל מחשבת פגול מאשר חשדוהו ומאשר הלשינו עליו.¹¹²

However, while unusually open to all kinds of extra-Talmudic literature, the Neziv strongly felt that none of this should come at the expense of Talmud Torah. His son wrote:

אולם בו בזמן כשהרגיש אבא ז"ל כי מתרחש משהו שיכול להפריע מלימוד התורה לא היה נושא פנים בדבר, בין שהיה זה בשפה זרה ובין בלשון הקודש.¹¹³

As a result, the Neziv was totally and unalterably opposed to officially allowing secular studies into his beloved yeshiva because it was clear to him that devoting part of the day to secular studies would invariably have a detrimental affect on the students' study of Torah. It was one thing to favor pursuing secular knowledge "at a time which is neither day nor night"; it was quite another to formally integrate it into the yeshiva's official curriculum. He made his position very clear in a letter to Zederbaum where he wrote, in no uncertain terms:

כמו שחולין טהורים מטמאים את הקודש בנגיעה, כך לימודי חול, אע"ג שאין בהם שמץ טומאה ואיסור, מפריעים קדושת התלמוד והצלחתה כשהם מזדווגים בפונדק אחד.¹¹⁴

This idea is also reflected in one of his most famous responsa written in reaction to an essay in the periodical *Mahzikei ha-Dat* about "right," "left" and "center" orthodoxy:

באשר זה דרכה של תורה שאין עמלה ותכליתה מתקיים אלא בימי שמפנה כל ראשו בה, ונפש עמל בה עמלה לו לסייעהו לזכות בה, וא"א להיות גדול בתורה בשעה שעוסק בדברים אחרים. וכל גדולי תורה שהמה גם חכמים בלימודי חול, אינו אלא שנתעסקו בלימודי חול קודם ששקעו ראשם בתורה או אחרי שכבר נתגדלו בתורה אבל ביחד א"א להגיע לתכלית הלמוד.¹¹⁵

When asked by M. Y. Berdyczewski why he was opposed to the current efforts at educational reform in his yeshiva, the Neziv replied:

כאשר נחפוץ לתקן דבר חדש, עלינו להשקיף על דוגמתו בעולם ההויה, לראות מה פעל ומה יצא ממנו? וכאשר נראה שזה הדוגמא לא הביא שום תועלת, ואדרבה עוד הרע; הכי לא לאולת תחשב לנו לצאת בעקבותיו? הן עינינו הרואות פעולת בתי הספר לרבנים אשר בוויילנא ובויטאמיר, ואיך נוכל לצאת בעקבותיהם?¹¹⁶

Anything that led to *bittul Torah* had to be totally and utterly rejected, even if that activity, per se, was not intrinsically offensive or prohibited. This is reflected in a number of decisions of the Neziv:

1. He closed a separate society devoted to studying “*ḥokhmat yisra’el*” that had been founded by some students in the yeshiva. In discussing the short-lived history of this group, M. Y. Berdyczewski noted that although “Haskalah is permitted in Volozhin and the *rosh yeshiva* does not object to it a great deal, he does not consider it appropriate to establish a society for it.”¹¹⁷

2. He outlawed all newspapers and journals in the yeshiva,

לא מחמת שהוא קנאי ומתעב את ההשכלה אשר מה"ע מלמדים בכותה. חלילה! ורק בסבת ביטול תורה. . . . וזה הדבר כי היו מה"ע למכשול לרבים להתרשל בלימודי התורה.¹¹⁸

For the same reason he did not allow the students to publish their own newspapers or Torah journal.¹¹⁹

3. Although very active in the *Hibbat Ziyon* movement, the *Neziv* would have outlawed any Zionist society in the yeshiva had he known about it. Israel Klausner noted that the *Neziv* would never permit his students to neglect Torah study in order to spend time even on a cause so close to his heart like *yishuv Erez Yisra’el*.¹²⁰ As a result, both such societies which existed in the yeshiva in the second half of the 1880’s and beginning of the 1890’s, *Nes Ziyonah* and *Nezah Yisra’el*, had to function clandestinely. After the first group was forced to disband in 1890 because the government had reason to suspect it of disloyalty, the *Neziv* told its secretary that such a society did not belong in Volozhin because, “one does not suspend Torah study for the sake of a *mizvah* that can be done by others.”¹²¹

4. He even did not allow the yeshiva students to stop their learning in order to recite Tehillim on behalf of his very sick wife, so as not to cause *bittul Torah*.¹²²

5. For this reason he is also purported to have opposed the efforts of R. Izeleh Peterburger to institute the study of *mussar* in Volozhin.¹²³

After having been successful at maintaining the existence of his yeshiva for close to four decades in the face of enormous financial and ideological pressures, things began to unravel for the *Neziv* at the end of the 1880’s. A number of factors combined to weaken his hold over his beloved institution, ultimately resulting in its closing in the Winter of 1892.

The increasing independence and assertiveness of an ever-growing student body made life extremely difficult for the *Neziv* on a number of different occasions. First of all, a great deal of sentiment began to be expressed in opposition to his wife who had been taking a more active role in the yeshiva’s affairs. Students resented her increased involvement and some vented their anger in most disrespectful ways.

הנהו בריוני דבי מתיבתא עשו נבלה גדולה וזרקו אבן בחלונה, ומפני הפחד חלתה ונפלה למשכב והגיעה כמעט עד שערי מות, וכל כך קלקלה השנאה את השורה, שבשעה שהרופאים התיאשו מחייה ובכל בית הרב היתה האניה ואניה, מצא הרב בהגמרא שלו גליון מונח ועליו כתוב—נוסח מצבה לחרות על קברה.¹²⁴

Much more serious was the economic crisis which came to a head in 1891. That year was a leap year and the yeshiva did not have enough money for the students' stipends for the extra month. Tensions ran high and when one of the yeshiva's custodians embarrassed some of the students, a veritable riot broke out in the *bet midrash*. In his memoirs, the Neziv's son, who was then a young boy studying in the yeshiva, described the scene:

הרוחות היו נרגזים, כמה סערה, מישהו שבר את המנורה אשר היתה תלויה מעליו למען הגדל המהומה, ולא עברו רגעים רבים וכל האולם היה כמרקחה. המאור כובה, השולחנות נתהפכו, בשמש אשר פגע בהם בדברי פיו פגעו הם, בני הישיבה, בפועל ידים והשאון גדול ורב. רבן של ישראל נכנס אל הישיבה, ראה ובכה ולא מצא דברים להוכיח, כי אם לבקש רחמים על הישיבה כולה שלא תחרב.¹²⁵

The repercussions of this event were felt both within the yeshiva and without it and, once again, led to serious concerns about the future viability of the institution. The Neziv did all he could to maintain its existence, pacifying many of his students and travelling regularly to Vilna, and even on occasion to St. Petersburg, to prevail upon the secular authorities to continue to look with favor upon his yeshiva.¹²⁶ But he found the pace and the pressure too taxing and decided at that point to finally carry out his life-long dream of settling in the land of Israel.¹²⁷ He made plans to leave Volozhin and appointed his oldest son, R. Hayyim Berlin, in his place.

It was this desire on the part of the Neziv which aroused the greatest ire and indignation of the student body. At that time, R. Hayyim Soloveitchik had been saying *shiurim* in the yeshiva together with the Neziv and many students felt that he was more qualified than R. Hayyim Berlin to assume the position of *rosh yeshiva*. The Neziv's insistence upon appointing his son met with great opposition and, once again, a number of his students made life very difficult for him:

ואותה שנה היתה שנה של מהומה בישיבה, ערבוביה באה לתוכה, ולא היה לה שלום מבית ומחוץ. . . ומבית—מפני רצונו של הנצי"ב להושיב על כסאו את בנו הבכור, ובני הישיבה התנגדו לו, משום שכוח הבן לא היה יפה ככוח האב. מלחמת בית זו היתה קשה ועקשנית משני הצדדים. כלי זינן של הנצי"ב במלחמה זו היו דמעות ותחנונים, וכלי זינם של התלמידים בה היו קול וידים. הקול קול יעקב, רגוני וצעקני, שהולך מסוף העולם ועד סופו; והידים ידי יעקב אף הן זורקות חצים ואבני בליסטראות מאחורי הגדר, כשבעליהם רואים ואינם נראים. בכל יום ובכל שעה, היה הנצי"ב מקבל מכתבי־סתר, רובם כתובים בידים גסות, מלאים דברים קשים כגידיים כנגדו, ופוגעים בכבודו פגיעה גסה. כצפרדעי מצרים, כך עלו ובאו מכתבים אלו אל הנצי"ב בחדר משכבו, ועל מטתו; בארץ הקודש, בעמודו,

בתיק טליתו, בין עמודי ספריו, ובכיסו בגדיו—לא היה מקום פנוי מהם. באכזריות קשה, שרק הנוער מסוגל לה, שמרו בני־הישיבה את צעדי הוֹקן, התחקו על כל פסיעה ופסיעה שלו, וגרמו לו יסורים הרבה.¹²⁸

One of the students who was studying in the yeshiva at the time described the situation facing R. Ḥayyim Berlin as follows:

התלמידים לא הסכימו למינוי זה, והפריעו את שיעוריו בכל האמצעים שבידם. לפעמים חסמו את הדרך בעדו לעלות על הבימה, ולפעמים הקיפוהו בקושיות שלא ידע מה להשיב עליהן. . . . התלמידים עשו פרעות בישיבה, הפכו את השולחנות, שברו את החלונות, כיבו את המנורות, והחורבן היה גדול מאוד. הנצי"ב עמד אצל הדלת ובלב שבור ראה את הנעשה בישיבתו הגדולה, אבל לא היה יכול לעשות מאומה. בשעה של השתוללות והפקרות, אין עצה ואין תחבולה.¹²⁹

This constant infighting and conflict had a terribly detrimental effect on the yeshiva:

בשעת חירום שכזו נפחתה צורתה של הישיבה; הופר בה הסדר ורפתה ההשגחה. המתמידים עקרו אל רגליהם מהישיבה ופרשו לבתי־מדרש קטנים שבעיר, או התייחדו בחרריהם עם גמרות שלהם. אוטרי המלחמה סבבו בשוקים וברחובות, הלכו מבית אל בית ועסקו בפוליטיקה. והבינונים, העומדים באמצע בין שני אלו, תפסו את הספסלים בישיבה, התנועעו על ספריהם ולבם כל עמם. העינים היו שקועות בגמרות הפתוחות לפניהם, והאזנים היו נטויות כלפי חוץ, לקלוט שמועות פורחות "משדה המלחמה". . . . כשהגיעו ימות הקיץ הורע המצב ונגרשה הסאה. כנופיות כנופיות של בחורים בטלים מלמודים היו עומדים ומשיחים בישיבה, ובחצר הישיבה; וכנופיות כנופיות של הולכי־בטל היו מטיילים בחוצות ומחוץ לעיר. ולמודים—מאן דבר שמם? מצב זה של בטלה מתוך אונס, של פיזור הנפש ושל היסח הדעת, גרם לכך, שרבים מבני־הישיבה שמאסו בבטלה החלו לעזוב אותה לגמרי. . . . כמעט בכל יום היו הנשארים בישיבה מלזים את העוזבים.¹³⁰

This struggle over who would succeed the Neẓiv was so intense and so sapped the strength of the yeshiva that some considered it to be the cause of its closing almost a year later.¹³¹ However, the key factor responsible for that event was the Russian government's insistence that secular studies be introduced formally into the yeshiva's curriculum. As mentioned above, the Russian maskilim and the secular government had long advocated such a change but they both had been successfully held off for decades by the tenacious and intensive efforts of the Neẓiv. However, by the end of the penultimate decade of the nineteenth century, they began to gain the upper hand and forced their will on a most reluctant, tired and saddened *rosh yeshiva*.

In February, 1887, thirteen rabbis were called to St. Petersburg to discuss the matter of instituting secular studies in the *ḥadarim* and yeshivot of Russia. Among those who attended this meeting were the Neẓiv, R. Yosef Dov Halevi Soloveitchik, then in Brisk, R. Yiḏḥak Elḥanan Spektor of Kovno, and R. Yiḏḥak Ya'akov Reines of Riga. Their

three weeks of deliberations resulted in a formal document, dated March 1, 1887, which clearly stated that every yeshiva is obliged to hire a teacher for instruction in spoken and written Russian, and that a separate building should be made available near the yeshiva where such instruction would take place. However, only these limited subjects would be taught and only from books acceptable to the *rosh yeshiva*; no “free-thinking” works or novels would be allowed, nor would the teacher be permitted to engage his students in any conversations about them. The first three signatories to the document were “Yizhak Elhanan Spektor mi-Kovno,” “Yosef Dovber Halevi Soloveitchik” and “Naftali Zevi Yehudah Berlin mi-Volozhin.”¹³²

In a lead editorial written two months later in *ha-Meliz*, its editor Alexander Zederbaum correctly noted that the permission granted by these rabbis to include secular studies in the curriculum of the religious schools did not reflect their true feelings on the matter:

לפי ידיעתם הפנימית אסור להביא תועבה זו אל החרדים המעלים באוש וק"ו ב"ב של ק"ו לבתי הישיבות, רק משום אין ברירה וכאלו כפאם שד מוכרחים המה לותר מעט, עכ"פ מפני מראית עין, בתקוותם כי לא תקום ולא תהיה.¹³³

In fact, even a year and a half later, the Neziv still adamantly refused to implement this agreement in his own yeshiva. In a discussion with a visitor in the winter of 1888–89, he insisted that he would never allow the teaching of Russian in Volozhin. He gave his guest a lesson in *bitahon* (faith) and told him that even if such a decision would result in the yeshiva being forced to close, he was not concerned because he was confident that it would reopen shortly thereafter.¹³⁴

Nevertheless, some time later, the Neziv was forced to relent and even he allowed the introduction of secular studies in Volozhin, albeit on a very limited basis.

He had already conceptually adumbrated such a policy a number of years earlier in his celebrated responsum already cited. There he wrote:

עלינו להתחזק לעסוק בתורה ויתעסקו בזה הרב וראשי הקהלה שיהיו המלמדים גדולי תורה, וגם אם יצטרכו עפ"י המלכות ללמוד למודי חול גם כן, יהא בהשגחה מהרב וראשי ישראל שיהא המורה י"א, וזה אי אפשר אם יהי' כל אחד דואג לבניו, ואין בידו לברור איזה מורה הגון ומחזיק הדת, ע"כ הוא מבריח את בנו מלמודי חול בע"כ וזה גורם שהבן בועט בהוריו והולך בדרך עקלקלות כדי להשיג למודי חול, אבל אם יהי' הדבר מוטל על הציבור וראשי הקהל לא יהיו מבריחים את בניהם לגמרי מלמודי חול, אבל יהא ההשגחה עפ"י המורה אשר יבחרו שלא יסורו מדרך התורה וגם יהיו מפנים שעות מרווחים לעסק התורה וזה יתקיים בידם האף שאין לקוות שיצאו מלימודם בשעות כאלה להוראה. . . .¹³⁵

Although there is no question that the Neziv never intended to adopt this policy in his own beloved yeshiva, the time came when he was forced to do so. The story is told, with all its pain and poignancy, by his son:

וכאשר הגיע הדבר לידייך, שלא היתה ברירה אחרת והיה הכרח להסכים ללימוד הלשון הרוסית בישיבה, עשו זאת כמי שכפאו שד וביקשו תחבולות לצמצם עד כמה שאפשר את מספר המהווייבים בזה וגם את שעות הלימוד הזה. הצליחו לקבל מאת הממשלה רשות, שלא כל בני-הישיבה, שמספרם היה רשמית מאתיים וחמישים, אלא רק החלק החמישי מהם, חמישים איש בלבד, יצטרכו לעסוק בלימודים הרוסיים. את החמישים בחרו מבין הגדולים והקשישים, בייחוד האברכים העומדים כבר לצאת מן הישיבה וחושבים לקבל על עצמם רבנות. זמן הלימוד של הלשון הרוסית הוקצב לשתי שעות ביום, השעות האחרונות מן הזמן הרגיל ללימוד בישיבה, היינו משבע וחצי עד תשע וחצי בערב.¹³⁶

A Gentile teacher was found and a room was set aside on the ground floor of the yeshiva for this purpose. There even was a picture of Czar Alexander III on the wall of that room.¹³⁷

However, none of the students wanted to attend these classes, considering them a waste of precious time better spent on Torah studies. When the instructor came to teach his class, he would find no one in the classroom. Afraid that the authorities would discover this and react harshly towards the yeshiva, the Neziv,

בכבודו ובעצמו היה נכנס לישיבה, ניגש אל השולחן שלפניו יושבים הרשומים כתלמידים ב"כיתה" ומתחנן אליהם: "אנא, בני, בטלו שעה מתלמוד-תורה ורדו אל הכיתה", המורה מחכה שם זה כחצי-שעה ואין איש. עשו זאת למען הישיבה, תלמוד-תורה דרבים... ובני-הישיבה, ברצון או שלא ברצון, היו מוכרחים לסגור את ספרי הגמרא ו"יורה דעה"–שלמדו רוב "האברכים"–ויורדים למטה. היסורים הנפשיים של המורה הגדול שהיה מוכרח לבקש בקשה זו, ושל התלמידים המבוגרים, שהיו מוכרחים לעשות זאת למענו, יכול לתאר לעצמו כל בעל-נפש.¹³⁸

There is other evidence as well for the formal study of Russian literature in the yeshiva. The son of a student who was there at the time wrote that:

באותם הימים חידשה הממשלה הרוסית את דרישתה מן הישיבה להנהיג את לימוד הלשון הרוסית ויסודי ההשכלה החילונית. בשנים קודמות הבטיחה הנהלת הישיבה לקיים דרישה זו והשתמטה. עכשיו שוב לא היתה ברירה, וכדי להציל את הישיבה מסכנת נעילה, בחרו מתוך בני הישיבה חבורה של "מתנדבים" שידעו בהם שירתם קודמת לחוכמתם, והטילו עליהם לשמוע לקח בשיעורים הרוסיים. אבי היה אחד "הגיבורים הללו"... עכשיו ניתנה לו הזדמנות להוסיף על ראשית השכלתו החילונית שקנה בוילנה, ובזכות הלימוד הזה שלמד "בעל-כורחו" בוואלוז'ין, היה אחד המעטים ברבנים שבדורו, שטעמו בקצה משענתם גם מן ההשכלה הכללית.¹³⁹

However, government leaders together with their cohorts among the maskilim continued their pressure to force secular studies into Volozhin on a more widespread scale, and the Neziv's reluctant compromise and valiant efforts to keep his yeshiva alive were no longer able to stem the tide. On December 22, 1891, the Russian government ordered the yeshiva to conform to a very comprehensive set of rules which governed all aspects of the yeshiva's existence, including its curriculum, student body, teaching staff and administration. Of the dozens of regulations, four

were most critical and serious: (1) secular studies were to take place daily between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. (#6a); (2) no more than ten hours a day could be spent studying (#6b); (3) there was to be no studying at all at night (#6c); (4) the members of the administration and teachers all had to be able to speak Russian and hold a diploma testifying to their knowledge of some secular subjects (#2, 27).¹⁴⁰ No longer were secular studies in Volozhin simply a matter involving only the fifty best students for two hours at the end of the day, but it was to transform the entire character of the yeshiva. The bulk of the day was to be spent on secular studies and only a few hours could be devoted to Torah, with virtually none at all during the winter season when the day was very short.¹⁴¹ It was obviously impossible for the Neziv to agree to such extreme demands. He said, as reported by his nephew, R. Barukh Epstein,

בתנאים כאלה מה לו ולהשיבה, ומה להשיבה לו, ומה לשניהם מקום בכותלי בית הישיבה בוואלאז'ין, אחרי כי לא "ישיבה" תהי' ותקרא עוד, כי אם "בית ספר" מדיני, כללי.¹⁴²

The end was near, and it came some ten weeks later. On Wednesday morning, February 3, 1892, Russian authorities entered the yeshiva and ordered all the students to leave. The sad and tragic scene was later described as follows:

ביום ד' ה' שבט בבקר בשנת תרנ"ב (בעצם יום הולדתו של ר' חיים ברלין, ראש הישיבה האחרון שלפני הסגירה, שגם בזה ראו אות ומופת, מעין "אצבע אלקים") הקיפו את הישיבה פקידים ושוטרים רבים מכל מחוז אשמינה, פלך ווילנה, וגם המון אכרייהכפרים מערייהסביבה נקראו בפקודת הרשות, ובמעמד שריהמחוז, סגן הקטיגור מהעיר והיא ועוד פקידים, ובמעמד כל ראשיהישיבות והתלמידים נקראה פקודת הממשלה על הישיבה ותלמידיה ועל גזירת המלכות לסגרה. ככלות קריאת הפקודה נתן צו לבני הישיבה לעזוב מיד את בית התלמוד, ובמשך שלשת ימים עליהם לעזוב גם את העיר, ואחרי שפנו את בית הישיבה והוציאו את ספריה התורה וספרי התלמוד-הניחיו חותם שחור על דלתות הישיבה, מקדשה התורה, ונסגרו על מסגריהם. . . . וכל אלה שהיו עדייראיה של אותו המחוז האיום אומרים, שכל מי שלא ראה תמונת תוגה מחרידה כזו לא ראה כחזיון הזה מימיו. מקום הישיבה, הקפתה על ידי שוטרים ואכרים, יציאת התלמידים, או יותר נכון, גרושם מתוך הבית, הוצאת כלל הבית, ספריה התורה וספריה התלמוד, וביחוד רגעהפרדו של ראשיהישיבה הנצי"ב, שהוצא במצב התעלפות החוצה, נשען על זרועותיהם של תלמידיו-אין פלא אם למראה כל זה סמרו שערות הרואים וכל העם געה בבכי.¹⁴³

Another description noted that:

כאבלים וכמנונים עזבו התלמידים את הישיבה, כל אחד התבודד לעצמו והתאבל על חורבן הישיבה וחורבן עולמו. . . . קבוצות קבוצות נשמטו בני הישיבה ונסעו לבתיהם נכאירוח וחפוייראש. מכל הכפרים נתאספו האכרים עם עגלותיהם להוביל את בני הישיבה אל התחנה. קור נורא שלט או בחוץ, סופת שלג התחוללה באויר וכסתה את פני כל העולם, והבחורים ישבו בתוך העגלות, מקופלים ומכונסים בתוך בגדיהם וצוררותיהם, תפושי יגון ואכולי צער. . . .¹⁴⁴

Ultimately the yeshiva closed over the issue of secular studies. Because it was clear that the Neziv did not want any secular studies in Volozhin, events developed that ultimately led to its close by the Russian authorities. Perhaps aware of the fact that his attempt at a compromise ended in failure, he warned his son on the day before he died never to allow *any* secular studies in his beloved institution.¹⁴⁵

After close to ninety years of serving as the premier Torah institution in Eastern Europe, if not the world, the Volozhin yeshiva was no longer. Some recalled that when they passed by the now empty and darkened yeshiva building in the middle of the night “they heard like a soft voice crying and wailing.”¹⁴⁶ Although the yeshiva did reopen some years later, it never regained its former position of supreme prominence in the yeshiva world. New centers of Torah learning sprang up in other cities like Mir, Telshe, Slabodka, Radin, Kletsk, Slonim, Kaminez, Lublin and Novaredok. Although eclipsed by these other yeshivot after 1892, Volozhin remained the model for them all and its powerful influence is felt even today, almost a full century later.

I would like to end with a “concluding unscientific postscript,” to borrow the title of a work by Kierkegaard. The discipline of history was never a priority for great Torah scholars. In his *haskamah* to R. Judah ha-Levi Lifshitz’s *Sefer Dor Yesharim*, R. Hayyim Ozer Grodzenski noted that:

גדולי התורה מאז ומעולם לא שמו לבם להעמיק בידיעת דברי הימים לבני ישראל, אף כי לכתוב בספר תולדות גדולי וחכמי ישראל מדור דור. דברי רבותינו הראשונים והאחרונים הלא חיים וקיימים בפיות תופשי התורה. כל בתי מדרש מלאים מן אל זן מרבנן ותלמידיהון הלומדים תורת חיים כאילו נאמרו וגשנו היום ואין עושין נפשות לצדיקים שדבריהם הן זכרונם.

גם אלה הגדולים המועטים אשר התעסקו בדברי הימים, היו מעשיהם בזה בדרך מקרה ובדרך אגב, ומבחרי עתותיהם הקדישו לידיעת התורה הרחבה מארץ מדה והעמוקה מני ים, בה שמו מעינם לכל מקצועותיה, ומשם שאבו גם ידיעת דברי הימים, בדברי רבותינו העמיקו דקר ולא בתולדותיהם ומקומות מושבותיהם.

Torah scholars of old did not devote their attention to delving deeply into a knowledge of Jewish history, even to write the biographies of the great scholars of Israel of each generation. Behold, the words of our earlier and later scholars are alive and preserved in the mouths of bearers of Torah. . . . “We do not build monuments to the righteous; their words are their memorials.”

Even the few great scholars who were involved in history, did so only by chance and in passing. They dedicated their choicest time to the knowledge of Torah whose measure is broader than the earth and deeper than the sea. They placed all their concentration upon all its areas and from there drew also the(ir) knowledge of history. They analyzed in depth the words of our rabbinic masters, not their history or the places of their dwelling.¹⁴⁷

In a recently published essay, Rabbi Shimon Schwab justified this neglect of history on positive ideological grounds rather than simply considering it as reflecting an avoidance of *bittul Torah*. His comments are remarkable and deserve being cited in detail:

There is a vast difference between history and storytelling. History must be truthful, otherwise it does not deserve its name. A book of history must report the bad with the good, the ugly with the beautiful, the difficulties and the victories, the guilt and the virtue. Since it is supposed to be truthful, it cannot spare the righteous if he fails, and it cannot skip the virtues of the villain. For such is truth, all is told the way it happened. Only a נביא mandated by his Divine calling has the ability to report history as it really happened, unbiased and without prejudice.

Suppose one of us today would want to write a history of Orthodox Jewish life in pre-holocaust Germany. There is much to report but not everything is complimentary. Not all of the important people were flawless as one would like to believe and not all the mores and lifestyles of this bygone generation were beyond criticism. An historian has no right to take sides. He must report the stark truth and nothing but the truth. Now, if an historian would report truthfully what he witnessed, it would make a lot of people rightfully angry. He would violate the prohibition against spreading Loshon Horah which does not only apply to the living, but also to those who sleep in the dust and cannot defend themselves any more.

What ethical purpose is served by preserving a realistic historic picture? Nothing but the satisfaction of curiosity. We should tell ourselves and our children the good memories of the good people, their unshakeable faith, their staunch defense of tradition, their life of truth, their impeccable honesty, their boundless charity and their great reverence for Torah and Torah sages. What is gained by pointing out their inadequacies and their contradictions? We want to be inspired by their example and learn from their experience.

When Noah became intoxicated, his two sons Shem and Japhet, took a blanket and walked into his tent backwards to cover the nakedness of their father. Their desire was to always remember their father as the Tzaddik Tomim in spite of his momentary weakness. Rather than write the history of our forebears, every generation has to put a veil over the human failings of its elders and glorify all the rest which is great and beautiful. That means we have to do without a real history book. We can do without. We do not need realism, we need *inspiration* from our forefathers in order to pass it on to posterity.¹⁴⁸

It is interesting that Rabbi Schwab does not deny that “important people” and “good people” have failings and inadequacies. Rather, he suggests that they are best overlooked and forgotten.

However, even this remarkable argument (which merits its own analysis) explains only the neglect and disregard of history; it does not justify the *distorting* of history. While it may explain why one should not write

about the past, it does not justify distorting the past when one *does* write about it. Inventing the past is as foolish as foretelling the future, but more scandalous.

This point was made forcefully and tellingly by Rabbi Joseph Elias in a review article written over twenty years ago. He wrote:

. . . the later history of the Jew can help most significantly toward a proper understanding of our sacred heritage and of our duty here and now. Through it we can convey to our youth the principles which underline and emerge from our past, and their application to the problems and issues of our time. Let it be well understood however: *we must see the present in the light of the past and not, reversely, project the passing ideas of the day, its confusions and uncertainties, into the past.* . . .

If he (i.e., “the Torah historian”) permits his values and judgements to be subject to the influence of his age, he will arrive at a distorted picture of both the Torah world and the secular world—and he will even project these distortions into that past from which he could have learned the truth.¹⁴⁹

This is exactly the issue at stake here. There is absolutely no doubt whatsoever that the Neziv allowed secular studies in Volozhin. There is also no doubt whatsoever that he did so entirely against his will, when circumstances totally beyond his control forced him, “as if compelled by a demon,” to do so. The assertion of the executive director of the Lakewood Cheder School that, with regard to this specific matter, *My Uncle the Netziv* “does not correctly portray the Neziv, his hashkofos, kedusha, and yiras shamayim as related to us by his revered talmidim, the ones who knew him best” is utterly unfounded and reflects nothing more than the projection of the present onto the past. To recall a book, and censor R. Barukh Halevi Epstein’s *Mekor Barukh* on these grounds, if indeed these were the grounds, is wrong. On the contrary, R. Epstein’s portrayal of the Neziv is totally accurate. The greatness of this outstanding *gadol ba-Torah* and his heroic devotion to his beloved yeshiva are not diminished one iota by presenting the *true* story of the closing of Volozhin with all its pain, passion and poignancy.¹⁵⁰

NOTES

My thanks to Dr. Michael Stanislawski and Dr. Shnayer Z. Leiman for carefully reading this article and for their many helpful suggestions.

1. See Moshe Dombey, *My Uncle the Netziv* (New York, 1988), 90–91. For the original, see Rabbi Barukh Halevi Epstein, *Mekor Barukh* (Vilna, 1928; reprinted New York, 1954), IV, 1794–95:

וכאשר נקרה שנתאחר “המגיד” לבא בזמנו, בערב שבת, ה” אומר, כי באותה השבת חש הוא כאלו חסר לו דבר מזה, כמו שמרגיש “בשבת חזון” זה הרגיל ללכת למרחץ בכל ערב שבת, ובערב שבת חזון נמנעים מזה.

וכן הי' אומר, כי העתונים יחשבו לו כמביאי אליו ברכת שלום מכל העולם, ועל כן יוקרם ויחל להם.

See also *My Uncle, ibid.*, 87: “My uncle said kiddush, had a piece of cake, and then discussed important Jewish issues that he had come across in that week’s newspapers.” This is an incorrect rendition of the original Hebrew which states that he actually read the newspaper on Shabbat morning:

ואחר שקידש דודי על היין וטעמו מיני מאפה קלה, ואחר שקרא מעט בעתונים שנתקבלו מחדש . . . החלנו לסדר עצמנו לסעודה.

See *Mekor Barukh, ibid.*, 1790.

2. *My Uncle, ibid.*, 169: “Every book in his library, secular or holy, was always put away in its proper place. . . .” This too is an incorrect translation of the original text. See *Mekor Barukh, ibid.*, 1983: על מקומו הנועד . . .
 3. *My Uncle, ibid.*, 74–75; *Mekor Barukh, ibid.*, 1772–73. This, in contrast to the Rashba who was engaged with others in the process of his Torah study and therefore his works were clear, correct and without error.
- For the Neziv’s favoring of *havruta* learning over solitary study, see Eliezer Leoni, ed., *Volozhin: Sipurah shel ha-Ir ve-shel Yeshivat “Ez Hayyim”* (Tel Aviv, 1970), 119; Hannah Katz, *Mishnat ha-Neziv* (Jerusalem, 1990), 56–57.
4. *My Uncle, ibid.*, 206–08; *Mekor Barukh, ibid.*, 2024–26.
 5. Before leaving this discussion it is interesting to note that the translator himself engaged in some censorship, simply skipping over very significant words when he was uncomfortable with them. For example, in describing the learned first wife of the Neziv, Rebbezin Rayna Batya, the daughter of R. Izeleh Volozhiner and granddaughter of R. Hayyim, Rabbi Epstein described her as follows:

כך הי' דרכה לשבת תמיד בסמיכות לתנור החורף אשר בבית האוכל, וגם בימי הקיץ, ולפניה שלחן צבור ספרים שונים: תנ"ך, משניות, עין יעקב, מדרשים שונים, מנורת המאור, קב הישר, צמח דוד, שבט יהודה, ועוד כמה וכמה ספרים ממינים אלה ומספרי אגדה, וכל עיונה וכל שימת לבה עם כל חושיה והרגשותיה—בתוך הספרים, ולא וזה ידה כמעט מהם; ומבל הנוגע לכלכלת הבית ידעה אך מעט מאוד, וכמעט לא מאומה.

See *Mekor Barukh, IV*, 1949–50.

The following is M. Dombey’s “translation” of this passage:

It was her habit to sit by the oven in the kitchen—even in the summertime—next to a table piled high with *seforim*. These included a *Tanach*, *Ein Yaacov*, various *midrashim*, *Menoras HaMaor*, *Kav HaYashar*, *Tzemach Dovid*, *Shevet Yehudah*, and many other books of this nature. Much of her time and attention were dedicated to pouring over these books, which interested her far more than running a household.

See *My Uncle*, 156. Clearly conspicuous by its absence is R. Epstein’s assertion that his aunt studied *Torah she-ba'al peh*, i.e., *Mishnayot* and “*Sifrei Aggadah*.” Dombey also left out her complaints that women play only a secondary role in Judaism, cited by R. Epstein, *loc. cit.*

Parentally it is interesting to note that Moshe Dombey and N. T. Erlin continued publishing English renditions of the *Mekor Barukh*. Their rendition of the first volume of that work appeared in 1989 as *Recollections*, this time printed by Targum Press in Southfield, Michigan.

6. See Aharon Suraski, *Toledot ha-Hinukh ha-Torani bi-Tekufah ha-Hadashah* (Bnei Brak, 1967), 290, n. 9; *idem.*, *Marbizei Torah u-Mussar* (Tel Aviv, 1976), I, 45–46. Suraski notes in both places that the original of the will was found in the possession of the late R. Aryeh Levin of Jerusalem. I do not know if it was ever printed in full. For the earliest printing of this passage, see the “Yalkut Da’at Torah” appendix to R. Elhanan Wasserman, *Ikveta di-Mishiha* (1962), 89–90,

#51. It is taken from a letter written by R. Aryeh Levin in which he notes that R. Hayyim Berlin gave it to him right before he died in 1912 and that he kept it in his possession ever since.

According to Ben-Zion Yadler, *bi-Tuv Yerushalayim* (Bnei Brak, 1967), 372–73, R. Hayyim wrote this in a letter shortly before he died so that its contents should be known for posterity. Furthermore, he notes that its authenticity was challenged after R. Hayyim’s death in 1912 and that the Bet Din Zedek of Jerusalem vouched for its legitimacy a little over three years later.

7. This tradition was first recorded in R. Shmuel Graineman, *Sefer Hafez Hayyim ‘al ha-Torah* (2nd ed.: Bnei Brak, 1953), 251. It is cited by Suraski, *Toledot, ibid.*, 290–91; *Marbizeit, ibid.*, 46–47. Suraski, however, seems to be unsure about an important detail of this tradition. In *Toledot* he reports this conference as having taken place *before* the Russian government closed the yeshiva; in *Marbizeit* he reports that it took place afterwards. Clearly the first is more logical. See also R. Moshe Meir Yoshor, *he-Hafez Hayyim* (Tel Aviv, 1958), I, 223–24, who cites this story and its conclusion in the name of the Hafez Hayyim’s second son-in-law, R. Zevi Hirsch Levinson, who had been a student in Volozhin. See too the English rendering of this work by Charles Wengrov, *The Chafetz Chaim* (New York, 1984), 294–95. It does not appear in the earlier English and Yiddish versions of Yoshor’s book, both published in 1937. See, too, “Yalkut Da’at Torah, *ibid.*, 109–10, #82. There it is reported in the context of the Hafez Hayyim refusing to join the non-Zionist delegation to the newly founded Jewish Agency which he was requested to do in order to protect the financial interests of East European yeshivot. Citing this story, the Hafez Hayyim is said to have demurred, remarking, “Better that all the yeshivot be closed, God forbid, so that I need not have to work together with sinners (ולא אצטרך לרת יד לפושעים).”

For a recent restatement of this tradition, see Samuel A. Turk, “Maimonides a Centrist? Hardly,” *The Jewish Press* (March 30, 1990), 22B:

In this article Dr. [Norman] Lamm counts as one of his moderationists the late Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin (known as the Netziv). But Dr. Lamm must be aware of Rabbi Berlin’s heroic struggle against the introduction of secular subjects in his yeshiva. If the Russian government would have gone through with the plan of forcing the Volozhin Yeshiva to introduce secular subjects into their curriculum, he was prepared to close it down.

Remarkably, Dr. Lamm himself recently repeated this assertion. See his *Torah Umadda* (Northvale, 1990), 40:

Perhaps the most dramatic proof of the seriousness with which the Lithuanian yeshivot viewed the incursion of secular learning as a threat to their whole way of life is the decision by the Netziv (Rabbi Naftali Zevi Yehudah Berlin) to close the Yeshiva of Volozhin rather than accept the demand by the Russian Minister of Education, in 1881 [?!], to introduce even the most elementary general studies into the curriculum of the yeshiva.

8. See *Mekor Barukh, op. cit.*, 1678: בעל אחותי הגאון דודי, אחי אמי, ואחרי כן גם גיסי, בעל אחותי הגאון דודי, אחי אמי, ואחרי כן גם גיסי, רבי נפתלי צבי יהודה ברלין; *My Uncle, op. cit.*, 13. For a list of the progeny of this union, see Rabbi Meir Berlin (Bar-Ilan), *Rabban shel Yisra’el* (New York, 1943), 155–56. For a picture of this second wife of the Netziv, see *idem.*, *mi-Volozhin ‘ad Yerushalayim* (Tel Aviv, 1971), I, after p. 128; E. Leoni, *op. cit.*, 476.
- For 1871 as the year of the death of the Netziv’s first wife, see “Berlin, Naftali Zevi Yehudah (ha-Neziv),” *Enziklopediah shel ha-Ziyonut ha-Datit* (Jerusalem, 1958), I, 404.
9. See, for example, R. Yehudah Leib Hakohen Maimon (Fishman), *Lema’an Ziyon lo Ehesheh* (Jerusalem, 1954), 110; *idem.*, *Sarei ha-Me’ah VI* (Jerusalem, 1965), 116–17.

10. See *Mekor Barukh*, *op. cit.*, Preface, Chapter I, p. 3. See too, *ibid.*, IV, 1797–98: ואני עורני בשחרות שנותי לומר בישיבה בוואלאזין תחת חסותו והשגחתו של דודי הנציב מוואלאזין.
11. *Ibid.*, 1789, 1798, 1979, 2033.
12. *Ibid.*, 2000–12.
13. *Ibid.*, 1681.
14. *Ibid.*, 2029.
15. *Ibid.*, 1984.

For more on the closeness between R. Epstein and the Neziv during the former's stay in Volozhin, see S. N. Gottleib, *Oholei Shem* (Pinsk, 1912), 103; A. Z. Tarshish, *Rabi Barukh Halevi Epstein* (Jerusalem, 1967), 71–80.

16. Perhaps the reason is that although R. Epstein received *semikhah* from his uncle and Rabbi Yosef Dov Halevi Soloveitchik of Brisk and published a number of *seforim*, of which the *Torah Temimah* commentary is the most well known, he served neither as a *rosh yeshiva* or rabbi but rather as an accountant and bank manager in Pinsk. See A. Z. Tarshish, *ibid.*, 81–105; B. Hoffman, ed., *Toyznt Yor Pinsk* (New York, 1941), 334–34; Hillel Seidman, “ha-Rav R. Barukh Epstein–Pinsk,” *Eleh Ezkerah* (New York, 1956), I, 142–49; Aaron Rothkoff, “The Baal Torah Temimah,” *Jewish Life* XXXVIII:3 (January–February, 1971), 54–59; below, p. 92.

It is also important to note that serious charges of plagiarism and even textual distortion were leveled against R. Epstein in his *Torah Temimah* commentary. See, for example, Natan Zevi Friedman, “‘Al ‘Torah Temimah’,” *Sinai* LVIII (1965), 85–90, for a list of fifty such examples; Ya‘akov Bazak, “‘Al Derekh Ketivat ‘Torah Temimah’,” *Sinai* LXVI (1969), 96–100. For an especially sharp attack, see R. Menaḥem M. Kasher, *Torah Shelemah* XXVI (1974), 285–301. My thanks to Mr. Ali Scharf for bringing these sources to my attention.

R. Epstein also claimed that many “*ḥakhmei yisra’el, ge’onei ha-Torah, [and] gedolei ha-dor*” read the work and were very impressed with it. He also printed part of a *haskamah* to it written by Rabbi A. Y. Kook. See R. Epstein’s introduction to the work, pp. 14–15.

For a picture of the cleanshaven (?) R. Epstein together with other rabbis at the installation of Rabbi Eliezer Silver in Springfield, Massachusetts in 1925, see Aaron Rothkoff, *Bernard Revel: Building of American Jewish Orthodoxy* (Philadelphia, 1972), 152.

17. For studies of the Volozhin Yeshiva in general, see Samuel K. Mirsky, “Yeshivat Volozhin,” *Mosdot Torah bi-Eyropah bi-Binyanam u-ve-Hurbanam* (New York, 1956), 1–86; E. Leoni, *op. cit.* (n. 3); Moshe Zinowitz, ‘*Ez Ḥayyim* (Tel Aviv, 1972). Most useful is Shaul Stampfer, *Shalosh Yeshivot Lita’iyot bi-Me’ah ha-Tesha-‘Esreh* (Hebrew University dissertation, 1981), 9–131, 235–92. For a discussion of R. Ḥayyim’s motivation(s) behind the founding of the yeshiva (e.g., following the mandate of his teacher, the Gaon of Vilna; as an anti-Hasidic action; to counteract the low state of Torah study in his day), see S. Stampfer, *ibid.*, 12–20 and the sources cited there.

My thanks to Dr. Yosef Burg for making his copy of Zinowitz’s book available to me.

18. This letter was published in Simḥah Assaf, *Mekorot le-Toledot ha-Ḥinukh bi-Yisra’el* (Tel Aviv, 1936), III, 178–79; Moshe Shmuel Shmukler, *Toledot Rabbenu Ḥayyim mi-Volozhin* (Jerusalem, 1968), 45–48. See also Zevi Scharfstein, *Toledot ha-Ḥinukh bi-Yisra’el* (Jerusalem, 1960), I, 341; *idem.*, *Gedolei Hinukh bi-‘Amenu* (Jerusalem, 1964), 53; Naḥum Lamm, *Torah Lishmah* (Jerusalem, 1972), 26–27; trans. into English as *Torah Lishmah: Torah for Torah’s Sake* (Hoboken, 1989), 24; A. Suraski, *Toledot, op. cit.*, 287; Shim’on Zak, “Yeshivat Volozhin,” *Yahadut Lita* I (1959), 207; M. Zinowitz, *ibid.*, 41–42; E. Leoni, *ibid.*, 82.

R. Yosef was the author of *Kapot Zahav* (Vilna and Grodno, 1836) and was the uncle of R. Zadok ha-Kohen of Lublin.

19. The letter was printed in *ha-Peles* II (1902), 293. See also M. S. Shmukler, *ibid.*, 59.
20. See M. S. Shmukler, *ibid.*, 63–64; Ya'akov Halevi Lifshitz, “Dor ve-Soferav,” *ha-Kerem* (Warsaw, 1887), 180. For a list of R. Ḥayyim’s students and their impact on nineteenth century Jewry, see M. Zinowitz, *op. cit.*, 98–177.
21. R. David Tevele, *Sefer Bet David* (Warsaw, 1854), Derush #9, 45b. See also the eulogy of R. David of Novaredok, *Sefer Galya Masekhet* (Vilna, 1844), II, 33b:

וכמה מורה הוראות יצאו מכלל ישיבתו שבטוחים להיות מורי הוראות בישראל וגם
תלמידיו אשר הגיע להוראה החזיק מהם אשר יצקו מים על ידו להחזיק ישיבות בכמה
מקומות . . . שוכה ללמוד וללמד ולהעמיד תלמידים הרבה למאות ולאלפים.

For other contemporary assessments of R. Ḥayyim’s achievements, see the appropriations to his *Nefesh ha-Ḥayyim*.

For a description of the yeshiva in the days of R. Ḥayyim, see S. K. Mirsky *op. cit.*, 1–30; M. Zinowitz, *op. cit.*, 32f.; E. Leoni, *op. cit.*, 82–98; S. Stampfer, *op. cit.*, 9–30.

For secondary literature on R. Ḥayyim, in addition to the references above, see Moshe Zevi Neriah, “Pirkei Volozhin,” *Shanah bi-Shanah* 5723 (1962), 525–32; reprinted in an expanded form as a separate pamphlet (Jerusalem, 1964), 7–20; E. Etkes, “Shitato u-Po’olo shel R. Ḥayyim mi-Volozhin ki-Teguvat ha-Ḥevrah ha-‘Mitnagdit’ le-Ḥasidut,” *PAAJR* XXXVIII–XXXIX (1970–1971), Heb. section, 1–45; *idem.*, *R. Yisra’el Salanter* (Jerusalem, 1984), 41–66; Yekutiel A. Kamelhar, *Dor De’ah* (New York, 1953), II, 130–34; Zevi Kaplan, “Kav bi-Derekh ha-Limud shel Rabbenu Ḥayyim mi-Volozhin,” *Sinai* XXIV (1949), 168–73; *idem.*, “le-Darko shel Rabbenu Ḥayyim mi-Volozhin be-Halakhah,” *Sinai* LXIX (1971), 74–99; S. Charna, “Rabi Ḥayyim mi-Volozhin bi-Tor Pedagog,” *Shevilei ha-Ḥinukh* IV:6 (1928), 309–17; Shmuel Bialobluzki, *Em le-Masoret* (Tel Aviv, 1971), 207–20; R. Yehudah Leib Hakohen Maimon (Fishman), *Toledot ha-Gra* (Jerusalem, 1955), 114–37; *idem.*, *Sarei ha-Me’ah* (7th edition: Jerusalem, 1965), II, 142–89; Walter S. Wurzbarger, “Rabbi Ḥayyim of Volozin,” *Guardians of Our Heritage*, ed. by Leo Jung (New York, 1958), 189–206; trans. into Hebrew in L. Jung, ed., *Notrei Moreshet* (Jerusalem, 1968), 26–38; B. Gross, *L’Ame de la Vie de Rabbi Ḥayyim de Volozhyn* (Paris, 1968); *idem.*, “Al Tefisat-Olamot shel R. Ḥayyim mi-Volozhin,” *Bar Ilan* XXII–XXIII (1988), 121–60. Most recently, see Mordecai Pachter, “Ben ’Akosmizm le-Te’izm—Tefisat ha’Elohut bi-Mishnato shel R. Ḥayyim mi-Volozhin,” *Mehkarim bi-Hagut Yehudit*, ed. by Sarah A. Heller-Wilensky and Moshe Idel (Jerusalem, 1989), 139–57.

For more on various aspects of R. Ḥayyim’s thought and behavior, see below.

22. See R. Izeleh’s introduction to his father’s *Nefesh ha-Ḥayyim* (Vilna, 1874), 4b.
23. For information about R. Izeleh and the yeshiva under his leadership, see S. K. Mirsky, *op. cit.*, 31–37; M. Zinowitz, *op. cit.*, 178–208; E. Leoni, *op. cit.*, 99–108; S. Stampfer, *op. cit.*, 31–36. For a list of R. Izeleh’s students, see M. Z. Neriah, *Pirkei Volozhin* (1962), 543–44; (1964), 34–35. More information on R. Izeleh is forthcoming in S. Bialobluzki, *op. cit.*, 221–22; M. S. Shapiro, “R. Izeleh mi-Volozhin,” *ha-Do’ar* XLIII:7 (December 14, 1962), 107–09; reprinted in *R. Moshe Shmuel ve-Doro* (New York, 1964), 39–49.
24. R. Eliezer Yizhak was the son of R. Hillel of Horodno who, in turn, was the son-in-law of R. Ḥayyim. A number of his responsa (together with some by R. Ḥayyim and R. Hillel) were published by his son, R. Ḥayyim Hillel Fried, in *She’elot u-Teshuvot Hut ha-Meshulash* (Vilna, 1882).

For more information on R. Eliezer Yizhak and the yeshiva under his leadership, see S. K. Mirsky, *ibid.*, 34–38; M. Zinowitz, *ibid.*, 209–18; S. Stampfer, *ibid.*, 37–39.

25. Studies of the Neziv, which include much information about the Volozhin yeshiva during his tenure, include: R. Barukh Halevi Epstein, *Mekor Barukh*, *op. cit.*, 1677–2039; Meir Berlin (Bar-Ilan), *Rabban shel Yisra'el*, *op. cit.* (n. 8); *idem.*, *mi-Volozhin 'ad Yerushalayim*, *op. cit.* (n. 8), I, 81–196; Moshe Zevi Neriah, “ha-Neziv mi-Volozhin,” *Yahadut Lita I* (1959), 365–69; Zevi Scharfstein, *Gedolei Hinukh bi-'Amenu*, *op. cit.* (n. 18), 57–67; R. Shlomoh Yosef Zevin, *Ishim ve-Shittot* (Tel Aviv, 1966), 9–37.

For information about the yeshiva under the Neziv's leadership, see S. K. Mirsky, *ibid.*, 39–82; M. Zinowitz, *ibid.*, 221f.; E. Leoni, *op. cit.*, 112f.; S. Stampfer, *ibid.*, 39–131.

26. For R. Israel Zamoscz (1700–1772), R. Shlomo b. Moses of Chelm (1717–1781), the Gaon of Vilna (1720–1797), R. Barukh of Shklov (1740–after 1812), R. Menahem Mendel Lefin (1749–1826), R. Yehezkel Feivel (1756–1834), and R. Manasseh of Ilya (1767–1831) as precursors or “forerunners” of Russian Haskalah, see Emanuel Etkes, “Immanent Factors and External Influences in the Development of the Haskalah Movement in Russia,” *Toward Modernity: The European Jewish Model*, ed. by Jacob Katz (New Brunswick, 1987), 13–32; published in a Hebrew version as “le-She'elat Mevasrei ha-Haskalah bi-Mizrah Eyropah,” *Tarbiz* LVII:1 (1987), 95–114.

See also *idem.*, “ha-Gra ve-ha-Haskalah—Tadmit u-Mezi'ut,” *Perakim be-Toledot ha-Hevrah ha-Yehudit bi-Yemei ha-Benayim u-va-'et ha-Hadashah Mukdashim li-Professor Ya'akov Katz* (Jerusalem, 1980), 192–217. For an early view of the role of the Gaon of Vilna in Russian Haskalah, see A. H. Weiss, “Reshit Zemihah ha-Haskalah be-Russeyah,” *mi-Mizrah u-mi-Ma'arav I* (Vienna, 1894), 9–16.

27. For information about the Haskalah in Russia throughout the nineteenth century, see Jacob S. Raisin, *The Haskalah Movement in Russia* (Philadelphia, 1913); Menasheh G. Margulis, *Dor ha-Haskalah be-Russeyah* (Vilna, 1910), an expurgated Hebrew version of a previously published Russian work; Josef Meisel, *Geschichte der Aufklarungs-bewegung unter der Juden in Russland* (Berlin, 1919); Yisrael Zinberg, *Toledot Sifrut Yisra'el* (Tel Aviv, 1960), VI, 153 f; VII (Tel Aviv, 1971), 17f.; Yosef Klausner, *Historiyah shel ha-Sifrut ha-'Iurit ha-Hadashah* (Jerusalem, 1930–50); Elias Tcherihower, *Yehudim be-'Itot Mahapekhab* (Tel Aviv, 1957); Yehuda Slutsky, “Zemihatah shel ha-'Intelegenziyah ha-Yehudit-Russit”; *Zion* XXV (1960), 212–37; *idem.*, “Sikkum 'Agum,” *he-'Avar* XIX (1972), 5–19.

For more recent studies, see Yehuda Slutsky, *ha-'Itonut ha-Yehudit-Russit be-Me'ah ha-Tesha-'Esreh* (Jerusalem, 1970); *idem.*, *Tenu'at ha-Haskalah bi-Yahadut Russeyah* (Jerusalem, 1977); Mordekhai Levin, *'Erkhei Hevrah ve-Kalkalah ba-Idiologiyah shel Tekufat ha-Haskalah* (Jerusalem, 1975); Azriel Shochet, *Mossad "ha-Rabbanut mi-Ta'am" bi-Russeyah* (Haifa, 1976); *idem.*, “Hitroffit ha-Zipiyot ha-Meshihiyot 'ezel Rishonei ha-Maskilim bi-Russeyah ve-ha-Hathalot le-She'ifat ha-Hishtalvut bi-Hevrah ha-Russit,” *Iyyun u-Ma'as* II (1981), 205–26; Steven J. Zipperstein, “Haskalah, Cultural Change, and Nineteenth-Century Russian Jewry: A Reassessment,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* XXXV:2 (1983), 191–207; Michael Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1983); *idem.*, *For Whom Do I Toil?: Judah Leib Gordon and the Crisis of Russian Jewry* (New York, 1988); Steven J. Zipperstein, *The Jews of Odessa* (California, 1985).

For the history of the Society of the Promotion of Culture Among the Jews of Russia, see Judah (Leon) Rosenthal, *Toledot Hevrat Marbei Haskalah bi-Yisra'el*

- bi-'Erez Russyah* I (St. Petersburg, 1885); II (St. Petersburg, 1890); *Encyclopedia Judaica* XV (1972), 58–62.
28. See Shmuel Ettinger, "Takanot 1804," *he-'Avar* XXII (1976), 87–110.
 29. See M. Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I*, *op. cit.*, 35–42.
 30. *Ibid.*, 123–33; Azriel Shohat, "ha-Hanhagah be-Kehillot Russyah 'im Bitul ha-Kahal," *Zion* XLII (1977), 143–223.
 31. See Azriel Shochat, *Mossad "ha-Rabbanut mi-Ta'am" be-Russyah*, *op. cit.*; Isaac Levitats, *The Jewish Community in Russia, 1772–1884* (New York, 1943), 147–62.
 32. For secondary literature on Russian efforts to reform Jewish education during this period and the role of Lilenthal, see Emanuel Etkes, "Parshat ha-'Haskalah mi-Ta'am' ve-ha-Temurah bi-Ma'amad Tenu'at ha-Haskalah be-Russyah," *Zion* XLIII (1978), 264–323 (Etkes focuses specifically on how the government's interest in compulsory enlightenment of the Jews through education affected the inner balance within the Jewish community between the Maskilim and their opponents); Isaac Levitats, *ibid.*, 69–86 ("Compulsory Enlightenment"); *idem.*, *The Jewish Community in Russia, 1844–1917* (Jerusalem, 1981), 45–55 ("Government Schools"), 113–28 ("Religious and Educational Activities"); A. Z. Rabinowitz, "le-Toledot ha-Hinukh ve-ha-Haskalah shel ha-Yehudim bi-Russyah," *ha-Hinukh* III:2 (1912), 102–16; III:4 (1912), 248–61; D. Kahane, "Lilienthal ve-Haskalat ha-Yehudim bi-Russyah," *ha-Shilo'ah* XXVII (1912), 314–22, 446–57, 546–56; Zevi Scharfstein, *Toledot ha-Hinukh bi-Yisra'el*, *op. cit.* (n. 18), 313–24; M. Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I*, *op. cit.*, 43–109. For more on Lilenthal's effort, see below.

For the shared interest of the maskilim and the Russian government, see Gideon Kaznelson, *ha-Milhamah ha-Sifrutit ben ha-Haredim ve-ha-Maskilim* (Tel Aviv, 1954), 168.
 33. For a treatment of the attitude of maskilim towards the yeshiva, see Moshe Avital, *ha-Yeshiva ve-ha-Hinukh ha-Mesorati bi-Safrut ha-Haskalah ha-'Ivrit* (unpublished doctoral dissertation: Yeshiva University, 1977).
 34. See Y. Klausner, *op. cit.* (n. 27), V (Jerusalem, 1955), index; Abraham Sha'anani, *ha-Sifrut ha-'Ivrit ha-Hadashah li-Zeramehah* (Tel Aviv, 1962), II, 44–47; *EJ* VII (1971), 1366–68.
 35. A. Zuckerman, "Androlomusya," *ha-Shahar* VII:5 (January, 1876), 289. For the forced conscription of the Jews and the hatred it aroused, see M. Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I*, *op. cit.*, 13–34.
 36. Avraham A. Sh-n (= Shirotkin), "Tel she-Hakol Ponim 'Elav," *ha-Shahar* VIII:3 (1876), 112–19; VIII:4 (1876), 161–69. See especially pp. 115, 163–65.
 37. See Y. Klausner, *op. cit.*, (n. 27), IV (Jerusalem, 1963), 120–23; Simon Bernstein, *bi-Hazon ha-Dorot* (New York, 1928), 90–102; *EJ* VII (1971), 1232–34.
 38. Arez (= Alexander Zederbaum), "Ha-Herev ha-Mithapekhet," *ha-Meliz* XV:28 (July 15, 1879), 559–63. This incident was first reported in *ha-Meliz* XV:25 (June 24, 1879), 503–04. There too Zederbaum had only words of praise for the yeshiva.
 39. *ha-Meliz* XV:32 (August 12, 1879), 648.
 40. "Yeshivah shel Ma'alah," *ha-Meliz* XVI:36 (December 21, 1880), 743–48. The subjects that Zederbaum suggested be included in the yeshiva's curriculum as absolutely indispensable for a successful rabbi were Jewish and Russian history and language, Jewish philosophy, mathematics and geography.
 41. "u-Ba ha-Katuv ha-Shelishi ve-Yakhria' Benehem," *ha-Meliz* XVII:6 (February 23, 1881), 119–20. That issue also included some reminiscences about R. Hayyim of Volozhin by Shimon Friedenstein.
 42. "Yeshivah shel Ma'alah," *ha-Meliz* XXV:9 (February 13, 1885), 137–40.

In the interim, Zederbaum denied a published report that the Neziv grabbed a copy of *ha-Meliz* out of the hands of a student, "as the Angel of Death [grabs] a

soul” and consigned it to flames as a fulfillment of the biblical injunction of “and you shall sweep out evil from your midst” (וּבְעֵרָה הָרַע מִקִּרְבְּךָ) (Deut. 13:6). He wrote: כי ידענו את הרב המאודה”ג פנים אל פנים ולא יכולנו להתאים את מזוג ודבוריו בנחת and claimed that he would consider the report untrue until verified by another source. See *ha-Meliz* XIX:61 (August 20, 1883), 977–78. A few weeks later Zederbaum published a report which stated that although the Neziv did outlaw *ha-Meliz* in the yeshiva, he never burned a copy of it. See *ha-Meliz* XIX:69 (September 17, 1883), 1108–09.

See also Menahem Mendel Bonimoviz, “Masa Volozhin,” *ha-Meliz* XXV:68 (September 21, 1885), 1097–98.

43. See *ha-Meliz* XXV:10 (February 16, 1885), 159; XXVI:32 (May 7, 1886), 497; XXVI:40 (June 4, 1886), 623–24; XXVI:55 (July 19, 1886), 837; XXVI:105 (September 14, 1886), 1360–61; XXVI:125 (October 11, 1886), 1573.

See too *ha-Meliz* XXVI:149 (November 18, 1886), 1826–27 for a letter of the Neziv thanking the publishers of *ha-Meliz* for a donation he recently received from them and *idem.*, XXVI:151 (November 21, 1886), 1849–50 for another list submitted by the Neziv of people who recently made donations to the yeshiva.

For more on the fire in Volozhin, see E. Leoni, *op. cit.*, 59–60, 68, 114; M. Zinowitz, *op. cit.*, 268–69.

The fact that the *rosh yeshiva* of Volozhin did not refrain from publishing in the pages of a Haskalah newspaper (specifically his request for assistance from American Jewry), coupled with a desire expressed by Leon Rosenthal, leader of the Society for the Promotion of Culture Among the Jews of Russia, to direct the Society’s attention back towards traditional texts and sources encouraged some maskilim to suggest a collaboration between these two institutions. They suggested that the Society should found a school in Volozhin which could teach the yeshiva students all the secular knowledge they would need to know in a short period of time. In this way, a graduate from both institutions could serve in the dual capacities of a traditional rabbi as well as an official crown rabbi (“*rav mita’am*”). See Shlomoh Mandelkorn, “Rehokim Na’asu Kerovim,” *Ozar ha-Sifrut* II (1888), 41–44.

44. For Berdyczewski and Volozhin, see Yeshurun Keshet, *M. Y. Berdyczewski (bin Gurion): Hayyav u-Po’olo* (Jerusalem, 1958), 53–59. See also M. Zinowitz, *ibid.*, 320. His general criticism of the traditional educational system combined with a personal nostalgia for Volozhin is described in Moshe Avital, *op. cit.* (n. 33), 82–83, 236–45.

A student in the (re-opened) Volozhin yeshiva at the end of the century recalled in his memoirs that his colleagues would pass around a volume of Tractate Nedarim which had Berdyczewski’s name printed on it. See Aryeh Leib (Louis) Hurwich, *Zikhrone Mehanekeh Ivri* (Boston, 1960), I, 114.

45. M. Y. Berdyczewski, “Toledot Yeshivat ‘Ez Hayyim,” *ha-Asif* III (1886), 231–42. It is interesting to note that the Neziv’s son, R. Hayyim Berlin, wrote Berdyczewski to correct two statements he made in this article. R. Berlin’s comments were printed in another journal edited by Berdyczewski, *Bet ha-Midrash* I (Cracow, 1888), 72–73.
46. *Idem.*, “‘Olam ha-‘Azilut,” *ha-Kerem* (Warsaw, 1887), 63–77. Eliezer Atlas, the editor of *ha-Kerem*, followed this article with one of his own in which he defended the yeshiva from any criticism. See “‘Olam Barur,” *ibid.*, 77–82. He wrote:

הישיבות בכלל—וישיבת וואלאזין כאחת מהנה—הנה המרכז ונקודת ההשענה שכל בית ישראל נשען עליו, כי על כן חלילה לנגוע בהן במלא גימא.

See p. 79.

For a literary analysis of the short-story part of this article, see Dan Almagor, *Aspects of the Narrative of Micha Yosef Berdichevsky (Bin Gurion)* (unpublished doctoral dissertation: University of California, Los Angeles, 1968), 51–56.

47. See Bar be-Rav, "Zeror Mikhtavim," *ha-Meliz* XXVIII:19 (February 5, 1888), 183–85; XXVIII:30 (February 17, 1888), 303–07; XXVIII:53 (March 16, 1888), 541–44; XXVIII:56 (March 20, 1888), 573–74. For evidence of the impact these articles had on the student body in Volozhin, see Joshua Leib Radus, *Zikhronot* (Johannesburg, 1936), 68–69.
- For an incomplete list of articles in *ha-Meliz* dealing with the yeshiva in Volozhin, see E. Leoni, *op. cit.*, 173–79. See too M. Zinowitz, *op. cit.*, 318–19.
48. M. Reines, "Akhsanyot shel Torah," *Ozar ha-Sifrut* III (Cracow, 1889–1890), 5–21.
49. There is no evidence for the attempted closings of the yeshiva in 1824, 1856 and 1858 in Jewish sources, probably because it, in fact, continued to function without any interruption. All information on these events is available only in Russian archival sources, printed by Iulii Gessen (= J. Hessen), "Sud'by Volozhinskago Eshibota" [The Fortunes of the Volozhin Yeshiva], *Perezhitoe* I (1908), documentary section, 19–22 and summarized by S. Stampfer, *op. cit.*, 34, 117–19. There is no evidence at all to indicate that the yeshiva actually closed between 1879–1881 as suggested by J. S. Raisin, *op. cit.*, 254 and J. D. Eisenstein, *Ozar Yisra'el* V (New York, 1951), 235.
50. After 1879, Russian officials paid yearly visits to the yeshiva. See *ha-'Asif* III, 236; M. M. Bonimoviz, *op. cit.* (n. 42), 1098; *ha-Zefirah* XIV:53 (March 16, 1887), 3.
51. See M. Avital, *op. cit.*, 192–210.
- For a discussion of the influence of Haskalah among Volozhin's students and the yeshiva administration's reaction to it, see S. Stampfer, *op. cit.*, 74–80, 83–84, 89–91, 93.
52. See Jacob Mark, *Gedoylim fun unzer Tsayt* (New York, 1927), 302. This decision radically affected his personal life. No longer able to live with his wife and her traditional family, he forced her to accept a divorce from him and left town.
- However, Harkavy continued to feel a warmth for the yeshiva and, close to thirty years later, when the yeshiva was in danger of closing in 1879, the Neziv travelled to St. Petersburg to ask him to intercede on his behalf with the government and he did. See Binyamin Goldberg, *Zikhron le-'Aharonim* (Grajewo, 1924), 15. He also helped the Neziv obtain a manuscript of the *She'iltot de-R. Abai Gaon* found in the Department of Jewish Literature and Oriental Manuscripts at St. Petersburg's Imperial Library which he headed. See Moshe Shmuel Shapiro, "R. Naftali Zevi Yehudah Berlin," *R. Moshe Shmuel ve-Doro*, *op. cit.* (n. 23), 54.
53. See Rosa Shomer Bachelis, ed., *Shirei Shomer ve-Zikhronotav* (Jerusalem, 1952), 55–68, esp. pp. 60, 62.
- In all likelihood, the R. Shlomoh mentioned here is R. Shlomoh David Dinkin, the *mashgiah* in Volozhin referred to above, p. 88. Students in the yeshiva referred to him as "the shed," (הַשֵּׁד), based on the first letters of his name. See Yizhak Nissenbaum, *'Aleï Heldi* (Jerusalem, 1969), 45. When the Neziv would leave the yeshiva, R. Shlomoh David would substitute for him and deliver the *shiur* and, after the yeshiva closed in 1892 and the Neziv left Volozhin, the townspeople asked him to serve as their rabbi. He held the post for six and a half years until he died in 1898. See E. Leoni, *op. cit.*, 53; M. Zinowitz, *op. cit.*, 302–03.
54. See *Mekor Barukh*, *op. cit.*, I, 887–890; A. Z. Tarshish, *op. cit.* (n. 15), 81–84.
55. *Mekor Barukh*, *ibid.*, 878–86; A. Z. Tarshish, *ibid.*, 84–88.
56. Fuenn (1818–1890) was a Hebrew writer, teacher, leader of the Hibbat Zion movement and prominent member of Vilna's Jewish community. As a more traditional *maskil*, he enjoyed a close relationship with the Neziv.
- Schulman (1819–1899) taught Hebrew language and literature in Vilna's state-sponsored Jewish school and wrote mostly Hebrew translations and adaptations of historical works which were popular in religious circles. He wrote a nine-volume history of the world based on the work of Georg Weber and other

German historians, entitled *Divrei Yemei 'Olam*, and sent seven copies of it to be distributed among the students in Volozhin. See *ha-Shaḥar* VIII:4 (1876), *op. cit.* (n. 36), 163, n. In the 1830's, he was a student of R. Izeleh's in Volozhin. See K. A. Bartini, "Kalman Shulman," *Yahadut Lita* I (1959), 442; S. L. Citron, *Yozrei ha-Sifrut ha-'Ivrit ha-Ḥadashah* (Vilna, 1922), I, 143–44.

57. M. Y. Berdyczewski, "'Olam ha-'Azilut," *op. cit.* (n. 46), 67–68.

For a similar description of an interest displayed by students in matters of *ḥokhmat yisra'el*, see Abba Balosher, "Bialik bi-Volozhin," *Moznayim* IV (1935), 127. A slightly different version of this essay was published as a separate pamphlet, *Ḥayyim Naḥman Bialik bi-Volozhin, u-Volozhin bi-Bialik* (Kaunas = Kovno, 1935). For other evidence that some students read *ha-Shaḥar*, in spite of its anti-religious animus, see Zalman Epstein, "Yeshivat Volozhin," *ha-Zefirah* (Elul, 1903); reprinted in *Kitvei Zalman Epstein* (St. Petersburg, 1904), I, 119 and M. Zinowitz, *op. cit.*, 318. For Zalman Epstein in Volozhin, see E. Leoni, *op. cit.*, 279–81.

In another of his articles on Volozhin discussed above (p. 89), Berdyczewski noted that late at night:

רבים ישקרו גם על דלתות ההשכלה באין מפריע. זה ילמוד שפת רוסיא וגם אשכנז. וזה שפתנו העבריה ודקדוקיה, זה יהגה בספרות ישראל וזה בספרות הרוסית או אשכנזית, זה יהגה בהנדסה וזה בדברי ימי עולם.

See *ha-'Asif* III (1886), 237.

Moses Eleazar Eisenstadt, later author and rabbi in Paris, read (Georg) Weber's general history of the world before going to bed each night. See M. E. Eisenstadt, "Yeshivat Volozhi," *he-'Avar* XIV (1967), 162. See also the memoirs of Joseph Rothstein who studied in Volozhin at the end of the 1880's: ובלילה הגו בספרים ספרי השכלה... כאחד מבני הישיבה הייתי עוסק ביום בתלמוד ובליילה בספרי השכלה. See Yisrael Klausner, *Toledot ha-Agudah Nes Ziyonah bi-Volozhin* (Jerusalem, 1954), 117.

58. *ha-Meliz* XXVIII:30 (February 17, 1888), 307.

59. *Ibid.*, 304–05; see below, p. 104. For more information on Haskalah among the students in Volozhin, see *idem.*, *ha-Meliz* XXVIII:19 (February 5, 1888), 183.

60. For a study of these novels and their impact, see David Patterson, *Abraham Mapu* (London, 1964).

61. See E. Z. Lewin-Epstein, *Zikhronotai* (Tel Aviv, 1932), 31–32; M. Lipson, *mi-Dor Dor* (Tel Aviv, 1968), I, 42, #963. *Abavat Zion* was the title of a book written by R. Yehezkel Landau. For similar stories, see *ha-Shaḥar* VIII:3 (1876), 115 and Y. Nissenbaum, 'Alei Haldi, *op. cit.* (n. 53), 45, n.

Lewin-Epstein himself came to Volozhin at the age of fourteen after having studied German and Russian. He had already read William Tell of Schiller before entering the yeshiva. As soon as he left Volozhin, he devoted himself to reading Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem* in the original German and Fichte's *Reden an die deutsche Nation*. See *ibid.*, 26–8, 33.

For other evidence that the novels of Mapu were banned (and read) in Volozhin, see Binyamin Goldberg, *Zikhron le-Aḥaronim*, *op. cit.*, 6; Y. L. Maimon (Fishman), *Sarei ha-Me'ah* (Jerusalem, 1965), V, 197–98.

62. See *ha-Shaḥar*, *ibid.*, 115–17; *ha-Meliz* XV:32 (August 12, 1879), 648; B. Goldberg, *op. cit.*, 6, 14.

See too J. S. Raisin, *op. cit.*, 245:

The Tree of Life College in Volozhin became a foster-home of Haskalah. The rendezvous of the brightest Russo-Jewish youths, it was the centre in which grew science and culture, and whence they were disseminated far and wide over the Pale. Hebrew, German, and Russian were surreptitiously studied and taught. Buckle and Spencer, Turgenief and Tolstoi were secretly passed from hand to hand, and read and studied with avidity.

According to B. Goldberg, *ibid.*, 14, one student studied Schiller's *Die Rauber*; another source describes how a student became an expert in Joshua Steinberg's Hebrew grammatical work, *Ma'arkhei Leshon 'Ever*. See M. Peker, "bi-Yeshivat Volozhin," *ha-Tor* (2.7.1924), #40; cited by E. Leoni, *op. cit.*, 262.

63. See *ha-Meliz* XIX:61 (August 20, 1883), 977; above n. 42.

64. See *ha-'Asif* III, 238. See too B. Goldberg, *op. cit.*, 4, for a similar list. He wrote that "the day on which an issue was received was a great holiday" ("yoma tava le-rabbanan"). He also noted that he had never seen a Russian newspaper until he came to Volozhin. At one point, he was discovered reading the *Voskhod* and promised one of the authorities in the yeshiva never to read any newspaper again. But

מוכן שבהבטחתי זו לא עמדתי גם יום אחד, כי מי יעמוד בנסיון קשה כזה? הן גם אחרי
המשגיח בכבודו ובעצמו היו מרגנים כי גליוני "רוס יעור" נושרים מחיקי, ולמה זה אהיה
אנכי קתולי יותר אדוק מהאפיפיור?

See *ibid.*, 5–8.

65. See Bialik's letter to Y. Klausner written in the summer of 1903, printed first in *Sefer Bialik*, ed. by Yaakov Fichmann (Tel Aviv, 1934), 80; reprinted in *Iggerot Hayyim Nahman Bialik*, ed. by F. Lachover (Tel Aviv, 1937), 165. Elsewhere Bialik wrote:

נסעתי לולוז'ין על סמך השמועות שפשטו בעירי בין הבחורים שבולוז'ין לומדים בגלוי
או בסתר יחד עם גמרא גם שבע חכמות ושבעים לשון ובין וולוז'ין לבין ברלין בפשע
אחד.

66. *Sefer Bialik, ibid.*, 81; *Iggerot, ibid.*, 166.

67. H. N. Bialik, "Iggerot Rishonot mi-Volozhin," *Knesset* II (Tel Aviv, 1937), 29; reprinted in *Iggerot, ibid.*, 21–22.

68. See above, n. 66. Nevertheless, Bialik recalled many years later that he did not attend any *shiur* while in Volozhin, neither that of the Neziv nor that of R. Hayyim Soloveitchik. See H. N. Bialik, *Devarim she-Be'al Peh* (Tel Aviv, 1935), II, 233.

69. "bi-'Ohel ha-Torah" was published in *Knesset* II (Tel Aviv, 1937), 4–5. It is dated 5650 Elul, V-n (= August–September, 1890, Volozhin).

70. See above, n. 66.

71. For a comprehensive presentation of Bialik's stay in Volozhin, see Fishel Lachover, *Bialik: Hayyav ve-Yezivotav* (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 1964), 46–100. See also E. Leoni, *op. cit.*, 31–34.

72. Abba Balosher, "Bialik bi-Volozhin," *op. cit.* (n. 57), 127, 133. This article is full of information about the state of Haskalah in Volozhin at this time.

For more on the openness to Haskalah in Volozhin at the time of Bialik's arrival there, see M. Zlotkin, "Yeshivat Volozhin bi-Tekufat Bialik," *Shevivim* I:1 (Paris, 1954), 56–64.

73. B. Epstein, *Mekor Barukh, op. cit.*, 2023.

In 1912, after the yeshiva reopened, students receiving financial aid were required to sign a document prohibiting them from reading newspapers and secular literature. They responded to this new regulation by going on a strike for three months. See Yizhak Rivkind, "Shevilei Volozhin, Nehirim ve-lo Nehirim," *ha-Do'ar* XLII:23 (April 6, 1962), 367.

74. See R. Judah L. Maimon (Fishman), *Sarei ha-Me'ah, op. cit.*, II, 143.

75. Dubno's book was never published but R. Hayyim's *haskamah* to it was printed by Shlomo Yosef Fuenn, *Sefer Safah le-Ne'emanim* (Vilna, 1881), 137. It was reprinted by Yizhak Rivkind, "Shevilei Volozhin, Nehirim ve-lo Nehirim," *ha-Do'ar* XLII:22 (March 30, 1962), 349. See S. Stampfer, "R. Hayyim mi-Volozhin ve-Haskamotav," *Alei Sefer* IV (1977), 163; *idem.*, *Shalosh Yeshivot, op. cit.*, 26.

76. This was cited by R. Avraham Simḥah, son of R. Ḥayyim's brother Nahman, in his approbation to Kalman Schulman's Hebrew translation of Josephus' *The War of the Jews* (Vilna, 1862). Much of the literature on R. Ḥayyim (see above, n. 21) focuses on the closeness of his relationship with the Gra.
- See also *Mekor Barukh*, *op. cit.*, IV, 1168 where R. Epstein records R. Ḥayyim referring to ספרי חוקרי תכונת האדמה בארצות שונות which he read.
77. B. Z. Katz, *Rabbanut, Hasidut, Haskalah* (Tel Aviv, 1958), II, 179. The reference here is to a statement R. Barukh quoted in the name of the Gra: כפי מה שיחסר לאדם ידיעות משארי החכמות לעומת זה יחסר לו מאה ידות בחכמת התורה. See R. Barukh of Shklov, *Sefer Uklidus* (Hague, 1780), introduction.
78. For this last point, see E. Etkeš, "ha-Gra ve-ha-Haskalah," *op. cit.* (n. 26).
79. See M. Lilienthal, "My Travels in Russia," in David Philipson, *Max Lilienthal: American Rabbi* (New York, 1915), 344. For more on this visit, see below.
80. M. Berlin, *Raban shel Yisra'el*, *op. cit.* (n. 8), 20.
81. *Idem.*, *mi-Volozhin 'ad Yerushalayim*, *op. cit.* (n. 8), I, 99.
82. *ha-'Asif* III (1886), 233.

R. Ḥayyim's biographer, Moshe Shmuel Shmukler, added that R. Izeleh also knew some ancient Latin. See his *Toledot Rabbenu Ḥayyim*, *op. cit.* (n. 18), 81; *idem.*, "R. Izeleh mi-Volozhin," *op. cit.* (n. 23), 108. See also R. Ya'akov Yeḥiel Weinberg, *Seridei Esh* (Jerusalem, 1969), IV, 284: רבי יצחק שנתפרסם בידיעותיו; הרב ר. Reines, "Akhsanyot shel Torah," *op. cit.* (n. 48), 9: הרב ר. Reines, "Akhsanyot shel Torah," *op. cit.* (n. 48), 9: נודע גם לאיש מלומד בחכמה וחכם בהיותו העולם; Yizḥak Rivkind, "mi-Yalkutei ha-Volozhini," *Reshumot* V (1927), 379:

גם בחכמות חיצוניות ידיו לו רב. ידע לשונות וגם מדעים. לא היתה זרה לו גם בביתו הרפואה ובמקרים שונים נסה לשמש בה גם למעשה. אחרי מותו מצאו חכמת הרבה ספרים מהספרות הפולנית.

See also S. Bialobluzki, *op. cit.*, 221: במתמטיקה גם בהתענין; R. Barukh Epstein, *Mekor Barukh*, *op. cit.*, II, 1075; A. I. Paperna, "Zikhronot u-Shemu'ot," *Reshumot* I (1925), 149: הוא היה גם חכם בהיותו העולם ומעורב עם הבריות ובתור; E. Leoni, *op. cit.*, 102; S. Stampfer, *op. cit.*, 34–35.

For R. Izeleh's medical knowledge, which was sometimes deficient, see Samuel Loeb Citron, *Yozrei ha-Sifrut ha-'Iurit ha-Ḥadashah*, *op. cit.* (n. 56), I, 144. See also R. Izeleh's comments on Ḥumash, *Peh Kadosh* (Warsaw, 1890), 16: כי ידוע לזהרופאים מומחים שהאדם שהוא עייף מהדרך לא טוב לו שישתה הרבה כי אולי ח"ו ייזק לו. However, this bit of information does not require sophisticated medical knowledge.

R. Izeleh's few pejorative comments about "ḥokhmot ḥizoniyyot" in his commentary on Avot are standard and do not prove an overall negative attitude. See *Sefer Mili di-Avot* (Vilna, 1887), 10, 49–50.

83. I. Rivkind, *ibid.* See too E. Leoni, *op. cit.*, 101.
84. For information about this "haskamah," see Perez Sandlar, *ha-Bi'ur le-Torah shel Moshe Mendelssohn ve-Siya'ato* (Jerusalem, 1940), 180f; Sha'ul Stampfer, "R. Ḥayyim mi-Volozhin ve-Haskamotav," *'Aleī Sefer* IV (1977), 164, n. 8. See also *ha-'Asif* III, 239–40; S. L. Citron, "Milhemet ha-Dinasti'ot bi-Yeshivat Volozhin," *Reshumot* I (1925), 126; Shmuel Bialobluzky, "Merkazei ha-Torah bi-Lita," *Yahadut Lita* I (1959), 191; reprinted in *idem.*, *Em le-Masoret* (Tel Aviv, 1971), 221; Yizḥak Rivkind, "Shevilei Volozhin," *op. cit.* (n. 73), 349; M. Zinowitz, *op. cit.*, 194; E. Leoni, *op. cit.*, 99. It is explicitly indicated at the beginning of the book that it was "printed at the order of the government."

This same list of Jewish leaders (including R. Izeleh) appears as well at the beginning of an edition of Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* also prepared by Mandelstamm in 1850–1852 under the auspices of the conference that met in 1843. In

connection with that, M. Stanislawski noted that, "The title page in Hebrew and German both contain an approbation by leading rabbis and writers of the day, phrased to sound like a *haskamah*, which it was not." See his "The Tsarist Mishneh Torah: A Study in the Cultural Politics of the Russian Haskalah," *PAAJR* L (1983), 165, n. 2. This is equally true with the *Bi'ur*.

85. See M. Lilienthal, *op. cit.*, 348. For a note of caution, however, regarding the historical accuracy of Lilienthal's memoirs, see M. Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I*, *op. cit.*, 73.

For an example of the obvious discomfort that R. Izeleh's high regard for Mendelssohn's *Bi'ur* caused in traditional circles, see M. S. Shapiro, "R. Izeleh mi-Volozhin," *op. cit.* (n. 23), 109. He paraphrased Lilienthal's description of his visit to R. Izeleh printed in his memoirs but, when he came to this passage, substituted the following: "ואחר התפילה אני מבאר להם את פרשת השבוע עם רש"י וביאור שלי!"

86. The other delegates were R. Menahem Mendel Schneerson of Lubavitch representing the Hasidic community, the director of the modern school in Odessa, Bezalel Stern, representing the *maskilim*, and the wealthy traditional Jew, Israel Halperin from Berdichev.
87. M. Lilienthal, *op. cit.*, 340.
88. See M. Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I*, *op. cit.*, 69–70.
89. M. Lilienthal, *op. cit.*, 344–45, 353. See too A. Z. Rabinowitz, "le-Toledot ha-Hinukh ve-ha-Haskalah shel ha-Yehudim bi-Russiyah," *ha-Hinukh* III:2 (1912), 109; יצחק יצחקין: בדרבו סר לולוזין ונתקבל בכבוד גדול מאת ראש הישיבה ר' יצחק יצחקין (1912), 109.
90. See A. I. Paperna, "Zikhronot u-Shemu'ot," *Reshumot* I (1925), 150. Paperna reported that he heard this story from Shlomo Yosef Fuenn (*ibid.*, 151, n.). See also Y. L. Hakohen Maimon (Fishman), *Sarei ha-Me'ah* (Jerusalem, 1965), IV, 30–31; E. Leoni, *op. cit.*, 104–05. For a slightly different version of this story, see R. Barukh Epstein, *Mekor Barukh*, *op. cit.*, IV, 1920; R. Ya'akov Lipschitz, *Zikhron Ya'akov* (Kovno-Sladobka, 1924), I, 82–83. Liphshitz reported in the name of R. Hayyim Berlin, son of the Neziv and grandson of R. Izeleh, that his grandfather told this question and answer to Lilienthal privately.
91. A. Paperna, *ibid.*, 150–51. This version is accepted by M. S. Shapiro, "R. Izeleh mi-Volozhin," *op. cit.*, 108 and M. Zinowitz, *op. cit.*, 187–88.
92. R. Epstein, *Mekor Barukh*, *op. cit.*, 1921.
93. Y. L. Maimon, *op. cit.*, 31. According to R. Hayyim Berlin's version, R. Izeleh burst out crying when he told this to Lilienthal and the latter broke down and cried as well. R. Hayyim also reported that R. Izeleh shared another Torah thought with Lilienthal and concluded: "אין לך להתפלא על הרעש והחרדה הגדולה: אשה תוקף הממשלה אשר יחדו בני עמנו על החדשות הנעשות על ירך בבח תוקף הממשלה." Once again, both cried. See also Eliyahu Tcherikover, *Yehudim bi-'Itot Mahapekha* (Tel Aviv, 1957), 125.

It is interesting that, in his memoirs, Lilienthal also referred to the Kol Nidre sermon of R. Izeleh that year but made no mention of this text or its application. See M. Lilienthal, *op. cit.*, 352–53.

In his description of Lilienthal's trip, David Kahane simply writes: "ל"ט דרבו לולוזין ושם התראה עם הגאון ר' יצחק ב"ר חיים. הוא התענה בעיר זו ביום הכפורים ובערב סוכות הלך למינסק." See D. Kahane, "Lilienthal ve-Haskalah ha-Yehudim bi-Russiyah," *ha-Shilo'ah* XXVII (1912), 549.

94. See R. Barukh Epstein, *Mekor Barukh*, *op. cit.*, II, 1076–78. See also M. Zinowitz, *op. cit.*, 189–92; M. Stanislawski, *op. cit.*, 78.

Lilienthal noted that the Neziv was present during the discussions between himself and R. Izeleh. See M. Lilienthal, *op. cit.*, 349. He referred to the Neziv by his Yiddish name Rabbi Lebele (*ibid.*, 344, 348). For other such references, see *Shirei Shomer ve-Zikhronotav*, *op. cit.* (n. 53), 60; E. Z. Lewin-Epstein,

Zikhronotai, *op. cit.* (n. 61), 29; Samuel Leib Citron, *Dray Literarishe Doyres*, IV, 160–65.

For a discussion of these different versions of R. Izeleh's reaction to Lilienthal, see E. Etkes, *op. cit.*, 294–96.

95. M. Stanislawski, *ibid.*, 78.

96. See also M. Zinowitz, *op. cit.*, 189–91.

97. See above, p. 97.

98. M. Lilienthal, *op. cit.* (n. 79), 350.

99. See M. Y. Berdyczewski, *ha-'Asif* III (1886), 234; M. S. Shmuckler, *Toledot Rabbenu Hayyim*, *op. cit.*, 80–81; *idem.*, "R. Izeleh mi-Volozhin," *op. cit.*, 107–08; M. Zinowitz, *op. cit.*, 195; S. Bialoblużki, *op. cit.*, 221–22. Berdyczewski reported that the yeshiva's enrollment went from 200 to 100 students under R. Izeleh's tenure.

100. See M. Stanislawski, *op. cit.*, 150–51. I disagree with Dr. Stanislawski (*ibid.*) that R. Izeleh's "collaborationist" politics with the Russian authorities were responsible for this decline. As noted earlier, there is no evidence to assume that his intention was any different than that of R. Menahem Mendel of Lubavitch who also agreed to participate in the 1843 rabbinical conference and whose intention, all agree, was to protect the interests of the traditional community to the extent that it was possible for him to do so. In fact, there was a tradition in R. Izeleh's circle that he included a warm coat among the items he asked to be packed for him for the trip to the conference lest, it is told, he be unsuccessful in his attempts and be exiled to Siberia where he would need such an item of clothing for protection. See Y. Liphshitz, *op. cit.*, I, 101. What may have made yeshiva students wary, rather, was R. Izeleh's known general openness to extra-Talmudic knowledge. See also M. Stanislawski, *ibid.*, 78; Yizhak Rivkind, "mi-Yalkutei ha-Volozhini," *Reshumot* V (1927), 380.

For R. Izeleh's role during the conference and his reaction to its results (inner concern and outer optimism), see Y. L. Hakohen Maimon, *Sarei ha-Me'ah*, *op. cit.*, II, 190–92; IV, 31–2; E. Etkes, *op. cit.*, 299, n. 134. Cf. Y. Liphshitz, *ibid.*, 102, who records that R. Izeleh gave a public pessimistic report in Wilkomir, after returning from the conference in St. Petersburg.

According to Maimon, *ibid.*, IV, 33, R. Izeleh convened a secret conference of rabbis and lay leaders in 1845 to plan strategy about how to avert the dangers in the government's policies that lie ahead.

101. See M. Berlin, *Rabban shel Yisra'el*, *op. cit.*, 24; *idem.*, *mi-Volozhin 'ad Yerushalayim*, *op. cit.*, 133. See too Abba Balosher, *op. cit.* (n. 57), 131:

חביבה היתה עליו תורתם של ראשונים שלא כל הלומדים מצויים אצלם כגון
ירושלמי, ספרא וספרי, תוספתא ומכילתא, שאלתות דרב אחאי, ותשובות של
גאונים.

102. For R. Hayyim's practice, see R. Izeleh's introduction to his father's *Nefesh ha-Hayyim*: בכל רובי תורותיו אשר זכה וזכה את הרבים לא הניח ידו מלהגיד לבני עירו *ha-Hayyim*: אחר תפלת השחר פרשה מסדרא דשבוע יום יום
R. Simḥah Re'uven Edelmann, *ha-Tirosh* (Warsaw, 1901), 78a:

נהירנא כד הוינא בר שיתסר למדתי בקיץ תקצ"ו בישיבת וולאזין והרב הגאון האב"ד
מ' יצחק ד"ל הגיד לפני התלמידים יום יום אחר תפלת השחר פרשה בתורה מסדר
השבוע.

See also A. Kupernik, *op. cit.* (n. 41), cited in *ha-'Asif* III, 240 and E. Leoni, *op. cit.*, 100; M. Z. Neriah, *Pirkei Volozhin*, *op. cit.*, 541, n. 4; M. Zinowitz, *op. cit.*, 180.

R. Y. L. Hakohen Maimon was wrong when he wrote that the Neziv was the first after the Gaon of Vilna to teach the weekly Torah portion to his students. See *Sarei ha-Me'ah* (Jerusalem, 1965), V, 185.

103. See R. Shlomoh Yosef Zevin, *Ishim ve-Shitot* (Tel Aviv, 1966), 20–27; M. Bar-Ilan (Berlin), *mi-Volozhin*, *op. cit.*, 133–34.

For the Neziv's exegetical methodology, see the introduction to his *Ha'amek Davar*, entitled "Kidmat ha-'Emek"; S. Y. Zevin, *Ishim ve-Shitot*, *ibid.*, 27–36.

A careful analysis of the Neziv's critical methodology, based on a close reading of all his works, is a major desideratum.

104. See R. Barukh Epstein, *Mekor Barukh*, *op. cit.*, IV, 1824. See too Meir Bar-Ilan (Berlin), *mi-Volozhin 'ad Yerushalayim*, *op. cit.*, 139–40.

105. See Meir Bar-Ilan (Berlin), *mi-Volozhin 'ad Yerushalayim*, *ibid.*, 138. See too *ibid.*, 163:

אבא ז"ל עצמו היה קורא עתונים. . . מלבד עתונים עבריים היו באים לביתנו תמידים כסדרם גם עתונים גרמניים שאחדים מבני הבית קראו בהם.

See too *idem.*, *Rabban shel Yisrael*, *op. cit.*, 112:

לעתונות בכלל לא התנגד והוא בעצמו היה קורא את "הלבנון" ו"מחזיקי הדת" ואת "המליץ" ואת "הצפירה" אפילו הפיליוטנים שבהם.

For other evidence, see *Mekor Barukh*, cited above, p. 78; *Kevod ha-Levanon* VI:7 (1869), col. 49, where the Neziv writes how he enjoyed "oneg Shabbat" by reading newspapers on that day. My thanks to Dr. Shnayer Z. Leiman for bringing this source to my attention. See too M. Zinowitz, *op. cit.*, 318.

106. Meir Bar-Ilan (Berlin), *Mi-Volozhin*, *ibid.*, 138–39. See too *ibid.*, 163: וגם ציורה: *idem.*, *Rabban shel Yisra'el*, *ibid.*, 134–35:

אכן לא היה רבן של ישראל מאלה אשר כל חדש אסור להם מן התורה. אף כי לא ידע שפת עם זר לא היה מוצא פגם אם למדו וידעו את שפת המדינה.

R. Shlomoh Dovid Dinkin, the *mashgiach* of the yeshiva (above, pp. 88, 91), knew Russian and served as the translator for the Neziv when it was necessary for him to interact with the secular authorities. He also had a wide-ranging curiosity about current events. See M. S. Shapiro, "Yeshivat Volozhin bi-Shenot Gedulatah," *ha-Do'ar* XLII:26 (May 11, 1962), 439.

107. *Mi-Volozhin*, *ibid.*, 139.

108. See A. I. Kook, "Rosh Yeshivat "Ez ha-Hayyim,"" *Knesset Yisra'el* (Warsaw, 1887), II, 142. It was reprinted in *Ma'amarei ha-Re'iyah* (Jerusalem, 1980), 126.

This was the first biography ever written about the Neziv (see M. Berlin, *Rabban shel Yisra'el*, *op. cit.*, 11). R. Kook's son, R. Zevi Yehudah Hakohen, told the story that one day his father, who was then studying in Volozhin, came into the Neziv's library and found him in a dilemma. He had just received a request from Shaul Pinhas Rabinowitz, the editor of *Knesset Yisra'el*, to prepare a biography of himself for publication. He felt, however, that it was only appropriate to write a biography about a person who died or stopped being productive but, on the other hand, did not want to alienate Rabinowitz by denying his request. To help solve the problem, R. Kook volunteered to write the biography himself, which he did. See R. Z. Y. Kook, *ha-Zofeh* (27 Av, 5703), cited by S. Mirsky, *op. cit.*, 53, n. 20; Y. L. Hakohen Maimon, *Sarei ha-Me'ah* (Jerusalem, 1965), VI, 258. For a tradition cited by R. Hayyim Berlin about his father's opposition to reading biographies of *gedolei Torah*, considering them to be nothing more than a ploy of the *Satan* to cause *bittul Torah*, see the preface to *Sefer Meromei Sadeh* I (Jerusalem, 1956).

The article was cited by M. Y. Berdyczewski in *ha-Meliz* XXVIII:30 (February 17, 1888), 303–04.

109. *ha-'Asif* III, 237.

110. A careful analysis of all of the Neziv's works would undoubtedly yield a mine of information about his attitude to extra-Talmudic study. For one such example, see *Ha'amek Davar* on Num. 8:2 in connection with the menorah:

שבעת הנרות: משום שבתורה שבעל פה נכלל שבע חכמות שבלי ידיעה בכל החכמות א"א לבא לכמה עיקרי תורה כמו שיעורי כלאים ועוקצין וקדה"ח [= קידוש החודש] ועוד הרבה עניני שיעורים. וכל החכמות באו לשמש ולבאר אזהרות תורה שבכתב. וגם מי שיש לו עינים מוצא כל החכמות מרומז בתורה שבכתב. . . . וכן כל פרטי המוסרים מרומז בתורה. . . . והיינו שהזהיר הקב"ה שיהיו מאירים כח כל החכמות לפני המנורה שהיא נגד עיקר התורה.

For a preliminary unsatisfactory treatment of this subject, see H. Katz, *op. cit.* (n. 3), 11–13, 109–16.

111. See above, n. 94.

112. See *Mekor Barukh, op. cit.*, IV, 1917, 1921.

The *Neziv* also enjoyed a close relationship with a number of maskilim, including the prominent maskil Shlomoh Yosef Fuenn and turned to him to intercede on behalf of the yeshiva. See *Mekor Barukh, ibid.*, IV, 1831–33; M. Berlin, *mi-Volozhin*, 124–25; I. Klausner, *Toledot ha-'Agudah Nes Ziyonah bi-Volozhin, op. cit.*, 19–20. Unlike many of his colleagues, Fuenn agreed with the *Neziv* that there should be no secular studies in Volozhin. See M. Reines, *Ozar ha-Sifrut III*, 13, n. 1.

113. M. Bar-Ilan, *mi-Volozhin, op. cit.*, 139.

114. *ha-Meliz* XXV:9 (February 13, 1885), 139.

115. *Neziv, She'elot u-Teshuvot Meshiv Davar I:44*, end. This seems to be the basis of a statement made by his son:

אבל על-אף כל זה עמד אבא ו"ל בתוקף על דעתו שמבחינה פדגוגית היא מוצדקת בהחלט, כי בתוך הישיבה אין מקום ללמוד רוסית. היו רואים בעין טובה את מי שבא ללמוד בישיבה והביא עמו השכלה שקנה לו קודם; הבינו יפה את זה, שאחרי עובו את הישיבה היה מכין עצמו לקראת בחינות. אבל בתוך הישיבה עצמה דרשו מאת התלמיד התמכרות שלימה ללימוד התורה ותו לא.

See M. Bar-Ilan, *mi-Volozhin, op. cit.*, 163–64. See too *ha-Meliz* XIX:69 (September 17, 1883), 1108 where someone wrote in defense of the *Neziv* that he outlawed various periodicals in his yeshiva,

לא מחמת שהוא קנאי ומתעב את ההשכלה אשר מה"ע מלמדים בכותה, חלילה! ורק בסבת ביטול תורה, שבאה לרגלי מה"ע נאלץ לגדור גדר לבלי ידה להם מהלכים בקרב תלמידי הישיבה. וזה הדבר, כי היו מה"ע למכשול לרבים להתרשל בלימודי תורה.

For more on this crucially important responsum, see below.

116. *Ha-Kerem* (1887), 65. See too R. A. Y. Kook, *Knesset Yisra'el, op. cit.*, 142: ואם יתנגד לקביעות עתים ללמודי חול הוא מיראתו שלא יעשו התלמידים השכלתם קבע ותורתם עראי.

117. M. Y. Berdyczewski, *ha-Meliz* XXVIII:30 (February, 17, 1888), 305. For more information on the formation of this society, see S. Stampfer, *op. cit.*, 104; above, p. 93.

118. *Ha-Meliz* XIX:69 (September 17, 1883), 1108.

119. See M. Berlin, *Rabban shel Yisra'el, op. cit.*, 112; M. Y. Berdyczewski, *ha-Kerem* (1887), 77.

The students, however, did so clandestinely. See Pinhas Turberg, *Kitvei Pinhas Turberg* (New York, 1953), 134–35; S. Stampfer, *op. cit.*, 104–05.

120. Israel Klausner, *Toledot ha-'Agudah Nes Ziyonah bi-Volozhin* (Jerusalem, 1954), 13. See too Yizhak Nissenbaum, *ha-Dat ve-ha-Teḥiyah ha-Le'umit* (Warsaw, 1920), 123, in connection with *Hibbat Ziyon* societies in Volozhin:

הגאון המתמיד הזה שאף כי כל בני הישיבה ישקדו יומם ולילה על התורה, והביט בעין רעה על כל מיני זרמים אחרים שפרצו לתוך ארבע אמות של הלמוד בתורה, גם אם עצם הזרמים האלה בחיי היהודים בכלל היו רצויים לו.

See too J. L. Hakohen Maimon, *Lema'an Ziyon Lo Ehesheh* (Jerusalem, 1954), 113; Simon Federbush, *Hazon Torah ve-Ziyon* (Jerusalem and New York, 1960), 86.

121. See the memoirs of Yosef Rothstein, printed in Klausner, *ibid.*, 123.

For the major role played by the Neẓiv in the new Hibbat Ziyon movement (his willingness to work closely with “sinners” for a religious purpose, the premium he placed on the unity of the Jewish people, the important part he played in the controversy surrounding the Bilu group in Gedera, his prominent role in the Shemittah controversy of 1888–89), see S. L. Citron, *Toledot Hibbat Ziyon* (Odessa, 1914), 342–47; Z. H. Masliansky, “Zikhronotai,” *ha-Ivri* VII:32 (August 24, 1917), 9–10; Yizhak Rivkind, *ha-Neziv ve-Yihuso le-“Hibbat Ziyon”* (Lodz, 1919); *idem.*, “ha-Yeshiva bi-Volozhin ve-ha-Tehiyah ha-Le’umit,” *ha-Toren* IX:10 (December, 1922), 58–61; *idem.*, “Iggerot Ziyon,” *Sefer Shemu’el* (Mohliiver) (Jerusalem, 1923), 73–103; printed as a separate pamphlet (Jerusalem, 1923); Y. Nissenbaum, *ibid.*, 119–22; J. L. Hakohen Fishman (Maimon), *ha-Ziyonut ha-Datit ve-Hitpathutah* (Jerusalem, 1937), 266–67; reprinted as *Yisra’el, Torah, Ziyon* (Jerusalem, 1989), 340–42; A. R. Malachi, “Mishpahat Berlin ve-ha-Yishuv,” *Talpiyot* V:3–4 (1952), 395–406; reprinted in *idem.*, *Perakim bi-Toledot ha-Yishuv ha-Yashan* (Tel Aviv, 1971), 253–62; J. L. Hakohen Maimon, *Lema'an Ziyon lo 'Ehesheh*, *ibid.*, 106–11; *‘Enziklopediah shel ha-Ziyonut ha-Datit*, *op. cit.* (n. 8); Simon Federbush, *Hazon Torah ve-Ziyon*, *ibid.*, 80–91, 128–42, 166–70; E. Leoni, *op. cit.*, 56–58; Bezalel Landau, “ha-Neziv mi-Volozhin bi-Ma’arakhah le-Ma’an Yishuv Erez Yisra’el bi-Kedushatah,” *Niv ha-Midrashi’ah* XI (1974), 251–77; Yisra’el Klausner, *mi-Katowitz ‘ad Basle* (Jerusalem, 1965), Vol. I and Vol. II, in *passim*; M. Zinowitz, *op. cit.*, 342–52; Yosef Salmon, “ha-Imut ben ha-Haredim le-Maskilim bi-Tenu’at Hibbat Ziyon bi-Sehnot ha-80,” *ha-Ziyonut* V (1978), 43–77; Ehud Luz, *Makbilim Nifgashim* (Tel Aviv, 1985), trans. into English as *Parallels Meet* (Philadelphia, 1988), in *passim*; H. Katz, *op. cit.* (n. 3), 151–54.

Contrast this to the position of Rabbi Eliezer Gordon of Telshe and Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik of Brisk who bitterly opposed the Hibbat Ziyon movement, denouncing it as “a new sect like that of Shabbatai Zevi, may the name of the wicked rot, which it is a mizvah to annihilate.” See Ehud Luz, *ibid.*, 116.

For R. Eliezer Gordon’s change of heart about the Hibbat Ziyon movement, see Yehudah Epel, *bi-Tokh Reshit ha-Tehiyah* (Tel Aviv, 1936), 545–49. For the opposition to the Hibbat Ziyon movement among great rabbinic authorities during the time that the Neẓiv continued to be very active within it, see Yosef Salmon, “Sefer ‘Shivat Ziyon’ ve-Rik’o ha-Histori,” *Eshel Be’er Sheva* II (1980), 331–40. For the opposition of R. Hayyim Soloveitchik, see M. Lipson, *mi-Dor Dor* (Tel Aviv, 1968) I, 24, #65.

For the role of these two Zionistic societies in Volozhin, see Y. Nissenbaum, *ibid.*, 122–25; “Had min Havraya,” “Hibbat Ziyon bi-Volozhin,” *ha-Tor* IV:40 (July 2, 1924), 9–13; IV:44 (August 1, 1924), 8–9; IV:45 (August 8, 1924), 10–11; IV:47 (August 22, 1924), 7–9; M. M. Zlotkin, “ha-Hevrah ha-Hasha’it ‘Nezah Yisra’el’ ve-H. N. Bialik,” *Molad* V:27 (June, 1950), 181–85; Y. L. Hakohen Maimon, *Yisra’el, Torah, Ziyon*, *ibid.*, 342–45; *idem.*, *Lema’an Ziyon*, *ibid.*, 113–32; I. Klausner, *ibid.*; S. Federbush, *ibid.*, 85–87; Y. Nissenbaum, *‘AleI Heldi*, *op. cit.* (n. 53), 96–105; E. Leoni, *op. cit.*, 120–23; M. Zinowitz, *op. cit.*, 311–15; S. Stampfer, *op. cit.*, 99–104. Klausner’s book was unfavorably reviewed by Yizhak Rivkind, “‘Nes Ziyonah’ bi-Yeshivat Volozhin,” *ha-Do’ar* XXXV:35 (August 12, 1955), 673–74.

H. N. Bialik was very active in Neẓah Yisra’el. See F. Lachover, *op. cit.* (n. 71), 69–84 and the sources cited there.

R. Isser Zalman Melzer was a member of the Nes Ziyonah group (see Y. Nissenbaum, *‘AleI Heldi*, *ibid.*, 42–43; F. Lachover, *ibid.*, 79, n. 27) as was

R. Moshe Mordecai Epstein (see I. Klausner, *ibid.*, 25). For a picture of R. Moshe Mordecai in a group of members of Nes Zionah in Kovno, see I. Klausner, *ibid.*, 26. For another picture of R. Moshe Mordecai with a group of men who bought land in Haderah, see Ever Hadani, *Haderah* (Tel Aviv, 1951), before p. 25. See also E. Leoni, *op. cit.*, 121. For the leading role he played in the transactions, see E. Hadani, *ibid.*, 12–16; E. Leoni, *ibid.*, 281–83.

Cf. Aharon Suraski, *Toledot ha-Hinukh ha-Torani, op. cit.* (n. 6), 286, who claims that the ideology of Hibbat Zion was *pasul* and that it succeeded in ensnaring some yeshiva students who were misled by it. He totally ignored the fact that the Neziv himself was an important leader of that movement, which also included at least these two scholars (R. Isser Zalman and R. Moshe Mordecai) who later became *gedolei Yisra'el*.

122. See R. Moshe Shmuel ve-Doro, *op. cit.* (n. 23), 61. For the circumstances surrounding Mrs. Berlin's serious illness, see M. Y. Berdyczewski, *ha-Meliz* XXVIII:56 (March 20, 1888), 573; below, p. 105.

123. *Ibid.*, 63–64. Cf. R. Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, "Ish ha-Halakha," *Talpiyot* I:3–4 (1944), 697f. For more on the struggle over *mussar* in the Lithuanian yeshivot, including Volozhin, see Dov Katz, *Pulmus ha-Mussar* (Jerusalem, 1972), 255f.

Also relevant to a study of the Neziv's attitude to secular studies is his reaction to the educational innovation proposed by R. Yehiel Mikhel Pines in Palestine towards the end of the century. See Alter Druyanow-Shulamit Laskov, *Ketavim le-Toledot Hibbat Zion ve-Yishuv Erez Yisra'el* (Tel Aviv, 1982), I, 209–13.

124. M. Y. Berdyczewski, *ha-Meliz* XXVIII:56 (March 20, 1888), 573.
125. M. Berlin, *Rabban shel Yisra'el, op. cit.*, 138. See also *idem.*, *mi-Volozhin 'ad Yerushalayim, op. cit.*, 129:

קפצו ורצו על ספסלים, על שולחנות, הפכו את ה"שטנדרים", כיבו את המנורות ומדומה גדולה קמה. המדומה נמשכה זמן מה עד אשר שקטו הרוחות קצת. אולם בתוך הישיבה נראה החורבן בעינו... הורגש באוויר כי משהו איום יותר עומד לברוא, המאורעות אינם מקרא בודד, אלא התחלה של דבר נורא... .

126. *Idem.*, *Rabban shel Yisra'el, ibid.*

127. *Ibid.*, 139. For the Neziv's particular love for Erez Yisra'el and his involvement in Jewish life there, see above, n. 121. According to one report, whenever he would recite תמלוך in the Shabbat morning *kedushah*, היה מתמוגג, בדמעות שליש, וקול בכיתו היה הולך מסוף הישיבה עד סופה ויחרור כליית לב. See Elyah Meir Feivelson, "ha-'Emet ve-ha-Shalom," *ha-Peles* III:12 (1903), 729.

The Neziv may also have been motivated at this time to move to the Land of Israel because his brother Lipa had just recently done so. See Hāyīm Mikhel Mikhlin, *bi-Re'i ha-Dorot* (Tel Aviv, 1940), 31.

See also *ha-Meliz* XXX:120 (June 13, 1890), 4 for a report that the Neziv devoted part of his customary sermon in the yeshiva on the first day of Shavuot that year to the notion of *yishuv 'Erez Yisra'el*.

128. See A. Balosher, *op. cit.* (n. 57), 123–24. Also, R. Hāyīm had a special relationship with many of the students and was beloved by them. See J. L. Radus, *Zikbronot, op. cit.* (n. 47), 65–66.

129. See M. A. Shapiro, "Yeshivat Volozhin bi-Shenot Gedulatah," *ha-Do'ar* XLII:26 (May 11, 1962), 440; reprinted in R. Moshe Shmuel ve-Doro, *op. cit.*, 75–76. See too M. Bar-Ilan (Berlin), *mi-Volozhin, op. cit.*, 159–62.

The controversy over R. Hāyīm's appointment also spilled over into the Jewish press. See *ha-Meliz* XXXI:45 (March 6, 1891), 5; XXXI:54 (March 17, 1891), 2; XXXI:61 (March 26, 1891), 3; XXXI:63 (March, 1891).

Bitter conflicts over the succession of leadership in Volozhin's yeshiva were nothing new. The Neziv himself was challenged a number of times to justify his own position as *rosh yeshiva* (in 1849 by R. Yehoshua Heschel Levin, in 1853

and 1857 by the followers of R. Yosef Dov Halevi Soloveitchik, and in 1870 by R. Hayyim Hillel Fried) and the turmoil within the yeshiva was intense. It always involved the division of the students into factions whose disagreements degenerated into shouting matches and fist fights, public expressions of disrespect for the Neziv, tumult and disturbance in the *bet midrash*, forged letters and more. In more than one instance outside rabbis had to be brought in to decide the matter.

All histories of the Volozhin yeshiva are full of information about these controversies. In particular, see M. Bar-Ilan (Berlin) *mi-Volozhin, ibid.*, 99–101; *idem.*, *Rabban, op. cit.*, 26–28; R. Barukh Epstein, *Mekor Barukh, op. cit.*, IV, 1691–95; *My Uncle, The Netziv, op. cit.*, 21–25; S. K. Mirsky, “Yeshivat Volozhin,” *op. cit.*, 39–41; S. L. Citron, “Milhemet ha-Dinasti’ot bi-Yeshivat Volozhin,” *Reshumot* I (1925), 123–35; Y. Rivkind, “Shevilei Volozhin, Nehirim ve-lo Nehirim,” *ha-Do’ar* XLII:23 (April 6, 1962), 366; M. Zinowitz, *op. cit.*, 221–32; E. Leoni, *op. cit.*, 124–33; S. Stampfer, *op. cit.*, 39–47; R. Hayyim Karlinsky, *ha-Rishon le-Shushet Brisk* (Jerusalem, 1984), 102–42.

For a similar example of a later upheaval and strike in Volozhin over the matter of succession (in 1916), see Gedalyah Pomeranz, “ha-Shevitat ha-Aharonah bi-Yeshivat Volozhin,” *ha-Do’ar* XLIII:15 (February 8, 1963), 240–43.

130. A. Balosher, *op. cit.*, 124. See too S. Stampfer, *ibid.*, 121–25.

For information on R. Hayyim Berlin, see E. Leoni, *op. cit.*, 215–20 and the bibliography cited there; M. Zinowitz, *op. cit.*, 297–302.

Another important factor in the events leading up to the close of the yeshiva was the growing strength of a group of informers within the yeshiva who joined together with their fellow maskilim on the outside in appealing to the Russian authorities to take steps to close it. As many sources indicate, this “fifth column” of students in Volozhin was also very responsible for its closing.

131. See, for example, B. Goldberg, *Zikhron le-Aharonim, op. cit.* (n. 52), 16–17; E. Leoni, *ibid.*, 217.
132. A copy of the original handwritten document was printed in *Evreiskaia Entsiklopediia* V (1906), 725–26. It was reprinted in Ephraim Shimoff, *Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Spector: Life and Letters* (New York, 1959), Heb. section, 28–30. This conference is described in Ya’akov ha-Levi Lifshitz, *Zikhron Ya’akov, op. cit.*, 153–57, although he erroneously dates it as having taken place in 1885. See too Zevi Sharfstein, *Gedolei Hinukh bi-Amenu* (Jerusalem, 1964), 65; S. K. Mirsky, “Yeshivat Volozhin,” *op. cit.*, 68–70; E. Leoni, *ibid.*, 135–38; S. Stampfer, *op. cit.*, 119–20.
- R. Epstein noted that the study of mathematics was also required. See his *Mekor Barukh* IV, 2026.
133. “Mah Ho’ilu Hakhamim bi-Takanatam?” *ha-Meliz* XXVII:88 (May 3, 1887), 928. See M. Zinowitz, *op. cit.*, 323–34.
134. See Yizhak Eizik ben-Tovim, “bi-Yeshivat Volozhin Lifnei Segiratah,” *ha-Hed* VII:4 (December, 1931–January, 1932), 30. See M. Zinowitz, *ibid.*, 321–23.
135. *She’elot u-Teshuvot Meshiv Davar* I:44, end.
136. M. Bar-Ilan (Berlin), *mi-Volozhin ‘ad Yerushalayim, op. cit.*, 164.
137. *Ibid.*, 165–66.
138. *Ibid.*, 166.
139. H. L. Gordon, “Ben Yekhabed Av . . .,” *ha-Do’ar* XLIV:33 (August 6, 1965), 614. See too Y. Don Yihyeh, “bi-Yeshivat Volozhin,” *Netivah* XII:11 (November 20, 1936), 3; Zevi Scharfstein, *Gedolei Hinukh bi-Amenu, op. cit.*, 64–65; M. Auerbach, ed., *Sefer Zikaron le-Rabi Yizhak Eizik Halevi zt”l* (Bnai Brak, 1964), 23–28; S. Stampfer, *op. cit.*, 120–21.

A. Suraski, *Toledot ha-Hinukh ha-Torani, op. cit.* (n. 6), 289–90, is clearly wrong when he claims that the Neziv decided to close Volozhin rather than

allow *any* secular studies in it. See also the sources cited above, n. 7. Most striking is a statement made in an article printed in 1887 by Rabbi Avraham Yizḥak Hakohen Kook that a separate room had already then been set aside in the yeshiva for secular studies. He wrote that although the Neẓiv was opposed to designating time during the day for secular studies out of a fear that it would lead to minimizing Torah study (see above, pp. 103–4),

בכל זאת עשה עתה תקנה גדולה שאלה מהתלמידים שכבר באה דעת התורה אל קרבם וגם התחוללה דעתם עליהם יקבעו עתים מוזמנים ללמודי חול בתא מיוחד ועפ"י הדרכת מורים מובהקים.

See his “Rosh Yeshivat ‘Ez Ḥayyim’,” *Knesset Yisra’el* II, *op. cit.* (n. 108), 142; reprinted in *Ma’amarei ha-Re’iyah*, *op. cit.*, 126. My thanks to Rabbi Matis Greenblatt for being the first to bring this source to my attention. However, I know of no other evidence for such a program in Volozhin at that early date. It is also hard to believe, as it would appear from R. Kook’s description, that the Neẓiv instituted this new policy on his own, without having been forced to do so by the government. Everything we know about the Neẓiv indicates that such a move on his part would be inconceivable. Cf. Y. Lifshitz, *Zikhron Ya’akov*, *op. cit.*, 144.

For other explicit statements that secular studies (i.e., Russian language) were formally studied in Volozhin, see E. Leoni, *op. cit.*, 137; Azriel Shohat, *Mossad “ha-Rabbanut mi-Ta’am” bi-Russyah* (Haifa, 1976), 189, n. 107.

140. This list of regulations was printed in *ha-Meliz* XXXII:46 (March 7, 1892), 1–2; *ha-Zefirah* LVI (March 6, 1892), 224 and LVI (March 8, 1892), 228. See too M. Zinowitz, *op. cit.*, 326–32.
141. This was a particularly onerous regulation for Volozhin because, since the days of R. Ḥayyim, the custom there had been for students to learn in the *bet midrash* throughout the entire night, every night of the year. For this practice during R. Ḥayyim’s days, see R. David of Novaredok, *Sefer Galya Masekhet*, *op. cit.* (n. 21), 33b:

ואף גם זאת שכל לילה ולילה היה קבועים משמרות ערר עדר לברו מכלל הישיבה אל אשר תמיד יום ולילה לא יחשו מלהיות שונין ומפסיק מלימודם. והוגד לי באמת שאף בליל הבנסות שבת לא פסקו משמרות הלילה.

This was cited by R. Barukh Epstein, *Mekor Barukh*, *op. cit.*, IV, 1787. For a formulation by R. Ḥayyim on the importance of uninterrupted Torah study, see his *Nefesh ha-Ḥayyim* IV:25.

For the days of R. Izeleh, see M. Z. Neriah, *Pirkei Volozhin* (Jerusalem, 1964), 24, n.; cf. S. Stampfer, *op. cit.*, 33.

For the practice during the days of the Neẓiv who made regular nocturnal visits to the *bet midrash* at all hours of the night, see M. Berlin, *Rabban shel Yisra’el*, *op. cit.*, 99, 114; *idem.*, *mi-Volozhin*, *op. cit.*, 114; R. Barukh Epstein, *Mekor Barukh*, *ibid.*, IV, 1787–88.

For a discussion by the Neẓiv of the significance of Torah learning especially at night, see his commentary on Shir ha-Shirim I:8 in *Metiv Shir* (Jerusalem, 1967), 8b.

A number of articles about Volozhin describe the very imposing sight it made on winter nights when the yeshiva building was all lit up and the voice of Torah emanated from it. See, for example, *ha-Asif* III (1886), 236; A. Balosher, “Bi’alik bi-Volozhin,” *op. cit.*, 129; M. E. Eisenstadt, “Yeshivat Volozhi,” *op. cit.*, 160; M. Bar-Ilan (Berlin), *mi-Volozhin*, *op. cit.*, 104–05.

142. *Mekor Barukh*, *ibid.*, IV, 2025, 2026. Even some maskilim who defended the Russian regulations which led to the closing of Volozhin recognized the unfair and unacceptable nature of these most extreme clauses. They suggested that they

- be changed when the yeshiva would reopen. See *ha-Meliz* XXXII:47 (March 8, 1892), 1-3; XXXII:50 (March 11, 1892), 1-3.
143. Yizhak Rivkind, "mi-Yalkutei ha-Volozhini," *Reshumot* V (1927), 363.
144. P. Turberg, *Kitvei Pinhas Turberg* (New York, 1953), 136. See also R. Barukh Epstein, *Mekor Barukh*, *op. cit.*, IV, 2026-28; M. Berlin, *Rabban shel Yisra'el*, *op. cit.*, 141-42; *idem.*, *mi-Volozhin*, *op. cit.*, 173-76; E. Leoni, *op. cit.*, 138-40, 178; M. Zinowitz, *op. cit.*, 333-36; S. Stampfer, *op. cit.*, 130, for a graphic description of the event and its personal immediate impact on the Neziv.
- When the news spread that Volozhin had closed, the traditional community reacted with great sorrow. See, for example, Rabbi Y. Nissenbaum's letter to H. N. Bialik postmarked 10.2.1892 and printed in *Iggerot ha-Rav Nissenbaum* (Jerusalem, 1956), 2:

שבר גדול השברנו, נתרסקו אברינו ונפרדו עצמותינו . . . על חורבן בית המקדש כי הורס וכי הודש-עיני מקור דמעה ועל חורבן בית מקדש מעט כי סגר. נקרע לבי בקרבי ונחמות נביאינו על הראשון תנחמנה אותנו גם על השני. חזקו אחים!

- See also R. Moshe Mordecai Epstein's letter to Menaḥem Mendel Naḥumovsky, printed in E. Hadani, *Haderah*, *op. cit.* (n. 121), 37-38.
- An eighteen-year-old student in the Telshe Yeshiva wrote a play about the closing of Volozhin which became very popular and was performed in many yeshivot throughout Lithuania. See Y. Rivkind, "mi-Yalkutei ha-Volozhini," *op. cit.*, 362-75.
- Alexander Zederbaum could not refrain from leveling a parting blow at the Neziv, blaming him for not instituting secular studies in the yeshiva as per the government order, and therefore being personally responsible for its close. See *ha-Meliz* XXXII:47 (March 8, 1892), 1-3.
145. See above, p. 78.
- Dr. Shnayer Leiman suggested two other ways of interpreting R. Ḥayyim Berlin's words in his *zava'ah* cited above, assuming that it is an accurate transcription of what the Neziv told him: 1) The Neziv told his son not to allow secular studies *in the main hall of the yeshiva* (שול לא להכניס לתוכה שום לימוד חול), which is what the Russian authorities wanted and which he never allowed. He permitted it only in a room downstairs; 2) The Neziv told his son not to allow secular studies *to become an integral part of the formal curriculum of the yeshiva* (שול לא להכניס לתוכה שום לימוד חול). Hence his continued emphasis on עיניי חול המתערים בקודש בלא הברל. As long as they were kept separate, i.e., late in the evening and in a specially designated room, he did not object.
146. See M. S. Shapiro, "Yeshivat Volozhin bi-Shenot Segiratah u-Petiḥatah," *R. Moshe Shmuel ve-Doro*, *op. cit.*, 78.
147. See R. Judah ha-Levi Lifshitz, *Sefer Dor Yesharim* (Petrokov, 1907), 8. It was reprinted in A. Suraski, ed., *Ahi'ezer: Kovez Iggerot* (Bnei Brak, 1970), II, 583. See too Shimon Finkelman, *Reb Chaim Ozer* (New York, 1987), 61-62.
- For the neglect of history by Jews in general, see Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle and London, 1982).
148. See R. Shimon Schwab, *Selected Writings* (Lakewood, 1988), 233-34. The essay was first published in the December-March, 1984-85 issue of *Mitteilungen*.
149. See Joseph Elias, "Past and Present in the Teaching of Jewish History," *The Jewish Observer* IV:8 (November, 1967), 18, 23. The italics are by the author.
150. It is worth noting that two recent descriptions of the events in Volozhin do correctly note that secular studies were, indeed, formally offered in the yeshiva. See Shaul Kagan, "Reb Chaim Ozer: An Appreciation," *Yated Ne'eman* (14 Cheshvan 5751; November 2, 1990), 4:

At these conferences, the government regularly introduced proposals to force the traditional *rabbanim* to attain knowledge of the Russian lan-

guage and to study secular subjects. They eventually forced the famed Yeshiva of Volozhin, the major and largest yeshiva in the world at that time, to include secular subjects in the curriculum. Ultimately, the holy Netziv, the aged Rosh Yeshiva and Rav of Volozhin, closed the yeshiva rather than allow it to be transformed into a secular institution with its pure Torah diluted. This in turn hastened his untimely passing.

See also Berel Wein, *Triumph of Survival* (Monsey, 1990), 131: “There were periods when secular studies were taught in Volozhin.”